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ROYAL CEREMONIES AND OFFICIAL CELEBRATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF KING ‘ABD AL-‘AZĪZ ĀL SA‘ŪD IN THE PILGRIMAGE SEASON OF 1368 AH / 1949 CE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the royal ceremonies and official celebrations held for King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz during the 1368 AH / 1949 CE pilgrimage season, as recorded in Wathbat al-Diyār al-Ḥijāziyya fī ‘Ahd ‘Āhil al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya. The analysis reveals how these events reflected the King’s leadership in consolidating national unity, strengthening state authority in the Ḥijāz, and framing pilgrimage as both a religious duty and a manifestation of emerging Saudi identity. By documenting these ceremonies, the study highlights the role of royal ritual in shaping political legitimacy and the cultural diplomacy of early Saudi Arabia.

KEYWORDS: Ceremonies, Reception, King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Pilgrimage Season, Celebration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel literature constitutes one of the most significant historical sources, given that its authors relied on direct observation and personal experience. Such works capture features of the reality witnessed by the writer. Among the most important forms of travel accounts are pilgrimage narratives, which received particular attention from some pilgrims who recorded their observations during the journey. These accounts often engaged with political, economic, cultural, and social aspects, thereby becoming a valuable source of knowledge for understanding historical events and the markers of civilizational progress in the Hijāz region.

One such account is the journey of Muḥammad al-Silāḥ, entitled *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Hijāziyya fi 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya*, which he wrote after performing the pilgrimage in 1368 AH / 1949 CE. His work carefully documented his observations at the stations he passed through on the way to the Hijāz, describing the stages of the journey from beginning to end, and portraying the region's civilizational development. He particularly emphasized the efforts of King 'Abd al-'Azīz in serving the pilgrims and personally supervising the pilgrimage season.

This study focuses on an important aspect of that journey which deserves further attention: the royal ceremonies, receptions, and celebrations held during the pilgrimage season. **Accordingly, the research has been structured as follows** (in addition to the introduction and conclusion) a prologue providing an analytical reading of the book; Section One, examining the ceremonies welcoming King 'Abd al-'Azīz during the pilgrimage; Section Two, addressing the royal receptions of pilgrim delegations in Mecca; and Section Three, exploring the official celebrations conducted during the pilgrimage season.

1.1. Rationale for Topic Selection

The reasons for selecting this topic are as follows

- The importance of studying the royal ceremonies and celebrations held during the pilgrimage season in the reign of King 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al Sa'ūd.
- The chosen book for this study is a valuable source, as the author was an eyewitness and recorded his observations during the pilgrimage of 1368 AH / 1949 CE.
- To our knowledge, the book has not previously received scholarly study or analysis. This research therefore provides a new analytical reading of the royal ceremonies and celebrations during the pilgrimage season of

1368 AH / 1949 CE.

1.2. Research Problem

This research seeks to address the following questions

- What is the significance of *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Hijāziyya fi 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya*?
- What royal ceremonies were held for King 'Abd al-'Azīz during the pilgrimage season?
- What celebrations were associated with the pilgrimage season?
- What efforts did King 'Abd al-'Azīz undertake during the pilgrimage season?

1.3. Research Objectives

- To give attention to writings that deal with the history of King 'Abd al-'Azīz.
- To document the royal ceremonies held to receive King 'Abd al-'Azīz during the pilgrimage.
- To identify the celebrations associated with the pilgrimage season.
- To highlight the importance of *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Hijāziyya fi 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* with regard to King 'Abd al-'Azīz's supervision of the pilgrimage season and his service to the pilgrims.

1.4. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical historical method, based on collecting material from original sources and examining it closely. The data were compiled and organized according to the research plan, then analyzed scientifically and objectively to arrive at the most accurate historical picture of the topic. The research adheres to both temporal and spatial frameworks, and the material is presented in a precise academic style, maintaining linguistic accuracy, coherence, and chronological sequence in order to achieve the intended results.

1.5. Research Sources

The primary source for this study is the book *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Hijāziyya fi 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* (1368 AH / 1949 CE) by Muḥammad al-Silāḥ, the journalist-pilot, who recorded his personal observations and impressions during the pilgrimage season. Supplementary sources include Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī's *The Arabian Peninsula in the Era of King 'Abd al-'Azīz*, 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Ghullāmī's *Al-Malik al-Rāshid - King 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd* (may God have mercy on him), as well as contemporary newspapers such as *Umm al-Qurā*, in addition to several other relevant references.

2. PROLOGUE: AN ANALYTICAL READING OF THE BOOK

2.1. Author's Profile

Muḥammad al-Silāḥ, known as the "journalist-pilot," was of Syrian origin. He worked as a pilot and also served as an editor for al-Barīd al-Sūrī newspaper, which was first issued in Aleppo in 1337 AH / 1919 CE by its owner and editor-in-chief, Fāḍil Aswad. The newspaper began as a free, national, and critical political-economic paper, appearing three times a week in its early years, and later became a daily publication, ranking among the leading Syrian newspapers. Little additional information is available about the author, except that he described himself in this work as a pilot, and refrained from presenting a personal biography, despite his many writings on his travels to Saudi Arabia and beyond. He consistently referred to himself as the "journalist-pilot," and included his own photograph. (Elyās, 1983, p. 513; al-Silāḥ, 1950, p. 156).

Al-Silāḥ was a prolific writer, documenting what he witnessed during his repeated journeys to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He produced a series of works on the rise of the Saudi state, its rulers, and its leading figures. **Among his most notable books are** *Sū'ūdiyyāt*, *Sū'ūd wa-l-Āmilūn fī al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Su'ūdiyya* [*Sū'ūd and the Workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*], *Sū'ūd al-Awwal wa-l-Dhikrā al-Sābi'a li-Julūs Jalālatihī 'alā al-'Arsh* [*Sū'ūd I and the Seventh Anniversary of His Accession to the Throne*], *al-Amīr Sū'ūd Walī al-'Ahd al-Mu'azzam* [*Crown Prince Sū'ūd the Great*], *Riḥla ilā Yanbu'* [*Journey to Yanbu'*], and *al-Riyāḍ fī al-Qāhira* [*Riyadh in Cairo*], among many others (al-Silāḥ, 1353 AH; al-Silāḥ, 1375 AH; al-Silāḥ, 1378 AH; al-Silāḥ, 1935 CE; al-Silāḥ, 1380 AH).

2.2. Title of the Book

The author entitled his work *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Ḥijāziyya fī 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* (1368 AH / 1949 CE). His choice of title reflects his intention to highlight the progress of the Ḥijāz region during the reign of King 'Abd al-'Azīz—may God have mercy on him—emphasizing the king's care in developing facilities for the service of the pilgrims to the Sacred House of God. The book records, as an eyewitness account, the events of the pilgrimage season of 1368 AH / 1949 CE.

2.3. Technical Details of the Book

The book, titled *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Ḥijāziyya fī 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* (1368 AH / 1949 CE), was authored by Muḥammad al-Silāḥ, the

journalist-pilot. This research relies on its first edition, a rare publication printed in Aleppo, Syria, at Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif (Najeeb Knaydir Press), shortly after the author's return from the 1949 pilgrimage. A copy was obtained from the King 'Abd al-'Azīz Library in Riyadh. The book comprises 156 pages and contains a large collection of photographs depicting figures and facilities. Its front cover is decorated with two crossed Saudi flags bearing the palm tree and crossed swords emblem, accompanied by small portraits of King 'Abd al-'Azīz and his sons, Princes Sū'ūd and Fayṣal. The back cover displays the Saudi flag with its emblem and includes advertisements for some of his other books, such as *'Abd al-'Azīz wa-l-Ḥajj* [*'Abd al-'Azīz and the Pilgrimage*] and *Sū'ūd wa-l-Āmilūn fī al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Su'ūdiyya*, along with a notice announcing a forthcoming publication titled *al-Malik wa-l-Wazīr* [*The King and the Minister*].

2.4. Occasion of Writing the Book

The book records the author's observations and impressions of the pilgrimage season of 1368 AH / 1949 CE, which he documented upon his return. His account highlights the modern renaissance of the Ḥijāz, encompassing various facilities, and provides a detailed discussion of pilgrimage affairs and the services offered to pilgrims. The purpose was to inform the wider world of King 'Abd al-'Azīz's efforts in promoting development in the Ḥijāz to ensure the best possible services for the pilgrims of the Sacred House of God.

2.5. Methodology of Muḥammad al-Silāḥ, the Journalist-Pilot

The author wrote down the impressions and observations retained in his memory after returning from the pilgrimage of 1368 AH / 1949 CE. The book begins with a foreword by al-Silāḥ, in which he explained his objective, followed by a preface authored by Bakrī Rajab, the director of al-Riḍā'iyya School and teacher in religious schools in Aleppo. Rajab praised King 'Abd al-'Azīz's efforts in securing safety for the pilgrims, providing them with comfort, and improving the essential facilities of pilgrimage in Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina.

Al-Silāḥ then added an introduction on social theory concerning the development of nations, though it contained information unrelated to the book's title. This was followed by a brief section summarizing his impressions of the renaissance and progress of the Ḥijāz in general. He then commenced his narrative with an introductory chapter titled "History and the Beauty of the Sacred Lands,"

offering a descriptive portrayal of the Ḥijāz, its history during the Prophet's era, and the pilgrims to the Sacred House. (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 5, 7, 15, 16).

His methodology relied on organizing his material under numerous subheadings, **including** The Beginning of the Journey; Arrival in Jeddah; To Mecca; We Are in Mecca; On the Virtue of Ṭawāf; Between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa; A Short Tour in the Markets of Mecca; From Riyadh to Ṭā'if; The Military Parade in Ṭā'if; His Majesty the King in Mecca; Washing of the Ka'ba; His Majesty during the Pilgrimage—the latter written in an ornate style distinct from his usual headings—To Muzdalifa; On the Road to Minā; Celebrations of 'Īd in Minā; Description of Minā; The Grand Reception in Minā; From Minā to Riyadh; Crown Prince Sū'ūd the Great; Journalists and Men of Letters Meet; Summary of Honorary Receptions; In the Palaces of Princes; In the Minister's Palace; In the Palaces of the Royal Court; Among Men of Economy; Completing Pilgrimage and 'Umrah for God; Farewell Ṭawāf; What in Jeddah?; In Jeddah's Offices; At the Radio House; The King Appeals to God. He further included descriptions of the activities of the Arab Automobile Company, and later discussed his return to Jeddah and his journey to Medina and Damascus, though without assigning them independent chapter titles. (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 26, 36, 50, 62, 87, 88, 89, 126, 128, 133, 134, 156).

2.6. *Observations on the Author's Methodology*

Positive aspects of al-Silāḥ's approach include his careful identification of prominent figures and their positions, photographic documentation of the journey, and his descriptions of the locations he visited. The book is also largely free from typographical errors, aside from a few, such as the use of "Qanāl" instead of "Qanāt." **However, certain shortcomings are evident** the absence of an index to organize the topics, limited attention to dating events in either Hijrī or Gregorian terms, failure to specify the departure date and omission of distances or durations for most stages of the journey. The year of the pilgrimage is mentioned only midway through the narrative. Moreover, while he diligently named notable figures, he sometimes referred to them only by title or role, such as "the local representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the port of Jeddah," omitting their personal names. Several photographs lack captions, and some images were misplaced—for example, the portrait of 'Abd al-Muḥsin Ḥuwārī, Police Inspector General, and a photograph of the police headquarters in Minā were inserted within sections unrelated to policing. The narrative is also

characterized by lengthy descriptive digressions, interruptions of chronological sequence, and emotional reflections, including accounts of events not directly relevant to the book's subject, making it difficult for the reader to follow the progression of events.

3. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BOOK

The significance of this book lies in its documentation of King 'Abd al-'Azīz's efforts to develop the Ḥijāz region and his attention to the service of the pilgrims. It provides a detailed account of the royal celebrations and ceremonies held during the pilgrimage season of 1368 AH / 1949 CE.

3.1. *First: The Royal Receptions of King 'Abd al-'Azīz during the Pilgrimage Season*

The pilgrimage season is one of the most prominent Islamic occasions, attracting Muslims from across the world to the holy sites in the Ḥijāz. Since the annexation of the Ḥijāz in 1343 AH / 1925 CE, King 'Abd al-'Azīz devoted great attention to the welfare of the pilgrims, striving to provide them with safety, comfort, and ease. In that same year, Umm al-Qurā newspaper reported that King 'Abd al-'Azīz issued a call to the Muslim world, inviting them to perform the pilgrimage and assuring them of the prevailing security in the sacred lands (Umm al-Qurā, 1925, p. 2).

In 1345 AH / 1926 CE, the King introduced a comprehensive policy and precise regulations aimed at meeting the needs of pilgrims and organizing their affairs so they could perform the pilgrimage with ease. He allocated both human and material resources to ensure these tasks were carried out efficiently. A special committee, known as the Pilgrimage Administration Committee, was formed under the leadership of his son, Prince Fayṣal, the Deputy General in the Ḥijāz. Its responsibility was to manage pilgrimage affairs, develop services, and oversee their implementation (al-Babiṭīn, 2003, p. 170; Jamīl, 2002, pp. 45–46).

Although the Pilgrimage Administration Committee continued to manage the season, the increasing number of pilgrims and the need for greater efficiency led the King to establish the General Directorate of Pilgrimage Affairs in 1365 AH / 1945 CE. Linked to the Ministry of Finance, it was **divided into six divisions** administrative, religious, financial, health, transportation, and publicity/translation. Additional branches included a guidance section and a committee for resolving the cases of pilgrimage guides (muṭawwifīn). Its duties

involved direct supervision of pilgrimage activities and receiving pilgrims from the moment of their arrival until their departure, including facilitating entry procedures, transportation, accommodation, signage in multiple languages (Arabic, Indonesian, Urdu, Turkish, English, and others), and the distribution of the Pilgrim's Guide, a free publication issued annually with essential information for performing the rites. Associated institutions included the Automobile Syndicate, the Committee for Adjudicating the Cases of Pilgrimage Guides, the leaders of the zamāma in Mecca, and the Guides' Association in Medina. King 'Abd al-'Azīz spared no effort and spent generously from the state's resources to support the management of pilgrimage affairs (al-Ziriklī, 1970, p. 1335; al-Ghullāmī, 1980, pp. 90-91).

In 1372 AH / 1952 CE, King 'Abd al-'Azīz ordered the reorganization of the directorate under the new name General Directorate of Pilgrimage, supervised by the Ministry of Finance and reporting to the General Deputation. It oversaw all offices connected with pilgrimage affairs, including Saudi radio, whose programs were predominantly religious, instructional, and related to pilgrimage (al-'Utaybī, 1998, p. 265). The King personally attended the pilgrimage season and welcomed delegations every year from the annexation of the Ḥijāz until his death, **with the exception of six years when he delegated his sons** Prince Fayṣal, who deputized for him twice (1360 AH / 1941 CE and 1363 AH / 1944 CE) (Umm al-Qurā, 1941, no. 882, p. 1; Umm al-Qurā, 1944, no. 1029, p. 1), and Crown Prince Sū'ūd, who deputized on four occasions (1366 AH / 1947 CE, 1369 AH / 1950 CE, 1371 AH / 1952 CE, and 1372 AH / 1953 CE) (Umm al-Qurā, 1947, no. 1181, p. 1; Umm al-Qurā, 1950, no. 1329, p. 2; Umm al-Qurā, 1952, no. 1427, p. 4; Umm al-Qurā, 1953, no. 1477, p. 1).

The King's first three pilgrimage journeys (1343-1345 AH / 1924-1927 CE) were undertaken on camelback. From 1346 AH / 1928 CE to 1364 AH / 1945 CE he traveled by automobile, and thereafter by airplane for his journeys between Najd and the Ḥijāz until his death. Outbound trips were typically from Riyadh to al-Ḥawiyya Airport in Ṭā'if. The journey relevant to this study was undertaken by plane. During the 1368 AH / 1949 CE pilgrimage season, King 'Abd al-'Azīz resolved to depart from Riyadh to perform and supervise the pilgrimage. The author describes the preparations for this journey and the ceremonies marking his departure, overseen by Crown Prince Sū'ūd. Royal aircraft were prepared to transport the King, his entourage, and officials to al-Ḥawiyya Airport in Ṭā'if (al-Silāh, 1950, pp. 53-54).

Umm al-Qurā reported that on 15 Dhū al-Qa'da

1368 AH / 7 September 1949 CE, the King set out for the airport accompanied by a grand procession of motor vehicles and motorcycles, amidst the chants, prayers, and invocations of the people. Upon reaching Riyadh Airport, he was received by Crown Prince Sū'ūd, numerous princes, tribal leaders, and vast crowds of loyal citizens who had gathered to bid him farewell. The departure ceremonies began with an honor guard rendering a military salute while the royal anthem was played. The King took his place in the ceremonial pavilion, where prayers were raised for him. He greeted those present individually and shared Arabic coffee and tea with them. Thereafter, King 'Abd al-'Azīz boarded the aircraft prepared for him, while the royal princes and members of his entourage boarded other planes, and together they departed for Ṭā'if (Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1278, p. 1).

The Royal Receptions of King 'Abd al-'Azīz in Ṭā'if during the Pilgrimage Season of 1368 AH / 1949 CE The author described in detail the royal reception of King 'Abd al-'Azīz upon the arrival of his air convoy at al-Ḥawiyya Airport in Ṭā'if. He noted that His Royal Highness Prince Fayṣal ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd, Deputy of His Majesty in the Ḥijāz, oversaw the arrangements for receiving his father at the airport and prepared his own palace for the King's stay. The palace halls and salons were furnished with luxurious carpets. His eldest son, Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, who made great efforts to ready the palace and present it in a manner befitting the King, assisted Prince Fayṣal. The Governor of Ṭā'if, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Mu'ammār, was at the forefront of those welcoming the King at the airport and supervising the arrangements.

The ceremonies began on the grounds of al-Ḥawiyya Airport, where Prince Fayṣal advanced with other princes, ministers, scholars, senior statesmen, notables from Mecca, Jeddah, and Ṭā'if, and a large crowd of citizens. The regular troops lined in formation rendered a salute to King 'Abd al-'Azīz. He was then transported in his royal automobile, surrounded by escort vehicles and motorcycles of the royal guard, followed by a convoy of cars carrying princes, advisors, court officials, and members of the royal entourage. They proceeded to the pavilion prepared for the reception. Upon arrival, the troops once again rendered a military salute, and the King received greetings for his safe arrival, responding with words appropriate to the occasion.

After a brief rest, the King was honored with poetry. Umm al-Qurā reported that Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghazzāwī, the King's poet, member of

the Consultative Council, and deputy head of the Municipal Council, recited a welcoming poem on behalf of the people. The verses had a deep impact, sincerely expressing the people's loyalty, devotion, and affection for King 'Abd al-'Aziz. The audience interrupted the lines with warm applause and repeated the verses (al-Silāh, 1950, pp. 54-55; Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1278, p. 1).

The author also noted that Mr. 'Alī Ḥasan Ghassāl, education commissioner and principal of the secondary school in Ṭā'if, recited a poem welcoming the King, which was met with appreciation and applause. After the serving of Arabic coffee, those present had the honor of greeting the King personally. King 'Abd al-'Aziz then departed the pavilion amidst the same splendid ceremonies with which he had been received, heading to the palace prepared for his residence in Ṭā'if. As the royal convoy moved from al-Ḥawīyya Airport toward the city, crowds of citizens lined both sides of the road to welcome him. In return, the King distributed generous alms in silver riyals to the poor and needy, a striking display of the bond between ruler and people. Upon his arrival at the palace, the troops once again rendered a military salute, the band played the royal anthem, and the artillery fired twenty-one rounds in salute. Large crowds gathered in the open square before the palace, cheering the King. The celebration in Ṭā'if was regarded as one of the most remarkable receptions in the city's history. When the King entered the grand reception hall, delegations from all social classes came forward to greet him. He received them warmly, with a radiant countenance.

Among those accompanying His Majesty were his brother Prince 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, and his sons Princes Muḥammad, Ṭalāl, Mu'tab, Fahd, Nawwāf, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Mishārī, Fawwāz, Badr, Mājīd, and Sulṭām; along with Prince Fahd ibn Sū'ūd ibn Muḥammad, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Prince 'Umar, and Prince Fahd ibn Khālid ibn Muḥammad. Also present were Shaykh Ḥasan, head of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice; Sayyid Rashīd 'Alī al-Kaylānī; Minister of State Fu'ād Ḥamza; Dr. Midḥat Shaykh al-Arḍ, the King's physician; Dr. Rushdī Malḥas, head of the political department; Shaykh 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Uthmān, head of the Royal Court; Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Dughayr, head of the telegraph bureau and the King's secretary; Muḥammad ibn Mandīl, assistant head of the Royal Court; Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Tuwayjirī, deputy in the telegraph bureau and assistant secretary; and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Imrān, scribe in the Royal Court. Crowds of citizens lined the road to the palace,

welcoming the King's arrival (al-Silāh, 1950, pp. 55-56; Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1277, pp. 1-2).

The author further noted that the celebrations continued until 20 Dhū al-Qa'da 1368 AH / 12 September 1949 CE, when a military parade was held in front of Prince Fayṣal's palace, where King 'Abd al-'Aziz was staying. The parade was organized under the supervision of Prince Mish'al, Deputy Minister of Defense; Muḥammad Bek Shaykhū, Secretary of the Ministry of Defense; and Colonel Yaḥyā Ṭarābulusī, Deputy Commander of the Military Units. A grand pavilion of three tents was erected, with the Saudi flag flying over the first. The courtyard in front was covered with fine carpets and furnished with royal chairs, with the King's special seat at the center, in front of which stood a table topped with a telephone. Police and security forces lined both sides of the parade route, with the royal guard on the left of the pavilion, and the special guard known as the Khuwiyā, armed with gilded swords and modern rifles, nearby. Present also were Sharīf Muḥsin al-Ḥārithī, commander of the military schools, and Muḥammad Bek al-Ḥammāmī, head of the military court, along with senior commanders and officers.

When the King's procession arrived, the troops rendered a salute, the band played the royal anthem, and he took his seat, surrounded by princes, statesmen, and attendants. The crowds cheered and prayed for his long life. The military parade then commenced, passing in full formation with its weaponry and equipment. The author listed the names of the commanders: at the head marched Colonel Yaḥyā al-Ṭarābulusī, who saluted with his sword, followed by his aide, Chief Muḥammad al-Maymān. The military band, dressed in white, performed stirring martial music. Lieutenant 'Abd al-Karīm al-Nāfi' carried the flag, accompanied by four non-commissioned officers under First Lieutenant Ḥasan Biṣrāwī. Captain Sa'īd al-'Umri commanded the First Infantry Regiment, **followed by its companies** the first under Captain Muḥammad al-Muṭliq, the second under First Lieutenant Muḥammad al-Ballā', the third under First Lieutenant 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the fourth under Second Lieutenant Fā'iq 'Īd, the fifth under Second Lieutenant 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Uthaymīn, the sixth (Royal Guard) under First Lieutenant Ḥamza Subkī, and the seventh under First Lieutenant Ghāzī al-Ṭā'ifi.

They were followed by the Second Regiment under Commander Manṣūr al-'Assāf and his aide, Chief Ḥamza 'Ajlāwī; then the mechanized unit, with vehicles, armored cars, machine guns, and mortars;

followed by the mobile company under First Lieutenant Ṭāriq 'Abd al-Ḥakīm and Second Lieutenant Iḥsān al-Ḥilwānī. The artillery regiment, composed of two batteries, was commanded by Commander Khālīd 'Alamdār and Second Lieutenant Aḥmad al-Ṭarīḥ. Next came the intelligence division, the medical and ambulance corps led by Dr. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sādātī, and finally the engineering corps and military workshop, prepared for mechanical and electrical tasks under First Lieutenant Muḥammad Katū'a. King 'Abd al-'Azīz acknowledged the salutes of all the officers as they passed. At the conclusion of the parade, the royal anthem was played, the audience rose to their feet, and cheers, applause, and prayers for the King's victory and success filled the air. The King then departed with the same honors and returned to the palace (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 56-59).

After spending several days in Ṭā'if, King 'Abd al-'Azīz departed for Mecca. The author briefly described the farewell ceremonies, noting that the King ordered preparations to continue for the journey to Mecca. He was seen off by the heads of government departments, senior officials, scholars, and notables, led by the Governor of Ṭā'if, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Mu'ammar. The King traveled with Prince Fayṣal, his deputy in the Ḥijāz; Prince Maṣṣūr, Minister of Defense; Prince Miṣṣal, Deputy Minister of Defense; other princes; the royal entourage; and the royal guard and court staff.

The royal convoy proceeded to al-Sayl al-Kabīr, where large crowds gathered to greet the King, led by Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, deputy of the King in the Ḥijāz; Minister of Finance 'Abd Allāh al-Sulaymān; Shaykh Muḥammad Surūr al-Ṣabbān, Chief Advisor to the Ministry of Finance; Minister Plenipotentiary Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Ṣabbān, Mayor of Mecca; 'Alī Jamīl, Director of Police and Public Security; Shaykh Sulaymān al-Ḥamad, Deputy Minister of Finance; and Muḥammad al-'Abd Allāh al-Sulaymān, Director of Special Affairs, along with other prominent figures and businessmen of Mecca. After a short rest, preparations were made for donning the pilgrimage garments in preparation for entering Mecca and performing 'Umrah. Crowds lined the road to Mecca, welcoming the King with ceremonies of greeting and expressing their loyalty and devotion. In return, King 'Abd al-'Azīz bestowed monetary gifts upon them (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 60-62).

The Royal Reception of King 'Abd al-'Azīz in Mecca King 'Abd al-'Azīz arrived at the outskirts of Mecca on 30 Dhū al-Qa'da 1368 AH / 22 September 1949 CE. The author described the royal reception in

Mecca, noting that upon the arrival of the King's procession at the city's outskirts, the artillery fired twenty-one rounds in salute, while the military band played the welcoming anthem. Another unit lined both sides of the road, rendering formal salutes. Thousands of residents and pilgrims crowded the streets and balconies, raising their voices in prayers to God for the King's long life, in recognition of his efforts to secure the pilgrimage routes and to provide safety and comfort for pilgrims and visitors, after the region had long suffered from banditry and lack of security.

The author further noted that the King's procession moved toward the royal palace in Mecca, where he took a period of rest. He then proceeded to the Sacred Mosque, preceded by vehicles of the Saudi army, motorcycles of the public security forces, and the car of the royal guard. The King followed in his car, dressed in the iḥrām, surrounded by his sons — led by Prince Fayṣal, Prince Maṣṣūr, Prince Miṣṣal, and Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal. Behind them came the car of the Chief of Police, the Mayor of Mecca, and a large group of attendants, shaykhs, dignitaries, and notables of the country (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 62-63; Umm al-Qurā

The author described the route of the royal procession to the Sacred Mosque, noting that it proceeded through the junction of al-Ḥajūn, then 'Umrah Street, Sūq al-Layl, al-Qashshāshiyya, and then along al-Mas'ā Street until it reached Bāb al-Salām. Large crowds filled the entire route, greeting King 'Abd al-'Azīz and praying for his long life. When the procession reached Bāb al-Salām, the King disembarked from his car, and the military unit rendered a salute. The administration, servants, and guards of the Sacred Mosque received the King. Soldiers lined both sides of the entrance to Bāb al-Salām, where the King stopped and raised his hands in the noble Prophetic supplication, **saying**

"O Allah, You are Peace, from you comes peace, and to you returns peace. Grant us life, our Lord, with peace, and admit us into Paradise, the Abode of Peace. O Allah, increase this Ancient House in honor and reverence."

He then continued toward the Sacred Mosque until he reached the Ka'ba, where he began the circumambulation with his companions. After completing seven circuits, he stopped at the door of the Ka'ba, performed the two rak'āt of ṭawāf behind the Station of Abraham, drank from the Zamzam water, and exited through Bāb al-Ṣafā to begin the sa'y between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa. After completing the sa'y, the royal procession returned to the palace, while crowds of citizens and pilgrims continued to

greet him, applaud, and pray for his well-being along the entire route. This spectacle was one of the most magnificent scenes, reflecting the high esteem in which the King was held by Arabs and Muslims everywhere.

In the evening, a banquet was held at the royal palace, attended by a large number of princes, shaykhs, senior officials, scholars, notables, and merchants. The King presided over the gathering, with Prince Fayṣal and Prince Maṣṣūr at his side. All present came forward to greet him before he took his place at the head of the royal banquet table, where all had the honor of dining. During the meal, the King shared eloquent words and wise counsel that left a deep impression on those present. After the banquet, the guests moved to the grand reception hall, where they were served Arabic coffee. Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghazzāwī, member of the Consultative Council and deputy head of the Municipal Council, then delivered a welcoming address on behalf of the Mayor of Mecca (al-Silāh, 1950, p. 65).

On the following day, a magnificent public celebration was held at the royal palace in honor of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz – may God have mercy on him. The author noted that Prince Fayṣal personally oversaw the event. Those who came to greet the King included many popular delegations, such as heads of government departments, representatives of various official and public classes, senior officials, scholars, notables, schoolteachers, senior members of the Public Security force, and students from the Orphan School in Mecca. Once they had gathered in the palace, King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz entered with his sons, Princes Fayṣal and Maṣṣūr, greeted them warmly, and shook hands with each one.

Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Shaybī, Second Custodian of the Sacred House and Second Deputy of the Consultative Council, then stepped forward to welcome the King and pray for him. After that, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Māni‘, Director General of Education, assigned Muḥammad Afandī Shattā, Inspector of Education, to deliver his welcoming address, followed by Sayyid ‘Umar ibn ‘Aqīl, who also gave a welcoming speech. The popular celebration concluded with warm applause, chants, and prayers for the King. The King’s attendance at this reception every pilgrimage season demonstrates his eagerness to meet his people, listen to them, and attend to their needs (al-Silāh, 1950, pp. 65–66).

The Royal Reception of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz at Umm al-Salam After completing the pilgrimage, King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz – may God have mercy on him – departed Mecca on 25 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1368 AH / 17 October 1949 CE, heading toward the city of Jeddah.

He arrived at the Umm al-Salam station, where a reception was organized by Acting Governor Prince ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sudairī, his assistant ‘Alī Bek Ṭahā, and Police Director Ṭal‘at Bek Wafā. The reception was attended by a large number of statesmen, notables, dignitaries, merchants, members of the diplomatic corps, heads of government departments, leaders of pilgrimage delegations, police officers, and many army officers and soldiers. They all stood to welcome the King’s procession, which was preceded by the cars of the princes and accompanied by members of the royal guard.

The Royal Reception of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in Jeddah The King’s procession continued to Jeddah, where it was received by large crowds of citizens lining both sides of the road leading to the royal Khuzam Palace. The royal convoy proceeded until it reached the palace, where many senior statesmen and dignitaries were waiting at the entrance to greet the King individually. They then moved to the reception hall, where Arabic coffee and lunch were served, after which the guests departed.

The author noted that King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz remained in Jeddah until the beginning of 1369 AH / 1949 CE, during which time he received many visitors offering congratulations for the new Hijrī year from the people of Jeddah and from across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He also received numerous telegrams of congratulations from various world capitals (al-Silāh, 1950, pp. 128–129).

3.2. Second: The Royal Receptions of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz for Pilgrim Delegations in Mecca

King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was keen during the pilgrimage seasons to hold an official reception dedicated to honoring the pilgrim delegations arriving from the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, including the rulers of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, and Ḥaḍramawt, among others. Their number reached about two hundred. The author recorded that on the 4th of Dhū al-Ḥijja 1368 AH / 26 September 1949 CE, these delegations arrived at the royal palace, where they were received with the warmest welcome. They were then granted the honor of greeting King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in the grand royal reception hall and conversing with him about matters beneficial to the Islamic peoples and the pilgrims. After a short rest, the King presided over the royal banquet, surrounded by Saudi princes, while the delegates were honored to sit at this great royal table. The King enveloped them with his kindness and gracious royal sentiments. After the meal, they returned to the grand reception hall,

where Arabic coffee was served. The King's poet, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghazzāwī, recited a poem before the King, which was met with appreciation and applause, leaving a beautiful impact on the hearts of those present. Incense burners of agarwood and perfume were then passed around, after which the delegates once again greeted the King before departing the palace with the same honor and hospitality with which they had been received, praying for his triumph and glory.

King 'Abd al-'Azīz also took care to organize the great annual banquet in the royal palace, held every year on the 6th of Dhū al-Ḥijja 1368 AH / 28 September 1949 CE, in honor of the delegations and Islamic missions and the distinguished figures who came from all countries to perform the pilgrimage. The aim was to consult with them on what served the interests of the holy lands and the affairs of the pilgrimage. The King's tireless efforts in serving the pilgrims, and the measures he adopted for the administration of pilgrimage each year, motivated senior delegates to come to Mecca during the pilgrimage seasons. The number of pilgrims that year reached 450,000. Given the importance of this event, it was placed under the care of Prince Fayṣal, Deputy of the King in the Ḥijāz, who personally supervised the program and its organization with precision and efficiency (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 66-68; Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1280, pp. 4-5).

The author noted that the General Administration of Pilgrimage, under the direction of Prince Fayṣal, was tasked with overseeing the banquet. Invitations were distributed to about six hundred selected guests. On the evening of the 6th of Dhū al-Ḥijja, after the Maghrib prayer, the invitees were transported in luxurious cars arranged for them from the government offices to the royal palace. The arrangements were supervised by police officers, security officials, and commissioners, led by Secretary 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥaḍrawī. Considerable effort was made by the organizers to ensure the comfort of the guests of the Sacred House of God. A unit of soldiers stood at the entrance of the palace, led by senior commanders and officers. At the palace elevator stood Commander of the Royal Guard, Prince Ayy Sa'īd Bek Jūda, with some of his men. At the entrance to the royal reception hall, they were received by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Qazzāz, Director of the Pilgrimage Committee, Dr. Rushdī Malḥas, the Secretary of the Political Division, and senior palace officials, who welcomed them with the honor befitting their rank.

They were first gathered in the grand reception hall and then ushered into the banquet hall. As soon

as the guests had taken their seats around the royal banquet table, His Majesty the King entered and took his place at the head, with his sons, court officials, and the commander of the royal guard standing behind him. Everyone rose in respect, greeted him, and prayed for his long life and enduring strength. The King signaled for the dinner to begin. At his side sat the heads of the pilgrim delegations, next to whom were seated ministers and consuls of Islamic and Arab states. Opposite them sat the princes, men of learning and literature, and representatives of the press, along with other eminent Islamic and Arab figures. The King's noble generosity and gracious sentiments filled the gathering with joy and delight, leaving them with cherished and lasting memories.

After the meal, they returned to the grand reception hall, where Arabic coffee was served, and orators and poets competed in delivering their valuable words. The banquet concluded, and all came forward to shake hands with King 'Abd al-'Azīz, expressing their gratitude for the hospitality and honor they had received. The King shook hands with each one individually. **The delegations were then seen off with full ceremony** at the first gate stood many guards holding rosewater flasks and incense burners. On one side of the palace stood Princes Fayṣal, Maṣṣūr, and 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, along with many other Saudi princes. On the other side stood Minister of Finance 'Abd Allāh al-Sulaymān, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaykh Yūsuf Yāsīn, Secretary of the King Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Dughayr, Mayor of Mecca Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Ṣabbān, Commander 'Alī Bek Jamīl, Director of Police and Public Security, and senior officials of the Ministry of Finance, including Chief Advisor Shaykh Muḥammad Surūr al-Ṣabbān and Deputy Director-General of Finance Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Sa'd. The guests then departed for their residences in the same cars that had brought them to the palace, escorted with the same honor and hospitality (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 67-71).

3.3. *Third: The Celebrations Held During the Pilgrimage Season*

The Ceremony of Washing the Ka'ba The custom of washing the Ka'ba has continued since the time of the Prophet—peace be upon him, who washed it on the day of the conquest of Mecca. The practice persisted throughout the ages, and at the beginning of the Saudi era, **it became customary to wash the Ka'ba twice** once in the month of Rajab and once at the beginning of Dhū al-Ḥijja in preparation for the pilgrimage season. King 'Abd al-'Azīz personally attended the washing of the Ka'ba and participated

with his own hands, accompanied by his sons and a large number of senior statesmen.

However, in the pilgrimage season of 1368 AH / 1949 CE, the author noted that Prince Fayṣal carried out the washing of the Ka'ba on behalf of his father, King 'Abd al-'Azīz. When Prince Fayṣal arrived at the Sacred Mosque, accompanied by princes, statesmen, and scholars, he was received with ceremonies appropriate to his status. The door of the Ka'ba was opened, and he entered with leading dignitaries of the pilgrims, the notables, and the custodians of the sanctuary, Muḥammad al-Shaybī and 'Abd Allāh al-Shaybī, along with the employees of the Sacred Mosque. All of them participated in washing the Ka'ba in a solemn religious celebration, perfuming it with Zamzam water mixed with the finest perfumes, rosewater, musk, and amber. On this occasion, the Imam of the Sacred Mosque offered a supplication, praying for the betterment of the Muslims, and for the strengthening of their kings and leaders. The ceremony concluded with chants of tahlīl and takbīr (al-Fāsī, 1999, p. 292; al-Mūjān, 2008, pp. 151–152; al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 71–72).

The Ceremony of Replacing the Ka'ba's Covering On the first of Dhū al-Ḥijja 1368 AH / 23 September 1949 CE, the Egyptian Honorary Delegation arrived carrying the new covering (Kiswa) of the Ka'ba, sent by His Majesty King Farouk, under the leadership of Dr. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām Bek. At the gates of Mecca, they were received by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Shaybī, the First Custodian of the Sacred House; Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Shaybī, the Second Custodian of the Sacred Mosque and Second Deputy of the Consultative Council; Shaykh Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Rajab, Assistant Director of the General Endowments; and Sayyid Hāshim, Deputy of the Sacred Mosque and Chairman of its Board of Directors. The delegation formally handed over the covering to the Custodian of the Sacred Mosque in the customary ceremonies, in the presence of senior figures (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 67–68).

The covering of the Ka'ba used to be replaced once every year, with the celebration of the new covering taking place on the first day of 'Īd al-Aḏḥā, after the completion of the Ṭawāf al-Ifāḍa and the Sa'y. At this point, pilgrims would remove their garments of iḥrām, put on their regular clothes, perfume themselves, cut their hair, and perform other acts that had been prohibited during iḥrām. During the reign of King 'Abd al-'Azīz, the covering consisted of four large curtains in addition to the curtain of the Ka'ba's door (burqu'). Each curtain was designated for one side of the Ka'ba, while the

belt (ḥizām) was composed of sixteen pieces of varying lengths, with four pieces for each side. Each belt was sewn onto its respective curtain before the covering was draped over the Ka'ba. King 'Abd al-'Azīz took care to attend the ceremony of dressing the Ka'ba, accompanied by princes, senior statesmen, and a large number of pilgrims returning from Minā after completing the rites of release from iḥrām. After the ceremony, the ḡuhr and 'aṣr prayers were performed in the Sacred Mosque.

In 1444 AH / 2022 CE, however, the date of replacing the Ka'ba's covering was changed to the beginning of every Hijrī year, on the 1st of Muḥarram. The old covering is formally handed over to the Saudi government (al-Silāḥ, 1950, p. 83; al-Mūjān, 2008, p. 160; Saudi Press Agency, 1444 AH).

The Celebration of 'Īd al-Aḏḥā in Minā The grand annual reception celebrating 'Īd al-Aḏḥā was usually held in Minā on the second day of the feast. Lavish preparations were made for the occasion, with Saudi green flags raised and troops lined up in formation at the entrance courtyard of the palace. The ceremonies began at two o'clock in the afternoon and lasted for three hours. King 'Abd al-'Azīz attended, and the assembled troops rendered him a military salute. He then proceeded to the grand reception hall to receive greetings for the feast. Dignitaries included leaders of Islamic states, prominent figures from across the Islamic and Arab worlds, and heads of pilgrimage missions.

At the palace entrance, the King was received by princes, led by Prince Fayṣal, Prince Manṣūr, Prince Mish'al, Prince Musā'id, Prince 'Abd al-Muḥsin, and Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, along with many other princes of the Saudi family. Senior statesmen present included 'Abd Allāh al-Sulaymān, Shaykh Yūsuf Yāsīn, Shaykh Muḥammad Surūr al-Ṣabbān, Dr. Rushdī Malḥas, Commander 'Alī Bek Jamīl, and Commander Sa'īd Bek Jūda, head of the Royal Guard. King 'Abd al-'Azīz presided over the reception hall, seated alongside his brother, Prince 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 86–87, 100; Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1281).

Umm al-Qurā reported that at three o'clock, the delegations entered the reception hall to greet King 'Abd al-'Azīz and extend their congratulations for the blessed feast. Ministers, regional governors, heads of government departments, senior officials, scholars, notables, and community leaders came forward, along with the rulers of the Gulf—namely the princes of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Abu Dhabi. They were followed by ministers plenipotentiary, chargés d'affaires, consular officials, and their representatives from Arab and Islamic countries. The

delegations of Arab and Islamic missions for that year's pilgrimage also had the honor of greeting the King, as did leaders, notables, merchants, and representatives of newspapers, radio, and press agencies across the Arab and Islamic worlds. The King invited each of them to sit by his side one by one.

After the greetings concluded, Arabic coffee and refreshments were served. The guests then returned to their tents, departing with honor and appreciation, delighted by the King's noble kindness and royal sentiments. On the third day of 'Īd al-Aḏḥā in Minā, the procession of King 'Abd al-'Azīz – may God have mercy on him – and the pilgrims returned to Mecca after completing the pilgrimage rites (Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1281, p. 4).

The Military Parade for the King in Mecca after the Completion of the Pilgrimage The author notes that after completing the pilgrimage rites, the procession of King 'Abd al-'Azīz – may God have mercy on him – together with the pilgrims, returned to Mecca on the 13th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. On this occasion, a military parade was held in front of the Royal Palace on 14 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 AH / 7 October 1949. It was organized under the supervision of his son, Prince Maṣṣūr, Minister of Defense. **The ceremony began with a magnificent military display in the following order** the command corps, the military band performing its spirited anthems, followed by the flag corps, graduates of the military academy, and thereafter the army units, which had been organized and trained in modern methods. Behind them marched tanks and heavy artillery, along with other armed divisions with their equipment.

The parade was attended by King 'Abd al-'Azīz, his Royal Guard, princes, high-ranking officials of the Royal Court, ministers, provincial governors, heads of government departments, senior officials, notables, and pilgrims. Each division of the armed forces passed before the King, rendering a military salute in grand displays of enthusiasm, which he reciprocated with a gracious wave of his hand. The parade concluded with the military band performing the royal anthem (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 103–104; Umm al-Qurā, 1949, no. 1281, p. 4).

Honorary Receptions for Official Delegations It was customary for representatives of states and heads of pilgrimage missions, after the completion of the pilgrimage, to hold honorary receptions in recognition of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's efforts in serving the ḥajj and the pilgrims. The author records that on the evening of 16 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 AH / 9 October 1949, Khwāja Shahāb al-Dīn,

Minister of the Interior of Pakistan and head of the Pakistani pilgrimage mission, hosted a tea reception at the Bank Misr Hotel in Ajyād. The event was honored by the attendance of Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal and included senior officials, ministers, statesmen, scholars, writers, journalists, broadcasters, and representatives of Islamic missions from various Arab and Islamic countries. In his remarks, the Pakistani minister praised King 'Abd al-'Azīz's efforts in facilitating the pilgrimage that year. The gathering exchanged cordial greetings, and refreshments of fine fruit, sweets, tea, and beverages were served in an atmosphere of courtesy and distinction.

On 17 Dhū al-Ḥijjah / 10 October 1949, 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām Bek, Amir of the Egyptian pilgrimage mission, hosted a tea reception at the same venue. Attendees included Princes Fayṣal, Maṣṣūr, and 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, along with senior statesmen. A Saudi military band performed honors at the entrance of the hotel. After the assembly settled, 'Azzām delivered a speech expressing gratitude for the services provided by the government of King 'Abd al-'Azīz. Prince Fayṣal responded with a gracious address, affirming: "What the government of His Majesty the King has undertaken is but a duty fulfilled within its means and capacities, and, God willing, it will continue to secure ever greater improvements in the affairs of the pilgrimage." His words were met with enthusiastic applause, reflecting joy at the successful completion of the pilgrimage and appreciation for his supervision and care in organizing it. After the reception, the princes departed amid the same ceremonies of honor with which they had been received (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 104–105).

The author further notes that the Saudi princes and statesmen organized several other honorary receptions, which reflected the spirit of Islamic solidarity. Among the most prominent were the banquet hosted by Prince Maṣṣūr, Minister of Defense, attended by ministers and heads of Islamic pilgrimage missions; the grand reception hosted by Prince 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal, Deputy Viceroy of the Ḥijāz; and the sumptuous banquet given by Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Sulaymān, Saudi Minister of Finance, for the heads of Islamic delegations and statesmen. In addition, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Surūr al-Ṣabbān, adviser to the Ministry of Finance, hosted a reception in honor of pilgrimage missions, as did Shaykh Sulaymān al-Ḥamad, Deputy Minister of Finance. Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Māni', Director of Education, also gave a luncheon for members of the Azhar delegation, attended by numerous educators

from both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The speeches delivered at these gatherings expressed the close ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt (al-Silāḥ, 1950, pp. 105–106).

4. CONCLUSION

The true historical value of Muḥammad al-Silāḥ's book *Wathbat al-Diyār al-Ḥijāziyya fi 'Ahd 'Āhil al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya* lies in the fact that the author was an eyewitness who documented in his account the scenes he personally observed during his journey to the Ḥijāz to perform the pilgrimage, as well as events he heard of, highlighting the efforts of King 'Abd al-'Azīz in serving the pilgrims. His narrative illustrates the King's distinguished leadership during the pilgrimage season and his pioneering role in the service of Islam and Muslims.

King 'Abd al-'Azīz devoted great attention to the pilgrimage season, issuing directives to establish special committees to organize pilgrimage affairs, improve the services offered to pilgrims, and oversee their delivery. To further develop the administrative framework for the pilgrimage, he ordered the creation of the General Directorate of Pilgrimage under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance, with the Office of the Viceroy of the Ḥijāz as its reference authority. This body coordinated all government departments connected to the pilgrimage within an integrated system.

Until his passing, King 'Abd al-'Azīz personally oversaw the pilgrimage season each year, inspecting the conditions of both pilgrims and citizens, except in certain years when he delegated this responsibility to his sons.

The royal receptions in the Ḥijāz were organized under the supervision of his Viceroy in the Ḥijāz, the Minister of Defense, and senior statesmen. These ceremonies included a grand celebration featuring the royal anthem, military parades, and welcoming

poems.

The King's popularity was evident in the streets of the Ḥijāz, where citizens would greet him with prayers and acclamations of honor. In turn, King 'Abd al-'Azīz generously bestowed alms and gifts upon the people.

During the pilgrimage season, he took care to meet numerous princes, scholars, dignitaries, officials, merchants, and popular delegations, listening to them and attending to their needs. He also hosted a dedicated reception to honor the delegations arriving from the Arabian Peninsula, and another grand annual reception in the Royal Palace for international Islamic delegations and dignitaries, consulting them on matters beneficial to Muslims at large.

King 'Abd al-'Azīz also took a personal interest in the religious ceremonies held during the pilgrimage, including the ritual washing of the Ka'ba, the replacement of its kiswa, and the celebrations of 'Īd al-Adḥā.

The pilgrimage season was further distinguished by the numerous honorary receptions held by heads of pilgrimage delegations after completing the rites each year, expressing gratitude for the Kingdom's efforts in facilitating the pilgrimage. Additionally, Saudi princes and statesmen hosted several honorary gatherings for official delegations, reflecting a strong spirit of Islamic solidarity.

This study further demonstrates how royal ceremonies under King 'Abd al-'Azīz functioned as instruments of nation-building and religious diplomacy. Through these public acts, the emerging Saudi state projected an image of unity, legitimacy, and custodianship over the holy sites, transforming the pilgrimage from a purely spiritual journey into a stage for asserting political stability and Islamic leadership. In doing so, these ceremonies established the symbolic vocabulary of authority and identity that would come to define modern Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix A. Chronological Summary of the 1949 Pilgrimage Season Ceremonial Events.

Date (Hijri / Gregorian)	Location	Event Description
15 Dhū al-Qa'dah 1368 / 7 September 1949	Riyadh To Ṭā'if (Al-Hawiyah Airport)	King 'Abd al-'Azīz departed from Riyadh by plane and arrived at Al-Hawiyah Airport, Ṭā'if. A formal royal reception was organized under the supervision of Crown Prince Saud and Prince Fayṣal.
15-20 Dhū al-Qa'dah 1368 / 7-12 September 1949	Ṭā'if	Series of welcoming ceremonies led by Prince Fayṣal, including a grand military parade on 20 Dhū al-Qa'dah attended by senior officials, scholars, and citizens.
30 Dhū al-Qa'dah 1368 / 22 September 1949	Makkah al-Mukarramah	Arrival of the royal procession to Makkah; greeted by artillery salute and mass public reception. King performed 'Umrah and prayers at the Holy Mosque.
4 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 26 September 1949	Royal Palace, Makkah	Reception held for Arabian Peninsula delegations (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, and others).
6 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 29 September 1949	Royal Palace, Makkah	Annual royal banquet and reception for international Islamic delegations and consular representatives.
11 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 4 October 1949	Minā	'Īd al-Adḥā celebration and royal reception for dignitaries and foreign delegations.
12 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 5 October 1949	Makkah	Return of the royal convoy from Minā to Makkah after completion of pilgrimage rituals.
14 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 7 October 1949	Makkah (Royal Palace)	Grand military parade organized by Prince Maṣṣūr, Minister of Defense, featuring army divisions, tanks, and royal guards.
16 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 9 October 1949	Makkah	Diplomatic tea reception hosted by Pakistan's Interior Minister Khawaja Shihāb al-Dīn, attended by Saudi princes and officials.
17 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 10 October 1949	Makkah	Reception organized by Egyptian delegation head 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb 'Aẓẓām Bey, attended by princes Fayṣal, Maṣṣūr, and 'Abd Allāh al-Fayṣal.
25 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / 18 October 1949	Umm al-Salam & Jeddah	Farewell ceremonies for King 'Abd al-'Azīz upon departure from Makkah to Jeddah. Official reception held by Prince 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sudayrī and dignitaries.
Late Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1368 / October 1949	Jeddah	Arrival at Khuzām Palace; formal reception by ministers, officials, and notables. King remained in Jeddah until the beginning of 1369 AH, receiving congratulatory messages for the new Hijri year.