

PAN-ISLAMIC COOPERATION AND ANTI-COLONIALISM BETWEEN THE OTTOMAN CALIPHATE AND THE MALAY WORLD

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Abstract

Human civilization has been profoundly shaped by the ancient oceanic maritime trading connections linking the Mediterranean World and Africa to China, via the Arabian, Indian, and Southeast Asian ports, shaping social and cultural exchanges enriched by numerous cultures, including the religion of Islam. The Malay World has always been at the crossroads of international maritime traffic, developing a common and diverse culture incorporating local and global elements, notably Hindu-Buddhist, Confucian, and Islamic influences, in a long and generally peaceful civilizational paradigm prior to the advent of European colonial exploitation. The active and multidimensional relations between the Ottoman Caliphate and the Muslim rulers of India and Muslim Southeast Asia have been largely forgotten, despite extensive materials available in Ottoman, and local Malay archives. This paper explores Pan-Islamic cooperation between the Ottoman Caliphate and Southeast Asia in the context of anti-colonial resistance, focusing on specific diplomatic relations between the Sublime Porte and the sultanates of Aceh, Riau, and Jambi from the 16th century onwards, analysing the role of Malay Muslims in the Ottoman Caliphate, and the role of the Ottomans in Sumatran resistance to Dutch colonialism. The latter 19th century witnessed increased interactions between the Ottoman Empire and many local sultanates in Southeast Asia, facilitated by the role of Hadramis, Ottoman consuls, the Pan-Islamist press, and pilgrims and clerics. The history of the Pan-Islamic platform offers great scope for developing countries to autonomously assist each other without

neo-imperialist agendas, recovering their historical position and dignity as vibrant, compassionate societies.

Keywords: *Hadramis, Islam, Malay World, Ottoman Caliphate, Pan-Islamism, Anti-Colonialism*

Introduction

South and Southeast Asia have been regions of vibrant cultural exchanges across the centuries, but their fundamental role in the development of human civilization has been sorely neglected in historical studies and popular consciousness rooted in Western perspectives viewing them as regions awaiting discovery by European colonialists. The crucial region of Malaya is the hub of the busy seafaring route between India and China, which has been an artery of commerce since ancient times, and the Malay region itself was globally famous for its profitable spice trade. Spices from Southeast Asia were valuable international commodities, used in medicine in addition to gastronomic refinement, and prior to European encroachment from the 16th century onwards it was mainly Arab traders who brought spices to the Middle East (and to Europe beyond). There is no specific date for the advent of Arabs in this affluent region, but they certainly came considerably earlier than any other known traders, and their contact with this region goes far back in history to the pre-Islamic era, as evidenced by the rapid proliferation of Islamic communities and influences in maritime ports as far as China at a time when the terrestrial armies of the Arab-Islamic civilization had not extended beyond Greater Persia.

This paper underscores the immense potential of this region that intensifies the process of awareness between wide-ranging groups of people. Arabs (particularly those of Yemen and Oman) were known for their voyaging skills and maritime prowess since prehistoric times, and they had extensive activities in the wider region of Southeast Asia. They were the leading adventurers in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, producing travel books and navigational manuals for traders and seafarers. Hindu taboos about deep sea voyages meant that Arabs who braved the ocean main were welcomed in the ports of India, connecting the Subcontinent to global maritime trade. The role of early Arab navigators and their mercantile activities in this part of the world, and their innovative drive, were of great magnitude in the history of global trade, and their pioneering and unprecedented tasks in the field of navigation are a fundamental contribution to human life on this planet.¹ The crucial role of early Arab navigators was accentuated by Islamic injunctions relating to voyages and navigation in the Holy Qur'ān:

He is the One who has subjugated the sea, so that you may eat fresh meat from it, and may take out from it ornaments

you wear, and you see the boats cleaving through it, and so that you may seek His bounty, and that you may be grateful. And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you, and rivers and tracks, so that you may find the right way,²

(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break. He has made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning. This is a measure set by the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.³

Early links between the Middle East and Southeast Asia

The Arab-Islamic civilization of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties was mainly preoccupied with the conquest and administration of West Asia and the Southern Mediterranean regions, while independent and peaceful traders propagated their commercial activities across the Indian Ocean. The terrestrial Muslim empires became engaged with this phenomenon as they began penetrating into India, with the Umayyad victory over Daybul in Sind in 712, and the following conquest during the reign of Caliph Hisham b. Abd al-Malik (723-43), who sent Junaid b. ‘Abd al-Rahman (722-28) as a governor of Sind. Junaid conquered the neighbouring territories of Bailman and Jurz (Gujarat).⁴ The subsequent establishment of the Abbasid capital Baghdad in 762 marked a more eastward-looking orientation in the Muslim heartlands of the Middle East. During the reign of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mahdi (r. 775-85), Abdul Malik b. Shihab al-Masmai attacked Gujarat and captured the coastal city of Barbad near Bharuch in 777, giving additional stimulation to Muslim marine commerce and settlement from the littorals of East Africa to southern China, marking a profound change of the locus of Islamic civilization to the East, and Asia.⁵ Sulaiman Tajir (237/851) provided a glimpse into what a typical full circle maritime trip from Siraf to Canton would have been during the Abbasid era, and Al-Masudi (d. 956) described parallel oceangoing missions in the South-western Indian Sea, from Arabia to East Africa (*Bilad al-Zanj*). Likewise, al-Himyari described palm tree plantation among the people of Sarandip (Sri Lanka), who freely mingled with foreigners.⁶

The advent of Muslims in South India was incredibly significant due to the thriving maritime trade there, which was at a high point during the 9th century. Many seaport towns of the region became famous because of the benign behaviour of their rulers’ admirable and conducive working atmosphere for the foreign merchants. The Muslim chiefs of the Malabar ports emphasized the guiding principle of fostering harmony among the thousands of traders who flocked to the ports from various parts of the world, following different religions and beliefs. Traders from Arabia, China, Egypt, and the Roman world used to visit Muziris (Kodungallur), a port of Malabar that became a trajectory for Muslim merchants and

chieftains, and a hub of spices and ivory of great demand in global markets.⁷

Tabari recounts that the Muslims of Iraq during the second decade after Hijra noticed a Chinese ship at the northern tip of the Arabian Gulf; such vessels would have passed by Arab ships on their eastbound trip, dropping anchor at the ports of al-Bahrain and Oman. The adventurous Arabs inhabiting the entire shore of the Gulf, traditionally under the suzerainty of the Sassanid Empire (224-651), could unleash their potential under the shade of Islam, and they brought drastic changes in every sphere of life for many centuries, including in trade, warfare, shipbuilding, history, and geography. Sulaiman Tajir took to the sea for trading purposes, and left an extensive overview of places, people, and commodities.⁸ By the 15th century this remarkable trading network was flourishing peacefully, making it a ripe target for the nascent European empires. Ahmad ibn Majid (d. 1500) described marine traffic in South and Southeast Asia in the 15th and 16th centuries, noting how ships could harmlessly traverse the eastern seas. It is possible that this was the same Ahmad ibn Majid who acted as pilot (*mua'llim*) to Vasco da Gama (d. 1524) during his voyage from Malindi (on the east coast of Africa) to Calicut (on the western coast of India) in 1498.⁹

The advent of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean signalled the end of peaceful Arab-Islamic trade between Africa and China, and the beginning of militarization and conquest. Da Gama himself burnt alive 200-400 voyagers on an Arab ship in Cannanore, north of Calicut, after stealing their cargo on his second expedition to India in 1502. He also detained and massacred 38 Hindu fishermen to terrorize the Zamorin, the Hindu ruler of Calicut. The Portuguese seizure of Malacca in 1511 and of Hormuz in 1515 sealed the fate of Arab navigation and seaborne commerce until Arab sailors reached an understanding with the new lords of the sea, the Portuguese, under Admiral da Gama and his successor Afonso de Albuquerque (d. 1515).¹⁰ The Spanish and Portuguese targeted Southeast Asia to extend their crusades against the Muslims in Iberia and the Southern Mediterranean. Afonso de Albuquerque, the conqueror of Malacca in 1511, explained the religious rationale for the Portuguese "trading" activities in Southeast Asia as a means to attack Ottoman finances in furtherance of the crusades:

"The first of these is the great service we shall render to Our Lord by throwing the Moslems out of this country and preventing the first of the Mohammedan sect from spreading any further. I hope in Our Lord that, as a result of our doing this, the Moslems may be driven out of India [i.e., the broader region of the Indies] altogether... The King of Portugal has often commanded me to go to the Straits, because it seemed

to His Highness that this was the best place to intercept the trade which the Moslems of Cairo and of Mecca and Jeddah carry on in these parts. So it was to do Our Lord's service that we were brought here; by taking Malacca, we would close the Straits so that never again would the Moslems be able to bring their spices by this route...

"It is the source of all the spices and drugs that the Moslems ship from here each year to the Straits, without our being able to stop them.... Since we gained control of the Malabar pepper trade, Cairo has not received any except what the Moslems have been able to take from this region. Forty or fifty [ships] sail every year from here bound for Mecca, laden with all kinds of spices...

"I am very sure that, if this Malacca trade is taken out of their [Muslim] hands, Cairo and Mecca will be completely lost".¹¹

This account concisely presents the geostrategic entailments of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. For Europeans, this was always premised on the destruction of the Ottoman Caliphate, a struggle that engaged them for over four centuries. During the 16th century the Spanish and Portuguese transposed their crusades against the Muslims of Iberia and the Southern Mediterranean to a new theatre in Southeast Asia; De Albuquerque himself rose to prominence crusading against North African Muslims, including Ottoman forces. The Catholic powers were passionately committed to economic warfare against the Muslims by shattering their peaceful trading activities in Africa and Asia, and violently commandeering the resources of the peoples of those lands, with the final goal of razing Cairo and Makkah. Consequently, when the Ottomans assumed the Caliphate in 1517, it was already a matter of state to extend military and political protection to defend the Muslims and other communities from North Africa to China, imperilled by the European venture.¹² When the Portuguese and Spanish were later eclipsed by other European empires (particularly the British and Dutch), the Ottomans continued in their responsibility to resist colonial oppression.

Against the backdrop of this global political struggle stretching across centuries, the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia continued to live as best they could, and to continue their trading and cultural activities and existence to the best of their ability. The Malay World was the centre of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia, and Malacca on the Malay coast (successively under Portuguese, Dutch, and then British domination from 1511 onwards) was the major maritime centre in the larger Muslim Indian Ocean trading network, eclipsing centres on Java and Sumatra. Malacca had a

sizeable Muslim population that had strong connections to western Indian merchants and ports, such as Cambay and Gujarat.¹³

The Ottoman era of adventure

The Fatimid annexation of Egypt and the subsequent foundation of Cairo in 969 triggered a major political and trading confrontation with the Abbasids (750-1258). The Fatimids effectively diverted business from the western Indian Ocean (from Baghdad and the Persian Gulf) to Fustat and the Red Sea. The profitable marine route of Egypt and the Red Sea to the western Indian Ocean was supervised by the Ayyubids and Mamluks after the collapse of the Fatimids in 1171. The Ayyubids were Kurds, and the Mamluks were mainly Central Asian and Turkish slaves; their increasing political power throughout the Muslim world from the 10th century onwards marked the rise of the Turkic peoples, including the Ottomans, who began their awesome advancement as a frontier state launching fierce raids on Byzantine regions early in the 13th century. The Mongols routed the Saljuqs in the battle of Kose Dag in 1243, creating great flux among the Turkish nomads coming into Asia Minor and the Anatolian plateau. The disintegration of Saljuq power led to the establishment of several trivial states under volatile Mongol suzerainty. After capturing Bursa, and founding its capital in 1326, the Ottomans became the key actors in the divisive conflict that plagued the Byzantine Empire in its concluding years.¹⁴

After subjugating Greece, Macedonia, and Bulgaria the Ottomans successfully got control over Kosovo in 1389, which gave the avenue of further acquisition of European territories. By their rapid success the Ottomans subjugated Constantinople in the spectacular triumph of Fatih Sultan Mehmet (r. 1451-81) in 1453. This ultimate feat galvanized the Ottomans to become the preeminent and universal Muslim rulers. In 1517 Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-20) subjugated the Mamluk domain in Syria and Egypt, and assumed guardianship of the holy cities of the Hejaz as *Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn* (Servant of the Holy Cities), which had been the emblem of revered supremacy amongst the Muslim lands, and with that the Caliphate. Subsequently the Ottomans had absolute authority over all Muslim states worldwide, including in the Indian Ocean, and responsibility to combat the attempts by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean to destroy the Muslim economy and seafaring routes to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah as a prelude to a renewed crusade.¹⁵

At this crucial juncture, the Ottoman sway had extended towards India, particularly the Deccan, and the western coast of the Subcontinent. The Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66), wanted to help Sultan Muzaffar Shah II (r. 1511-26), the ruler of Gujarat, against the Portuguese, but the death of Sultan Selim

in 1520 had caused some upheavals in Ottoman realms that hampered coordinated military action for a time. The subsequent years showed the growth of Portuguese intensity in the Indian Ocean, and caused a major armed menace to the Muslim states and their maritime trade, including in the Mediterranean Sea. The Hajj of Muslims from the East to Makkah was also threatened by Portuguese maritime terrorism. Facing this rising danger, and seeking to prevent the Portuguese gaining terrestrial footholds, Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Bahadur Shah (r. 1526-37) of Gujarat looked for support to the Ottomans. At that point of time the governor of Diu was Malik Toghan. Consequently, the first Ottoman armada arrived under the command of Mustafa Bayram at Diu in 1531, with 2,000 soldiers. This Ottoman gesture boosted the morale of the Indian Muslims.¹⁶

In addition, the Ottoman conquest of Aden in 1538 gave them supremacy over the Red Sea maritime route and increased their ability to protect the spice trade, which was a decisive move and a golden chance for the Acehnese to establish connections with the Ottoman Empire, as the greatest Islamic state and protector of Muslim maritime kingdoms in India and Southeast Asia.¹⁷ This kind of assistance was given a fillip by Hadim Suleyman Pasha, who in 1538 cruised to Diu on the coast of southern Gujarat with a flotilla comprising 72 ships and 6,500 men; furthermore, cannon cast in Egypt (dated Muharram 938/ August 1530), were brought to Gujarat in a flotilla by the Turkish Admiral Hadim Suleyman Pasha, to fight against the Portuguese at Diu Fort in 1538. The larger canon bears the inscription the name of *Sultan Sulayman Khan b. Salim Khan azza wa nasarahu*, and the second line states *amalahu Muhammad b. Hamzah* (craftsmanship of Muhammad b. Hamzah). The larger of the two, the Nilam Tope cannon, is over 5.2 m (17 ft) long, with a bore of 25cm (9 ½ ins).¹⁸

Khvajah Safar, the Governor of Surat, and Ali Khan, a Gujarati General commanding 19,000 warriors, joined the Turks and the joint forces stuck an overwhelming blow to the Portuguese garrison of only 800 soldiers, razing most of the fort wall, and sparing the puny garrison. The Turkish navy left and cruised back to their position, whereas the Gujaratis under Khvajah Safar set flame to parts of Diu, then they left.¹⁹ At this crucial juncture, the Ottomans had built relations with the Mughals, who held sway in the Deccan and most of Northwest India. Ottoman explorers and soldiers were by then recognized as proficient gunners and mariners, and were mainly employed by the Mughals as elite artillerymen. A few talented Turks were already serving under the sultanate of Gujarat, such as Rumi Khan, Safar Khudawand Khan, and his son Rajab Khudawand Khan. Rumi Khan latter served under the Mughal Emperor Humayun (r. 1530-56) as chief of artillery, and held the fiefs of Ranir, Surat, Mahim and Diu. Safar Khudawand Khan was responsible for the

ruling the town of Surat successfully for many years, where he constructed a fort and erected fortifications in the Turkish style. His son Rajab Khan held the position of Governor of Surat in 1546 and continued in this post until his death in 1560. Sidi Ali Reis (1498-1563), the Ottoman admiral and navigator, was given a splendid welcome in Surat and other parts of Gujarat as a testimony of the lofty position of the Ottoman Turks in the Indian subcontinent. There were more than 300 Turks enrolled in the Gujarat army at the time of its collapse at the hands of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) in 1572.²⁰

Indian Muslims had been active in the trade and defence of the Indian Ocean long before the Ottoman venture into Indian waters during the 16th century. Many Muslim merchants from Egypt settled in Calicut, and intermarried with local Muslim women. In Gujarat, Tom Pires met many warriors including Abyssinians, Arabs, Egyptians, Gilanis, Khorasanis, Persians, Rumis, and Turkomans, who helped Sultan Mahmud Begada (r. 1458-1511), the Sultan of Gujarat, to quell the rebellious Kanbi and Koli groups.²¹ The volume of trade was inexorably increasing, and the Ottoman state devised different systems for securing revenue from this. In provinces next to the Indian Ocean, business-oriented Ottoman officials tested new taxation policies to manage traffic via the competing routes of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, thus enhancing revenues from both. In the Red Sea, the government itself became an active partner in trade by sending the frequent fleet of ships, investing in public enterprise spice cargoes from Yemen and selling them in Egypt for significant gain. The Ottoman business managers established trading centres, including in Hormuz, Calicut, and Aceh, and developed business for the royal coffers in the overseas trading centres. Simultaneously, these plans amounted to a broad scheme for increasing Indian Ocean trade, for the universal benefit of all stakeholders, which proved more equitable and financially responsible than the rapacious plunder of the Europeans, including the British, who in later centuries reduced India to destitution.²² A contemporary scholar has suggested that during the term of the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1565–79) the Ottomans undertook a conscious strategy of establishing a ‘soft empire’ in the Indian Ocean, seeking to expand Ottoman ascendancy through the peaceful expansion of cultural, economic, and political connections with the Muslim states of the region. However, this strategy petered out after the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed in 1579, combined with the death of the Sultan of Sumatra Ali Ri'ayat Shah I (1571-79), a close Ottoman ally in the Indian Ocean region.²³

The worsening condition of Muslim states in the 18th and 19th centuries

The 18th and 19th centuries were dominated by chaos and confusion in the world of Muslim politics. The resurgence of Russia

challenged Turkish hegemony in Northwest Asia, as seen in the Turko-Russian War (1768-74) and the Russian invasion of the Crimea in 1783. The bulk of Muslims of Central Asia and different parts of the globe increasingly came under European domination, particularly that of the British, French, Russian, and Dutch empires. In certain cases, reigns of terror, brutal tyranny, and torture led to arrivals of Muslim immigrants to the areas under Ottoman control. Due to deteriorating political conditions, Muslims were too weak to repulse intrusion in the Caucasus in the 1850s and 1860s, the Yunan region in China in the 1860s, Egypt (1881), and the Sudan (1884). The sequence of persistent setbacks revealed the vulnerability of societies and governments in the Muslim countries, and their exposure to European antagonism. Initial efforts at moderate fiscal improvements and embracing trivial traits of Western culture under Ottoman Tanzimat reforms (1839-76) did little to overturn the Ottomans' deterioration. Endless wars and unethical, egotistic political entrepreneurs and traitors impeded advancement, until Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876-1909) started to consolidate the Ottoman government from 1878, which facilitated the harmonization and growth of Ottoman civilization throughout Ottoman lands and beyond, enabled in some cases by Pan-Islamic funding, and Pan-Islamism became the keystone of Ottoman external strategy until the end of World War I.²⁴

Pan-Islamism

It is pertinent to record that an embryonic blueprint for Pan-Islamism was envisioned in the beginning of the 18th century by Shah Wali Allah (1703-62) in his book *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*. He implored the Muslims to rally around one banner and work regularly and unitedly for the success of Islam. The endorsement of the Ottoman Sultan's right to be the Caliph of all Muslims was also asserted in the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca (1774). Attempts to ascertain widespread Islamic guidance and mutual defence against colonialist encroachment were already emergent prior to 19th century Pan-Islamism, but as a modern political concept, "Pan-Islamism" likely crystallized as a counterpart to "Pan-Slavism", which became popular in Eastern Europe during the 1870s. The specific use of "Pan-Islamism" dates from a German work by Franz von Werner, *Türkische Skizzen (Turkish Sketches)* (University of California Libraries, 1877).²⁵

Pan-Islamism is entrenched in the doctrinal principle in the unity of all Muslim followers in a single society (the ummah). In Islam, the formal submission of Muslims in subservience to Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (*Ṣalā Allāh-u-ʿalaihe wa sallam*), is the basis of life. It is an issue of commitment for Muslims to obey Islam, as part of which they should surrender their egoistic interests to the revealed wisdom of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. This

is manifested in the devotees being unified together in this venture, and Allah has cautioned the Muslims not be partitioned, which will be a root of loss in worldly terms, rising from the spiritual ailment of disagreement and arrogance, as adumbrated in the following Quranic verses:

*O you who believe, fear Allah, as He should be feared, and let not yourself die save as Muslims. Hold fast, all of you, to the cord of Allah, and be not divided. Remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, so that, you became brothers through His blessing. You were at the brink of a pit of Fire, then He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path.”.*²⁶

*Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with each other, lest you should lose courage, and your prowess should evaporate; and be patient. Surely, Allah is with the patient.”.*²⁷

*All believers are but brothers, therefore seek reconciliation between your two brothers, and fear Allah, so that you may be blessed with mercy..*²⁸

These verses indicate the point that from the beginnings of Islam, the Muslim ummah has – according to its own understanding – only been capable to withstand those seeking its annihilation by surrender to Allah, unity, and persistence, obtaining the miracle of constant survival from Allah. Subsequently, Muslims all over the world fundamentally desire to be as one unit, like cells in a body, reciprocally helping each other in hours of necessity, which is precisely how the Prophet (*Ṣalālah-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*) explained the spirit of the ummah as being comparable to a single human body:

*“The likeness of the believers in their mutual love, mercy and compassion is that of the body; when one part of it is in pain, the rest of the body joins it in restlessness and fever”.*²⁹

Conceptualizations of Pan-Islamism

As a Socialist Liberation Ideology

An early 20th-century observer, Mushir H. Kidwai, considered that the European fear and opposition to Pan-Islamism was due to Islam’s historical role as an anti-imperial ideology:

“Islam once defied the mighty Empires of Rome and Persia, Greece and Egypt and succeeded at last in extending its

influence over all the known world. It has also defied successfully the armed, fanatical and aggressive opposition of the combined forces of Christendom during the crusades, and as a religion, in spite of the innumerable odds against it, it stands not only unvanquished but even progressive and victorious”.³⁰

He linked this implicit threat to European colonialism to the unifying force of Islamic rites, particularly the Hajj pilgrimage, and the supposedly socialist credentials of Islam as a political ideology of liberation:

“The idea of establishing practically the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God by that great and true Socialist is the germ and the basis of Pan-Islamism, while the unconcealable truth that embodies the first principles of Islam is a fire that burns in the heart of every true Musalman and is bound to do its work of kindling others with the same flame. The fact is that whether a Musalman openly styles himself a Pan-Islamist or not, he is in spirit and at heart a Pan-Islamist and is sure to be ready to serve the cause of Islam and even to spread it howsoever he can... Every Musalman became an ardent advocate and a keen lover of Islam and ready to risk even his life to further its cause”.³¹

As Ottoman policy

Sultan Abdul Hamid II's adoption of Pan-Islamism had little to do with the “socialist” vision of Kidwai described above except in so far as this related to resisting colonialism. The Sultan's primary foreign policy vision was rooted in classical Islamic ethics and doctrines, relative to the existential threats of European colonialism throughout the Muslim world. Islam accepts, protects, and honours ethnic identities except where these run contrary to Islamic ethics – for example, tribalism is specifically condemned in Islamic morals, thus tribal feuds or nepotism are abhorrent to Islamic *shari'ah*, while manifestations of a tribal identity (e.g. clothing and language etc.) are encouraged and celebrated; the Ottoman civilization was particularly notable for its celebration of minority cultural manifestations, especially of non-Muslim religious groups. However, the European colonial venture attempted to replace the universal philosophy of Islamic belief with numerous types of exclusive national identities, fomenting exclusionary and fanatical nationalism at the expense of harmony among Muslims and indeed other communities in traditionally Muslim lands; the scars of this are still seen in the nationalist, genocidal struggles of recent history in the Balkans and elsewhere. The greatest achievement of European colonialism was its classic divide-and-rule tactic applied in the Muslim world, pitting

Albanians, Arabs, Armenians, Bosnians, Greeks, Hindus, Jews, Kurds, Turks and others against each other, in their struggles for exclusionary national states, thereby serving Western colonial interests. This project scattered the seeds of many of the geopolitical “blunders” that continue to stain the world today (and fill the banks and treasuries of Europe and North America).³²

The main hindrance of this project was Pan-Islamism, particularly as championed by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The Ottoman “sultans” received the title of “Caliph” when the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil III (r. 1508-17) of Cairo ceded the title to Sultan Selim I, after the Ottomans undertook the obligation to preserve the Holy Sanctuaries at Makkah and Madinah in 1517 after their conquest of the Hejaz. The title was hardly used in practice until this relic of the prophetic era was galvanized by its effectiveness in anticolonial struggle by the Ottomans and other Muslim peoples from the late-18th century to the ultimate death of the Ottoman Empire ensuing World War I.³³

Sultan Abdul Hamid II disseminated this concept and defended his status as the “Commander of the Believers”. The Ottoman sultans obviously used expressions of Islamic unity (including *Ittehad-e-Islami*, *Ittehad-e-Din*, and *Ukhuvvat-e-Din*) in their official communications with Muslim rulers in India, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, explicitly cautioning against external intrusions, and counselling Muslims to bond and unite against their mutual foes. The historic role of the Ottomans in serving other Muslim lands counterattacked colonial expansionism, but this is often intentionally ignored nowadays. They were particularly active in averting Russian hostility against Central Asian khanates, who needed help and defence from the caliphs to defend themselves against Russian Christian imperialism, and designs on Bukhara, Khiva, and Khokand, after the Crimean War.³⁴

Pan-Islamism is fundamentally a sacred notion, combined with the Islamic prevention of prejudice centred on ethnicity, and in contemporary political vocabulary can be recognized as a philosophy describing socio-political unity among all Muslims. The Darwinian empires of Europe, with their obsessive taxonomy of ethnic orders and classifications of “national” cultures, always found the pluralistic and heterogeneous draperies of Muslim civilisations very difficult to arrest, and observed with anxiety how tyranny or barbarity against Muslims on one side of the world could cause a rebellion on the other. This pragmatic connection among Muslims was triggered by Sultan Abdul Hamid II during the era of high imperialism, with European expansionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pan-Islamism stimulated Islamic morality and activated Muslims to search for deliverance and improvement by withstanding and fighting against

colonialism and the progression of Westernization, nurturing the fusion of the Muslim ummah.³⁵

Pan-Islamic contacts with Southeast Asia

The countries East of India were traditionally referred to by the Persian *zīrbad* (“Below the Wind”), based on maritime usage and the sheltered nature of the region. This was likely a translation of the local term *Negeri Di Bawah Bayu* with the same meaning (“Land Below the Wind”), a common observation given by the mariners to Sabah, simply since it is located below the typhoon belt, and hence relatively free from climatic turmoil.³⁶ After the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511, Tom Pires disembarked at Sumatra, where he spent significant time at the ports of Pedir and Pasai. Although Pedir was ruined by persistent war, trade at Pasai thrived, and a number of traders moved there from Malacca, averting the Straits by entering Sumatra from its western shore. Apart from several groups, including Bengalis, Javanese, Kelings (Tamils), and Malays, Pires noticed the presence of Arabs, Gujaratis, Persians, Rumis (Greeks or other Anatolians), and Turks at the time of Portuguese conquest of Pasai in 1521. Various forms of exclusion and oppression against Muslim traders caused most of them to move away to nearby ports like Minangkabau and Pedir. The Acehnese showed great resentment to the Portuguese incursion, and were determined to unify Muslims to fight to oust the Portuguese from the 1520 onwards. This trend deepened after the accession of Alauddin Ri’ayat Shah al-Qahhar (r. 1537-71).³⁷

This section gives a sketch of the Pan-Islamic contacts between the Turks and the Acehnese. The first formal relationships between the two states began in the mid-16th century when the Portuguese controlled Malacca, and the sultanate of Aceh appealed the Sublime Porte for armed assistance from the Caliph against the invaders. Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66) responded to the calls of Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Bahadur Shah (r. 1526 to 1535, 1536 to 1537) of Gujarat,³⁸ and Sultan Alauddin Ri’ayat Shah al-Qahhar of Aceh, an influential ruler in the Southeast Asia. The Portuguese explorer Mendes Pinto visited Sumatra in 1539, and stated that Sultan Alauddin Ri’ayat Shah achieved victory over the Batak (in North-Central Sumatra) with the help of 300 Turks. Mendes further stated that many Turkish soldiers joined the Pasai army attempting to oust the Portuguese from Malacca.³⁹ These Turkish fighters may have been sent to Aceh in 1537 or 1538. Earlier, the Ottoman Admiral Hadim Suleyman Pasha led an unsuccessful operation to Diu in 1538, sending emissaries to Gujarat and Arab ports to support him in the combat against the Portuguese in 1537.⁴⁰

The early relationship between the Ottomans and Aceh was attested to in the writing of Shaikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri (d. 1658) in

Bustan us-Salatin (1638) (*The Garden of Kings*). According to this work, Sultan Alauddin dispatched a mission to the sultan of Rum (i.e. Istanbul) in order to consolidate Islamic brotherhood, and in response the Ottoman sultan sent craftsmen and gunsmiths to cast cannons.⁴¹ This friendship was further strengthened on the solemn appeal of the Acehne ruler to the Ottoman Sultan Selim II (r. 1566-74), who consented to reinforce the Aceh against the Portuguese. According to *Divan-i Humayun* (Ottoman Imperial Council) documentation, and correspondence retained in the collections of *Hindistan Musulmanin bir Arizasi* discovered by Naimur Rahman Farooqi,⁴² Sultan Alauddin Ri'ayat Shah al-Qahhar dispatched a petition in the middle of Jumad al-Thani 973/ January 1566 to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, imploring him as the Khalifa of Islam to intervene and protect Muslim pilgrims and merchants travelling to Mecca and other Arabian ports in the face of the *firangi* aggressors. It informed the Sultan that the Muslims of Calicut and Ceylon read the *khutbah* in his name, and that the infidel rulers of these states are willing to fight the *firangis* under the Sultan's banner. Moved by the contents of the petition, Sultan Selim II, who had succeeded Suleyman in 1566, took immediate action and commissioned a fleet of fifteen galleys and two barks, equipped with cannons, muskets, and other military hardware, to Sumatra. A host of janissaries, and seven master gunners, along with the imperial Master-General of artillery, were ordered to join the expedition. Several carpenters, miners, blacksmiths, and painters were also directed to accompany the fleet. Khizr Kurtoglu, the Captain of the Alexandria fleet, was nominated to lead the expedition to help the king of Sumatra and capture the infidel forts, to be assisted by all provincial governors.⁴³

According to Feridun Bey, Sultan Selim II promptly dispatched a flotilla on 15, Rabi Al Awwal 975/ 28 September 1567 to support the Acehne sultan.⁴⁴ However, fleet was diverted to quell a Zaidi uprising (also known as *Mutahhar Riot*) in Yemen,⁴⁵ and a second fleet was promised to Sumatra the following year, and Portuguese, Jesuit, and Sumatran sources suggest that Ottoman military aid reached Sumatra. The ships carrying 500 Turks including experts of firearms builders, gunners, engineers together with war materials comprising a number of heavy bronze guns and other combat materials anchored at Aceh in 1567. These experts moulded heavy artillery for the Sultan of Aceh in order to oust the Portuguese from Malacca in 1568. This voyage and the ensuing attacks on Malacca in 1570s ended in failure. The Ottoman Sultans took their duty of facilitating the pilgrimage of the Muslims around the world seriously, and that they were willing to fulfil this moral obligation whenever the need arose.⁴⁶ Ottoman military specialists sent to the region in the 16th century founded a military academy named *Askar-i Bayt al-Muqaddas* during the rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-36). These soldiers perpetually settled there and never returned to

their homeland, and it is assumed that these soldiers were buried in the Turkish graveyard of Banda Aceh, which survives today. This diplomatic association between the two states persisted until the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda. After this there is no indication of any official mission sustained between the two states until the mid-19th century.⁴⁷

Diplomatic relations were recommenced when the Acehese Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Shah (r. 1838-70) forwarded a petition to the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Majid I (1839-61) in 1849, reiterating the pledge of eternal loyalty to the Ottoman Caliphate by “requesting a ship, one imperial edict, and one Ottoman flag.”⁴⁸ Subsequently, the sultanates of Riau and Jambi followed the Acehese design pleading for vital support from the Ottoman Sultan beside the Dutch menace in Sumatra petitioning in 1857 and 1858 respectively desiring to be vassal states under the shadow of the Ottoman Caliphate.⁴⁹ However, Aceh kept its political control over the minor sultanates of Asahan and Batu Bahara until the 1860s, and they considered themselves under the protection of Aceh even from the time of Dutch invasion in late 1873. During this troubled period, they exhibited Islamic bonds of unity and support to resist European colonialism.

However, at this juncture the Ottoman administration was engaged with its own internal dilemmas and obsessed with Westernization, afar from its traditional Islamic initiatives, until the Pan-Islamic apparition of the last *de facto* Caliph, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who was immensely worried about the Aceh-Dutch War of 1873-1903. Sultan Abdul Hamid II efficiently expanded Ottoman foreign policy universally due to the mandate of the Caliphate, and his Pan-Islamist programme widened Ottoman links to support the Muslims of Aceh from the Dutch offensive.⁵⁰

The first point of contact in Ottoman–Sumatran relations was mediated by Arab Hadramis, merchant communities from Yemen and the Hejaz who had many settlements in ports throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in Sumatra, Java, and Malaya. They intermarried with locals and settled permanently, often rising to positions of prominence in local governments (including the Sultanate of Aceh; additionally, the mother of Sultan Taha of Jambi was an Arab). Most of the traditional maritime trade across the Indian Ocean was operated by them, and they had a thriving community in Aden and the Hejaz (including links with the Ottoman Sharifian governors of Makkah). Many local Arabs from Southeast Asia, as well as non-Arab locals, went to study in the Hejaz (as well as Cairo), and along with the *Hajj*, which strengthened inherent links among Muslims, these connections directly contributed to the propagation of Islam throughout the oceanic sea routes between Africa and China.⁵¹

Due to its strategic location, Riau had a unique place in this area in the nineteenth century as a well-grounded centre for printing and publication, and it was leading in the modernization of the Malay World as an axis of knowledge for awareness in the global world, together with the Ottoman Caliphate. It is noted that some of the luminary in the region vigorously observed the Ottoman news agencies to acquire news about what was going on worldwide.⁵² In this conducive atmosphere, the Ottoman Caliphate became a constant source of support for Pan-Islamist activities linking the Middle East and Southeast Asia, epitomized in the diplomatic connexion between the Ottoman State and Riau Sultanate during 1857-1904.⁵³

This later fed into the propagation of Pan-Islamism, with reformist newspapers from Istanbul and Cairo being smuggled into the region by returning pilgrims. For this reason, the Dutch attempted to prevent the Acehnese from going for *Hajj*, under various pretexts, but when they outlawed Arab and Turkish newspapers this backfired, and a thriving local Pan-Islamic press emerged. For instance, when the most influential Arab weekly magazine, *Al-Manar* (associated with Mohammad Abduh's reformist ideas and a Pan-Islamic ethos) was banned, the local publication *Al-Imam* emerged, which was essentially a local translation of the Arabic original, giving a fillip to the circulation of Islamist ideas locally, and greatly extending their reach.⁵⁴ Indeed, *Al-Imam* directly carried news of Abdul Hamid II's policies. Alongside this, the Ottomans also sent manuscripts of the Holy Qur'ān to be disseminated to all Muslims in the region, alongside *tafsīr* (exegesis) books, sometimes sponsored by local Hadrami merchants.⁵⁵

Islamic issues of local religious observance and worship were vigorously observed by the local Ottoman consulates, particularly those established in Singapore and Batavia. The Ottomans appointed local Hadrami merchants Syed Abdullah bin Omer el-Junejd (d. 1865), as honorary consuls in Singapore from 1864 at the latest, but they were continually hampered by the Dutch (who also attempted to stifle Hadrami traders by imposing various restrictions upon their activities, causing them to seek Ottoman citizenship). A direct Turkish Consul Mehmed Kamil Bey was appointed in 1897, against fierce Dutch opposition, and he and Ottoman diplomats in the region had an unusually high mortality rate from bizarre accidents. Fortunately, they had stolen a march on the Dutch by installing a Consulate in Batavia in 1881. Despite Anglo-Dutch interference and sabotage, both consulates managed to provide direct communication between Istanbul and local Muslims, which enabled direct Ottoman engagement to protect local Muslims' interests, such as preventing Dutch suppression of the *Hajj*, and encouraging local *masājid* (mosques) to read the Friday *khuṭbah* in the name of the Caliph. On the Sultan of Riau's earnest request

the Ottoman Sultan allowed both Eid and Friday *khuṭbahs* to be read in his name.⁵⁶

However, to tighten its hold over the Indonesian sultanates, the Dutch authorities implementing increasingly strict measures, especially in the Siak region of Riau. Internal disputes were stirred up by the meddling of outsiders as a pretext for Dutch mediation in 1858, and the Siak rulers of Riau agreed to allow the Dutch control, and undertook not to deal with any other foreign states without Dutch approval.⁵⁷ Naturally under these provisions the Dutch did not allow any Ottoman diplomacy or envoys, whereby the Dutch successfully alienated any probable or normal relationship between the local officials and the Ottomans, and for quite a prolonged period (c. 1858-97) there was no substantial connexion amongst the two states. By sheer luck Mehmed Kamil Bey was assigned to the position of Ottoman Consul in Batavia on June 29, 1897,⁵⁸ and he revitalized Ottoman connections with Riau and other sultanates in the Indonesian Archipelago. In the meantime, the Dutch co-operation with the state authorities in Riau was disturbed by some local nobles who resisted the blatant encroachments of colonialism on Riau's prestige. Although the Dutch did not take such resistance seriously, the Riau rulers found a way exchanging diplomats with Istanbul to overcome this situation.⁵⁹ Kamil Bey had an incomparable reputation as the representative of the Caliph in the region, while giving immense support to Riau's elites in this matter. This dynamic approach of Kamil Bey became the genesis of the revival of the Pan-Islamist ethos in the Malay World.⁶⁰ By the 1900s the rulers of Jambi were imitating the Acehnese and dispatched multiple embassies to Istanbul. The Malay sultanates of Southeast Asia were very keen to cement their relations in the spirit of Pan-Islamism, and requested Ottoman symbolic recognition for the Malay polities, reflected in prestigious journeys to Istanbul by local notables, such as the Sultan of Langkat in East Sumatra and Sultan Abu Bakr (r. 1885-95) of Johor, Dato Abdul Rahman bin Andak (d. 1930), and Sultan Ibrahim of Johor (1895-1959) sent Dato Abdul Rahman bin Andak as his personal emissary to Istanbul in 1898.⁶¹

The diplomatic connections between the rulers of the Riau Islands predated the Crimean War (1853-56), and they continually sent various forms of tribute to Istanbul to express their devotion to the Caliph during times of need. This friendship continued, and the Malay rulers sent humanitarian relief to the victims of the Balkan War (1912-1913), helping in the rehabilitation of orphans, widows and refugees of the martyred soldiers.⁶² During the early 20th century, both the Ottoman and Acehnese states ceased to exist, but the connections and sympathy linking their Muslim populations was revived following the Aceh tsunami in 2004,

galvanizing Muslim cooperation as manifest in the Red Crescent, Turkish Awqāf, and individual NGOs in Aceh providing emergency relief, rebuilding homes, and establishing clinics, hospitals, hostels, mosques, orphanages, and schools, as well as providing scholarships.⁶³

Conclusion

The European capitalist imperialism of the 19th century incited numerous popular Muslim response and resistance trends. As the realms of the Ottoman caliphate continued to be absorbed by European empires, the caliphate nevertheless continued to inspire Muslims around the world. The *Tanzīmāt* reformation within the Ottoman state apparently failed in achieving its aim of catching up with Western materialist development by jettisoning traditional Islamic and cultural features of Ottoman life, and the European empires continued to gorge on the wealth of conquered Muslim populations throughout the world. Only the Pan-Islamism of Abdul Hamid II was able to seriously restore the Ottoman state as a serious consideration in global affairs, including material developments as well as a spiritual heart-and-minds approach. He was able to wield the emotive potential of his role as Caliph to inspire a highly impactful Pan-Islamic programme, which subsequently fed into numerous anti-colonial and post-colonial nationalist movements worldwide. The Ottoman state thus functioned as a source of inspirational as well as material (financial and logistical) succour for anticolonial resistance movements, and promoted socio-economic development in colonized (or at risk of being colonized) regions, laying the foundations of deep connections between Islamic communities worldwide, and paving the way for Muslim anticolonial leadership.⁶⁴ Pan-Islamism's authentic anticolonial force, including resistance and promoting material development, was an internationalist force that undermined the nationalism the European empires sought to foment to divide and rule subject peoples. Pan-Islamism posited a humanitarian framework that transcended nationalist confines and facilitated respect and assistance among Muslims and others on the basis of social and political liberation. This continues to be as pertinent today in the face of neo-colonial financial colonization as it was in the epoch of direct Western political colonization.

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⁴⁹ BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377: H. (16 Jumad Al-Thani 1273 / 10 February 1857); BOA, İ. HR, 173/9431: H. (4 Jumada Al-Thani 1276/ 29 December 1859) quoted by Alaeddin Tekin, "Restoration of Riau Sultanate", pp. 180-81.

⁵⁰ BOA, Y. PRK. TKM. 28.56.1.1. Pan-Islamic activity was anathema to Dutch colonial governance in the Indies, and they sought to promote their own supposedly Islamic credentials, conjuring fatwas legitimizing their rule and establishing consulates in Jeddah to facilitate their subjects' pilgrimages. See Mehmet Ozey, *Routledge Handbook of Islam*, p. 97; Reid, "Aceh and the Turkish Connection", p. 3; Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam", p.283; Kemal H. Karpat. *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 140.

⁵¹ Reid, "Aceh and the Turkish Connection", pp. 32, 35; Sumit K. Mandal, *Becoming Malay-Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2018, p. 43.

⁵² Jan Van der Putten, "Printing in Riau: Two Steps Towards Modernity," *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania*, 153, no. 4 (1997), pp. 717-736; Michael Laffan, "Between Batavia and Mecca. Images of Agoes Salim from the Leiden University Library," *Archipel*, 65, no. 1 (2003), pp. 111-112.

⁵³ Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam", p.282.

⁵⁴ Jutta E. Bluhm, "A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established between the Reform Magazine *Al-Manar* and the Malayo-Indonesian World", *Indonesia Circle*, 32 (1983), p. 36.

⁵⁵ BOA, HR-ID 1373-65; Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of al-Manar's Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: The Case of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*", *Studika Islamika*, 6, no. 3 (1999), pp. 88-9; Mandal, *Becoming Malay*, p. 150; Elizabeth Lambourn, "Khutba and Muslim", p.140; Frial Ramadhan Supratman, "The Ottoman State, Pan-Islamism, and Modernisation in Indonesia", *Al-Jāmi'ah*, 54, no. 2 (2016 /1437), pp. 458-59; Ali Akbar, "The Influence of Ottoman's Qur'ans in Southeast Asia Through the Ages", in *From Anatolia to Aceh*, pp. 331-34; Burhanudin Jajat. "The Ulama and Colonial Politics: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia", in Osman Bakar, Ahmad Murad Merican, Wan Ali Wan Mamat (eds). *Colonialism in the Malay Archipelago: Civilisational Encounters*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC-IIUM, 2020, p. 165.

⁵⁶ This document is already translated by Mehmet Ali Alacagöz - Ahmet Ergün - Mehmet Akif Terzi, *Osmanlı Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı Endonezya İlişkileri*, Basım yılı ve yeri, İstanbul, 2017, pp. 230-233; (DVN. NMH, 9/23: H. 10 Dū al-Hijjah 1274/ 22 July 1858), quoted in Alaeddin Tekin, "Restoration of Riau Sultanate", p. 189; Alves, "From Istanbul with Love", p. 5; Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, pp. 55, 62; Reid, "Aceh and the Turkish Connection", p. 34; Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam", p. 271; Frial Ramadhan Supratman, "The Ottoman State", p. 457.

⁵⁷ Reid, Anthony. *The Contest for North Sumatra - Aceh, the Netherlands and Britain 1858-1898*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 2017, p. 22.

⁵⁸ BOA, HR. TH. 199/27: H. 19 Rabī' al-'Awwal 1315/ 18 August 1897; BOA, Ī. HR. 355/32: H. 28 Muḥarram 1315/ 29 June 1897 (quoted by Alaeddin Tekin, "Restoration of Riau Sultanate", p. 192).

⁵⁹ Barbara Watson Andaya, "From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau 1899-1914," *Indonesia*, 24. (1977), p. 130.

⁶⁰ Alaeddin Tekin, "Restoration of Riau Sultanate", pp. 192-94.

⁶¹ Secretary of State 509/1898(1),1957/0581899, no 8, Native States Despatch no 56, 18 May 1898, Arkib Negara Malaysia; BOA, HR.SFR (3). 428.16.5.1.(28.6.1894); see also Hussain Shaharom, " Hubungan Johor Dengan Turki. " *Jauhar, Jurnal Sejarah Johor*, Bil.4 (Disember 2002), pp. 54-67.

⁶² As attested by Ottoman archival records, the Muslims of Malacca sent a donation amounting 8480 Franks, and the Muslims of Muar (Johor) sent a separate donation (A. MTZ (05).30.46.1 (12 Rajab 1331/16 June 1913); BOA. BEO. 4229.317130.2.1. (6 Dhul Hijjah 1331/5 November 1913). See also Mehmet Ozey, *Routledge Handbook of Islam*, p. 100.

⁶³ Schmidt, *Through the Legation Window*, p. 57; Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam", p. 279; Alaeddin Tekin and Arshad Islam, "Turkish Waqf", pp. 1058-59.

⁶⁴ Reid, "Aceh and the Turkish Connection", p. 33.