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Ottoman-Aceh Relations According to the Turkish Sources

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1. Introduction.

Despite geographical distances, there had been commercial, diplomatic and military relations between Turkey and Aceh. These relations took place mainly in the 16th and 19th centuries. The main aim of this paper is to examine these relations according to the Turkish sources. Most of the Turkish sources for the 16th century relations can be found in the Mühimme Records issued by the Divan-ı Humayun (Ottoman Government), some of which are also available now in published form. These official records are mainly on the coming of Aceh envoys to Istanbul and their request of military aid from Turkey as well as on the preparation of a navy campaign to Sumatra in support of Aceh in 1567. As for the 19th century relations, the Turkish sources focus on the coming of Aceh delegations to Istanbul in 1851 and 1873. These sources come from various government offices, and they are mainly related to the renewal of loyalty compromise of the 16th century and Acehnese requests of protection from the Ottoman Empire.

In fact, Turkish connection with Southeast Asian region goes back as far as to the 12th century, when the Turkish traders began to participate in the international trade activities between West Asia and China, following behind the Arab, Persian and Indian muslim traders after the Seljuki Turks' domination of the whole Middle Eastern area in the second part of 11th century. Affan Seljuk states that the existence of a Turkish dwelling near the famous Khurmuz Straight and going of a long and tried journey from this harbour until China by ships give us the opinion that the Turks began to involve in this international trade activities in the Malay archipelago at the last period of the Abbasids in Baghdat.¹

The presence of the Turks in the region has also been recorded by the famous North African Muslim traveller İbni Battuta (d.1369), who visited the Samudra-Pasai Sultanate in northern Sumatra on his way to China in 1345 and 1346. He mentions that the state traditions of this sultanate are similar to those of the Delhi Turkish Sultanate in India. He also tells about the story of a queen who spoke Turkish with himself in an island called Tawalisi. Her name is given with a Turkish word as Urduja.²

We can find some cultural influence in north Sumatra in early centuries as well. For instance, the adoption of Turkish Memlukı sultans' names and titles by the Samudra-Pasai sultans like Malik al-Salih, Malik al-Zahir and Malik az-Zahir at the end of the 13th century is another evidence that demonstrates cultural and religious influences on Sumatra island and as well as Sumatra's close connection with the Western Asia, in particular with the shores of Arabian Peninsula and Egypt.³

The presence of the Turks and their trading activities with the region has also been noted by the Portuguese sources. For instance, the Portuguese traveller Tome Pires, who visited Pasai harbour city in 1511, describes that city as a strong, welfare and cosmopolitan kingdom. He mentions the existence of many foreign traders in Pasai from India and Western Asia, among whom there were also the Turkish ones called "Rumî" or "Turkî". These foreign traders coming from Cairo, Aden and Khurmuz firstly used to call at the harbour cities of Gucerat in India, and then they sailed as far as Sumatra and Malaka.⁴

1. Affan Seljuk, "Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago", *Der Islam*, No: 57, 1980, p.302-303.

2. Muhammed at-Tanci, *İbni Batuta Seyahatnamesi (Tuhfetu'n-Nuzzâr fi Garâibi'l-Emsâr)*, Vol. I-II, Ed: Mümin Çevik, İstanbul: Üçdal Publication, p.454-455, 459-460.

3. Rita Rose Di Meglio, "Arab Trade with Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula from the 8th to the 16th Century", *Islam and the Trade of Asia: A Colloquium* (ed: D.S. Richards), Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Oxford and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970, p.117.

4. Meglio, p.120-122.

While Pasai and Pidie regions of northern Sumatra continued to be an important center for its product of pepper and its export for a long time,⁵ Aceh began to emerge gradually as a powerful sultanate in northern Sumatra as a result of her gains from this international trade in the first part of the 16th century. C. R. Boxer gives the date of flourishing trade between Aceh and the Red Sea shores as the year of 1534.⁶ From 1530's until 1560's, there were frequent trade activities between Aceh and the Red Sea shores, in particular with the harbour city of Aden in the Yeman, and this commercial relation was growing year by year. In early 1550's there was even surplus in foreign commercial goods in Yeman, even resulting a decrease in prices for the commodities coming from the east, but the Portuguese forces were trying to capture the ships in the straight of Bab al-Mandab coming from Aceh and Gucerat.⁷

Apart from these commercial activities of the Turks, there were also the Memluki Turkish military activities in the Indian Ocean at the beginning of 16th century. When the Portuguese began to dominate the Indian Ocean and took much of the international sea trade under their control, Muslim sultanates in the region began to feel disturbed by this and consequently they sought to obtain the assistance of the Memluki sultans in Egypt. The Memlukis tried to build a navy in the Suez to get rid of these Portuguese from the Red Sea and Indian shores. A Memluki navy went as far as the harbour of Diu in 1512 to drive the Portuguese out of the city.⁸

Besides these organised expeditions, some freelance Turkish seamen and levants were also sailing from the Red Sea shores to the Indian Ocean for their own aims. These were as the same as those who were acting in the western Mediterranean region and North African shores, and they were independent seamen originally from the cities of western Anatolia known as the "levants". The famous Turkish historian Halil İnalcık states that "Those Rumis who sailed from the Red Sea to India between the years of 1500 and 1517, are the same Anatolian gazis (fighters), some of whom were working in the western Mediterranean and Algiers. Among them there were an artilleryman called Rumî Topçu Mustafa who entered in the service of Indian-Mughul Empire in India".⁹

As a result of the eastern campaign of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520) in Syria and Egypt in 1517, the whole Middle Eastern area were brought under the Ottoman rule. Then, the previous Memluki legacy of the Red Sea and Indian waters was taken over by the Ottoman sultans who not only wished to control the Holy places of Islam in Arabia, but also its surrounding areas, especially the Red Sea shores and the Indian waters as well. In fact, this brought the Ottoman Turks into conflict with the Portuguese who were also trying to control the international sea trade in the Indian waters at that time.

5. Haji Abdullah Nabir, "Turki dan Alam Melayu: Tinjauan terhadap Sejarah Hubungan Keduanya", *Jebat*, Bangi, Selangor (Malaysia) 1987, No:15, p.137.

6. C.R. Boxer, "A Note on Portuguese Reaction to the Revival of Red Sea Spice Trade and the Rise of Atjeh, 1540-1600", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Singapore 1969, Vol.X, No:3, p.416.

7. Salih Özbaran, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Hindistan Yolu" [The Ottoman Empire and Indian Route], *Tarih Dergisi* [History Journal], No: XXXI, İstanbul: Publication of İstanbul University, Faculty of Letters, 1963, p.136-137.

8. Özbaran, p. 78; Saffet Bey, "Şark Leventleri: Osmanlı Bahri Ahmer Filosunun Sumatra Seferi Üzerine Vesikalar" [Eastern Levants: Documents on the Sumatra Campaign of the Ottoman Red Sea Navy], *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* [The Journal of the Ottoman Committee's History], İstanbul 1329 [1911], Vol:IV, No:24, p.1528-1530; See for the Memluki expeditions to Indian shores in detail Muhammed Yakup Mughul, *Kanuni Devri: Osmanlıların Hind Okyanusu Politikası ve Osmanlı-Hind Münasebetleri* [The Period of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent: Ottoman Policy of Indian Ocean and Ottoman-Indian Relations], Ankara: Publication of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1987, p.27-86.

9. Mughul, p.3 (Halil İnalcık's Preface to the book).

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The first military activities of the Ottomans in the Indian Ocean began during the time of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (r.1520-1565). The Ottoman sultans, seeing themselves as the protector of the whole Muslim world because of the office of the caliphate, determined to keep open the haj traffic and trade route of the Muslims in the east as well as to protect the small muslim states against the Portuguese attacks. When Ibrahim Pasha, one of the viziers of Sultan Suleyman, came to Egypt in 1525, he immediately ordered the establishment of a navy in the harbour of Suez and sent Selman Reis to the Yeman province to prevent the shores against the Portuguese attacks. In his report to the vizier Ibrahim Pasha, dated June 2nd, 1525, Selman Reis reports the Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean and considers Sumatra and Malacca as important centers of pepper and spices. Before the coming of the Portuguese to these islands, spices and peppers have been sent to Egypt, and Egypt gained an important income from this trade traffic, but now the situation changed entirely in favour of the Portuguese, so Egypt came to become weaker in terms of overseas trade.¹⁰ Therefore, the control of the Red Sea shores, the Gulf area and the Indian waters became a vital concern of the Ottoman Turks from the middle of 1520's.

After the sudden death of Selman Reis in 1526, his cousin Emir Mustafa bin Behram Reis took the initiative, sailing as far as Diu in India in 1531 and fought against the Portuguese. But the most important Ottoman expedition in the Indian waters was that of Hadım Suleyman Pasha in 1537. This was actually sent as a response to the Gucerati ruler Bahadır Shah, who asked for military help from the Ottoman Sultan against the Portuguese. When the Ottoman navy under the command of Hadım Suleyman Pasha arrived in Diu in 1538, Bahadır Shah had already been killed by the Portuguese and the Portuguese appointed a new ruler named Mahmud Shah III to the Gucerati throne, who was then allied with the Portuguese. Suleyman Pasha, having failed to get the support of the higher Gucerati officials and also upon the hearing that a big Portuguese force was coming behind, was compelled to return to Yeman back, leaving behind many dispersed Turkish soldiers and cannons, some of whom worked afterwards for the Indian rulers.¹¹

It is presumed that after the defeat of Hadım Suleyman Pasha, some of his soldiers may have gone as far as Aceh and entered in the service of Aceh sultanate. According to the Portuguese traveller Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, who visited Sumatra in 1539, there was war between Aceh and the tribes of Batak, and there were Turkish, Cambay and Malabar auxiliary soldiers in the Acehnese army. He also mentions that the Acehnese Sultan Alaaddin signed an agreement with the Ottoman Governor of Egypt on behalf of the Sultan Suleyman against the Portuguese.¹² During the years of 1540's in Aceh's battles with her enemies such as in 1540 with Aru and in 1547 with Malacca, Turkish soldiers were noted among the Acehnese forces.¹³ Most probably from the late years of 1530's, Aceh began to employ or hire Turkish soldiers and military experts in her army. Yet this early Turkish military contribution to Aceh was probably on an individual basis.

The Ottoman activities in Indian waters continued in early 1550's with more density after a decade of Suleyman Pasha's abortive siege of Diu in 1538. In 1551 Piri Reis and in 1552 Murad Reis fought against the Portuguese in the Khurmuz Straight and the Indian shores. In 1553, Seydi Ali Reis launched a new Indian expedition to give an end the domination of the Portuguese in the Indian harbours and to help the Muslims in India and

¹⁰. Mughul, p.104.

¹¹. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* [Ottoman History], II, Ankara: TTK Publications, 1983, p.392-394; Mughul, p.113-137.

¹². Antony Reid, "Sixteenth Century Turkish Influence in Western Indonesia", *Journal of South-East Asian History*, Vol: 10, No: 3, 1969, p.401-402; Seljuk, p.307.

¹³. Reid, "Sixteenth Century", p.402-403.

surrounding areas, but he could not reach the result that he wished to gain. A few years later, he returned to Istanbul through the land road in Central Asia, leaving the remains of the navy to Recep Han, governor of Gucerat Sultanate in Surat.¹⁴ After Seydi Ali Reis, Kurtoglu Hızır Reis was appointed to the captainship of Suez navy, which was responsible for the control of the Red Sea shores and the Indian route.

2. Sixteenth Century Ottoman-Aceh Relations.

When we carefully examine the Turkish sources on the official diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh Sultanate, it is seen that these relations were first established during the time of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent and that it continued during the time of his successor, Sultan Selim II (r.1566-1574). According to Ottoman historical sources, the first Acehnese ambassador to Istanbul came in the year of 1547, although we do not have an archival official record proving this. The famous Ottoman historian of Austrian origin, B. J. Von Hammer, basing his information on the histories of Ali, Celalzade, Solakzade and Lufti, who all were the Ottoman croniclers, mentions that during the coming of Christian envoys to Istanbul, "there was also an envoy of Alaaddin from the Indian rulers in order to request military help against the Portuguese. The envoy of Alaaddin presented to the Sultan unfamous animals, nice parrots with various colours, valuable spices and perfumery, taffy with balm, negroes and eunoch servants...The procession of Indian envoy is very recognisable, but the Iranian one, which is organised for the occasion of the coming of Iranian prince in-exile who escaped to Istanbul after his rebellion against Shah Tahmasb is the most significant one."¹⁵ The naming of "Alaaddin from Indian rulers" must be the Acehnese sultan Alaaddin Riayet Shah al-Kahhâr, who ruled Aceh from 1537 to 1571, as the documents related to Aceh were usually classified under "Indian" name, and the name of Aceh in sixteenth century Ottoman official records is given with different wording such as "Ashi", "Achi" or "Achin". Hammer also mentions the coming of another Aceh envoy to İstanbul, basing his knowledge on a report of Venetian ambassador to Istanbul dated 12th June, 1562. He says that "it should be recorded in particular the envoy sent by Ashi ruler from India that it was requesting cannon help against the Portuguese"¹⁶ This Aceh envoy is also confirmed by the Portuguese sources. Even the Jesuit sources state that the Ottoman Sultan sent an ambassador to Aceh as a response to this Aceh attempt and that this ambassador reached Aceh in 1565.¹⁷ Lombard considers the year 1562 as the coming of the first Aceh ambassador to Istanbul.¹⁸ But, the year 1547 should be accepted as the first diplomatic Acehnese mission to Istanbul.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh Sultanate during the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent and the exchange of envoys between the two capitals are confirmed by the letter of Aceh Sultan Alaaddin Shah addressed to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in 1566. This letter, dated 7th January 1566, was brought to Istanbul by the Acehnese ambassador Huseyin Efendi. It was classified one of the letters of Indian Muslims in the archive of Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul and was first examined by the Pakistani researcher Razaulhak Shah in an article together with other concerned documents on this Aceh envoy to Istanbul.¹⁹

¹⁴. Uzunçarşılı, II, p.397-400; Özbaran, p.120,127; Seydi Ali Reis, *Mirat al-Memalik*, ed: Necdet Akyıldız, İstanbul: Tercüman 1001 Basic Works Publication, undated, p.21-25.

¹⁵. B.J. von Hammer, *Osmanlı Devleti Tarihi* [History of the Ottoman Empire], Turkish Translation by Mehmet Ata Bey, eds: Mümin Çevik and Erol Kılıç, VI, İstanbul: Üçdal Publications, 1984, p.1648-1649.

¹⁶. Hammer, VI, p.1741.

¹⁷. Seljuk, p.307.

¹⁸. Denys Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)*, Translator from French to Indonesian: Winarsih Arifin, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1986, p.50.

¹⁹. Razaulhak Shah, "Açı Padişahı Sultan Alaeddin'in Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Mektubu"

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The Aceh Sultan stated in his letter that they had formerly sent two ambassadors called Umar and Huseyin to Istanbul. It is again understood from the statement in the letter, "when your men were here and helped us in 972 (1564-1565)" that the Ottoman Empire had formerly sent an ambassador to Aceh. In the letter, the name of this Turkish ambassador sent by Sultan Suleyman to Aceh is given as Lutfi Bey and the Aceh Sultan says about him, "Since we were much pleased with Lutfi Bey and his friends, we want them to be sent here again ... The cannoneers whom you sent safely came here and their place near us is very high ..."

In his letter, Alaaddin Shah also gives some information on the political and cultural situation of the islands in the region. He states that the Portuguese tries to control important sea passages in the region, and that they capture the Muslim pilgrims and traders and make them slaves or destroy their ships by the cannon fire, sinking them finally into the sea. In the letter, an example of Portuguese acts is also given. When an Aceh ship, loaded with black pepper, silk thread, cinnamon, cloves, camphor and other valuable products of the region, was sent to the side of Mecca in 972 H. (1564-1565) and when it came to the said islands, the Portuguese with their three galleons and seven galleys attacked the ship and the fighting lasted for 4 days and nights; in the end the Aceh ship was sunk by the Portuguese with a cannon fired from far away, while some 500 Muslims died in the Ocean and some others were made slaves.

He says on the muslims of Calicut on the southern shore of India and of the island of Ceylan (Srilanka) the following: The Ceylan island has very valuable ores, but her ruler is an infidel one. There are 14 mosques in this island and the Muslims of this island reads Friday sermons on the name of the Ottoman caliph. In the same way, the Muslims of Calicut have 25 mosques and they read sermons on the name of the Ottoman caliph as well. They are in war with the Portuguese; and when Lutfi Bey and his friends came here, they also send envoys to me, asking that, in the case of the coming of an Ottoman navy to this side, they would become Muslim with all their people. If this happens, all the present gold and silver can be possessed by your soldiers and fighters.

The Aceh sultan requested in his letter some horses, experts on galleys and castles. He wanted to be treated by the Ottoman caliph as his servant and Aceh be considered an Ottoman village and her people be seen as his servants as well. He continues to say: "Would Your Majesty please inform to the governor-generals (Beylerbeyi) of Eygpt and of Yeman and the Beys (sub-governors) of Jeddah and Aden that we are not your enemies, but your servants... If you send a navy with the necessary weapons and cannons to this side, we promise that the Portuguese can be destroyed. The rulers in this part and in India wish to obtain the assistance of the Portuguese, but we request help only from you. Would Your Majesty please send some bashlıkcha (war heads of torpidos) and cannons which can destroy the castles. Your Majesty gives commands to the governor-generals of Eygpt and Yeman as well as the Beys of Jeddah and Aden that, they should give permission to our men without any delay to enter your office, when our men come to these places. Aceh is one of your villages and I am a servant of your office. Former governor of Gucerat, namely Karamanoglu Abdurrahman, is a very helpful man. When you sent Lutfi Bey to this side, he had some difficulties when he arrived at Jeddah, because he could not find any ship to travel to this side. Then, Abdurrahman, who showed very great respect to your command, spent much money and helped Lutfi Bey and his men to find a ship and sent them to this side. He himself is very good person. Please give him the province of Jeddah. Since we are very happy from Lutfi Bey and his men, we request from you to send them again to this side. Because they are very

[The Letter of Aceh Sultan Alaaddin to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent], *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil, Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* [The Journal of History Researches of Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History and Geography], Vol: 5, No: 8-9, Ankara 1967, p.373-409; Origin of the Sultan Alaaddin's letter: Archive of Topkapı Palace Museum, No: E-8009.

knowledgeable persons on our region and on India, by seeing and hearing the situation of these places. Would you please warn those persons whom you send to this side that they obey our orders. Those cannons who had been sent from the Ottoman center of capital came to this side peacefully and their place near us is very great. It is requested that some talented artisans of castles and galleys as well as horses be sent to this side. The servant of this palace, Huseyin, in other name Bertete, is being sent to Istanbul to bow your Great Palace.”²⁰

When Huseyin Efendi came to Istanbul with this letter, he had to wait in the capital for some time because of a series of events, including his arrival in Istanbul coinciding with Sultan Suleyman's campaign to Szigetvar, Hungary, Suleyman's subsequent death, and Sultan Selim II's accession to the throne. There is almost two years of duration between the date of Alaaddin Shah's letter (7 January 1566) and the responding letter (20 September 1567) of new Ottoman sultan Selim II. After the death of Sultan Suleyman, his son Selim II seated on the throne, so the Acehnese ambassador Huseyin Efendi was accepted by him. Selim II, having welcomed the ambassador very warmly, sent a responding letter addressed to Aceh Sultan Alaaddin through the hand of Mustafa Chavush who has been just appointed as a Turkish ambassador to Aceh by Selim II. In his letter, Sultan Selim II, after summarising the contents of Aceh ruler's letter, states that accepting of Muslim rulers' requests is a religious and traditional duty of the Ottoman sultans. It follows that it has been decided to send Aceh a navy of 15 galleys and 2 galleons, a cannoner leader from the imperial cannons and 7 cannons under his command, adequate soldiers from Egypt and a fleet armed with cannon, rifle and war material to attack castles. It goes on in the following summary: "The former admiral of İskenderiye (Alexandria), Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, has been appointed to command this navy. It is my orders to him that when he arrives in Aceh, his duty is to crush your enemies and to conquer the fortresses from the infidels. It is also informed that the said admiral, cannons and other soldiers, whether they are junior or senior, should obey your orders and work in your service in accordance with religious injunctions and your handle of affairs. Those who oppose your orders shall be punished by the Admiral himself. The salaries of soldiers to be sent will be paid for a year by us. You are required to give documents (temessuk) to the returning gunsmiths back after the completion of their work there and inform us on other affairs via Mustafa Chavush. For those who continue to stay there, you are required to follow whatever commands I issue for it. When your letter came here, my father Sultan Suleyman Han was fighting against the infidels in the Szigetvar war in Hungary. After the conquest of this cattle, he died and I took over his duties. I have decided to combat the infidels on your sides. We will always send soldiers to you in order to overcome the enemies of religion and to get rid of those who are attacking on Muslim lands in those sides. You are required to inform us in detail whatever affairs occur in your parts in accordance with your handle of affairs. Galleons were prepared; they will be sent after they are loaded. Your ambassador, who came here, did his duty with good manners and he is now being sent with our highest permission.”²¹

It is seen from this letter that Sultan Selim II was very determined to help Aceh and he acted promptly for this end. On the following day (21 September 1567), he issued an imperial order (nishan-ı humayun) to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, appointing him as the admiral of the navy which will include 15 galleys and 2 galleons and other necessary military

²⁰. Razaulhak Shah, p.375-376,381-388; İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, *Güneydoğu Asya'da Osmanlı-Türk Tesirleri* [Ottoman-Turkish Influences in Southeast Asia], Isparta: Fakülte Kitabevi Publications, 2004, p.39-41,193-198.

²¹. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) I* [The Number 7 Register of Importance I (973-976/1567-1569)], No:33, Ankara: BOA Publications, 1996, Original Print: Nr: 244, p.90-93; Transcription: Nr:244, p.124-126. See also Saffet Bey, "Sumatra Seferi", *TOEM*, Vol.X, p.606-609; Razaulhak Shah, p.388-393; Göksoy, p.198-200.

equipments. This order was sent via the hand of Mustafa Chavush, an imperial official who accompanied the Acehnese ambassador. Kurtoglu Hızır Reis was instructed to lead the navy, and when he arrives in Aceh, he should obey the instructions of Aceh ruler and help him in seizing the infidel castles from his enemies. The whole soldiers whether they are junior or high ranking and whether they are from the servants of Istanbul or from the servants of Egypt should obey the commands of Aceh sultan. If anyone who disobeys the Aceh ruler, they should be punished by Kurtoglu Hızır Reis himself to be an example to others. The salaries and provisions of navy personnel will be met for the first year by the Ottoman government, after which if the Aceh ruler would need these personnel, he, then, be responsible for their expenses.²²

In addition, the necessary instructions concerning every kind of assistance to be rendered to the ambassador of Aceh, Huseyin Efendi, while he was returning to his country via Yeman were written to the governor-generals of Egypt and Yeman. It was stated in a command sent to the governor-general of Yeman on the same dates that the Aceh ambassador was sent back, and if he wants to buy any horses, military equipment and copper, nobody should prevent him; and his personal belongings should not be checked in at the custom offices. Every kind of assistance must be given to him during his entry and leave Yeman. Copies of this command was also sent to the Beys of Jeddah and Aden, instructing them that assistance be given to Aceh ambassador and be escorted while his return to his own country.²³

As for the request of the castle destroyers and artisans of galleys by the Aceh ruler, Selim II sent another command dated 27 September 1567 (23 Rebiul-evvel 975) to the governor-general of Egypt, informing him that the names of those artisans such as carpenter, blacksmith, caulker, shieldmaker, painter/carver and other professional masters were written down in a register and they were sent now to Egypt. All these artisans, whether they are salaried or unsalaried, were to be sent to Aceh ruler together with the ambassador.²⁴ In another command to the governor-general of Egypt, it is stated that if anyone from the soldiers of Egypt voluntarily wants to go to Aceh with the galleys sent to Aceh ruler, nobody shall prevent them, and permission should be given to them for their going to Aceh.²⁵

In a command sent to the Bey of Rhodes island, it is informed that the Aceh ambassador has been sent with a galley from Istanbul to Egypt. When he arrives in Rhodes, the Bey himself is obliged, without any delay, to accompany the ambassador together with the galleys sent with him from Istanbul until Egypt. When the galley that carried the ambassador himself arrives in Egypt, it should be sent back to Istanbul again.²⁶

In a command written to the Sherif of Mecca, dated 21 September 1567 (17 Rebiul-evvel 975), it is informed that when Aceh ambassador with his men come to Mecca, every assistance such as the providence of water, food and guide shall be given without asking the central government for permission. If the ambassador wants to buy some

²². Ibid, Original Print: Nr: 233, p. 86; Transcription: Nr:233, p.118-119. See also Razaulhak Shah, p.392-393; Saffet Bey, "Şark Levetleri" *TOEM*, Vol.IV/24, p.1540; Göksoy, p.200-201.

²³. Ibid, Original Print: Nr: 237, p. 89; Transcription: Nr:237, p.121-122. See also Razaulhak Shah, p.393; Göksoy, p.201-202.

²⁴. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:238, p.89; Transcription: Nr:238, p.122; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.393; Göksoy, p.202-203.

²⁵. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:239, p.89; Transcription: Nr:239, p.122; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.393.

²⁶. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:240, p.89; Transcription: Nr:240, p.122-123; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.394.

horses for the Aceh sultan, nobody will prevent him, and everyone is obliged to render necessary assistance to him.²⁷

A similar command sent to the governor-general of Egypt with the same date states that when the ambassador of Aceh ruler arrives in the harbour of Iskenderiyye, nobody will check in his and his men's personal belongings either in the harbour or in other places by the custom officers (emins) or any other persons.²⁸

Two other commands written to the governor-general of Egypt and the admiral of the navy are concerned with the appointment of convenient men as captains (reis) to the ships that will go with the ambassador and the payment of their salaries. Their salaries will be paid by the Ottoman government, and when the captains and soldiers returned back from Aceh and if they bring documents (temessuk) with them, proving that they have done their work properly, their previous salaries (ulufe) will be continued to pay again.²⁹

According to a command written to the governor-general of Egypt on 30 December 1567 (28 Cemaziye'l-ahir 975), the admiral of Suez, Mahmud Reis, was appointed as deputy admiral to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis, former admiral of Iskenderiyye. In this command, it is also explained that when the navy arrives in a place, Mahmud Reis will stay in the navy, looking after the cannoneers and fighting forces in the ships and keeping his eyes on the infidel slaves in the ships in cases of their possible rebellion. On the other hand, Kurtoglu Hızır Reis' duty will be the taking care and carrying the cannons and other military equipments to the right place in the ground. During the presence of Kurtoglu Hızır Reis on the ground, the command of the ships in the sea will be under Mahmud Reis.³⁰ The copies and contents of these commands were also sent to Kurtoglu Hızır Reis and Mahmud Reis themselves.³¹

It is understood from these documents that during the return of Aceh ambassador from Istanbul, he sailed by a galley firstly to Rhodes island, then to Egypt. The name of the galley captain who carried the ambassador from Istanbul to Egypt was Karabiyık Reis.³² It can also be understood that the ambassador probably visited Mecca. Moreover, a high level importance and assistance was given to this Aceh delegation while returning to Aceh.

From all these official records, it can be said that the Ottoman Sultan Selim II gave great importance to this Aceh ambassador and determined to meet all the requests of the Aceh ruler. However, while preparations were being made for a navy to be sent to Aceh in support of Aceh sultan, a rebellion occurred in the Yeman province of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the navy prepared for this purpose was sent to Yeman to oppress the rebellion.³³ This decision was communicated to the ambassador of Aceh ruler, Huseyin, with a command dated 22 January 1568 (22 Recep 975) through the hand of Mustafa Chavush. It is stated that the sending of imperial navy (donanma-i humayun) to the side of India, namely Aceh, was postponed this year because of the rebellion in Yeman, but

²⁷. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:242, p.90; Transcription: Nr:242, p.123; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.394.

²⁸. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:243, p.90; Transcription: Nr:243, p.123-124; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.394.

²⁹. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:474, p.177; Transcription: Nr:474, p.234; Ibid, Original Print: Nr:491, p.182; Transcription: Nr:491, p.241; See also Razaulhak Shah, p.394,395.

³⁰. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:583, p.211; Transcription: Nr:583, p.282-283;

³¹. Ibid, Original Print: Nr:586, p.213; Nr:587, p.213; Transcription: Nr:586, p.284-285; Nr:587, p.285.

³². Ibid, Original Print: Nr:307, p.157; Transcription: Nr:307, p.156-157.

³³. Uzunçarşılı, Vol. II, p.400; Vol. III, p.31-32.

after the uprisings are suppressed and situation is normalised, “the said navy shall be sent the next year as previously agreed upon”.³⁴

In the meantime, another command issued to the governor-general and defterdar (finance director) of Egypt, dated 5 May 1568 (8 Zilkade 975), mentions the providence of food and other necessary items by the state treasure for this Aceh delegation while their stay in Egypt. It is explained that during the stay of ambassador and his men in Istanbul, 70 pieces of bread, 3 oke sugar, 3 boxes of nectar, 1,5 kilos rice, 4 oke butter, 4 oke honey, 3 wing chicken, 3 big sheep were provided daily for them. It is instructed that similar amount of food and other cooking items should be provided by the Egyptian treasure during their stay in Egypt.³⁵ It is understood from this document that this Aceh delegation was very large and they stayed probably for a time in Egypt. Considering the amount of these items, it might be included the needs of the artisans who would go to Aceh with the ambassador.

Sultan Selim II was very serious in sending a navy to Aceh, because he sent an instruction to the governor-general of Egypt almost at the same dates, namely on 12 January 1568 (17 Recep 975), to investigate on whether opening of a canal at Suez would be possible or not, after expressing that the Portuguese tried to blockade the route of the Muslim pilgrims and traders coming from the Indian waters. He instructed the governor-general that architects and engineers should go to the area to search and plan a canal between the Mediterranean and Red Sea and to report back its possibility, duration of work and number of ships that can be sailed through it.³⁶ Similar canal projects were under consideration at that time, one being to unite the rivers of Don and Volga. But all these were not able to put into effect.³⁷

In the meantime, 4 more galleys were added to the navy of 15 galleys prepared under the command of Kurtoglu Hızır Reis and necessary war materials needed from Istanbul were also sent to Egypt. It is stated in a command written to the captain of Iskenderiyye on 22 January 1568 (22 Recep 975) that the equipments needed for the mentioned navy should be carried by the captain of Iskenderiyye to Rashid either by land or by sea route whatever the way is possible. In addition, a similar command was sent to the Emin of Rashid, ordering him to hire a ship to carry the equipments prepared for the said navy to Egypt. Both commands were sent via the hand of Mustafa Chavush who was to go to Aceh.³⁸

Despite the equipments sent from Istanbul, it has been decided that if some more materials are needed in any case, they should be met from Egypt or Iskenderiyye. According to a command sent to the governor-general of Egypt on the same dates, the preparation of the said navy, which has included now 19 galleys, has already been completed, but the military equipments sent from Istanbul were not sufficient. Therefore, any deficiencies were to be met from Egypt and Iskenderiyye. In this command it is also stated that the said navy prepared especially for the “province of Aceh” (vilâyet-i Açı) will be used firstly for the Yeman expedition.³⁹

³⁴. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) I*, Original Print: Nr:708, p.255; Transcription: Nr:708, p.347; Razaulhak Shah, p.395; Saffet Bey, “Sumatra Seferi”, *TOEM*, XI, p.680; Göksoy, p.203.

³⁵. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) II*, Original Print: Nr:1363, p.473; Transcription: Nr:1363, p.88-89.

³⁶. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) I*, Original Print: Nr:721, p.258; Transcription: Nr:721, p.351-352.

³⁷. Uzunçarşılı, III (1st Book), p.32-34.

³⁸. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) I*, Original Print: Nr:725, p.259, Nr:731, p.261; Transcription: Nr:725, p.353, Nr:731, p.355-356.

³⁹. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) II*, Original Print: Nr:1316, p.455; Transcription: Nr:1316, p.63. In this document, Aceh is mentioned as a “vilayet (province)”

Another command dated 16 February 1568 (17 Shaban 975) and written to the governor-general of Egypt informs us that the galleys assigned to the ambassador of Aceh ruler and the carpenters, rowers, caulkers, ironsmith workers and masters of other professional arts have also been appointed to the expedition of Yeman because of the riots there and the delay of Aceh campaign. The names of these artisans are recorded as follow: Carpenter Ahmed and his four friends, master of sawyer Ahmed and his four friends, carpenter Ahmed bin Abdulbasit, Mustafa Ahmed, Ahmed bin Berekat and his two friends, Ustaz Ibrahim and his five friends, Rower Memi and Rower Hasan bin Abdullah, Ironsmith Ibrahim and his two miners, an Ustaz of copper miner and his two friends, a caulker and his four friends, an Ustaz of gilder and his two friends. All these who were intended to be sent to Aceh, were firstly sent to Eypgt, and then because of the Yeman expedition and the delay of Aceh campaign, they were appointed to the expedition of Yeman as well. Since Mustafa Chavush was on the way now, this command was therefore sent through the hand of Perviz, assistant of Mustafa Chavush in İstanbul.⁴⁰

According to a command sent to Vizier Piyale Pasha at the same dates, it is stated that a pay increase shall be given to those who would go to Yeman as previously given to those sent to Aceh. In this command it is also expressed that the cannons prepared at the weight of one kantar (120 pounds) and at the height of 7 karish (inch) for Yeman expedition were not convenient for use.⁴¹

In the Muhimme Registers, we do not have any further records on this subject. But, according to other Turkish official records, the Aceh sultan again sent 2 more ambassadors to Istanbul in the following years. We know the coming of these ambassadors to Istanbul through two more letters of Sultan Selim II addressed to Aceh ruler. Although the exact dates of these letters are not clear, we can judge from their contents that the first one is written in 1569, the second one in 1571. In both letters, the reasons of the delay of the required military aid were focused on, and it was once more confirmed that the navy would be sent after the military activities around Yeman, Cyprus and Tunisia were completed.

It is known from this first letter that Aceh Sultan sent some presents to Sultan Selim II via his ambassador and asked for help again. The letter goes on as follow: "We received your letter and gifts through your man. You are asking for help in your letter. It is our traditional duty to accept the requests of rulers. In fact, when you requested help against the infidels previously, we acted in response immediately, but when the equipments were just going to be sent, an uprising happened in Yeman. Since it has become a necessity to send soldiers there, we were late to meet your requests. After the return of the forces that have been sent to fight against the enemies in those parts, it has been decided certainly on the sending of soldiers and navy"⁴²

It is understood from the second letter of Sultan Selim II to Aceh sultan that the Ottoman Empire has not yet sent the planned navy to Aceh as they dealt mainly with the uprising in Yeman and the campaigns in Cyprus and Tunisia. When we look at its contents, it is seen that this responding letter was written in 1571. It continues as follows: "Your ambassadors Sünbül Agha and Khamza brought your letter and presented your requests to me. In accordance with the rules of religion, your requests had been accepted before and it had been ordered to send the requested equipments and war materials. But while these equipments were just on the way to send, the rebels suddenly revolted in Yeman. Since it has become a necessity to save the people and the province

⁴⁰. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) I*, Original Print: Nr:887, p.311; Transcription: Nr:887, p.427.

⁴¹. *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973-976/1567-1569) II*, Original Print: Nr:1284, p.446; Transcription: Nr:1284, p.48.

⁴². Razaulhak Shah, p.379-380; Origion of this letter: *Suret-i Mekâtib-i Hulefâ ve Selâtîn* [Copies of the Letters of Caliphs and Sultans] p.816b-817b, Library of Topkapı Palace Museum, Nr: R-1959.

of Yeman from the evil acts of those who twisted from the right path, some soldiers were sent there. Later on some soldiers were also needed to be send to Cyprus, because it became a vital duty to clean that island from the infidels who continued to give harms to those Muslims while they were going to pilgrimage by sea route. Therefore, your requests have not been fulfilled. After a big war, Cyprus was cleaned from the infidels and was annexed to the Ottoman territory. The governor of Algiers, Ali Pasha, fought against the ruler of Tunisia and conquered this place as well. Those soldiers who were sent to Yeman have overcome the enemies there. When the situation is normalised in that place and soldiers are returned back, your requests shall be fulfilled. It has been decided on this certainly.”⁴³

In the Muhimme Register of 12, we have also a record of these Acehnese ambassadors, which is concerned mainly with the rendering of assistance to them while leaving the Ottoman lands peacefully. Although the names of ambassadors are not mentioned in this command, it can be understood from the words with plural forms like “Acehnese ambassadors” and “the mentioned men” as well as from the date⁴⁴ of the command (1571) that they are most probably Sünbül Agha and Khamza. It is stated in this command written to the Bey of Rhodes that when the Acehnese ambassadors arrive at Rhodes, the Bey should accompany them peacefully, without any delay, until Iskenderiyye whatever ways are possible, by ship or galley or kalita or firkate. As it is noted at the beginning of the command, this command was sent via Mustafa Chavush, who “has been working for the Aceh ruler”. Copies of this command were also sent to the Bey of Iskenderiyye, the governor-general of Eypgt and the Bey of Jeddah, ordering them that any assistance should be rendered to these Acehnese ambassadors until Yeman while returning to their country.⁴⁵

The first hand Turkish official sources for the 16th century Ottoman-Aceh relations does not go further than this. Therefore we do not know whether this planned campaign to Aceh was carried out in the following years or not. The uprising in Yeman was suppressed by the end of 1570, but it took a few more years to normalise the situation there.⁴⁶ Various speculations were made by the researchers and writers who are interested in the matter concerning whether this arranged campaign was made or not. The historian İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı says that the planned expedition to Aceh did not take place, but the cannoneers, gunsmiths and artisans were sent to Aceh with 2 ships due to the campaigns being directed to Yeman.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Saffet Bey⁴⁸, İsmail Hamdi Danişmend⁴⁹, and Mehmet Ziya⁵⁰ say that this campaign was made and Danişmend also says that the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire extended after Asia, Europe and Africa as far as the Oceans. Metin İnegöllüoğlu, who had been to Jakarta as the Turkish ambassador for a period, assumes that the campaign was made and two ships had

⁴³. Razaulhak Shah Shah, p.380-381; Origion of this letter: *Suret-i Mekâtib-i Hulefâ ve Selâtîn* [Copies of the Letters of Caliphs and Sultans] p.881a-883a.

⁴⁴. Although the date is not mentioned in the document, the previous record is dated 22 Shavval 978 (19 Mart 1571) and the latter one 20 Zilkade 978 (15 Nisan 1571).

⁴⁵. *12 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (978-979/1570-1572)*, Origional Print: Nr:596, p.90; Transcription: Nr:599, p.370.

⁴⁶. Uzunçarşılı, vol. II, p.335-342.

⁴⁷. Uzunçarşılı, vol. II, p.400, vol. III, p.31-32. Uzunçarşılı, citing from the Münşeât of Feridun Bey, writes that the Acehnese sultan Alaaddin as the ruler of the places of winds (tahter-rih) to whom imperial letters were sent, asked from the Ottoman government to send cannons that he ordered their heights and weights, cannon founders and masters of gunsmiths. See Uzunçarşılı, vol. III, 2nd book, p.252 (dipnot 1).

⁴⁸. Saffet Bey, “Sumatra Seferi”, *TOEM*, XI, p.682,683.

⁴⁹. İsmail Hakkı Danişmend, *Tarihi Hakikatler* [Historical Facts], Vol. II, İstanbul: Tercüman History and Culture Works Publication, 1979, p.61-64.

⁵⁰. Mehmed Ziya, *İslam Alemi: Tarih-i Açe* [World of Islam: Aceh History], İstanbul 1317, p.85-86,157-160.

stayed in Aceh.⁵¹ The Pakistani researcher N. Ahmet Asrar, who had seen a part of Turkish sources about the subject, states that this campaign was never made but that arms and military aid may have been sent by ships.⁵² Antony Reid shares similar views as well. He says that "Kurtoglu Hızır Reis and his fleet never reached Aceh. But the importance the Acehnese give to the cannons, the flag, and gunsmiths makes it reasonably certain that these at least were sent along with some sort of imperial message. They probably reached Aceh during 1568 or 1569..."⁵³ So it can be said that the campaign in consideration was not made as planned in the letter of Sultan Selim II, but by sending a smaller military aid to Aceh.

Considering the death of Aceh Sultan Alaaddin in 1571 and the prisiding of his office by a weak ruler on the one hand and the sitting of Murad III on the Ottoman throne after Sultan Selim II and his reluctance to give more emphasis to the sea campaigns on the other hand, we can judge that the planned Turkish campaign to Sumatra was not materialised. However, when we consider the local Acehnese and some Portuguese sources, we can presume that some military assistance, probably including two ships, some big cannons and some war artisans were sent to Aceh by Sultan Selim II, as the Indonesian sources state that 2 ships had come from Turkey with many military experts and this 2 ships motif is frequently mentioned in Acehnese oral traditions. These two ships loaded with war materials and some artisans might have come to Aceh together with the Acehnese ambassador Huseyin.

The alliance between Turkey and Aceh was not only limited to the exchange of ambassadors. The western sources confirms that many experts and craftsmen had come to Aceh with the Ottoman ambassadors as well. For example, Diago do Couto says, "Aceh reinforces its power day by day ... and as far as we know, it established alliance with the Turks and developed its relations with them and Turks became the source of experts, weapons, blacksmiths, sailors, and cannoners. The Ottoman Sultan was always considered by the Aceh Sultan as an ally against the Portuguese."⁵⁴ A recently examined Portuguese source of 1582 also states that the Aceh ruler sent annually ambassadors to the sultan of Turkey to obtain military help in return of the pepper trade to West Asia. Even Aceh wanted to establish a trading center in Jeddah, which would be extremely lucrative for Cairo as well. Again, Aceh ruler sent annually gifts of gold, gems, spices and parfumes to the sultan of Turkey via the Red Sea in order to induce the latter to dispatch metal cannon to Aceh. This way he has managed to secure royal cannons, basilisks, cannon-balls, gun-founders, ship captains, helmsmen, galley officers, fortification engineers and siege experts.⁵⁵

At the begining of 17th century there was even a small Turkish colony settled in Aceh and they were usually named as "Rumî" or "Turkî" in local language. For instance, in 1604, a western traveller F. Martin mentions the existence of a Turkish colony in Aceh. He says "One part of the Turks, settled in Aceh, bought pepper from the farmers to sell; and a few times they tried to make a bargain with us to sell the pepper they had stored for us"⁵⁶

Although the Acehnese local sources mention the coming of two Turkish chelebis from Istanbul to Aceh during the time of Sultan Iskender Sani (r.1637-1641)⁵⁷, there is no

⁵¹. Metin İnegöllüoğlu, "A Short History of Early Turkish-Indonesian Relations", *Voice of Eastern Turkistan*, Year:4, Vol:4, No:16, December 1987, p.59.

⁵². N. Ahmet Asrar, p.301.

⁵³. Reid, "Sixteenth Century", p.407.

⁵⁴. Lombard, p.50.

⁵⁵. B. N. Teensma, "An Unknown Portuguese Text on Sumatra from 1582", *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 145/1-2, Leiden 1989, p.315-316,321.

⁵⁶. Lombard, p.158-159 (footnote 4).

⁵⁷. H.M. Zainuddin, *Tarich Atjeh dan Nusantara*, Medan, 1961, p.272-278; Seljuk, p.308-309.

Turkish source, proving this. Nevertheless, we keep in mind that there has always been a taraffic between Aceh and the Hejaz because of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Aceh has always welcomed warmly some religious scholars of the West Asian origin and sent her own students to get a higher education in the Hejaz. Also it is generally believed that some rulers in the region took their titles of sultan from the Ottoman governors of Yeman and the Hejaz through their envoys sent to Hejaz.⁵⁸

The memory of the Ottoman-Aceh relations in the 16th century was kept alive for centuries in the form of the Aceh flag, similar to the red Ottoman flag, and by keeping a cannon named lada secupak (a bag of pepper) in the royal courtyard in the capital, Bandar Aceh. These were accepted and respected as presents coming from the sultan as signs of the influence of the Ottoman Empire on its furthest vassal, the Sultanate of Aceh.⁵⁹ The Turks staying at Aceh founded a military academy, and many leaders, including the first woman admiral of the Sultanate of Aceh, Kumalahayati, were trained in this academy known as askari bayt al-mugaddas (Sacred Military Academy).⁶⁰ Again according to the local sources, two big bronze cannons had been sent among the weapons. It is stated that one of the big cannons had been protected in Banda Aceh until the last century. A Turkish traveller, Abdulaziz, who went to Aceh in 1898, asked the conditions of these cannons from the Acehnese officials, and the local leader named Tengku Suleyman said that one of these was in the Aceh courthouse, the other was in Java.⁶¹ But these cannons were confiscated by the Dutch, and later transported to the Bronbeek military museum in Holland.⁶²

In 1899, a Turkish writer Mehmed Ziya writes in his treatise on Aceh history that the Ottoman caliphate had sent a star of honour to the Aceh sultan and the Aceh ships were allowed to fly the Turkish flag. He states also that Suleyman the Magnificent had sent a flag to the Aceh ruler on which the holy testament of faith was written.⁶³ He also establishes some similarities between the clothes that the Aceh people wore in the beginning of the 20th century and those of the Turks in Anatolia in his treatise. For example the Aceh women and girls used to wear baggy shalwars and skirts, and jewellery as in Anatolia. The Aceh men of the aristocratic class used to wear fezzes like the Ottoman fez, the lower class men used to wrap belts around their waists and put handled knives in them.⁶⁴

Turkish effects in Aceh are much more seen in the military aspect. Seventeenth century Turkish author Katip Chelebi (d.1657) mentions in his geography book named Cihannuma (Terrace of the Whole World) that the Acehnese muslims are warior persons and good fighters, and that they learned the art of war from the Turks. They can use arrows and bows and manufacture the cannons similar to those of the muslims, namely the Turks.⁶⁵

⁵⁸. B.J.O. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1957, Vol. II, p.250-251; Göksoy, p.61-62.

⁵⁹. C. S.Hurgronje *The Achenese*, Trans.: A. W. S. O'Sullivan, I-II, Leiden: Brill, 1906, p.208-209; Antony Reid, *The Contest for Nort Sumatra: Atjeh, The Netherlands and Britain, 1858-1898*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Pres, 1969, p.3.

⁶⁰. Alfian and co., p.57.

⁶¹. Saffet Bey, p.683; Also see A. Nalbandoğlu, "Sumatra ve Cava'daki Türk Topları" [Turkish Cannons in Sumatra and Java], *Tarih Hazinesi* [Historical Treasure], vol.I, No:10, May 1951, İstanbul, p.519.

⁶². Teuku Ibrahim Alfian and co. (eds.), *Perang Kolonial Belanda di Aceh (Dutch Colonial War in Aceh)*, Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 1997, p.171.

⁶³. Mehmed Ziya, p.85.

⁶⁴. Mehmed Ziya, p.99-104.

⁶⁵. Katip Çelebi, *Cihannuma*, İstanbul 1145 [1733], p.144-145.

Furthermore, local sources state that the palace guards of Iskender Muda (r.1607-1636) in the 17th century consisted of slaves who had been captured from enemies at a young age, and also that they had been exposed to a military education like the Ottoman janissaries. Again in this period the Aceh soldiers had known and practised some of the Turkish war tactics. The military experts coming from Turkey also helped Iskender Muda in the construction of the famous Aceh castle and royal palace. A more outstanding example of this period of the Turkish effects on Aceh is the use of an Aceh flag resembling the Ottoman Turkish flag, consisting of a white star and crescent embroidered on a red background, with a white sword below it.⁶⁶

4. Nineteenth Century Ottoman-Aceh Relations

Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Sultanate of Aceh began to revive again in the 19th century after a long while. In fact, the 19th century was a period of colonisation of the Muslim lands by the Western colonial powers like the British, French and the Dutch. The Dutch advance in the island of Sumatra since the second half of the 18th century agitated the Sultanate of Aceh and by the middle of the 19th century the Dutch treat became evident for Aceh. The Aceh sultan Ibrahim Mansur Shah requested the renewal of the loyalty compromise in the 16th century by applying to the Ottoman Empire. He requested the declaration or a firman from the Ottoman government about an instant acceptance of them to vassal status and sent an envoy of two people called Sheikh Ismail Efendi and Muhammed Gus Efendi to Istanbul in 1851 to seek the protection of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁷

This Aceh envoy included 8 men and stayed in the Guest House of Tahir Efendi in Istanbul. Although they intended to stay two months in Istanbul, they extended their stay two more months, in total four months. During their stay in Istanbul, their expenses were met by the Ottoman treasury.⁶⁸ The Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid welcomed this Aceh envoy and the letter of Mansur Shah addressed to Sultan Abdulmecid with great warm. Since the matter of protection is considered a political one, it needed further discussion.⁶⁹

The Ottoman Council of Ministers known as Majlis-i Vukela discussed the matter in one of its meetings and came to the conclusion that there was no civil benefit to the acceptance of the vassal status by putting forward reasons like the remoteness of Aceh from the Ottoman lands, the non existence of a direct connection, and the insufficiency of communication. On the other hand, the Council of Ministers, considering the position and office of the Caliph as the leader of whole Muslims in the world, thought that a non-saying or rejecting the proposal totally would not be a convenient approach. Therefore, the Council decided to invite the Aceh envoy together with the Ottoman Governor of Yeman to one of its meetings to get further information on the subject. During the Council meeting of November 24th, 1851, the Aceh envoy stated the self-sufficiency of Aceh from the financial and military view and reported that they sent 25.000 pilgrims to Mecca each year and they required the declaration of their dependency on the Ottoman Empire in order to get rid of any foreign, especially the Dutch pressure and threats. The Aceh delegation also reported that the Friday sermons in the mosques has already been given in the name of the Ottoman Caliph, and they

⁶⁶. Seljuk, p.120.

⁶⁷. Reid, *The Contest*, p.21; Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği* [Abdulhamid II and Islamic Unity], İstanbul: Ötüken Publications, 1992, p.90.

⁶⁸. Letter of permission and its appendix dated 17 December 1851 to the Ministry of Finance: BOA, A.MKT:NZD, 47/38; Letter of permission dated 20 April 1852 to the Head Director of Finance Ministry: BOA, A.MKT.NZD, 51/51. BOA is the abbreviation of the Ottoman Archives of Prime Ministership in Istanbul. Henceforth BOA will be used for referring Ottoman Archives.

⁶⁹. Note dated 15 February 1852: BOA. MKT.MHM, 43/13.

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requested that permission should be given to Aceh to issue its coins in the name of Caliph and expressed their readiness to pay an annual tribute to the Ottoman Government as a sign of vassal status. They also requested the sending of some instructors and experts to train the Acehnese soldiers. All these were to be written down in a firman that would be sent to Aceh sultan.

However, the Council viewed bestowing vassal status based only upon the ambassador's request as contrary to the administrative procedure. In the end, the Council decided that the governor and the envoy would together go to Yeman and an experient high-rank officer would be appointed to inspect the situation further at its place. If the sincerity of the Aceh ruler about the matter of vassal status were to be confirmed, this Ottoman officer would come back with a man of the ruler in order to receive the symbols and documents of the vassal status. The Council wanted the instructions that would be given to this officer to be sent after they were seen by the sultan and also sufficient amount of money to be given as a present to the envoy, and this matter should be kept in a top secret manner without revealing anything to foreign agents. The Sublime Port (Bâbiâli) presented the case to the Sultan after a fortnight on 11 December 1851 together with an allowance of 15.000 Turkish guruh (piaster) as an *atıyye* (present) to be given to this Aceh envoy. The will of the sultan was declared on 13 December 1851, by approving the proposal.⁷⁰

It was decreed at the Council's meeting of 7th of January, 1852 that the journey expenses of the officer, who would go to Aceh, the presents and other expenses would be supplied from the state treasury of Yeman and they should be recorded on a register and be sent to the central treasury. The selection of this officer would also be made by the Yeman Governor, Mustafa Pasha.⁷¹

It is also stated in the letter of the Ottoman Sultan sent to the Aceh ruler via this Aceh envoy that the letter of Ibrahim Mansur Shah was welcomed by the sultan with pleasure and that it was desired by the office of caliphate to assure all the Muslims in the region of living in security and hapiness. But it was reminded that the duty of choosing a particular ambassador for discussing the matter of vassal status was assigned to the governor of Yeman, so that they were to be careful about the notification of the governor and that they could convey wishes to the caliphate via the Yeman governor. All of these documents were presented for the sultan's opinion on the 11th of February, 1852 and the sultan's approval came on the following day.⁷²

The letter to be sent to Aceh ruler was first prepared in Turkish and it was translated immediatedly into Arabic, as the Governor of Yeman, Mustafa Pasha, would leave Istanbul for Yeman. After that it was given to the Aceh envoy.⁷³ Moreover, a sum of 15.000 Turkish guruh was given to this Aceh envoy as an "atıyye" from the state treasury to meet the envoy's expenses during their journey. The envoy left İstanbul for Yeman together with the governor of Yeman to whom a ship was assigned as a promotion.⁷⁴ It can be understood from all these developments that the Ottoman Government did not approach the matter of vassal status seriously, although it welcomed the envoy very warmly. Finally it handled the case to its governor of Yeman.

The matter of vassal status was revived again after the Dutch threat on Aceh had become gradually evident. The Acehnese saw the Otoman Caliph as a source of hope and help to defend the sovereignty of their sultanate and to prevent the Dutch expansion

⁷⁰. BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, 7706; see also Eraslan, p.90-92.

⁷¹. BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, 7935; Eraslan, p.92.

⁷². BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, 7706; Eraslan, p.91-92.

⁷³. BOA, A. MKT.NZD, 49/64.

⁷⁴. BOA, A. MKT.NZD, 47/66.

over the Aceh territory. Therefore, they sent an appeal of protection to Istanbul through the Turkish authorities in Yeman and Hejaz in 1868. In fact, behind this initiative was there Sayyid Habib Abdurrahman az-Zahir, an Hadramevt origin Arab who, after travelling over various countries, came to Aceh in 1864 and entered into the service of Aceh government. He, having worked as the head of the Aceh religious court and the imam of the Aceh mosques for several years, went to Mecca in 1868 with a petition of protection signed by 65 Acehnese leaders. After his arrival in Mecca, he established close relation with the Ottoman governor of Jeddah and sent his petition to the caliph in İstanbul via the Governor of Yeman. According to this petition, it is claimed that, from the time of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent to the time of Sultan Abdulaziz, all the rulers of Aceh and her statesmen and her people had been under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. There were still the Ottoman cannons and military equipments in Aceh left from old times. The Acehnese harbours and ships carried the Turkish flags and the Friday sermons and the festival prayers were read in the name of the Caliph. Even, when the Acehnese officials had a meeting with the representatives of a foreign state, they wore the Ottoman official dresses; without them, they did not seat on any meeting with foreigners, and Aceh did not have any relation with foreign power other than the Ottoman Empire. They therefore requested from the caliph to renew their attachment to the Ottoman Empire, so that this could be declared to the all people. Aceh would not be a burden on the Ottoman Empire economically; it has necessary resources to administer itself as the vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. They requested from the Caliph to appoint an official to Aceh and send him with a ship, so that Aceh would be considered an Ottoman territory and the Acehnese people, having the dignity of belonging to the Ottoman Empire, would become happier.⁷⁵

In another letter written by Sayyid Abdurrahman az-Zahir himself in Mecca, the matter of protection was explained in some more detail. It is stated that if the Ottoman Empire sent a special officer to Aceh with a ship and gave a token and a sword to Aceh ruler as presents and necessary titles and tokens to other Acehnese statesmen according to their positions, any foreign power could not attack on Aceh and even the neighbouring emirates would wish to enter under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, he proposed that a monthly salary of 4.000 riyal to Aceh ruler with his own family, 500 riyal to the viziers of Aceh, 240 riyal to other chiefs can be given. In that way, it is expressed that Aceh should be governed by the Ottoman Empire as a vassal sultanate. There were one hundred thousand soldiers in Aceh and all of them will feel great dignity serving as the soldiers of the caliph.⁷⁶

When this petition, demanding vassal status and protection from the Ottoman Empire, was presented to the new sultan Abdulaziz on 1 December, 1868, the caliph issued an order, asking that necessary search has to be done on Aceh, that is to say, whereabouts of Java island Aceh is and under whose rule she is, whether she has relation with any European power or not.⁷⁷ As a result of inspection, it is understood that Aceh is part of Sumatra island and some part of it is still under the rule of Ibrahim Mansur Shah, while others are under the Dutch sovereignty. Aceh's relation with other European powers is that of a friendship, but there was a Dutch threat of expansion in the region. It was also seen that the matter of vassal status had already been discussed from different angles in a meeting held in Mecca with the presence of Abdurrahman az-Zahir, the Sherif of Mecca and the Governor of Hejaz, who all agreed that the request of protection has been presented by the Aceh ruler and other leading Acehnese personalities jointly. According to them, the Aceh ruler himself also wanted to enter under the protection of the Ottoman Government. If the caliph appoints an official and sends him to Aceh, he could annex and rule Aceh in the name of the Ottoman Government easily. The Emir himself would be very happy, working under the rule of the Ottoman caliph rather than any other

⁷⁵. See for the translated version of this petition: BOA, A. MKT.MHM. 457/55.

⁷⁶. BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 457/55.

⁷⁷. BOA, İrade Meclis-i Mahsus, 1524; Eraslan, p.97.

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European power. He could keep the boundaries of his country from the colonial power for a while, but if an official, who has knowledge on international laws and modern political affairs, is sent to Aceh together with a number of 200 soldiers, that official could easily gain the administration of Aceh; and the Ottoman Empire might also benefit from the richness of the region. It was considered that the official, after arriving in Aceh, would hold meetings with the Aceh ruler and with his high officials, discussing the administration of Aceh under the Ottoman rule. After that, he would act according to the instructions to be sent by the central government in Istanbul. All these opinions were presented to the Sublime Port (Office of Sadrazam) on 14 March, 1869 as a proposal.

Nevertheless, these thoughts and proposal did not get enough support at the meeting of the Council of Ministers led by the Sadrazam (Prime Minister). If the protection request of the Acehnese is accepted, the other Muslim rulers in the region would also wish to enter under the protection of the Ottoman government and ask for a vassal status. In that case, this would damage the friendly relations with the Dutch government and this would pave the way for some difficulties in terms of international law. Even the possibility of attacking on Aceh by the Dutch as a colonial power would be more evident. If the Dutch attacks on Aceh, it would be an unavoidable situation for the Ottoman Empire to respond to this, and such a thing might cause many unexpected difficulties. In the end, it was preferred to do something, but not openly. Thus, Pertev Efendi, the former kaimakam (district governor) of Mause, has been chosen as the right person to inquire the matter further. His knowledge of Arabic language and his interest in the law of inter-states and in modern politics played an important role in this selection. But, his appointment included officially the improvement of the ties of the tribes in the Yeman province. This appointment was presented by the Office of Sadrazam to the Sultan on 29 April, 1869. The Sultan's approval came on the following day, on 30 April 1869.⁷⁸

From all these discussions, it can be deduced that the Ottoman authorities in the capital did not approach the matter of vassal status requested by the Acehnese in the real sense of the politics, but they tried to use every means to improve the spiritual ties and the feelings of religious brotherhood with Aceh. In the end the government chose the way of sending a secret official to inquire the situation further in its place. The Dutch representative in Istanbul was informed that the Aceh's request of protection has been rejected, because the Ottoman officials had got the impression that this protection request was only an idea of Abdurrahman az-Zahir and a group of his close friends in Aceh or some Acehnese pilgrims living in Mecca.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the Ottoman authorities in Mecca and Yeman, who first welcomed the Acehnese envoys and pilgrims, always approached the matter positively, and they continued to hold their warm stance in the following years as well. According to Reid, in 1872 the Ottoman Pasha of Jeddah and some other minor officials claimed to the Dutch consulate there that Aceh was part of the Ottoman Empire. He also says that the pioneer of this vassal status, Abdurrahman az-Zahir, returned to Aceh later with some letters obtained from the Sherif of Mecca and the Ottoman Pasha of Jeddah and probably with a Mecidi token.⁸⁰

The last Aceh envoy to Istanbul came in 1873, on the eve of the Dutch attack on Aceh. This Acehnese struggle of over 30 years against the Dutch, known as *perang sabil* (holy war), is registered as the Aceh War (1873-1906). This last Aceh envoy was sent by the new Aceh Sultan Mahmud Shah and it was led by Abdurrahman az-Zahir, who acted as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Aceh government. In his letter addressed to Sultan Abdulaziz, the Aceh ruler, after mentioning the old ties established by his ancestors, requested the Ottoman protection and military help against the Dutch. He expressed that they have been under the protection of the Ottomans since the time of Sultan Selim, and that his grand father Alaeddin Mansur Shah has been given a firman and a Mecidi token

⁷⁸. BOA, İrade Meclis-i Mahsus, 1524; See also Eraslan, p.97-98.

⁷⁹. Reid, *The Contest*, p.82.

⁸⁰. Reid, "Nineteenth Century", p.275.

by the caliph Abdulmecid, and that they recognised only the Ottoman Turkish rule as their highest administration; As the prove of their attachment to the Ottoman Empire the Aceh flag has a crescent like the Turkish flag and they use the Turkish flag in their harbours and ships, even they practise the Ottoman rules as their own law. It is stated that vizier Abdurahman was sent to Istanbul to present their whole plans and requests, and that he has been given the full authority to discuss the matter of protection. It is also stated that they consider themselves as the people of the Ottoman caliph and their country to be an Ottoman land. He expressed that he would be ready to work under the instruction of an Ottoman Turkish governor and would carry out every kind of instructions issued by the caliphate office with a great willingness.⁸¹

Abdurrahman az-Zahir first called at Mecca and stayed in the Hijaz for a time during the months of February and March 1873. He met the Ottoman authorities there and discussed the matter of protection with them, asking, among other things, the sending of a special ship under the leadership of an Ottoman official together with some soldiers. The Ottoman authorities in the Hejaz, who had knowledge on the subject previously, considered the matter very positively and even they thought that Zeynel Abidin Efendi, originally a Sumatran person who stayed in Mecca, could be a qualified person for such a post, but because of his death now they considered that another person could be nominated either from Mecca or from Istanbul. Since the caliph is the leader of all Muslims, the request of protection and military help could not be refused, but the details of this should be determined together with the Acehnese envoy in Istanbul. Moreover, the Ottoman authorities proposed that convenient tokens can be given to the new Aceh ruler Alaaddin Mahmud Shah, Abdurrahman az-Zahir and other Acehnese leaders according to their positions. The matter of sending some military experts to Aceh to train the Acehnese soldiers and that of sending some military equipments with a ship should need the decision and instruction of the caliph in Istanbul.⁸²

With this support and hope, Abdurrahman left for Istanbul and arrived in the capital on 27 April, 1873. He firstly stayed at the Ozbek Tekke, a guest house where pilgrims from Buhara and other central Asian cities usually call at on their way to Mecca, and payed short visits to the Sublime Porte and government offices for a few days. During his early days in Istanbul, he also had a chance to meet with the ambassador of Yakup Khan from the Kashgar Emirate in Eastern Turkistan. On 4 May, he moved to the imperial guest house and stayed there until his departure from Istanbul. With the help of the director of this guest house, Shemsi Efendi, he was able to meet the high-rank authorities at their private houses in order to get their attention to Aceh cause as well. On 15 May, 1873, he was accepted by the Sadrazam Mahmud Rushdi Pasha and presented the letter of Mahmud Shah to him. According to his own remark, he was also accepted by the Sultan for a short time.⁸³

The time when Abdurrahman az-Zahir came to Istanbul was coincided with the time of various foreign Turkic delegations from Hiwa, Buhara and Kashgar in Central Asia. These

⁸¹. See the letter of Aceh Sultan Mahmud Shah sent to Sultan Abdülaziz via the hand of his ambassador Abdurrahman az-Zahir: BOA, A. MKT.MHM. 457/55; See for its Indonesian version: Aboe Bakar (ed.), "Surat Sultan Aceh Alauddin Mahmud Syah Kepada Sultan Turki Abdul Aziz", *Surat-Surat Lepas Yang Berhubungan dengan Politik Luar Negeri Kerajaan Aceh Menjelang Perang Belanda di Aceh*, Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 1982, p.29-30.

⁸². Letter signed by the Deputy Governor and Defterdar of Hejaz, Mustafa, dated 13 March 1873 (13 Muharrem 1290) and letters sent to the Office of Sadrazam dated 11 March and 12 March 1873: BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 457/55.

⁸³. Jan Schmidt, *Through the Legation Window 1876-1926: Four Essays on Dutch, Dutch-Indian and Ottoman History*, Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1992, p.59.

delegations were also asking help from the Ottoman caliph as the caliph of all Muslims. Among them the delegation of Kashgar was able to obtain from the Sultan a letter of support as well as four Turkish training officers and some weapons⁸⁴ Therefore, this situation gave some encouragement and hope to Abdurrahman in order to get support for his cause. The İstanbul press of the period paid also great importance to this Aceh delegation and its requests. Consequently the Aceh matter became a subject of great discussions in the press. The aim of the delegation, the crimes and unjust practices of the Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia were expressed to a great extent in the press. The majority of the Turkish press supported the Aceh cause, pressing for diplomatic and military support to her. The Arabic journal *al-Jawaib* with a panislamic stance wrote news on the head of the Aceh delegation, while another panislamic Turkish newspaper *Basiret* included news on Aceh and old ties between the two countries in its several issues, calling the authorities that Turkish war ships should be sent to Sumatra in support of Aceh. The half official newspaper *La Turquie*, published both in French and Turkish, demanded that the government should take steps to initiate the protection and the rights of small and weak Muslim nations. When the newspaper *Basiret* wrote on the 9th of July 1873, saying that the government has already took a decision to send 8 war ships to Aceh and that one of them would stay in Aceh waters permanently, this news immediately prompted a diplomatic concern among the European representatives in İstanbul, who all jointly protested against such a decision if it were true. So, the government needed to issue an official statement that the news was entirely fabricated one, while *Basiret* was banned by the government for a duration of five days for its false and provocative news.⁸⁵ This news of *Basiret* reached Penang through the Reuter agency and it was reached also to Aceh via the Acehnese immigrants in Penang. The influence of the first news was immense in the region, encouraging the Acehnese against the Dutch, while the official statement of the government, which denied all these, was not publicized in the area.⁸⁶

On the other hand, all the European powers were not happy with the presence of this Aceh delegation in İstanbul, which caused a great anxiety among the Dutch and other European states. The Dutch Embassy in İstanbul appointed one of its clerks named Antoire Scassarò to follow every movement of Abdurrahman az-Zahir and to write reports on his daily activities in the capital. In addition, the Dutch government tried to obtain guarantee from the great states including the British not to support the diplomatic mission of Aceh in İstanbul. Upon the request of the Dutch, the French, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian and British ambassadors in İstanbul insisted first on the Ottoman Foreign Minister Saffet Bey and then on Rashid Pasha not to intervene in the war between the Dutch and Aceh⁸⁷ French ambassador De Vogue claimed that Turkey's arbitration would not bring any benefit, since it was going to be refused by the Dutch. Most notably the Russian ambassador in İstanbul, General Ignatiev, opposed vehemently Turkey's involvement in the Aceh war. He was a staunch supporter of the Dutch arguments and had great influence in the diplomatic circles in İstanbul. He was explaining to his European friends that they should be very careful on the Panislamic ideas and movements as well as the recognition of the Ottoman sultan as the universal caliph of the whole Muslims in the Islamic world. If the Ottoman Empire try to protect the Muslims in Asia on the name of the caliphate and intervene every international event in favour of its interests, great powers would push forward the protection of Christians living in Turkey. Therefore, he opposed to a possible Turkish intervention on Sumatra and arbitration of the Ottoman Government in the case. Even later, when the question of

⁸⁴. Mümtazer Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu* [Birth of Panislamism as a Political Ideology], İstanbul: İletişim Publications, 1991, p.155; Reid, *The Contest*, p.120.

⁸⁵. Türköne, p.155-156.

⁸⁶. Reid, *The Contest*, p.121.

⁸⁷. Schmidt, p.58.

Aceh was closed in favour of the Dutch interests, the Dutch ambassador Heldevier said: "we owe this only to General Ignatiev".⁸⁸

According to the remarks of Abdurrahman, the Aceh envoy was received by the Ottoman sultan with a warm welcoming in Istanbul and the sultan expressed his happy remarks to the proposal of protection, but the government officials took a more reserved stance towards the Acehnese requests. For several months, the question of Aceh became an important problem in Istanbul, waiting for a solution. The Aceh cause was generally defended among the members of Ottoman government by the reformist Mithad Pasha, Minister of Justice, who saw the Aceh question as a convenient reason to take an opposing attitude towards the western powers. He argued that the sultan should do something in that matter; at least an arbitration should be offered to the Dutch, which would mean also a diplomatic support for the Acehnese. He also suggested giving of a first class token to the Aceh ruler and a second class token to Abdurrahman az-Zahir as the head of the Aceh envoy in Istanbul.⁸⁹ While the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saffet Pasha, preferred to follow the advices and views of the western states. He wrote to his ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, on 5 May, 1873, asking him to learn the attitude of the British government on the subject. The British answer was that of non-intervention. The British authorities advised that the Ottoman Government would not get any benefit from supporting the Acehnese, and that there was no religious element in the war. Therefore, the Ottoman government should avoid from taking any steps which would encourage the Acehnese in the war. In their opinion, only a protest could be sufficient.⁹⁰

Among the Ottoman government ministers, Mithad Pasha was the only person who appeared to be ready to respond positively to the Acehnese demands. According to Heldevier, Mithad Pasha was trying to improve his position before the sultan and wanted to be Sadrazam. Mithad Pasha, reminding to Heldevier the old relations existed between the Ottoman Turks and the Acehnese, continuously expressed Aceh's ties with the Ottoman caliph. On the other hand, Heldevier insisted that the caliphate should not be a political power on other Muslims, and that the Dutch always behaved the Muslims in Indonesia justly and respected the Islamic religion. In his opinion, the war between the Dutch and the Acehnese did not have any religious basis. What is more important was that if the Acehnese saw themselves a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan, why did they sign an agreement with the Dutch in 1857 without taking first the consent of the Ottoman Government?⁹¹

Under the pressure of the Western states, Saffet Pasha gave a guarantee to the Dutch authorities on May 15, 1873, that Turkey would not become an arbitrator on this matter. Although Abdurrahman met the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rashid Pasha, he was not able to obtain sufficient support for Aceh demands. Rashid Pasha told to him at the beginning of June 1873 that Aceh was very far from the Ottoman lands to do something for her. The representatives of the Western states in Istanbul, who were much annoyed with the existence of this Aceh envoy, wished that the question should be solved as soon as possible; and they wanted the Aceh delegation to be departed instantly from Istanbul and to be sent back with a letter of abstruse words expressing that their requests would be taken into consideration according to the circumstances.⁹²

When Abdurrahman az-Zahir did not obtain enough support from the Ministers, he insisted that Aceh has already been accepted as a Turkish land in the firmans given to Sultan Ibrahim in 1851; since then the Turkish flag has been waving in Aceh lands and

⁸⁸. Schmidt, p.58-59; Reid, *The Contest*, p.123.

⁸⁹. BOA, İrade Hariciye, 15589; Eraslan, p.99.

⁹⁰. Reid, *The Contest*, p.123.

⁹¹. Schmidt, p.60.

⁹². Reid, *The Contest*, p.125.

waters. He stated that these firmans, which are said to recognise the Ottoman protection on Aceh, should have been in the Ottoman archives. This protection and vassal status went back as far as the time of Sultan Selim, and it was renewed again during the former Aceh sultan Ibrahim Mansur Shah. Now he, having relied on all these previous ties, asked for a renewal of protection and recognition of the new Aceh sultan as a vassal ruler of the Ottoman caliph. Upon Abdurrahman's insistence, Head Registry searched the archives and in the end two firmans were found. One of them was the letter of 1567 written by Sultan Selim II to the Aceh ruler Alaeddin Riayet Shah al-Kahhar; the second one was a letter given by Sultan Abdulmecid to Ibrahim Mansur Shah in 1851. According to the latter, the Acehnese Sultanate was accepting the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire by the letter sent by Ibrahim Mansur Shah to Sultan Abdulmecid, who, in return, issued a firman and granted an imperial Mecidi token to the then Aceh sultan. Even when the contents of these documents became known in the capital, a favourable stance was taken by the Turkish press and the panislamic circles in Istanbul for the Acehnese demands, which they argued that political and military help should immediately be given to the Acehnese. After the archival research, these documents were brought before the Ottoman cabinet on 13 June 1873. Nevertheless, they did not convince enough the ministers and officials, some of whom considered them as signs of religious royalty only, but not a direct and political protection. Some members of the cabinet maintained that a decision should be taken, expressing the worry about the beginning of the war against Aceh, while new Foreign Minister Rashid Pasha suggested that a protest can be made against the Dutch and an imperial token could be given again to Aceh ruler. Some others argued that, since Aceh is very far from the Ottoman lands, it would be very difficult to send help and to establish communication with Aceh. In their views, it would be inconvenient to have the responsibility of a direct protection on Aceh. On the other hand, it would also not be suitable for the greatness and the prestige of the caliph to refuse the requests of the Acehnese and to leave them in despair, since they had been previously given imperial firmans and tokens.⁹³ In the end, it was politely explained to the head of the envoy that the contents of these firmans had a religious importance rather than a political one. Therefore, they should not have been understood as proves, granting Aceh a direct protection.⁹⁴

Abdurrahman az-Zahir, having disappointed from the result, submitted a letter to the Office of Sadrazam at the end of June 1873, in which he stated that he has just received a telegram from Aceh, according to which the Dutch forces sieged the Aceh capital from the side of the sea, but the Acehnese still resisted against them. He, after mentioning the old ties between the two countries again, maintained that the renewal of their royalty to the Ottoman caliph and the vassal status of Aceh to Turkey has not still been done, although this was continuously demanded and was presented to the authorities. If these were to be finalised, they would have been resulted in peace in Aceh and the Dutch would not dare to attack on Aceh. He requested that a firman together with a token should be given to their ruler like they were given to the Turkish ruler of Kashgar in East Turkistan and to other rulers. He urged their requests be brought once more to the notice of the caliph.⁹⁵

The matter began to enter into a crisis in the month of July 1873, when the Russian ambassador Ignatiev learned of the news that new documents written in Arabic came from Aceh and they have just reached Istanbul. These documents were shown to Ignatiev in the house of Rashid Pasha in Kanlıca, and according to his translator they were written in a bad Arabic. These documents were a *pancarte roulee* signed by the Aceh sultan and they included documents signed and stamped by five Acehnese emirs and 20 Acehnese administrators. According to these documents, Aceh ruler and his

⁹³. BOA, İrade Hariciye, 15586; Eraslan, p.100.

⁹⁴. Reid, *The Contest*, p.126.

⁹⁵. Letter of Abdurrahman to the Office of Sadrazam dated 28 June 1873: BOA, A.MKT.MHM.457/55.

officials submitted the whole Acehese lands to the sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan, and for the administration of these Acehese lands they demanded the appointment of an Ottoman governor to Aceh. In that manner, the sultan, who was encouraged by Mithad Pasha in that matter, has seen the documents and ordered the writing of an official letter to the Dutch government.⁹⁶

Due to the pressure of western powers, the Ottoman government was left no choice, but to make a proposal of mediation between the Dutch and the Acehese. To this end, a letter was prepared with soft words that it could mediate in an appropriate way to the benefit of the Dutch government and that it would apply to the humanitarian side of the Dutch on the matter of the protection of peace and the esteem of the Ottoman caliphate in Aceh. It was also emphasized that historical ties has been existed between Turkey and Aceh for centuries, and that a polite warning to the Dutch not to take any further action against Aceh has been included. The proposal was approved by Sultan Abdulaziz on 3 September, 1873.⁹⁷

While western representatives in Istanbul had great anxiety and dislike for the presence of this Aceh delegation, some Turkish authorities also began to feel that this matter should be closed as quickly as possible.⁹⁸ In fact, many of them felt that some kind of help had to be given to such a friendly country in accordance with the prestige of the Sublime Port and the position of the caliph, but political, military and geographical circumstances did not allow such an initiative in that direction. In the end, it was unanimously agreed that "some warnings on friendly ways" should be made to the Dutch in order to keep the contents of the firmans given to the Acehese valid and to avoid a problem with the Dutch.⁹⁹

This letter of arbitration was sent to the Hague via the Ottoman ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, on 4 September 1873, while a letter of credence was given to the Dutch court in the Hague. According to the latter letter of friendly warning, initially the historical ties between Turkey and Aceh and the friendly relations between the Sublime Porte and the Dutch were explained. It was stated that during the time of Sultan Selim I [Selim II] Aceh had come under the Ottoman rule and the Sultan had sent some signs and tokens to the Aceh ruler as the symbols of the Ottoman sovereignty on Aceh; since then the relations continued, but because of the geographical distance, relations were cut off from time to time. Later on, in 1851, Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Shah had sent a delegation to Istanbul to renew the old relations and he had asked for recognising their land with the title of "a special province" (*eyalet-i mümtaze*). The letter continued that upon the preparation of Dutch attack on Aceh, the ruler had sent a delegation to Istanbul, demanding the sending of an Ottoman official to govern their lands. Although the Dutch action on Aceh was not ruled out completely, the Dutch were called upon to show "moderateness and greatness" in their fightings with Mahmud Shah. Since the Ottoman government wished friendly relations with the Dutch, it would arbitrate to the extent that the Dutch agreed on and in accordance with their interests.¹⁰⁰ That meant that this proposal of arbitration was going to be carried out in accordance with the wishes of the Dutch government.

Thus, the Ottoman government, which came under the pressure of the great powers on the one hand and the urging demands of the Acehese for help on the other hand, had formulated a moderate and friendly arbitration proposal. But this arbitration proposal did

⁹⁶. J. Woltring (ed.), *Bescheiden betreffende de Buitenlandse Politiek van Nederland, 2de Periode, I-III*, The Hague: Vaderlandse Instituut voor Geschiedenis, 1962, Vol. II/1, Nr:434, p.591-592.

⁹⁷. BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15586, Meclis-i Vukela mazbatası, 2 September 1873.

⁹⁸. Schmidt, p.60.

⁹⁹. Eraslan, p.100.

¹⁰⁰. BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15586; Woltring (ed.), *Bescheiden*, II/1, Nr:444a, p.612-614, Nr:445, p.615.

not change the situation. In its responding letter, the Dutch government rejected the arbitration proposal and the intervention of the Ottoman government in Aceh affairs. The Dutch government claimed that Aceh sought protection not only from Turkey but also from other countries. It maintained that the Dutch provided full freedom of religion for the Indonesian Muslims, and that the war in Aceh was not a religious one, but it was a result of breaking responsibilities by the Acehnese authorities agreed upon in the agreement of 1857.¹⁰¹

This answer determined the destiny of the Aceh delegation in Istanbul. By December 1873, the Sublime Porte decided to give a token to Abdurrahman az-Zahir himself and a letter of Sadrazam to the Aceh ruler. Thus, on 7 December 1873, the Ottoman government gave "a second class Ottoman token" to Abdurrahman and a letter of Sadrazam to the Aceh ruler Mahmud Shah, expressing the Turkish efforts of aid to Aceh. Abdurrahman az-Zahir and his delegation left Istanbul for Mecca on 18 December 1873.¹⁰² His delegation included his companion Abbas Efendi, an Acehnese pepper producer and trader, and his three young servants named Faradi, Abdullah and Yaver respectively at the age of 19, 14 and 12 years old.¹⁰³ In his letter to Aceh ruler, Sadrazam expressed his well wishes for the letter of Aceh ruler, which included royalty to the caliph and the requests of renewal of the old ties, the visit of Abdurrahman and his delegation which the caliph felt great happiness, and other things were told to the ambassador Abdurrahman that was agreed on 3 September 1873.¹⁰⁴

In the following years, according to western sources of the period, some Turkish officers secretly went to Aceh and helped them in their armed struggle against the Dutch. Although their number is not known, one relatively experienced Turkish officer left Aceh in 1875 after staying 20 days there, by seeing disagreements of Acehnese leaders. In 1876, two more Turkish artillery officers on their way to Aceh were also reported in Singapore.¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, the aid demands of Aceh from Turkey continued in the following years. On November 21, 1893 the new sultan Davud Shah and Tuanku Hashim wrote a letter addressed to the Ottoman caliph, asking for help, but it fell into the hands of the Dutch in Batavia, so it was not able to reach its destination.¹⁰⁶ Again in 1897, Davud Shah sent another letter to the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II via the Ottoman consulate of Batavia, which was delivered secretly by an Arab origin Indonesian during the night: So, it could not fall into the hands of the Dutch who tried to control every initiative of the Acehnese to establish contact with Turkey. In his letter, Davud Shah, after having expressed Aceh's old relations with Turkey, stated that since the time of Sultan Selim Aceh had been under the protection of the Ottoman Empire and that this sultan had sent to Aceh a firman together with some cannons, the flag and 40 Turkish soldiers; his grand father Ibrahim Mansur Shah had renewed this vassal status with Sultan Abdulmecid who send to him a decorated sword and a mecdi token. Now, he stated that he would not accept attachment to any foreign infidel ruler and asked for the renewal of Aceh's previous vassal status. He also appealed for help, expressing that the Dutch made a lot of crimes to the Acehnese and destroyed the villages and were prepared again with a big

¹⁰¹. Woltring (ed.), *Bescheiden*, II/1, Nr:448, p.623-625, Nr:449, p.627-629.

¹⁰². Reid, *The Contest*, p.128-129.

¹⁰³. Schmidt, p.61; Reid, "Nineteenth Century", p.275.

¹⁰⁴. BOA, *İrade Hariciye*, 15589 lef 1; Eraslan, p.99-100. Abdurrahman az-Zahir continued his struggle against the Dutch together with the Acehnese hero known as Teungku Chi di Tiro when he returned to Aceh, but he went to Jeddah in 1878 and died there in the following year. See Alfian and others (eds.), p.80; Smicht, p.62.

¹⁰⁵. Reid, *The Contest*, p.138.

¹⁰⁶. Reid, *The Contest*, p.259.

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army to attack the people.¹⁰⁷ The Ottoman consulate of Batavia also reported to Istanbul that Davud Shah and his men were “continuously sending news” to the consulate, demanding Turkey’s help to stop the Dutch aggression in Aceh.¹⁰⁸ Although some of these appeals reached Turkey, this did not change the situation in Aceh. In 1903, the last Aceh ruler Davud Shah was captured by the Dutch and the Acehese struggle came to an end in the following years.

To sum up, there existed close and sincere relations between Turkey and Aceh since the 16th century. Aceh became the farthest ally of the Ottoman Empire in that century and the Turkish assistance to Aceh in those days mediated a lasting remembrance and friendship between the Turks and the Acehese. Although the political circumstances of the 19th century did not allow Turkey to offer an effective help to Aceh, the Turkish people showed great concern to the cause of Aceh in that century as well. Recent tsunami disaster of 2004 became again a means to remember this friendly relations between Turkey and Indonesia.

¹⁰⁷. Letter of Davud Shah to Abdulhamid II dated 25 Muharrem 1315 (26 June 1897): BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA, 28/66.

¹⁰⁸. Consulate report of 7 January 1898: BOA, Y.PRK:BŞK, 55/41.