

## **The Role of Al-Sham's Soldiers in the Islamic Land and Sea Conquests**

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### **Abstract**

The study aims at casting light on the Umayyad military role in the expansion of the Islamic state. Soon after the completion of the command occupation of Umayyad caliphs in Damascus were emboldened to expand the Islamic empire territory to extend to the north and south of Asia, Egypt, Morocco, and Mesopotamia Andalus. This expansion was achieved by weakening the enemy represented by the Persians and beg entire which was culminated by the success of the Umayyad dynasty in its spreading the Islamic civilization and military power in its struggle with its enemies.

Then the Islamic state under Banu Umayyad was able to prevail justice, security, and peace, together with brotherhood and paternity spent between its righters and the people of the occupied lands.

Umayyad caliphs could build a quite strong and well-equipped naval fleet in a relatively short period. The building and establishment of this naval power helped them to defeat and destroy the historically well-reputed Roman navy in two battles which were: Zat Al-sawary and Cyprus a situation that assisted them to dominate all the Mediterranean Sea coast up to the Atlantic Ocean.

**Keywords:** soldier's administration, Sham administration, Mawali and administration.

state to fight at more than one battlefield as a result of the multitude of the opposition regions outside in addition the interior hidden opposition. The interior opposition appeared as a result of the competition among tribes with political and military importance such as Al-Qaisiyyad and Al-Yamaniyyah who struggled among each other to be in control of the state which was getting weaker and weaker. Because of this weakness, the Umayyad used to bring closer the Qaisiyyah sometimes and the Yamaniyyah other times in order to gain their loyalty, but the gained neither because such great tribes were looking for what served their own interests, not the state's.

When the outside opposition intensified especially in Hijaz and in Al-Shamis soldiers in particular, the Jordan soldiers had played a significant role in preserving the Umayyad authority led by Hassan Ibn Bahdal El-Kalbi who was able to kill the Damascus' soldiers' leader Al-

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#### **Introduction:**

The importance of Jordan Soldiers refers to its geographical site among Al-Sham's soldiers. It has a great military importance. Jordan soldiers worked hard and acted with loyalty to preserve the Umayyad state's sovereign and its unity where there was a political opposition in different regions of the state. This opposition was both political and ideological inside and outside the state against the Umayyad rule. It was clearly represented by Abdullah Ibn Al-Zubair in Makkah and Madinah, and the Abbasids in Iraq who were pretending that they had the right to rule the Islamic world. The Abbasids considered the Umayyad as usurpers of authority. The Persians patronized the Abbasids in their claim.

As a result of these different attitudes, the Umayyad state became in an embarrassing situation politically and militarily, so, it was obligatory for the

demand of Yazeed Ibn Abi-Sufian from the leaders of other soldiers to send him the fighters after Omar Ibn Al-Khattab assigned him with the mission of Al-Sham war and ordered him to march to conquer Qisariah. Al-Azdi says: "Yazeed Ibn Abi-Sufian wrote one copy to the leaders of soldiers: I decided to compose an expedition from the people with whom I want to go to Qisariah. Supply me with one soldier out of three and send them to me as fast as you could. Peace be upon you. After short periods, all the soldiers were accumulated in his region" (Al-Azdi, 1970, P. 276).

So, Al-Sham regions (Damascus, Palestine, Jordan, Hims and then Qinnisreen) became centres and posts for the fighters. They got their provisions from these regions (Al-Balathri, 1932, P. 134). Each region of soldiers had to offer the necessary number of soldiers and fighters were chosen from the regions to achieve the military missions by draft and lot, or by election or by giving the soldiers the choice (Al-Tabari, 1966, P. 260). That procedure of choosing the fighters was carried out according to the risk of the mission that was assigned to the leader. For instance, Sufian Ibn Awf Al-Azdi chose from each region of soldiers those who were known for their chivalry, assistance and honour and great knowledge of the policy of fighting, (Badran – Tahdeab, 1969, P. 455). From these various methods of selecting fighters, we deduce the following:

1. The Muslim population in those regions had the desire and the will to join the Islamic army and fight under the leadership of the Umayyads.
2. The Umayyad state did not force any one to join the Islamic army although it was in a state of an ongoing war.
3. we deduce the individuals of the Islamic army in the Umayyad state.

The Sham soldiers together contributed in most of the military expeditions which were directed to conquer the region of the Euphrates Island during the Caliphate of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and after him during the Caliphate

Dhahhak Ibn Qais El-Fehri whose caprice was with Abdullah Ibn El-Zubair. From that time on, the Jordan soldiers had had a distinguished position among the Umayyads because the soldiers proved that they were loyal and honest and obedience to the Umayyads after the state been about to fall. They restored the state's position and caused all the conspiracies against it to fail.

### **First: The role of Jordan soldiers in the Movement of Conquests.**

The Muslims took on Al-Sham in general after the conquest as a military base from which the military campaigns launched to conquer Egypt, and then the Moroccan Lands and Andalus followed by the Islands in the Mediterranean Sea such as Cyprus and Crete, and Middle Asia and Armenia. From Sham, the Summer and Winter expeditions were launched to invade the Byzantine Lands joined to the boundaries of the Islamic state. The Jordan soldiers were a part of this base and they contributed to these expeditions as the rest of Al-Sham's soldiers.

Jordan soldiers were represented from the very beginning in that strength that came from Madinah led by Sharhabeel Ibn Hasanah. Their destination was to what was known the lands of Jordan soldiers as a region for military operations (Al-Balathri, 1932, P. 111, 112), and what was attached to that strength afterward including individuals as assistants (Al-Waqidi, P. 68, 180, 260). The local people who embraced Islam after the conquest also joined Jordan Soldiers (Al-Azdi, 1970, P.111). All those forces assumed the region known according to the Islamic division as Jordan Soldiers – as their spot (Al-Azdi, 1970, P. 276). It seems that all those procedures took place after Al-Yarmouk Battle in 15 H/ 636 A.D (Al-Azdi, 1970, P. 276). But the ultimate settlement of Jordan Soldiers and other Al-Sham fighters was after the Muslims had conquered most of Al-Sham lands definitely in 18 H/ 639 A.D. During these times, Jordan Soldiers were still participating with other Muslim armies in conquering the rest of Al-Sham lands after Yarmouk Battle. This is shown from the

Morocco with that army, Abdulmalik decided to assist him with a huge army to reconquer Morocco and put an end to the Barbar's resistance in addition to the Byzantians'. This happened in 80 H/699 AD after the situations had settled in Iraq and Al-Sham. Ibn Athara reports that the army consisted of 40000 warriors (Ibn Abd Al-Hakam, 1991, P. 78) Hassan Bin Al-Nu'man managed to end the Barbar's and the Byzantian's resistance and conquer most of the Moroccan lands, so, Africa and Morocco became a Willayah of the Islamic state. With the same army, and with these who joined the army from the Afrian and Moroccan Muslims, Musa Ibn Nussair managed to complete the conquest of the Moroccan lands (Ibn-Qutaybah, 1967), and then the conquest of Al-Andalus that took 4 years from Rajab 92 H/ 710 AD until the beginning of 96 H/ 714 AD (Ibn Abd Al-Hakam, 1991, P. 204-210), and so, Al-Andalus became a Willayah of the Islamic State.

It is obvious from this clarification that Al-Sham regions of soldiers accomplished large military missions outside the boundaries of the Islamic State. This explains that the Umayyad state's missions were not exclusive to maintain its political and secure influence in the Arab lands at that time such as Hijaz, Iraq, Sham and Egypt, but the state had military missions outside in the east and west to enforce the position of the Umayyad State inside and outside. By this position and status the State achieved political, military and economic gains that supplied the soldiers and their regions with their needs to enable them continue defending the achievements of the Umayyad state and preserve its existence. It is also obvious that the military expeditions that the state carried out inside and outside led by the soldiers could not have been accomplished unless Al-Sham, Iraq and Hijaz had been settled politically. Those armies used to walk and march for long distances that took months or years, and they could not have done that if the political and military situations had not been settled.

It is noted here that the Arabs of Sham who entered Al-Andalus were

of Othman Ibn Affan in addition to Al-Sham frontiers, Armenia and Egypt.

When the Caliphate descended to the Umayyads, they assumed Damascus as the Capital of their state and all the regions of Al-Sham soldiers became under the administration of the Caliph directly. The Umayyad Caliphs considered these regions and soldiers as their priority of attention and care. They made them the mainstay of their state and were able to achieve the rest of conquests in Armenia, Allan and Al-Khazar, thanks to Al-Sham armies. (Khalifa bin Khayyat, 1985).

The Umayyad Caliphs also sent the aids and supports from Al-Sham to the east and west in 54.4/673 AD. For example, when Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufian assigned Obeidullah Bin Ziyad as Wali of Khurasan, he moved there accompanied by some of Sham people (Al-Tabari, 297). In 61 H/680 AD, Yazeed Bin Muawiyah assigned Muslim Bin Ziyad in Khurasan and he provided him with some of Al-Sham people (Ibn Al-Atheer, Al-Kamil, 1983). In 98 H/716 AD, Yazeed Bin Al-Muhallab invaded Jurjan with 120000 soldiers from whom were 60000 soldiers from Al-Sham. It is worth indicating here that an army from Al-Sham people numbered to 600 moved in 119 H/737 AD to assist the deputy of Khalid Bin Abdullah Al-Qisri in India (Al – Tabari, 1966).

The assistances and expeditions sequenced. The caliphs used to send these expeditions and assistances chosen from Al-Sham soldiers to help conquer African, Morocco and Andalus. One of those expeditions included ten thousand knights was sent by Muwayyah Bin Abi Sufian in 50 H/ 669 AD to Oqba Bin Nafi' in order to conquer Morocco (Ibn Athari, 1963, P. 23).

In 69 H/688 AD, Abdulmalik sent an army from Al-Sham to Zuhair Bin Qais to reconquer Al-Qirawn which the Barbar controlled in 64 H/ 683 AD. In 73 H/692 AD, Abdulmalik prepared and equipped an expedition to Morocco led by Hassan Bin Al-Nu'man consisted of six thousand warriors (Ibn Abd Al-Hakam, 1991, P. 34). Because Hassan could not control

property and men. He also organized the warriors in these cities and assigned guards and established fireplaces.

Muwayyah did not consider that enough. He always dreamed of eliminating the Byzantine navy. When the Caliph Othman gave him the permission to do so, he wrote to the coastal inhabitants ordering them to repair the boats and bring them to Akka fortress Coast (a part of Jordan soldiers). He also restored the coast and called for people who got their sustenances to come to his place. He left Akka port in 28 H/648 AD with what he gathered from Al-Sham warriors and ships which numbered to 220 ships (Ibn Uthman, 1968, P. 34) for Cyprus. He managed to impose Jizyah on its people. That was the first marine expedition that the Muslims accomplished since they had never done that before (Ibn Al-Batriq, 1909, P. 25). After this, marine expeditions continued. Al-Sham soldiers including Jordan soldiers were the main troops in those expeditions. Arwas Island was conquered in 29 H/650 AD (Al-Manbaji, 1986, P. 6). In 33 H/635 AD, Muwayyah led his second expedition to Cyprus after they had violated the truce treaty and he conquered the Island by force. In that year, the Muslims attacked Rhodes Island and conquered it after a violent fight with the Byzantine defenders in the Island. That violent fight resulted in killing a lot of people and capturing about 5000. This result forced the Byzantine Emperor to send a messenger to Damascus requesting reconciliation. He agreed with Muwayyah Bin Abi Sufian on a three-year truce in return for paying Jizyah (Kawthar Sarhan, 1997, P. 37-38).

From what has been discussed so far, the role of Muwayyah appears clearly in adopting several procedures before the battles such as repairing the ships, manufacturing new ships and restoring the fortresses. This makes obvious the responsibility of the successful leader who did not engage in a battle except after precise considerations and precautions that guaranteed victory most of the times although the Muslims did not have enough experience in sailing and fighting in seas.

distributed according to their regions of soldiers and tribes. Every region of warriors of Al-Sham had a specific banner. When Al-Andalus was completely conquered, every draft of soldiers inhabited a part of Al-Andalus named after them, so, the region which was inhabited by the Jordan soldiers was known as the Jordan soldiers region.

### **The Role of Jordan Soldiers in the Marine Expeditions:**

Jordan soldiers were a part of the main regions of soldiers who played a basic role through the land military role. Their role and marine contribution were as effective as their role and land participation. In addition, they participated with Sham soldiers in the marine expeditions launched to conquer the Islands in the Mediterranean, Sea that used to threaten the cities on the Egyptian and Sham coasts. The main aim of those expeditions was to spread Islam in these Islands and so the Muslims could control the international trade ways at that time and to protect the coastal cities from the Byzantine navy attacks and to establish marine military bases in these Islands (Abd Al-Salam Tadmari, 1987, P. 335-348), in order to contribute to the expeditions sent to Constantinople the city which the Muslims were looking forward to conquering to put an end to the Byzantine State, so that the Muslims could spread Islam freely in the Byzantine lands and in all Europe (Fathi Othman, 1966, P. 185).

Muwayyah Bin Abi Sufian was aware of the strategic importance of the Mediterranean Sea and the threat of the Byzantine navy that endangered Al-Sham. When he was assigned as a Wali of Al-Sham by the Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab, he asked for the Caliph's permission to sail to Cyprus to exact it from the Byzantines, but Omar refused Muwayyah's demand because of the Arabs' lack of experience in marine affairs (Al-Balathari, 1932, P. 130). Still, Omar commanded Muwayyah to strengthen the defenses of the coastal cities, so Muwayyah restored their fortresses and supplied them with money,

Because of that, Muwayyah was cautioned to the necessity of establishing arsenals on Al-Sham coast. He was convinced that the dependence on arsenals in Egypt was not sufficient. He ordered that all the makers and producers of ships as well as carpenters should be gathered in Akka which he chose to be the first arsenal of ships in Al-Sham. He also arranged the warriors on the coast and assigned leaders to accomplish summer and winter invasions which continued with Al-Sham soldiers in the Mediterranean sea during the Umayyad Era to conquer all the Islands (Al-Yaqoubi, 1891, P. 229-283).

Concerning the arsenal of warlike ships in Jordan region, it can be resulted that there were several reasons that stimulated Muwayyah to choose Akka and Sour to be the warlike and military arsenals. Such reasons are:

- 1- Jordan soldiers' region mediates the other regions of soldiers concerning its coasts and interior boundaries and this facilities the regions' mission concerning supplying them with provisions and victuals as well as warriors and ammunition when needed.
- 2- It facilitates the transition of the Islamic navy as assistances to other regions in the north and south when dangers and threats occur on Al-Sham coasts.
- 3- The existence of skilled makers with sufficient experience and high competence in the field of producing ships.
- 4- The easiness and facility of transmitting the raw materials needed to manufacturing ships from other soldiers' regions such as woods available in Jordan region especially sour.
- 5- The high confidence that the Umayyads had in their leaders and Jordan soldiers might have had an effect in the above – mentioned choice of Muwayyah particularly, the Islamic marine weapons formed a power that was able to play a great role in the happenings of military and political events in the Umayyad state.

This explains to us the reason for being interested in warlike preparations in the sea. The centre of building the Islamic marine and navy and preparations was in Akka which was attached to the Jordan soldiers in land and sea. It is also resulted that the majority of Jordan soldiers and inhabitants were professional warriors in the Islamic Army both in land and sea.

One of the aspects of the interests and preparations of the Islamic Army in marine wars was the desire of the Umayyad Caliphs in preserving this military strength in the Mediterranean sea so that the Byzantian navy could not return to the Mediterranean as it was previously when it used to threaten the coasts of Al-Sham.

Then, in 34 H/ 655 A.D, it was likely that the Battle of "Thatel-Sawari" happened when the Islamic navy encountered with the Byzantian navy in the Mediterranean sea opposite to the Lebanese Coast. The Islamic navy was under the leadership of Abdullah Ibn Abi El-Sarh, the Wali of Egypt. The navy consisted of the Egyptian ships in addition to the Sham navy led by Abul-Awar Bin Amro Al-Sullami the Wali of Jordan. The number of the ships in the Islamic navy was more than two hundreds (Al-Kindi, 1961, 1961, P. 36) while the number of the ships in the Byzantian navy under the leadership of the Emperor Constantine was between 500 and 1000. It was the battle in the sea that the Muslims achieved a great and decisive victory in, and the Byzantian navy was completely defeated (Abu Zar'ah, 1980, P. 187).

Again, the Egyptian people participated with Al-Sham people in this battle. The assemble of Al-Sham warriors was in Akka coast, a region attached to Jordan soldiers, from which a part of the Islamic navy launched its attacks (Ibn Uthman, 1968, P. 128). This indicates the role of the coast of Jordan Soldiers' region in the marine military expeditions, and that its coastal ports sour and Akka were suitable and eligible to be marine bases. So, when Muwayyah became the Caliph, the Byzantians were still bothering Al-Sham coast with their marine attacks.

continued after the Persian state had Fallen.

They also represented one of the aspects of cultural struggle between the two halves of the world (The Byzantian State and the Islamic State that replaced the Persian State in that straggle). The Umayyad Caliphs led that struggle after the Orthodox Culiphs (Al-Rashideen). As we mentioned above, Al-Sham regions' soldiers were the base and the power on which the Umayyad Caliphs depended to strike the Byzantian State which represented the second side of the cultural struggle. The Umayyads attempted to eliminate the Byzantians so that the Islamic thought would pervade and reign and its civilizations could reach the European continent. So, we find that a number of those invasions (summer and winter) on land and sea were serious attempts to invade the city of Constantinople the capital of the Byzantian state and the symbol of its existence.

The Muslims imposed several blockades and sieges on Constantinople from land and sea. Muwayyad reached the Gulf of Constantinople in 32 H / 652 AD when he was the Wali of Al-Sham (Al-Tabari, 1966, P. 3-4). When he became the Caliph, he sent his son Yazeed with a big expedition to Constantinople and Yazeed with a big expedition to Constantinople and seiged it (Al – Yaqoubi, 1986, P. 240). Also, Mashlamah Bin Abdulmalik Bin Marwan sieged constantinople during his brother's Caliphate Suleiman Bin Abdulmalik that lasted for a whole year 98-99 H/ 716-717 AD (Al Manbaj, 1986, P. 3-4).

In this way, Al-Sham warriors including Jordan warriors took over in the movement of Islamic conquests on land and sea especially the conquest of Morocco and the Islands of the Mediterranean Sea and Al-Sham fronts. They also participated in the summer and winter invasions which they were a part of the conquests. In addition, those in various formed an aspect of the battles which were launched to confront all the Byzantian

The coast of Jordan Soldiers' region continued playing a basic role in the marine invasions. Those invasions (Summer and Winter) were launched from Akka coast where the basic marine base because the arsenal was there, and with the help of other Sham coasts, or they were launched from one of the ports of Al-Sham coasts such as Tripoli or Beirut or Saida with the assistance of the ports of Akka and Sour (Abd Al-Salam Tadmuri, 1987, P. 235).

Also, the coast of Jordan Soldiers' region remained a spot of importance and interest of the Umayyed Caliphs. The Caliph Muwayyah Ibn Abi Sufian fortified Akka and Sour and supplied them with warriors and money. He also built the first arsenal in Akka. The Caliph Abdulmalik Bin Marwan restored their fences and refortified them. Also, Hisham Bin Abdulmalik conveyed the arsenal from Akka to Sour, as Al-Balathari reports, because he wanted to enlarge them. He offered to buy lands and facilities from one of Abi Mu'ait's sons who refused, so, Hisham conveyed the arsenal to Sour where he assumed a hotel. The arsenal and ships remained in Sour until the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil ordered to convey them again to Akka in 247H/ 861 AD (Al-Balathari, 1932).

Generally speaking, the first who named summer and winter invasions was the Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab during his visit to Al-Sham in 17 H/ 638 AD. But Muwayyah Ibn Abi Sufian made them permanent invasions and organized to be carried out every year and so was the habitude of the Umayyad Caliphs after him (Al-Tabari, 1966). Those invasions never ceased during the Umayyad Caliphate except at times of turmoils and disorder. The warriors of Al-Sham played the significant role in those invasions (summer and winter). Al-Balathari says: "The Ummayyads invade the Romans with warriors from Al-Sham in summer and winter and other fronts of Al-Sham and Al-Jazeera (Al-Balathari, 1932).

These invasions were a part from the movements of the conquests that targeted the world at that time and

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