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RESTORATION OF RIAU SULTANATE-OTTOMAN RELATIONS (1857-1904) Explanatory Factors

Alaeddin Tekin¹

Abstract

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was a resurgence in relations and cooperation between the Malay Archipelago and the Ottoman Empire. Historical analysis of the policy followed by the Ottoman Caliphate in its relations with the Riau Sultanate contributes to a better understanding of the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Malay World. The historical background of the relations between the two regions is mainly characterized by a lapse of approximately three centuries (c. 1570-1850), the reasons for which are analysed in this study. The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the Ottoman State and the Sultanate of Riau through primary sources, from 1857 to 1904. The Riau Sultanate, an important polity in the Malay World, re-established its relations with the Ottoman State in 1857, and these continued until 1904, as expounded in detail in this study, based on Ottoman archives. This study extends knowledge of the neglected area of Ottoman-Malay relations with substantive new insights for contemporary cultural directions in relations between modern Turkey and the Malay World.

Keywords: Malay World, Ottoman Empire, Riau, Istanbul, Sumatra

Introduction

The relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Malay

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Archipelago had many dimensions throughout history, including in diplomatic, military, and religious terms. Around about the fourteenth century traditional Malay literature manifested its first Turkish motifs, after which related terms would frequently appear in the *Hikayat*,² such as the Malay terminology ‘*Turk*’, ‘*Setambul*’, and ‘*Rum*’.³ Likewise, traditional Turkish literature mentioning the Malay Archipelago used several words to describe the region, including *Cezîretü'l-Hindiyye*, *Ağî*, *Cava*, and *Samudara* (Malay Archipelago, Aceh, Java, Sumatra). However, these Turkish sources are geography books, with limited sociological and diplomatic information about the Malay Archipelago.

The Portuguese occupation of Malacca (1511–1641) and the Ottoman capture of Aden in 1538 essentially set the stage for a great geopolitical struggle for control of the Red Sea spice routes, with the local Muslim sultans in the region continually seeking to expel the invaders and resist other crusading encroachments. Malacca and Aden were the early modern equivalents to Singapore and Suez (respectively) from the nineteenth century, in terms of their geostrategic importance to global trade. With the hostile Portuguese occupation, ambassadorial and letter traffic began between the Malay

² Traditional Malay works of literature provide valuable information on the direct or indirect connections and linkages between Turks and the Malay World, including *hikayat* literature such as *Bustan al-Salatin*, *Hikayat Aceh*, and *Hikayat Meukota Alam*. Besides this, some *hikayats* give information on the history of the Ottoman Empire, such as *Hikayat Perang Setambul*. However, this section examines the first *hikayats* using Turkish themes in Malay literature. These *hikayats* are *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah*, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, and *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, which were translated from Persian, and *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*, which was translated from Arabic into the Malay languages.

³ ‘Rum,’ the Arabic for ‘Roman’ (as in the Qur’an), refers to the Romans known in the West as Byzantines, and it was used in Turkish literature to refer to the Roman and Christian inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean. In the wider Muslim world, it continued to be used as a geographical term to describe the former Roman lands ruled by the Turks, particularly Anatolia. For example, Malay literature referred to the Ottoman Empire as ‘Rum,’ and its ruler as the *Raja Rum* or *Sultan of Rum*. See V. Braginsky, “Turkic-Turkish Theme in Malay Literature, with Special Reference to the Works of the Fourteenth to Mid-Seventeenth Centuries,” *From Anatolia to Aceh - Ottomans, Turks and Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Oxford University Press, 2015), 264; *Hikayat Aceh*, ed. Teuku Iskandar (The Hague: 1958), 162–168.

Archipelago and Istanbul. The Ottoman State first established political links with the Sultanate of Aceh in the mid-sixteenth century. During this time, one of the most powerful rulers in the Malay Archipelago was the Acehnese Sultan, Alâeddin Ri'ayat Shah al-Qahhar (1537-1571). He was the only ruler in the region who could realistically lead resistance against the Portuguese, and he sent a letter to the Ottoman State asking for their support.⁴ During these years, the Ottoman State had already fought against the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, and it would be a logical move within their global strategy to open a new front against this common enemy (Portuguese) by supporting the Muslim Kingdom in Sumatra.

The Ottoman Empire's initial relations with the Indo-Malay World that began in the mid-sixteenth century subsequently fell into effective abeyance for centuries. From 1571 to 1849, approximately 280 years, there was no interstate relationship between the two regions. There are multiple factors to explain this long-term non-relationship period:

- (a) *Long distance between the two regions.* Geographical distance was undoubtedly the most significant barrier to the relationship between Istanbul and the Malay Archipelago. For this reason, no connection was established in this period unless the two regions needed each other.
- (b) *Lack of common interest between the two regions between 1571 and 1849.* It was initially for the benefit of everyone in the area when the Netherlands and Britain supplanted the Portuguese as the preeminent European interest in the Indies, as the newcomers seemed to be a benign commercial interest. Trade agreements between the colonial countries and the local authorities in the Malay Archipelago, appeared to embed a win-win policy for both sides.⁵
- (c) *Ottoman Empire enters a period of stagnation.* After the death of Sultan Süleyman I (1566), the Ottoman Empire

⁴ Razaulhak Şah, "Açı Padişahı Sultan Alaeddin in Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Mektubu." *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* (1967): 373.

⁵ Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Sumatran Sultanate and Colonial State – Jambi and the Rise of Dutch Imperialism, 1830-1907* (New York: Cornell University - SEAP Southeast Asia Program, 2003), 51.

entered a long period of relative stagnation, with the abandonment of the old policy of continual conquest, and the Ottoman Empire steadily lost its military power. Thus, the Malay Archipelago, a faraway Asian land on the eastern end of the Indian Ocean, was not an attractive place for the Ottomans to become engaged in during this period, especially with the potential for expensive and unpredictable conflict.

As a consequence of inertia in the Islamic world, it was being progressively conquered by industrialized Western states, piece by piece. The sultanates in the Malay Archipelago such as Aceh, Jambi, Johor and Riau were not formally occupied before the mid-nineteenth century by the Dutch or the British, but they were increasingly aware of their impotence to resist colonial encroachment and tyranny. Mansur Shah the Sultan of Aceh realized this danger and wanted to send gifts and letters to their ancient ally, the Ottoman Empire, in 1849.⁶ Thus after a long time, official relations between the two regions started again. In the letter the Acehnese Sultan wrote briefly to the Ottoman Sultan: “requesting a ship, one imperial edict, and one Ottoman flag.”⁷ If these kinds of demands were fulfilled by the government in Istanbul, the requester state would have acquired the status of a vassal state under the Ottoman Empire, but the Ottoman Empire always kept a distance from such demands because of its unwillingness to aggravate the colonial states.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Riau and Jambi followed the Acehnese in seeking help from the Ottoman State against the Dutch threat in Sumatra. The Netherlands began to pursue an expansionist policy throughout Sumatra and was clearly poised to annex the three sultanates. Ottoman-Aceh relations undoubtedly shaped the relations of the rest of Malay Archipelago sultanates with the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan of Riau, Raja Ali (Sultan Amir Ali ibn Jaafar), sent a letter to Istanbul in 1857,⁸ followed by the letter of

⁶ Anthony Reid, “The Ottomans in Southeast Asia,” *Asia Research Institute Working Papers Series* 36 (2005): 7.

⁷ BOA, İ.HR, 66/3208: H. 29/*Rajab*/1266 (June 10, 1850).

⁸ BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377: H. 16/*Jumādā al-ʿĀkhirah*/1273 (February 11, 1857).

Sultan of Jambi, Taha Sayfi'uddîn, in 1858.⁹ These two letters have similar characteristics, methods, and contents as the correspondence sent by the Sultanate of Aceh in 1849 showed. They also demanded the help of the Ottoman Caliphate against the Dutch invasions and requested to be vassal states under the authority of the Ottoman Caliphate.

Reestablishment of Riau-Istanbul Relations in the Nineteenth Century: Complementary Motivating Factors

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when the colonial forces began to occupy many Islamic lands, this caused a difficult situation for the Caliph in Istanbul. As a result of the invading politics of the Dutch colonial forces on the island of Sumatra in the context of these occupations, the Aceh, Jambi and Riau Sultanates renewed diplomatic relations with the Ottoman State. These sultanates, which were losing territories and effective control of their realm's day by day, requested military and diplomatic assistance from the Caliph in Istanbul.

Riau is located on the central-eastern coast of Sumatra and includes a large group of small islands located at the east exit of the Malacca Strait, between East Sumatra and South Singapore. Riau has a commanding position on one edge of the Malacca Strait, while its southern neighbour is Jambi. In the seventeenth century, the Riau Sultanate and its islands were one of the most powerful states in Southeast Asia; while its political and military power was subsequently eclipsed, its importance as a trading hub increased during the eighteenth century. Riau was also a capital of international trade, and it pioneered the entry of commodities from China and India into the Malay World.¹⁰

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the decline of many local sultanates in the Malay Archipelago, as well as increasingly sophisticated colonial machinations against the Ottoman Empire. This period was one of increasing colonial dominations and nascent nationalist ideologies across the entire Islamic world. The

⁹ BOA, İ. HR, 173/9431: H. 04/*Jumādā al- 'Ākhirah*/1276 (December 29, 1859).

¹⁰ Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor, 1641-1728: Economic and Political Developments* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Ottoman Empire continued to hold a unique position within the Islamic world as the most influential Islamic state and the Caliphate, which gave Ottoman sultans authority as nominal leaders of all Muslims, but also entailed the burden of protecting the entire *ummah*. During the period of the study, when the colonial forces began to occupy many Islamic lands, the Caliph in Istanbul was increasingly beset by myriad problems and setbacks, undermined at home by scheming political factions and continually thwarted by burgeoning colonial plots and nationalist ideologies. Anthony Reid summarized this political relationship as follows:

*“For Southeast Asian Muslims, the faraway Ottoman dynasty in Turkey represented a dream, a longing for Islamic power at a time of Islamic political decline. But there were important moments when that dream had immediate political effects.”*¹¹

However, the Ottoman Empire was increasingly a target for gluttonous Western powers, who systematically carved out the nationalist states of the Balkans and laid the groundwork for on-going ethnic conflicts, genocide, and war in Eastern Europe (and later the Middle East), claiming to come as peacemakers to sort out the Ottoman “Sick Man of Europe.”¹²

The most prominent role in the formation of these relations was undoubtedly the increasing influence of the Dutch government’s colonial policy on Dutch East Indies. There had been some local revolts against Dutch encroachment during the early nineteenth century in Minangkabau, Aceh and Jambi. Towards the middle of the century excellent communication among the indigenous society, the increasing number of pilgrims, and the efforts of the Dutch government to increase their power in the region led to the emergence of several Islamic movements in the Dutch East Indies.

¹¹ Anthony Reid, “The Ottomans in Southeast Asia,” *Asia Research Institute Working Papers Series* 36 (2005): 1.

¹² Frank Edgar Bailey, *British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement: A Study in Anglo-Turkish Relations, 1826-1853* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 3-40.

These groups were likely supported and facilitated in various ways by Ottoman interests and influence. For example, one of the Naqshbandiyyah Sufi leaders brought an Ottoman flag to Minangkabau from the Hejaz when he returned in the mid-nineteenth century.¹³

Another factor that motivated the progress of relationships is the policy of Pan-Islamism implemented during the reign of Sultan Abdü'l-Ĥamîd II (r. 1876-1909), which had a profound influence on Muslims under the British occupation in India and Malaya, and those under Dutch rule in the Indies.¹⁴ The Pan-Islamism policy of the Ottomans in the Malay Archipelago was a dynamic, innovative and bold strategy that revealed the genius and resourcefulness of the administration of Sultan Abdü'l-Ĥamîd II during the Ottoman Empire's terminal decline. The renovation of the role of the Caliphate provided a locus of anti-colonial resistance that helped to mitigate the worst impacts of colonization throughout the Muslim world, and thus it inherently achieved its primary purpose.

Riau had a distinctive place in this region in the nineteenth century as a reliable centre for printing and publishing, and it was influential in the modernization of the Malay World¹⁵ as an information hub for developments in the world in general, including the Ottoman Caliphate. It is also known that some of the Muslims in the region actively followed the Ottoman news agencies to get news about what was going on globally.¹⁶ In this intellectual milieu, the Ottoman Caliphate continued to have a major intellectual and cultural presence that outstripped its material, military and diplomatic reach into Southeast Asia. As a result of these and other similar factors, a relationship was established between the two regions, which reached

¹³ Anthony Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967): 272-273.

¹⁴ Cengiz Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat Yayınları, 1992), 87-88.

¹⁵ Jan Van der Putten, "Printing in Riau: Two Steps Towards Modernity," *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania* 153, no. 4 (1997): 717-736.

¹⁶ Michael Laffan, "Between Batavia and Mecca. Images of Agoes Salim from the Leiden University Library," *Archipel* 65, no. 1 (2003): 111-112.

its apogee in the diplomatic relationship between the Ottoman State and Riau Sultanate during the period 1857-1904.

The First Phase of the Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman State and Riau Sultanate (1857-1858)

The Sultanate of Riau was established around the first half of the nineteenth century. With the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, the Sultanate of Riau (Riau-Lingga) was separated from the Malay kingdoms¹⁷ and the Malay World was technically divided into two parts, leaving this area under Dutch control. Riau was busy with internal power struggles during this period. Even though the state administration was controlled outwardly by the Malay Sultans, the real rulers of the state were Bugis¹⁸ who were highly influential in the administration. For instance, the *Yumtuan Muda* (Deputy Vizier) of the Sultan was selected from their ranks,¹⁹ and via such key offices such as Raja ‘Ali Haji (ca. 1809-1870), a *Yumtuan Muda*, they directly ruled Riau in practice. Although Raja ‘Ali Haji of Riau had mastered the culture, language and traditions of the Malays, he was a Bugis and his ethnic origin was cited by his enemies as an obstacle to his legitimate authority. He described himself as a Malay in response to this, and tried to document this situation with his work on history. He never opposed the Malays and argued that the Bugis were an indigenous part of the Malay World and society.²⁰

¹⁷ Barbara Watson Andaya, “From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau 1899-1914,” *Indonesia* 24 (1977): 125.

¹⁸ “The Bugis are an ethnic group identified with the contemporary province of South Sulawesi. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they had a fearsome reputation as seafarers, pirates and mercenaries. Their relevance to the history of the Riau islands lies in the early 1700s, when the Malay World had been thrown into turmoil following the assassination of childless Sultan of Johor, Mahmud Shah II, in 1699.” (Nicholas J. Long, *Being Malay in Indonesia – Histories, Hopes and Citizenship in the Riau Archipelago*, 71). A major Bugis migration occurred in the early eighteenth century from Sulawesi to Riau. The group managed to have a say in both government administration and education in the Riau Islands. For more information, see Barbara W. Andaya, “From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau 1899-1914,” *Indonesia* 24 (1977): 124-125.

¹⁹ B. W. Andaya, (1977), 125.

²⁰ Jan Van der Putten, “A Malay of Bugis Ancestry: Haji Ibrahim’s Strategies of

According to a document in the Ottoman Archive dated February 11, 1857, the ruler of Riau sent two envoys to Istanbul who firstly arrived in Mecca on the way to submit their petition to the Sharif of Mecca, Abdullah Pasha (Figure 1).²¹ These two envoys were Sheikh Ahmed Efendi of Java²² and Sayyid Husain of Mecca.²³ The letter sent by the Sultan of Riau, Raja ‘Ali ibn Raja Ja’afar (c. 1844-1857), records his name as “Ali ibn Amir Cafer” (Ja’afar) on the document. Later, these two ambassadors presented the petition to the Ottoman Grand Vizier in Istanbul.

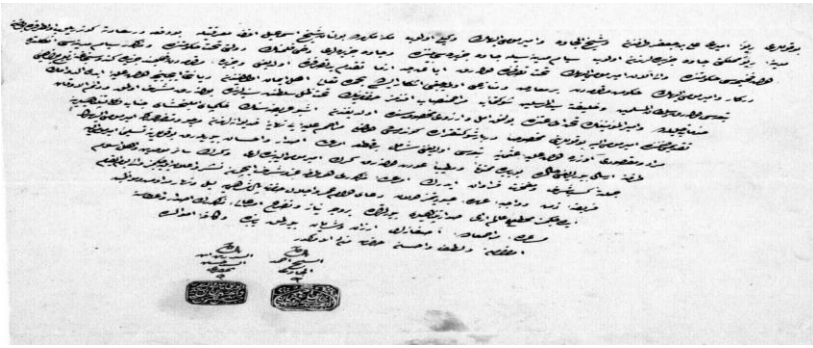


Figure 1. First Page of the Letter Sent by Sultan of Riau to Istanbul, written on February 11, 1857 [H. 16/Jumādā al-‘Ākhirah/1273].²⁴

After the Grand Vizier read and analyzed the letter, he gave it to the Ottoman Sultan, Abdül-Majid I (r. 1839-1861). The substance of the message was the following:

“Amir ‘Ali ibn Ja’afar wishes to be a vassal state and a part of the Ottoman Caliphate, and he hopes to feel the

Survival,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, (3) (2001): 343-345.

²¹ BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377: H. 16/Jumādā al-‘Ākhirah/1273 (February 11, 1857).

²² According to the archive document BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377, Sheikh Ahmed al-Javi was the deputy of Raja ‘Ali, and at the same time he was also “Java Sheikh.” His seal was on the document, giving his full name as “*Ahmed bin Osman El-Halidi En-Naqsshibendi Eş-Şazili*.”

²³ According to his seal in the document, the full name is written as follows: “*El-elisiku bi’llahi fi’s-sirri ve’l-cehr, Es-seyyid Zeyn ibn-I Huseyin El-Cufri*” (BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377).

²⁴ BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377: H. 16/Jumādā al-‘Ākhirah/1273 (February 11, 1857).

presence of the caliphate in terms of Islamic unity and strengthen ties between the two states.”

In addition to this letter, the Sharif of Mecca, Abdullah Pasha, also gave his opinion and comments in an attached document to provide consent to this request. He added that:

“As the legal annexation of these Muslims to the Ottoman State is accepted by all, there is not much to think about this request.”

Sharif Abdullah Pasha made a second comment on the political consideration of this demand and scheduled this issue to be discussed at the Advisory Council, with a decision to be taken accordingly, after the Ottoman Sultan, Abdül-Majid I (r. 1839-1861), had reviewed the petition. On another page of the archival documents of the same series, Riau’s geographical location and local Muslims are mentioned. Another remarkable point in this document is that the ruler of Riau did not mention any colonial issues, possibly to avoid the negative implications of directly addressing British encroachment in a diplomatic letter to the Ottoman Sultan. It is understood from the following part of the letter that Sheikh Ahmed, who was one of the ambassadors sent, made a request that was well considered by the Ottoman bureaucrats:

“Sheikh Ahmed requests the issuance of an imperial edict confirming his submission to the Ottoman Caliphate and the delivery of this edict to the Amir. Should his wish be granted, he will return to his country happy and content...”

If the Ottoman Sultan accepts these requests, they will pray all day for the Sultan to have a long life and lasting sovereignty.”²⁵

²⁵ BOA, İ. DH, 368/24377: H. 16/*Jumādā al-’Ākhirah*/1273 (February 11, 1857).

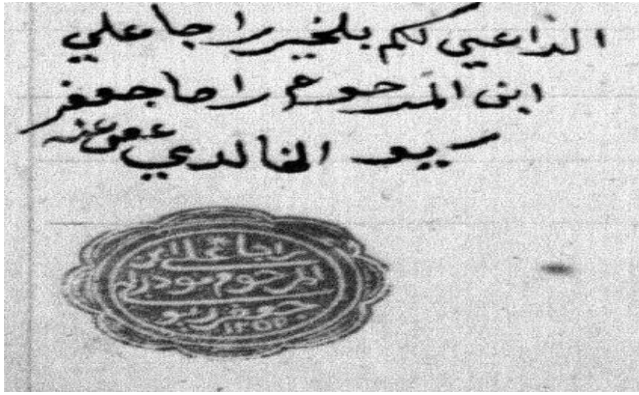


Figure 2. The Seal of Sultan of Riau, Raja 'Ali ibn Ja'afar, on the Second Page of the Letter Sent to Istanbul (BOA. İ. DH, 368/24377. Lef 2.).²⁶

Although this issue was duly referred to the Advisory Council by Ottoman bureaucrats for further discussion and investigation, the Governor of Mecca, Abdullah Pasha, who was in a position of mediation between Riau and the Ottomans, completed his research on this subject and sent his results to Istanbul. Even though this request was added to an agenda in Istanbul on February 11, 1857, Abdullah Pasha's approval report was prepared only on June 20, 1858.²⁷ Abdullah Pasha's sources of information on this subject were generally pilgrims and merchants coming to Mecca from the region, from whose information about this subject he formed his opinion on the seriousness of the Sultan of Riau and the request. As a result of this research, Governor Pasha prepared a report, according to which permission should be given to the Sultan of Riau to read sermons on behalf of the Caliph. He also advised that the Sultan be awarded the Ottoman decoration, *Majidiya*, of the third order with the name of Amir 'Ali ibn Ja'afar of Riau, and that the expenditures of the ambassadors during their one-year residence should be borne by the government.²⁸ It is understood from the other archival documents

²⁶ *Al-Da'yi Lekum Bil-Hayri Râjâ 'Ali Ibn Al-Merhûm Râjâ Ja'afar Riau Al-Halidi 'Anhu(?)*.

²⁷ BOA, İ. DH. 407/26941: H. 08/*Ḍū al-Qa'dah*/1274 (June 20, 1858).

²⁸ BOA, İ. DH. 407/26941: H. 08/*Ḍū al-Qa'dah*/1274 (June 20, 1858).

that these recommendations of the Governor of Mecca were viewed as appropriate. Both of these recommendations were entirely ceremonial, and no substantive Ottoman engagement with Riau as a vassal state was implied.

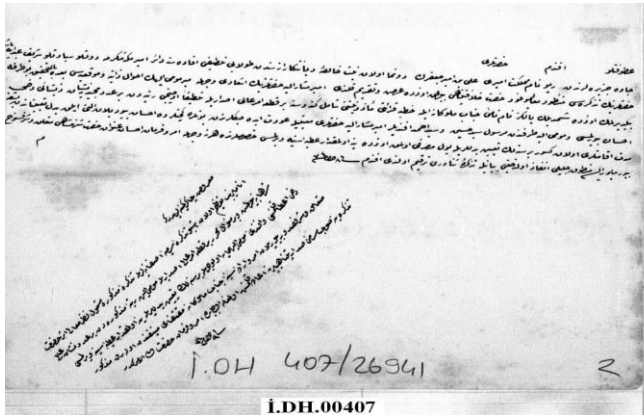


Figure 3. The Decision on the Preparation of the Ottoman Decoration, with the name of Amir ‘Ali ibn Ja’afar of Riau (BOA, I. DH. 407/26941).

When the archival documents about the subject are examined chronologically, two documents²⁹ issued in July 1858 from the Ottoman government indicate that Abdullah Pasha’s recommendations were taken into consideration. The first of these documents allowed reading sermons in the name of the Caliph in Riau, and the other is related to the imperial medal planned to be given to Amir ‘Ali ibn Ja’afar of Riau:

“Amir ‘Ali ibn Ja’afar of Riau of the Javanese Islands has sent a letter declaring his intention to pledge allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan and go under its rule. His goodwill greatly pleased the Ottoman Sultan, who accepted his request and thus granted him permission from the Caliphate to have the *khuṭbah* [Friday sermon] read on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan on Friday and ‘Aid

²⁹ BOA, A.} DVN. NMH, 9/23: H. 10/*Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (July 22,1858); BOA, A.} DVN. MHM, 25/97: H. *Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (June-July 22, 1858).

prayers in areas under his rule. This edict has been sent to affirm this permission. He is thus asked to uphold his knowledge, intelligence, and honesty in his affairs, pray for the Ottoman Sultan's well-being, and act in accordance with the demands of religion and honesty."³⁰

As explained previously, persistent missions from Aceh to the Sublime Porte met with mixed success, but in the case of Riau, the Ottoman State frankly accepted its request to be a vassal state under the Caliphate, despite the obvious encroachment of Western powers in the region and the potential difficulties this could cause for the Ottomans. The permission to read the *khuṭbah* as well as this imperial medal given to the ruler of the region is certainly a symbol of the warm regard for the Ottoman Caliphate, as another Ottoman document summarizes: "The Riau Sultan has been awarded this *Majidiya* Decoration of the third-order as a figure of the sentiments of sympathy and kindness (...)"³¹ It is understood that the first declaration on this decoration was prepared on 19 July 1858.³²

The decision of the Ottoman Caliphate clearly shows the influence of Meccan Governor Abdullah Pasha, whose role in this matter was encouraged by the government. Another document written on behalf of the Governor of Mecca informed the Sultan of Riau that his request was accepted, and the Arabic version was sent to Riau.³³ Overall, the subjection of Riau to the Ottoman Caliphate was not a *de facto* political arrangement but an expression of the spiritual devotion of the Sultan of Riau and his people to the Caliphate.³⁴ The ordinance prepared for Riau emphasized in many places the loyalty and obedience of the Riau Sultan and his people to the Ottoman Caliph. Another official document sent by the Ottoman

³⁰ This document is already translated by *Osmanlı Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı-Endonezya İlişkileri*, 230-233. However, the book has given the serial number of the document as BEO, 9/25 incorrectly, and this serial number has been corrected as A.) DVN. NMH, 9/23: H. 10/*Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (July 22, 1858).

³¹ BOA, A.) DVN. MHM, 25/97: H. *Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (June-July 22, 1858).

³² BOA, A.) DVN. 132/72: H. 07/*Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (July 19, 1858).

³³ BOA, A.) MKT. NZD. 259/89: H. 06/*Ḍū al-Ḥijjah*/1274 (July 18, 1858).

³⁴ İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, *Güneydoğu Asya'da Osmanlı-Türk Tesirleri* (Isparta: Fakülte Kitapevi, 2004), 75.

Ministry of Finance to the Meccan Governor included similar information on the Sultan of Riau and the medal given to him. Apart from this duplicate information, it was noted that the expenses of the Sultan's ambassadors during their stay in Istanbul were met by the Ottoman Treasury, along with their travel expenses to Riau³⁵ (additional largesse not originally mentioned by the Governor). Based on the information in this document, these ambassadors stayed in Istanbul for about one and a half years,³⁶ and they likely left from Istanbul in mid-July 1858.

Thus concluded the initial fluttering of relations between the two states. What is interesting in this section is that the Ottoman State interestingly approved and accepted this request from the Riau Sultan. The whole Islamic world was being occupied or threatened by colonial powers, and many of them appealed for assistance from the Ottoman State, but Istanbul either ignored these demands or followed a policy of mediation. The acceptance of the Riau Sultanate was particularly bold in the foreign policy of the Ottoman State during these years. However, these relations between the two states were interrupted for a while after the end of the administration of Raja 'Ali ibn Ja'afar (c. 1857), reflecting his own key role in the establishment of relations with the Ottomans.

The Second Phase of the Relations (1897-1904)

The east coast of Sumatra has always been heavily populated between Jambi and the Siak region of Riau. The Dutch attempted to take measures against a possible rebellion or *jihād* against them in this densely populated area of the island. A report prepared by some Sumatrans living in Mecca promoting cooperation among locals with the Sultanate of Aceh because of the Ottoman engagement with the

³⁵ BOA, A.} MKT. MHM. 134/32: H. 24/*Dū al-Qa'dah*/1274 (July 6, 1858).

³⁶ According to the information given in the previous document, the Ottoman State Treasury paid for these ambassadors for their first six months' stay in Istanbul, and then again for a further year. See BOA, A. MKT. MHM. 134/32: H. 24/*Dū al-Qa'dah*/1274 (July 6, 1858). In addition, when the documents related to this matter are examined, the first document was dated 11 February 1857, and the last was recorded as July 1858. This shows that these ambassadors stayed in Istanbul for about one and a half years.

latter as the pre-eminent Malay state, justified the concerns of the Dutch.³⁷ While it is not known very well whether Riau established a relationship with Aceh for this purpose, all Muslim societies around the world were looking forward to any assistance they could get from the Ottoman State. Aside from this general expectation, the Riau rulers also requested assistance from Japan, which was seen as another alternative to help resist the colonial powers.³⁸

Local reactions to the Dutch exploitation system in the region also increased the popularity of the Ottoman State, which was seen among the Sumatrans as an alternative Muslim power against the imperial forces. This interest in and the relevance of the Ottoman Caliphate began to pose a threat to the British, who were continually haunted by the spectre of a potential Muslim insurrection, of the kind seen in India in 1857. Nevertheless, Singapore was the main hub of Malay publication and dissemination, including pamphlets advocating Muslim unity, sometimes in terms of the Muslims of the region being united against the “Christians” who had combined against the Ottomans in the Balkans.³⁹

Against this evolving trend, the Dutch government sought to take some measures, particularly in the Siak region within the borders of Riau. Local conflicts were affected by foreign interference, and the Dutch reconciled the parties in 1858 with a treaty under which the Siak rulers in Riau would accept Dutch domination and would not correspond with foreign states without the permission of the Dutch government.⁴⁰ This treaty clearly showed that the Dutch government did not want any envoys sent to Istanbul. With these and similar methods, they tried to cut off any possible relations of local administrators with the Ottomans, and for a long time (c. 1858-1897) there was no significant relationship between the two states. When Mehmed Kamil Bey was appointed as the Ottoman

³⁷ Anthony Reid, “Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967): 274.

³⁸ Sumit K. Mandal, *Becoming Arab: Creole histories and modern identity in the Malay World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 151.

³⁹ Anthony Reid, (1967), 274.

⁴⁰ Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra - Aceh, the Netherlands and Britain 1858-1898* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2017), 22.

Consul in Batavia on June 29, 1897,⁴¹ he reignited contact with Riau and other sultanates in the Malay Archipelago. Meanwhile, the Dutch involvement in the state administration in Riau was opposed by some Riau elites, which was interpreted as damaging Riau's prestige. Although the Dutch did not take these reactions seriously, the Riau rulers felt that sending an ambassador again to Istanbul as the only way to overcome this situation.⁴² Kamil Bey had an excellent reputation as the representative of the Caliph in the region, and he also gave enormous support to Riau's elites in this process.⁴³ This active policy of Kamil Bey would cause a revival of the Pan-Islamist ethos in the Malay World.

As a result of the attitude of the Riau Sultanate in the Aceh-Dutch War (1873-1903) and the position of the political and educated class in Penyengat Island of Riau, the call for a *jihād* against the Dutch government could easily correspond to popular aspirations in the region, and the people of Riau were sympathetic to Kamil Bey's propagation of this idea in Batavia (c. 1897-1899).⁴⁴ As a result of the good relations between the Ottoman Consul in Batavia and some Sayyids and Hadramis in the region, the Dutch began to put pressure on him, with evidence to that effect from December 1898.⁴⁵ As the Ottoman Consul in Batavia for less than two years, Kamil Bey disseminated Pan-Islamist ideas among the political and educated elites of the Sumatran sultanates, including those of Deli and Aceh in North Sumatra, which caused the Dutch government to voice their concerns to Istanbul.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Kamil Bey was not intimidated.

⁴¹ BOA, HR. TH. 199/27: H. 19/*Rabī' al-'Awwal*/1315 (August 18, 1897); BOA, İ. HR. 355/32: H. 28/*Muḥarram*/1315 (June 29, 1897).

⁴² Barbara Watson Andaya, "From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau 1899-1914," *Indonesia* 24 (1977): 130.

⁴³ İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Güneydoğu Asya Bölgesi ile İlişkileri," *Devr-i Hamid Sultan II. Abdülhamid*, (2011): p. 40.

⁴⁴ B. W. Andaya, (1977): 130.

⁴⁵ Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells, "Hadhrami Mediators of Ottoman Influence in Southeast Asia," *From Anatolia to Aceh – Ottomans, Turks and Southeast Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 111.

⁴⁶ Anthony Reid, (1967), 280.

Shortly after Kamil Bey took office in Batavia, the main colonial states in the region – Britain and the Netherlands – made it clear that his work posed a threat to their interests in the area. For instance, an English booklet published in Singapore on December 29, 1898, described the Ottoman Consul's activities in the region in these words: "he ostentatiously remained away from all the coronation ceremonies, as if to impress upon the natives with what contempt he could treat the Dutch government." Kamil Bey was also "known to be tempering with the allegiance of two of the highest native Princes in Mid Java, and he sent a letter to a prince under Dutch rule in Borneo or Sumatra to try to seduce him from his loyalty...."⁴⁷ The probable owner of the letter sent by Kamil Bey on this date could be the Sultan of Riau, who was one of the local rulers with such a close relationship with Kamil Bey. Other information supports this. According to the decision taken in a secret meeting held in Raja 'Ali's house in February 1904, a letter was to be prepared for the Ottoman Sultan to summarize the current situation in Riau, to be sent to Istanbul as soon as possible.⁴⁸

As Kamil Bey was so active in the region, the Dutch government increased their pressure on the Ottoman Empire, and Kamil Bey was subsequently swapped with the Consul of Liverpool, Emin Bey, who was appointed to Batavia.⁴⁹ After Kamil Bey worked for a short time at the prestigious but politically inconsequential position in Liverpool, he returned to Singapore in June 1904 and married the widow of the former ruler of Johor, but his role as Consul was opposed by the British.⁵⁰ His arrival in Singapore was the last hope for Riau, whose leaders met Kamil Bey in the final months of 1904, entrusting him with \$20,000 to provide financial support to the Ottoman State. In October 1904, they set out for Istanbul with the documents dated 1857, which he had found in the Riau archive. According to Dutch sources, they never reached Istanbul, and in July

⁴⁷ Jan Schmidt, *Through the Legation Window 1876-1926 - Four Essays on Dutch, Dutch-Indian and Ottoman* (Belgium: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut The Istanbul, 1992), 87.

⁴⁸ B. W. Andaya, (1977), 130.

⁴⁹ BOA, HR. SFR. 3. 473/65: (August 23, 1898).

⁵⁰ J. Schmidt, (1992), 88.

1904 Sultan Abdü'l-Hamîd II complained to the Dutch Queen about the maltreatment of Sumatran Muslims.⁵¹

Although there were close contacts between the Riau-Sultanate and the Ottoman following the restoration of their diplomatic relations in the second half of the nineteenth century, no documents were found in the Ottoman archives regarding their relations in the 1900s, and most of what we know concerns the personal efforts of Kamil Bey. He made ambitious efforts to reiterate the framework of the Pan-Islamist policy in Southeast Asia, and became a thorn in the flesh of the British and Dutch colonial interests in the region. It is not known how much he communicated to Istanbul concerning his activities in Riau, and the extent to which the Ottoman Sultan was engaged in this policy.

Conclusion

Part of the struggle of the Riau Sultanate against the Dutch occupation of the Malay world in the nineteenth century was to seek help from alternative states in world politics, for diplomatic leverage if not direct military support. The only Muslim state that had any status as a global power during this period was the Ottoman Empire, which was quite far from the Malay world.

As a result, when the Sultanate of Riau was in contact with the Ottoman State between 1857-1904, the period may be divided into two phases. The first phase, which started with Riau sending ambassadors to Istanbul in 1857, could not continue for a long time. The relations that were restored between 1857-1858 were ruptured around 1897. The rupture ended with the new occupations of the Netherlands in the region and the beginning of the Ottoman Pan-Islamism policy in the Malay Archipelago. The intensification of Dutch imperialism galvanized efforts to seek Ottoman help. Indeed, the relations between local powers and the Ottomans were directly proportional to Dutch colonial expansion in the region, explicable by the simple action and reaction theory.

It is possible that these two neighbouring states, Riau and Jambi, who sent ambassadors to Istanbul one year apart, were acting

⁵¹ B. W. Andaya, (1977), 130-31.

in concert when faced with the same threats and scenarios. In 1857 the envoy of the Riau Sultanate was sent to Istanbul, followed by the ambassador from Jambi in 1858. These developments were contemporaneous with the Indian Mutiny, which was likely no coincidence, as the potential for Pan-Islamic unity to unite the Muslims against colonialism was a key theme of the situation in India (and a persistent fear of the British Raj). These sultanates, which had not established any diplomatic relations with the Ottoman States until these years, had to develop relationships with Istanbul as the effect of the Dutch occupation increased in their lands during these years.

Sultan 'Ali ibn Amir Ja'afar of Riau and Sultan Taha Sayfi'uddîn of Jambi played a significant role in the connections of their realms with the Ottoman State. Both historical figures seriously resisted colonial invasions, and they were outstanding figures in Indonesian national history. For example, after the independence of Indonesia, Sultan Taha Sayfi'uddîn was named as one of Indonesia's Pahlawan Nasional (National Heroes) because of his struggle.⁵² As a result of these personal efforts and attempts of both Sultans, they started a relationship with the Ottoman State. However, the Ottoman State openly accepted the request of the Sultan of Riau for help and the desire to become a vassal state under nominal Ottoman suzerainty, while they were intransigent to the same demands from the Jambi Sultan around a year later.

Careful analysis of the Ottoman archival documents reveals that the Ottomans wanted to help due to their Pan-Islamic ideology, but during the late nineteenth century the Ottoman Caliphate was nearing the end of its 600-year history, and it was terminally weak. However, it has been observed that Ottoman diplomacy, which displayed a more confident stance in the first phase of the relations (1857-1858), lost this stance in the second phase of the relations (1897-1904). Increasing British and Dutch pressure especially in this second period, undoubtedly influenced the Ottoman Empire's adoption of this attitude.

⁵² Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers – Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 248.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ء	‘	‘	‘	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g
ب	b	b	b	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l
پ	—	p	p	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m
ت	t	t	t	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n
ٹ	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ş	و	w	v/u	v
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ž	ی	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	-a ²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al ³	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	¹ – when not final ² – at in construct state ³ – (article) al - or l-			
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh				
ڈ	—	—	ḍ	ف	f	f	f				
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	k				
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	k			

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)
	و	uww (final form ū)	uvv
		uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au	ev
	ی	ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	u	u	u or ū
	ی	i	o or ö
	ی	i	ī

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

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