

## **Muslim and European Perceptions of Oceanic "Trade" in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries and their Implications for International Politics**

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*Abstract: In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Muslim and European powers perceived the importance of oceanic trade routes differently. During this earliest phase of European colonial expansion, Muslim powers, particularly the Osmanlis who claimed to be the champion of Islam, did not consider the loss of oceanic trade routes to Europeans a serious threat to Muslim interests. However, this gradually led not only to the loss of trade which was once dominated by Muslim merchants, but might have contributed to the total disappearance of Muslim powers from their supremacy of world politics later in history.*

Perceptions of the self and of the other have always played a major role in shaping world events. Such perceptions have influenced human being either to cooperate or not to cooperate with other. This has happened both at individual and collective levels. But the perceptions of individuals and groups regarding various objects and institutions may also have profound influence. I intend to show this regarding the perceptions of high sea trading routes in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. What is the significance of such perceptions? How did such perceptions influence world politics and economies at that time and what were the results of such perceptions later in history? This paper proposes to discuss these questions.

These questions are extremely important at this point of history when topics of the day are: "globalization," or "the end of history," the "clash of civilizations," and, or, "civilizational transformation."

At the end of the century, and of the millennium, it seems that everyone is expecting some change in the current pattern of world politics. These questions are more relevant at this moment of history because the current global structure began to take shape in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is important to examine the world political and economic structure during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

There is a general misunderstanding about the world situation at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Janet Lippman Abu-Lughod has rightly pointed out that:

Virtually all Western scholars, and specially those who had taken a global perspective on the "modern" world, began their histories in about AD 1400 ... when the organizational system that had existed prior to this time had broken down. By selecting this particular point to start their narratives, they could not help but write a similar plot, one in which the West "rose" apparently out of nowhere.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, there existed a sophisticated system in international trade during this period, which made significant contributions to the growth of Europe. Even though no political power dominated global politics, close trading contact existed between the European and the Muslim countries during this period. While most trading commodities were transported through a combination of land and sea routes; high seas and oceans also were utilized. However, the rise of new European powers in oceanic trade brought significant changes in the trade pattern between Europe and the Muslim world. To be specific, European and Muslim perceptions of trade in the high seas, particularly in the Indian Ocean during this period, made a difference in international trade.

Trade between Europe and the Muslim world was conducted mainly from the Mediterranean region to the Black Sea through Central Asia up to China by land, and to the Middle East through the Indian sub-continent to South East and Far East Asia through the Indian Ocean. One trade route from Europe passed through Constantinople to the Black Sea where goods were transferred to the overland caravan route to China. Yet another stretched along on the coast of Palestine where caravans set out to Baghdad, onward to the Persian Gulf. Yet another route passed through the Egyptian port of Alexandria, from where connections were made via Cairo to the Red Sea and, from there farther eastward through the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Journeys were broken down into much smaller

geographic segments and “the entire world system of the thirteenth century functioned smoothly to the benefit of all players.”<sup>3</sup>

Does this mean that there existed very cordial relations between the Italian states and the Muslim world? No. In order to increase trading activities between Europe and the Osmanlı state, the strongest Muslim power, the Osmanlıs granted the capitulation’s concessions (*imtiyazāt*) to the Genoese in 1352 when the Italians, chiefly Genoese and Venetians, had monopolized European trade with Asia and North Africa through the Osmanlı and Byzantine territories. This concession was granted to Genoa, which was at war with Venice, for political reasons. Venice, a relatively stronger power in the area, was actively engaged in anti-Muslim designs in cooperation with the Pope. An Osmanlı grant of capitulation to Genoa proved to be to the advantage of both parties even though Genoa occasionally violated the agreement. According to Turkish historian Halil İnalcık:

... the Ottomans continuously supported the Genoese and secured the cooperation of the Genoese colonies in the Levant despite the intermittent anti-Ottoman policies of the Genoese mother city. In return, the Ottomans obtained immense economic profits and naval assistance.<sup>4</sup>

The Osmanlıs continued to improve their navy and asserted their presence in the area. On its part, Venice also began to strengthen its military and economic power. It developed commercial ties with Egypt and Syria, areas that were then under the Mamlūk rule. Venice penetrated up to Lebanon and Palestine in search of such crops as cotton. Yet its anti-Muslim policy continued to dominate Venetian politics, Frederic C. Lane, a historian of Venice, says:

To accord with its policy of defending key outposts that were well fortified and could be supported from the sea, Venice should make a major effort to keep Constantinople out of the hands of the Turk, even if the privileges of the large Genoese colony there and the hatred of the Greek population toward the Roman Church made the city a constant problem. But reports of preparations by Mohammed the Conqueror were not taken as seriously as they should have been. ... When the city fell in 1453, some Venetian merchants and seamen in the city played a prominent role in its defense... Cutting its losses and playing for time, Venice merely negotiated a new treaty in which Mohammed promised protection to its commerce and colonies.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile the Sultan strengthened Osmanlı naval forces in the Mediterranean and developed working commercial relationship with another business community—the Florentine merchants—who already

enjoyed a privileged position in the Byzantium for selling their woolen cloth. However, Venice was not happy with the increased Osmanlı naval power in the area. Within ten years from the latest agreement (1453), Venetians “felt ready to strike back” the Osmanlıs.<sup>6</sup>

In 1470 Muhammad al-Fātiḥ assumed the responsibility to personally lead the Osmanlı forces against Venice. His army and a huge newly constructed fleet attacked Venice’s North Aegean base, Negroponte. This destroyed Venice’s status as a maritime power: it suffered a humiliating defeat and the Osmanlıs occupied Negroponte. However, soon the Osmanlıs retired to Dardanelles and the Venetians resumed their raids on Osmanlı allies in the area. This time Osmanlı forces attacked Dalmatia and Friuli, penetrating far into Northern Italy and forcing Venice to admit defeat and sign another peace treaty in 1479. She renounced Negroponte along with some other Aegean islands and also agreed to pay 10,000 ducats a year for trading privileges in the Osmanlı territories.

This peace did not last long. On his part, Sultan Muhammad al-Fātiḥ captured Otranto in order to establish total Osmanlı control over the Adriatic. The Italian princes, on the other hand, were able to stop fighting against one another and achieved unity among themselves to fight the Osmanlıs. A direct and all out confrontation was imminent. But when the Sultan died (1481) and Otranto was evacuated by the Osmanlıs, there was a drastic change in the situation; the Italian princes were at war against each other again. The Pope took advantage of Osmanlı weakness and induced Venice to attack Naples with a promise to reward her with Ferrara, a rich agricultural city, where Venetians were not getting favorable treatment. Venice immediately took advantage of this offer in order to establish its superiority over other territories in the area. Frederic Lane comments:

Just three years after the conclusion of the Turkish war, she [Venice] felt rich enough to start a new war that she knew would be expensive. At first, the condottieri whom Venice hired were very successful, but the principles of the balance of power came into play. Milan and Florence supported Ferrara. The Pope, alarmed by the extent of Venetian victories, changed sides, ordered Venice to stop its attack on Ferrara, and placed Venice under an interdict when she refused.<sup>7</sup>

This is to suggest that in spite of occasional peace treaties and agreements between the Italian states and the Osmanlıs there was no permanent peace in the area. Yet this did not effect European trade with Asia and Africa. By the end of the fifteenth century this situation

changed. Muslims in Spain were defeated by the Catholics and were thrown out of the Iberian Peninsula. Both Spain and Portugal began to chase Muslims along the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. This act of Spain and Portugal had a strong material motivation: both the countries were looking for better trade and potential colonies. Occasionally they fought against one another. In order to avoid clash between the two Catholic powers, the Treaty of Trodesilhas was signed between Spain and Portugal in 1494 by fixing "a line 370 leagues west of Cape Verde Islands as the demarcation of their respective zones."<sup>8</sup> The same year this was confirmed by Pope Alexander VI and thus became the final line of division between the two. Thus colonial and missionary activities of European powers in non-European countries became more formal and organized. The Indian Ocean region fell under the sphere of the Portuguese.

Soon Portugal became the champion of Christianity against Islam in the area. The spirit of Crusades had not only survived; it had flourished with added vigour. They introduced ships carrying cannons in the Indian Ocean and this gave an immediate advantage to the Portuguese over their opponents. The Indian historian K. M. Panikkar has rightly pointed out that the Arabs, the Chinese and the Indians competed openly in the high seas but the idea of "sovereignty over the sea", except in narrow straits, never concerned Asian powers.<sup>9</sup> However, this was true not only for Asian powers, but for all countries. That is why when European mercantile companies embarked on their "voyages of discovery," they encountered opposition from pirates, but not from any organized government. The only Muslim power that had a navy capable of navigating the high seas was the Osmanlis, but they had no interest in the Indian Ocean at that time. "[B]y the time the Sultan awoke to this menace (Portuguese attempts of domination), Portugal had not only gained a foothold, but was in a position continuously to reinforce her navy which the Turk with his naval power concentrated in the Levant was unable to do," says Panikkar.<sup>10</sup> But why? Why did the Osmanlis concentrate in the Levant region alone and allowed the Portuguese to dominate the Indian Ocean? This question demands examination of Osmanlı and Portuguese activities in the region during this period.

According to Halil Inalcik, "After Vasco da Gama's arrival in India the first spice cargo arrived in Lisbon in 1501. In order to take complete control of the traffic in the Indian Ocean, Portuguese naval operations proceeded at a bewildering speed."<sup>11</sup> All interested parties felt concerned on this development. As early as 1502 Venice sent a

message to Cairo warning about the possible disastrous consequences of the Portuguese success. On his part, the Mamlūk sultan contacted the Indian rulers requesting to close their markets to the Portuguese. Mamlūks also sought and received Ottoman consent to employ Turkish mercenaries to fight the Portuguese. However, by 1510 Portugal was not only able to defeat both the Mamlūks and the Indians, they were also able to establish a trading colony on the Indian coast of Goa.

Meanwhile the Portuguese reached directly to the source of spices. Its navy under the leadership of Affonso Albuquerque attacked Malacca in 1511 with a fleet of 18 ships, each carrying cannons, and forced the Sultan of Malacca to negotiate "trade."<sup>12</sup> The Portuguese wanted to capture the spice trade between Europe and Asia, which was then dominated by Arab, Indian and Chinese merchants. In order to impress the Sultan, Albuquerque burned all merchant vessels belonging to Muslims and spared the Chinese and non-Muslim ships. Panikkar describes the Portuguese motivation as saying:

He (Albuquerque) emphasised especially "the great service, which we shall perform to Our Lord in casting the Moors out of this country and quenching the fire of the sect of Mahomet so that it may never burst out again hereafter." After service to God he alluded to the service to the King, "for," he said, "I hold it certain that if we take this trade of Malacca away from them (the Moors), Cairo and Mecca will be entirely ruined and Venice will receive no spices unless her merchants go and buy them in Portugal."<sup>13</sup>

Consequences of the Portuguese interference in Euro-Asian trade on Europe were quite clear: Albuquerque's plans succeeded in destabilizing European spice market. According to Frederic Lane:

...the Portuguese were marketing their spices at Lisbon and Antwerp and threatening to supply all France and Germany through Antwerp. Some Venetians thought that, in order to keep its German market, Venice would do well to draw its supplies from Lisbon, but when they sent their merchant galleys to Lisbon, the Venetians found the prices there too high to be attractive.<sup>14</sup>

However, the impact of the rise of the Portuguese in oceanic trade was more devastating in Asia and Africa than in Europe. This not only meant loss of lucrative business for the Mamlūks and the Ottomans, it also posed a threat to their religion. Quoting Portuguese sources Panikkar informs:

The Portuguese armada ran across an unarmed vessel returning from

Mecca. Vasco da Gama [the so-called discoverer of alternative trade route to India avoiding the Osmanlı territories] captured it...."after making the ship empty of goods, prohibited anyone from taking out of it any Moor and then ordered them to set fire to it." The explanation for capturing the vessel is perhaps to be found in Barroes' remark: "It is true that there does exist a common right to all to navigate the seas and in Europe we recognize the rights which others hold against us; but the right does not extend beyond Europe and therefore the Portuguese as Lords of the Sea are justified in confiscating the goods of all those who navigate the seas without their permission."<sup>15</sup>

Panikkar then comments:

Strange and comprehensive claim, yet basically one which every European nation, in its turn held firmly almost to the end of Western supremacy in Asia. It is true that no other nation put it forward so crudely or tried to enforce it so barbarously as the Portuguese in the first quarter of the sixteenth century ...<sup>16</sup>

Panikkar is right in highlighting the European perceptions of non-Europeans in general and Muslims in particular during this period, Europeans did not generally recognize the right of non-Christians and non-conformists. He has also rightly pointed out the method of translating this perception into action as being the most crude and barbarous by the Portuguese. Other European powers later followed the same attitude but in a different manner. How did this happen? What were the Muslims doing during this period? Why did the powerful Muslim states such as the Osmanlıs, who had the power to threaten the most powerful European country—the Austro-Hungarian Empire, allow this to happen? The Safavids of Persia, and the Mughals of India were no less powerful. Commenting on the rise of the Portuguese and the general situation in the region during this period the American orientalist Marshall Hodgson says:

... the Portuguese continued to act as a single power even (in) remote (areas) from home — (this) was reinforced by Christian fanaticism in men used to anti-Muslim crusading in the western Mediterranean, so that they felt a special solidarity in hostility to all the various nationalities of Muslim traders... the Portuguese proved stronger at sea than any one Muslim power that faced them, ... while the several interested Muslim powers were never able to maintain an adequately lasting coalition against the intruders.<sup>17</sup>

This observation might not be completely true. For, an examination of Osmanlı activities in the region does not support the view that the Osmanlıs totally ignored the Portuguese presence in the

Indian Ocean region. There might have other reasons for Muslim inaction against the Portuguese. One possible reason is the general framework of existing oceanic trade. Panikkar has rightly pointed out the legal framework of navigation in the Indian Ocean at that time. He says:

Arab mercantile activity [in the region] had never been political. The Arabs traded freely in all the Indian ports, sailed out to the Pacific and reached even the China coast. After the ninth century they seem to have entered into effective competition with Gujrāṭī (Indian) merchants for the spice trade of the Indonesian islands, ...<sup>18</sup>

But with the emergence of European traders in the Indian Ocean and the high seas this non-political nature of international trade changed: with their anti-Muslim spirit, Spain and Portugal not only wanted to eliminate Muslim interests everywhere they went, they also wanted to establish their total control over the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. They targeted Muslims first because Muslims were the strongest force in the region, and Osmanlis were the strongest among the Muslims. This brought the Portuguese into direct confrontation with the Osmanlis.

Failure of the Mamlūks to contain the Portuguese brought the Osmanlis to Arabia and to the Indian Ocean. Selim I (1467-1520) took direct control of Egypt and Arabia (1516-1517) and assumed the title "Savior of Makkah and Madīnā", with a "duty to keep open the pilgrimage and trade routes for all Muslims in the world."<sup>19</sup> Osmanli mercenaries, working for the Mamlūks in Yemen, declared their loyalty to the Osmanlis; thus effectively bringing the country under the Osmanli sovereignty. The Osmanlis were also able to establish their control in the African coast. According to Inalcik:

Mir Ali [an Osmanli commander in the area], exploiting the anti-Portuguese feelings of the native rulers, succeeded in establishing Ottoman suzerainty on the East African coast from Mogadishu down to Mombasa. The ruler of Mombasa declared himself a vassal of the Ottoman sultan. The Portuguese admitted that the Ottomans now had the upper hand on the African coast facing India and had the capacity to cut their communications with Portugal.<sup>20</sup>

Portuguese threat to Muslims also brought the Osmanlis to South East Asia. Immediately after the fall of Malacca, many unsuccessful attempts were made to re-capture Malacca by the local Muslims from neighboring Johore, from the newly established Kingdom of Acheh, and from other adjacent territories. According to one South East



Asian historian, local Muslims had established a relationship with the Osmanlis in the 1530s in order to fight the Portuguese domination in the area. The Achenese historian Nūruddīn al-Ranīrī says,

... government of Atjeh Daru's-Salam (Acheh, a territory in modern Indonesia) ... sent a mission to Sultan Rūm, to the state of Istanbul, in order to strengthen the Muslim religion. The Sultan Rūm sent various craftsmen and experts who knew how to make guns. It was at that time that the large guns were cast.<sup>21</sup>

Osmanlı sources, however, place the period of cooperation between Acheh and the Istanbul government much earlier. According to another report,

When Sultan Selim carried his victorious arms to the extremities of the Arabian peninsula, of which he made the conquest, the echo of his victories reached as far as the island of Sumatra. The Atjehnese sent a deputation to the feet of the conqueror, recognised the supremacy of the powers inherent in his title of Khalif, made an act of submission ... raised the Ottoman flag in their ports and on their vessels, declared themselves vassals of Sultan Selim and asked in return for his high protection.<sup>22</sup>

This development seems to have frightened the Portuguese in Malacca. In a letter they are reported to have mentioned that,

...the Sultan of Atjeh was continuing his warlike preparations... Because of his great commerce with Turkey, "the Turk provides him with men gunners and artillery with which he makes war against us."<sup>23</sup>

These sources clearly demonstrate that the Osmanlis provided assistance to fellow Muslims in South East Asia and other parts of the world when sought. As for the Portuguese, they were seem to have been aware of other potential problems for the Osmanlis. According to one Portuguese source:

The Turks have already supplied the Achenese with bronze cannons of all calibres, gunners, naval personnel and engineers capable of "fortifying and besieging fortresses" ... the Sultan of Acheh has sent a substantial amount of money to the Porte that can cover twice the estimated cost of the Turkish fleet of galleys ... (however) because of their engagements in the Balkan wars the Turks have not yet been able to attend the Achenese problem. If the situation changes then the Turks would gladly lend the naval assistance to Acheh ...<sup>24</sup>

In spite of this apparent failure to achieve the goal to eliminate the Portuguese from the region, it seems that with the Osmanlı assistance

the Achenese were able to clear Northern Sumatra from the Portuguese threat, at least for a while. This, Anthony Reid suggests, helped recovering Muslim trading activities in the area.<sup>25</sup> Generally speaking, however, the withdrawal of Osmanlı support due to its engagements in the Balkans and elsewhere resulted in the loss of business by Muslim traders from long distance maritime trade. But what was the economic consequence of this loss? With available information, it seems, this loss of trade did not bring any immediate disaster on the economy of Muslim trading centers such as Jeddah, Aleppo, and Yemeni ports in the Arabian peninsula.<sup>26</sup> According to one survey, local and regional trade increased during this period to a level that these trading centers did not have to face economic disaster.<sup>27</sup> City population continuously increased in both regions from the year 1537 to 1683. Similarly, the populations of other Arab cities also increased during this period. According to Albert Hourani, "The population of Cairo had increased to perhaps 200,000 by the middle of the sixteenth century and 300,000 by the end of the seventeenth. By the same time Aleppo was a city of some 100,000 inhabitants..."<sup>28</sup> Another historian puts the figure in Cairo around 1660 to about 400,000. Therefore the economies of these trading centers did not seem to have suffered any major setback during this period.<sup>29</sup> According to one report in the 1590's Jeddah harbor yielded customs duty of 90,000 gold pieces (flori). The total value of the goods passing through Jeddah, therefore, can be calculated as 3.6 to 6 million gold pieces. The figure for Yemen landing stages (tax-farms) was 118,193 gold pieces. From this one may roughly calculate that the total value of goods passing through the Yemeni ports was 4.5 to 9 million gold pieces.<sup>30</sup> European traditional business centers such as Venice also minimized their dependence on supplies from the Osmanlı territories,<sup>31</sup> thus avoided a total collapse.

However, the fact remains that the rise of the Portuguese led to the collapse of Muslim participation in Euro-Asian maritime trade which eventually led to what Abu-Lughod calls the collapse of the East.<sup>32</sup> Why did this happen? Why did attempts to liberate Malacca failed so badly? Why did Osmanlı assistance prove to be inadequate for such a purpose? The Portuguese continued to dominate until they were successfully challenged by the Dutch over a century later. Now the question that arises here is why the Dutch succeeded in defeating the Portuguese while the local Muslims with assistance of the Osmanlıs failed to do so.

A number of factors are responsible for this. First, the Osmanlı

assistance failed to become a catalyst to bring unity among the South East Asian sultanates. Aceh, which was established after the fall of Malacca, sought and received Osmanlı assistance both in the form of arms and trained manpower. But attempts to defeat the Portuguese in Malacca never succeeded. In fact, it seems, the Achenese government attempts to forge unity among Muslims, in which Turkish troops were utilized, brought more misery than success. One such attempt by the Sultan of Aceh around 1540 resulted in uniting all Malay Muslims under the leadership of the Sultan of Johore against Aceh. This ended in the annihilation of the Turkish troops in the area.<sup>33</sup> The Osmanlı government does not seem to have studied the local situation before responding to the Achenese request. They also do not seem to have followed how the Achenese utilized Turkish forces. The Turkish troops were used against fellow Muslims but the Osmanlıs did not seem to have taken any notice of this, or at least did not take the reports seriously.

Secondly, it also seems, as has been noted in the Portuguese source quoted earlier that, the Portuguese leadership rightly understood the limitations of the Osmanlı commitments in South East Asia and the Indian Ocean. The Osmanlıs had at the same time many other fronts to fight and the Portuguese took full advantage of this. The same Portuguese source also suggest that they were well aware of Osmanlı activities in international politics. On many occasions the Portuguese intercepted Osmanlı ships in the Indian Ocean in order to prevent the latter assisting its South East Asian allies.

There is no doubt that the Osmanlıs had many other fronts to fight: Russians in the Black Sea region, local chieftains in the Balkans, the Hapsburgs and other Europeans in the Mediterranean and other parts of Europe and Spanish and Portuguese navies in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the Red Sea region. In the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf region, the Osmanlıs had to fight not only non-Muslim powers, but also had to devote time and energy towards the Şafavîds and some local Arab rulers as well. In 1533-35 Sultan Sulayman's (Qānūnī) campaign against the Şafavîds delayed his expedition against the Portuguese. Around the same time, Halil Inalcik informs us, Arab Shaikhs of Lower Iraq "found the Portuguese to be useful in balancing power in the region to protect their trading revenue."<sup>34</sup>

Yet it must be noted that in spite of all these problems, the Osmanlıs paid attention to protect material and spiritual interests of the Muslims during this period. As has been mentioned earlier, with

the Ottoman occupation of Egypt and Arabia the economic condition of this region improved. But why didn't the Ottomans try harder to protect the trade route in the Indian Ocean? This, perhaps, is due their perception of the Indian Ocean and the high seas. They do not seem to have considered those areas vital to their interests. They do not seem to have realized that their occupation of Istanbul had already placed them to the position of a global power. The extension of Ottoman power to the holy territories of Makkah, Madīnā, and Jerusalem had reinforced this idea. But the Ottomans do not seem to have developed themselves as a world power.

The Ottoman sources suggest that the Turks had the knowledge of sea routes from Europe to the Americas and to the Far East through the Cape of Good Hope before they were known to the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers. However, the Ottomans it seems, were not interested in being informed about the latter's use of these routes. In other words, although they claimed legitimacy in the name of Islam as demonstrated by the adoption of the institution of *khilāfah*, Turkey was yet to develop global interest in real terms. Active Ottoman interest in the Indian Ocean and the South East Asian region could come only from such a commitment.

This lack of interest on the part of the Ottomans to assume the leadership role in global politics should not be taken lightly. For what was happening in international scene could not, in any way, justify the silence for a political power such as the Ottoman state in the sixteenth century. We have noted earlier that, although European colonial historians called the Spanish and Portuguese transactions in the international scene as maritime trade, in reality this was nothing less than plunder. Indigenous peoples were massacred like animals, their properties were mercilessly looted and dangerous diseases such as plague were spread deliberately in order to make room for European immigrants. The local Americans, popularly known in Europe as the Red Indians suffered so much that they almost became non-existent. On the other hand Europe benefited immensely from this transaction: Huge amount of precious metals enriched Europe which eventually became catalyst in Europe's colonization effort in other parts of the world. According to one historian:

The flow of precious metals began immediately after the discovery of America, and by 1640 at least 180 tons of gold and 17,000 tons of silver are known to have reached Europe—the real figure must be double or triple these amounts, since records were poor for some areas and periods and since contraband was immensely important.<sup>35</sup>

Is there any relevance of this transfer of wealth to the Muslim world? Yes. This wealth enabled European countries to establish maritime trading companies and to launch "trading" voyages to the Muslim world.

Muslims in various parts of the world also suffered, and suffered heavily in the hands of European colonizers but they did not become non-existent. In our opinion the presence of powerful Muslim states, such as the Osmanlis, is partially responsible for this. Muslims of South East Asia might have faced with a similar fate as did the native population in the Americas. The Osmanlı assistance was definitely useful for the survival of Muslims in the area even though it was far away from the Osmanlı heartland. However, the lack of Osmanlı interest in actively participating in international affairs with the spirit of a global power gradually eliminated the Osmanlis themselves from the world map centuries later.

However, weakness of the Osmanlı state does not fall within the scope of this paper. The point that is emphasized here is that the Osmanlis did not consider control over the oceanic routes important to their strategic interests. They seem to have perceived the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, and other coastal areas important to their economic and political interests. They also perceived that the control over the Red Sea was vital to their interests. In doing so they turned out to be the champion of Islam in the fifteenth century. It is on the basis of such understanding of world affairs that they occupied Egypt and Arabia. This perception might have been responsible for their action against the Şafavids as well. But they did not take the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean and Spanish presence in the Atlantic Ocean seriously. According to one European observer:

Selim I and Suleiman, the greatest of Ottoman conquerors, were powerless in their efforts to bring back the lucrative flow of Eastern wares. The shifting of the trade-routes was done, not by the Turks, but in their despite and to their disadvantage.<sup>36</sup>

Osmanlis themselves did not loose much because of the loss of spice trade through India and Arabia. In fact, Arabia and Egypt witnessed economic growth under the Osmanlis in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Osmanlis strengthened their navy in the Mediterranean when they perceived it necessary to their interests. That is why it is suggested that the Osmanlis did not consider control over the Indian Ocean and the high seas as vital to their interests; and that is why they did not pay adequate attention to these areas. The

Osmanlis perceived themselves as a Muslim power, and not a global power. It is this perception of the Osmanlis that led them to assist the Muslims of Ache. Had they acted as a global power, their assistance to Ache would not have been inadequate and, perhaps, they would not have been erased from the world map.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System 1 Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1974), 15. Also see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 – 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987.)
2. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, "The World System in the Thirteenth Century: Dead-End or Precursor?" in Michael Adas (ed.), *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, n.d.), 75-102.
3. *Ibid.*, 102.
4. Halil Inalcik, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600," in Halil Inalcik and Donald Quateart (ed.) *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 9-409: 194.
5. Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 235.
6. *Ibid.*, 235.
7. *Ibid.*, 237.
8. K. M. Panikkar, *Asia Under Western Dominance* (London: Alan and Unwin, 1953), 27.
9. *Ibid.*, 29.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Inalcik, "The Ottoman State," 319.
12. Here one needs to explain the meaning of trade in the present context. During this period Europeans usually bought eastern goods in exchange of bullion. There was hardly any demand for European goods in Asia and Africa. Also the Portuguese always insisted on buying goods in its own terms, and frequently used force to compel merchants to sell goods to them.
13. Panikkar, *Asia Under Western Dominance*, 40.

14. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 291.
15. Panikkar, *Asia Under Western Dominance*, 35.
16. Ibid.
17. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974) 3: 21.
18. Panikkar, *Asia Under Western Dominance*, 30.
19. Inalcik, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600", 322.
20. Ibid., 331.
21. See Nūruddīn al-Rānīrī, *Bustanus salatin (Bab II Fasal 13)*, ed. T. Iskandar (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1966), 31-32; cf. *Bustanus salatin*, (Fasal Yang Ketiga Belas), ed. Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992), 2. Also quoted in Anthony Reid, "Sixteenth Century Turkish Influence in Western Indonesia", *Journal of South East Asian History* 10 (Dec. 1969) 3:395-415: 396. We have used Reid's translation.
22. Quoted in Reid, "Sixteenth Century," 398. Reid considers this as a reference to Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) and not Selim II (1566-1578).
23. Ibid., 406, quoting a letter of C. da Costa from Malacca.
24. Von Dr. Affan Seljuq, "Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago," *Der Islam*, 57 (1980) 2:301-310: 308 by quoting Jorge de Lemons.
25. Reid, "Sixteenth Century," 400.
26. On the revival of trade through the Osmanlı territories, see Inalcik, "The Ottoman State," 340-359.
27. Ibid., 499-502.
28. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 234.
29. On this subject, see Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
30. Murat Czakca, "Economic Islamization of Medieval Eurasia: An Institutional Framework," *Library of Mediterranean History* (1994) 1:47-75.
31. See Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 297-307.
32. Abu-Lughod, "The World System in the Thirteenth Century," 90
33. See Reid, "Sixteenth Century," 402.
34. Inalcik, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600," 336.

35. J. M. Blant, *1492: The Debate on Colonialism, Eurocentricism, and History* (Trenton N.J: African World Press, 1992), 39; also see Carlo M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy 1000 - 1700*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1980), 226.

36. A. H. Lybyer, "The Ottoman Turks and the Routes of Oriental Trade," *The English Historical Review* 30 (1915): 577-588: 588.