

The Ottoman Response to Portuguese-Acehnese Conflicts in the 16th Century

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Abstract

This research investigates the diplomatic correspondence between the Acehnese Sultanate and the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century, shedding light on the transregional alliances that shaped geopolitical dynamics in Southeast Asia. The study employs a structured historical methodology, encompassing heuristics (data collection), verification (authentication of sources and authors), interpretation (critical analysis), and historiography (historical synthesis). The findings reveal a series of preserved letters in the Ottoman archives, documenting official communications during the reign of Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar of Aceh, notably, correspondence with Ottoman rulers Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and Sultan Selim II highlights Aceh's strategic efforts to secure Ottoman support against Portuguese expansion in the Indian Ocean. Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's letters detail three primary requests: formally recognizing Aceh as an Ottoman vassal state, military assistance including cannon makers, naval vessels, and fortification materials, and the dispatch of military advisors and trainers. The records further confirm that the Ottoman Empire responded positively, demonstrating a willingness to assist Aceh, reflecting shared interests in countering Portuguese influence. This study contributes to a nuanced understanding of early modern diplomacy and the interconnected nature of political and military networks across the Indian Ocean, emphasizing the Ottoman Empire's pivotal role in supporting regional powers like Aceh.

Keywords: *Response, Acehnese, Ottoman, Sultan.*

Introduction

The arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean towards the end of the 15th century had a significant impact on the political landscape of the Muslim kingdoms situated along the coast, particularly in the vicinity of the Straits of Malacca. Following the Portuguese conquest of Malacca, the Muslim kingdoms in the region found themselves divided into two groups: (1) those who made peace with the Portuguese, recognizing their growing dominance in the archipelago, and (2) those who rejected Portuguese presence, leading to conflicts. One such kingdom that resisted Portuguese influence was the Acehnese Sultanate.¹

To consolidate their political and economic position, the Acehnese Sultanate sought to establish diplomatic relations with various kingdoms across Asia and Europe, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Notably, they formed a remarkable alliance with the Ottoman Empire, seeking assistance and support. This alliance with the Ottomans proved instrumental in enhancing the military capabilities of the Acehnese Sultanate. They received substantial aid in terms of training their troops, construction of weapons, expertise in cannon-making, and more. By forging this alliance with the Ottomans, the Acehnese Sultanate was able to strengthen its military prowess and ensure its continued presence in the region.²

The Portuguese presence in Indian waters led to the Acehnese-Ottoman Empire's intensive diplomacy. The Portuguese existence in this ocean after Vasco da Gama was to control the spices along the coast of the Indian Ocean (primarily controlled by Muslim rulers) with their military power. Albuquerque pursued the king of Portugal to permit him to conquer

¹ See Denys Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1991), p. 247-327.

² Halil Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 329.

Malacca immediately, an excellent base for spice commodities in the archipelago.³ This conquest aimed to cut off the trade routes from this area to the Red Sea. He expected to destroy Cairo and Mecca so that Venice would no longer get this commodity except through the Portuguese.⁴ Reid said that the Portuguese war against Muslims seemed to become a new Reconquista in which Spain's closest rival had succeeded in expelling Muslims from Andalusia, particularly in 1492 AD.⁵

The Portuguese presence in Indian waters led to Islam and Christianity conflict. The Muslims had stayed in this area for hundreds of years and made the Indian waters a lucrative trading place, while the Portuguese also considered Muslims as an enemy.⁶ The Portuguese, trying to monopolize the trade, made war against the local Muslim authorities. The Portuguese conquered several areas, including the Strait of Hormuz (1506 AD), India (1508 AD), and Malacca (1511 AD).⁷

Even though the Portuguese trade hegemony efforts continued to be carried out around the Malacca Strait, The Acehnese refused to sell their spice commodities to them, and they brought them to the Red Sea, passing a new route; through the Maldives to avoid Portuguese interference.⁸ The new trade route was controlled by Acehnese military assistance for Southeast Asian merchant ships, and they also sailed through the west coast of Sumatra and Sunda Strait to avoid the familiar route of Malacca Strait.⁹ According to Venetian sources, 50 ships between 1565 AD and 1566 AD came from Aceh. The Acehnese sent their spices to West Asia, and they also took some merchandise to sell in the archipelago.¹⁰

When the Portuguese arrived at the Indian Ocean, most rulers of the regions were Muslims. According to Pearson, the Muslim community gradually controlled the Indian Ocean coast. Over a few centuries, most of the population in this area are Muslims and more dominant than Hindus and Buddhists. The Muslim community continues to grow around the coast and even they met many Muslim people who expected to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.¹¹ This research is conducted through library research involving the usage of classical sources dating in the 16th century.

Method

This study constitutes library research, utilizing a historical methodology to explore and analyze primary and secondary sources relevant to the subject matter. The research follows four systematic stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics, or the process of identifying and collecting sources, involved extensive archival

³ Anthony Reid, Aceh and the Turkish Connection, dalam Arndt Graf dkk (ed) *Aceh: Politics, History and Culture*, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), p. 27.

⁴ See Afonso de Albuquerque, *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque: Second Viceroy of India*, vol. 3 (London: The Hakluyt Society, tt), p. 117-118.

⁵ Anthony Reid (Ed), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 164.

⁶ Azyumardi Azra, 1530-1670: Race Between Islam and Christianity, dalam Jan Sihar Aritonang & Karel Steenbrink, *The History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Netherlands: Brill, 2008), p. 12.

⁷ See Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra Aceh, the Netherland and Britain, 1858-1898*, (Kuala Lumpur: The University of Malaya Press, 1969), p. 1.

⁸ A.R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and Portuguese Empire: from Beginnings to 1807, Vol.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 151.

⁹ M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962), p. 115-116.

¹⁰ M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian...*, p. 144.

¹¹ M. Pearson, *The Indian* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 62.

visits to obtain authentic and reliable materials. Notable among these locations were the Topkapi Palace and the Şişli Military Museum in Istanbul, which house significant correspondence between the Ottoman Sultan and the Sultan of Aceh Darussalam. These letters provide invaluable insights into the diplomatic, political, and cultural interactions between the Ottoman Empire and Aceh during a period marked by complex global dynamics.

In addition to the Ottoman sources, the research extended to European archives to ensure a more comprehensive perspective. The Bronbeek Museum in Arnhem, the Netherlands, and the Torre do Tombo National Archive in Lisbon, Portugal, were instrumental in accessing records and documents, including Portuguese-authored manuscripts that illuminate the European perspective on the interactions between these Islamic states. These archives yielded critical primary sources, such as Portuguese colonial reports and chronicles, which offer contrasting narratives and underscore the multifaceted nature of historical events. The inclusion of diverse sources strengthens the validity and depth of the historical analysis.

The letters from the Ottoman Sultan and the Sultan of Aceh Darussalam, central to this study, were subjected to rigorous analysis through source criticism to determine their authenticity, context, and significance. By triangulating these primary sources with other historical documents, including treaties, diplomatic correspondence, and contemporaneous accounts, the research reconstructs the socio-political milieu of the era. This process of corroboration not only enhances the credibility of the findings but also facilitates a nuanced interpretation of the historical connections between the Ottoman Empire and Aceh, reflecting broader themes of Islamic solidarity, resistance to colonial powers, and the interplay of regional and global influences.

Results and Discussion

Acehnese Request for Assistance to the Ottoman Empire

1. Background of the request for assistance

The Portuguese incursions into the Indian Ocean during the early 16th century marked a transformative period in the region's geopolitical landscape, triggering widespread disruption among Muslim maritime powers. Equipped with superior naval technology and advanced firearms, the Portuguese capitalized on their navigation around the Cape of Good Hope to establish a dominant presence along vital maritime routes stretching from Yemen to Sumatra. Their aggressive campaigns targeted key coastal regions and Muslim trade networks, intercepting vessels transporting pilgrims, merchants, and valuable commodities, including spices, to major trade hubs such as Indian ports, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, East Africa, and Southeast Asia.¹²

The expansion of Portuguese naval supremacy posed significant threats to established Muslim trade routes and political stability, prompting urgent appeals for assistance from the Ottoman Sultan. Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar of Aceh, in particular, underscored the vulnerability of Muslim states, highlighting that many neighboring polities had either succumbed to Portuguese pressure or entered into alliances with them. Consequently, Aceh found itself isolated in its resistance against Portuguese incursions.¹³ He said, "We trust in the universal kindness of your imperial majesty, refuge of the world and shadow of God (on earth) since no one who seeks to be sheltered by your illustrious Court is disappointed in his desires. The other rulers in these lands and India have all sought help and

¹² See T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975–976/1567–1569)*. <Özet–Transkripsiyon–İndeks> I, (Ankara, 1998), p. xviii

¹³ See T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, xviii.

assistance from the Portuguese, but we have (instead) presented and committed our request to the charge of Your Majesty's illustrious Court."¹⁴

Pinto pointed out that the Acehnese was the only kingdom refusing the Portuguese existence in Malacca. Several neighboring kingdoms of Acehnese, such as Pasai, Pedir, Batak, Aru, Ujung Tanah, Johor, Perak, Kedah, etc., and also India allied with the Portuguese.¹⁵

When Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Malacca in 1511, Many Muslim and also non-muslim rulers cooperated with the Portuguese. The Kingdom of Pasai established cooperation with the Portuguese, including the Kingdom of Pedir.¹⁶ In 1538 AD, the Batakese and Arunese rulers collaborated with the Portuguese.¹⁷ Several other rulers who eventually became friends with the Portuguese included Johor, Perak, Jepara, and later Mataram.¹⁸ Johor, which was previously hostile to the Portuguese, also made peace. According to De Sousa, this peace was due to two factors; (1) Johor's concerns about Aceh's expansion and (2) a disappearing hostility to the Portuguese, unlike his predecessors. Sultan Muzaffar Syah (the ruler of Johor) prepared his fleet to help the Portuguese against Aceh.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Perak Kingdom preferred to cooperate with the Portuguese rather than accept Aceh. Barreiro de Resendes mentioned that Perak once asked the Portuguese for help because they were unable to fight the Acehnese army.²⁰ Other kingdoms cooperating with the Portuguese were the Hindu Kingdom of Siam and Sunda (1522) which previously had long with Islamic Malacca.²¹ According to Halikowski-Smith, the diplomatic relations that occurred were not only initiated by the said rulers, the Portuguese also sent their ambassadors to China (Tome Pires), Batak (Mendez Pinto), Siam (Antonia de Miranda and Manuel Pragoso), Hormuz (Fernaõ Martin Evangelho), Moluccas (Antonio de Abreu), etc.²²

The Acehnese Sultanate asked for help from the Ottomans to expel the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean and Malacca. The reason for the abundant spice trade from 16th century Aceh to the Red Sea became an important factor for Acehnese and Ottoman relations to save pepper and spice trade from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. Meanwhile, in the east, The Acehnese established relations with the northern coast of Java and the Sunda Strait. Moreover, Aceh also created trade relations with Bengal, Pegu, Arakan, Masulipatnam, and Nagapatnam in the last three decades of the 16th century.²³

Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's request for military assistance to the Ottoman Empire with compensation for spices was not difficult to realize. The Sultan of Aceh was very rich, as it

¹⁴ Razaullah Şah, Açî Padişahı Sultan Alâeddin'in Kanunî Sultan Süleyman'a Mektubu." *Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5/8-9 (1967). p. 386.

¹⁵ Fernao Mendez Pinto, *The Voyages and Adventures of Ferdinand Mendez Pinto: A Portugal during his Travels*, Trans. Inggris oleh Henry Cogan (London: J. Macock, 1663). P. 31,49.

¹⁶ Afonso de Albuquerque, *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque: Second Viceroy of India*, vol. 3 (London: The Hakluyt Society, tt), 64 dan 66. See also John Villiers, Aceh, Melaka and the Hystoria dos cercos de Malaca of Jorge Lemos, in *Portuguese Studies*, Vol.17, Homage to Charles Boxer (2001), p. 80.

¹⁷ Fernao Mendez Pinto, *The Voyages*, p. 31,49.

¹⁸ Amirul Hadi, *Aceh: Sejarah Budaya dan Tradisi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Obor, 2010), p. 58.

¹⁹ Paulo Jorge De Sousa Pinto, *The Portuguese and The Straits of Melaka, 1575-1619: Power, Trade and Diplomacy*, translated into English by Roopanjali Roy (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), p. 83.

²⁰ W. George Maxwell, Barreiro de Resende's Account of Malacca, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society No. 60* (Desember, 1911), p. 11.

²¹ Stefan Halikowski-Smith, The Friendship of Kings was in the Ambassador: Portuguese Diplomatic Embassies in Asia and Africa in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, *Portuguese Studies. Vol. 22 No. 1* (2006), p. 108-110.

²² B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, Part 1 (Bandung: Sumur Bandung, 1960), p. 42.

²³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Commerce and Conflict: Two Views of Portuguese Melaka in the 1620s, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 19 No.1 (Maret, 1988), p. 66.

was said that when Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar sent a letter to the Ujung Tanah Kingdom (after the Achenese attack to the Aru Kingdom, "from my majesty and the rich Aceh Palace",²⁴ or what Beaulieu mentioned, the Acehnese Sultan has been "infinitely rich").²⁵

Realizing that it was very difficult for Aceh against the Portuguese ships and cannons, Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar then sent a delegation to Istanbul; the center of the Ottoman Empire to seek help. The messengers brought valuable goods and gifts. Sultan Sulaiman assisted the Acehnese Sultanate with a small fleet. In 1564, this Fleet fought with Portuguese troops and in that war, the Portuguese finally sank the Ottoman ship and captured 500 Muslims. Sultan Alauddin asked for greater assistance to expel the Portuguese from Aceh's waters. He sent Husayn to Istanbul through the Yemen-Hijaz-Suez route and brought valuables, gifts, and letters and asked Sultan Sulaiman to send his navy, experts, shipbuilders, and forts (Hisar).²⁶

Up to 1562, the Acehnese Sultanate was against the Portuguese power several times. This happened either around the Malacca Strait or out of the areas such as the Maldives and its surroundings. Trade in Malacca was monopolized by the Portuguese. so, many Muslim traders came to Aceh. With the arrival of these traders, Aceh became bustling and change to be a trading center.²⁷ The abundant source of trade in Aceh's ports and the impact is the abundance of spices which are then sent directly to several areas such as the Red Sea.²⁸

Due to the prolonged conflict with the Portuguese, the Sultan of Aceh decided to establish diplomatic ties with other influential entities, particularly the Ottoman Empire, which was recognized as the most powerful Islamic state at the time. This was a strategic move by the Sultan to seek support and forge alliances in the face of the ongoing hostilities.²⁹

2. The arrival of the Acehnese envoy in Istanbul in 1562 and 1566

The diplomatic engagement between the Sultanate of Aceh and the Ottoman Empire is evidenced by two notable delegations dispatched to Istanbul, occurring in 1562 and 1566. According to Lombard, the earliest record of the Acehnese envoy's presence emerged from Venetian sources, indicating the observation of two Acehnese representatives in Istanbul during the initial mission in 1562. This visit marked the beginning of formal diplomatic exchanges aimed at fostering closer ties between the two Muslim polities. The second delegation, conducted in 1566, was led by Husain, who was accompanied by Lutfi, signifying a continued effort to strengthen the alliance. This mission was distinguished by the delivery of an official letter from the Sultan of Aceh, underscoring the Sultanate's strategic pursuit of military and political support from the Ottoman court.

²⁴ Fernao Mendez Pinto, *The Voyages*, p. 72.

²⁵ M. Beaulieu, *The Expedition of Commodore Beaulieu to the East-Indies; Containing a Curious and Accurate Description of the Sea Coast and Commerce*, dalam John Harris D.D. & F.R.S, *Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca* (Complete Collection of Voyage and Travel) Vol. 1 (London: Printed for Woodward etc, tt), p. 746

²⁶ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, p. xix.

²⁷ Muhammad Ibrahim, et.al, *Sejarah Daerah Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh*, (Jakarta: Departemen P dan K, 1991), p. 71

²⁸ See Anthony Reid, *Aceh and the Turkish Connection*, dalam Arndt Graf dkk (ed) *Aceh: Politics, History and Culture*, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), p. 28.

²⁹ In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire was well known both among Muslims and Christians. As a powerful kingdom, this kingdom was respected by other Islamic kingdoms such as the Mamluks and Safavids. In addition, the Ottomans also became enemies of Christians in Europe such as the Habsburgs in Central Europe and the Mediterranean. The Ottomans were also active in helping groups in opposition to the 'Vatican' and the Habsburgs such as Calvinism in France, Hungary and the Netherlands, the Muslims (Moriscos) in Spain and the emerging kingdoms of France and England. See Halil Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 21.

According to *Bustan al-Salatin*, the Sultan of Aceh Darussalam was instrumental in preserving the kingdom's traditions and took proactive measures by dispatching an envoy to the Sultan of Rum in Istanbul to advance and fortify the Islamic faith. This work, written by Nuruddin ar-Raniri, was composed during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani, who governed from around 1604 to 1640.³⁰

In 1562, the presence of the Acehnese envoy was witnessed in Istanbul.³¹ Alauddin al-Kahar, in his letter, referred to the past visit of Umar and Husayn to the Ottoman sultan, Sulaiman al-Kanuni, seeking military support against the Portuguese in Malacca. The letter explicitly states the following:

*"When our envoys, Umar and Husayn, set out for the royal court of His Majesty, news of their arrival quickly spread to the surrounding rulers across the Indian Ocean who had aligned themselves with the unfortunate infidels."*³²

After spending a few months in Istanbul, Umar and Husain had the opportunity to meet with Sultan Sulaiman and deliver multiple messages from the Sultan of Aceh, requesting military support. In response, the Sultan decided to dispatch Lutfi as an envoy of the Ottoman Empire, who would accompany Umar and Husain on their return journey. Lutfi's role was to assess the situation and conditions in Aceh and oversee their journey. However, regarding the request for weapons assistance, Sultan Sulaiman faced several obstacles that prevented him from fulfilling it. In a letter penned by Sultan Sulaiman, the following is stated:

*"The cannons and any other necessities that you requested are gathered and ready (to be dispatched), but since your territory is very far away, it is very important to be careful to ensure that the weapons arrive safely and do not fall into the hands of the enemy as they cross the places ruled by the accursed disbelievers. For this reason, people who have traveled extensively in these areas and are aware of routes and stops along the way and full military escort are indispensable to ensure that the above-mentioned weapons arrive safely and unharmed. lost on the path due to lack of preparation and careful planning."*³³

In 1544, Sultan Sulaiman engaged in negotiations with the King of Portugal. In a letter addressed to King Dom João III, Sultan Sulaiman mentioned the presence of the Portuguese ambassador, Duarte Catanho, in Istanbul. The purpose of the negotiations was to reach an agreement regarding the activities of the Ottoman Empire and Portugal in the Indian Ocean. The letter outlined the Ottoman's request for 5000 quintals of pepper while offering to provide 3800 tons (equivalent to 5000 moio) of wheat in return. This letter served as a response to Duarte's request, which conveyed King Dom João III's proposal for a peace treaty with the Ottomans. The Portuguese proposal included granting the Ottomans 2500 to 3000 quintals of pepper, a fifteen-year truce, and permission for Portuguese ships to dock in Jeddah for commercial purposes. However, it appears that these negotiations failed, as the Portuguese were willing to provide 5000 quintals of pepper only if the Ottomans also supplied 8000 to

³⁰ T. Iskandar (Ed), *Bustanu's*, p. 32.

³¹ Giancarlo Casale, "His Majesty's", 49. See also in Denys Lombard, *Le sultanat d'atjeh au temps d'iskandar muda 1607-1636*, (Paris: De l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, 1967) Trans. Denys Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh: Jaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1991), p. 158.

³² Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 383.

³³ "tâleb olunan toplar ve sayir mühimmatı cümle hâzır ve müheyâ olup lâkin vilâyetiniz mesâfe-i ba'idede olmağın bu denlü yarak selâmetle vuşül bulmağa külli tedârük gerekdür yollarda niçe yirde küffâr-ı hâksâra uğrayup a'dâ eline düşürmekden ziyâde ihtiyât lâzımdur. Ol cânibe defa'atla varup gelmiş yollar ve manziller ahvâline vâkıf âdemler ve küllî asker gerekdür ki zıkr olunan yarağı emîn u sâlim anda çıkaralar bu tarik ile tedârük olamayacak meşakkat ve rahmet zâyî olup gönderilen yarak aйдâya mu'âvenet olduğı ecilden hâlâ top ve yarak gönderilmek mümkün olmayup. (T.S.M.K. R.1959, fol. 817a-818a) dikutip dari Giancarlo Casale, "His Majesty's", p. 50.

10,000 *moio* (up to 7000 tons) of wheat.³⁴ Nevertheless, official correspondence between the two kingdoms continued until 1565. According to Ozbaran, during the period of confrontation in the Indian Sea, there were several potential agreements with the Portuguese.³⁵

In the Ottoman archives, specifically in the 5 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, there is a record dated 8 Muharram 973 (25 August 1565) that documents an attempt to establish friendly relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Portuguese Kingdom. According to the note, the Portuguese expressed their intention to form a friendship with the Ottoman Empire. They requested the Ottoman Sultan to instruct the regional Ottoman rulers (Pashas) in the Indian Ocean area to ensure the safety and security of the Portuguese in India (Hindistan) and the Maldives (Cezâyir). Furthermore, the Portuguese urged for the immediate dispatch of an ambassador to clarify any uncertainties or doubts.³⁶

According to the contents of Al-Kahar's letter, when Umar and Husayn returned to Aceh, they were accompanied by Lutfi, who served as the Ottoman ambassador during the year 972 H (1564-1565).³⁷ The letter specifically states that Lutfi arrived in Aceh in 972 H, as mentioned in Al-Kahar's words, "In 972 H, His Majesty's servant, Lutfi has come here (Aceh Darussalam)."³⁸ Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's letter also mentions that eight artillery experts, who were previously dispatched by His Majesty, had safely arrived in Aceh and were in good health. These experts remained constantly by his side, and their presence was regarded by him as more valuable and precious than pearls.

According to the findings of Razaulhak Sah and Hakki Goksoy, the letter sent by Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar to Lutfi was dated January 7, 1566.³⁹ Ismail Hakki Kadi, on the other hand, suggests that the letter was dated between January 2 and 12, 1566.⁴⁰ In the letter, it is mentioned that Umar and Husain were the initial envoys from Aceh who departed for Istanbul. However, in subsequent requests, the Sultan only mentioned the name of Husain. Limited information is available about Husain himself, including his background and profession. The only bit of information obtained is when Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar referred to Husain as a "knowledgeable person" at the end of the letter. "...to pay sincere respects to Your Majesty, we have sent our servant Husain, who is known as a man of knowledge..."⁴¹

3. The Contents of Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's letter

The evidence of Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's plea for assistance to the Ottoman Sultan is divided into two parts: the first 13 lines are written in Arabic, while the remainder is in Turkish. The original text of the letter is currently preserved in the Topkapi Palace Archives Museum, specifically under the reference T.S.M.A. marked E.8009. According to Casale, there are concerns regarding the Turkish portion of the Sultan of Aceh's letter. He questions

³⁴ Salih Özbaran, An Imperial Letter from Suleyman the Magnificent to Dom João III concerning Proposal for an Ottoman-Portuguese Armistice, *Portuguese Studies Vol. 6 (1990)*, h. 24-31, p. 28-30.

³⁵ Salih Özbaran, An Imperial Letter, p. 30-31.

³⁶ T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973/1565-1566) No. 160* (Ankara: Divan-ı Humayun Sicilleri Dizisi II, 1994), p. 30.

³⁷ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, p. xviii.

³⁸ "Sene dokuz yüz yetmiş ikinci tarihinde Lutfi kulları bu cânibe gelip muâvedet ettiklerinde..." Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 384.

³⁹ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, 374. See also İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, Ottoman Aceh Relation as Documented in Turkish Sources, in R. Michael Feener, dkk, *Mapping the Acehnese Past* (Netherland: KITLV, 2011), p. 69.

⁴⁰ Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock, *Ottoman-Southeast Asian Relations; Sources from Ottoman Archives, Vol. 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 33.

⁴¹ "Kibeline yuz surmek icun kendu kullarımız Huseyin el-Muhatab bu-rutbet-peymayi-i ma'rife gonderildi." Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 388.

why Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar would have written it in Turkish instead of Arabic or Persian, commonly used as the diplomatic language in the Islamic world. Casale suggests that the document might not be an original letter from Aceh, but rather a translation into Turkish prepared by a court clerk for the Ottoman Sultan's understanding.⁴²

The letter is comprised of a total of 121 lines, with the first 13 lines written in Arabic and the remaining lines in Turkish. The initial 13 lines in Arabic serve as a prologue, praising Sultan Sulaiman.⁴³ Overall, the letter can be divided into three main sections: (1) expressions of admiration towards Sultan Sulaiman, (2) information regarding the Acehnese Kingdom and the political situation in the Indian Ocean region, and (3) various requests made by Alauddin al-Kahar, the Sultan of Aceh.⁴⁴

A. Praise and Prayers for Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent

In the thirteen opening lines of his letter written in Arabic, Sultan Alauddin begins with honors. The arrival of his envoy seeking assistance from Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent is the right step he takes to eliminate backwardness and isolation, and it serves as evidence of Sultan Alauddin's sincere devotion to him. Furthermore, Sultan Alauddin lavishes great praise upon Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent as the most just, renowned, and honorable ruler, surpassing the achievements of his ancestors and even surpassing the sultans who came after him because his entire life is dedicated to jihad in the path of Allah. Al-Kanuni is likened to Abu Bakr in terms of truth and honesty, akin to Umar in justice and bestowing happiness, resembling Usman in good manners and simplicity, and resembling Ali in courage and generosity.⁴⁵

The Ottoman Empire's realm of power was vast. Many regions sought the benevolence of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar mentioned four major areas under Ottoman rule: Egypt, Persia, Yemen, and Iraq.⁴⁶ During the reign of Sultan Selim I, Arabian territories such as the holy lands of Mecca and Medina, Syria, and Egypt were successively brought under Ottoman control in 1516 and 1517. Later, during the rule of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, Iraq, particularly Basra, was captured in the 1530s, and at the same time, Aden in Yemen came under Ottoman rule. The acquisition of Aden and Yemen by the Ottoman Empire began when the Muslim rulers of Gujarat sought assistance against the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The Sultan dispatched his fleet from Suez in 1538 towards Gujarat, and before reaching there, these two territories were brought under Ottoman control.⁴⁷

B. Geo-Political Conditions around the Indian Ocean.

⁴² See Giancarlo Casale, "His Majesty's Servant Lutfi: The Career of a Previously Unknown Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Envoy to Sumatra Based on an Account of His Travels from the Topkapı Palace Archives," *Turcica* 37 (2005), p. 46.

⁴³ The version of the translation of the first 13 lines of Sultan Alauddin's letter into English is specifically italicized by Casale while showing that the translation is entirely from Arabic. According to him, this letter was probably written by Lutfi to the Ottoman Sultan. See Giancarlo Casale, "His Majesty's," 49. See also Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock, *Ottoman...*, p. 27.

⁴⁴ My sincerest thanks to Mrs. Esra Mueyessaroglu from *Milli Saraylar Araştırma Birimi* Istanbul for giving me a valuable copy of Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's letter.

⁴⁵ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 381-382.

⁴⁶ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 382.

⁴⁷ See Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 100.

In addition to praise, in the letter, Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar also provides information about the social and geo-political situation around the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam, including the region surrounding the Indian Ocean. Since the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean and Malacca, many states have formed friendly relations with the Portuguese, while others, like Aceh Darussalam, have become hostile. Since the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511, the Kingdom of Aceh, including its intense attacks on Malacca, has long fought against the Portuguese. Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar states in his letter, "The struggle in the 'Land beneath the Wind' has lasted for days and months against the evil infidels."⁴⁸

With Husain's departure accompanying Lutfi back to Istanbul carrying a letter, Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar hopes that Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent can send military assistance so that he can easily fight against the enemies for the glory of Islam, and it can only be achieved if the Ottomans help in the fight against the Portuguese.⁴⁹

In the letter mentioned above, Sultan Alauddin quotes a verse from the Qur'an, Surah As-Saff: 14. This verse emphasizes the importance of mutual support, building Islamic brotherhood, and working together for the sake of religion. Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar strongly desires to obtain military assistance from the Ottomans to fight against the Portuguese, requesting weapons, armaments, and troops.⁵⁰

Sultan Alauddin conveys that the arrival of Lutfi (the Ottoman envoy) in the Kingdom of Aceh has been known by the Portuguese in India (the Indian Ocean), and the local rulers allied with the Portuguese. They are trying to attack Aceh before Ottoman assistance arrives quickly. Therefore, Sultan Alauddin pleaded for immediate military support because if not, the Portuguese and the rulers on their side would unite and attack Aceh before Ottoman assistance arrived. Furthermore, the departure of Umar and Husain to Istanbul in 1562 has also been known by the rulers in the Indian Ocean who were allied with the Portuguese. According to Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar, the Acehnese envoy to Istanbul had received reactions from the rulers who had good relations with the Portuguese. When they learned that the Sultan of Aceh was seeking assistance from Istanbul, they also sought help from the King of Portugal.⁵¹

In addition to the political situation in Aceh itself, Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar also described the condition of neighboring kingdoms. In his letter, he mentioned three regions west of Aceh: the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Calicut. He noted that between Aceh and Mecca, twenty-four thousand islands, half are inhabited, and the other half are uninhabited. The Portuguese government center in India (Goa) is at one end of the islands, and dark islands (uninhabited) at the other. After the Portuguese took over the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean and Arabia, many people from the "Land beneath the Wind" crossed the Maldives to go to the Red Sea, either for trade purposes or to visit Mecca and Medina. However, once again, the Portuguese did not remain idle. They stationed their people to guard every entrance to the islands (Maldives), and according to Sultan Alauddin, out of the twenty-four thousand

⁴⁸ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 382. *Tahterrih* is below the wind. There are two terms to describe the position of a region or country, namely "di atas angin" (above the wind) and "di bawah angin" (below the wind). "Negeri di atas angin" refers to countries located in the western regions of the Malay world, such as India, Persia, Arabia, and Europe. On the other hand, "Negeri di bawah angin" encompasses the regions in the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula. P. Clifford & F.A. Swettenham, *A Dictionary of the Malay Language, Part I* (Taiping: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 63.

⁴⁹ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 382

⁵⁰ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 383.

⁵¹ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 383.

islands, only four islands were safe to pass through.⁵² When they saw these pilgrims and traders, they would immediately plunder their belongings on the ships. Furthermore, Portuguese ships would shoot at the boats that could not be successfully plundered with cannons to sink them, and the surviving individuals would be taken from the sea and enslaved.⁵³

C. About Abdurrahman, the Ottoman Envoy, and the Acehnese Envoy.

In addition to the rulers and territories mentioned above, Sultan Alauddin also informed about several individuals, such as Karamanoglu Abdurrahman, Lutfi (the Ottoman envoy), and Husain (the Acehnese envoy). One of the ministers from Gujarat named, Karamanoglu Abdurrahman, was praised as very kind because he had helped Lutfi and his companions depart to their destination with his ship. At that time, Lutfi and his companions couldn't find any vessel heading to the Indian Ocean. Abdurrahman assisted because Lutfi was an envoy of Sultan al-Kanuni and even paid for all their needs during the journey. Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar also hoped that Sultan al-Kanuni would grant Abdurrahman a position as the *Sancak* of Jeddah or any other suitable job for him.⁵⁴

During his time in Aceh, Lutfi assisted Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar in his royal duties. As the envoy of Sultan al-Kanuni, Lutfi's presence in Aceh was highly respected. Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar compared Lutfi to a bird that arrived swiftly and to Prophet Isa (Jesus), who brought peace and comfort to the kingdom and the people. After completing his mission, Lutfi immediately boarded the 'Rahmatullah' royal ship along with Acehnese soldiers and returned home. In this account, the Sultan narrated some strange occurrences involving Lutfi. After three days of journeying with other ships (merchant's vessels), their ship began to take in water and was on the verge of destruction. But thanks to the mercy and help of Allah and the blessings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Lutfi fell asleep and saw Sultan al-Kanuni on the ship, giving orders to the minister to send all the crew members of this ship back to their homeland." Lutfi woke up, and suddenly, a wind brought by Allah blew, allowing all the crew members to return safely to their homes, and the other merchant ships could return to their respective routes.⁵⁵

Lutfi's presence in Aceh was awe-inspiring, and Sultan Alauddin Al-Kahar expressed his happiness and satisfaction with all the tasks entrusted to him. The Sultan also considered the artillery experts sent to Aceh more valuable than the mountains of precious gems.⁵⁶

D. Requests for Vassals, Requests for Weapons, Troops, and Experts.

The purpose of this letter is to seek military support from the Ottoman Sultan. Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar directed his plea to Sultan Sulaiman al-Kanuni. The applications presented in the letter encompass various requests made by the Acehnese, including the acquisition of Ottoman territories, assistance with cannons, troops, and the expertise of military experts. The contents of the application are articulated as follows:

"We sincerely request that His Majesty Your Majesty the Sultan no longer regard me, your servant in this country, as an independent ruler, but accept us as poor, humble, and downtrodden servants who live thanks to the charity of His Majesty Sultan, Protector of the

⁵² Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 383.

⁵³ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 384.

⁵⁴ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 387.

⁵⁵ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı...*, p. 387

⁵⁶ "bu cânibe vâsıl olup anların makamı bizim yanımızda cevâhir dağlarından azîm." Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 388.

World and the Shadow of Allah. on this earth, who is no different from the Governors (*beylerbey*) of Egypt and Yemen or the beys of Jeddah and Aden.”⁵⁷

The aforementioned four territories were brought under Ottoman control as vassals. In 1517, Sultan Salim I conquered Egypt and Jeddah, which were previously ruled by the Mamluk Empire and encompassed Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah. One of Sultan Salim I's objectives in seizing Egypt was to gain control over the economic activities and trade routes originating from the southern regions, which were predominantly influenced by the Portuguese at that time. Additionally, during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman, Yemen, and Aden, serving as gateways from the Indian Sea to the Red Sea, were also conquered. As Ottoman vassals, the administrative systems of Egypt, Jeddah, Yemen, and Aden were aligned with Ottoman governance. The Sultan appointed trusted individuals to oversee the affairs of these regions, including the appointment of leaders and military forces.⁵⁸ Under Sultan Sulaiman's rule, the royal treasury benefited from increased revenue generated from the southern territories. Various trade transactions, particularly involving spices as the primary commodity from Southeast Asia, took place in Egypt and Jeddah, two significant Ottoman territories situated in the Red Sea region. These trade routes extended through Aden and Yemen. Al-Kahar requested that he be sent the best Ottoman troops and weapons of war by stating that he needed the Sultan to deploy his great armies, weapons of war, weapons of destruction, and formidable soldiers in battle.⁵⁹

5. Sultan Salim II's Response.

Sultan Salim II, in response to Al-Kahar's letter, took approximately two years after Husain's arrival in Istanbul. The response was directed to Sultan Sulaiman al-Kanuni but was delivered by Sultan Salim II. After ascending to the Ottoman throne officially, succeeding his father following Sultan Sulaiman's death, Sultan Salim II addressed the letter.⁶⁰ Within his response, several aspects were addressed, such as the state of the Kingdom of Aceh, the prevailing circumstances in the Indian Ocean region, pledges of allegiance, requests for weaponry, and the arrangements for the envoy's journey.

In his correspondence, Sultan Salim II made a pledge that upon the arrival of the Ottoman fleet in Aceh, they would engage in a battle against the Portuguese and endeavor to conquer the islands under their control. Alongside the appeals for cannons and ships, Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar also requested that the governors of Egypt, Yemen, and Jeddah be instructed not to impede the Aceh delegation's activities once they obtained their requested items, including horses, weapons, and copper. Additionally, the request included the dispatch of skilled engineers capable of constructing forts and shipbuilding.⁶¹ Sultan Salim II, in response, granted these pleas for assistance and assured that the necessary support would be provided.⁶²

⁵⁷ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 385.

⁵⁸ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 385.

⁵⁹ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 383

⁶⁰ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı... No. 244*, p. 129-131. Surat tersebut bertanggal 19 September 1567. See Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock, *Ottoman...*, 63. According to Razaulhak, it was dated 20 September 1567, “II. Selim'-in Açı padişahı Alâeddin'e gönderdiği 20-9-1567 tarihli cevabî mektupta.” Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 377.

⁶¹ “ve at ve yarak ve nuhas alındıkda ol diyara varmağa mâni' olmamak için Mısır ve Yemen Beylerbeylerine ve Cidde ve Aden Beylerine emr-i şerifimiz gönderilmesini ve hisar ve kadirğa bennâlarından talep olunup ve bunlardan gayri her 11e dahi takrir ve tahrir olunmuş ise pâye-i serîr-i saâdet-mesîr-i hüsrevânemize arz olunup ilm-i şerif-i âlem-şümûl-i hidivânemiz muhit ve şâmil olmuştur.” T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 389-390

⁶² T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 390

The letter indicated that Sultan Salim II granted approval to Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's request. He appointed Kurdoglu Hizir, the captain of Alexandria, as the commander of the troops for the expedition. Kurdoglu Hizir was chosen by Sultan Salim II to lead the arduous journey to Aceh. Along with Kurdoglu, fifteen ships (including kadirga, a type of vessel) and two warships (Barca) were dispatched from the port of Suez. Istanbul sent gunsmiths, seven gunners, rifles, and other war equipment to support the mission.⁶³ Sultan Salim II emphasized in his letter to Kurdoglu Hizir the importance of engaging in a dedicated fight to help Aceh capture the enemy's strongholds and teach them a lesson. He granted Kurdoglu Hizir the authority to punish any soldiers who violated regulations.⁶⁴ Regarding the Ottoman troops being sent to Aceh, Sultan Salim II ensured they were paid their salaries for the first year in advance.⁶⁵

In addition to these matters, Sultan Salim II expressed his hope that Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar would demonstrate a steadfast commitment to fighting for religion and the kingdom, thereby liberating Muslims in the region from the oppression of the infidels (the Portuguese) and allowing them to live securely and peacefully.⁶⁶ He also requested that the engineers be allowed to return home once the Ottoman and Acehnese forces had defeated the Portuguese. Furthermore, he indicated that any further concerns or issues should be directed to Mustafa Çavuş, the Ottoman envoy.⁶⁷

6. The Ottoman Response to Acehnese Letter

In response to the letter seeking assistance for Aceh, Sultan Salim II sent multiple letters of instruction to various local rulers under Ottoman control, including Rhodes, Egypt, Yemen, Jeddah, and Aden. These letters were issued during Sultan Salim II's extensive journey through several Ottoman territories. On September 17, 1567, three letters were dispatched with the same date, and several additional letters were issued on September 19, 1567. These instructions from Sultan Salim II to the governors of Ottoman subordinate territories were a direct response to Alauddin al-Kahar's request. The purpose of these instructions was to facilitate the Acehnese ambassadors on their journey back to Aceh and to ensure they obtained the necessary items as requested.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Sultan Salim II issued specific instructions to the rulers of Egypt. If the Acehnese ambassadors arrived in Egypt, they were to be placed under his protection. The Sultan ordered the Governor of Egypt to ensure that upon the ambassadors' arrival in Alexandria, they would be exempted from customs duties at the port and their goods should not be interfered with. Following Sultan Salim II's orders, the Governor of Egypt was also required to arrange for the provision of various experts, including carpenters, blacksmiths, boatmen, and other craftsmen, who would accompany the Acehnese delegation.⁶⁹

Sultan Salim II also issued orders to the rulers of Yemen, directing them to allow the Aceh delegation to purchase horses, weapons, and copper without any disturbances or hindrances. The rulers were instructed to protect the delegation and ensure that no one would cause any trouble related to the acquired goods. They were further instructed to assist the

⁶³ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 390

⁶⁴ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 390

⁶⁵ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 390

⁶⁶ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 390

⁶⁷ “ İnşallah murâd üzere eger kal'a ahvâli eger memleket hıfzı görülüp zimâm-ı naslâhat oldukda irsâl olunan topçulara icâzet veresiz ve şâir ahvâl ve etvâr her neye müncer olursa müşârünileyh Mustafa Çavuş ile il'âm eylesesiz.” T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı*, 130. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 390.

⁶⁸ Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock, *Ottoman...*, p. 59.

⁶⁹ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı... No. 238*, 127. Razaullah Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 393.

delegation in any way possible.⁷⁰ Similar letters were addressed to the rulers of Jeddah, Aden,⁷¹ and the Sharif of Mecca, requesting their assistance in fulfilling the needs and desires of the Kingdom of Aceh.⁷²

7. Case after Correspondence

After spending two years in Aceh, Lutfi returned to Istanbul, carrying a letter from Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar requesting military assistance. However, the Aceh delegation had to patiently wait for two years before receiving a response from the Sultan. Sultan Sulaiman, occupied with a military campaign in Hungary, was unable to meet and read the letter from the Sultan of Aceh until he tragically passed away due to illness.⁷³

During this period, the Ottoman Empire was also preoccupied with the preparations for the coronation of Sultan Salim II as the successor to Sultan Sulaiman al-Kanuni. Following the replacement of Semiz Ali with Sokullu Mehmed as the prime minister, efforts continued to secure the Ottoman territories in the seas. This included initiatives to drive the Portuguese out of the Indian Ocean with the support of maritime kingdoms such as Gujarat, Bijapur, Calicut, and the Maldives. Providing military aid to Aceh aligned with these strategic policies. Finally, Aceh received substantial assistance in the form of a fleet consisting of fifteen galleys, four additional galleys specifically assigned to the mission and two transport ships. These vessels were fully equipped with weapons, troops, cannons, and a team of experts who set sail for Aceh.⁷⁴

Aceh Darussalam faced unfortunate circumstances in the subsequent events. Just as the Ottoman ships and troops departed from Egypt, a revolt erupted in Yemen, diverting the ships that were supposed to be sent to Aceh.⁷⁵ In 1566, the Zaidiyah Shia rulers in Yemen, led by Al-Mutahhar, launched a war against the Ottoman forces. The Zaidiyah soldiers were successful in pushing the Ottomans back to the shore. When news of the rebellion reached the Sultan in Istanbul, the ship intended for Aceh was redirected to Yemen to confront the Zaidiyah Shia troops. However, it is worth noting that the number of troops sent was insufficient to bolster the Ottoman presence in the Indian Ocean. Eventually, the Yemeni forces managed to thwart the Ottoman ambitions in the Indian Sea, effectively putting an end to their aspirations in the region.⁷⁶

The troops that were originally intended for Aceh were redirected to Yemen, as stated in Sultan Salim II's letter addressed specifically to Husain. In the letter, Sultan Salim informed Mustafâ Çavuş to convey to Husain that due to unfavorable circumstances in Yemen, the Ottoman troops were temporarily transferred there to suppress the rebellion taking place. Sultan Salim II assured that once the situation in Yemen stabilized, he would dispatch the Ottoman troops to Aceh as planned.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı... No. 237*, 126-127. Razaulhak Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 393.

⁷¹ "Yazıldı. Bu dahı. Fi't-târîhi m. Bir sûreti, Cidde beğine; vech-i meşrûh üzre. Surat juga ditujukan kepada penguasa Aden. "Yazıldı. Bu dahı. Fi't-târîhi m. Bir sûreti, Aden beğine. T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı... No. 237*, 127. Razaulhak Şah, Açı Padişahı, 393. Lihat juga Ismal Hakki Kadi, *Ottoman*, p. 59.

⁷² T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı... No. 242*, 128. Razaulhak Şah, Açı Padişahı, p. 394.

⁷³ Vladimir Braginsky, *The Turkic-Turkish Theme in Traditional Malay Literature* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015), p. 41.

⁷⁴ Vladimir Braginsky, *The Turkic-Turkish Theme in Traditional Malay Literature* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015), p. 41.

⁷⁵ Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age*, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Bruce Master, *The Arab of The Ottoman Empire*, (New York: Cambridge: University Press, 2013), p. 35.

⁷⁷ T.C. Başbakanlık, *7 Numaralı No. 708*, 362. Lihat juga Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock (ed) *Ottoman ...*, p. 71-72.

The letter, dated 22 Rajab in 975 H (January 15, 1568, according to Ismail Hakki Kadi), reveals this transfer. This change of destination is also evident in Sultan Salim II's letter to the Egyptian Beylerbey, instructing the transfer of individuals who were meant to be sent to Aceh to Yemen instead. The letter states that the ships and personnel intended for Aceh were redirected to Yemen. Before the change, Sultan Salim II mentioned that the carpenters (*dülger*), rowers (*kürekçi*), putty experts (*kalafatçı*), blacksmiths (*demirçi*), and miners (*madençi*), along with the Ottoman troops, were also transferred to Yemen.⁷⁸

Özbaran observed that only three ships were continuously sent to Aceh.⁷⁹ However, Boxer stated that out of the nineteen ships dispatched to Aceh, only two successfully arrived. These two ships carried a contingent of five hundred Ottoman troops, including gunsmiths, gunners, engineers, and a variety of weapons and war supplies. They reached Aceh between 1566 and 1567. Alongside seeking assistance from the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Aceh also requested support from the rulers of Kalikut in India and Jepara in Java for the attack planned in 1568.⁸⁰

According to Braginsky, the two ships that set sail for Aceh were likely merchant vessels carrying cannons, ammunition, and a few experts in weapon-making. It is possible that due to this limited support, Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar's attempt to conquer Malacca from the Portuguese in 1568 failed. In 1569 and 1571, Sultan Alauddin once again dispatched his envoys to Istanbul, and Sultan Salim II promised to send his fleet once the conflicts in Yemen, Cyprus, and Tunisia were resolved. However, the promised assistance did not materialize. Unfortunately, during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595), succeeding his father; Sultan Salim II, the Ottoman Empire showed little interest in extending its rule to distant seas, which further compounded the situation.⁸¹

In 1571, the envoy from the Sultan of Aceh returned, as evidenced by Sultan Salim II's letter. The letter instructed the rulers of Rhodes, Alexandria, the Governor of Egypt, and the ruler of Jeddah to assist the Acehnese envoy in his journey back to Aceh.⁸² Sultan Salim II specifically ordered the ruler (bey) of Rhodes to ensure a safe and secure transportation to Alexandria, whether by the galley, galiot, or frigate and to report back to the Sultan about all the accompanying circumstances.⁸³ The rulers of Alexandria were also directed to provide any necessary transportation to Cairo.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Sultan Salim II commanded the Beylerbey of Egypt to arrange for the Acehnese envoy's passage to Suez and Jeddah, using a galley or any other means of transportation. Lastly, Sultan Salim II instructed the ruler of Jeddah to accompany the Acehnese envoy to Yemen.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ T.C. Başbakanlık, 7 Numaralı No. 887, 445-446. According to Ismail Hakki Kadi, this letter is dated 17 Sha'ban 975 H (February 16, 1568). Ismail Hakki Kadi & A.C.S. Peacock (ed) *Ottoman ...*, p. 72.

⁷⁹ Salih Özbaran, *Expansion in the Southern Seas*, dalam Salih Özbaran, *Ottoman Response to European Expansion: Studies on Ottoman-Portuguese Relations in the Indian Ocean and Ottoman Administration in the Arab Lands during the Sixteenth Century* (Michigan: ISIS Press, 1994), p. 87.

⁸⁰ R. Boxer, A Note on Portuguese Reactions to the Revival of the Red Sea Spice Trade and the Rise of Atjeh, 1540-1600, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, International Trade and Politics in Southeast Asia 1500-1800 (Dec. 1969), 421. See also Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman*, p. 133.

⁸¹ Vladimir Braginsky, *The Turkic-Turkish ...*, p. 41.

⁸² T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 12 Numaralı *Mühimme Defteri (978-979/1570-1572) No. 596* (Ankara:Divan-ı Humayun Sicilleri Dizisi IV, 1996), p. 395.

⁸³ "Mezkûrlar anun gibi Rodos'a varup vâsıl olduklarında*, gemi ile mi olur, kadirge ve kalite ve firkate ile mi olur; her ne tarîk ile mümkün ise emîn ü sâlim iskenderiyye[ye] ulasdurup te'hîr itdürmeyesin ve ne gün gönderilüp ne vechile tedârük eyledüğün yazup bildüresin."

⁸⁴ *Bu dahi*. Bir sûreti, iskenderiyye begine; "... Mısır'a ile mi olur, her ne tarîk ile olursa vakti ile ..."

⁸⁵ *Bu dahi*. Bir sûreti, Cidde begine; "... Vakti ile Yemen'e ulasdura ..."

According to Razaulhak, while Yemen could be brought under control by 1570, it would require additional time for the situation to stabilize. Unfortunately, the support and assistance needed were not realized due to the deaths of Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar and later Sultan Salim II. Furthermore, the situation worsened as Sultan Murad III, who succeeded Sultan Salim II, did not display significant interest in expanding the empire's influence, particularly in the southern maritime regions.⁸⁶

Reid argues that Sultan Sulaiman's focus was primarily on expanding westward, which resulted in relatively less attention given to the eastern regions, particularly around 1540. Sultan Sulaiman was considered the greatest Sultan; however, after his death, corruption infiltrated the Ottoman palace, except for a few notable aspects, such as the presence of the esteemed Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha. The final Ottoman expedition occurred between 1580 and 1589, led by Ali Bey, who relied more on bluffing than military strength. Unfortunately, he was captured by the Portuguese in 1589, effectively marking the end of the Ottoman Navy's presence in the Indian Ocean. This decline was further compounded by the weakening of Ottoman power in Yemen by 1635.⁸⁷

Additionally, according to Ozbaran, following the rebellion in Arabia, the revenue generated from the region was barely sufficient to cover salaries for officials and soldiers stationed there. This raises the question: what were the actual benefits of the Ottoman expansion in the southern region?⁸⁸

According to Reid, Sultan Sulaiman was so focused on expanding to the west and a little 'ignored' the east, especially in 1540. Sultan Sulaiman was the greatest Sultan and after his death, the Ottoman palace was corrupted, except for a few things that were proud such as the presence of the great vizier; Sokullu Mehmed Pasha. The last Ottoman expedition took place in 1580-1589 under Ali Bey who relied more on bluff than strength. He was captured by the Portuguese in 1589 and since then the Ottoman navy in the Indian Ocean ended this was also exacerbated by the waning of Ottoman power in Yemen in 1635.⁸⁹ Furthermore, according to Ozbaran, since the rebellion in Arabia, the income in the region was only enough to pay salaries for officeholders and the soldiers who were there, so that then raises a question: what are the benefits of the Ottoman expansion in the southern region?⁹⁰

Conclusion

Historical records from both Turkish and Acehnese/Malay sources confirm the existence of a strategic alliance between the Kingdom of Aceh and the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. Sultan Alauddin al-Kahar of Aceh sought military and logistical support from the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent (Sulaiman al-Kanuni), to counter Portuguese aggression in Malacca. This request encompassed the deployment of soldiers, advanced weaponry, skilled artisans specializing in armament production, and the construction of fortresses, warships, and palaces. In response, Sultan Suleiman dispatched his envoy, Lutfi, accompanied by eight cannon-making specialists to aid the Acehnese defense efforts. Further diplomatic outreach followed, as Sultan Alauddin dispatched Husain and Lutfi to Istanbul to seek additional reinforcements. This subsequent plea was met favorably by Sultan

⁸⁶ Razaulhak Şah, *Açı Padişahı*, p. 381.

⁸⁷ Anthony Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra*, (Singapore: NUS Publishing, 2005), p. 87-88.

⁸⁸ Salih Özbaran, *Expansion in the Southern Seas*, p. 87.

⁸⁹ Anthony Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra*, (Singapore: NUS Publishing, 2005), p. 87-88.

⁹⁰ Salih Özbaran, *Expansion in the Southern Seas*, p. 87

Selim II, resulting in continued military and technical assistance. The Ottoman contribution extended beyond material support, encompassing troops, firearms, expert engineers, warship builders, and horse trainers, significantly bolstering Aceh's military infrastructure.

The influx of Ottoman expertise and resources facilitated the rapid militarization of Aceh, enhancing its defense capabilities and enabling the Sultanate to integrate Ottoman military structures, strategic frameworks, and recruitment practices. One of the most notable advancements was Aceh's capacity to manufacture cannons of various calibers, ensuring a steady supply of ammunition. Additionally, Acehnese shipbuilding evolved to produce sophisticated warships, such as the *ghurab*, modeled after the Ottoman *kadirga*, a type of galley renowned for its effectiveness in naval warfare.

This alliance not only fortified Aceh's resistance against Portuguese encroachment but also contributed to the broader dissemination of Ottoman military traditions in Southeast Asia, reinforcing Aceh's position as a formidable regional power.

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