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Luc Chantre, ed., *Un administrateur colonial au cœur de l'Islam: Rapport de Paul Gillotte sur le pèlerinage des Algériens à La Mecque en 1905*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2016. 151 pp. Bibliography, appendices, and photographs. €15.00 (pb). ISBN 979-10-320-0073-1.

Review by Baz Lecocq, Humboldt University of Berlin.

This publication is a critically annotated primary source. The main body of the text consists of a long report on the “official” Algerian pilgrimage to Mecca in 1905 by its accompanying colonial administrator, Paul Gillotte.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the French government organised what became known as “le pèlerinage officiel,” a state-organised and partly subsidised pilgrim journey to Mecca from the ports of Algeria. The French administration sought to take on state responsibilities in the organisation of the hajj, a function previously exercised by the Ottoman authorities and by local religious institutions known as *Ahbās* (which the French had abolished in 1840), and therewith to project its power towards both its Muslim subjects and the Ottoman Empire, which the French feared still commanded loyalty in colonial Algeria.

In order to check Ottoman influence and, later, that of new ideologies and religious ideas (especially Bolshevism and Wahhabism), the French colonial government not only sought to organise the pilgrimage logistics, but to effectively monitor the behaviour and thoughts of the pilgrims. To this end, each official pilgrimage was accompanied by a number of French administrators, who were responsible for the well-being of the pilgrims during their journey, assisted them with travel formalities (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mainly medical vaccinations, later in the twentieth century also the organisation of passports, visas and banking services), but who above all tried to keep an eye open for possible nefarious anti-French influences and ideologies, which they reported to their superiors.

Such a report is presented here, accompanied by a most helpful biographical introduction on its author and the context in which it was written, and commented upon in explanatory notes. The introduction by Luc Chantre, who found the report during his research on the Algerian hajj in the National Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence, gives a good overview of all we need to know to understand the report, which makes this book comprehensible to those who might be familiar with French metropolitan history, but less so with the history of its Algerian colony. Chantre situates Gillotte as a career administrator, born in the French Algerian city of Constantine to French *colons* and attempting to further his career by volunteering to accompany

the hajj in 1905. Chantre then briefly but comprehensively describes the French involvement in the organisation of the hajj in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Algeria. The main themes and topics include the political context, both in Algeria and abroad (especially the international position of the Ottoman Empire); the rise of global epidemics, especially cholera, through international shipping; the position of the hajj in the spread of these epidemics, and the international efforts to contain these epidemics by vaccination campaigns and the organisation of international quarantine stations in the Red Sea; the increasing state regulation of the hajj; and the social and religious aspects of the hajj from the point of view of the Algerian Muslims. This overview is followed by a discussion of the role of the *administrateur accompagnant le pèlerinage officiel* and especially the way Gillotte performed this function, as well as his views on Muslims, the hajj, and the role of the colonial administration toward both.

What is striking is that Gillotte was not a specialist on Islam. As a career administrator he was trained to administer French colonial citizens more than he was trained to understand Muslim subjects, and he clearly had either not read or misunderstood the by then already vast body of work on Islam in Algeria compiled by colonial Arabists such as Massignon and Houdas. This would have severely hampered his ability to actually monitor the political influences the pilgrims were suspected to undergo, as these would be framed largely in a finely nuanced discourse based in Islamic thought. Chantre points out that Gillotte based most of his observations on the larger political context of the Muslim world on publications by journalists and the few conversations he had with other Europeans based in Jeddah, especially medical doctors and the French consul, who himself reported directly to the French administration. As he was not a Muslim, Gillotte could not accompany the pilgrims all the way to Mecca and was forced to remain in Jeddah waiting for their return. He therefore chose to beef up his report with some almost touristic observations and *faits divers* about Jeddah. The report would therefore most likely not have been of great intelligence value to his superiors, and the reader who hopes to learn more about the intricacies of the early twentieth-century pilgrimage from the point of view of Muslims subjects will be highly disappointed by this book.

The report is nevertheless interesting to the historian of French Algeria and the wider colonial Muslim world for three main reasons. First, it gives further material on the logistics and material organisation of the official pilgrimage, as well as on the international efforts to contain steamship-borne epidemics, and it gives insight in the colonial frame of mind and the way stereotypes based on misconceptions and the lack of knowledge long informed colonial attitudes toward France's Muslim subjects. Luckily, Chantre makes this clear from the start in his introduction, where he dedicates a last paragraph to "a colonial view on the hajj," in which Gillotte's misconceptions are contextualised within the prevailing views of his days. The last reason why this work is interesting to the historian of the hajj is the vast body of photographs that form part of the report. Some of these would later become emblematic and circulated widely in the French colonial world. Photo number five, "Pèlerins au départ du navire," for example, is now claimed to depict the great-grandfathers of a variety of inhabitants of the city of Timbuktu.

Baz Lecocq  
Humboldt University of Berlin  
[baz.lecocq@hu-berlin.de](mailto:baz.lecocq@hu-berlin.de)

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