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Bedouin Attacks on the Damascus Hajj Caravan and the Ottoman State's Countermeasures (1700–1702)

Şam Hac Kervanına Bedevi Saldırıları ve Osmanlı Devleti'nin Karşı Tedbirleri (1700-1702)

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Abstract

This article investigates a pivotal yet often neglected episode in the Ottoman Empire's pilgrimage administration: the Bedouin attacks on the Damascus hajj caravan in 1700 and 1701, and the state's institutional response in 1702. These events illustrate how the Ottoman central authority sought to preserve its religious and political legitimacy by ensuring the security of the hajj, one of Islam's most sacred rituals. Holding the title of *Hādīmū'l-Ḥaremeyn* (Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries), Ottoman sultans regarded the protection and regulation of the hajj as both a divine duty and an imperial necessity. By the sixteenth century, two major pilgrimage routes were formalized: one through Cairo and the other through Damascus. These caravans were led by an *amir al-hajj* (commander of the pilgrimage) and protected by imperial troops. However, the long and vulnerable desert passage between Damascus and Medina remained a constant threat due to the activities of semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes, known in Ottoman sources as *eşkiyâ-yı Urban* (Urban bandits). These tribes traditionally received payments—known as the *Urban surresi*—in exchange for safe passage and logistical support. Any disruption in these arrangements, whether due to delayed payments or political conflicts, often led to violence. This occurred in 1700, when the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes attacked the Damascus caravan after being denied their expected surre and allegedly mistreated by the Sharif of Mecca. Hundreds of pilgrims were killed. The following year, a second attack by other Bedouin groups proved even more catastrophic; reports submitted to the Sultan suggested that as many as 30,000 pilgrims perished. These twin calamities deeply alarmed the imperial government, undermining both its capacity to protect Muslim pilgrims and its image as guardian of Islam's holiest sites. The failures of Mehmed Pasha and Hasan Pasha—successive amirs of the hajj—were harshly criticized. Hasan Pasha, remembered as *Hacıkırdıran* (the one who caused the death of pilgrims), was dismissed and exiled. In response, the Ottoman state implemented a comprehensive institutional overhaul in 1702. Arslan Mehmed Pasha, an experienced provincial governor, was appointed both as governor of Damascus and amir al-hajj a dual mandate aimed at unifying command and improving coordination. Troop numbers were significantly increased, including the deployment of more provincial soldiers and local militias. Logistical improvements were introduced: additional camels, food, and water supplies were arranged, and detailed protocols on military discipline were issued. A key administrative reform involved transferring the authority to distribute Urban surre from the Sharif of Mecca to the amir al-hajj aiming to eliminate miscommunication and tribal resentment over missed payments. Furthermore, an embargo was imposed on hostile tribes such as the Aneze and Beni Sahr, prohibiting trade in grain and essential goods, while limited military retaliation was authorized to demonstrate imperial resolve. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources—imperial registers (*mühimme defterleri*), official correspondence in *münşeât mecmuaları*, chronicles such as the *Nusretnâme*, and eyewitness accounts—this study reconstructs the political and military context of the 1700-1702 hajj crises. It argues that the 1702 reforms represent not merely a military reaction but also a deliberate strategy to reclaim imperial authority. Ultimately, this episode reveals how the Ottoman Empire adapted its provincial governance structures in times of crisis. Though attacks on pilgrims persisted in later years, the measures implemented in 1702 became a model for subsequent hajj security policies. This case highlights the complex entanglement of pilgrimage, tribal diplomacy, and imperial sovereignty in the early modern Islamic world.

Keywords: History of Ottoman Empire, Hajj, Damascus Hajj Caravan, Bedouin Arab Tribes, Urban, Surre.

Şam Hac Kervanına Bedevi Saldırıları ve Osmanlı Devleti'nin Karşı Tedbirleri (1700-1702)

Öz

Bu makale, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun hac idaresine dair kritik ancak çoğunlukla göz ardı edilmiş bir dönemi incelemektedir: 1700 ve 1701 yıllarında Şam hac kervanına yönelik Bedevi saldırıları ve Osmanlı devletinin bu krizlere 1702 yılında verdiği kurumsal tepki. Bu gelişmeler, Osmanlı merkezî otoritesinin İslam'ın en kutsal vecibelerinden biri olan hac ibadetinin güvenliğini sağlayarak hem dinî hem de siyasi meşruiyetini koruma çabasını açıkça gözler önüne sermektedir. Hādīmū'l-Ḥaremeyn (İki Harem'in Hizmetkârı) unvanını taşıyan Osmanlı sultanları, hac organizasyonunu düzenlemeyi ve hac yolunun güvenliğini temin etmeyi hem ilahi bir görev hem de imparatorluk siyasetinin vazgeçilmez bir unsuru olarak değerlendirmişlerdir. On altıncı yüzyıla gelindiğinde, hac yolları resmî olarak iki ana güzergâh üzerinden işlemekteydi: Kahire ve Şam. Bu kervanlar, emirü'l-ḥacc unvanını taşıyan yetkili bir kişi tarafından yönetiliyor ve Osmanlı askerî birlikleri tarafından korunuyordu. Ancak Şam ile Medine arasında uzanan uzun ve çetin çöl yolu, özellikle yarı-göçebe Bedevi aşiretlerin faaliyetleri nedeniyle sürekli tehdit altındaydı. Osmanlı kaynaklarında *eşkiyâ-yı urban* olarak anılan bu aşiretler, geleneksel olarak kervanlara güvenli geçiş ve lojistik destek sağlamak karşılığında *Urban surresi* adıyla belirli ödemeler almaktaydılar. Bu ödemelerin gecikmesi ya da siyasal anlaşmazlıklar gibi durumlar, çoğu zaman şiddetli saldırılara yol açmaktaydı. 1700 yılında, Aneze ve Beni Sahr kabileleri, beklenen surre ödemelerinin yapılmaması ve Mekke Şerifi tarafından haksızlığa uğradıklarını iddia ederek Şam hac kervanına saldırmış,

binlerce hacı hayatını kaybetmiştir. 1701 yılında ise başka Bedevi gruplarının düzenlediği ikinci bir saldırı, çok daha yıkıcı olmuştur. İstanbul'a gönderilen raporlarda ölü sayısının 30.000'e ulaştığı ileri sürülmektedir. Bu ardışık facialar, Osmanlı merkezini derinden sarsmış; yalnızca hacıların güvenliğini sağlayamama riski değil, aynı zamanda Halife sıfatını taşıyan Osmanlı padişahının İslam'ın kutsal mekânlarını koruyamadığı yönünde oluşacak imaj kaybı da büyük endişe yaratmıştır. Bu süreçte, art arda hac emîrliği görevini üstlenen Mehmed Paşa ve Hasan Paşa'nın başarısızlıkları şiddetle eleştirilmiştir. Özellikle 1701 kervanındaki kayıplardan sorumlu tutulan Hasan Paşa, kamuoyunda "Hacıkırdıran" lakabıyla anılmış, görevinden azledilerek sürgüne gönderilmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti, 1702 yılında bu krizlere karşı kapsamlı bir kurumsal reform süreci başlatmıştır. Tecrübeli bir eyalet valisi olan Arslan Mehmed Paşa hem Şam valiliğine hem de hac emîrliğine atanarak, komuta birliğini sağlamak ve koordinasyonu güçlendirmek amacıyla çift yetkiyle donatılmıştır. Askerî kapasite önemli ölçüde artırılmış; taşra askerleri ile yerel milislerin sayısı yükseltilmiştir. Lojistik alanda da düzenlemelere gidilmiş; deve, yiyecek ve su temini artırılmış, askerî disipline dair ayrıntılı yönergeler yayımlanmıştır. En dikkat çekici idarî değişikliklerden biri, Urban suresinin dağıtım yetkisinin Mekke Şerifi'nden alınarak doğrudan hac emrine verilmesidir. Bu adım, ödeme gecikmeleri ve yanlış anlaşılmalara nedeniyle aşiretlerle yaşanan gerginlikleri önlemeyi hedeflemiştir. Ayrıca Aneze ve Beni Sahr gibi saldırgan aşiretlere yönelik ambargo uygulanmış, bu aşiretlerle tahıl ve temel ihtiyaç maddelerinin ticareti yasaklanmıştır. Bazı aşiret reislerine karşı askerî misillemelere izin verilerek Osmanlı'nın kararlılığı gösterilmek istenmiştir. Bu çalışma, 1700–1702 hac krizinin siyasî ve askerî bağlamını yeniden inşa edebilmek amacıyla, mühimme defterleri, münşeat mecmuaları, *Nusretname* gibi kronikler ve gözlemci tanıklıkları gibi çok sayıda birincil kaynağa dayanmaktadır. 1702'de gerçekleştirilen reformların yalnızca askerî bir tepki değil, aynı zamanda Osmanlı'nın taşra idaresini yeniden yapılandırmaya yönelik bilinçli bir strateji olduğunu savunmaktadır. Her ne kadar ilerleyen yıllarda hac kervanlarına yönelik saldırılar tamamen sona ermesede 1702'de uygulamaya konulan tedbirler sonraki dönemlerde hac güvenliği için bir model teşkil etmiştir. Bu vaka, erken modern İslam dünyasında hac, aşiret diplomasisi ve imparatorluk egemenliği arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri anlamak açısından da önemli bir örnek sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Tarihi, Hac, Şam Hac Kafilesi, Bedevi Arap Kabileleri, Urban, Surre.

Introduction

Following the Ottoman Empire's conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517, the Sharifs of Mecca came under Ottoman authority. As a result, the Ottoman sultans adopted the title *Khādim al-Ḥaramayn* (Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries)¹ and took responsibility for organizing and overseeing the annual pilgrimage.² This development elevated the Ottomans' status in the Muslim world and solidified their position as the leading Islamic power.³ In order to preserve this new identity and maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of other Muslim communities, the Ottoman authorities need to ensure the regular performance of the hajj and protect the lives and property of pilgrims.⁴

In the first half of the 16th century, four primary pilgrimage routes were used. The Cairo route served pilgrims coming from Africa and the Balkans; the Damascus route was used by pilgrims from Anatolia and Central Asia; the Zabid route was preferred by those from the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean islands; and the Baghdad route was followed by pilgrims from Iran and India.⁵ However, the Portuguese intrusion into the Indian Ocean and their aggressive enforcement of the cartaz system—attacking or sinking ships that did not pay the transit fee—

¹ In 1517, Sharif Barakāt of Mecca donned the robe of honor (ḥil'at) sent by Sultan Selim I, delivered the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) in the sultan's name, and referred to him with the title *Ḥādimü'l-Ḥarameyn*. M. Feridun Emecen, "Hicaz'da Osmanlı Hakimiyetinin Tesisi ve Ebu Numey", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 14 (1994), 89.

² Suraiya Faroqhi, "On Altıncı ve On Yedinci Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Devlet Anlayışı ve Hac Olgusu", *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara: 22-26 Eylül 1986, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 5/2117.

³ Karl Barbir, "The Ottomans and the Muslim Pilgrimage: 1517-1800", *Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugün ve Gelecekte. I. Uluslararası Konferans Bildirileri* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Türkiye ve Ortadoğu Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1979), 76-77.

⁴ Tuğba Aydeniz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Mekke'nin Yönetimi (1517-1617)* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Turkic Studies, P.h.D Thesis, 2010), 104; Abdülkadir Özcan, "Hac: İslamda Hac", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1996), 14/400.

⁵ Orhan Kılıç, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Hac Emirliği Müessesesi: Mısır Örneği", *Proceedings of the International Conference on Egypt During the Ottoman Era, 26-30 November 2007, Cairo* (İstanbul: İrcica, 2010), 141; Attallah Alrawashdeh, "XVII. Yüzyılda Safevi Haclılarına Yönelik Osmanlı Devleti ve Mekke Şerifliğinin Tutumu Üzerine Bir İnceleme", *Hazine-i Evrak Arşive ve Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6/6 (2024), 169.

posed a serious threat to both traders and pilgrims.⁶ As a result, maritime pilgrimage routes became less secure/reliable. Additionally, the protracted Ottoman–Safavid conflicts, beginning in the 16th century and continuing intermittently into the early 17th century, rendered the Baghdad pilgrimage route practically inaccessible. Consequently, only the Cairo and Damascus routes remained fully functional.⁷

Under Ottoman rule, the Damascus and Cairo routes were formally designated as the official pilgrimage roads. Pilgrims arriving from Anatolia, Rumelia, and Central Asia gathered in Damascus, from where they proceeded to the Hijaz under military escort. Similarly, pilgrims coming from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Tripoli assembled in Cairo, and their onward journey was similarly conducted under military protection. Within the Ottoman system, each of these two official routes was supervised by an *amir al-ḥajj* (commander of the pilgrimage caravan), a practice that remained in place until the end of the Ottoman Empire. In addition to these two main routes, temporary *umarā'* al-ḥajj were occasionally appointed for pilgrims departing from other Ottoman provinces such as Baghdad, Basra, al-Aḥsā, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and Yemen. However, these appointments were often irregular and lacked institutional continuity, largely due to the Ottoman–Safavid wars and recurrent regional rebellions.⁸

The primary responsibilities of the pilgrimage commanders were threefold. First, they had to protect the pilgrims from starvation and dehydration. Second, they were responsible for securing the caravan against raids by the Bedouin tribes living along the route. Finally, they were expected to ensure the safe arrival of the pilgrims in Mecca and their safe return home.⁹

The Damascus commander was responsible for the safety of pilgrims from Anatolia, Iran, and Central Asia, as well as those gathering in cities such as Aleppo and Baghdad. In contrast, the Cairo commander oversaw pilgrims from Egypt and North Africa.¹⁰ Military escorts were assigned to both commanders to maintain security along the routes.¹¹ From the 17th century onward, pilgrims from Persia, Iraq, and India increasingly joined the Damascus caravan due to worsening insecurity on alternative routes.¹²

The Damascus pilgrimage route was a historically significant trade corridor dating back to the Nabateans, connecting Arabia to the Mediterranean. During the Umayyad era, when Damascus served as the capital, this route was used for pilgrimage. However, with the Abbasid capital's relocation to Baghdad, the route via Kufa and Darb Zubayda gained prominence. After the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt, the Damascus road regained strategic importance, becoming the main overland route connecting Mecca to Istanbul.¹³

⁶ Umar Ryad, *The Hajj and Europe in the Age of Empire* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2017), 23.

⁷ Barbir, "The Ottomans and the Muslim Pilgrimage", 78.

⁸ Fethi Furkan Yırıkoğulları, *Osmanlı'da Hac Organizasyonu (XVII–XVIII. Yüzyıllar)* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Turkic Studies, PhD Thesis, 2025), 135; Mihael N. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca, The Indian Experience, 1500–1800* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 51.

⁹ Hugh Kennedy, "Mekke'ye Yolculuğun Tarihi", *Hac, İslamın Kalbine Yolculuk*, ed. Venetia Poter (İstanbul: EDAM Eğitim Danışmanlığı ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2015), 76.

¹⁰ Kılıç, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Hac Emirliği Müessesesi", 141; For the Egyptian Pilgrimage Caravan also see. Tahir Sevinç, *Mısır Suresi ve Hac Emirliği* (İstanbul: Aktif Yayınevi, 2025); Şerife Eroğlu Memiş, "17. ve 18. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Mısır Hac Güzergâhi-Kahire'den Mekke'ye Hac Menzilleri", *Kadim Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6/2 (2020), 39–63.

¹¹ Münir Atalar, "Emir-i Hac", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1995), 11/132.

¹² Abdolqader Steih, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Şam Hac Kafilesinin Güvenliğini Sağlamaya Yönelik İcraatlarını Gözden Geçirmesi (1700–1725) ve Güney Şam Sancakları Yöneticileri", *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi* 22 (2024), 317.

¹³ Robert Irwin, "Mekke'ye Yolculuğun Tarihi (Bölüm 2)", *Hac, İslamın Kalbine Yolculuk*, ed. Venetia Porter (İstanbul: EDAM Eğitim Danışmanlığı ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2015), 148; Joy McCriston, *Pilgrimage and Household in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34.

The stretch between Damascus and Medina represented the most critical and perilous segment of the route, traversing harsh desert terrain devoid of major urban centers¹⁴. Bedouin tribes known as Urban (Arabs living in the desert) inhabited this region and primarily sustained themselves through pastoralism, with limited agricultural activity. However, trade with the pilgrimage caravans constituted a major source of income for these tribes.¹⁵ The Bedouin would often sell their goods at caravan stopovers, thereby integrating themselves into the pilgrimage economy.¹⁶

The Bedouin procured their needs through both legitimate and illegitimate means. On the legitimate side, they negotiated agreements with the Ottoman administration and the Sharif of Mecca to provide security along the pilgrimage route in exchange for cash or in-kind payments. These agreements often granted the tribes permission to conduct trade in cities like Mecca and Jeddah. Illegitimate methods included road blockades, extortion of taxes from caravans, and outright raids.¹⁷

Attacks on caravans by Bedouin tribes were often driven by environmental hardships and the nomadic way of life. These tribes sometimes raided each other and, at times, targeted pilgrimage caravans. Return journeys were particularly vulnerable, as pilgrims were likely to carry valuable goods acquired from distant regions such as India and Yemen. Luxury items purchased in Mecca offered tempting loot to desert raiders.¹⁸ In Ottoman sources, such raiding tribes were labeled as *eşkiyâ-yı Urban* (Bedouin brigands), a term that became synonymous with security issues in Arab provinces.¹⁹

To counter this persistent threat, the Ottomans adopted various military and administrative measures. Armed units accompanied the caravans from Damascus and Cairo, while an auxiliary force called *cerde* was dispatched to meet the returning caravans. In addition, small fortresses were constructed along key points such as al-Karak (Qatrana), Unayzah, Ma'an, Tabuk, al-'Ula, and Hadiyya.²⁰ Prior to the 18th century, the Bedouin had limited access to firearms on horseback, which made these forts relatively secure.²¹ The fortresses also served as storage depots for arms and valuables. Nearby cisterns and reservoirs were built to meet the caravan's water needs.²²

The most effective Ottoman strategy for securing the pilgrimage route was establishing formal agreements with Bedouin tribes. These agreements designated specific tribal zones of responsibility along the route, with the tribes receiving payments known as *Urban sursesi* in return for services such as guarding the caravan, providing water and food, and maintaining the

¹⁴ Steih, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Şam Hac Kafilesinin Güvenliğini Sağlamaya Yönelik İcraatlarını Gözden Geçirmesi", 318.

¹⁵ Mustafa Güler, "XVIII. Yüzyıl Suriye Hac Yolunda Urban Kaynaklı Güvenlik Problemleri ve Çözüm Önerileri", *Suriye: Tarih, Siyaset, Dış Politika* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2018), 17.

¹⁶ For example, in the 17th century, Arab tribes were trading sheep, lambs, barley and hay within the range of Katrana Castle; see. Şerife Eroğlu Memiş, "XVII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Hac Menzilleri: Rûznâmçeci İbrahim Efendi Kethüdâsı Hacı Ali Bey'in Tuhfetü'l-Huccâc Risâlesi Örneği", *Akademik Bakış* 13/26 (2020), 279.

¹⁷ Attallah Alrawashdeh, *XVII. Yüzyılda Mekke Şerifleri ve Osmanlı Devleti* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Thesis, 2024), 153-154.

¹⁸ Yırıkoğulları, *Osmanlı'da Hac Organizasyonu*, 99; Irwin, "Mekke'ye Yolculuğun Tarihi II", 169.

¹⁹ Selda Güner, "16. ve 18. Yüzyıllar Arasında Osmanlı Arabistan'ında Merkez-kaç İlişkileri: Eşkiyâ-yı Urban ve Devlet", *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 52/3 (2019), 69.

²⁰ Francis Edward Peters, *The Hajj* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 154.

²¹ Peterson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, 32.

²² Mustafa Güler, "XVIII. Asırda Hac Yolunun Güvenliği Kapsamında Ürdün'deki Menziller ve Kaleler", *Yeni Türkiye* 22/85 (2016), 705.

wells.²³ Not all tribes received such payments, nor were the payments uniform; stronger and more aggressive tribes received more generous compensation.²⁴ In return for the Urban surre, the Bedouins were obliged not only to refrain from attacking the caravan but also to provide security, guide the caravans,²⁵ supply foodstuffs (especially wheat) at designated stations,²⁶ procure camels, and ensure the maintenance and security of the water wells.²⁷ In times of need, they also offered military assistance to the Ottoman authorities.²⁸ However, when payments were delayed or deemed insufficient, some tribes resorted to violence to enforce their demands. A significant number of 17th- and 18th-century caravan raids stemmed from disputes over these payments.

The issue of Bedouin attacks on pilgrimage caravans has been addressed in earlier scholarly works. Among the earliest is the chapter “Caravan Security” in Suraiya Faroqhi’s *Pilgrims and Sultans*, which partially discusses the subject and laid the groundwork for future studies.²⁹ However, Faroqhi’s analysis is limited to the period between 1517 and 1638 and does not cover the major attacks of 1700 and 1701.

Among the more recent works using Arabic sources, the contributions of Ibrahim Al-Shra’ah and Abdalqader Steih stand out. While Al-Shra’ah briefly mentions the attacks of 1700 and 1701, his focus lies on developments in the 18th and 19th centuries.³⁰ Steih, on the other hand, analyzes Ottoman responses in the 18th century, examining the role of the amir al-hajj, the cerde commander, and structural changes to these offices. However, Steih’s study omits the 1700 attack by the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes and mistakenly dates the 1701 Dubays raid to 1700.³¹

Several Turkish scholars have also addressed the topic. Hasan Yavuz summarizes various Bedouin raids and Ottoman countermeasures but does not mention the 1700 attack. His examples are mostly drawn from the 18th and 19th centuries.³² Similarly, Faruk Doğan does not discuss the attacks of 1700 and 1701, focusing instead on the 18th-century institution of the cerde

²³ In general, surre refers to items such as money, clothing, fabric, and grain sent by sultans, government officials, and philanthropists to the people and the poor in Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem via pilgrimage caravans; see. Münir Atalar, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Surre-i Hümayun ve Surre Alayları* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 2. Urban surre, on the other hand, differs from the regular surre in that it refers to cash payments made to Bedouin tribes.

²⁴ Peters, *The Hajj*, 160.

²⁵ During his pilgrimage journey in 1671, Evliya Çelebi recounts that upon reaching the Aneze station, members of the Aneze tribes—specifically from the Vahidat and Beni Zühd branches—approached and demanded surre payments. In response, the Governor of Damascus, Hüseyin Pasha, reportedly declared: “According to the law of Sultan Süleyman Khan, surre has been allocated to you on the condition that you bring provisions and goods for the pilgrims, fill the cisterns with water and guard them, and act as guides by riding ahead of the caravan”; see. Evliya Çelebi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi 9. Kitap*, haz. Seyit Ali Kahraman (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2023), 2/730-731.

²⁶ According to the information given by Abdurrahman Hibri Efendi, in 1632, Urban kept grain in the ranges of Müzeyrib, Katrane, Maan, Zatulhicce and Ula; see. Sevim İlgürel, “Abdurrahman Hibri’nin Menâsik-i Mesâlik’i”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 6 (1975), 125-126.

²⁷ Zekeriya Kurşun, “Hac ve İktidar: Haremeyn’de Erken Dönem Osmanlı İmar Faaliyetleri”, *FSM İlimi Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 9 (2017), 289.

²⁸ Güler, “XVIII. Yüzyıl Suriye Hac Yolunda Urban Kaynaklı Güvenlik Problemleri”, 23.

²⁹ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Hacılar ve Sultanlar Osmanlı Döneminde Hac (1517-1638)* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2024), 87-114.

³⁰ See. Ibrahim Shra’ah, “The Bedouin Tribes Attitude Towards Alsham Caravan Pilgrimage During 17th and 18th Centuries”, *el-Ulumi’l-insaniyye ve’l-İctimaiyye* 29/2 (2002).

³¹ Steih, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin Şam Hac Kafilesinin Güvenliğini Sağlamaya Yönelik İcraatlarını Gözden Geçirmesi”, 316-332.

³² Hasan Yavuz, “Osmanlı Devleti Zamanında Hac Yollarında Urban Saldırıları ve Alınan Önlemler”, *Bitlis İslamiyat Dergisi* 5/1 (2023), 40-53.

commander.³³ Melek Çolak's work centers on early 20th-century hajj logistics,³⁴ and İsmail Yaşayanlar explores developments in pilgrimage security after 1856.³⁵

This study, however, examines the three hajj operations conducted between 1700 and 1702. The attacks in 1700 and especially in 1701—where approximately 30,000 pilgrims were killed—rank among the most violent and deadly incidents in Ottoman pilgrimage history. The fact that such major assaults occurred in two consecutive years made the 1702 pilgrimage mission a turning point for the Ottoman administration.

In the 1702 pilgrimage operation, the central Ottoman government adopted two primary objectives: first, to ensure that pilgrims could perform the hajj without incident and return safely to Damascus; second, to retaliate against the Bedouin tribes responsible for previous raids. Accordingly, the Ottoman state tightened its administrative, military, and financial preparations for the 1702 pilgrimage. Drawing on archival records, official correspondence, and contemporary chronicles, this study provides a detailed analysis of Bedouin attacks between 1700 and 1702, as well as the institutional responses developed by the Ottoman administration.

1. Bedouin Raids on the Hajj Caravan

Raids on the hajj caravans by Bedouin tribes had occurred even before the Ottoman conquest of the region. For example, in 1500, both the Meccan caravan and the city itself were plundered by a tribe referred to as Benybraem. Similarly, in 1508, Bedouin forces looted a caravan in Palestine. However, following the establishment of Ottoman authority—often referred to as the Pax-Ottomana—such attacks significantly declined.³⁶ The Cretan and Austrian wars, commencing in the latter half of the seventeenth century, alongside the Ottoman government's preoccupation with these prolonged conflicts, resulted in significant administrative and security vulnerabilities across the Empire's peripheral provinces, particularly in Syria and Iraq. The protracted conflict with the Holy League—lasting sixteen years and intensified following the failed Siege of Vienna in 1683—further diverted the Empire's attention and resources toward the European front. Nevertheless, from the second half of the 17th century onwards, a notable increase in Bedouin assaults on the Damascus caravan can be observed. In this context, the hajj caravans faced serious attacks in the years 1662–63, 1671, 1677, 1687, 1691, 1692, and 1693. While there had been earlier assaults by Bedouin elements, these were not severe enough to disrupt the performance of the pilgrimage.³⁷

A closer look at the raids that took place between 1662 and 1700 reveals that the primary motivation was the Bedouin tribes' demands for surre payments from the Ottoman state. In December 1662, tribes in the desert region launched an attack on the hajj caravan due to unpaid promises of surre, resulting in the deaths of approximately 1,000 Bedouins and 320 pilgrims. To

³³ Faruk Doğan, "18 ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Şam-Medine Hac Yolu ve Güvenliđi: Cerde Başbuđluđu", *Tarih Okulu Dergisi* 15 (2013), 127-157.

³⁴ Melek Çolak, "Osmanlı İmparatorluđunun Hac Yollarının Güvenliđi İin Aldıđı nlemler (XX. Yüzyıl Bařları)", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 9 (2003), 87-94

³⁵ İsmail Yaşayanlar, "Havâli-i Mübâreke-i Hicâziyye'yi Muhafaza Etmek: Şam-Medine Hac Yolunun Güvenliđini Sağlamada Âsâkir-i Avniyye Alayları", *Yavuz Sultan Selim Dönemi ve Bursa* (Bursa: Gaye Kitabevi), 325-349.

³⁶ Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, 49

³⁷ Münecimbaşı Ahmed Dede, *Camiü'd-Düvel, Sultan IV. Murad Dönemi Tercüme, Metin ve Deđerlendirme*, haz. Fahri Oluk (Kayseri: Erciyes University, Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Thesis, 2011), 106; Rakan Bdour, *XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluđunda Ürdün ve Şam Hac Yolu* (Ankara: Hacettepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 1993), 5.

prevent further escalation, the hajj commander, Bodur Süleyman Pasha, paid a portion of his personal wealth to the attackers.³⁸

Similarly, in December 1687, on the return route of the pilgrims, approximately 8,000 Bedouin attackers ambushed the caravan near Birket al-Mu‘azzama. Intense fighting ensued over the course of two days. Initially demanding 45,000 kuruş (piastre), the attackers eventually settled for 8,000 kuruş after negotiations, allowing the caravan to return safely to Damascus.³⁹

One particularly well-documented raid took place in 1691 and is described in detail in the *Zeyl-i Fezleke*. It provides valuable insight into the tactics employed by the Urban tribes, the weapons they used, and their treatment of the pilgrims. According to the account, as the caravan passed through a narrow mountain pass known as Yeni Kuyular, the Bedouin forces blocked their path and seized roughly twenty loads of goods. While the caravan stalled, promising payment of the surre to buy time, several high-ranking Ottoman officials were given as hostages. The following day, a separate Urban tribe launched another attack. Although the pilgrims eventually managed to cross the pass, they were soon surrounded by Urban infantry and cavalry who attacked with spears, swords, rifles, and stones. They looted the caravans, wounded and killed those who resisted, stripped many pilgrims of their belongings, and kidnapped numerous women. The survivors buried their dead and tended to the wounded the next day, ultimately raising 20,000 kuruş (approximately 40 purses) to ransom the hostages.⁴⁰

According to the *Nusretnâme*, former Crimean Khan Hacı Selim Giray, who was present among the pilgrims, advised that 40 purses of silver be paid to the Bedouin, which enabled the caravan to safely return to Damascus. However, following this incident, the Urban tribes began demanding the same amount annually. While these payments were made in some years, in others they were denied, resulting in armed conflict.⁴¹

In conclusion, the main driving force behind the Bedouin assaults on the hajj caravan was the demand for surre payments. When these payments were made, safe passage was usually ensured. Conversely, the refusal or failure to pay typically triggered violent confrontations. However, fulfilling these demands also encouraged the tribes to demand consistent and increasingly large payments each year, forcing the Ottoman authorities to resort to military measures on multiple occasions. As noted above, the Ottoman Empire’s long-term preoccupation with wars in Europe and the failure of the appointed amir al-hajjs are among the political and governance reasons behind the increase in Bedouin attacks.

2. The Plundering of the Pilgrims by the Anazeh and Beni Sahr Tribes (6 July 1700)

The year 1700 (1111 AH) marked a turning point, as the Ottoman hajj caravan suffered an unprecedented and large-scale attack. For that year’s hajj expedition, Elçi Mehmed Pasha—governor of Gaza, Nablus, and Lajjun—was appointed as the amir al-hajj (commander of the pilgrimage caravan). Alongside his personal retinue, troops from the *zeamet* (fief with medium

³⁸ Nazire Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, Zeyl-i Fezleke* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Turkic Studies, PhD Thesis, 2012), 260-261.

³⁹ Silahdar, *Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 1109.

⁴⁰ Silahdar, *Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 1398-1400.

⁴¹ Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, haz. Mehmet Topal (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2018), 551, 552. In 1692 and 1693, there was armed conflict with Bedouin Arab tribes. Around 100 Urbans were killed in 1692. In 1693, the Governor of Damascus, İsmail Pasha, defeated Urbans at Birke-i Muazzama, thus allowing pilgrims to reach Damascus safely; see. Ramazan Aktemur, *Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinâmesi (H.1058-1106 / M.1648-1694) (Metin ve Değerlendirme)* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master’s Thesis, 2019) 211-212.

revenue) and timar (land grant or fief) holders of Gaza, Nablus, and Lajjun accompanied him.⁴² The commander of the *cerde* unit escorting the caravan was the governor of Damascus, Circassian Hasan Pasha.⁴³ Hasan Pasha, together with his *kapı halkı* (household troops) and *yerli kulu* (local janissaries) soldiers of Damascus,⁴⁴ was stationed in Muzayrib to ensure the safety of the pilgrims.⁴⁵

The *züema* (plural of *zaim*; holders of *zeamets*) and *erbab-ı timar* (holders of timar lands) of the Damascus province, along with the governors of Ajlūn and Jerusalem, were also assigned to escort and receive the pilgrims as far as Birket al-Mu‘azzama.⁴⁶ The command of all these regional military forces was left to the discretion of the governor of Damascus, Hasan Pasha. To address the risk of an insufficient escort, 300-man reserve units were dispatched from the *eyalets* of Tripoli and Sidon-Beirut, under the command of Arslan Pasha and Kaplan Mehmed Pasha, respectively.⁴⁷ Furthermore, tribal elements under the leadership of Kuleyb, the appointed Urban shaykh of Damascus, were also integrated into the *cerde* forces.⁴⁸

The exact number of troops accompanying the 1700 hajj caravan is not explicitly stated in the archival records. However, according to established practice, the amir al-hajj from Damascus typically commanded a force of around 1,500 men, composed of *kapı halkı* (household troops), *yerli kulları* (provincial Janissaries), and *timariot* cavalry. Among them, the *yerli kulları*—comprising about 400 janissaries—traditionally escorted the caravan both to and from Mecca.⁴⁹ In addition, *cerde* units and Urban tribal shaykhs were temporarily deployed to ensure security, though their role was usually limited to escorting the caravan until its arrival near Medina. These *cerde* contingents were generally drawn from the districts of Jerusalem, Safed, Nablus, Ajlūn, and Lajjun and numbered approximately 1,500 soldiers.⁵⁰ The total strength of troops under Urban shaykhs is unknown.

⁴² Ottoman Archives (BOA); *Mühimme Registers* (A.DVNS.MHM.d) 111/688. For the *Mühimme Register* No. 111, see. Recep Temel, *111 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin 338.-507. Sayfalarının Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi* (Artvin: Artvin Coruh University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2019); Burcu Duzcan, *111 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin 338.-507. Sayfalarının Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi* (Artvin: Artvin Coruh University Social Sciences Institute Master's Thesis, 2019). Both theses contain numerous reading errors. Therefore, the original copy of the *Mühimme* register was used.

⁴³ Ottoman Archives (BOA); *Bâb-ı Asafî Divan-ı Hümayun Kalemî* (A.DVN) 260/82.

⁴⁴ “Yerli kulu” refers to soldiers recruited locally to serve in large, strategically important fortresses. The Damascus Yerli kulu is a Janissary soldier serving in Damascus. For detailed information, see. Oğuzhan Samkıran, “17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Şam Yeniçerileri”, *XVIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi 1-5 Ekim 2018 / Ankara: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2002), 3/1303-1323, Abdülkadir Özcan, “Yerli Kulu”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2013), 43.

⁴⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1043. The Governor of Damascus, Hasan Pasha, was asked to send soldiers from Damascus to have the overflowing water tank, located within the Prophet's Esmesi, cleaned by collective effort, so that pilgrims would not have to worry about water. He was also advised to hold discussions and consultations with Amir al-Hajj Mehmed Pasha, the Surre Emini, Sakabaşı (chief of the water-bearers), and other prominent pilgrims, the “ayan-ı hüccac” (the notables of the pilgrims; see. BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/892; BOA. A.DVN. 264/46.

⁴⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/744, 891, 1103. BOA. A.DVN. 260/85. Birket al-Mu‘azzama was a large fortress in the southeast of Tabuk, with a reservoir in front of it for collecting rainwater. Arabs brought grain here and sold it; see. Latif Armağan, “XVIII. Yüzyılda Hac Yolu Güzergâhi ve Menziller (Menâzilü'l-Hacc), *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 20 (2000), 95; Coşkun, “Stations of the Pilgrimage Route From Istanbul to Mecca”, 318.

⁴⁷ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/894, 895, 1050.

⁴⁸ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1047. One of the measures adopted by the Ottoman Empire to ensure the safety of pilgrims traveling between Damascus and Mecca was the appointment of a *Shaykh al-Urban* of Damascus. Typically selected from among the leading shaykhs of the major Bedouin tribes residing south of Damascus, this figure served a dual purpose: not only was he expected to facilitate cooperation between the Bedouins and the caravan, but his leadership over a dominant tribe was also intended to prevent both his own tribe and its affiliated smaller clans from attacking the pilgrims. Another primary duty of the *Shaykh al-Urban* was to provide active military and logistical support to the *cerde* (the organized military escort of the caravan). A further advantage of holding this position was the privileged role it conferred in the lucrative business of renting out camels to the pilgrims; see. Güler, “XVIII. Yüzyıl Suriye Hac Yolunda Urban Kaynaklı Güvenlik Problemleri”, 32.

⁴⁹ Yırıkdoğan, *Osmanlı'da Hac Organizasyonu*, 160-161.

⁵⁰ Mehmet İpşirli, “Cerde”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1993), 7/393.

In comparison with the following years, the military force allocated to the 1700 Damascus hajj caravan was relatively small. Notably, in 1700, only a provincial governor (sanjakkbeyi), Elçi Mehmed Pasha, was appointed to lead the caravan, whereas in 1701 and 1702, the position of amir al-hajj was given to the governors (beylerbeyi) of Damascus directly.

After completing the rituals at ‘Arafāt, the Damascus and Egyptian caravans began their return journey. On 19 Muḥarram 1112 (6 July 1700), however, the caravan was attacked by the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes. Caught unprepared and lacking sufficient troops to defend the caravan, the hajj commander Mehmed Pasha, in addition to all these setbacks, was also unable to satisfy the demands for surre payments. Consequently, the caravan was plundered and many pilgrims were massacred. Not only was Mehmed Pasha’s own contingent inadequately staffed, but the troops dispatched by the Sharif of Mecca were also insufficient in number.⁵¹ Although the exact number of casualties is unknown, the chronicler al-Sinjārī exaggerated the scale of the event by claiming that not a single pilgrim survived.⁵² In contrast, according to Silahdar’s account, some pilgrims survived and returned to Damascus, stripped of their clothing.⁵³ Regardless of the precise figures, the attack of 1700 was the most devastating assault on the hajj caravan up to that time.

At this juncture, it is useful to provide some background on the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes, who carried out the attack. By the early 18th century, Anazeh⁵⁴ had become the largest tribal confederation in Arabia, composed of three main branches, each numbering around 60,000 Bedouins.⁵⁵ Originally based in the Najd region, the Anazeh migrated closer to the hajj route in the second half of the 17th century due to prolonged drought.⁵⁶ In addition to providing camels, food, and water for the pilgrims, the Anazeh also offered security services and derived significant economic benefit from both the surre payments and the caravan trade.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, they occasionally attacked the caravans as well.⁵⁸ During his travels in 1694, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī reported that the Anazeh living between al-‘Ulā and Medina often harassed pilgrims and regularly posed difficulties for the Damascus amir al-hajj.⁵⁹ In response to their persistent provocations, the Sharif of Mecca, Sa‘d, launched a military campaign against the tribe, killing or capturing many of its members and securing oaths from the tribal shaykhs to cease hostilities—albeit only temporarily.⁶⁰

⁵¹ Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Pasha, *Zübde-i Vekayiât, Tahlil ve Metin (1066-1116/1656-1704)*, haz. Abdülkadir Özcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), 699-700; Rashid Mehmed Efendi-Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi, *Târih-i Râsîd ve Zeyli*, haz. Abdülkadir Özcan and others (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2013), 592; Uşşâkizâde es-Seyyid İbrahim Hasib Efendi, *Uşşâkizâde Târihi*, haz. Raşit Gündoğdu (İstanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2005), 439-440.

⁵² Al-Sinjārī, cited in Alrawashdeh, *XVII. Yüzyılda Mekke Şerifleri ve Osmanlı Devleti*, 166.

⁵³ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 577.

⁵⁴ The Anazeh tribe’s original name is said to be ‘Amir’, but they are said to have adopted the name ‘Anazeh’ after their ancestor killed a man with a short spear called ‘anazeh’. Some argue that the name is related to ‘anz’, meaning goat; see. Touvia Ashkenazi, “Social and Historical Problems of the ‘Anazeh Tribes’”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8/1 (1965), 93.

⁵⁵ Güner, “16. ve 18. Yüzyıllar Arasında Osmanlı Arabistan’ında Merkez-kaç İlişkileri”, 74.

⁵⁶ Steih, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin Şam Hac Kafilesinin Güvenliğini Sağlamaya Yönelik İcraatlarını Gözden Geçirmesi”, 321; Abdülkerim Özyaydın, “Aneze”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1991), 3/195-196.

⁵⁷ Jane Hathaway-Karl Barbir, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 184.

⁵⁸ Güler, “XVIII. Yüzyıl Suriye Hac Yolunda Urban Kaynaklı Güvenlik Problemleri”, 30-31.

⁵⁹ Mustafa Keskin, *Abdülganî en-Nablusî’nin Seyahatnamesinde Medine* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master’s Thesis, 2019), 100.

⁶⁰ Alrawashdeh, *XVII. Yüzyılda Mekke Şerifleri ve Osmanlı Devleti*, 162-163.

The Beni Sahr tribe, a branch of the Banū Harb⁶¹ confederation, inhabited the region between al-‘Ulā and Balqa. Responsible for the security of the Ma‘dā’ in Şāliḥ area, they earned income by selling camels, horses, and food to pilgrims, in addition to receiving considerable Urban surre payments. In 1756, following another attack on the caravan, the tribe was punished by Çeteci Abdullah Pasha and forced to migrate toward Gaza.⁶²

3. The Role of Surre Payments and The Responsibility of the Sharif of Mecca

The financial assistance allocated to the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes was distributed directly by the Sharifs of Mecca and thus referred to in the literature as the *Sharif surre*. In 1672, a payment of 1,275.5 kuruş was made to Beni Sahr under the Urban surre allocation.⁶³ By 1679, the payment to Beni Sahr had increased to 6,000 kuruş, and the amount granted to Anazeh had similarly risen from 1,054 to 6,000 kuruş.⁶⁴ By 1681, the total surre allocated to these tribes was being delivered by the Damascus amir al-hajj to the Sharif of Mecca, who was then responsible for its distribution. In earlier years, the Sharif had fulfilled this duty in an orderly fashion.⁶⁵ After 1698, the total amount allocated to the two tribes was raised to 20,000 akçe (40 kese) and was to be covered from revenues of the Jeddah Customs allocated to the Sharif of Mecca.⁶⁶

By 1700, however, it was reported that Sharif Sa‘d had failed to pay the surre due to Anazeh and Beni Sahr and had even chained about 150 members of the two tribes, of whom 50 died while in captivity.⁶⁷ As a direct result of these actions, the two tribes launched the aforementioned attack on the hajj caravan, killing many pilgrims and plundering the convoy.

Following the attacks in 1700 and—soon after—in 1701, the Ottoman central government revised its policy and decided that, starting in 1702, the Sharif surre allocated from Jeddah Customs would be paid directly by the amir al-hajj, Arslan Pasha, instead of the Sharif.⁶⁸ This administrative reform aimed to restrict the authority of the Sharifate, prevent delays or mismanagement in disbursing the surre, and eliminate Urban attacks resulting from such neglect.

In the wake of the 1700 attack, both Sharif Sa‘d and Hajj Commander Elçi Mehmed Pasha were held responsible. Upon returning to Damascus, Mehmed Pasha was arrested due to his negligence and imprisoned in the Citadel of Damascus. His pasha title was revoked, and he was exiled to his estate in Amasya under house arrest.⁶⁹ For the 1701 pilgrimage, the Ottoman state appointed Governor Hasan Pasha (known as Hacıkırdıran) of Damascus as the new amir al-hajj.

As for Sharif Sa‘d bin Zayd, he bore direct responsibility for the safety of the pilgrims. His duties included meeting the caravan in Ma‘dā’ in Şāliḥ,⁷⁰ escorting them to Mecca, and returning them

⁶¹ The Banu Harb tribe lives primarily in the region between Mecca and Medina. It is estimated that some branches of the tribe have spread to Najd, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt; see. İbrahim Sarıçam, “Harb (Benî Harb)”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), 16/111-112.

⁶² Güler, “XVIII. Yüzyıl Suriye Hac Yolunda Urban Kaynaklı Güvenlik Problemleri”, 19, 27.

⁶³ Mustafa Karazeybek, “XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısından XVIII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısına Hac Yolu Masrafları, Hizmetleri ve Urban Surreleri”, *Yeni Türkiye* 98 (2017), 530, 533.

⁶⁴ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, haz. Merve Karaçay Türkal (İstanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2023), 329; Mustafa Güler, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Haremeyn Vakıfları (16. ve 17. Yüzyıllar)* (İstanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2011), 71.

⁶⁵ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, 504.

⁶⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d 112/387.

⁶⁷ Defterdar, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 699-700; Rashid, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 592; Uşşâkizâde, *Uşşâkizâde Târihi*, 439-440.

⁶⁸ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d 112/387.

⁶⁹ Defterdar, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 700. Mehmed Pasha was pardoned and appointed governor of Erzurum in 1703; see. Rashid, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 628.

⁷⁰ In previous years, the Sharif of Mecca welcomed pilgrims to the Ula area; see. Tahir Sevinç, *Osmanlı Devleti İdaresinde Surre-i Hümayun, Surre Akçesi, Kaynakları ve Haremeyn’e Ulaştırılması (XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıllar)* (İstanbul: İdeal Kültür Yayıncılık, 2020), 314.

safely by the same route after the pilgrimage.⁷¹ Maintaining order in the ports of Jeddah and elsewhere, protecting the people of the Haramayn and the pilgrims, ensuring fair distribution of the surre, and preventing Urban attacks were regularly emphasized in the imperial letters (nâme-i hümayun) addressed to the Sharifs of Mecca.⁷²

The Ottoman state organized the Urban tribes of Syria and the Hijaz within a hierarchical framework. Among the Syrian tribes, the most esteemed shaykh was appointed as the Urban Shaykh under the supervision of the governor of Damascus. Meanwhile, the Urban tribes operating in the Hijaz—including Anazeh and Beni Sahr—were directly subordinate to the Sharif of Mecca. The Sharif held the authority to discipline or punish these tribes when necessary. Thus, if a tribe under the Sharif's nominal control attacked the hajj caravan, the central government regarded the Sharif himself as responsible.

Notably, intelligence had already reached the Ottoman authorities suggesting that an attack on the pilgrims might occur before the caravan even departed from Mecca.⁷³ Nonetheless, Sharif Sa'd failed to take preventive action. This neglect alone was sufficient grounds for his dismissal. However, instead of deposing him immediately, the Ottoman government sought to use his local authority: they tasked Sa'd with leading a retaliatory campaign against the two tribes and avenging the attack.

In response to the incident, both an imperial decree and an official letter from Grand Vizier Amcazâde Hüseyin Pasha were sent to Sharif Sa'd.⁷⁴ These documents described the attack by Anazeh and Beni Sahr as unprecedented in scale and severity. It was emphasized that even though the attack had been anticipated prior to the caravan's departure from Mecca, Sharif Sa'd had taken no precautions, a dereliction considered gross negligence.

The Grand Vizier's letter further instructed that the tribes be punished through a coordinated campaign with the governor of Damascus, Hasan Pasha. The orders were severe: the destruction of the tribes' settlements, the eradication of their male population, and the cutting down of their date palm trees to inflict long-term economic damage. Additionally, the Sharif was ordered to mobilize the Urban fighters under his command and arm them against the attackers.

While archival evidence does not definitively confirm whether these punitive operations were carried out, the proposed economic sanction—cutting down date palms—reflects a strategic Ottoman approach aimed at asserting control not only through military means but also via economic pressure.

4. The Hacıkırdıran Hasan Pasha Incident: The Plunder of The Pilgrims in 1701

Following the plunder of the pilgrims in 1700, as noted above, Amir al-Hajj Mehmed Pasha was dismissed, and the governorship of Damascus was transferred to Silahtar Hasan Pasha, who was also appointed as the new amir al-hajj. Although Hasan Pasha had taken part in the 1700 pilgrimage campaign as the commander of the cerde troops and thus bore partial responsibility

⁷¹ Ottoman Archives (BOA), *Nâme-i Hümayun Registers* (A.DVNS.NMH.d) 5/520; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Mekke-i Mükەرreme Emirleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2013), 60.

⁷² Abdullah Çakmak, "Sultanın Mektubu: Osmanlı Hac Organizasyonunda Mekke Emirlerine Gönderilen Nâme-i Hümayûnlar", *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9/1 (2022), 75; Zekeriya Kurşun, "Osmanlı Devleti İdaresinde Hicaz (1517-1919)", *Yeni Türkiye* 6/31 (2000), 130.

⁷³ BOA. A.DVNS.NMH.d. 5/519-520.

⁷⁴ BOA. A.DVNS.NMH.d. 5/521-525; *Münşeat Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 9b-10b.

for the previous year's attack, his familiarity with the pilgrimage route and the dangers it entailed rendered him a suitable candidate for the following year's pilgrimage.⁷⁵

Hasan Pasha was given explicit instructions to confront the Urban tribal groups, particularly the Anazeh and Banu Sahr tribes, which had attacked the caravan in the previous year. In this regard, he was ordered to punish these tribes by setting their populations and dwellings ablaze, thereby exacting retribution for their offenses against the state. In this military campaign, Sharif Sa'd of Mecca was assigned to collaborate with Hasan Pasha.⁷⁶

Following Sharif Sa'd's proposal, the Ottoman administration decided not to rely solely on military measures but also to implement an economic embargo. Consequently, a policy of *qat' al-dabir*—which meant cutting off the supply lines and eliminating the sustenance of the tribes—was adopted against the Anazeh, Beni Sahr, Wahidat, Shararat, and Beni Atiyya tribes, predominantly residing in Damascus, Gaza, and Hawran regions. Edicts were sent to local authorities in Damascus, Gaza, Jerusalem, Hama, and Homs prohibiting the sale of grain and fruit to these tribes.⁷⁷ Similar orders were also conveyed to the Shaykh of the Damascus Urban tribes, Kuleyb, and to the governor of Egypt.⁷⁸

The embargo on grain and the destruction of date palm groves emerged as frequently used punitive measures by Ottoman administrators and Meccan Sharifs against rebellious Bedouin tribes. Indeed, following the plunder of pilgrims in July 1677, the governor of Damascus, Osman Pasha, had received orders to prevent the Urban bandits active between Balqa and Hauran from obtaining any agricultural produce or grazing their horses in the area.⁷⁹ Similarly, Sharif Barakat of Mecca was instructed to completely destroy the Jubayr palm grove, where these tribes were known to take refuge.⁸⁰

According to the sources, during his struggle against the Harb tribe between 1693 and 1695, Sharif Sa'd b. Zayd of Mecca ordered the burning of the houses and date palms belonging to villagers who supported the tribe.⁸¹ Around the same time, grain embargoes were also imposed on the Wahidat, Ma'arra, Banī 'Atiyya, and Banī Jawhar tribes operating in the Aqaba and Gaza regions and known for their attacks on pilgrims. In line with this, a letter was sent to the governor of Egypt, instructing that grain should not be delivered to these tribes, given that their primary food supplies were largely sourced from Egypt.⁸² Similarly, the governor of Damascus was ordered not to allow the harvests from Balqa and Hawran regions to be sold to these tribes and to prevent their livestock from grazing in the region's pastures.⁸³

The military expedition and the economic embargo implemented following the 1700 raid appear to have been effective. Notably, in 1701, the tribes responsible for the attack no longer included the Anazeh or Beni Sahr. In fact, in 1703, the Anazeh tribe was found supplying grain to the fort of Eşmeler in cooperation with the deputy governor of Gaza and even participated alongside

⁷⁵ Uşşâkizâde, *Uşşâkizâde Târîhi*, 232.

⁷⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1488.

⁷⁷ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1368.

⁷⁸ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1756.

⁷⁹ Silahdar, *Zeyl-i Fezkele*, 686-687.

⁸⁰ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, 141.

⁸¹ Faroqhi, *Hacılar ve Sultanlar*, 106; Silahdar, *Zeyl-i Fezkele*, 1572-1573.

⁸² *Münşeat Mecmuası*, 141.

⁸³ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, 143.

Ottoman forces in combat operations against the tribes of Baghdad, Dübeys, Zeydan, and Beni Duḥa, who had attacked the ceremonial military units.⁸⁴

The military precautions taken during the 1701 pilgrimage campaign were also considerably enhanced compared to previous years. That year, 400 troops from the yerli kulu corps of Damascus were assigned to escort the pilgrimage caravan, alongside the zü'amā and erbab-ı tīmār (provincial timar holders) of the province. Although the Mühimme register does not specify the numbers of other military contingents, it explicitly states that their primary duty was to combat the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes and ensure the security of the caravan both to and from the Hijaz. It was believed that soldiers from the Damascus province, due to their familiarity with trade routes, conditions of warfare, and the terrain, would be more effective than other military elements.⁸⁵

The ceremonial duties of sending off and receiving the pilgrims (teşyi' and istikbāl, also known as *cerde*) were assigned to Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Jerusalem, Arslan, the sanjakbey of Nablus, and Boz Receb Bey, the governor of the sanjaks of Jabal 'Ajlūn and Lajjun. Their responsibilities were not limited to welcoming the pilgrims and transporting provisions to the region; they were also tasked with protecting the caravan from potential attacks by Urban bandits along the route.⁸⁶ The Urban sheikhs of Damascus, who had previously been criticized for their failures in the *cerde* duty, were also reappointed this year. In a decree sent to Sheikh Kuleyb, it was ordered that the Damascus Urban sheikhs should accompany and guard the caravan all the way to the Kal'a-i Mu'azzama.⁸⁷

The most notable innovation in the 1701 pilgrimage organization was the appointment of a higher-ranking official—namely, the governor of Damascus himself—as the commander of the pilgrimage (Amir al-hajj). In addition to Hasan Pasha's leadership, the direct participation of provincial notables and yerli kulu troops in the pilgrimage mission reflected the seriousness with which the Ottoman administration approached the issue.

The necessary financial resources were also secured to enable Hasan Pasha to fulfill his duties. A total of 300 *kise* (purses), approximately 150,000 *kuruş*,⁸⁸ was allocated from the tax farms (*mukāta'āt*) of Tripoli, Safed, and Sidon–Beirut to fund the ammunition and provisions of the Damascus pilgrimage caravan.⁸⁹ Moreover, a royal decree was sent to the governor of Egypt to deliver essential food items—such as barley, beans, rice, hardtack, flour, and oil—to the ports of Jeddah and Yanbu by sea, to supply the pilgrims during their stay in the Hijaz.⁹⁰

The initial stages of the 1701 pilgrimage campaign reportedly proceeded without incident. The pilgrims successfully reached Mecca and 'Arafāt and completed their rituals. Under the

⁸⁴ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 708–710. On 10 June 1703, a force of approximately 20,000 *eşkiyâ-yı Urban*—comprising tribes such as the Baghdad, Dübeys, Zeydan, and Beni Duḥa—launched an attack on the *cerde* troops near a location called Mağara, in the vicinity of Ma'ān. The confrontation lasted for eight consecutive days, and on the ninth day, the arrival of the hajj caravan alongside the Governor of Damascus, Mehmed Pasha, turned the tide of battle. The Bedouin forces suffered a major defeat as a result; see. Ersin Kırca, *Sadrzamlardan Mektuplar 1703-1704 (Râmi Mehmed Paşa Münşeati)* (İstanbul: Kitapyurdu Doğrudan Yayıncılık, 2020), 64–65.

⁸⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1489, 1491, 1495.

⁸⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1434, 1632; 1628, 1700, 1702, 2049

⁸⁷ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1494

⁸⁸ The following year, 450 purses (225,000 *kuruş*) were allocated to Arslan Mehmed Pasha, the hajj emir.

⁸⁹ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1488, 1581. However, since the revenues from this *mukataa* had not yet been collected—due to the fact that they were to be gathered in March—it was requested that 50,000 *kuruş* be taken from the Egyptian treasury being transported to Istanbul via Damascus and delivered to the Governor of Damascus, Hasan Pasha; see. BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1653.

⁹⁰ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1471.

command of Hasan Pasha, the Damascus pilgrimage caravan departed from Mecca on 2 Muḥarram 1113 AH (9 June 1701) and arrived in Medina on 12 Muḥarram (19 June). However, during the return journey, personal tensions emerged between Hasan Pasha and Sharif Sa‘d b. Zayd of Mecca. According to Uşşâkizâde, after arriving in Medina, Hasan Pasha waited for news from Sharif Sa‘d, which caused the caravan to remain there for an additional seven days. In his reply, Sharif Sa‘d warned that this delay could lead to a famine in Medina and that he could not provide any assistance, as he had been tasked with a military expedition to Khaybar.⁹¹

Following these developments, the pilgrimage caravan under Hasan Pasha's command departed Medina on 23 Muḥarram 1113 AH (30 June 1701). When it reached the vicinity of Bi'r-i Ghanam on 29 Muḥarram (6 July), the Dübeyts and Zeydan tribes demanded the promised surre payments. Hasan Pasha responded that the funds were still en route and would be distributed upon arrival. However, this explanation failed to satisfy the tribes. Upon reaching the area near the Ula fortress, the tribes launched a coordinated attack on the pilgrimage caravan. Many pilgrims were killed, their food supplies and possessions were plundered, and the survivors returned to Damascus in extreme hardship—many of them reportedly naked and destitute.⁹²

This catastrophic assault is narrated in a dramatic tone in the *Nusretnâme* as follows:

When the caravan arrived at the Ula station, it was met by a rebellious Urban force of 50,000 men,⁹³ and violent clashes ensued for ten days. During the fighting, some pilgrims were martyred, others taken captive, and many perished from hunger. Only 150 people, deprived of all belongings and naked, managed to reach Damascus. The Amir al-hajj, Vizier Circassian Hasan Pasha, was a vain and arrogant man who refused to heed any counsel or advice. When the Urban tribal leaders demanded their surre, he drew his sword and scolded them. This behavior led to the unification of the Urban tribes and the death of nearly 30,000 pilgrims. Circassian Hasan Pasha escaped by disguising himself as a Tatar messenger and returned to Damascus, after which he was henceforth known as Hacıkırdıran (Pilgrim-Destroyer). That year, the caravan included many women and children, and the pilgrims carried with them considerable wealth.⁹⁴

The information that 30,000 pilgrims were killed is only mentioned in *Nusretnâme*.⁹⁵ Although the figure of 30,000 dead pilgrims may initially appear exaggerated, it is known that this number was directly reported to the reigning sultan. In the Ottoman Empire, every year, usually on the twelfth night of the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal, a Mawlid celebration was held in one of the major mosques, attended by the sultan and high-ranking officials. During these Mawlid celebrations, the "harbinger of the hajj" would inform the sultan about the progress of the hajj and the return of the hajj caravan. In 1701, during a Mawlid ceremony held in Edirne's Selimiye Mosque, Hasan Agha, the harbinger of the hajj, informed the sultan that the hajj convoy had been plundered and 30,000 pilgrims had died. Silahdar himself states that he heard the account directly from the hajj messenger Hasan Agha in the presence of the sultan. Furthermore, records from the period suggest that the number of pilgrims performing the wuqūf ritual at 'Arafāt

⁹¹ Uşşâkizâde, *Uşşâkizâde Târihi*, 210–211.

⁹² Uşşâkizâde, *Uşşâkizâde Târihi*, 232.

⁹³ According to Al-Shra'ah, this information is exaggerated. Because the Dubays tribe had 4,000 rifles; see. Al-Shra'ah, "The Bedouin Tribes Attitude Towards Alsham Caravan Pilgrimage", 329.

⁹⁴ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 634–635.

⁹⁵ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 635.

reached approximately 70,000.⁹⁶ Within this context, it is plausible that the Damascus caravan could have comprised around 30,000 individuals.⁹⁷

Silahdar's emphasis on the large number of women and children is also noteworthy. In fact, in the following year, there were discussions of transferring women, children, and the elderly to the Egyptian caravan instead—an idea that clearly stemmed from the trauma of the 1701 disaster.

Based on both narrative sources and archival *mühimme* registers, the principal reason behind the attack appears to have been Hasan Pasha's stubborn refusal to deliver the surre payments demanded by the Urban tribes. Contemporary Ottoman historians cite Hasan Pasha's inadequate precautions, negligence, and laxity as the leading causes of this major calamity.⁹⁸

Drawing on the details given by Uşşâkizâde, another significant reason behind the tragedy was the lack of cooperation and communication between Amir al-hajj Hasan Pasha and Sharif Sa'd b. Zayd. Coordination between the hajj commander and the Sharif of Mecca was vital to ensuring the security of the pilgrimage. In fact, this had been demonstrated in earlier years. In 1680, Grand Vizier Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha had directly consulted the Governor of Damascus and Sharif Barakat of Mecca, and he had written a stern letter to Amir al-hajj Hasan Pasha, warning him "not to travel with a small force, to maintain good relations with the Sharif of Mecca, and to consult him for the safety of the pilgrims." The Grand Vizier had also clearly stated that any opposition or conflict between the two must not jeopardize the welfare of the pilgrims.⁹⁹

One of the key reasons why the 1701 assault had such devastating consequences was the unwillingness of the 400 Damascus *yerli kulu* (provincial janissaries) troops, who were responsible for the caravan's safety, to engage in battle with the Bedouin attackers.¹⁰⁰ Other military units also lacked sufficient equipment and motivation to fight. These *yerli kulu* troops, deployed on a rotating basis each year, happened to include, in 1701, soldiers who were neither financially nor physically capable, and who had weak combat abilities. Consequently, they failed to put up an effective defense during the Urban raid. Additionally, the *zeamet and timar* troops and other military units tasked with securing the hajj route departed without sufficient weaponry, ammunition, or logistical support. During the attack, they exhibited indiscipline and lethargy, ultimately failing to protect the pilgrims. The provincial administrators, who neglected to enforce military discipline and penalties within these units, were also held accountable.¹⁰¹

In the orders issued by the central administration following the attack, no explicit reference was made to the tragic events. Instead, the *sanjakbeys* (district governor) in charge of cerde were instructed to combat the Urban bandits, and the Governor of Damascus, Hasan Pasha, was ordered to delegate his responsibilities to a *mütesellim* (acting governor) and travel to Istanbul

⁹⁶ "Each year, 70,000 pilgrims perform the rites of hajj at Arafat and in Mecca"; see. Üsküdârî Abdullah Efendi, *Vâkı'ât-ı Rûz-merre*, haz. Muzaffer Doğan (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Yayınları, 2017), 4/253.

⁹⁷ Pearson states that the Damascus hajj caravan in the 17th and 18th centuries may have consisted of approximately 30,000-40,000 people; see. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, 46, 52.

⁹⁸ Uşşâkizâde, *Uşşâkizâde Târihi*, 210-211; Rashid, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 601; BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/213, 214.

⁹⁹ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, 134, 419.

¹⁰⁰ The reluctance of the Damascus yerli kulu troops to fight the enemy caused the other military groups in the convoy to lose their motivation to fight.

¹⁰¹ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/259.

to serve at the imperial court alongside the *kubbe viziers* (vizier of the dome).¹⁰² Subsequently, Arslan Pasha, then Governor of Tripoli, was also appointed to the Governorship of Damascus.¹⁰³

In parallel with the summons of Hasan Pasha to Istanbul for his failings during the *hajj* mission, an order was issued for his arrest and detention at *the kapı arası* (the court gate).¹⁰⁴ Pasha was first brought to Istanbul and then taken to Edirne to present his case directly to the Grand Vizier. After being held under arrest for a month, he was spared execution through the intercession of influential advocates and was instead exiled to the island of Chios.¹⁰⁵ Hasan Pasha's chamberlian, İkikapılı İbrahim Aga, was executed on charges of secretly communicating with the Urban tribes.¹⁰⁶

Although Sharif Sa'd of Mecca was also accused of turning a blind eye to the actions of the Urban bandits, the Ottoman central administration, following its political strategy, chose not to dismiss him immediately. Instead, he was reaffirmed in his position and honored with a *nâme-i hümayun* (letter of Sultan), a sword, and a robe of honor.¹⁰⁷ In a letter from Grand Vizier Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha to Sharif Sa'd, it was stated that Hasan Pasha was considered solely responsible for the disaster, a conclusion reached based on reports from *hajj* messenger Hasan and the governor of Jeddah, Süleyman Pasha. The sultan was likewise persuaded of this view.¹⁰⁸

In the reports sent by Sharif Sa'd to the imperial center, he attributed the attack to the instability and incompetence of the military officers accompanying the Damascus *hajj* caravan. He proposed that Süleyman Pasha, governor of Jeddah, be appointed as the next Amir al-hajj. However, the central government did not approve this recommendation. Instead, Arslan Mehmed Pasha, governor of Tripoli and known for his familiarity with *hajj* and Urban matters, was appointed to the position. Nonetheless, Süleyman Pasha's authority was expanded: in addition to his governorship of Jeddah, he was also appointed governor of the Habesh province and Shaykh al-Ḥaram of Mecca.¹⁰⁹

In conclusion, while the Ottoman administration did not dismiss Sharif Sa'd directly, it sought to limit his authority indirectly—first, by rejecting his recommendation for *hajj* command, and second, by empowering an alternative loyal official with broader authority in Mecca.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, shortly after the accession of Sultan Ahmed III, Sharif Sa'd was dismissed and replaced by his son, Sa'id.¹¹¹

¹⁰² BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2158–2162, 2218–2219, 2309.

¹⁰³ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2310; BOA. A.DVN. 276/5.

¹⁰⁴ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2311, 2312; *Münşeât Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 84a.

¹⁰⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/213, 214.

¹⁰⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/110, Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 639.

¹⁰⁷ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 639.

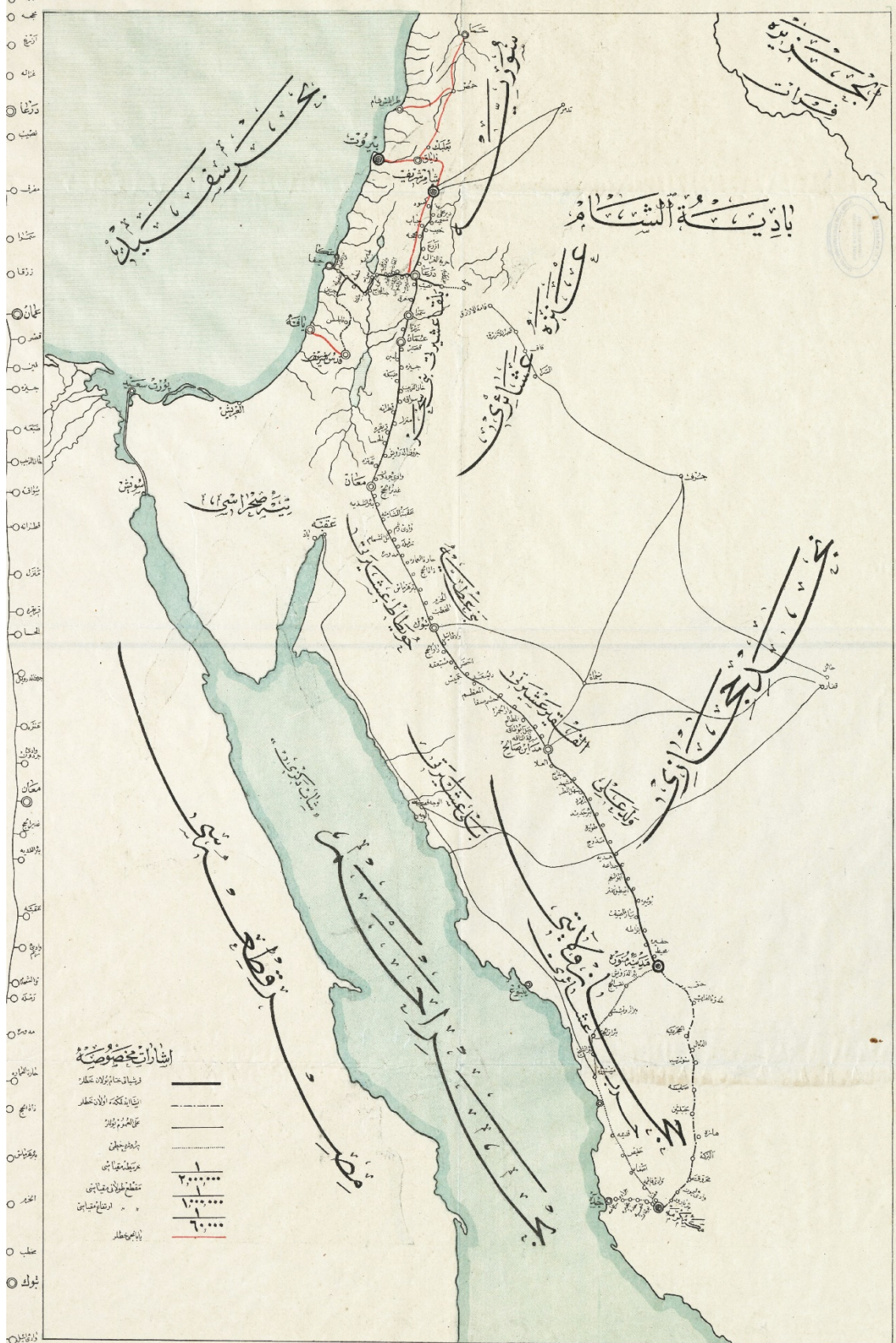
¹⁰⁸ *Münşeât Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 3a–3b.

¹⁰⁹ *Münşeât Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 3b–4a.

¹¹⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Mekke-i Mükerrerme Emirleri*, 26–27; Mustafa Sabri Küçükbaşçı, "Mekke: Mekke Emirliği", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2003) 28/573.

¹¹¹ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 686.

Picture 1. Map of the Hajj Route between Damascus and Mecca. (BOA. HRT.h 1565)



5. The 1702 Hajj Organization and the Measures Taken by the Ottoman Administration

The Bedouin attacks on the Damascus hajj caravan in 1700 and 1701 necessitated significant changes in the Ottoman central administration's security policies regarding the organization of the pilgrimage. Beginning in 1702, more rigorous and systematic measures were adopted in terms of military deployment, logistical support, and administrative appointments. Within this context, the assignment of Arslan Mehmed Pasha, the Governor of Tripoli who was well-versed in the region's socio-political structure, to both the governorship of Damascus and the position of amir al-hajj reflects an intention to ensure centralized coordination of the implemented precautions. The Ottoman Empire continued to implement the practice of appointing a more powerful amir al-hajj, experienced in organizing the hajj and able to exert authority over Bedouin tribes. This was given particular importance in the years following attacks on hajj caravans.¹¹²

According to Ottoman administrative customs, the principal qualifications for appointment as amir al-hajj included sufficient political influence to establish regional control, diplomatic skill to maintain communication with tribal leaders, financial capability, and the economic means to cover extraordinary expenses. Particularly from the last quarter of the 17th century onward, in response to the increasing threat posed by the Urban tribes, additional criteria such as holding the rank of vizier, maintaining harmonious relations with the Sharif of Mecca, and possessing familiarity with the hajj route gained further importance.¹¹³

In this regard, the reappointment of *Hacıkırdıran* (Pilgrim-Destroyer) Hasan Pasha as amir al-hajj in 1701 despite the attack that occurred in the previous year illustrates the value placed on experience in the administrative mindset of the period. However, following the severe assault in 1701, he was swiftly dismissed and replaced by Arslan Mehmed Pasha, then Governor of Tripoli. Arslan Pasha's extensive regional experience and substantial personal wealth were both decisive factors in his appointment. To facilitate his financial capacity, the governorship of Tripoli was retained under his control,¹¹⁴ allowing local revenues to be used to partially cover the pilgrimage expenses.¹¹⁵

Kaplan Mehmed Pasha -governor of Sayda-Beirut, Mehmed Pasha—the mutasarrıf of Jerusalem and Gaza, Gavvasoğlu Hasan Bey—the mutasarrıf of Nablus, and Boz Receb Bey—the governor of Lejjun and Jabal Ajlun, were assigned to join the cerde escort.¹¹⁶ However, due to a rebellion in Nablus, its mutasarrıf was ordered to remain in his province to suppress the uprising rather than join the expedition.¹¹⁷

5.1. Administrative Measures

In the 1702 hajj organization, notable expansions were made in both military and logistical capacities. Traditionally, the Damascus hajj caravan was accompanied by Arslan Pasha's household guards, 400 local janissaries, and the provincial zü'amā (landholding elites) and timariot cavalry. However, in 1702, the central administration ordered the inclusion of an additional 1,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry troops. These reinforcements were to be recruited

¹¹² For example, after a major attack on a pilgrimage caravan in 1757, the Ottoman government decided to appoint a pilgrimage emir who could secure both Damascus and the pilgrimage route, and most importantly, whose name the Bedouins would fear. Considered to possess these qualities, Çeteci Abdullah Pasha was appointed as the pilgrimage emir; see. Mustafa Güler-Fatih Özasan, "1757 Yılında Şam Hac Kafilesi ve Hicaz: Tedbirler ve Olaylar", *İçtimaiyat Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7/2 (2023), 386.

¹¹³ Yırınkoğulları, *Osmanlı'da Hac Organizasyonu*, 137.

¹¹⁴ Adil Erken, *XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Şam Valilerinin Emirü'l-Hacc Olarak Hizmetleri* (Afyon: Afyon Kocatepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Thesis, 2017), 21.

¹¹⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2330; Defterdar, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 718.

¹¹⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/348-352.

¹¹⁷ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/547, 715.

from among the prominent notables and *serdengeçti* (irregular troops) of the Tripoli, Hama, Homs, and Damascus regions.¹¹⁸

Moreover, to meet transport needs, the purchase of 1,000 privately owned camels was authorized. Anticipating a shortfall, additional orders were issued for the rental of another 1,000 camels from the provinces of Aleppo, Raqqa, and Egypt.¹¹⁹ Arslan Pasha dispatched agents to these provinces for camel procurement, and a judicial order sent to the judge of Damascus instructed that suitable camels be rented from among the Turkmen, Urban tribes, and local peasants in exchange for appropriate compensation.¹²⁰

Assuming that a portion of pilgrims might prefer the Egyptian route following the 1701 attacks, security measures on this route were also tightened. The regular detachment previously dispatched from Egypt for the protection of Mecca and the pilgrims—consisting of 500 soldiers led by seven serdars (commanders)—was expanded to 700 troops in 1702. Participation in the campaign was made compulsory for these soldiers, with the delegation of duties strictly prohibited. The Governor of Jeddah, Süleyman Pasha, was appointed to inspect these forces personally.¹²¹

Due to the indifference displayed by local troops and other military units during the clashes of 1701, several measures were introduced to restore military discipline in 1702. Consequently, the land grants (*dirliks*) of local troops who had refused to engage in combat were reassigned, and the fees they received for their camels were reclaimed. Furthermore, it was emphasized that this year's participating troops should be selected from among strong and trustworthy individuals—even if their turn for duty had not yet arrived. Similarly, the provincial cavalry (*zeamet* and *timar* holders) and the private retainers of *sanjakbeys* were to be composed of well-equipped and elite personnel. Troops who failed to comply with orders were explicitly warned that their land grants would be revoked.¹²²

Primary sources indicate that the *cerde* units assigned for this year had two main tasks: first, to engage in armed combat with Urban bandits operating in the regions of Damascus, Nablus, and Gaza;¹²³ second, to ensure the transport of grain to the station at Ula, where the caravan would be received. The *mutasarrifs* of Gaza and Jerusalem, Mehmed Pasha, and of Lejjun and Jabal Ajlun, Boz Receb Bey, were tasked with securing grain supplies from Muzayrib¹²⁴ and delivering them to Ula before the Damascus hajj caravan's arrival. They were also instructed to be physically present to oversee the safety of the supplies.¹²⁵

Even before the hajj caravan had set out, armed confrontations erupted between the *cerde* units and Urban tribes. In one military operation against a group of approximately 1,000 Urban tribesmen previously known for plundering the hajj caravans, 25 individuals—including a tribal leader named Hajjāj—were killed, and the remainder were routed and driven from the region.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/587.

¹¹⁹ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/168, 169, 203, 387.

¹²⁰ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/217.

¹²¹ BOA, A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112: 72, 83, 158, 262.

¹²² BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/259, 386.

¹²³ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/348-352.

¹²⁴ Muzayrib had a castle and water, the pilgrim convoy would stay here for a few days and traditionally leave on the 1st of Dhu al-Qi'dah; see. Menderes Coşkun, "Stations of The Pilgrimage Route From Istanbul to Mecca Via Damascus on The Basis of The Menazilü't-Tarik ila Beyti'llahi'l-Atik by Kadri (17th Century)", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 21 (2001), 316.

¹²⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/714, 716.

¹²⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/241. The term *cerde* appears for the first time in this imperial decree. (Early Rabi' al-Thani 1113 / 1-10 December 1701).

Around the same time, Kaplan Mehmed Pasha laid siege to the fortress of Bayt al-Jibrīl, a stronghold used by the Urban elements. However, the siege lasted longer than anticipated.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, the central administration commended Kaplan Mehmed Pasha's efforts in combating banditry, awarding him 30 purses (equivalent to 15,000 kuruş), with a promise of an additional 34 to 40 purses to follow.¹²⁸

5.2. Financial Measures

In line with the increase in both military personnel and the number of transport camels in the 1702 hajj organization, the financial appropriation allocated to the Damascus caravan was also significantly augmented. A total of 100,000 kuruş (piastre) was allocated from the Egyptian treasury,¹²⁹ while an additional 125,000 kuruş was drawn from the revenues of the Tripoli and Sayda-Beirut provinces (Münşeat Mecmuası, 107b). Furthermore, the sultan personally granted an imperial donation of 33,000 kuruş, bringing the total budget to 258,000 kuruş. In comparison, the total budget for the previous year had been 150,000 kuruş,¹³⁰ indicating an increase of 108,000 kuruş.

As per annual tradition, 41,000 *erdeb* (dry bushel) of grain were purchased in Egypt at the market price and transported via the Red Sea through Suez to the ports of Yanbu and Jeddah.¹³¹ Additionally, the sum of 60,228 gold coins—earmarked for the inhabitants of the Holy Cities (Mecca and Medina) and Jerusalem—was ordered to be delivered to Damascus before the caravan's departure and handed over to the *surre emini* (official in charge of distribution) by the Governor of Egypt.¹³²

One of the financial matters addressed in the 1702 hajj planning was the proposed increase of the Urban *surre*—the financial allowance granted to certain Bedouin tribes. Arslan Pasha, the appointed amir al-hajj, proposed raising the Urban *surre* to 104,000 kuruş, excluding the allowances designated for the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes. However, the central administration rejected this proposal, considering the extensive military and financial measures already taken. The administration feared that an increase might prompt similar demands from other Urban tribes and encourage further extortion. As a result, the proposal was denied; nevertheless, an additional 33,000 kuruş was allocated to Arslan Pasha by the sultan.

The 40 *kise* (purses) (20,000 kuruş) allocated annually to the Anazeh and Beni Sahr tribes, which were not included in Arslan Pasha's proposed total, had traditionally been paid from the customs revenues of Jeddah via the mediation of the Sharif of Mecca. In 1702, a policy shift assigned this payment directly to the amir al-hajj, thereby curtailing the authority of Sharif Sa'd.¹³³ The appointment of Süleyman Pasha, Governor of Jeddah, to the posts of Governor of

¹²⁷ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/478.

¹²⁸ *Münşeat Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 85b-86a.

¹²⁹ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/390, 391.

¹³⁰ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/1488.

¹³¹ (BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111: 2383). In the year 1701, a total of 41,000 *erdeb* of grain was dispatched in full. In 1702, due to a shortage of ships, the undelivered portion—amounting to 7,000 *erdeb*—was ordered to be transported via merchant vessels upon payment. BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/311.

¹³² BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2454. The *surre* donations sent on behalf of the sultan for the inhabitants of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem were originally dispatched from Istanbul along with the hajj caravan. However, during the Cretan Wars, the *surre* began to be financed and sent from the Egyptian treasury; see. *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1109-1116/1688-1704)*, haz. Abdülkadir Özcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), 186-187; Tufan Buzpınar, "Surre", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2009), 27/568.

¹³³ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/387.

Habesh and Shaykh al-Haram in Mecca was another manifestation of this administrative centralization policy.

Another dimension of the Ottoman state's financial strategy involved the imposition of an economic embargo on the Urban tribes. After it was discovered that the Urban elements who had looted the hajj caravans in 1701 were selling the stolen goods¹³⁴ in exchange for grain in the Damascus and Hauran regions, the central administration banned all commercial transactions with them.¹³⁵ Governors of Egypt and Aleppo, as well as the mutasarrifs of Jerusalem and Gaza and the Urban Sheikh Kuleyb, were issued firmans prohibiting the sale of grain to these tribes.¹³⁶ Through these measures, the Ottoman administration aimed to economically isolate and weaken the bandit tribes.

5.3. Logistical/Operational Measures

One of the additional strategies proposed by the Ottoman administration in the 1702 hajj organization was the separation of pilgrims based on their ability to contribute to caravan defense. Pilgrims who owned riding animals and could potentially participate in combat against bandits were to be included in the Damascus caravan, while others were to be redirected along the Egyptian route.¹³⁷ This plan was discussed in correspondence between Grand Vizier Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha and Arslan Pasha. However, Arslan Pasha deemed the proposal impractical and refrained from implementing it.¹³⁸

Another precaution taken against the Urban threat involved the inclusion of certain notable figures from the local elite and *ulema* (religious scholars) in Damascus, who maintained close ties with the Urban tribal leaders, in the hajj caravan. These individuals were expected to contribute to the caravan's safety through mediation and negotiation efforts. The expenses related to their participation were ordered to be covered by the Governor of Damascus.¹³⁹

As a result of these comprehensive measures, it appears that the 1702 Damascus hajj caravan completed its journey without any casualties or incidents. According to a letter sent by Arslan Pasha to the grand vizier, the caravan reached Ma'an on 5 Şafar 1114 (1 July 1702).¹⁴⁰ Later, on 13 Rabī' al-Awwal 1114 (7 August 1702), during the Mawlid celebration held in the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne, the return of the pilgrims to Damascus in safety was formally announced to the sultan by Hasan, the official bearer of hajj news.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, throughout the 18th century, Bedouin attacks on hajj caravans increased markedly.¹⁴² This trend culminated in 1757, when the Beni Sahr and Harb tribes launched a devastating assault on the caravan.¹⁴³ Therefore, while the measures taken in 1702 proved

¹³⁴ Following the 1701 looting, rumors spread that some Bedouin shepherds had acquired goods worth 30 to 40 purses. (BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2330).

¹³⁵ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2330.

¹³⁶ BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 111/2331-2334. Regarding the appointment of Sheikh Kuleyb of the Serdiyya tribe as the Urban Sheikh, see.: (BOA. A.DVN. 260/81; 260/83).

¹³⁷ "If necessary, in order not to be encumbered, send the weak, women, elderly, and children via the Egyptian route; and proceed on pilgrimage with those who can fight if needed—your well-trained household troops, the *alaybeyis*, *züema*, and *timariot* soldiers of the Damascus province, its local *kuls*, foot and cavalry soldiers of the *miri* army, water carriers, the *surre emini*, and the bearer of the *mahmil-i serif*." (BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d. 112/387).

¹³⁸ *Münşeât Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 84a-84b, 89b.

¹³⁹ *Münşeât Mecmuası*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, 3104, 108a.

¹⁴⁰ Ottoman Archives, (BOA. Bab-ı Asaî Mektubi Kalemî, A.MKT.) 5/60.

¹⁴¹ Silahdar, *Nusretnâme*, 681; Uşşâkîzâde, *Uşşâkîzâde Târîhi*, 236.

¹⁴² For a list of Bedouin attacks on hajj caravans in the 18th century, see.: Sena Öğülmüş, *18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Hac Yolunun Güvenliđi* (Eskişehir: Anadolu University, Institute of Graduate Education, PhD Thesis, 2024), 102-104.

¹⁴³ Andrew Petersen, "The Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan: Motivation and Ideology", *Bulletin D'études Orientales* 57 (2018), 43; Öğülmüş, *18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Hac Yolunun Güvenliđi*, 97. In 1757, the Banu Sahr tribe first defeated—and even annihilated—

successful in the short term, they ultimately failed to offer a lasting solution to the structural challenges facing the Ottoman pilgrimage administration.

Picture 2. Armored Horseman of the Ruwala (Ruala), a sub tribe of the Anazeh. In the Middle, Fahd, the Sheikh of the Tribe.



Source. Istanbul University Rare Books Library, <https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90567---0011.jpg>

Conclusion

This study has examined the security, diplomatic, and administrative intervention mechanisms developed by the Ottoman public administration in response to the Bedouin attacks targeting the Damascus hajj caravan between 1700 and 1702. Within this framework, it has analyzed how the Ottoman state managed the organization of the pilgrimage within the center-periphery dynamic and what measures were taken to address emerging crises.

Specifically, the article has highlighted the administrative dimensions of the comprehensive measures implemented in 1702, following two successive large-scale attacks in the preceding years. It thus explores the Ottoman administration's crisis management capacity not only during periods of stability but also under extraordinary circumstances.

Focusing primarily on the years 1700, 1701, and 1702, this study evaluates the events of this three-year period through primary sources such as archival documents, mühimme registers,

the *cerde* unit on its return from the pilgrimage, and then turned to attack the hajj caravan. In this assault, approximately 20,000 pilgrims were killed. The drought experienced in 1756 is also believed to have played a role in the outbreak of this attack; see. Irwin, "Mekke'ye Yolculuğun Tarihi II", 181.

chronicles, and *münşeat* collections. In this respect, the analysis is limited to the administrative practices and decision-making processes along the Damascus–Hejaz corridor. A comprehensive comparative analysis of all hajj caravans, including those from Mecca and Egypt, lies beyond the scope of this work.

Moreover, the study concentrates on the decisions and measures adopted by the Ottoman central government rather than the internal structures of the Urban tribes, their intertribal relations, and long-term sociopolitical transformations. Nevertheless, the impact of Bedouin demands on security policies along the pilgrimage route constitutes one of the study’s key focal points, as it sheds light on the vulnerabilities within the Ottoman provincial governance.

The Bedouin attacks targeting the Damascus hajj caravan in 1700 and 1701 brought a critical security issue to the fore. These attacks were largely driven by unmet demands from Bedouin tribes concerning *surre* payments. The heavy casualties suffered in 1701, in particular, exposed the insufficiency of the existing mechanisms for ensuring security along the pilgrimage route.

In response, the Ottoman administration implemented an extensive set of measures during the 1702 hajj campaign. These included appointing Arslan Mehmed Pasha as *amir al-hajj*, reinforcing the military escort, restructuring the caravan, transferring vulnerable groups such as women and children to the Egyptian route, applying economic sanctions to Bedouin tribes, and launching diplomatic efforts. As a result, the 1702 pilgrimage was successfully completed without incident, and the caravan returned safely.

However, these measures failed to address the structural roots of the problem and merely yielded short-term success. The resurgence of Bedouin attacks later in the 18th century underscores the limitations of the 1702 measures as a long-term solution. This outcome highlights the structural challenges the Ottoman administration faced in terms of provincial security, fiscal sustainability, and center–periphery relations.

The limited long-term effects of the 1702 reforms can be better understood in light of the empire’s fiscal constraints and the inherent tensions between the center and the periphery. Although the Ottoman government temporarily reasserted control over the Damascus–Hejaz route through increased military expenditure and emergency subsidies, these measures placed additional strain on an already overstretched provincial treasury. The *surre* system—intended as a stabilizing mechanism through regular payments to Bedouin tribes—proved fiscally unsustainable when local revenues were insufficient and central remittances became irregular. Moreover, the reliance on negotiated compliance with tribal leaders rather than durable institutional integration reflected a broader pattern of contingent governance that characterized Ottoman center–periphery relations. Consequently, while the 1702 interventions restored short-term order, they failed to resolve the underlying fiscal and administrative asymmetries that made the frontier zones persistently volatile.

This case study on the Ottoman hajj administration reveals that the responsibility of the central authority in maintaining public order relied heavily on a delicate balance with local power actors. In this respect, the organization of the pilgrimage in Ottoman administrative history should be understood not merely as a religious service, but also as a multidimensional state operation involving public security, fiscal management, and provincial control.

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