



حبر أبيض
WHITE INK



Dr. Ali Al-Bassam

“The attempt to eliminate the first Saudi state”

The Ottoman Empire was concerned with what was going on inside the Arabian Peninsula in terms of the rise and expansion of Saudi influence in its various regions, and the consequent emergence of the political and religious renaissance in the center of the Arabian Peninsula. The Ottoman interest in Saudi affairs has been since the mid-twelfth century AH / mid-eighteenth-century AD. It became closely following all those developments and moves that the Saudis were taking, through what was reaching Astana from the Ottoman provinces surrounding the Arabian Peninsula, and from within the Arabian Peninsula through officials, detectives and spoilers in the form of hundreds if not thousands of reports and messages. These reports carried a lot of news and intelligence information about the situation in the Saudi state. Most of that information was false, slanderous, and distorted. In our opinion, that information, in turn, with the passage of time formed a public opinion in the Sublime Porte against the emerging Saudi state, during which it distorted its clear reality in unifying the country after a great division, and working hard on its revival and building a unified political entity on religious foundations with pure sources away from whims and desires.

The Ottomans realized that the presence of a strong, unified political entity in the Arabian Peninsula would undermine their authority and their strategic and economic interests there, in addition to losing their religious standing in the Islamic world. In fact, these factors made the Ottoman Empire adopt only one option, which was the military option, in an attempt to eliminate this emerging Arab entity. The truth is whoever carefully investigates the contents of the Ottoman documents received and issued by the Sublime Porte will find in them an enormous amount of hatred, loathing, slander, insults and cursing of everything that is Saudi.

The first initiative to launch campaigns against the first Saudi state was through Baghdad Province, after Sultan Mahmoud I issued a royal firman to launch military campaigns against the Saudi state in (1201 AH / 1786 AD). Accordingly, the governor of Baghdad, Suleiman Pasha, was assigned to carry out this military mission. If we check the history of the military campaign, we will find that it was in a relatively early period in the beginning of the campaigns that were targeting the emerging first Saudi state. Suleiman Pasha, in turn, commissioned Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al Shabib, the head of AL-Muntafiq, to prepare and lead the military campaign against the Saudis.

The historian Ibn Bishr describes that campaign as being large in number and armament with its regular soldiers. Those invading forces headed to attack the capital of the Saudi state, Diriyah. He started with AL-Qassim and attacked "Al-Tanuma" with his large army, besieging them for days and pounding them with cannons. He did not succeed in entering that small town which showed great resistance and great steadfastness from its people in the face of the campaign. However, nothing but steadfastness helped, except that Thuwaini was able to deceive the people of the town with safety, but he did not fulfill his promise with them, so he took control of the town and plundered it and killed all its people except the homeless.

The sources indicate that the number of dead reached about one hundred and seventy men, and then the military campaign headed to the city of Buraidah. He fought its people and surrounded it with his soldiers, but he retreated after a dispute occurred in his homeland over the leadership of the tribe, as his cousin turned against him and he was forced to retreat with his army. The reader will be shown the enormity and strength of the first military campaign, which tried to spread terror in the Saudis and break their resolve, but things were not as the aggressor wanted. The military campaign failed miserably before the Saudi state, which in turn seized the opportunity to retaliate the aggression by attacking the outskirts of Ottoman Iraq and reciprocity. The military campaign failed miserably before the Saudi state, which in turn seized the opportunity to retaliate the aggression by similarly attacking the outskirts of Ottoman Iraq. This campaign only increased the Saudis' determination to adhere to their state and expand in the unification of the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, despite the intrigues and attacks.

Those military campaigns from the side of Ottoman Iraq continued, in implementation of strict orders from the Ottoman Sultan, between (1212 AH / 1797 AD) and (1213 AH / 1798 AD) to strike the Saudis again and eliminate them. The Ottoman Empire conducted two campaigns against the Saudis in Al-Ahsa. Thuwaini bin Abdullah was commissioned again to prepare a military campaign to confront the Saudis, attack Diriyah and take back Al-Ahsa. However, these factors of failure were going along with that campaign. There was a great discrepancy in the elements of the campaign, especially among the leaders of Bani Khalid. Thuwaini was close to some of them and ignored the others. Therefore, the result was that Thuwaini was betrayed and killed on the battlefield. This assassination was enough to disrupt the campaign and its ranks. In the end, the campaign failed and had to go back to where it came from without achieving its goals. Allah wanted to keep this evil away from the Saudi state at this point.

As for the other military campaign, it was led by Ali Al-Kikhia, "the deputy governor of Baghdad", which was supported by various weapons and equipment. The campaign included various regular military forces and the Kurdish and Arab tribal forces. The Iraqi historian "Yassin al-Omari" estimated that these forces amounted to about twenty thousand fighters. The British Resident in Baghdad "Harvard Johns" also watched the great preparations for the campaign that were camping outside the walls of Baghdad on the western shore of the Tigris River. After Ali Al-Kikhia completed his preparations, he left Baghdad with his large army, heading towards Basra. The campaign reached Basra, and there it was divided into two parts. The first part included the knights and clan forces, headed by the leader of the Iraqi campaign "Ali Al-Kikhia", and they headed towards Al-Ahsa by land. As for the other part, it includes infantry, artillery and heavy munitions teams, where the aforementioned commander rented some of the ships that sailed towards Uqair port on Al-Ahsa shore.

The military campaign, with its land and sea divisions, continued until it entered Al-Ahsa after much suffering and trouble. As soon as Al-Kikhia approached Al-Ahsa, the campaign attacked the Saudi forts and imposed a siege on them for a period of three months. However, the Saudi garrisons were able to vigorously confront the violent campaign attacks. This confrontation had a bad impact on the psyche of the soldiers of the campaign, as the Iraqi historian Al-Karkawli refers to this by saying: **“Government forces were camping in the desert, which had no vegetation. As a result, camels were emaciated and unable to carry weights. Nearly nine thousand camels perished, and ammunition and equipment dwindled. The soldiers were thinking about their fate and the doom that awaited them, and they went to their commanders urging them to hurry back because there was no point in staying there”**. The Iraqi campaign returned from Al-Ahsa after several months without achieving any victory or any significant goal, and its only result was a truce and reconciliation between the Ottoman governors of Baghdad and the Saudis.

The failure of the Ottoman military campaigns gave the Ottomans and others another perception of the first Saudi state as a great power in the region and that it could not be defeated easily. The faith that brought people together under its unified banner, ruling by the Sharia of Allah, and its impact on the state of security and stability experienced by the Arabian Peninsula society, was enough to show that it is not easy to defeat this state. The Saudi resistance in the face of military campaigns set an example to be followed against the invaders.