



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTE FOR AREA STUDIES

**INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PAN-ISLAMISM IN CEYLON IN
THE HAMIDIAN ERA (1876–1909)**

MASTER'S THESIS

Mohamed Zameer CAREEM

DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

AUGUST 2025



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Asst. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Tuba SUNGUR

August 2025

ETHICS STATEMENT

I hereby declare that I have collected all the written and audio-visual material presented in this thesis in accordance with academic rules and ethical principles; that I have fully cited and referenced all material that is not original to this work in compliance with scientific norms; and that this thesis is the product of my own original work except where indicated by referencing.

Mohamed Zameer CAREEM

DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Zahiye Allal Careem and Gnei Zareen Kayath Careem.
Thank you so much for everything! Words cannot describe how much I love you both.*

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I am truly grateful to my supervisor, Dr Zeynep Tuba Sungur, for all the help rendered over the last two years. If it hadn't been for her diligence, meticulousness, work ethic and unfeigned interest in my topic, I doubt I would have been able to complete this thesis on time. I also wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to Prof. Hatice Çelik, Dr Yusuf Avcı and Dr Mehmet Uğur Ekinci for all their support and invaluable lectures, which helped me gain a much deeper insight into Asian Studies and research methodology. My time in Türkiye, particularly at Ankara Social Sciences University, has greatly influenced my intellectual rigour, scrupulousness and writing style.

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PAN-ISLAMISM IN CEYLON IN THE HAMIDIAN ERA (1876–1909)

Mohamed Zameer CAREEM

M.A., Department of Asian Studies

Adviser: Asst. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Tuba SUNGUR

August / 2025

One of the main ideologies that gained momentum in the late nineteenth century was Pan-Islamism which advocated for the unity of the Muslim *ummah* under a single political entity. Ruling the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909, Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was also the Caliph in this period, employed pan-Islamism to garner the support of global Muslims in the face of European encroachment and colonialism. Analysing this period, this thesis addresses the question of how Pan-Islamism reached and influenced the Muslim community in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) during the Hamidian Era (1876-1909). Employing the method of archival research conducted both in Türkiye and Sri Lanka, this study begins with an insight into the history, ambit and key proponents of Hamidian Pan-Islamism, and then, goes on to answer two sub-questions. The first sub-question intends to find out the main channels and actors through which Pan-Islamist ideas were introduced to Ceylon. To answer this sub-question, the thesis examines the role and influence of the Ottoman Honorary Consuls in Ceylon, the Egyptian political exile Urābī Pasha and the role of the rising Muslim press in the dissemination of Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of Ceylon. Also analysed is how Pan-Islamism was viewed as intrinsically linked to Islamic modernism and ‘Arabisation’ in Ceylon. To answer the second sub-question of how different segments of the Ceylonese Muslim community responded to Pan-Islamism and what factors influenced these responses, the study examines how literacy, technology, colonialism, cultural heterogeneity, socio-religious dynamics,

political exigencies and self-interest influenced the perception and receipt of Pan-Islamism by the Ceylonese Muslims. One of the main findings of this study is that pan-Islamism helped the Tamil-speaking urban Moors improve their social standing, expand their businesses, realise their political aspirations, strengthen their claims to Middle Eastern ancestry and establish themselves as a distinct ethnic group different from the Tamil community.

Keywords: Abdülhamid II, Moors, Ottoman Empire, Pan-Islamism, Sri Lanka



ÖZET

HAMİDİYE DÖNEMİNDE (1876-1909) PAN-İSLAMİZMİN SEYLAN'A GİRİŞİ VE GELİŞİMİ

CAREEM, Mohamed Zameer

Yüksek Lisans, Asya Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Zeynep Tuba SUNGUR

Ağustos / 2025

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında ivme kazanan başlıca ideolojilerden biri, Müslüman ümmetin tek bir siyasi otorite altında birleşmesini savunan Pan-İslamizm olmuştur. 1876-1909 yılları arasında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu yöneten ve aynı zamanda bu dönemde Halife olan Sultan II. Abdülhamid, Avrupa'nın müdahaleleri ve sömürgecilik faaliyetleri karşısında dünya Müslümanlarının desteğini kazanmak amacıyla Pan-İslamizmden yararlanmıştır. Bu dönemi analiz eden bu tez, Pan-İslamizmin Hamidiye Dönemi'nde (1876-1909) Seylan (Sri Lanka) Müslümanlarına nasıl ulaştığını ve onları nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Türkiye ve Sri Lanka'da yürütülen arşiv araştırmalarını temel alan bu çalışma, Hamidiye Pan-İslamizminin tarihine, kapsamına ve başlıca savunucularına ilişkin bir değerlendirme ile başlamakta; ardından iki alt soruya yanıt aramaktadır. İlk alt soru, Pan-İslamcı fikirlerin Seylan'a başlıca hangi kanallar ve aktörler aracılığıyla ulaştığını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu soruya yanıt olarak bu tez, Seylan'daki Osmanlı Fahri Konsoloslarının, Mısır'daki siyasi sürgün Urâbî Paşa'nın ve yükselen Müslüman basınının Seylan Müslümanları arasında Pan-İslamizmin yayılmasındaki rol ve etkisini incelemektedir. Ayrıca Pan-İslamizmin, Seylan'da İslami modernizm ve 'Araplaşma' fikirleri ile nasıl özdeşleştiğini de analiz etmektedir. İkinci alt soruda Seylanlı Müslüman toplumunun farklı kesimlerinin Pan-İslamizme nasıl tepki verdiği ve bu tepkileri hangi faktörlerin şekillendirdiği sorusuna yanıt arayan çalışma, okuryazarlık, teknoloji, sömürgecilik, kültürel heterojenlik, sosyo-dini dinamikler, siyasi ihtiyaçlar ve kişisel çıkarların Seylan Müslümanlarının Pan-İslamizmi algılama ve ona yanıt verme biçimlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Çalışmanın başlıca

bulgularından biri, Pan-İslamizmin Tamilce konuşan kentli Moorların toplumsal statülerini yükseltmelerine, ticari faaliyetlerini genişletmelerine, siyasi emellerini gerçekleştirmelerine, Orta Doğu kökenli olma iddialarını güçlendirmelerine ve kendilerini Tamil toplumundan farklı, ayrı bir etnik grup olarak konumlandırmalarına yardımcı olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: II. Abdülhamid, Moorlar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Pan-İslamizm, Sri Lanka



ABBREVIATIONS

ACJU	All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama
ATASE	Millî Savunma Bakanlığı Askerî Tarih Arşivi
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
BEO	Bâb-ı Âlî Evrak Odası
GAS	Government Assisted Schools
HR.TO	Hariciye Nezâreti Tercüme Odası Belgeleri
HR.SFR.3	Hariciye Nezâreti Londra Sefareti Belgeleri
HR.TH.	Hariciye Nezâreti Tahrirat-ı Hariciye Odası
HR.İM.	Hariciye Nezareti İstanbul Murahhaslığı
İ.MTZ.	İrade Eyâlet-i Mümtâze Mısır
İ.HUS.	İrâde Hususi
İ.HR.	İrade Hariciye
Mohd.	Mohammed
Y.A. HUS.	Yıldız Arşiv-i Hususi
Y.PRK.ASK.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Askerî Maruzat
Y/PRK-MK.	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Müfettişlikler ve Komiserlikler Tahriratı
Y.PRK.ŞH.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Şehremaneti Maruzatı
Y.PRK.SRN.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Serkurenâlık
Y.PRK.TKM.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Tahrirat-ı Ecnebiye ve Mabeyn Mütercimliği

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I. CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka, meaning 'resplendent land' in Sanskrit, is a tropical island off India's southern coast, which, given its strategic location at the nexus of major maritime routes, has since time immemorial played a pivotal role in maritime trade, politics, and security. Aside from its global renown as a major trade hub, Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is also popular for its scenic landscapes, exotic flora and fauna, and wide range of precious commodities, which include cinnamon, blue sapphire, and the celebrated 'Ceylon tea.' Sri Lanka is home to 22 million people, who belong to a wide array of ethnic groups, chief among them being the Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Malays and Veddahs.¹ The main religions of the island include Buddhism, practised by over 70 per cent of the populace; Hinduism, by 12 per cent; Islam, by a little less than 10 per cent; and Christianity, at around 7 per cent. Between the 16th and mid-20th centuries, Sri Lanka was colonised by three European powers: the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British. The French, Danes, and Norwegians also attempted to conquer the island, but their efforts largely proved futile. In 1802 the governing of Ceylon was divorced from the British East India Trading Company, and the island became Asia's first Crown Colony directly administered by the British Government (Crown) in London (Bourne, 1869; Mills, 1964; Robinson, 1892). In 1815, following the British conquest of the Kandyan Kingdom, the entire island came under the control of the British. Unlike the territories of today's Bangladesh, India, Myanmar (Burma) and Pakistan, Ceylon was never part of the British Raj. The island gained independence from the British in 1948 but remained a dominion within the British Commonwealth until 1972, when the country transitioned from a constitutional monarchy to a republic and took the name 'Sri Lanka' (Abeyratne, 2019; Barnes, 2022; de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2013).

Contemporary Sri Lanka, which maintains diplomatic relations with 176 countries, is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Among the regions with which Sri Lanka has long since maintained relations is Anatolia, also known as

¹ Burghers are those of mixed European and Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) descent. Those who are of mixed Ceylonese and, through the paternal line, British ancestry are referred to as 'Eurasian'. Veddahs, also known as Wanniyalaeto (people of the forest) are the indigenous, or the earliest known, people of Sri Lanka.

Asia Minor, the peninsula that makes up the majority of modern Türkiye's landmass. The writings of Shemsu'd-Din Ahmed, Piri Reis, Katip Celebi, Seyfi Çelebi, Evliya Çelebi and Mevlana Rumi help validate that ancient Sri Lanka was not an obscure territory to the Turks (Barks, 2010; Casale, 2004, 2007, 2010; Çelebi, 1971; Rūmī, 1881; Rūmī and Helminski, 2005). In fact, 'Serendib'—one of the historical names for Sri Lanka, which is believed to be a corrupt form of *Sinha-Dvipa*, Sanskrit for 'Island of Lions'—was first mentioned in the poem *Hasht Bihisht* (Persian: Eight Paradises) by Amir Khusrau (1302), a Sufi singer, poet and historian of Turkic ancestry. (Das, 2005; Devy, 2022; Hodges, 1964). Moreover, Pir Hazrat Nathar Shah, a saint from Rûm, Anatolia, is credited with having introduced Sufism to Sri Lanka and South India. In addition, there is proof of mercenaries, mainly gunmen from the erstwhile Ottoman Empire, serving in Colonial Ceylon (Brohier, 1973; De Silva, & Beumer, 1988; Ferguson, 1998; Obeyesekere, 2017). Until the early 20th century, Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) was home to the *Ravuttar* and *Thulukkar* communities, both of Turkic extraction, who, with the passage of time, assimilated into larger ethnic groups, eventually losing their distinctive cultural identities (McGilvray, 1974, 2008; Ràmanáthan, 1888; *The Times of Ceylon Green Book*, 1921).

Though Sri Lanka's relations with the Ottomans can be traced back to the time of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494 – 1566), formal diplomatic relations were established only in 1864, during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz (1861-1876). Subsequently, two Ottoman consulates were established in the port cities of Colombo and Galle, which were overseen by influential local Muslims, who held the title of *şehbender* (Ottoman Consul). It is worth noting that in the official Ceylonese and British records the Ottoman consuls were mainly identified as 'Turkish' consuls or consular representatives of 'Turkey', and the term 'Ottoman' was seldom used (Colonial and Indian exhibition, 1886; Hertslet, 1895; Keltie, 1896). In addition, as the 'Turkish' consuls in Ceylon were locals and not 'Turkish' or subjects of the Ottoman Empire, they were referred to as 'honorary' Turkish consuls (Aldrich & Stucki, 2022; *Kelly's Directory of Merchants*, 1907).

Under Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876 to 1909 known as the Hamidian era), who was revered as the Caliph (the chief Muslim civil and religious ruler) by certain segments of Ceylon's Muslim community, relations extended beyond diplomacy to cultural and religious domains. Sultan Abdülhamid II holds the rare honour of being the only non-British royal whose jubilees were commemorated, charities were financed, and war efforts were supported by the Muslims of Ceylon, who even had institutions rechristened in his honour. One of the key ideologies promulgated among

Muslims that drew them closer to Abdülhamid II was Pan-Islamism, which left an indelible imprint on the socio-political landscape of early 20th-century Sri Lanka.

Figure 1

Map of Sri Lanka



Note. Map of Sri Lanka indicating the main provinces, towns, villages, roads, railroads, and airports. From *Wikipedia* (public domain).

Despite the influence wielded by Abdülhamid II and his Pan-Islamism policy on the Muslims of Sri Lanka, there hasn't been a single book, let alone an academic paper, that has hitherto delved into this subject. Moreover, the history of Ottoman ties to Ceylon remains largely relegated to the archives, overlooked by scholars, and has never been subjected to academic scrutiny. There hasn't been a single study that has explored in depth how the Ottoman subjects and sympathisers, particularly during the Hamidian era, disseminated pan-Islamism in Ceylon, the strategies they

employed, the challenges they faced, and the validity of the claims made by Ottoman officials. This thesis seeks to address these questions and bridge the existing knowledge gaps through extensive archival research and use of secondary sources by examining in depth the history of Ceylon-Ottoman relations during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

Before diving straight into Pan-Islamism, it is crucial to analyse the history of Muslims of Ceylon during the colonial period, focusing on how their state of affairs changed drastically between the early 16th and late 19th centuries. Also examined is how the Muslims strove to maintain their religious identity under colonial rule. In addition, the subsequent sections explore how the Colonial powers, especially the British, tactfully exacerbated the social stratification and created new ethnic identities. Also analysed in the subsequent sections is the resurgence of the Muslim community in the 19th century, particularly in the years preceding the Hamidian era.

1.1.Early History of Muslims of Sri Lanka

Given Ceylon's strategic positioning at the confluence of major maritime routes, it is widely believed that the inhabitants of the coastal belt had established contacts with Muslim Arab traders as far back as the 8th century AD. However, there has long been a dispute over the exact period when Muslims first settled in Ceylon (Asad, 1993a; Shukri, 1986). In the 16th century, when the Portuguese colonists arrived in Ceylon, Muslims had already established themselves as an important mercantile community on the island and maintained good relations with local Sinhala monarchs (Shukri, 1986). The Portuguese identified the Muslims in Cannanore, Ceylon, Cochin, Bengal, Maldiv Islands, and elsewhere, as *Mouro*, just as the Spaniards who colonised the Philippines identified the Muslims there as *Moro*, a cognate of the English *Moors* (Bell, 2004; Glazer, 1941; Tennent, 1859). The term *Mouro/Moro* was first used as an exonym by Christian Europeans to identify the Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb, the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta (Lane-Poole & Gilman, 1889). But by the 17th century, *Moro/Moor* came to mean anyone who practises Islam (*The Lusiads of Camoens*, 1878). Therefore, when the Portuguese arrived on the shores of Ceylon in the early 16th century and found Muslims living on the island's coastal belt, especially in the neighbourhoods surrounding prominent ports, they chose to identify them as *Mouro*, a cognate of the English *Moors* (Tennent, 1859).

Figure 2

Native Races in early 20th C. Ceylon



Note. “Types of Native Races met with in Ceylon,” The Royal Visit to Ceylon, by W.L.H. Skeen & Company, April 1901. From *Two leaves and a bud: tea and the body through a colonial lens*, by L.A. Harris, 2021, *Asia*, 11(2)

The Portuguese viewed the Muslims with suspicion, took control over their trade, deprived many of their livelihood, imposed penalties and restrictions on their trade, and subjected them to religious persecution (Asad, 1993a; McGilvray, 1998; Shukri, 1986). In the 1566 letter sent by the court of Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Syah of Aceh, Northern Sumatra, to Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, it is mentioned that the Portuguese persecuted the Muslims in Ceylon, who maintained fourteen mosques across the island where the Friday sermons were read in the name of

the Ottoman Sultan (Casale, 2010; Feener et al., 2011; Kadı & Peacock). Going by this letter, it is clear that the Ottoman Sultan had been revered as the Caliph by the Muslims of Ceylon even as far back as the 16th century. Given that the 16th century witnessed sporadic ‘proxy’ wars between the Ottomans and their archenemies, the Portuguese, the presence of ‘Ottoman’ mosques and reverence to ‘Ottoman Sultans’ in Ceylon would have further enraged the Portuguese, who oppressed the Muslims and tore down many mosques in Ceylon.

The Dutch who usurped the Portuguese from Ceylon in the mid-17th century were also hostile towards Muslims, particularly the Moors, whom they disparaged as “descendants of a mean and detestable Malabar caste” who had embraced Islam following their encounter with Arabs (Tennent, 1860, p. 630).² This explains that during the Dutch Colonial period, the Moors were neither seen as a reputable community nor as descendants of Arabs. As proselytising was rampant under Dutch rule, Muslims were not granted permission to erect new mosques. However, the Dutch authorities became more lenient and tolerant in the closing decades of the 19th century and permitted the Muslims to build mosques. Notwithstanding, the Malays, who formed a significant number in the Dutch regiments, were permitted to practice Islam freely and build ‘military’ mosques in their cantonments (Hussainmiya, 1986; Zulkiple & Jazeel, 2013). This helped the Dutch retain the loyalty of the Malays, who proved critical in suppressing revolts and fighting battles.

The Malay royals, nobles and courtiers who were exiled to Ceylon from the Dutch East Indies between the late 17th and early 18th centuries proved pivotal in promoting the *Shafi* school of Islamic jurisprudence and setting up *Pesantiren* (schools for teaching students to read the Quran) on the island (Mahroof, 1990b). The most prominent among these Malay exiles was Sheikh Yusuf al-Macassar, also known as *Jawi alim* (Javanese scholar), who had studied Islamic theology in Hejaz. Sheikh Yusuf, who arrived in 1684, wrote several religious works during his residence in Ceylon, but the Dutch, who felt threatened by his presence, banished him to the Cape of Good Hope in 1694 (Ward, 2009). As the Malay exiles lived in Colombo’s Hulfsdorp region, it was mostly the Muslims of Colombo who were exposed to their teachings. Unlike the Muslims who lived in the European-occupied coastal belt, those who lived in the erstwhile Kandyan Kingdom—which remained independent until 1815—were not only free to practice Islam but also engage in trade without much restriction (Dewaraja, 1986). In 1762, the Kandyan King sent a Muslim named

² The term ‘Malabar’ was used to identify the Tamils of Ceylon.

Udumu Lebbe as his envoy to convince the Nawab of Arcot to negotiate with the British and send troops to oust the Dutch from Ceylon (Dewaraja, 1986). This would most likely have made the British realise the influence of Muslims in the Kandyan Kingdom.

1.2. Muslims under British Rule

In 1796, the British overthrew the Dutch and seized Ceylon's coastal belt with the help of their Malay regiments. Unlike their predecessors, the British took an avid interest in Ceylonese affairs and devised various stratagems to win the favour of the Muslims and Sinhala *Radala* aristocracy to depose the Kandyan King, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha (r. 1798-1815). Sir Alexander Johnston (1775–1849), the third Chief Justice of Ceylon, introduced reforms that granted the Ceylonese the freedom of religion and codified the laws governing the marriage, divorce and inheritance of the Moors of Colombo, which came to be called *the Mohammedan Code of 1806* (Mahroof, 1990b). All twenty signatories to the 1806 code were Moor residents of Colombo. This set the stage for the Moors of Colombo to become the *de facto* representatives of Ceylon's Muslim community. It should be noted, however, that the *Mohammedan Code of 1806* makes mention of the word *maskawien* (Malay for marriage gift/dowry) on six occasions. This calls into question whether the *Mohammedan Code of 1806* represents the laws that were practised by the Moors in Colombo at the time or “whether it was *De Byzondere wetten*, a compilation of the Muslim law and practice of Java and other islands then under the control of the VOC” (Mahroof, 1990b, p. 80). Given that Malay exile Sheikh Yusuf al-Macassar spent his youth in Hejaz, it is likely that his knowledge of *Sharia law* gave rise to what became known as the *Mohammedan Code of 1806*.

It was Alexander Johnston who claimed that according to local tradition, the first Muslims who settled in Ceylon were Arabs of Hashemite descent who arrived in the 8th century AD (Azeez, 1907; Tennent, 1860). This Arab ancestry claim helped the Moors, who were otherwise indistinguishable from the natives of Ceylon, whether in manners, dress or appearance, to establish themselves as a culturally distinct community (Dewaraja, 1986; McGilvray, 1998; Shukri, 1986). It was most likely a tactic employed by the British to distance the Moors from the Sinhalese and Tamils. In 1815, the British conquered the Kandyan Kingdom, largely with the help of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment, which comprised substantially of Malays. In 1817, the British appointed a loyal Moor, Haji Marikkar, to the office of *Travala Madige Muhandiram* of Wellassa (Chief of Transport Department), which had been traditionally reserved for Sinhala Buddhist headmen

(Pinto, 2015; Powell, 1984). This, along with other incidents that reflected the British's insensitivity to Buddhist customs and disrespect for Kandyan traditions, incited the 1818 anti-colonial rebellion led by the Sinhalese, which was quelled by the Malay soldiers. By prioritising the Muslims over the Sinhalese majority, the British sowed the seeds of religious tension in the Ceylonese society. Therefore, it is clear that, just like in other colonies, the British consolidated their rule in Ceylon by using the divide et impera (divide and rule) policy.

1.2.1. Muslim Ethnic Groups in British Ceylon

Given that the period under focus is the Hamidian era, it is essential to understand the cultural heterogeneity of Ceylonese Muslims during that period. Until Ceylon's independence in 1948, the adherents of Islam were commonly referred to as *Mohammedan*, *Mussulman* or *Moslem* and were largely classified into three main ethnic groups: the Ceylon Moors, Malays and Indian Moors (see Table 1). The Ceylon Moors are arguably descendants of Arabs who had intermarried with the natives of Ceylon and Southern India and settled on the island's coastal belt during the pre-colonial times (Ali, 1984; Bertolacci, 1817; Ràmanáthan, 1888; Tennent, 1859). By the late 19th century, the Ceylon Moors had become a widely distributed Tamil-speaking community, largely involved in commerce and agriculture (Denham, 1912; Ràmanáthan, 1888). The Indian Moors, as the name suggests, were descendants of Indian Muslims who had settled in Ceylon, mainly during the British colonial period. As these Indian Moors hailed from different regions of British India, such as Madras Presidency, Travancore, Baluchistan Agency, Bengal Presidency and Bombay Presidency, they spoke a wide array of languages and belonged to different sects and schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Denham, 1912; Lee, 1892). The Indian Moors settled mainly in cities like Colombo, Galle, Jaffna and Kandy.³

³ Prominent Muslim ethnic groups of present-day Sri Lanka such as Bohras, Memons, Khojas etc. were collectively identified as "Indian Moors" until the early 20th century.

Table 1*Muslims of British Ceylon*

	1881	1891	1901
Moors (Ceylon and Indian)	184,536	197,166	228,034
Malays	8,895	10,133	11,902
Other Muslims	4,338	4,696	6,182
Total Muslim Population	197,775	211,995	246,118
Total population of Ceylon	2,759,738	3,007,789	3,565,954
Muslims as a percentage of Ceylon's population	7.2	7.0	6.9

Note. It was in the Census of 1911 that Ceylon and Indian Moors were enumerated separately. The Table was prepared using the Ceylon Census Reports published by the Ceylon Government Press in the years 1882, 1892 and 1902.

The Malays are largely descendants of soldiers from the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) and British Malaya (Malaysia) who settled in Ceylon mainly between the 17th and early 19th centuries (Hussainmiya, 1990; Ricci, 2019). Some Malays are descendants of royals and courtiers who were exiled to Ceylon between the late 17th and 18th centuries by the Dutch East India Company (Hussainmiya, 1990; Ricci, 2019). Although the British identified them as *Malays*, they were largely ethnic Javanese (Saldin, 1996). During the British Colonial Era, they were largely employed in the police force and clerical service (Asad, 1993a; Denham, 1912; Ricci, 2019; Wright, 1907). Apart from the Malays and Moors, there was a smattering of Muslims from the Maldives, Africa, Anatolia, Persia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula who lived in British Ceylon, and they were classified as *Other* in the census.

1.2.2. *Muslim Identity Before the 1880s*

The first island-wide population census in Ceylon was conducted in 1824 under the governorship of Sir Edward Barnes. However, it was incomplete, as it was based largely on the data supplied by village headmen, and the population was classed according to caste. There were a few other censuses conducted in the decades that followed. These censuses, however, were incomplete, as they focused primarily on caste and languages spoken in Ceylon; hence, there isn't much information on the religions practised on the island. The first complete population census in the whole of South Asia was conducted in Ceylon in 1871, in which the British replaced caste with

concepts like race and nationality, which had become popular in Europe at the time. It should be noted that ‘race’, ‘nationality’ and ‘ethnicity’ were Western concepts introduced to Ceylon during the British Colonial period. Until the late 19th century, Muslims, particularly those from the Eastern Province of the island, identified primarily by their individual ‘caste’, such as *Timilar*, *Mukkuvar*, *Karaiyar*, etc., and followed matrilineality and the matri-clan system, much like those who lived on the Malabar coast of South India (Denham, 1912; McGilvray, 1974, 2008). Similarly, the Muslims who lived on the northwestern and southern coasts of Ceylon belonged to a range of castes, and ‘caste’ played a significant role in ‘Moor’ marriages (Bawa and Bawa, 1888; Denham, 1912).

The Census of 1881 also categorised Ceylon’s population based on nationality rather than caste or ethnic group. As shown in Table 2 and Table 3, there were many nationalities that identified themselves as *Mohammedan* (Muslim) in the 1871 and 1881 censuses. Therefore, it is evident that until the early 1880s, it was common among Muslims to identify themselves as Sinhalese, Tamil, *Pattani* (descendants of Pathans) and *Tulukkar* (those of Turkic descent).⁴ In fact, many British officials couldn’t distinguish the Sinhala Buddhists from ‘Sinhala Muslims’ as they shared a great deal in common, whether it be in manners, appearance or dress (Davy, 1821; Denham, 1912). According to James Cordiner (1807), “The Cingalese, who profess the religion of Mahomet, appear to be a mixed race, the principal of whose progenitors had emigrated from the peninsula of India” (p. 117). Likewise, in Tamil majority areas, it was difficult to tell apart the ‘Tamil Muslims’ from the Tamil Hindus and Christians. The colonial period also witnessed a steady influx of “converted Hindus from the South Indian port settlements” (Dewaraja, 1994, p. 47). These converts largely belonged to lowly Hindu castes (Jairath, 2013). Therefore, embracing Abrahamic religions like Islam and Christianity and migrating to British colonies like Ceylon liberated them from caste-based oppression and helped them gain some respectability (Stepanov & Karatay, 2024). Nevertheless, British records indicate that there were instances when ‘Moors’ were treated as ‘low caste’ by the natives of Ceylon (Sivasundaram, 2017a). In addition, as Sinhala Buddhists were chiefly agriculturists who abstained from materialism, they were “unconnected with the internal commerce of the island”, hence trade was “conducted by Moormen, Malabars, Parsees and strangers” (Macgregor, 1848, p. 710).

⁴ In South India, the Tamils used the word 'Tulukkar' to identify those of Turkic descent as well as a misnomer to identify Muslims in general, particularly the Tamil Muslims who lived along the Coromandel coast.

Table 2*Muslims of Ceylon in 1871 and 1881*

Nationalities	1871	1881
Moors	163,516	184,536
Malays	6,838	8,857
Pattany	1,304	1,210
Tamil		715
Sinhalese		71
Arabs	151*	450
Afghans	6	130
Dekkanese		3
Hindustani		164
Tulukkar (Turks)		128
Javanese		3
Eurasian		4
European		1
Total Muslim population	171,542	197,775
Total Population of Ceylon	2,401,066	2,759,738

Note. Unlike the Census of 1881, that of 1871 does not list the specific nationalities that practised Islam; it only lists the total *Mohammedan* population. This table was prepared using the Ceylon Census Reports published by the Ceylon Government Press in the years 1872 and 1882. It is likely that not all Arabs were Muslims.

Among the South Indian ‘Moor’ trading communities who established their businesses and rose to prominence as traders, particularly in principal towns along the southwestern and northwestern coasts of Ceylon, are Lebbe (Labbai) and Maraikkayars (Markar/Marakkar), whose descendants continue to bear surnames like Lebbe, Maricar and Markar that reflect their ancestry (Ali, 1984; Bray, 1863; Macgregor, 1848; Mohamad, 2004; Nolan, 1861). The Tamil-speaking Lebbe (Labbai) community is comprised of those who are descendants of the children of Arab traders and their lower caste Hindu wives, as well as the descendants of Hindus who had converted to Islam (Balfour, 1885; Pandian, 1978; Sharif, 2017; Thurston, 1909a). As noted by Edgar Thurston (1909a), the Labbais spoke Tamil, their customs closely resembled those of low-caste

Hindus, and many were traders and betel vine growers, while some were engaged in weaving corah (sedge) mats and pearl and chank fishing. Labbai/lebbe was also commonly affixed to the names of Tamil Muslims who were religious or held religious occupations (More, 1997). The Marakkayar, on the other hand, were largely descendants of Hindu boatmen, sailors and fisherfolk who had converted to Islam (Amrith & Sahraoui, 2018; Jairath, 2013; Punathil, 2018; Thurston, 1909b). Sometimes the terms 'Labbai' and 'Marakkayar' were used interchangeably, or they were collectively referred to as 'Sonakar' (Thurston, 1909a, 1909b).

Until the early 20th century, just like their Hindu counterparts, these Muslim migrants from South India—who were commonly referred to as ‘Moors’ by the colonists—maintained close contacts with their native towns and villages in South India (Christie, 1811; Kinnis, 1835, 1837). As shown in Table 3, some Moormen identified as Buddhists and Christians in the early 1880s. It is unclear whether they had converted to Christianity or Buddhism or whether they were mistaken for being Christians or Buddhists.

Table 3

Religions and Nationalities in Ceylon in the Census of 1881

STATEMENT SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION ACCORDING TO RELIGION AND NATIONALITY. (Exclusive of the Military and the Shipping).													
				Christians.		Buddhists.		Hindus.		Muhammadans.		Others	
				Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.
CEYLON.													
Europeans	...	...	...	3132	1051	—	—	—	—	1	—	48	4
Eurasians and Burghers	..	..	..	8883	8021	25	21	—	—	2	2	17	15
Sinhalese	...	...	...	82908	79272	879237	804764	32	40	36	35	127	73
Tamils	...	...	...	44089	38131	8350	4463	326818	263513	496	249	767	402
Moormen	...	...	...	2	1	2	—	—	—	103799	80737	1	—
Malays	...	...	...	21	11	3	3	—	—	4715	4142	—	—
Veddahs	...	...	...	1	—	361	325	417	371	—	—	308	355
Others	...	...	...	532	332	379	137	1512	927	2320	1271	62	17
Total...				139058	128319	888357	809713	328779	264851	111339	86436	1420	866

Note. It is likely that the British mistook some Moormen to be Christians and Buddhists. However, in the case of Malays, it is likely that some were Buddhists and Christians, as there is a record from the Dutch era that some Amboinese Malays in Ceylon were Christians. From *Census of Ceylon 1881* (p.320), by L. Lee, 1882, Frank Luker.

As expounded in this thesis, it was mainly from the mid-1880s onwards that Ceylonese Muslims, particularly Tamil-speaking urban Muslims, started increasingly identifying themselves as ‘Moors’ as Pan-Islamism, a sense of belonging to the Middle East and separate political representation for ‘Moors’ started gaining momentum in Ceylon. However, by the early 20th century, ‘Moors’ were invariably Muslims, and Muslims belonging to different castes, ethnic

groups and nationalities, including *Tulukkar*, *Ravuttar*, *Mukkuvar* etc., had assimilated into the larger ‘Moor’ community (Ferguson, 1903). In today’s Sri Lanka, except for converts, none of the Muslims identify themselves as Sinhalese or Tamil, to the extent that it is considered offensive to call a Sri Lankan Muslim Sinhalese or Tamil.

Table 4

Moors of Ceylon from 1871 to 1921

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Ceylon Moors	163,516	184,536	197, 166	228,034	233,901	251,938
% of Moors in Total Muslim Population	95.32	93.30	93	92.65	82.47	83.27
Total Muslim population	171,542	197,775	211,995	246,118	283,631	302,532
% of Muslims in Ceylon	7.1	7.2	7.0	6.9	6.9	6.7

Note. Due to the economic growth in Ceylon, the influx of foreigners, including Muslims from British India, Southeast Asia, the Maldives, Arabia and North Africa, increased rapidly between the 1870s and 1940s.

Moreover, the caste identities and matrilineality among Sri Lankan Muslims are increasingly disappearing. As highlighted by Mohamed Faslan (2025), Muslims of Sri Lanka are reluctant to discuss the caste system, as it conflicts with the egalitarian ideology of Islam. As detailed in the sections that follow, Hamidian Pan-Islamism was one of the factors that led to the disappearance of age-old traditions of Ceylonese Muslims that didn’t align with the practices of their religious counterparts in the Middle East as well as widened the gap between the Muslims and the rest of Ceylon’s population.

1.2.3. Religious Establishments before 1880s

The oldest surviving structures of almost all the mosques that are believed to have been erected before the 16th century can be traced only to the 19th century. The reason being that it was under the British rule that most mosques that had been destroyed, particularly during the Portuguese rule, were reconstructed (Hussein, 2022). There were also new mosques built across

Ceylon starting from the first quarter of the 19th century (Hussein, 2022). Like their predecessors, the British too permitted Malays, mainly soldiers, to build their mosques in Colombo, Kurunegala, Kandy, Hambantota, Trincomalee and other towns. These Malay mosques were popularly called *Ja Palli* (Tamil for Javanese/Malay Mosque), and many of them have been well preserved and stand to this day (Hussainmiya, 1986, 1990; Hussein, 2022). However, there seems to be no record of the exact number of mosques that were established before the 1880s.

It was only in 1870 that the first *madrassa*, *Zawiyathul Makkiyatul Fasiyyatul Shadhiliyya* (Lodge of the *Fassiyatush* branch of the *Shadhiliyya* Sufi Order), was founded in Galle, Ceylon (ACJU, 2019; Razak & Imtiyaz, 2021).⁵ However, according to Shukri (1986) and Nuhman (2007), it was in 1884 that *Madrassathul Bari*, the first Arabic *madrassa* in Ceylon, was established by South Indian Islamic scholar Seyed Mohamed Mappillai Lebbe Alim (1816 - 1898). Therefore it can be argued that, unlike the case of British India and the Maldives Islands, it was only from the late 19th century onwards that Quranic lessons in Arabic became common among Ceylonese Muslims, particularly the urban Moors of the island. Moreover, until the late 19th century, there were not many trained *ulema* in Ceylon. Apart from colonial oppression, one of the major reasons for the lack of trained *ulema* in Ceylon was that, unlike in British India, there were no *nawabs*, *nizams*, and *zamindars* (landlords who collect revenue) to serve as patrons and benefactors (Mahroof, 1995). Although Arabic was considered a sacred language by the Muslims of Ceylon, the *ulema* conducted their lessons mainly in Tamil, which was also the language in which they delivered their sermons and published their works. This tradition continues to this day, although there are now over 300 Arabic colleges and over 1600 *madrassa* spread across the country (Razak & Imtiyaz, 2021). As detailed in the subsequent sections, not much has been written about the history of Muslim education in Ceylon, particularly of the 'Moor' community before the arrival of the British. Also, it is uncertain as to when exactly the Tamil-speaking Muslims of Ceylon adopted the Arabic script (Arwi) to write Tamil.

⁵ The *Fassiyatush* branch of the *Shadhiliyya* Sufi Order is named after a Moroccan Sufi scholar, Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Fassi (1760–1863). This particular Sufi order, which, according to his adherents, flourished in Masjid al-Haram Makkah, was introduced and promulgated in the Indian subcontinent, particularly among Tamil Muslims, by Sheikh Aboobakkar Miskeen Sahib Radiyallah of Kayalpatnam and Sheikh Mir Ahmad Ibrahim Raziyyallah of Madurai. South Indian Muslims later introduced the *Fassiyatush* order to Ceylon, where it became popular among Tamil-speaking Muslims of southern Ceylon. In 1870, a *Zāwiya* (Sufi lodge/spiritual retreat) is said to have been erected in Ceylon. However, it should be noted that a *Zāwiya* isn't a *madrassa* (religious school); however, in Sri Lanka, establishments that are known as '*Zāwiya*' also serve as *madrassa*.

1.3. Literature Review

Having presented the contextual information about the Muslim communities of Ceylon, it is now time to have a look at the general literature on the influence of Hamidian Pan-Islamism on these communities. The existing literature that falls within the scope of this thesis can broadly be divided into four major topics: the history of Muslims in Sri Lanka, the Ottoman history in relation to Sri Lanka and South Asia, Pan-Islamism and Ceylon-Ottoman relations.

1.3.1. *History of Muslims of Sri Lanka*

There are only a handful of publications that examine in depth the history of Sri Lankan Muslims; foremost among them is the book titled *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity* (1986), edited by Dr M.A.M. Shukri, which includes nineteen chapters penned by eminent scholars of history. Though this publication provides a comprehensive account of the history of Muslims, it carries nothing more than a few cursory remarks on Turkey, mainly in the contexts of trade and travel. In the same vein, Asiff Hussein, one of Sri Lanka's notable writers on Islamic history, in his book *Sarandib: An Ethnological Study of the Muslims of Sri Lanka* (2007), discusses briefly the respect accorded to Sultan Abdülhamid II, whose birthdays and jubilees, he states, were celebrated by the Muslims of Ceylon. Similarly, *Collective Identities, Nationalisms, and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka*, edited by Michael Roberts (1979), and Sharika Thiranagama's *In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka* (2011) glance over how Muslims commemorated the jubilees of Abdülhamid II. Also to be noted is that Thiranagama (2011) mentions that Ceylonese Muslims celebrated the Sultan's golden jubilee in 1900, when it was his silver jubilee. This shows that there is limited knowledge on Ottoman-Ceylon relations even among academics.

Aside from giving a short overview of the popularity of the Ottoman Sultan among the Muslims of Ceylon, M.A.M. Mahroof, in his book *Ethnological Survey of the Muslims of Sri Lanka* (1986), outlines how the ordinary Muslims who weren't very educated looked up to Ottoman Sultans as their religious figurehead. He goes on to question whether the ordinary Muslims were conscious of the political developments in Turkey and the actual role of the Sultan. Thus, subtly hinting that educated Muslims, who were well-versed with Turkish politics, didn't profess great admiration for the Ottoman Sultan. Indian academic Vasundhara Mohan, in her book *Identity Crisis of Sri Lankan Muslims* (1987), makes a fleeting mention of how Muslims in Ceylon expressed their

anguish over the Italian invasion of Ottoman territories. Similarly, P. Irāmanātan (1916), M. C. A. Hassan (1968), and Stanley J. Tambiah (1996) have, in their respective writings, mentioned in passing how Muslims of Ceylon, despite being subjects of the British King, supported the Ottoman Sultan during the First World War. Except for some ephemeral remarks or fleeting mentions, none of the aforementioned publications dive deep into Ceylon's relations with the Ottoman Empire, nor on how effective Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamist policies were in Ceylon, which is understandable, given that they were not the key subjects or scope of those publications.

1.3.2. History of Ottoman Relations with South Asia

There is only a smattering of publications that examine the history of Ottoman relations with South Asia, such as those penned by C.A. Bayly (2007), Faiz Ahmed (2020, 2022), Emre Yürük (2022) and William Bamber (2022). Despite providing detailed accounts of Ottoman relations and influence within the context of the Indian subcontinent, there is hardly any mention of Ceylon. Some of the major works on Ottoman relations with Southeast Asia, particularly those authored by Anthony Reid (1969), A.C.S. Peacock (2018, 2019), İsmail H. Kadı (2019), and Giancarlo Casale (2004, 2007), make passing remarks on Ceylon's strategic location, the Portuguese dominance over the island, and its ties to the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. However, these works do not have a particular focus on the Hamidian era. Other than those published in English, I also perused those in Turkish. Akin to the case of English publications, most of the books published in Turkish, such as those authored by Erol Özbilgen (2003), Hulûsi Yavuz (2003), İsmail Hakkı Göksoy (2004), and Oğuz Çetinoğlu (2008), make only passing remarks on trade and religious ties between the Ottoman Empire and Ceylon in the 16th century, which is beyond the purview of my research topic. However, there are a handful of Turkish publications that carry brief statements about Ottoman ties to Ceylon during the Hamidian rule. Notable examples include the writings of Mustafa Keskin (1991), Ahmet Uçar (2000, 2007), Metin Hülâgü (2014), Selçuk Esenbel (2016), and İclal Ünüvar (2023), which carry nothing more than a sentence or two about Ceylon (Seylan), mostly in the context of how the Muslims there respected Abdülhamid II.

1.3.3. Pan-Islamism

There are only a mere handful of academic writings that focus on Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamism and how it influenced the socio-political landscape of the Indian subcontinent. Chief among them is the book titled *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans, and Britain (1877-1924)* (1997) by Azmi Özcan, one of the prominent scholars about Pan-Islamism. As in the case of most writings,

this book focuses exclusively on India, making only a single reference to Ceylon, that too in a footnote that glosses over the countries visited by Ali Asgar Effendi, a civil servant at the Ottoman Foreign Ministry in 1909. Similarly, Jacob M. Landau's *Pan-Islam: History and Politics* (2015) makes a single mention of Ceylon when discussing the countries visited by the frigate Ertuğrul en route to Japan in 1889. In a similar fashion, the writings of M. Naeem Qureshi (1999) and Amjad Muhsen al-Dajani (2023) say nothing substantial about Ceylon in the context of Pan-Islamism. In the same vein, writings of scholars whose work focuses on the history, identity, and ethno-nationalism of Sri Lankan Muslims, such as that of Ameer Ali (1981), Victor De Munck (1992), and Dennis McGilvray (2011), only glance over the impact of the Ottoman Empire and Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamist policies on the Muslim populace of Ceylon.

1.3.4. *Ceylon-Ottoman relations*

As far as my research goes, aside from those penned by me, there are only three academic papers published hitherto that delve specifically into Ceylon-Ottoman relations, of which two are written by Ekrem Saltık (2020, 2022) and the other by Durmuş Akalin (2015). *Türkiye'de Sri Lanka Çalışmaları* (Sri Lanka Studies in Türkiye) (2022), co-compiled by Merthan Dundar and Ekrem Saltık and published by Ankara University Asia-Pacific Research Centre, is the only book devoted wholly to Türkiye's long-standing ties to Sri Lanka. Durmuş Akalin (2015) and Ekrem Saltık (2020, 2022), whose writings form the crux of my literature review, are both academicians whose work focuses on Ottoman foreign relations, particularly in the last two centuries that preceded the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Written with the use of Turkish archival material and secondary sources, their writings provide only the Turkish perspective of Ceylon's relations with the erstwhile Ottoman Empire.

Moreover, none of the aforementioned authors have conducted any field research in Sri Lanka, and as they are not proficient in Tamil or Sinhala, their writings, published solely in Turkish, do not provide the Sri Lankan perspective of Ceylon's relations with the Ottoman Empire. Instead, they are largely glorified accounts that do not delve into the nitty-gritty of Ceylon's ties to the Ottoman Empire, which, like most bilateral relations, experienced many ups and downs. This also explains the reasons behind their usage of misnomers and misinterpretation of information about the Muslims of Sri Lanka. For example, the usage of generic terms like *Seylan Müslümanları* (Muslims of Ceylon) might mislead readers to believe that the whole of the Muslim population in Ceylon held the Ottoman sultans in high regard. Moreover, such misnomers misrepresent and

disregard the ‘ethnic’, ‘caste’ and ‘denominational’ differences of the various communities that practice Islam in Sri Lanka. Other debatable claims made in their writings are that the mosques across the island acknowledged the Ottoman Sultan in their Friday *hutbe* sermons and that the Muslims in Ceylon readily embraced Ottoman cultural and religious practices, whether it be their music or headgear (fez). The authors have not only overlooked the distinct cultures of different ethnic groups that practice Islam in Ceylon but also undermined the strong influence of South Indians, Southeast Asians, and Arabs (particularly those from Hadhramaut) in shaping the cultural practices of Ceylon’s Muslim community.

Moreover, it is evident that the authors have largely analysed the history and culture of the Muslims of Ceylon, presuming mistakenly that they share a great deal in common with their religious counterparts in the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Regrettably, they have even got the names of the Ceylonese who served as Ottoman consuls (*şehbender*) and their respective tenures wrong. They have also not analysed the reasons behind their appointments, or the roles played by these consuls in strengthening the bilateral relations and disseminating pan-Islamism. Though their writings shed light on how the Ottoman Empire maintained relations with Ceylon, they seem more like varnished accounts catering largely to a readership of diplomats, investors, and the trade community, rather than academics and researchers.

1.4. Research Questions

As discussed earlier, Hamidian Pan-Islamism in the context of Sri Lanka is an uncharted terrain. Therefore, the primary objective of this thesis is to answer the main research question of how Pan-Islamism reached and influenced the Muslim community in Ceylon during the Hamidian Era. Due to the complexity and breadth of the subject, I will be answering the main question through two sub-questions. By addressing the first sub-question which intends to find out the main channels and actors through which Pan-Islamist ideas were introduced to Ceylon, I will be examining the role and influence of Ottoman consuls, Egyptian political exile Urābī Pasha, the Muslim press, Moor elite and business barons in the dissemination of Pan-Islamist ideology among the Muslims of Ceylon.

By answering the second sub-question of how different segments of the Ceylonese Muslim community responded to Pan-Islamism and what factors influenced these responses, I will be analysing how different Muslim ethnic groups responded to the visit of the Ottoman frigate, Ertuğrul, in 1889; Sultan Abdülhamid II’s silver jubilee in 1900; and the opening of the Hejaz

Railway, which coincided with Abdülhamid II's 33rd anniversary of his accession to the throne in 1908. Also examined is how the Muslims expressed their explicit support for Hamidian Pan-Islamism by wearing the Turkish fez and adopting the star and crescent, which were perceived as symbols of Muslim identity in Ceylon as they were in the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, this sub-question aims to analyse how the socio-political and religious dynamics within the Muslims of Colonial Ceylon influence their varied responses to pan-Islamism. In addition, I will be addressing briefly how the influence of Sultan Abdülhamid II as the Caliph outlasted his 33-year reign as Sultan in Ceylon.

1.5. Research Method

There are two main vantage points from which the main research question can be looked at and answered. One is by focusing on the Turkish resource materials, whether archival or secondary sources, and presenting the Turkish perspective of how pan-Islamism was promulgated among Muslims in far-flung British colonies like Ceylon. The second approach is examining the Sri Lankan sources, including archival material, and answering the main research question from the standpoint of Sri Lanka, particularly that of Sri Lankan Muslims. I chose a combination of both, but placed greater focus on the Sri Lankan sources, owing to two key reasons. First, I am a Sri Lankan with a Muslim background; therefore, I possess a much deeper understanding of the cultural nuances, ethnic differences, history, heritage and political complexities of the Muslims in Sri Lanka. Second, I am proficient in Sinhala, Tamil and English, which proved highly beneficial in perusing Sri Lankan resource materials, particularly newspapers and pamphlets issued in Tamil by the Muslim elite between 1882 and 1909. In addition, I have studied the Turkish language up to C1 level at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, which proved to be an added advantage in conducting my research, particularly when analysing the writings of Turkish scholars who have worked on Sri Lanka-Türkiye relations.

Choosing to focus on the Sri Lankan primary sources, I conducted archival research in Sri Lanka from July, 2024 till June, 2025. Conducting archival research in Sri Lanka entails a range of limitations. Unlike in Türkiye, where archival materials are largely digitised and can be accessed online, in Sri Lanka, one must visit the archives and other repositories in person in order to collect the needed sources. It is also worth mentioning that in a country like Sri Lanka, which observes at least 25 public holidays annually, accessing government institutions such as the National Archives and Libraries can sometimes be challenging. In addition, finding pamphlets, booklets, newspapers,

and journals, particularly those published in Tamil by prominent Muslim personages from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, proved arduous. As they were largely issued by private printing houses rather than by the Government Press and distributed exclusively to Muslims, the national archives and libraries most often do not hold copies of them. This required me to travel to certain towns and villages and meet with descendants of Moor leaders and clerics, if not contact them via email, to find the needful sources.

Aside from archival material, I have also used many secondary sources in writing this thesis. Again, as in the case of archival material, I have focused largely on writings of Sri Lankan and non-Turkish authors so that this thesis reflects the non-Türkiye-centric perspective on how Muslims in erstwhile British Ceylon received and responded to Pan-Islamism in the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century. Akin to the case of primary sources, finding secondary sources, particularly those published by specific organisations that are no longer extant proved onerous.

That being said, I have, between November 2022 and June 2024, visited and collected material from the Ottoman records held at the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives (Ottoman Archives – BOA), *Cumhuriyet Arşivi* (Republic Archive), *Türk Tarih Kurumu Kütüphanesi* (The Turkish Historical Society Library), *Türk Tarih Kurumu Arşivi* (The Turkish Historical Society Archive), *Türk Kızılayı Arşivi* (Archive of Turkish Red Crescent), and the Archive and Library of the *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi* (Topkapı Palace Museum). Examining Turkish resources alongside Sri Lankan material helped me analyse the introduction, development, and influence of Hamidian pan-Islamism in Ceylon and how it impacted relations between the Ottoman Empire and British Ceylon during the Hamidian era. Moreover, to avoid anachronism, I have used antiquated terms and spellings, such as Ceylon to identify contemporary Sri Lanka, and Ottoman Empire' instead of Türkiye.

The fact that I have scrutinised a vast array of resource materials, mainly primary sources (archival records) in English, Tamil, Turkish and Sinhala, and penned this thesis in English breaks most limitations that had hitherto prevented the dissemination of this knowledge, which had been consigned for far too long in archives and libraries. This thesis will therefore enable scholars to conduct further research on the influence of pan-Islamism in Ceylon and have a much clearer picture of the time-tested relations between Türkiye and Sri Lanka.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is made up of five chapters, each of which is divided into multiple sections to ensure readability and organisation. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter on the Conceptual Framework delves into the Hamidian Pan-Islamism movement. It will begin with a brief glimpse into the concept of *ummah* and the history of pan-Islamism. Thereafter it will explore the main ways through which Hamidian pan-Islamism was disseminated within and beyond the Ottoman Empire, focusing largely on the contributions made by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammed ‘Abduh and Shaikh Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi. Also examined is the role of the Arabic language and Muslim education in promoting pan-Islamism, particularly among Muslims living outside the Ottoman Empire. The second chapter also examines how the fez was perceived as a symbol of Pan-Islamism, particularly by those who lived beyond the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. Finally the chapter examines how Ottoman projects such as the Hejaz Railway were promoted as a symbol of pan-Islamism.

The third chapter, in answering the first sub-question, focuses on the main channels through which pan-Islamism was introduced to the Muslims of Ceylon. It begins by exploring the role of the four honorary Ottoman consuls in strengthening Ottoman-Ceylon relations and in promoting pan-Islamism and establishing the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Ceylon. Thereafter the chapter delves into the contribution made by Egyptian nationalist Urābī Pasha, who ironically promoted Pan-Islamism during his 19-year exile in Ceylon. Also examined are the services rendered by his disciples, M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz in promoting pan-Islamism and Muslim education. Finally the chapter analyses the role of prominent Moor businessmen in championing pan-Islamism in Ceylon.

The fourth chapter, in answering the second sub-question, examines the response of the Muslims of Ceylon to the visit of the Ottoman frigate Ertugrul in 1899, visit of Enver Pasha in 1901, and how the Muslims celebrated the 25th and 33rd anniversaries of the accession to the throne of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Also examined is how the Muslims demonstrated their support for the Ottomans, whether pan-Islamism had a role to play in convincing Ceylonese Muslims to finance Ottoman projects like the Hejaz railway, war efforts and charities, in encouraging Muslims to seek greater political representation, and in strengthening the Arab-ancestry claims of the Moors.

In addition, the fourth chapter explores how the rise of Pan-Islamism influenced the infamous ‘Fez controversy’ of 1905. This chapter highlights that in Ceylon the influence of Sultan Abdülhamid II as the Caliph outlasted his 33-year reign as Sultan.

The fifth and final chapter is the conclusion, where I have shared my final thoughts on Abdülhamid II’s pan-Islamism, its promulgation, reception and whether it proved effective in Ceylon. One of the key arguments raised in the conclusion, as well as in the second, third and fourth chapters, is that Hamidian Pan-Islamism as an ideology lacked a specific agreement on its nature, scope, aims and objectives. Even during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, what came to be understood as Pan-Islamism varied from region to region. This was particularly true outside the Ottoman Empire, where the ideals of Pan-Islamism depended on what was promulgated in the name of Pan-Islamism by the Ottoman agents, local actors and Muslim-centric print media.

II. CHAPTER

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: HAMIDIAN PAN-ISLAMISM

The fundamental concept around which this thesis is built is Pan-Islamism. Hence, it is essential to first elucidate what Pan-Islamism is, its scope, nature, goals and types. This chapter begins with examining the concept of Muslim *ummah*, which became the bedrock of what came to be known as pan-Islamism. Also analysed is the early history of pan-Islamism, how the term ‘pan-Islamism’ developed, and how unity and solidarity among Muslims came to be viewed by European great powers as a political force against Christendom. The next section begins with a brief glimpse into the history of the Ottoman Caliphate, how Sultan Abdülhamid II endeavoured to be recognised globally as the spiritual head of the Muslims and how pan-Islamism developed as an anti-colonial policy during the Hamidian era. Also analysed in this chapter is how pan-Islamism evolved into an ideology and how ideologues like Jamal Al Din Al Afghani, Muhammed ‘Abduh, Muhammad Rashid Rida and Shaikh Abu Al Huda Al Sayyadi helped establish the Caliphal authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II, advocated for solidarity among Muslims, and promoted Islamic modernism as a *sine qua non* of Pan-Islamism.

The next section analyses how Arabic served as an effective tool in promulgating pan-Islamism both within and beyond the Ottoman Empire. Also argued in this chapter is that the prioritisation and promotion of Arabic by the Ottoman State and Pan-Islamists like Afghani and ‘Abduh, led to Arabic language, culture and institutions becoming key facets of Pan-Islamism. Moreover, this chapter examines how Western-style education and Islamic modernism became potent aspects of pan-Islamism, mainly because the main proponents of Hamidian pan-Islamism, such as Afghani and ‘Abduh, were themselves advocates of Islamic modernism. This chapter also analyses the contribution of Abdülhamid II in promoting modern education in the Ottoman Empire and how he used education as an effective tool to promote his Caliphal authority in the Ottoman Empire and beyond. This chapter also examines how the fez transitioned from being a headgear that symbolised Ottoman subjecthood and modernism to a potent symbol of Pan-Islamism, particularly outside the Ottoman Empire.

Also delved into in this chapter is how Abdülhamid II and champions of Pan-Islamism strategically promoted Ottoman projects such as the Hejaz railway as a Pan-Islamic project, making

it a religious duty for Muslims to make financial contributions to the charities, war efforts and projects of the Ottoman Caliphate. One of the key arguments put forth in this chapter is that Hamidian pan-Islamism, which is a western construct, lacked a proper scope or goals, and what came to be understood as Pan-Islamism differed from region to region depending on a range of factors. This chapter highlights that outside the Ottoman Empire, it was largely the influence and personal ambitions of the Ottoman consuls, local actors and Muslim-centric press that shaped what came to be understood and disseminated as ‘Hamidian pan-Islamism’.

2.1. Before Pan-Islamism: Concept of the *Ummah*

Pan-Islamism is an ideology as well as a policy that advocates for the unity and solidarity of Muslims across the world on the basis of their shared Islamic identity. It has been understood and defined differently during different periods of history. Nevertheless, a term that is intrinsically linked to pan-Islamism is *ummah*, which is an Arabic word that defines ‘people’, ‘group’ or ‘community’. According to Dastagir and Ramzy (2018), an *ummah* is formed based on some common and coherent features like language, race, religion, culture, and economic interest with a common leader, goal, and constitution. In the same vein, scholars like Frederick Denny (1975, 1977) define the term *ummah* as a human community in the religious sense. It is stated in the Quran, scripture of the Muslims, that "the followers of each prophet form an ummah" (Qur'an 10:47). Therefore, along with the Muslims, the Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians were also historically identified as different *ummah*. However, the term *ummah* is now exclusively used to identify the Muslim community as a whole and highlight the unity, collective identity and commonwealth of the believers of Islam.

Though the term 'pan-Islamism' was coined in the last quarter of the 19th century, writings that discuss the *ummah* from a political standpoint can be traced back to the 10th century. Some of the notable Islamic scholars, like Al Mawardi (c. 974-1058), Al Ghazali (c. 1058-1111) and Fakhruddin Al-Razi (c. 1149-1209), have, in their respective writings, discussed the concept of *ummah* within the framework of political theology. The idea of the Muslim *ummah* and the need to secure the rights and identity of the Muslims gave rise to what the Europeans came to identify as ‘Pan-Islamism’ in the 19th century, particularly during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II of the Ottoman Empire, known popularly as the ‘Hamidian era’.

2.2. Hamidian Pan-Islamism: An Anti-Colonial Policy under Sultan Abdülhamid II

The Ottoman Sultan's claim to spiritual authority over the Muslims living outside the frontiers of his empire can be traced back to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, signed on 21st July, 1774, between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, which ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774 (Keddie, 1966; Özcan, 1997). According to this treaty, the Crimean Tatars, though subjects of the Russian Tsar, were permitted to acknowledge the Ottoman Sultan as their Caliph, mention his name in the sermons and offer prayers in his honour. Although there is evidence of Muslims in Ceylon, India, the Maldives and Sumatra having recognised the Ottoman Sultan as their Caliph as way back as the 16th century, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was the first internationally acknowledged ascertainment that recognised the Ottoman Sultan's claims to religious jurisdiction over Muslims living beyond his realm (Lambourn, 2011; Özcan, 1997; Peacock, 2018). Pan-Islamist sentiments among Muslims living outside the Ottoman domain were evoked following the conquests of Muslim lands by European powers, which prompted Muslim rulers to appeal for help from the Ottoman Sultan. For example, Sultans of Gujarat, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Nawab of Arcot in the Indian subcontinent as well as the Khans of Central Asia sent letters and embassies, seeking the support of Ottoman Sultan, whom they acknowledged as their Caliph, to counter the growing European influence in their domains (Ali, 1988; Keddie, 1966; Özcan, 1997).

In April 1877, in less than a year following the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II to the Ottoman throne, the Russian Empire declared war on the Ottomans. This concluded with the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878, which was revised by the Congress of Berlin in 1878. This led to Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro becoming independent. Bosnia and Herzegovina and a vast portion of Bulgaria became autonomous under Russian protection. His defeat at the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the growing threat of European dominance and nationalism among his subjects prompted Sultan Abdülhamid II to use Pan-Islamism as an effective tool to unite Muslims within the Ottoman Empire and to garner the support of Muslims living beyond his realm, especially those of the Indian subcontinent (Hirano, 2008; Keddie, 1966).

It was an Austrian nobleman turned Ottoman diplomat Franz von Werner (1836–1881), better known by his pseudonym and Muslim name Murad Effendi, who coined the term 'pan-Islamism' in his German work entitled *Türkische Skizzen* (1877), which had been written sometime before July 1876 but published in 1877 (Lee, 1942). Its first usage in English is traced to a letter

dated December 31, 1877, penned by Ármín Vámbéry, a Hungarian Turkologist and traveller, which was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (London) on January 12th, 1878, when the Russo-Turkish War had reached its peak (Lee, 1942; Qureshi, 1999). During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Britain took a neutral stance. Nevertheless, it provided humanitarian relief to the Ottoman Empire and, to some extent, supported the development of pan-Islamist sentiments among its Muslim subjects (Lee, 1942; Pethybridge, 1971). The reason for it being that the Russian Empire's expansionism, particularly in Central Asia, was perceived by Britain as an implicit threat to India, the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. Therefore, the British leveraged the ideology of pan-Islamism to garner the support of their Muslim subjects and thwart Russian invasion (Lee, 1942; Pethybridge, 1971). Britain also portrayed itself as a friend of the Ottoman Empire and thereby "admonished their Moslems to be loyal to the government which was the Caliph's friend" (Lee, 1942, p. 285). However, with British expansionism in Egypt, Anglo-Ottoman relations started deteriorating rapidly in the 1880s, which led to the British viewing Pan-Islamism as a potential threat, particularly in the Indian subcontinent (Basit, 2021; Berdine, 2020; Chamberlain, 1977; Galbraith, 1979; Hopkins, 1986; Karpat, 2001; Keddie, 1966; Tignor, 2015). Abdülhamid II was keen on promoting Pan-Islamism in British India (Basit, 2021). The 1880s also witnessed the founding of the bilingual Urdu-Turkish journal *Paik-i Islam* in Istanbul and pro-Ottoman organizations like *Anjuman-i Islam* in British India and beyond, which proved highly effective in promoting pro-Ottoman sentiments and Hamidian Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of British India (Özcan, 1993; Pirbhai, 2009).

Interference into the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire and colonisation of Ottoman territories in the Mediterranean and the Middle East by European powers provided further impetus for the dissemination of pan-Islamism across the Muslim world (Hirano, 2008; Karpat, 2001; Keddie, 1966). In his articles for the French monthly magazine, *Revue des deux Mondes* of 1881-82, French journalist Gabriel Charmes used the word 'Pan-Islam' to describe the Muslim opposition to French domination in Tunisia in 1881 (Hirano, 2008; Landau, 2012). Charmes argued that Sultan Abdülhamid II used his influence as Caliph to incite anti-French uprisings in Tunisia. Following the signing of the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, Abdülhamid II became increasingly dependent on his position as Caliph to secure the support of the Muslims living within and beyond the Ottoman domain to sustain power, fight European imperialism, and protect the Ottoman Empire (Buzpinar, 1996; Çetinsaya, 2003). In his article titled *Panislamismus* (1904), German Orientalist

Carl H. Becker claims that the term 'Pan-Islamism' (not to be confused with Pan-Islam) originated only after the Berlin Conference to define the unity among Muslims under the guidance of a single leader (Gossman, 2013; Hirano, 2008)

In the 1880s the three important Muslim-majority states, the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Afghanistan, were all threatened by European imperialism. Therefore, when the question arose as to who could be the ideal candidate to lead the *ummah* against Western dominance, many supporters of Pan-Islamism chose Sultan Abdülhamid II (Hirano, 2008). As Sultan Abdülhamid II was the unanimous choice by champions of Pan-Islamism like Afghani, and because he became the most renowned among Ottoman Sultans to use his role as Caliph for political gain, his Pan-Islamism policy came to be known as 'Hamidian Pan-Islamism' (Cohen, 2012; Duguid, 1973). Within the Ottoman Empire, Abdülhamid II used pan-Islamism as a domestic policy (Çetinsaya, 2022; Kern, 2011). It is worth noting that when the Ottoman Empire lost its Balkan territories following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, it lost almost half of its non-Muslim population (Çetinsaya, 2022). Therefore, securing the loyalty of the Muslims, who formed the majority of the Ottoman Empire following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, was crucial, and Abdülhamid II used Pan-Islamism as an instrument of domestic policy to promote solidarity among his Muslim subjects, resolve Sunni-Shia divisions, establish Caliphal authority, secure the loyalty of Muslim subjects and prevent the rise of nationalistic sentiments, particularly among the Albanians, Arabs and Kurds (Çetinsaya, 2022; Kern, 2011; Püskül & Faqir, 2023; Sancak, 2019; Türkmen, 2021).

Outside the Ottoman Empire, Abdülhamid II used pan-Islamism as part of his foreign policy to gain the loyalty of Muslims to the Ottoman Caliphate, to counter the threat of an alternative Arab Caliphate backed by Europeans and to mobilise the Muslim world against the West (Bozdaglioglu, 2003; Karpat, 2001; Kern, 2011; Rieber, 2014; Türkmen, 2021). Compared to his predecessors, he extensively used the titles such as *Emir el-Muminin* (Protector of the Faithful) and *Hadim-ül Haremeyn-i Şerifeyn* (Protector of the sacred sites of Mecca and Medina) to establish his authority as the Caliph of the Muslims both within and beyond the Ottoman Empire (Karpat, 2001; Kern, 2011; Rieber, 2014; Türkmen, 2021).

Abdülhamid II also used pan-Islamism to strengthen his diplomatic relations with Qajar Iran and promote Sunni-Shi'i unity, thereby attempting to resolve the Shia problem in Iraq (Kern, 2011). It was also during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II that the Ottoman Empire became known

increasingly as the ‘Ottoman Caliphate’—domain of the Muslims. Through dispatching Ottoman emissaries and Islamic scholars and sending copies of the Quran and books on Islamic theology as gifts, Abdülhamid II was keen on promoting Pan-Islamism and establishing his Caliphal authority among Muslims living in European colonies in Asia and Africa (Kern, 2011; Reid, 1967; Rochlin, 1939). In the Indian subcontinent, South Africa, and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), the printing press, potent symbols like the fez, and the telegraph proved highly effective in garnering the support of the Muslims who generously contributed to Ottoman charities, war efforts, and projects such as the Hejaz Railway; acknowledged the name of Abdülhamid II in the mosques; commemorated his birthdays and jubilees; and prayed for his success and longevity (Ali, 1983; Hamsah & Dahlan, 2023; Reid, 1967; Rochlin, 1939; Soekarba & Supratman, 2022).⁶

Abdülhamid II tactfully used Pan-Islamism to demonstrate his might and influence as the spiritual head of Muslims, thereby cautioning European powers to stay away from encroaching into his domains and interfering in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire (Deringil, 1991; Rieber, 2014; Salleh, 2003). When relations between the Ottoman Empire and European powers grew worse, particularly during the closing decade of the 19th century, the Western press started framing Pan-Islamism as a Muslim militant-political movement antagonistic to Christianity and advocating for anti-modernism and religious fanaticism (Karpas, 2001). The European powers also felt increasingly threatened by the growing solidarity among Muslims.

2.3. Pan-Islamism as an Ideology: Key Figures

The period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw widespread dissemination of the ideas of Pan-Islamism in the Muslim world. Apart from Ottoman state-sponsored projects, advocates of Pan-Islamism—many of whom were prominent ideologues, Islamic scholars, and supporters of Islamic modernism—played a crucial role in promoting solidarity between Sunnites and Shiites as well as in establishing the spiritual authority of Abdülhamid II (Deringil, 1991; Hirano, 2008; Keddie, 1966, 1969; Zhantiev, 2021). It should be noted, however, that Pan-Islamism lacked a “formal ideological structure” and was “developed in different directions by Muslim intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century both within and outside the Ottoman Empire” (Rieber, 2014, p. 135). In the words of Kemal Karpas (2001), “Pan-Islamism has been used in Western political and academic circles for a century or more to indicate merely a dark-age ideology,

⁶ Rulers of the erstwhile Sultanate of Aceh (now part of Indonesia) recognised the Caliphal authority of the Ottoman Sultans from the 16th century until the annexation of the Sultanate by the Dutch colonial state in 1903.

without any definite agreement on its content, scope, and goal” (p. 16). Therefore, what came to be understood as the nature, scope, goals and symbols of Pan-Islamism differed from region to region, particularly outside the Ottoman Empire, where it depended on what was disseminated in the name of Pan-Islamism by Ottoman consuls, agents and local actors (Karpas, 2001). Also to be highlighted is that Abdülhamid “often operated in the shadows”; therefore, it is difficult to point to whether those who promulgated pan-Islamism and recognised the Caliphal authority of Abdülhamid did so on their own free will or whether they served as agents under the direct instructions of Abdülhamid (Rieber, 2014, p. 135). Also to be noted is that some of the key proponents of Pan-Islamism, particularly those listed in the subsequent sections, were enigmatic personalities whose aims and objectives for promoting Pan-Islamism and supporting the Caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II seem far too complex to comprehend.

2.3.1. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897)*

One of the early champions of Pan-Islamism was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) who was a political activist, journalist and Islamic ideologist. In the words of Dwight E. Lee (1942)—one of the notable scholars on the origins of Pan-Islamism— “Jamal id-Din al-Afghani, who is given credit for being perhaps the earliest and greatest intellectual founder and leader of Pan-Islamism, may be described as a Moslem progressive” (p. 283). Afghani played a crucial role in politicising Islam and in founding a transnational Islamic movement aimed at uniting Muslims across the world against European imperialism (Matthee, 1989).

His place of birth has long been a subject of controversy. Most historians claim that Afghani was born to Persian parents in Asadabad in Qajar Persia, in modern-day Iran (Keddie, 2023; Landau, 1990, 2015). Despite being a Shi’ite of Persian ancestry, he exerted tremendous influence on both Sunni Muslims and Shi’ites, managed to secure prominent positions in the Royal courts and ironically maintained good relations with European powers (Keddie & Afghānī, 1968). Throughout his life, he travelled extensively and managed to leave a lasting impact wherever he went. During his stay in Afghanistan, he served as counsellor to Emir Muhammed Azam Khan (1866-1868), thereafter when he visited Istanbul in 1870, he was warmly welcomed by Ottoman officials and invited to deliver talks at various institutions. However, Afghani’s talks and take on Islamic theology didn’t sit well with most of the religious authorities in Istanbul, so he left for Cairo in 1871, where he taught philosophy at Al-Azhar and was actively involved in promoting

Pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism, which attracted a myriad of admirers, most notable among them being Muhammed ‘Abduh and Saad Zaghloul Pasha (Adam, 2017).⁷ It is worth noting that some of Afghani’s admirers who resolutely supported Pan-Islamism were critical of Sultan Abdülhamid’s policies.

During his time in Cairo, he urged the Muslims living across the Ottoman Empire to work in solidarity to help rejuvenate the Islamic nation, or *milla*, by embracing modernism and incorporating policies that had been adopted by the western nations (Keddie, 1969). In the 1870s, Afghani used the term ‘Islamic nation’ (*Milla*) to refer only to the Ottoman Empire, but in the years that followed, he wanted Muslims across the world to form a nation under the leadership of Abdülhamid II (Keddie, 1969). According to Keddie (1969), during his stay in Cairo, Afghani focused primarily on the unity of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, and not necessarily on the entire *ummah*. Afghani remained in Cairo for eight years, until he was expelled from there by Khedive (Viceroy of Ottoman Egypt) Muhammed Tawfiq Pasha in 1879. Afghani then proceeded to British India, where he advocated for unity among Muslims as well as solidarity between the Hindus and Muslims. (Keddie, 1969). From Calcutta, he sailed to France, where he arrived in January 1883. With the help of his disciple Muhammed ‘Abduh, he published an anti-British newspaper, *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* (“The Indissoluble Link”), censuring British expansionism in Asia and Africa (Keddie, 2023; Landau, 1990, 2015).

In his articles Afghani highlighted that in the past Muslims, whether they were Arabs, Turks, Persians, Indians, etc., stood for each other at times of despair and war, and he expressed his discontentment over how the Muslims of his era were overlooking the affairs of their co-religionists (Hirano, 2008). He grieved over instances such as the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, when the Afghans and Baluchis chose not to support their fellow Muslims against British encroachment, as well as the Second Anglo-Afghan War of 1878-80, when the Muslims in neighbouring British India did not fight in defence of Afghanistan (Hirano, 2008). Afghani repeatedly encouraged the Muslims to imbibe the qualities of their forebears, who stood for the *ummah* and defended the rule of Islam, which he claimed “stretched from the furthest point west, the Maghrib, to Tonkin on the borders of China, and from Fezzan in the north to Sarandib, south of the Equator” (Landau, 2015, p. 16).

⁷ Located in Cairo, Al-Azhar is the oldest degree-awarding university in Egypt and has been a premier academic institution for higher Islamic learning since its founding in the 10th century AD during the Fatimid Caliphate.

He urged the Muslims to look beyond their races, ethnicities, and nationalities and to be united with fellow Muslims in their struggle to defend Muslim lands against Christian Europeans. In his articles, Afghani shared verses from the Quran and Sunnah to defend his case that the Muslims should focus only on religious ties and not on nationalities, ethnicities, or race. Although he was initially critical of Sultan Abdülhamid II, Afghani eventually toned down and became an ardent supporter of Hamidian Pan-Islamism. He penned numerous articles for *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa*, highlighting that Sultan Abdülhamid was the only leader of an independent Muslim state who possessed the qualities to lead the *ummah* (Hirano, 2008).

It should be noted that by the 1880s Afghani had fallen out with both the Emir of Afghanistan and the Shah of Iran, who were both suspicious of him and had him expelled from their kingdoms (Mathee, 1989). During his brief stay in Britain in 1885, Afghani wrote numerous articles attacking the Shah of Iran and his policies. Sultan Abdülhamid was the only ruler of an independent Muslim state with whom Afghani maintained amicable relations. Therefore, Abdülhamid became the rightful candidate to lead the *ummah* in the eyes of Afghani and his disciples (Hirano, 2008). Moreover, Afghani wanted Qajar Persia, Afghanistan, and the Ottoman Empire to put aside their political and sectarian differences and work closely to promote Pan-Islamism under the leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid. He also suggested that an Islamic Congress be formed, comprising the *Ulema* and representatives from across the world, and that the congress should meet once a year either in Istanbul or Mecca to discuss the challenges faced by the Muslims (Hirano, 2008).

Afghani was also a key champion of Sunni-Shia unity. He wanted the Muslims to put aside their sectarian differences and was determined to find a *modus vivendi* between Sunnites and Shiites. He argued that the Sunni-Shia dichotomy was a thing of the past (Hirano, 2008). He also tried to resolve the rift between Arabs and Persians, as well as the tensions between the Afghans and Persians, and wanted all Muslims to be united against European imperialism under the leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid. Afghani was also a modernist who encouraged the Muslims to embrace science and modern technology and did not oppose Western-style education. Similar to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (in British India), Afghani was a proponent of Islamic modernism, however, the two were polar opposites when it came to their take on British colonialism and Sultan Abdülhamid. Sir Syed Khan was a staunch ally of the British and a champion of Muslim nationalism who firmly believed that Sultan Abdülhamid was only the Sultan of the Ottoman

Empire and not the Caliph of the Muslims.⁸ Afghani, on the other hand, was a zealous supporter of Abdülhamid II's role as Caliph and was bitterly opposed to British colonialism. Afghani sent letters and published articles pillorying Sir Seyed A. Khan's closeness to the British (Ahmad, 1960; Ansari, 2001). Moreover, Afghani openly criticised notable detractors of Sultan Abdülhamid, such as Khalil Ghanim, who published numerous articles in periodicals like *Al-Bassir* (The Observer) and *La jeune Turquie* (Young Turkey) attacking Sultan Abdülhamid and endorsing the adoption of reforms that would curb the Sultan's powers (Keddie, 1969).

According to Afghani, Ghanim's reforms targeting the Ottoman Caliph were unnecessary and untimely, and he repeatedly enjoined Muslims to unite against European domination under the leadership of Abdülhamid II. It was the anti-imperialist thought of Afghani that prompted many Muslim nationalists of the time to embrace the ideals of Pan-Islamism and to accept the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid.

Throughout the 1880s Afghani laboured to win the favour of Abdülhamid II and sent many letters to the Sublime Porte (the court or government of the Ottoman Empire). His efforts bore fruit in 1892, when he was formally invited by a member of Sultan Abdülhamid's court to visit Istanbul, where he was joined in his efforts of promoting Hamidian Pan-Islamism by Muhammad Rashid Rida (Keddie, 1966). In 1896 Mirza Reza Kermani, a follower of Afghani, assassinated Naser-al-Din Shah of Persia, and this incident made the Ottoman authorities become more cautious of Afghani's activities in Istanbul (Keddie, 2007). Afghani proved inimical to the Ottoman Empire's good relations with Persia (Keddie, 2007). In 1897, Afghani died of cancer in Istanbul, but his goal of promoting Hamidian pan-Islamism continued unabated by his disciple Muhammed Abduh.

2.3.2. *Muhammed 'Abduh (1849 – 1905)*

One of the most renowned disciples of Afghani was Muhammed 'Abduh, an Egyptian scholar and Grand *Mufti* (leading Islamic jurist) of Egypt, who proved imperative in disseminating pan-Islamism in the late 19th century. 'Abduh was born in Shanra, a village located in the Gharbiya Province, in the Central Delta region of Egypt, into an influential family of Turkish ancestry

⁸ Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was the pioneer of Muslim nationalism and Islamic modernism in British India. In 1875 he founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (predecessor of Aligarh Muslim University), the first Muslim academic institution modelled on Western-style scientific education in South Asia. He adjured the Muslims of British India to adopt Urdu as their lingua franca and to be loyal to the British. Although he adopted the Turkish fez, he never supported 'Pan-Islamism' under the leadership of Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II.

(Goldschmidt, 2000; Toth, 2013). He was first admitted to the *Ahmadi madrasa* in Tanta; thereafter, ‘Abduh pursued his higher education at Al-Azhar, where he was a student of Afghani, who became his mentor (Toth, 2013) Upon completion of his studies, ‘Abduh started teaching Islamic theology, ethics, and Arabic in a range of institutions, including ‘Dar Al-Uloom’ and his alma mater, Al-Azhar (Goldschmidt, 2000). Influenced by Afghani, ‘Abduh became closely involved in politics, opposed the rule of Khedive Ismail, and was accused of conspiring to assassinate the Khedive and establish a constitutional republic (Toth, 2013).

In 1879, he was exiled to his native village, where he remained for close to a year. He was later permitted to return to Cairo, where he was appointed editor-in-chief of *Al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, the official government gazette of Egypt (Toth, 2013; Goldschmidt, 2000) He also served on the board of the council of higher education and as director of government publications (Toth, 2013). ‘Abduh supported Urābī Pasha’s revolutionary activities largely because he didn’t approve of the decisions made by Khedive Tawfik, who maintained close ties with the British and the French (Toth, 2013).

When the British took control over Egypt in 1882, ‘Abduh was arrested and sent into exile. After a brief stay in Beirut, he joined his mentor and teacher Afghani in Paris, where he penned numerous articles for *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa*, urging the Muslims to join forces and resist European colonialism (Khaldun, 2021). ‘Abduh was a staunch modernist who advocated for the adoption of modern political, religious, educational, and social reforms, which he believed were timely and pertinent for the development of the *ummah* (Rahme, 1999; Salleh, 2003). He also advocated that Muslims should look at the West more objectively and adopt technological advancements, innovations, and progressive thoughts rather than shunning them as un-Islamic (Adam, 2017; Khaldun, 2021; Rahme, 1999). He supported the Ottoman Caliphate and recognised the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Deringil, 1991; Salleh, 2003). In his letter to Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1886, ‘Abduh supposedly mentioned the following:

The preservation of the Ottoman Empire to be the third article of belief after the belief in God and in its prophet, because it alone protects the religion of Islam and guarantees the existence of its domains: 'this is our belief, praise to be God: in it we live and in it we will die', therefore, it is a mistake to suppose that regard for the Islamic Caliphate arises from any other sentiment than that due to their religion: it does not come from the name of the

fatherland or the welfare of the country or any other such high-sounding phrases (Salleh, 2003, p. 105).

This indicates that ‘Abduh earnestly wanted the Muslims to support Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman Caliphate as part of their religious duty, mainly because he considered it the only domain that was left for the *ummah* and feared that if it vanished, the Muslims would also be pushed to the powerless state of the Jews (Deringil, 1991; Salleh, 2003). As mentioned earlier, one of the key reasons why Afghani and ‘Abduh supported the leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid II was not because he was perceived as an ideal Caliph, but rather because he was the only ruler of an independent Muslim state whom they felt possessed the qualities to lead the *ummah* against Western dominance compared to the Shah of Iran and Emir of Afghanistan. It is reported that ‘Abduh told his disciple, Rashid Rida (1865–1935)—who went on to become one of the champions of pro-Ottoman Pan-Islamism in the early 20th century—that “he gave no credence to Sultan Abdul Hamid's claim to the title of Caliph because the claim was motivated only by his personal ambitions and desires to increase his prestige in European eyes, not by any love for Islam” (Salleh, 2003, p. 105). ‘Abduh is reported to have also said, “I too hate the Caliph Sultan Abdul Hamid, but the Caliphate is the only fence for the Muslims” (Salleh, 2003, p. 106). Although he was seriously disillusioned by the Ottoman order and was conscious of the fact that the Sultan exploited pan-Islamism for his own gain, ‘Abduh defended pan-Islamism and asked the Muslims to stand with the Ottoman Caliphate no matter how defective it may be (Salleh, 2003). After he was permitted to return to Egypt in 1888, ‘Abduh established close ties with Egyptian authorities, supported the nationalism movement, promoted Western-style education, and held prominent positions in government (Toth, 2013). He had far-reaching influence on some of the prominent Arab ideologues and revivalists, such as Sa’ad Zaghlul Pasha (1857–1927), Qasim Amin (1863–1908), and Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed Pasha (1872–1963) (Goldschmidt, 2000)

2.3.3. *Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935)*

One of the prominent Islamic scholars who advocated for the unity of Muslims against European imperialism under a single political entity was Muhammad Rashid Rida, who, along with Muhammad ‘Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, is considered one of the three main champions of the Pan-Islamism movement. Rida was born in Al-Qalamūn, Ottoman Syria (modern-day Lebanon), to a Sunni-Shafi’i clerical family that claimed descent from Prophet Mohammed

(Goldschmidt, 2000; Toth, 2013). His family had for generations served as custodians of Al-Qalamūn mosque, where his father served as an Imam. Following in the footsteps of his forefathers, Rida was trained in Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence and became an *Ulama* in 1897. He took an avid interest in the writings of Al Mawardi (c. 974-1058), Al Ghazali (c. 1058-1111), and Fakhruddin Al-Razi (c. 1149-1209), who were among the first known Islamic scholars who discussed *ummah* from a political standpoint.

It was through reading the periodical *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* that Rida developed a strong interest in pan-Islamism and became a zealous supporter of Afghani and ‘Abduh, who became his teachers and mentors. Rida, who stood for Sunni-Shia unity, laboured to promote solidarity between the Sunni *Ulema* and Shiite scholars through conferences and meetings (Hirano, 2008). Rida later joined Afghani in Istanbul and worked closely to promote Pan-Islamism (Ryad, 2014). Following Afghani’s demise in 1897, he returned to Cairo, where he founded the Islamic journal *Al-Manār* in 1898 and became actively involved in promulgating Pan-Islamism with ‘Abduh (Nafi, 2017). However, after ‘Abduh’s demise in 1905, Rida became increasingly critical of Sultan Abdülhamid and joined forces with those who were at odds with Hamidian Islamism (Nafi, 2017). Rida was a far more enigmatic character than his mentors, and his take on Pan-Islamism, Arab nationalism, and Islamic modernism changed from time to time. Towards the latter stages of his life, particularly after the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate, he became a fervent supporter of Islamic conservatism and was favourably disposed to Wahhabism and the House of Saud, which went on to establish the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (Toth, 2013). He also penned numerous articles supporting the Wahabi movement and Islamic puritanism (Goldschmidt, 2000; Toth, 2013). Rida also wrote a commentary on the Quran and a three-volume biography of ‘Abduh (Nafi, 2017).

2.3.4. *Shaikh Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi (1849-1909)*

One of the key figures who gave religious legitimacy to the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II was the Islamic scholar, Sufi Sheikh of the Rifa’i order and poet, Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, who hailed from Khan Shaykhun, a village in central Syria. Although his birth name was Muhammed bin Hasna Wadi, he chose to be known by his sobriquet Abul-Huda. As he claimed descent from Prophet Muhammed, he affixed to his name the title ‘al-Sayyidi’ (Abu-Manneh, 1979). As in the case of Afghani, there isn’t much information on Abulhuda’s childhood. He grew to become a charismatic figure, known for his piety, zeal for knowledge, eloquence and good

memory, which helped him win the favour of influential leaders in Damascus such as the Ottoman governor. Due to his ancestry claims, he was permitted to join the Naqib Al-Ashraf Association, which helped him befriend those who were close to Ottoman Sultan (Abu-Manneh, 1979).

Abulhuda proved instrumental in promoting the Rifa'i order of Sufism and helped establish several *zawiyas* (Sufi institutions) and restore the tombs of saints in what is present-day Syria (Abu-Manneh, 1979). His popularity and influence over the Arabs caught the attention of Sultan Abdülhamid, who, unlike his predecessors, was keen on establishing good relations with the Arab Sheikhs, whom he tactfully used to promote pan-Islamism among his Arab subjects (Abu-Manneh, 1979). Abulhuda, who eventually settled in Istanbul, wrote several books in which he defended the spiritual authority of Abdülhamid II and urged the Muslims across the world to support the latter's endeavours through words and deeds. He also organised public lectures in Istanbul, in support of Sultan Abdülhamid II, whom he hailed as the executor of God's deeds.

The most popular among his writings that delve into Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamic policies is the booklet entitled *Da'i al-Rashad li sabil al-Ittihad wal-inqiyad* (1880) published by the Government Press in Istanbul (Abu-Manneh, 1979). In this booklet Abulhuda urges the Muslims to "not only be submissive to the Caliph but also to unite and bind their hearts to him" as they "have been commanded to do so by God in the Quran" (Abu-Manneh, 1979, p. 141). He also wrote on the duties of the Muslims to their Caliph and that they ought to defend the Caliphate from the enemies of Islam no matter what. In all his speeches and writings, he repeated the fact that God has commanded his believers to respect the authority of the Caliph and that obeying the Caliph—which in his standpoint was Sultan Abdülhamid II—meant obeying prophet Muhammed. (Abu-Manneh, 1979). In recognition of his services, Abulhuda was bestowed with the title 'Sheikh Al Islam' (Chief of the Muslim Community) by Sultan Abdülhamid II.

2.4. Impact of Arabic as Language of Pan-Islamism

Arabic is the language of the Quran and has since the advent of Islam been taught in religious schools (*madrasa*) across the Muslim world, making it the most widespread language among Muslims. During the Hamidian era, Arabic was the legal and liturgical language of the Ottoman Caliphate (Özcan, 1997). Several provincial newspapers (*vilayet gazeteleri*), periodicals that championed Pan-Islamism and defended the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II within and outside the Ottoman Empire, as well as the writings of pan-Islamists like Jamal al-Din al-

Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rida, were published in Arabic (Alatas & Tekin, 2022; Chouinard, 2010; Salleh, 2003). Rida also wanted Arabic to become the official language of the Ottoman Empire (Lekon, 2019). Moreover, some of the prominent Islamic scholars who resolutely defended Abdülhamid II’s status as the Caliph were Arabs. Most notable among them were Shaykh Abu-l-Huda al-Sayyadi, Shaykh Fadl al-Alawi and Shaykh Muhammad Zafir (Alatas & Tekin, 2022; Abu-Manneh, 1979; Chouinard, 2010; Karpat, 2001). Even Indian Muslim leaders who opposed British rule and sympathised with the Ottoman Caliphate expressed their grievances in Arabic so that they could be read and understood by Muslims across the world (Chouinard, 2010). Also, it is worth highlighting that Ottoman newspapers published in Arabic were popular among Muslim intelligentsia in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Africa (Ahmed, 2017; Özcan, 2017).

Moreover, most of the pan-Islamists who defended the spiritual authority of the Ottoman Caliph were either Arabs or those who were proficient in Arabic, as it was the language of Islamic theology and jurisprudence, whether in the Ottoman Empire, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia or Europe. Moreover, pan-Islamist thoughts were largely promulgated among the Muslims of Singapore, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), East and southern Africa, and Islands of the Indian Ocean by Arab traders, particularly the Hadrami, those native to the Hadhramaut region in the Arabian Peninsula, which is now part of Yemen (Alatas & Tekin, 2022). Therefore, Arabic naturally became the language of the Pan-Islamic movement (Chouinard, 2010; Hourani, 1983).

Sultan Abdülhamid II himself spoke fluent Arabic, was an ardent admirer of Arabic literature and preferred the usage of Arabic titles such as Caliph (leader) and *Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful) over Sultan and Padishah, as they were intrinsically linked to Islamic history and helped secure the loyalty of the Arabs (Onum, 2019; Özcan, 1997; Saad, 2019). The Hamidian regime glorified the Arab-Muslim civilisation (Azak, 2010). None of the Ottoman Sultans asserted and relied on their Caliphal authority as much as Abdülhamid II, who was determined to establish himself as the leader of the Muslims, hoping that it would thwart European encroachment (Mandal, 2018).

Arabic was also the most widely spoken language among the Ottoman subjects of Hejaz, the Levant, Mesopotamia and North Africa, which were the main regions that were threatened by European encroachment. Therefore, promoting the Arabic language and using Arabic titles helped Abdülhamid II maintain good relations with his Arab subjects, whose loyalty and support proved

indispensable in defending Ottoman domains from European imperialism (Özcan, 1997). Of the Arab-speaking regions, Hejaz proved paramount to Abdülhamid II, as it was the birthplace of Islam and where the two holiest sites of the Muslims, Mecca and Medina, were located (Buzpinar, 1995). Given that the right to hold the title Caliph depended on who controlled Hejaz, it was crucial for Abdülhamid II to win the favour of its tribal leaders and clerics. Moreover, Muslim rebels who opposed colonialism, such as Indian scholar Rahmatullah Kairanawi al-Hindi, sought refuge in Mecca, where he established *Madrasah as-Sawlatiyah* (Bsheer, 2020; Özcan, 1997). Therefore, during the Hamidian era, Mecca was not only a site of pilgrimage but also an epicentre of the pan-Islamic movement (Buzpinar, 1995). In late 1877, Abdülhamid II is reported to have instructed his Grand Vizier Edhem Pasha to send as many copies of *Mashari al-Ashwaq ila Masari al-Ushaaq*, a book on Jihad (holy war) by Ibn an-Nuhaas, as well as a pamphlet on Jihad titled *Mushir al-Gharam* by an anonymous author, to be distributed among pilgrims who visited Mecca that year (Buzpinar, 1995). Arabs from Hejaz also fought valiantly in defence of the Ottoman Empire against Europeans in numerous battles.

Therefore Sultan Abdülhamid, realising the significance of the Arabs for the survival of the Ottoman Empire and dissemination of pan-Islamist thoughts, prioritised the Arab-majority provinces and appointed notable Arabs as his ministers, advisers, and secretaries so that he could garner the support of his Arab subjects and curb the rise of Arab nationalism and separatism, which was gaining momentum in the late 19th century (Burke, 1972; Chouinard, 2010; Havemann, 1987; Karpas, 2001; Özcan, 1997; Philipp et al., 2010). Nevertheless, during the Hamidian era, many of the Muslim Arab, Egyptian, and Iranian nationalists, as well as Pan-Turkists, were simultaneously Pan-Islamists who believed that unity among Muslims was crucial to defend Muslim lands from Western imperialism (Keddie, 1969). Local nationalism that disregarded the leadership of the Ottoman Caliph gained prominence mainly after the First World War, as by then pro- and anti-Turkish sentiments were on the rise, Arabs were losing prominence in Ottoman courts, Ottoman Turkish replaced Arabic as the official language in Arab provinces, Ottoman-Persia ties were growing weak over border disputes, and Ottoman-Afghanistan relations were strained over Afghanistan's neutrality in the war (Dowty, 2019; Kéchichian, 2022; Keddie, 1969).

2.3.1. *Championing Muslim Education*

Establishing schools and *madrasa* and offering scholarships for Muslims were effective ways through which Sultan Abdülhamid II conveyed the idea that he was fervently devoted to the *ummah*, a guardian of Arabic language and literature, and a benefactor who supported Muslim education. This greatly helped promote pan-Islamism and boost Abdülhamid's image as the Caliph, particularly among the Muslims who lived beyond the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. Chief among the institutions established by Sultan Abdülhamid II that prioritised Islamic theology and the Arabic language were *Medrese-i Hayriyye* ('School of Benevolence', 1876), *Darüttalim* ('Abode of Education', 1882), *Rehber-i Marifet* ('Guide of Knowledge', 1887), *Darüttedris* ('Abode of Instruction', 1890), and *Mekteb-i Edeb* ('School of Literature'), all of which became premier centres of learning that attracted Muslim students from the Ottoman Empire and beyond (Somel, 2019). Abdülhamid II also encouraged the teaching of Arabic language, grammar and calligraphy not just at *madrasa* but also at schools and institutions of higher education across the Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign also witnessed a comprehensive modernisation drive, with the establishment of academic institutions that taught modern science, fine arts, and foreign languages like French (Inanc, 2024; Karpas, 2001). Abdülhamid, an ardent admirer of Europe and its civilisation, but not its culture, held the opinion that Muslims should not only learn Arabic, Persian, and Turkish but also embrace modernity by learning Western languages and science. Abdülhamid, who himself was fluent in French, encouraged academic institutions across the Ottoman Empire to offer lessons in French and German (Boyacıoğlu, 2015; Doğan, 2019; Inanc, 2024; Onum, 2019). This gave the impetus for Muslims living in European colonies to also follow the example of their Caliph and embrace Western-style education.

In 1892, Sultan Abdülhamid II established *Mekteb-i Aşiret-i Hümayun* ('Imperial Tribal School'), popularly called 'Aşiret Mektebi', a special school in Istanbul for the sons of influential tribal leaders from across the Ottoman Empire. Most of the students came from Arab strongholds such as Aleppo, Baghdad, Basra, Benghazi, Deir ez-Zor, Mosul, West Tripoli, and Al-Quds, and they were exposed to western languages, modern science and technology as well as well-groomed for Ottoman government service (Hamsah & Dahlan, 2023; Kent, 2018; Özcan, 1997; Rogan, 1996). The school became so popular that Muslim personages from Southeast Asia too sent their sons to Istanbul. For example, in 1899, Abdul Rahman bin Abdullah Ba Junaid from Bogor

(Indonesia) and Abu Bakr Bin Sunkar of Batavia (Indonesia) sent their sons and a few other students to Istanbul so that they could pursue their education at Aşiret Mektebi. (Alatas & Tekin, 2022).

In addition, students from the Dutch East Indies were offered Ottoman scholarships. Chief among those who studied in Istanbul on scholarship were members of the family of Abdullah bin Alwi Alatas, a Dutch East Indies merchant of Arab Hadrami descent (Alatas & Tekin, 2022). Apart from the remittances they received from their families, foreign students received monthly stipends from the Ottoman State. For example, students at Galatasaray High School were provided with a sum of 80 qurush per month (Alatas & Tekin, 2022).

Sultan Abdülhamid II also provided financial support for the construction of religious and educational institutions (Görez, 2024). Inspired by Sultan Abdülhamid II, many of his ardent followers, supported the cause of Muslim education by establishing *madrassa* and schools that actively promoted Arabic and Hamidian Pan-Islamism among Muslims living outside the Ottoman Empire. For example, Wang Haoren, a Chinese Muslim who served as imam at the Peking (Beijing) Niujie Mosque, who visited Istanbul and met with Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1906, proved instrumental in establishing *Darul Ulumi'l Hamidiyye* (Chinese: Hui Ciao Şı Fan Şüe Tang-Abdul Hamid school of science—house of learning)—a Muslim school named in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid II, whose name was invoked in Friday sermons in the mosques in Peking—where Hafız Ali Rıza and Hafız Hasan Efendi, both of whom were appointed by the Ottoman Empire, served as teachers (Aykurt, 2013; Karpat, 2001; Sirma, 2022). Moreover, modern education proved important in cultivating the sentiments of anti-colonialism among Muslims, who became increasingly well connected in the Hamidian era.

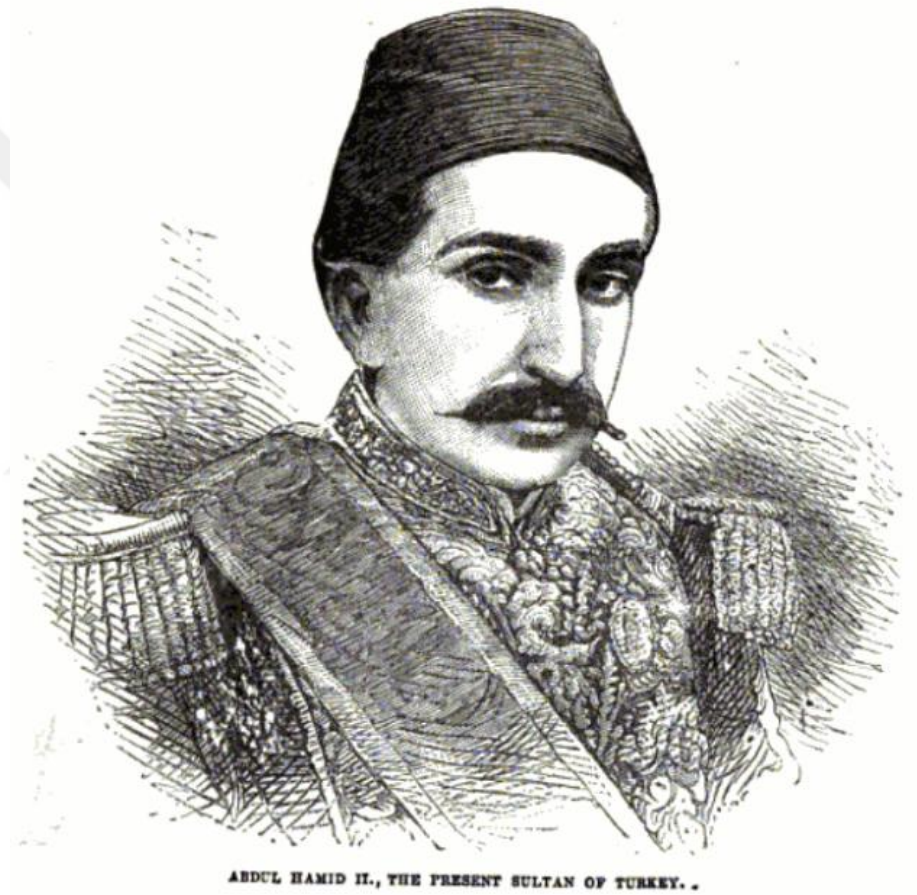
2.5. Fez: Potent Symbol of Pan-Islamism

One of the defining symbols of the Ottoman Empire and Pan-Islamism movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the Turkish fez, a thimble-shaped red headdress made of straw and felt. Also known as a 'tarboush' or 'fez', which most likely gets its name from the Moroccan city of Fez, it became part of the Ottoman fashion when, in 1827, Sultan Mahmud II mandated its use as modern headwear for the Ottoman army. Two years later, in 1829, Mahmud, as part of his efforts to modernise the empire, passed regulations that mandated the wearing of the fez by all civil and religious officials. Prior to this, Ottomans wore the turban, which varied in size, colour, shape

and style, depending on the social and economic status, religious affiliation and regional identity of the wearer. Until the late 19th century, the fez was worn not just by the Muslims, but also by the Christians and Jews who lived in the Ottoman Empire, thereby promoting Ottoman subjecthood, religious equity, and unity in diversity.

Figure 3

Sultan Abdülhamid II of the Ottoman Empire wearing the Turkish fez



Note. From “Abdul Hamid II, the present Sultan of Turkey”, by W.S. Chase, 1877, *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly*, p. 9.

The 1880s marked a significant turning point in the Anglo-Ottoman relations, which also impacted the diplomatic and commercial ties which British colonies like India, Ceylon and Singapore maintained with the Sublime Porte. In 1880, William Gladstone, who was highly critical of Abdülhamid II and pan-Islamism, was sworn in as Britain’s prime minister for a second term (Greene, 2010; Steele, 2014; Yildizeli, 2016, 2018, 2025). His tenure brought in significant changes

to British foreign policy, particularly on its outlook on Ottoman affairs. In 1882, British forces invaded Egypt, then a province of the Ottoman Empire, quelled the nationalist uprisings led by Colonel Ahmed Urābī against Khedive Tewfik Pasha, established British hegemony over Egypt and exiled Ahmed Urābī and his allies to Ceylon (Berdine, 2020; Chamberlain, 1977; Galbraith, 1979; Hopkins, 1986; Tignor, 2015). The growing anti-Turkish sentiments in 1880s Britain led to the Turkish fez, which had long been perceived as a symbol of sophistication and refinement, becoming increasingly associated with pan-Islamism, conservatism and allegiance to the Ottoman Empire (Baker, 1986; Thompson, 1886; Yavuz, 1995).

As the fez was worn by the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Caliph, it came to symbolise Muslim identity. Therefore, starting from the late 19th century, Muslims living in Ceylon, India, the Maldives, Mauritius, South Africa and other European colonies and protectorates in Asia and Africa started wearing the fez as a potent symbol of their Muslim identity and support for the Ottoman Caliph (Aktas, 2024; Asad, 1993a; Mahroof, 1981; Sykes, 2023). In South Asia, the fez was adopted not only by the general Muslim populace but also by royals, including Nizam Mahboob Ali Khan of Hyderabad and Sultan Haji Muhammad Imaaduddeen VI Iskandar of the Maldives. Not only did the Nizams of Hyderabad don the fez but also referred to the Ottoman Sultans as their Caliph, as evinced by their letters conveyed to the Sublime Porte (Bardakçı, 2017).

During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the fez not only became a potent symbol of Pan-Islamism but also of anti-colonial resistance. In the late 19th century, the British officials felt deeply threatened when there was a surge in the number of Muslims who not only adopted the Turkish fez but also hailed the Ottoman Sultan as their *Amir al-Mu'minin* (commander of the faithful) and *Padshah-i Mussalmanan* (Emperor of the Muslims) (Hardy, 1972). The British wanted to impose restrictions on the wearing of fezzes in places such as Punjab, as the headwear was perceived “as a symbol of cordial sympathy with the Sultan Caliph” (Özcan, 1997, pp. 105-106). Although in the Ottoman Empire the fez was worn by people belonging to different tribes and religions, including those who rejected the Ottoman Caliphate, in South Asia and Africa, it was worn substantially by the Muslims, who revered the Ottoman Sultan as their Caliph.

2.6. The Sacred Railway: A Pan Islamic project

The most renowned of all Ottoman projects that came to symbolise Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamism policy was the Hamidiye-Hejaz Railway, which came to be called the ‘Iron Silk Road’

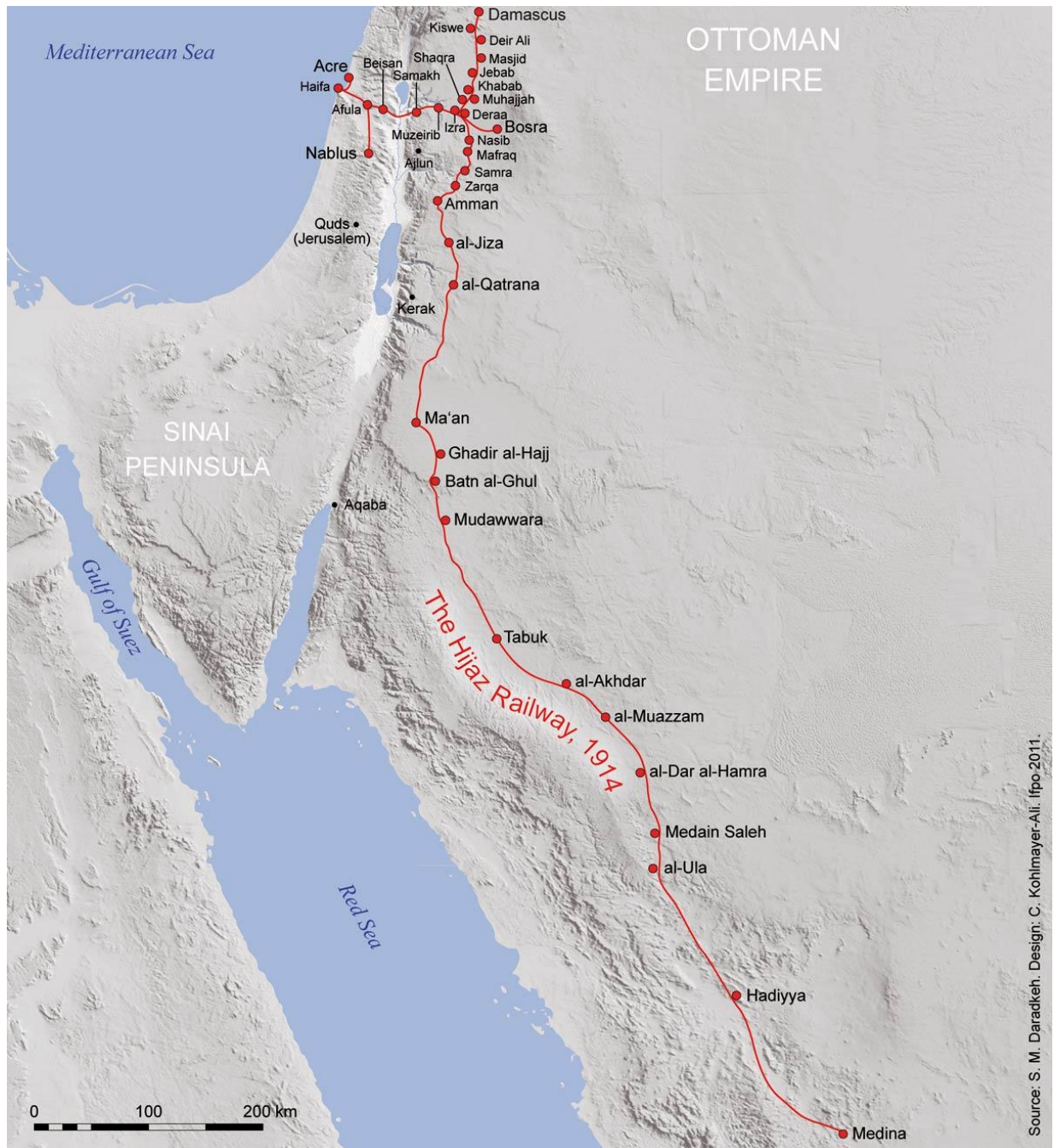
that connected Damascus to Medina. The original plan was to extend the rail line north to Istanbul and south to Mecca, but it never materialised. Apart from facilitating the Hajj pilgrimage, the project aimed to strengthen the unity among Muslims living across the world, establish the authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II as the Caliph, secure the loyalty of Arabs, and strengthen relations between Istanbul, the seat of the Ottoman Empire and Caliphate, and Hejaz, home to the holiest sites of the Muslims (Chowdhury, 2012; Landau, 2016; Ochsenswald, 1973; Özcan, 2023). Apart from religious reasons, the Hejaz Railway aimed to facilitate the transportation of goods and military to Hejaz, to reinforce the Ottoman hegemony over the Arab provinces and demonstrate the Empire's ability to resist European military might (Landau, 2016; Ochsenswald, 1973)

The construction of the Hejaz railway commenced in 1900, and Muslims from across the world were encouraged to subscribe to the project, which was estimated to cost around four million Ottoman liras (Ochsenswald, 1973; Wolfheze, 2018). Apart from Ottoman state funds, Sultan Abdülhamid himself made a donation of 50,000 liras, thereby encouraging others to follow suit (Mataracı, 2022; Valeev et al., 2017). Across the Indian subcontinent there were close to a hundred and fifty committees founded to raise funds for the project which the Muslim newspapers eulogised as the Holy Line. As noted by Ryan Gingeras (2016), “Abdülhamid II promoted the construction of the Hijaz railroad as a testament to his piety and concern for Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca” (p. 200). As subscribing to the project was considered a meritorious act, many well-to-do Muslims in British India, Ceylon, the Dutch East Indies, Algeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, China, Germany, Britain, the Russian Empire and America made generous donations. Depending on the amount subscribed, the donors were presented with medals in gold, silver and nickel (Ochsenswald, 1973; Valeev et al., 2017).

Between 1900 and 1908, Muslim newspapers from around the world published regular reports on the progress of the Hejaz railway to encourage the Muslims to continue their financial support for what was hailed as a Muslim enterprise. On August 28, 1908, the first train from Damascus arrived in Medina, and on September 1, 1908, the Medina Railway Station was officially opened to coincide with the 33rd anniversary of Sultan Abdülhamid II's accession to the throne. It normally took close to forty days or more to travel between Damascus and Medina, during which many died en route. But the Hejaz Railway reduced the perilous journey to just three days. The Hejaz rail line was severely damaged during the outbreak of the First World War, and many sections of track fell into disrepair. The railway was abandoned by 1920.

Figure 4

The Hejaz Railway in 1914



Note. From "Hijaz Railway in 1914," by S.M. Daradkeh (Figure IV.19), in M. Ababsa (Ed.), *Atlas of Jordan*, 2013, Presses de l'Ifpo.

2.7. Conclusion

The term ‘Pan-Islamism,’ which is a Western construct, was largely employed by Western writers of the late 19th century to describe the dangers surrounding unity among global Muslims under the leadership of Abdülhamid II. However, for most Muslim intellectuals of the Hamidian era, Pan-Islamism was a movement of regeneration and modernisation that advocated for unity among Muslims against Western colonialism. By the early 20th century, the term started carrying negative connotations as it became increasingly associated with Islamic fundamentalism, intolerance, and primitiveness. Although Pan-Islamism was perceived as a threat to colonialism by the Europeans, it was the survival strategy employed by Sultan Abdülhamid II. In addition, as detailed in the preceding sections, Pan-Islamism became intrinsically linked to Islamic modernism during the Hamidian era, and Pan-Islamists like Afghani used Arabic phrases such as ‘*al-Wahda al Islamiya*,’ which translates to Pan-Islamism, to promote not just unity among Muslims against European encroachment, but also modern education, science, equal rights, rationalism, democracy, political reforms, and secularism, among other concepts (Hirano, 2008; Uddin et al., 2022).

Therefore, Hamidian Pan-Islamism, particularly in non-Ottoman states, entailed not only recognising the Caliphal authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II and subscribing to Ottoman causes but also embracing the social, political, and educational reforms that were closely associated with Sultan Abdülhamid II’s reign as well as the Islamic modernism that was advocated by prominent Pan-Islamists like Afghani, ‘Abduh, and Rashid Rida. Moreover, as Arabic and Arabs served as the main conduits of Pan-Islamism, some non-Ottoman Muslims who supported the movement also embraced facets of Arab culture. Moreover, Arabs formed a substantial population of the Ottoman Empire, particularly during the Hamidian Era, and the main strongholds of Pan-Islamism were located in the Arab-majority *vilayets* (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, Arabic, Arab culture, customs, and institutions were perceived by non-Ottoman Muslims as facets of Pan-Islamism. Much like any other ideology, the perception and connotation of Pan-Islamism varied significantly depending on the region, period, and context.

III. CHAPTER

CONDUITS OF PAN-ISLAMISM IN CEYLON

From the early 16th century until the mid 19th century, Muslims of Ceylon remained largely disconnected from the Muslim world, particularly the Middle East and Central Asia. The main source of Islamic knowledge for Muslims during that period were South Indian Sufis and ulema (Muslim scholars) who travelled to the island from time to time. It was only in 1863 that British Ceylon established formal diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire, and the decades that followed saw improved contacts between the Muslims of Ceylon and their religious counterparts in the Ottoman Empire. One of the ideologies which gained traction and took root among the urban Muslim of Ceylon in the mid-1880s was Pan-Islamism, and this chapter addresses the research question of what were the main channels and actors through which Pan-Islamist ideas were introduced to Ceylon.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the role played by Ottoman honorary consuls (*şehbender*) in strengthening diplomatic ties to the Ottoman Empire, in establishing the paramountcy of Sultan Abdülhamid II as the Caliph of the Muslims in Ceylon, in promoting the ideals of pan-Islamism and in garnering the support of the Ceylonese Muslims for Ottoman causes. In addition, this chapter looks at how Anglo-Ottoman relations influenced Ceylon's ties to the Sublime Porte and how the honorary consuls implicitly expressed their allegiance and support to Sultan Abdülhamid.

The second section analyses Urābī Pasha's interest in Hamidian Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism, his influence on Moor intelligentsia, and his role in promulgating transnational Muslim identity in Ceylon. Also examined is his contribution to popularising the Turkish fez, the politicisation of the Moor community, the growth of the Muslim press, the establishment of Muslim schools and *madrassa*, and the development of Muslim nationalism in Ceylon. Also explored is the service rendered by local actors like Siddi Lebbe in founding Muslim-centric newspapers that served as effective mediums in transmitting the ideals of pan-Islamism and the importance of the Arabic language among the Muslims of Ceylon, South India, and the Straits Settlements. Moreover, this chapter delves into Siddi Lebbe's role in uplifting Muslim education in Ceylon, in persuading the Muslims to contribute to Ottoman causes, and in igniting an interest in the political affairs and

revivalist movements in the Muslim world. This section also delves into the contributions of I.L.M. Abdul Aziz to reviving the Muslim press, promoting pan-Islamism, deepening ties to the Ottoman Empire, and bolstering the reverence accorded to Abdülhamid in the early years of the 20th century.

The third and final section of this chapter examines the contributions made by business barons A.M. Wapchie Marikar, I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar, and Carrimjee Jafferjee, who served as the financial backbone for the promulgation of Hamidian Pan-Islamism in Ceylon.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Pan-Islamism lacked a formal ideological structure, and its nature, scope, and goals differed depending on a range of factors, including time, geography, and local actors. In Ceylon, apart from recognising the Caliphal authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II and promoting solidarity among Muslims, Pan-Islamism, as an ideology, entailed Islamic modernisation, adoption of Ottoman symbols, supporting Ottoman causes and Arabisation. As detailed in the subsequent sections, Ceylon's status as Britain's crown colony, its island geography, its smaller yet heterogenous Muslim population (around seven percent), sectarian and ethnic divisions, literacy and absence of local Muslim leadership influenced not only the dissemination of Pan-Islamism but also how it was understood.

3.1. Ottoman Honorary Consuls in Ceylon

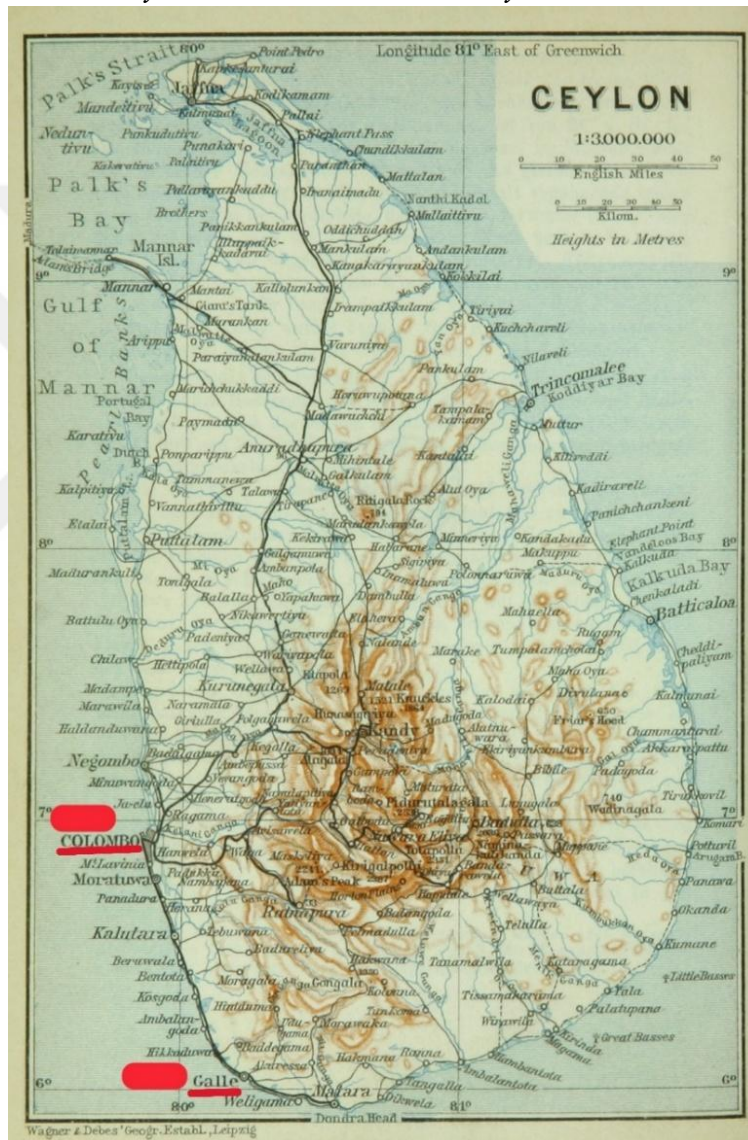
After centuries of isolationism, the Ceylonese Muslims resumed contacts with the Middle East after the British government in Ceylon established formal diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire in 1863 during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz. In his letter, dated 18th November 1863, to the *Hariciye Nezareti* (Foreign Ministry) of the Ottoman Empire, Konstantinos Mousouros, the Ottoman Ambassador in London, urged the Sublime Porte to establish two honorary consulates in the port cities of Colombo and Galle (see Figure 5) to serve the interests of the Ottoman subjects in Ceylon. Konstantinos Mousouros also recommended the names of Hussein Lebbe Marikar and Sultan Bawa Jaman, two Moor merchants based in Colombo and Galle, respectively, to the positions of Honorary Consul (BOA, İ.HR.204/11694). As mentioned earlier, those who served as representatives of the Ottoman Empire in Ceylon were local Muslims and not Ottomans; hence, they were referred to as 'honorary consuls'. It was most likely Lord Stanley of Alderley,⁹ a British

⁹ According to a news item published in *The Ceylon Times* under the title "An Englishman turned Turk", Lord Stanley travelled to Ceylon after he had performed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. During his sojourn in Ceylon, he visited Colombo and Kandy, where he befriended local Muslims with whom he sat cross-legged on the ground to enjoy his meals. It is also reported that he gave up the sartorial style of English noblemen and embraced long robes and the

aristocrat, Ottoman sympathiser and Muslim convert, who recommended to Mousouros the two Moor merchants for the office of honorary consul, who were plausibly among those whom he befriended during his sojourn in Ceylon in May 1859 (Gençoğlu, 2025; Gilham, 2024; Ismeth, 2022).

Figure 5

Locations of the Two Honorary Ottoman Consulates in Ceylon



Note. Map of Ceylon (c.1914) showing the two Ottoman Honorary Consulates established in Ceylon. One in Colombo (est. 1863) and the other in Galle (est.1882). Both underlined and marked in red. Between 1863 and 1914, three Ceylonese Moor elites and one Maldivian nobleman served as Ottoman Consuls. Edited image originally from *Wikipedia* (public domain).

Turkish fez. It is highly likely that during his time in Ceylon Lord Stanley met with both Hussein Lebbe Marikar and Sultan Bawa Jaman—two notable businessmen who maintained trade ties to the Ottoman Empire even before their formal appointments as honorary consuls.

It should be noted that until the late 1870s, Anglo-Ottoman relations were strong and that the British were keen on finding new markets to sell Ceylonese produce. Therefore, establishing honorary Ottoman consulates in Ceylon was favoured by the British government. As highlighted by Kamil Asad (1993a), Ceylonese Muslims who served as Ottoman consuls were basically the "commercial agents for the British Empire" who looked after the commercial interests of the British in the Ottoman Empire (p. 24). In January 1864, in compliance with Mousouros's requests and recommendations, the Ottoman authorities approved the appointment of the recommended individuals and sent the exequatur (*firman*) to Ceylon (BOA, HR.SFR.3.85/3; BOA, HR.SFR.3.86/1; BOA, HR.SFR.3.86/20). However, in July 1864, the British authorities in Ceylon informed the Sublime Porte that Sultan Bawa Jaman passed away in February 1864 and returned the exequatur of Hussein Lebbe Marikar, as the latter's name had been spelt incorrectly. Therefore, a new firman with the corrected spelling was requested by the British authorities from the Sublime Porte so that an exequatur could be requested from Queen Victoria, whose approval was mandatory as she was the sovereign of British Ceylon (Ismeth, 2022).

All documents from Ceylon, written or published in English, were first sent to the Ottoman Embassy in London, which thereafter translated them to French and had them sent to the Sublime Porte, where they were finally translated to Ottoman Turkish. Likewise, documents from the Sublime Porte reached Ceylon via the Ottoman Embassy in London, after having been translated from Turkish to French and then to English. Therefore, apart from spelling mistakes, there would most likely have been details lost in translation.

3.1.1. *Hussein Lebbe Marikar (in post 1864-1890)*

Hussein Lebbe Marikar, also known by the name Authu Kandu Marikar Hassen (Ossen) Lebbe, Lebbe Marcair M. Hussen, Marikar Hussain Lebbe Effendi and Ossen Lebbe Marikar was the first Ceylonese Muslim and the first Moor to be appointed not just as the Honorary Ottoman Consul but also as an official representative of a foreign government in Ceylon. The official title held by Marikar was *şehbender*, derived from the Persian words *Şeh*, meaning chief/king, and *bender*, which translates to a port. However, Ceylonese and British records identify Ossen Lebbe Marikar as the 'Consul for Turkey' or 'Turkish Consul' (Colonial and Indian exhibition, 1886; Hertslet, 1895; Keltie, 1896).

There is limited information on Marikar, but he is reported to have been a prominent merchant involved in trade with the Ottoman Empire, a reason why he was appointed as Ottoman Consul in 1864 (Ismeth, 2022). Although the Sublime Porte approved his appointment in January 1864, Marikar assumed duties only on the 7th of February, 1865, after he had received the exequatur from both Sultan Abdulaziz and Queen Victoria (Asad, 1993a; BOA, HR.SFR.3.85/3; BOA, İ.HR. 320/ 20638; Colonial Secretary's Office, 1891; Colonial Secretary's Office, 1892). Moreover, it is said that the British Governor to Ceylon at the time, Sir Hercules Robinson (1865-1872), was "distinctly sympathetic to the Muslim community" and was willing to employ them in the consular service (Asad, 1993a, p. 24).

This indicates that the Muslims of Ceylon had, by the 1860s, proven to be loyal subjects to the British Crown, to the extent that they were trusted with consular affairs. According to *The Ceylon Directory* (1868), Marikar was the only non-European/Burgher to serve as consul in Ceylon between 1866 and 1868.¹⁰ This demonstrates his influence and closeness to the British. According to Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy (1878), during his tenure as Chief Justice of Ceylon from 1860 to 1875, some Sinhalese defiled the principal mosque at Barbeyrn (Beruwela) by placing a dead pig on the desk of the reader of the Quran. Uncertain on the specific religious rites that needed to be observed, a delegation comprising of Moormen travelled to Mecca to seek the advice of the scholars specialised in Islamic sacred law and theology. It is highly unlikely for a delegation from Ceylon to have travelled to Mecca, then part of the Ottoman Empire, without the approval, advice and support from Marikar. As highlighted by Creasy (1878), although Ceylon was "never under Turkish rule", the Ceylonese Muslims recognised the authority of the scholars in Mecca, where "the authority of the Sultan, as Caliph, is fully recognised" (p. 151). Therefore it is evident that apart from diplomatic and trade relations, Ceylonese had also established religious ties with the Ottoman Empire.

In 1877, Marikar helped raise funds for the wounded soldiers and families of the victims of the Russo-Turkish War (BOA, HR.SFR.3.723/42; BOA, HR.SFR.3.548/7). One of the key organisations for which Marikar helped raise funds in Ceylon was the Turkish Compassionate Fund, a British charitable arm, established in the winter of 1877-78 by Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts, 1st Baroness Burdett-Coutts, as a relief fund for the victims of the Russo-Turkish War (Dunstan, 1883; O'Sullivan, 2018). Ten thousand rupees in aid of the sick and wounded Turks were

¹⁰ Burghers are those of mixed Ceylonese and European ancestry.

also raised by the Colombo Moslem Club, in which Marikar served as president. This munificent donation was remitted on October 21st, 1877, through the Oriental Bank Corporation by Hussein Lebbe Marikar to the Ottoman Consul at Bombay, to be forwarded to Constantinople (“Turkish Sympathies in Ceylon”, 1878). According to a letter sent to the Sublime Porte by Abdul Majid, one of the main donors to the fund was his father, Marikar (BOA, HR.SFR.3. 723/42). This was the first recorded instance in which the Muslims of Ceylon sympathised with and made a financial contribution in aid of their religious counterparts in the Ottoman Empire. According to the Commissioner of the Turkish Compassionate Fund, Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy (1878)—who served as the Chief Justice of Ceylon from 1860 to 1875—“there is full proof in Eastern newspapers at present that very deep interest in the fate of Turkey is felt and expressed by Mahometans far beyond the limits of Turkish temporal power” (p. 151).

This indicates that the Turkish relief fund had stirred noticeable interest and sympathy among Muslims towards the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Turkish relief fund sowed the seeds of Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of Ceylon. As detailed in the previous chapter, the dawn of the 1880s marked the downfall of Anglo-Ottoman relations and the rise of Hamidian Pan-Islamism. This made it difficult for Marikar and other Turkish consuls serving in British colonies to maintain good relations with both the British and the Sublime Porte. Nevertheless, Marikar remained undeterred, continued his consular duties, and updated the Sublime Porte on matters of concern. He also entertained Ottoman dignitaries who visited Ceylon, chief among them being Osman Pasha, commander in chief of the Ottoman frigate Ertuğrul, who visited Colombo en route to Japan in November 1889, as to be explained in detail in the next chapter (BOA, HR.SFR.3.336/37; BOA, HR.SFR.3.343/31; BOA, Y.A. HUS. 232/66; BOA, HR.TO.343/117). In the early months of 1890, Marikar, dispatched to the Sublime Porte, sent letters expressing his grievances over the content denigrating Sultan Abdülhamid and the frigate Ertuğrul published in the Ceylonese press, along with copies of Ceylonese newspaper clippings, such as that of *the Ceylon Observer* (HR.SFR.3.372/2; HR.SFR.3.372/35; HR.SFR.3.372/54). In March and April, 1890, Marikar received responses from the Sublime Porte confirming the receipt of his letters and press clippings (HR.SFR.3.372/36; HR.SFR.3.372/54). This particular incident helps demonstrate that Marikar was concerned about how the Ceylonese press portrayed Sultan Abdülhamid II and his empire.

As he was the representative of the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Caliph, Marikar exerted considerable influence over the Muslims of Colombo. He was deeply involved with the affairs of the Maradana Mosque in Colombo—which became the epicentre of Pan-Islamism in the late 19th century—and was the first trustee of the Maligawatte Muslim Burial Ground, where he was laid to rest following his passing in 1890 (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). Even his tombstone reads that he was the first consul for the imperial Ottoman Empire in Ceylon, implying how influential the position was at the time.

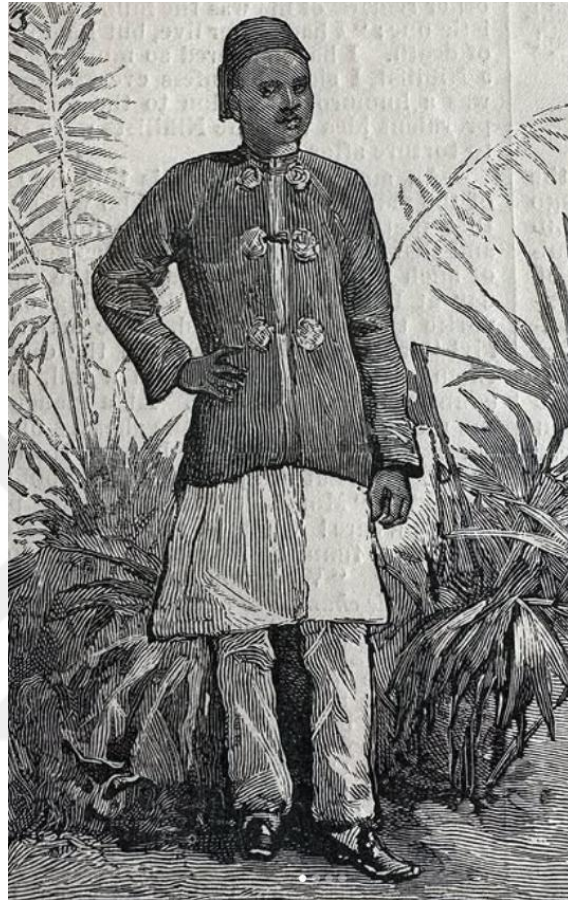
3.1.2. *Hadjie Ibrahim Didi bin Hadjie Ali Didi Effendi (in post 1882-1914)*

In May, 1881, Lord Stanley recommended to the Ottoman Authorities the appointment of Hadjie Ibrahim Didi bin Hadjie Ali Didi Effendi, an affluent trader and a relative of the Sultan of the Maldives, as the honorary Ottoman Consul to Galle, where the position of Ottoman Consul had remained vacant for decades since the passing of Sultan Bawa Jaman in February, 1864 (BOA, İ.HR. 281/17326). In compliance with Lord Stanley's request, Didi was appointed as the Ottoman Consul to Galle in July 1881, and on the 18th of April 1882, he received his exequatur from Queen Victoria (BOA, İ.HR. 284/17668; BOA, HR. SFR. 3.283/50; Hertslet, 1895; The Foreign Office List, 1888). Didi served as the Ottoman Consul until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 (Asad, 1993). However, as evidenced by the Ottoman archival records, except for some sojourns to Galle, he spent much of his thirty-two-year tenure being away in the Maldives attending to private matters and convalescing, while his son, Abdul Hamid Didi Effendi, performed the consular duties on his behalf as the acting Ottoman Consul to Galle (BOA, HR. SFR. 3.283/19; BOA, HR. SFR. 3.283/23; BOA, HR. SFR. 3.283/31; BOA, HR. SFR. 3.302/38).

According to the writings of British officials in Ceylon, while Abdul Hamid Didi Effendi served as the acting Ottoman consul and representative of the Maldives' government in Galle, his father, Hadjie Ibrahim Didi Effendi, served as private secretary and thereafter as the Prime Minister to the Sultan of the Maldives (Bechert, 1977; Bell, 1883, 1935, 1998; Geiger, 1996; Hockly, 2003). Although he was mostly away in the Maldives, Ibrahim Didi made sure that he fulfilled his duties as the Ottoman Consul to Galle. For example, in October 1901, when Ahmed Kemal Attaullah Effendi, the Consul General of the Ottoman Empire to Singapore, visited Colombo, he was entertained by Ibrahim Didi Effendi at his Colombo residence, *Gairloch* in Colpetty (Uçar, 2000).

Figure 6

Ibrahim Didi, Ottoman Consul to Galle



Note. Ibrahim Didi, nephew of the late Ali Didi, the wea city gate merchant (the Sultan’s brother-in-law). From “Sketches in the Maldiv Islands”, by n.d (p. 296), May 7 1881, *Harper's Weekly - Journal of Civilization*, 25 (1271).

In his account of the Maldives, published in 1883, H.C.P. Bell, British civil servant and the first Commissioner of Archaeology in Ceylon, described the attire of the Ottoman Consul, Hadjie Ibrahim Didi, as follows:

It is worthy of note that the last Ambassador, Isma'il Didi — for many years a resident with his late uncle 'Ali Didi at Galle, where he acquired a knowledge of Sinhalese, Tamil, and some English — discarded at the audience (March 9th, 1882) the turban, loose robe, and sandals of his country, for a fez, closely -fitting frogged uniform of grey tweed, and patent-leather shoes (Bell, 2004, p. 38)

Likewise, the illustrations of Ibrahim Didi published in *Harper's Weekly* of 7th May 1881, as well as *The Graphic* of 16th October 1885, depict him wearing a Turkish fez. Therefore, it is

evident that Didi took to the wearing of the fez long before the arrival of Urābī Pasha and his entourage to Ceylon. For Didi to be featured in two of the most popular Western periodicals of the time, his sense of fashion clearly stood out from the rest of the Maldivians. Didi was also most likely the first to don the fez in the Maldives and Ceylon. Apart from popularising the wearing of the Turkish ‘fez,’ which was subsequently adopted by the sultans and nobles of the Maldives, Didi also sported Turkish waistcoats (Bell, 1883, 1935, 1998; Geiger, 1996; Hockly, 2003). He also affixed to his name ‘Effendi, the Turkish title of respect and courtesy (Bell, 1883, 1935, 1998; Geiger, 1996; Hockly, 2003).

Also to be noted is that although the Maldives was a British protectorate at the time, it was also an Islamic sultanate whose rulers are reported to have recognised the Ottoman sultan as Caliph as far back as the 16th century (Mukherjee, 2022; Siddiqui, 1997). Therefore, it is understandable why Didi, who himself was closely related to the Maldivian Sultan, took an interest in the Turkish fez and pan-Islamism. Moreover, unlike Hussein Lebbe Marikar, Didi was explicit about his interest in Pan-Islamism. For example, in September 1901, when Urābī Pasha and his family were set to return to Egypt, Didi travelled to Colombo and, along with businessman Carimjee Jafferjee, he escorted them to the jetty and stayed until they boarded *Prince Irene* and set sail for Egypt (Ismeth, 2022). The fact that Didi travelled to Colombo to bid farewell to an anti-colonial Pan-Islamist like Urābī Pasha indicates that they maintained good relations and that he wasn’t concerned about what the British would perceive him to be. Moreover, it is likely that Didi, like many other Muslim elite in Ceylon, through his association with Urābī Pasha, came to learn more about Pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism championed by Al-Afghani and ‘Abduh in Egypt.

3.1.3. *H.L.M. Abdul Majid Effendi (in post 1891-1903)*

Following the passing of Hussein Lebbe Marikar in 1890, his son Abdul Majeed Effendi, a gem trader and businessman, assumed the office of Ottoman Consul of Colombo. On the 26th of January 1891, the Sublime Porte confirmed the appointment of Majid as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo (BOA, İ.HR.320/20638). His appointment was approved by Queen Victoria in March, 1891 (Colonial Secretary’s Office, 1891). According to Hertslet (1895), he received the Queen’s approval on the 30th of June, 1891. Majid’s tenure, which lasted until 1903, proved pivotal in strengthening relations between the Ottoman Empire and Ceylon, in the dissemination of pan-Islamism among the Muslim populace, and in establishing the authority of Abdülhamid II as the

Caliph of the Muslims of Ceylon. Majid was an influential figure among the Moor elite of Colombo, served on the board of the Maradana Mosque, and held prominent positions in Muslim organisations such as the Hameedia Society named after Sultan Abdülhamid II (also called the *Jemmiyathul Hameediah* Educational Association) and *El-Jamiathul Islamia* (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

Figure 7

The First Two Ottoman Consuls to Colombo



Note. The first two Ottoman Consuls to Colombo, Hussein Lebbe Maricar Effendi (left) and H.L.M. Abdul Majid Effendi (right). From “Father and Son Represent the Ottomans in Sri Lanka”, by M.B.M. Ghouse (p.88), in *International exhibition of Islamic arts and culture* by Y.L.M. Zavahir (Ed.). 1983. Moors’ Islamic Cultural Home.

When it was announced in the early 1890s that Abdülhamid II was hoping to construct a charitable institution called *Darülaceze* in Istanbul to provide free food and accommodation for the elderly, disabled, orphans, and unemployed, Abdul Majid raised funds for it through public subscription. When the Greco-Turkish War broke out in April 1897, the Muslims of Ceylon declared their support for the Ottoman Army, and such matters were conveyed with great gusto by Abdul Majid to the Sublime Porte (BOA, BEO.986/73924). According to the letters sent to the

Sublime Porte by Abdul Majid, Muslims of Ceylon, upon learning about the Ottoman victory in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, gathered in mosques, offered prayers for the Sultan and his Empire and submitted their congratulatory messages to be forwarded to the Sultan (BOA.BEO. 986/73924; BOA, İ.MTZ.(01)21. 972). Majid received a letter from the Sublime Porte, dated July 15th, 1897, appreciating his service and loyalty to the Ottoman sultan and his Caliphate and for conveying the felicitations of the Muslims of Ceylon on the Ottoman victory in the Greco-Turkish War (BOA, İ.MTZ. (01).21/972). As expounded in the next chapter, Abdul Majid was instrumental in initiating the collection of funds for the construction of the Hejaz railway, in founding Muslim educational and religious institutions, and in organising grand festivities to mark the Silver Jubilee of Abdülhamid in Ceylon (BOA, HR.SFR.3.528/9; BOA, HR.SFR.3.528/60; BOA, HR.TH.297/69; BOA, HR.TH.300/50). He was also the first Ceylonese Ottoman consul who wore the fez, which had by then become a popular article of clothing among the Moor luminaries of Ceylon. He also bore the honorary title of *Effendi* and was supposedly a descendant of a Turkish prince-physician from Konya who settled in Ceylon in pre-colonial times (*Lasting Reminders of the Ottoman-Moor Relations of the Good Old Days*, 2023).

It is worth noting, however, that both Hussain Lebbe Marikar and Abdul Majid, despite their support for Hamidian Pan-Islamism and Ottoman causes, weren't honoured with medals or higher ranks by Abdülhamid II. In February 1903 Majid was informed that he had been dismissed from the office of Ottoman Consul by the *Intihab-ı Memurin Komisyonu* (selection board for civil officials) at the request of Rüstem Mariani Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador to London (BOA, İ.HR.383/26; BOA, HR.SFR.3.528/60). Disgruntled by how he had been treated, Majid sent a letter dated 1st December, 1903, to the Sublime Porte, expressing his grievances, but to no avail. The Ottoman Archives do not hold any information on the exact reason for ousting Abdul Majid, and there seems to have been no medal or honour conferred upon him. Majid was replaced by Sir Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi, who, at the time of his appointment in July 1904, became the youngest Ottoman consul in the Orient (BOA, HR.SFR.3. 533/67; Wright, 1907). Though dismissed in February 1903, Majid continued to serve as the Ottoman Consul until May 1904, when he eventually handed over the stamps and other belongings of the consulate to Macan Markar, who assumed duties in July 1904, after he received the exequatur from the British government (Asad, 1993a; BOA, HR.SFR.3.548/2).

3.1.4. *Sir Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi (in post 1903-1914)*

Sir Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi—popularly called Macan Markar Effendi or Haji Macan Markar before becoming the first Muslim to be knighted in 1938—was a prominent Moor businessman, legislator, senator, first elected Muslim member of the State Council, and member of the municipal councils of Colombo and Galle and, in 1931, became the first Muslim in the first Board of Ministers as the Minister of Communications and Works (Gunawardena, 2005; Roberts, 1993). However, at the time of his appointment as the Ottoman Consul in 1903, Macan Markar was not active in politics and was mainly involved in running the jewellery firm named after his father, O.L.M. Macan Markar, whose celebrity clientele included King Edward VII and King George V of Great Britain (Asad, 1993; Wright, 1907). As he was well connected, Markar managed to secure the position of Ottoman Consul to Colombo, despite the fact that his appointment was bitterly opposed by the Muslim elite of Colombo, as discussed in detail in the next chapter (BOA, HR.SFR.3.548/7; Ismeth, 2022). Although Urābī Pasha and several Moor elites popularised the wearing of the fez in the late 19th century, the tradition survived into the 20th century largely because of personages like Macan Markar, who was among the members of the Fez Committee that fought for the rights of Muslims in Ceylon to wear the fez in courtrooms and other government buildings (Marikar et al., 1976; Thawfeeq, 1972; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

As seen in Figure 8, Macan Markar was among the first Ceylonese Moors to sport the Turkish fez overseas. It is reported that Markar, who was always immaculately dressed in tails whenever he visited Britain, refused to give up his Turkish fez for the top hat, even when he was invited to the Royal Ascot (Gunawardena, 2005). Therefore, it is evident that Markar was devoted to the wearing of the fez, which at the time was intrinsically linked to Pan-Islamism. As detailed in Chapter Four, Macan Markar's devotion to the fez was put to the test in 1915, when the Sinhala-Moor riots broke out.

Markar also extended his support for Ottoman projects that became intrinsically linked to Abdülhamid's efforts to promote Pan-Islamism, such as that of the Hejaz Railway. He chaired the Hejaz committee, established to collect funds for the Hejaz Railway Project (Ochsenwald, 1973). In June 1906, a sum of forty-seven British pounds and sixteen shillings contributed by the Ceylonese Muslims to defray the expenses of the Hejaz railway was forwarded by Macan Markar to the Ottoman Embassy in London, which sent a check in the amount of 5381 *kuruş* to the Sublime Porte, which confirmed receipt of the amount in September 1906 (BOA, BEO. 2893/216944; BOA,

BEO. 2912/218365; BOA, HR.TH.339/8). In 1906, Macan Markar dispatched a letter to the Sublime Porte seeking permission to travel to Hejaz in order for him to perform *Hajj*, and the permission was duly granted (BOA, HR.SFR.3.565/99).

Figure 8

Sir Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi, accoutred in a three-piece suit and Turkish fez



Note. From *Twentieth century impressions of Ceylon* (p. 462), by A. Wright, 1999 (Original work published 1907), Asian Educational Services.

In early 1907, when the Muslims of Ceylon came to learn that the Hejaz railway line had reached Al-Ula (in modern-day Saudi Arabia), they gathered at the Colombo Grand Mosque and presented an address of thanks to Macan Markar to be conveyed to Sultan Abdülhamid (Effendi, 1982). This indicates that the Muslims in Ceylon considered it their obligation to thank their Caliph, Abdülhamid II, for constructing the Hejaz Railway, which was eulogised in the Muslim press as the holy line and as the testament to Abdülhamid's piety. That same year, Macan Markar travelled to Hejaz to perform Hajj, and while he was away, his younger brother Samsudeen served as his proxy and managed the firm and consular affairs (BOA, HR.SFR.3. 575/10; Wright,

1907). It is likely that in 1907 Mohamed Macan Markar first travelled to Istanbul and thereafter proceeded to Hejaz to perform Hajj. It was customary at the time to first pray at any mosque in Istanbul where Sultan Abdülhamid had visited and offered his prayers, as this symbolised seeking permission from the Caliph before embarking on the Hajj pilgrimage. This was a common practice among Ceylonese Muslims who performed Hajj during the Hamidian era.

Macan Markar also took a keen interest in promoting Arabic language and Islamic education—which, as detailed in the previous chapter, was part of Abdülhamid’s domestic and foreign policies to promote Pan-Islamism within and beyond the Ottoman Empire (Mahroof, 1981). His firm, O.L.M. Macan Markar, which "was of a charitable and religious disposition," funded several institutions, such as the Ibrahimiyah Arabic College, established in 1892 by Mrs. OLM Macan Markar, and Akbar School, which was later rechristened Husseinie Boys’ English School (Ali, 1987, p. 324; Effendi, 1982; Gugler, 2013; Osella, 2017). As one of the founding members of the Ceylon Muslim Educational Society, Macan Markar made generous endowments to religious schools (*madrasa*), financed the construction of mosques across the island, including that of the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya, and promoted the *Shazuliya* order of Sufism (Effendi, 1982; McGilvray, 1998; Osella, 2017).¹¹

3.2. Urābī Pasha: Key to Pan-Islamism in Ceylon

Except the Ottoman Honorary Consuls, one of the key figures who introduced and disseminated the concept of pan-Islamism among the Ceylonese Muslims was Urābī Pasha, also known as Ahmed Urābī, who lived in exile in Ceylon for almost twenty years between January 1883 and October 1901. Although formal diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire was established in 1863, it was the arrival of Urābī Pasha that “stimulated the Muslims of Ceylon to establish direct cultural contact with the Middle East after an interval of centuries” (Tambiah, 1996, p.73). Born in 1839 as the son of a village headman of peasant (*fellah*) background in Hirriyat Razna, a remote village of the erstwhile Ottoman Egypt (Eyālet-i Mısr), Urābī Pasha pursued his education at Cairo’s Al-Azhar, where Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, one of the peripatetic champions of pan-Islamism, taught philosophy in the 1870s. Urābī Pasha joined the army and rose through the ranks

¹¹ Abdülhamid II also supported specific Sufi orders, whose leaders approved his Caliphal authority and helped promote Hamidian Pan-Islamism.

to become a colonel, having displayed conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, particularly during the Egyptian-Ethiopian War of 1875–76.

3.2.1. *Urābī Revolt in Egypt*

In 1879, disgruntled by the partiality towards recruiting those of Balkan, Circassian, and Turkish heritage to the Egyptian and Sudanese military ranks, Urābī Pasha and his comrades took part in the officer's revolt against Khedive (viceroy) of Ottoman Egypt, Tawfīq Pasha. This escalated into a nationwide nationalist uprising against the Khedive regime and European influence, which came to be called the 'Urābī Revolt' and received the fervent support of Mohamed Abduh, a celebrated disciple of Al Afghani, a strong proponent of Pan-Islamism and architect of Islamic modernism (Datla, 2013; Sagiv, 2013; Von Dehsen, 2013). In 1882, Urābī Pasha became Minister of War and virtual head of the government (Cabinet), earning the love and respect of the masses, who hailed him as a national hero under the slogan *Miṣr li'l Miṣriyyīn* ("Egypt for Egyptians") (Schölch, 1981). 'Abduh was among those who worked for the Urābī Government and served as director of the official journal and censor of the press (Hamilton, 2013). Although Sultan Abdülhamid was expected to intervene and resolve the issue in Egypt, which was one of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, he chose to play the waiting game by carefully analysing every situation in Egypt as it unfolded and retaining silence. He was even accused of pitting Urābī Pasha against Khedive Tawfīk (Vizetelly, 1901). According to Dominic Green (2007), "Tawfīk and Sultan Abdul Hamid had both used Urābī against the British for their own ends" (p.138).

By 1882, the Ottoman Empire had lost vast territories to the Russian Empire, Cyprus to the British, and Tunisia to the French; hence, Abdülhamid was very circumspect when it came to the affairs of Egypt. Although he professed inability to interfere, Abdülhamid kept "in close touch with Arabi by means of the telegraph line passing through the desert between Egypt and Syria" (Cairns, 1913, p. 769). In the words of Edward Vizetelly (1901), British war correspondent for the *London Daily News* and *The New York Times*,

Arabi constantly communicated with the Sultan's private secretary, and also with his Majesty's confidant and spiritual adviser Sheikh Mohammed Zaffer by public wire and mail. Abdul Hamid played one against the other with considerable effect, whilst toying with England and France in a masterly display of Oriental procrastination (p. 96)

Urābī and his supporters (Urābīsts) informed the Sublime Porte that Khedive Tawfiq was plotting to separate Egypt from the Ottoman Empire, make it a British colony, and be appointed its first governor (Al-Atnah et al., 2023; Deringil, 1988). Urābī also sent letters to Abdülhamid expressing his discontent over Tawfik Pasha's allegiance to the British (Deringil, 1988). Despite his opposition to Khedive Tawfik, there is no evidence of Urābī Pasha having opposed the status of Abdülhamid II as the Caliph. The Ottoman State Archives also hold records of the correspondence between Urābī Pasha and the Sublime Porte, especially in the year 1882, proving that there was no enmity between Urābī and Abdülhamid (BOA, Y.PRK.MK.1; BOA, Y.PRK.SRN.1).

Although the Egyptian Nationalists opposed the rule of the Khedive, they remained loyal to Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was popular across the Ottoman Empire as a leader who cared for his subjects and who spared no effort at preventing European encroachment into Muslim lands (Keddie, 1969). Abdülhamid II was a mastermind who used revolutionaries for his own advantage, and Istanbul became a refuge for those like Afghani in the closing decade of the 19th century (Keddie, 1966, 1969).

It is also reported that Urābī Pasha received letters from the private secretary of Sultan Abdülhamid, who as Caliph called upon Urābī to defend the interest of the "Mohammedan nation in Egypt" and alluded to the French invasion of Tunisia as an episode about to be repeated in Egypt (*Supplement to Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 740). Therefore, it is clear that Abdülhamid spared no effort to disseminate anti-colonial sentiments and retain his authority as both the Caliph and Sultan of Egyptians. Although Sultan Abdülhamid II tactfully refused to render his explicit support for the Urābī revolt, the "Urābī rebels used pan-Islamist rhetoric to mobilise the faithful against the British involvement," and this led to anti-European protests that swept throughout Egypt (Motadel, 2014, p. 23). In the words of Moaddel (2005):

In the Urābī movement there was also a call for Egyptian solidarity with the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid, putting the anti-British struggle in the context of a holy war, and popular sentiment dubbed the Urābī forces the part of God (hezbollah) (p. 141).

It can be surmised that Abdülhamid was hoping for Urābī Pasha to give up on his nationalist sentiments and embrace Hamidian Pan-Islamism instead so that it would curb the rise of Arabist sentiments in the Ottoman Empire. Abdülhamid was most likely tolerating the Urābīsts, hoping that they could feasibly be used to protect the Ottoman Empire against British encroachment

(Deringil, 1988). In the late 19th century nationalists were not perceived as threats to Pan-Islamism but were rather seen as proponents of the movement. According to Keddie (1969), “Several of the early Iranian, Egyptian, and Arab nationalists and many Pan-Turkists were simultaneously Pan-Islamists.” (p. 26). Urābī Pasha and many of his supporters also upheld the core ideals of Pan-Islamism and adjured the Muslims to remain united against European colonialism. It is likely that Urābī Pasha, like ‘Abduh’ considered supporting Hamidian Pan-Islamism as their religious duty.

To prevent the interference of the British and French, Abdülhamid II also dispatched a special mission to Egypt to effect a reconciliation between the Khedive and his Cabinet headed by Urābī Pasha. One of the key commissioners of this mission was Sheikh Ahmed Esad, a close confidante of Abdülhamid II and a prominent Arab who championed Hamidian Pan-Islamism, who is said to have given moral support to Urābī and his lieutenants against Khedive Tawfīk (Deringil, 1988; Schölch, 1981). It is therefore evident that Abdülhamid was keen on winning favour of Urābī Pasha. It has long been debated by scholars as to whether Urābī Pasha, as an Egyptian nationalist leader, wanted Abdülhamid II to remain the Sultan of Egypt. According to Colonel C. Charles Chaillé-Long (1884), who served as acting consular agent for the United States of America in Alexandria, Egypt:

Arabi Pasha declared to the Turkish commissioners that his only objects were the maintenance of the rights of His Majesty the Sultan in Egypt, the continuation of the authority of the imperial firmans, the preservation of the status quo, and the prevention of abuses on the part of foreigners who were not parties to the International Conventions (p. 174)

This indicates that Urābī Pasha was against Khedive Tawfīk and not Sultan Abdülhamid. Given that Urābī maintained correspondence with the Sublime Porte, declared war against the British in solidarity with Abdülhamid II, and worked closely with pan-Islamists like ‘Abduh, it is reasonable to argue that Urābī Pasha never challenged Abdülhamid II’s position as the Caliph of the Muslims. Threatened by the overbearing influence and popularity of Urābī Pasha, Tawfīq Pasha sought the assistance of the French and the British to quell the anti-Khedive ‘Urābī Revolt.’ In July 1882, the British responded promptly to the Khedive’s request and bombarded the city of Alexandria, which incited further unrest against the Khedive regime. Pressured by the British, Abdülhamid II declared Urābī Pasha a rebel and outlaw (Cole, 2014; Deringil, 1988).

In September 1882, Urābī's army faced a crushing defeat against the British at the battle of Tall al-Kabīr. Urābī Pasha was apprehended, court-martialed, and sentenced to death by the reinstalled Khedive regime. However, following the intervention of the British solicitors Alexander Broadley and Richard Eve, the sentence was commuted to banishment for life to British Ceylon. The properties of Urābī Pasha and all those who were involved in the 'Urābī revolt' were confiscated by the Khedive Government. On the dawn of 26th December 1882, along with Urābī Pasha and his comrades Ali Fehmi, Mahmoud Fehmi, Yacoub Sami, Mahmoud Sami, Toulba Ismet, and Abdul-El-Al-Hilmi, their 19 wives and daughters, and 17 sons, a total of 54 individuals boarded the steamer "*Mareotis*" and set sail for Ceylon (Broadley, 1884; Royle, 1886).

3.2.2. *Urābī Pasha in Ceylon*

The steamer safely anchored in Colombo harbour at around 5 pm on the 10th of January 1883; however, Urābī Pasha and his entourage did not disembark until 11 am the following day ("Arrival of Arabi Pasha in Ceylon", 1883; "Arabi Pasha in Ceylon", 1883). Given that the local and foreign newspapers had widely publicised Urābī Pasha's arrival, throngs of enthusiastic natives surged in from all quarters of Ceylon to greet the Egyptian exiles (Asad, 1993). As the rumour circulated that except for senior officials, others were prohibited from going onboard *Mareotis* to greet the Egyptian exiles, many got into their *dhonies* (fishing vessels) and rowed to the side of *Mareotis* to see the exiles descend into boats ("Arabi Pasha in Ceylon," 1883). Accompanied by their respective families, the Egyptian pashas disembarked one batch after another into boats that towed them to the jetty, where they were greeted by senior British officials. Among those who welcomed Urābī Pasha were the Turkish consul and *Mollah* (High Priest) (*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 1883, p. 68; Ismeth, 2022). This indicates that Urābī Pasha was treated as an Ottoman envoy and as a revolutionary who opposed colonialism, and not as a rebel condemned by the Caliph.

According to Thiranagama (2011), "while Ceylonese Muslims seemed unaffected by the actual revolt in Egypt, on his arrival in Ceylon Arabi Pasha was greeted by large crowds and feted by newspapers and local Muslim populations." (p. 113). It should be noted that by the early 1880s, Sinhala-Buddhists and Tamil-Hindus had begun their revival movements in response to Christian missionaries and British colonial rule (Kearney, 1973; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). However, the Muslims of Ceylon lacked a leader to settle the sectarian and ethnic differences and spearhead the Muslim revivalist movement (Azeez, 1964, 1968). Therefore, Urābī Pasha, an Arab who revolted against

the British, was perceived by the Muslim elite as a potential, or even ideal, leader and hence was accorded star treatment when he arrived in Ceylon. According to Captain Osborne of *Mareotis*, “On landing, the people crowded round him [Urābī Pasha]. I should call it fairly mobbing one. Some kissed his clothes, and some got down on their knees and kissed his boots” (“Arabi Pasha,” 1883, p. 6). As non-Muslims were also present to greet him, it is likely that they showed their respect by touching the feet, as it is a traditional gesture of humility and respect in Ceylonese culture. The enthusiasm of the Muslims of Ceylon in meeting the Egyptian exiles was widely reported in local and international print media. For example, the report of the police commission (1883) made the following remarks: “The advent of Ahmad ‘Arabi and other Egyptian exiles to our shores was the cause of some excitement among the native population, prior to and after their arrival and particularly on the day of landing” (Asad, 1993, p. 34)

With the help of their secretary and interpreter, the Pashas—none of whom spoke or understood any English—asked the visitors about the number of English newspapers, whether there was an Arabic newspaper, whether there were natives who spoke Arabic, the number of schools on the island, how far Kandy was from Colombo, and a range of other questions related to Ceylon and its inhabitants (“Arabi Pasha in Ceylon,” 1883). This indicates that they were curious about Ceylon and were interested in knowing the status of Arabic from the very moment they landed. Kamil Asad (1993) surmises that one of the main reasons why the British chose to exile Urābī Pasha to Ceylon was because the natives on the island did not speak or understand Arabic; hence, they presumed that the exiles would not be able to provoke any anti-colonial sentiments. After a short interaction with those who had gathered to greet them, they were shown to their carriages and driven off to their assigned residences (“Arabi Pasha in Ceylon,” 1883).

The British government provided Urābī and his six comrades—who were addressed by the locals with the honorific title ‘Pasha’—each with separate residences, a police constable, and a monthly allowance for their upkeep (Asad, 1993a; Ferguson, 1887). According to a letter dated 19th May 1890, sent by the inspector general of police to the colonial secretary, the seven Pashas were permitted to travel to any part of the island, except for the North and Eastern provinces, as police surveillance in those remote locations proved difficult for the British authorities (Asad, 1993a). Also to be noted is that the Eastern province had the highest Muslim population in Ceylon, while the Northern province was also home to a substantial Muslim population; hence, it could

have been another reason why Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants were prohibited by the British from travelling to those provinces.

Figure 9

The Egyptian Exiles in Ceylon



Note. From *Ceylon, the Land of Eternal Charm* (p.224) by Ali Foad Toulba, 1926, Hutchinson and Company. Copyright 1926 by Hutchinson and Company.

On the 12th of January, 1883, Urābī Pasha and his fellow exiles chose to visit the Maradana Mosque in Colombo, where they were welcomed with great warmth by the large assemblage of local Muslims (Asad, 1993). It is likely that Urābī Pasha was invited by Hussain Lebbe Marikar, the Ottoman Consul, who was closely involved with the Maradana Mosque, which eventually became the incubator of Pan-Islamism in Ceylon. On the 13th of February, 1883, the Ottoman consul to Colombo dispatched a letter to the Sublime Porte informing them that Urābī Pasha and his entourage had arrived safely and had been assigned residences in Colombo and made further enquiries on how the exiles should be treated, as he had not received any information in that regard (BOA, HR.TO.333/57). It appears that the Sublime Porte did not respond to the query. However, the Ottoman consuls maintained amicable relations with Urābī Pasha and his comrades. As detailed in the sections that follow, Urābī Pasha proved vital in introducing and promoting Hamidian Pan-Islamism in Ceylon, and during his 19-year exile, he was respected by the local Muslims more as an Ottoman envoy and leader than as a political exile. Moreover, he maintained cordial relations with the natives of Ceylon, especially its leaders, as well as with the British officials, and showed no trace of his anti-British 'Egyptian nationalist' past. However, there is no credible evidence to conclusively state whether Urābī Pasha—who was abstruse and strategic—served as an 'Ottoman agent' of Pan-Islamism, whether his endeavours to disseminate Hamidian Pan-Islamism in Ceylon were out of self-interest or whether he had been secretly instructed to do so by the Sublime Porte.

3.2.3. *Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism*

At a time when the local revivalist movements established schools and press to promote native culture, religions, and languages, Urābī Pasha chose to support English education. Given that Urābī Pasha was an alumnus of Al-Azhar, which served as an incubator for Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism in the 19th century, he was familiar with the educational reforms introduced in Egypt by prominent Islamic modernists like Rifa'a at-Tahtawi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Muhammad 'Abduh (Stauth, 1998). As detailed in the sections that follow, in Ceylon, Hamidian Pan-Islamism was intrinsically linked to Islamic modernism. In fact, it was largely Islamic modernists like Afghani and 'Abduh who championed Hamidian Pan-Islamism, while fundamentalist groups vehemently challenged the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Prior to the arrival of Urābī Pasha, the Muslims of Ceylon had little to no exposure to the teachings of Afghani and Abduh.

From the moment he landed, Urābī Pasha expressed his interest in learning English. Much like Afghani and ‘Abduh, Urābī Pasha believed that Islam was compatible with the changing contingencies of time and space. When one of the reporters from *Ceylon Observer* asked Urābī Pasha how he would spend his time in Ceylon now that he was freed from all political cares, he pulled out his English alphabet book and told him that he had been studying hard during his voyage and that he would persevere until he could read and speak English. (“Arabi Pasha in Ceylon, 1883”). Urābī Pasha also mentioned that one of the main reasons why he wanted to learn English was to know what had been published about him in the Ceylonese press. (“Arabi Pasha in Ceylon, 1883”). He encouraged the Muslims of Ceylon to embrace Western-style education, science and modern technology.

During his meeting with the British Governor of Ceylon, Sir James Longden, Urābī Pasha expressed his interest in learning English, requested an English doctor, and wanted his children as well as those of his fellow comrades to be admitted to Christian missionary schools so that they could receive an English education (Asad, 1993a; Broadley, 1884). He also requested an increase in the allowance provided and wanted both Toulba Ismet and Abdul-El-Al-Hilmi, who had been asked to live with Urābī Pasha at his residence, ‘Lake House,’ to be provided with separate residences. (Asad, 1993). Complying with his requests, the British authorities in Ceylon appointed English tutors, had the children admitted to English schools, increased the allowance, and provided Toulba Ismet and Abdul-El-Al-Hilmi with spacious bungalows in Colombo (Asad, 1993).

As evidenced by their letters to Alexander Broadley (1884), Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants grasped basic conversational English in just a few weeks since they started taking lessons. According to Julian Thomas—English journalist and correspondent for the Melbourne *Argus*—when he met Urābī Pasha, he spoke “English fairly well” (Ferguson, 1887, p. 360). Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants effectively and strategically used English to build friendships with Ceylon’s native gentry, particularly with Muslim personages, such as M.C. Siddi Lebbe, A.M. Wapchie Marikar, Carrimjee Jefferjee, I.L.M. Abdul Aziz and M.S.J. Akbar (Ali, 1981). Urābī Pasha hosted sumptuous banquets and held regular meetings to discuss challenges faced by the Muslims, to the extent that local newspapers described his residence as a mosque because of the constant flow of Muslims (Ali, 1981; Asad, 1993; Dep, 1983; Razzak & Shehu, 2024). The presence of Urābī Pasha and his comrades paved the way for the Muslim revivalist movement in Ceylon, and with the support of the local elite, Urābī Pasha soon established himself as an influential figure who

“enjoyed a position amongst the Ceylon Muslims almost equivalent to that of the Ottoman Sultan” (Ali, 1981, p. 6; Shukri, 1986). According to Dennis B. McGilvray (2017), “For Sri Lankan Moors, Orabi Pasha and his supporters came to embody an ideal of Middle Eastern civilization and pan-Islamic solidarity” (p. 93).

The most prominent among the Ceylonese Muslims who were drawn to Urābī Pasha’s Pan-Islamic and modernist sentiments was Muhammad Cassim Siddi Lebbe (1838–1898), also known as Mukammatu Kacim Cittilevvai, a literary savant, lawyer, educationist, and social reformer (Ali, 1981; Asad, 1993; Pieris, 2013; Shukri, 1986; Tambiah, 1996; Tschacher, 2018). He was amongst the handful of English-educated Moors of 19th-century Ceylon, whose camaraderie with Urābī Pasha led to the founding of Muslim schools and press, which served as effective mediums in promulgating pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism on the island (Azeez, 1968).

3.2.4. *Rise of Muslim Press: Sidi Lebbe*

In December 1882, just a month before Urābī Pasha was exiled to Ceylon, M.C. Siddi Lebbe started *Muslim Nesan*, meaning ‘Muslim Friend’ in Tamil language. Although Malay lithographer Baba Ounus Saldin started *Alamat Lankapuri* (Address of Lanka), the world’s first Malay newspaper, in Ceylon in 1869, it was marketed as a Malay and not Muslim newspaper (Hussainmiya, 1991; Kularatne, 2006; Ricci, 2016, 2019; Wright, 1907). Therefore, when Siddi Lebbe launched *Muslim Nesan*, which was published weekly in *Arwi* (Tamil written in Arabic script) and the English language, it gained recognition as the first Muslim newspaper published in Ceylon (Thawfeeq, 1972). Siddi Lebbe, who had read a great deal about Urābī Pasha and his anti-British revolt, was amongst the first Ceylonese who met with Urābī Pasha just twelve days following the latter’s arrival to Ceylon (Azeez, 1968; Shukri, 1986). Siddi Lebbe was granted permission to interview Urābī Pasha, and the interview was promptly published as a full-page article in the second issue of *Muslim Nesan*, published on 22nd January 1883 (Azeez, 1968). In the months that followed, Siddi Lebbe developed a strong rapport with Urābī Pasha, who became his mentor and teacher. During their stay in Ceylon, Urābī Pasha and his comrades steered clear of discussing politics, maintained good relations with Ottoman and British officials, and did not partake in or explicitly support anti-colonial or revivalist movements (Wenzlhuemer, 2008; Wickramasinghe, 2003, 2006). It can be reasonably argued that although Urābī Pasha maintained a low profile, he tactfully used Siddi Lebbe to realise his ambitions in Ceylon, such as promoting Arabic language, pan-Islamism, and anti-colonialism.

In 1884, Siddi Lebbe relinquished his lucrative practice as a proctor in Kandy and settled permanently in Colombo to remain close to his mentor, Urābī Pasha, under whose guidance he decided to focus on developing a Muslim-centric printing press, which became the vanguard of Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism in Ceylon (Azeez, 1968, 1970). Relocating to Colombo also helped Siddi Lebbe build acquaintances with some of the influential figures who visited Urābī Pasha. Chief among them was English poet, anti-imperialist, and ardent sympathiser with Muslim aspirations, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who, along with his wife, Lady Anne Noel, visited Ceylon in October 1883 (Dep, 1983; Asad, 1993a; Tyron, 1888). It is highly likely that Siddi Lebbe's interactions with Wilfrid Blunt, an acquaintance of Al Afghani and a close friend of Mohamed Abduh, provided him further insight on Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism.

Following the arrival of Urābī Pasha, *Muslim Nesan* started publishing weekly articles that focused on the educational and social reforms that Siddi Lebbe and Urābī Pasha envisioned should take place in the Muslim community of Ceylon. There were weekly columns on pan-Islamism and its development, political upheavals and revivalism in the Ottoman Empire and Muslim-majority countries, and the endeavours of Sultan Abdülhamid, his charitable causes, and war efforts (Heng & Aljunied, 2011; Shukri, 1986; Tschacher, 2009). According to Aboobucker Mohamed Abdul Azeez (1968)—Ceylonese civil servant, senator, and educationist—Siddi Lebbe, through his regular meetings with Urābī Pasha, gained deep insights on the educational reforms implemented in Egypt and Abdülhamid's pan-Islamism. Some of the key milestones of Ottoman-Ceylon relations covered in *Muslim Nesan* were the visit of the Ottoman frigate *Ertuğrul* (covered in the issues of 6th and 11th of November, 1889), the Silver Jubilee of Sultan Abdülhamid (covered in the issues of 15th, 25th, and 29th of August and 1st and 5th of September, 1890), the 33rd anniversary of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign (covered in the issues of 15th and 18th of August, 1908), and the Hejaz Railway project (covered in the issues of 15th and 22nd of August, 1908).

Muslim Nesan also published the articles and speeches of Sir Seyed Ahmad Khan, a pioneer of Muslim nationalism and Islamic modernism in British India (Heng & Aljunied, 2011; Tschacher, 2009). Through his writings, Siddi Lebbe strived to instill the feeling that the Muslims of Ceylon “belonged to the world fraternity of Muslim Umma” and “agitated vehemently for Muslim representation in the Legislative Council” (Shukri, 1986, p. 355). The period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the surge in interest among the Muslims in Ceylon in the “identification with Islam and Muslim identities outside the Island” (Thiranagama, 2011, p. 113).

Muslim Nesan also carried articles that had been previously featured in Arabic and Tamil newspapers published overseas, as well as a section devoted to opinion pieces, where readers' letters to the editor were published (Tschacher, 2018). Apart from Ceylonese, *Muslim Nesan* had subscribers in South India, Singapore, and Malaya, some of whom also contributed articles and sent letters that articulated their concerns (Heng and Aljunied, 2011; Tschacher, 2018).

Given that Siddi Lebbe maintained good relations with Urābī Pasha, who had made friends and acquaintances with leaders and rebels of Northeast Africa, such as the self-proclaimed 'Mahdi' (guide) Osman Digna of Sudan, the articles published in *Muslim Nesan*, particularly those that focused on Egypt, Sudan, and other domains of the Ottoman Empire, were considered "a special asset" and were reproduced in Southeast Asian newspapers. (Heng & Aljunied, 2011, p. 74). Therefore, it is evident that through print media and literary culture, Urābī Pasha's and Siddi Lebbe's political and social ideals were conveyed not just to Muslims of Ceylon but also to those across India and Southeast Asia (Shukri, 1986). Siddi Lebbe's success set the stage for other Ceylonese Muslim personages to establish newspapers that also focused on political affairs and Islamic revivalism in the Muslim world. For example, in 1886, A.L.C. Mohideen, a Moor scholar and a trustee of the Colombo Moslem Club, founded the newspaper '*Sarvajana Nesan*' ('The Universal Friend') as a rival to Siddi Lebbe's *Muslim Nesan* (Heng and Aljunied, 2011; Nuhman, 2007).

Drawn to the ideals of pan-Islamism, Siddi Lebbe also commenced a monthly journal called *Gñānadīpam* (Torch of Wisdom) in 1892 to enlighten the Muslims of Ceylon about the new trends, challenges, and political movements in the Muslim world, particularly that from the Ottoman Empire, as well as to promote Islamic jurisprudence, the Arabic language, and the teachings of the Quran (Ahmad, 2012; Azeez, 1968; Barnett & Pope, 1909; Tschacher, 2011).

3.2.5. *I.L.M. Abdul Aziz: Last Vestige of Hamidian Pan-Islamism*

One of the notable Ceylonese Muslims who was influenced by both Urābī Pasha and Siddi Lebbe was Idroos Lebbe Marikar Abdul Aziz, popularly called I.L.M. Abdul Aziz (1867-1915), an educationist, journalist, and social reformer. According to Shukri (1986), "Abdul Azeez was very much influenced by Orabi Pasha, and he also became an ardent admirer of Turkey and Sultan Abdul Hamid, who was considered at that time as the Caliph of Islam" (p. 357). Unlike Siddi Lebbe, Aziz was not proficient in Arabic. He had learnt to read Tamil and the Quran from his father and received education only up to the sixth standard at the Government 'Pettah Boys' English School in Colombo

(Mahroof, 1981). It was largely through his own dedication and zest for learning that Aziz became a voracious reader, which helped him acquire vast knowledge on a wide range of topics (Azeez, 1970; Mahroof, 1981).

His close interactions with Siddi Lebbe whetted his appetite for becoming a journalist. In the mid-1880s, Aziz, who had by then become proficient in both English and Tamil, started contributing articles to some of the major Ceylonese newspapers and periodicals, including *Ceylon Observer* and *Muslim Nesan* (Mahroof, 1981). In 1889, when Siddi Lebbe relinquished the editorship of *Muslim Nesan*, Abdul Aziz was unanimously chosen to succeed him as the next editor (Azeez, 1970; Mahroof, 1981). It was, however, short-lived, as he too resigned after six months due to differences with the new management (Azeez, 1970; Marikar, 1981). The passing of Siddi Lebbe in 1897 led to the downfall of the Muslim Press, and in his efforts to rejuvenate it, Aziz founded the periodical *As-Sawab* in 1900, which was published in Arabic-Tamil (Arwi) (Azeez, 1970; Mahroof, 1981). It didn't survive a year. Later in 1901, he established the biweekly *Muslim Guardian* (*Muslim Paadukavalan*), which endured until 1908, and published articles in Tamil and English (Azeez, 1970; Marikar, 1981).

Apart from promoting educational, religious, and social reforms, Aziz's *Muslim Guardian* helped disseminate pan-Islamism, promote the supremacy and authority of Sultan Abdülhamid as the Caliph of the Muslims, and help encourage the readers to subscribe to Abdülhamid's projects, particularly the Hejaz railway, which hoped to connect Damascus to Medina (Azeez, 1970; Marikar, 1981). In the 29th September, 1902 issue of *Muslim Guardian*, Abdul Aziz declared the Hejaz railway as a holy project "and even implied that those who subscribed funds would receive the blessings of Allah" (Ali, 1981, p.6). However, most Muslims in Ceylon, wanted certificates, tickets or medals to be presented to them, in recognition of their donations to the Hejaz railway (BOA, BEO.1696/127175; BOA, HR.SFR.3. 501/40; BOA, HR.TH.264/45; BOA, HR.TH.265/78).

Moreover, in his writings and speeches, Aziz urged the Muslims to learn English and requested the *Ulama* (scholars of Islamic doctrine and law) to mention the name of Abdülhamid at the sermons *Khutbah* delivered before the Friday congregational prayers (Ali, 1981). For example, the 1st of August, 1902, issue of *Muslim Guardian* published prayers for the good health and longevity of Abdülhamid and the Caliphate (Ali, 1981). Similarly, on the 31st of August, 1900, at an event organised to mark the silver jubilee of Abdülhamid, Aziz "reminded the audience of the

recital of the Sultan's name on every Friday in all the Jumma mosques of the Island” (Azeez, 1970, p. 16). His speech, which was delivered in Tamil, was later published as a book titled ‘Sultan’s Silver Jubilee,’ a copy of which was sent by the Ottoman consul to his counterpart in London to be delivered to the Sublime Porte, which confirmed receipt of the book in October 1900 (BOA, Y.A.HUS.411/95)

The Ceylonese Muslims were kept apprised of all major events that unfolded in the Ottoman Empire, to the extent that when they learnt that a Kadın Efendi (Imperial Consort) had passed away sometime in mid-1901, they sent a condolence message to the Sublime Porte (BOA, HR.SFR.3.501/30). Such was the interest in Ottoman affairs, particularly during the Hamidian Era. Apart from covering the political affairs of the Muslim world, Aziz’s *Muslim Guardian* also focused on enlightening the readers about the history of the Ottoman Empire, its rulers, conquests, and challenges (Mahroof, 1981). Despite his diplomatic acumen and zeal to promote pan-Islamism, Abdülhamid II was deposed in 1909 and replaced by his younger brother, Mehmed V. This, however, didn’t dissuade Aziz from championing pan-Islamism in Ceylon. Although by 1908 *Muslim Guardian* and most other Muslim newspapers had become defunct, Aziz continued to contribute articles to the English and Tamil newspapers, in which he addressed the challenges faced by the *ummah* in the hands of colonialism (Mahroof, 1981).

His service to the Ottoman Empire was acknowledged by his friend, Ottoman Consul Mohammed Macan Markar Effendi, who reported to the Sublime Porte of Aziz’s contribution (BOA, İ.HUS.179/48). When the Turco-Italian War broke out in September 1911, Aziz declared his support for the Ottoman Empire and urged his Moor brethren to make supplications for the victory of the Ottoman sultan and his army. On the 12th of October, 1912, under the chairmanship of the Ottoman consul, Aziz delivered an “illuminating address on the theme of the conflict between the Cross and the Crescent” (Azeez, 1970, p. 16). With the outbreak of the First World War, diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and British Ceylon were suspended in 1915, and in May that year, the Sinhala-Moor riots broke out, and on the 11th of September, 1915, Abdul Aziz passed away (Effendi, 1982; Mahroof, 1981).

3.2.6. *Promotion of Arabic Language and Muslim Education*

In his press conferences and meetings, Urābī Pasha emphasised the importance of English education and the teaching of the Arabic language to Muslims. When the Muslims questioned Urābī Pasha on his decision to send his children, including his daughters, to missionary schools, he

replied, saying he is confident that his children, who had been taught the Quran, would never leave Islam. He tried to convince the Moors that there was no harm in sending their children, including daughters, to school, as long as they had been taught the Quran before they were admitted to schools. In his view, Pan-Islamism wasn't restricted to learning Arabic and revering the Ottoman Caliph but entailed the adoption of modern education and acceptance of women's rights. To this day, urban Muslims send their children to *madrassa* before sending them to Christian missionary schools. According to Mahroof (1993), Urābī Pasha was “influential in presenting a high profile of the Arabic language in Sri Lanka” (p. 182).

Siddi Lebbe proved instrumental in helping Urābī Pasha promote Arabic among Muslims of Ceylon. As an adept writer and editor, Siddi Lebbe penned numerous articles on the importance of learning the Arabic language, and he actively advocated for government schools to offer Arabic as one of the subjects (Azeez, 1968; Shukri, 1986). Siddi Lebbe, who took an avid interest in learning Arabic, published an article in *Muslim Nesan* in 1884, in which he encouraged the Muslims to try and adopt Arabic as their home language (Nuhman, 2007; Ramesh & Wong, 2020). He argued that if the Portuguese and the Dutch who live in British Ceylon could forget their mother tongues and speak English, why can't the Moors forget Tamil and make Arabic their mother tongue? (Nuhman, 2007; Ramesh & Wong, 2020). This signifies that Urābī Pasha's influence was so profound that Siddi Lebbe rallied for Arabic to be adopted by Ceylonese Muslims who lived in a British colony where Arabic was not a common language.

Moreover, through publications such as *Tuhuwathul Nahwa* (Key to Grammar), *Shurut As Salat* (Observance of Prayer), Arabic Study Book Parts I & II, and '*Hidayatul Qasimiya*,' Siddi Lebbe urged the Muslims to adhere to the tenets of Islam in accordance with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (teachings of Prophet Muhammed), to respect the spiritual authority of Sultan Abdülhamid, to learn Arabic as it is the language of the Quran and the Prophet, and to send their children to schools to seek education, which he believed was the most effective way through which the Moors could uplift themselves from the backward condition they were in (Shukri, 1986). As Urābī Pasha was familiar with the reforms that had been introduced in Egypt, he encouraged local intelligentsia and Muslim businessmen to establish Muslim schools where the Arabic language and the Quran could be taught as part of the curriculum, along with other subjects like English, arithmetic, sciences, and liberal arts (Shukri, 1986; Wahab-Salman, 2016). As highlighted by Dennis McGilvray (2017),

Urābī Pasha’s “neo-Ottoman sophistication” convinced the Muslim businessmen of Ceylon to finance the construction of “western-style schools for Muslim children” (p. 93).

With the financial support of A.M. Wapchie Marikar and supervision of Urābī Pasha, M.C. Siddi Lebbe established on the 15th of November 1884, the Anglo-Mohammedan Boys’ School *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia* (The Good School of Islamic Studies) at New Moor Street, Colombo, and the name for the institution was chosen by Urābī Pasha himself (Azeez, 1968, 1970; Pieris, 2013; Shukri, 1986; Wenzlhuemer, 2008; Wimalaratne, 1986). The school was modelled after the Christian missionary schools of Ceylon. The only difference being that Arabic and Quran were part of the curriculum along with general subjects like English and arithmetic. At the inauguration ceremony of the school, Siddi Lebbe appealed for financial support to expand the new institution, and Wapchie Marikar made a princely donation of three thousand rupees (Azeez, 1970). Urābī Pasha contributed a sum of one hundred rupees and explained that he cannot afford to make a generous donation due to his meagre monthly allowance and went on to deliver a poignant speech by quoting from the Quran and Hadiths (Azeez, 1970). This oration had a profound impact on the audience and led to reconciliation between those who had fallen out as described by A.M.A. Azeez (1970) in the following passage:

He made a moving speech quickened with quotations from the Holy Quran and the Hatheeths. This produced an electric effect on the audience; leaders of warring parties whose long drawn cases were still pending in the District Court of Colombo sought immediate reconciliation; with tear filled eyes they gave salaams to each other. The circumstances looked propitious for the future of the school. There was a general feeling that a new era had dawned (p. 15)

It is highly unlikely for Urābī Pasha to have delivered a lecture in English; even if he had, it would not have been understood by most Muslims and been so impactful to the extent that it resolved conflicts among the audience. As Siddi Lebbe spoke Arabic, it is plausible that he translated Urābī’s speech to Tamil. It was probably this incident that made Siddi Lebbe realise that it was preposterous to urge the Muslims to forget their mother tongue and adopt Arabic. In 1886, he published another article in *Muslim Nesan* asking Muslims to learn four languages: Arabic, Tamil, English, and Sinhala (Hussein, 2007; Nuhman, 2007). He highlighted that Arabic is important as it is the language of Islam, its prayers, and its scripture, while English was necessary as Ceylon was then a British Colony where highly paid jobs were reserved for English literates. Siddi

Lebbe also advocated for Sinhalese to be studied by Muslims, as it was the language of the majority population of Ceylon (Nuhman, 2007). His four-language policy also signifies that Siddi Lebbe was largely interested in disseminating Pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism among Tamil-speaking Muslims and not among other non-Arabic and non-Tamil speaking Muslim communities such as the Malays, Afghans, Bohras, Memons, and Khojas.

Figure 10

Façade of Al-Madrasathul Hameedia in Hulftsdorp, Colombo.



Note. The engraved inscription *Al Madrasathul Hameedia* still adorns the façade. Own work.

Among those who were inspired by the oration delivered by Urābī Pasha at the inauguration ceremony of *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia* was 17-year-old I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, who went on to become a prominent champion of Hamidian Islamism in Ceylon. It is said that Urābī Pasha’s oration brought “Egypt within his [Abdul Aziz’s] ken, and with it came Istanbul, the seat of the Caliphate” (Azeez, 1970, p. 15). Moreover, it was at this ceremony that Abdul Aziz—who, like most other Ceylonese Muslims of the time, came to learn about Urābī Pasha, pan-Islamism, and

revivalist movements in the Muslim world through Siddi Lebbe's articles in *Muslim Nesan*—is said to have realised “how solicitous the uncrowned sovereign of the people of Egypt was for the welfare of a small population of Muslims in a distant land. His deep concern for unity among the Muslims, evidenced that day, connoted the compelling power of Islamic brotherhood” (Azeez, 1970, p. 15). This indicates that Urābī Pasha was accorded sovereign status by the Ceylonese Muslims. Aziz was also moved by the speeches delivered by Siddi Lebbe and Wapchie Marikar, so much so that “it left a deep and lasting impression on his mind” (Azeez, 1970, p. 15).

Urābī Pasha is also reported to have resolved sectarian differences among the Sunni Muslims and worked closely with Sunnites and Shiites, establishing himself as the leader of the urban Muslims (Azeez, 1970). This helps demonstrate that his thoughts aligned with that of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who strived to establish a *modus vivendi* between the Sunnites and Shiites. (Hirano, 2008).

Urābī Pasha's stay in Ceylon also influenced the founding of *Al-Jame-atul Islamia* (The Islamic Gathering), a society to promote the social, religious, and political welfare of the Muslims of Ceylon (Mahroof, 1981; Nuhman, 2007). The society worked indefatigably to convey the grievances of the Muslims to the relevant authorities. For example, until the early 1880s, the medical authorities granted permission for medical students to dissect the bodies of Muslims who died at hospitals. The dissected bodies were thereafter buried without performing the religious rites. Considering it indignant, Al-Jame-atul Islamia appealed to the British Governor, who discontinued the practice of permitting medical students to dissect Muslim bodies, which were ordered to be handed over to an *alim* assigned by Al-Jame-atul Islamia to be buried according to Islamic rites (Mahroof, 1981). When Siddi Lebbe felt despondent and wanted to return to Kandy relinquishing his press as *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia* did not receive the financial support he expected, it was A.M. Wapchie Marikar and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, the secretary of 'Al-Jame-atul Islamia', who convinced Siddi Lebbe to address his grievances at a Friday Jumma Gathering organised by Al-Jame-atul Islamia in the Maradana Mosque (Mahroof, 1981). In 1891, with the help of Al-Jame-atul Islamia, the Ceylon Muslim Educational Society was founded. Abdul Aziz was unanimously appointed as its first secretary, while Wapchie Marikar assumed the offices of treasurer and manager. (Mahroof, 1981). The Muslim Educational Society also started the periodical *El-Muslim*, which was edited by Abdul Aziz (Azeez, 1970; Marikar, 1981).

In 1891, the Colombo Muslim Education Society helped Siddi Lebbe establish three Muslim girls' schools in Kandy, Kurunegala, and Gampola, all of which, due to lack of financial support, deteriorated after some years (Asad, 1993b; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). According to K.D.G. Wimalaratne (1986), by 1894, there were four state-aided Muslim schools, and the government, under the persuasion of Lady Havelock, wife of Governor Sir Arthur Elibank Havelock, also established schools for Muslim girls in which provision was made for the instructions in the Quran (Asad, 1993b). If it hadn't been for the pioneering work of Siddi Lebbe, it is unlikely for Lady Havelock to have established Muslim schools where Quranic lessons were part of the curriculum. According to Nuhman (2007), it was following Siddi Lebbe's meeting with Governor Havelock in January 1892 that the British government established schools for Muslim girls, where English, Tamil, Quran, arithmetic, and sewing were taught to girls. In the years that followed, Siddi Lebbe, with the help of the British Government, went on to establish more schools for Muslim girls across the island. As there was a shortage of Muslim female teachers, Burghers (Eurasians) were mostly appointed as teachers and headmistresses.

Later, under the patronage of Urābī Pasha, on the 22nd of August 1892, a boys' school in the name of *Al Madrasathul Zahira* was founded by M.C. Siddi Lebbe in Colombo, which was named by Urābī Pasha in honour of his alma mater, Al Azhar (Asad, 1993b; Mohan, 1987; Shukri, 1986; Wimalaratne, 1986). Thanks to Urābī Pasha, Cairo's Al Azhar—which served as the locus for pan-Islamism—became popular among the Moor literati of Ceylon. For example, the protagonist of Siddi Lebbe's novel, *Acanpēyutaiya katai* (1885), studied at Al Azhar. (Shukri, 1986). Likewise, Siddi Lebbe's Arabic grammar books, such as '*Hidayatul Qasimiya*,' were based on the method of the textbooks prepared in Egypt for the teaching of Arabic (Shukri, 1986). In 1894, *Al Madrasathul Zahira* was officially registered as Maradana Muhammadan Boys School *Al-Madurastul-Al-Zahira*, and in 1913, the school was rechristened Zahira College (Asad, 1993b; Wimalaratne, 1986).

Figure 11

Maradana Mosque, Colombo



Note. Maradana Mosque was the incubator of Pan-Islamism in Ceylon and the main venue where festivities to mark Sultan Abdülhamid II's jubilee were organised. It was at a meeting held at the Maradana Mosque that M.C. Siddi Lebbe, Wapiche Marikar, and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz made the collective decision to establish *Al Madrasathul Zahira*. From Zahira College Library.

The four houses of Zahira College are named after four major cities steeped in Islamic history: Angora (Ankara), Baghdad, Cordova, and Istanbul. According to Ismeth (2022), “Apart from its salient contribution to the Ceylon Muslims' education history, the school also contributed to the strengthening of the Ottoman-Ceylon relationship in the 19th century” (p. 118). In 1900, to mark Sultan Abdülhamid's silver jubilee, the Anglo-Mohammedan Boys' School *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia* was rechristened *Al-Madrasat al-Hamidiya* (Effendi, 1982; Mahroof, 1986; Saltık, 2020). Moreover, on the 31st of August, 1900, in the grounds of the Colombo Grand Mosque, Ottoman Consul Abdul Majid laid the foundation for a new building, which was sponsored by Moor philanthropist and merchant Noordeen Hadjiar (Effendi, 1982; Ells, 2012; Saltık, 2020; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

In 1905, the then Ottoman Consul to Colombo, Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi, dispatched letters to the Sublime Porte, reminding them that *Al-Madrasat al-Hamidiya* was named in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid’s silver jubilee and suggested that it would be appreciated if the Sultan could send a special gift that could be presented to the best student at the annual prize-giving ceremony. Complying with the request, a gold-gilded *Al-Mushaf Al-Sharif* (Quran) was sent annually by the Sublime Porte, a gesture that reinforced the Muslims’ reverence for Sultan Abdülhamid (BOA, Y.A.HUS. 516/21; BOA, HR.TH. 326/77; BOA, BEO.3168/237591).¹² A portrait of Abdülhamid was also sent by the Sublime Porte, which was hung at the reading room of *Al-Madrasat al-Hamidiya* (BOA, Y.A.HUS.451/138). Again, it is worth highlighting that education was one of the many policies and soft powers adopted by Abdülhamid to expand his influence over the Muslim world (Aykurt, 2013; Hamsah & Dahlan, 2023; Karpas, 2001; Sirma, 2022).

Urābī Pasha’s efforts at promoting Arabic through schools proved effective. On the 12th of September 1901, when Urābī Pasha presided over a prize-giving ceremony at Al-Madurastul-Al-Zahira, six days prior to his departure from Ceylon, students read out their farewell addresses in Arabic. The students also lined the streets and sang songs in Arabic in praise of him (Asad, 1993a; Dep, 1983). He was pleased to see that by the time he was set to leave Ceylon, the Muslims on the island, particularly its younger generation, had acquired the skill to speak Arabic fluently. (Dep, 1983). Therefore, it is evident that due to the influence of Urābī Pasha, Arabic, which prior to his arrival had been studied only by a handful of prospective *alim* (scholars of Islam)—who managed to learn only to read and interpret the Quran—had, within two decades of his stay in a Buddhist-majority British colony like Ceylon, become a language read, written, and spoken by young Muslim students. Just days before Urābī Pasha’s departure, Abdul Aziz also organised a farewell event and delivered an address in which he described Urābī Pasha as a “kind father and affectionate friend to the Muslims for whose benefit and progress he worked assiduously and successfully during all the years of his stay in Ceylon, which lasted nearly two decades” (Azeez, 1970, p. 15). After Siddi Lebbe’s passing in 1897 and Urābī Pasha’s departure in 1901, it was largely through the efforts of Aziz that Hamidian Islamism remained relevant in Ceylon until Sultan Abdülhamid was overthrown in 1909. In recognition of Urābī Pasha’s services, the main road in Maradana on which Zahira College stands was renamed ‘Orabi Pasha Street’ in 1983, the colonial bungalow

¹² Abdülhamid II printed and distributed copies of the Quran to win the loyalty of Muslims in and out of his empire.

where he held regular talks in Colombo was renamed ‘Pasha Villa’, and his residence in Kandy—where he relocated when he complained that the climate in Colombo affected his health—now serves as the Orabi Pasha Cultural Centre (Ells, 2012; Green, 2024). In 1983, the government of Sri Lanka also issued a commemorative stamp in his honour (Ells, 2012).

3.2.7. *Identity Formation: ‘Arab’ Identity for Muslims of Ceylon*

The Muslims of Ceylon, including the intelligentsia, were mostly familiar with Arab publications and Arab-majority Ottoman *Vilayets* like Egypt and Hejaz, where the main strongholds of Pan-Islamism, such as Cairo, Mecca, and Medina, were located. Moreover, most of the writings on Pan-Islamism were published in Arabic, and the main source of Pan-Islamism in Ceylon was Urābī Pasha, an Egyptian Arab. Therefore, along with Pan-Islamism, a process of Arabisation took root in Ceylon, where Arab culture, customs, and institutions such as Al Azhar were promulgated as facets of Pan-Islamist identity. Due to the influence of Urābī Pasha and Siddi Lebbe, the educationally backward Muslims in Ceylon perceived the Ottoman Empire as an ‘Arab Caliphate.’ Therefore, it is fair to argue that ideas of Pan-Islamism triggered a process of Arabisation among the Moor elite in Ceylon particularly during Urābī Pasha's stay on the island. This section intends to explain how this process took place step by step.

First, Urābī Pasha's presence in Ceylon provided a catalyst for nascent Tamil-speaking Muslim elites of Ceylon to claim that their forebears were from the Middle East. Some of the prominent Moor families of Colombo shed their cultural mores and embraced the manners and customs of the Ottoman Arabs (Dep, 1983; Effendi, 1982; Holt, 2011; Shukri, 1986). It should be noted that the most notable Moors who claimed Arab or Turkish ancestry were those who bore names such as Marikar and Lebbe/Labbai,¹³ indicating that their forebears were Muslims from South India whose Arab heritage, as detailed in Chapter One, is highly questionable (Balfour, 1885; Pandian, 1978; Sharif, 2017; Thurston, 1909a).

Second, the presence of the Egyptian Pashas led to Moormen wearing the Turkish fez, which, from being a cultural symbol of pan-Islamism and allegiance to the Ottoman Caliph, eventually transcended to being “a sartorial marker of their transoceanic Arab identity” (Green, 2024, p. 90; McGilvray, 2017; Thawfeeq, 2011). Apart from the Ottoman Consuls, M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz were among the first Moor leaders to sport the Turkish fez. Aziz also

¹³ Most of the descendants of those who hailed from the ‘Marikar’ and ‘Labbai/Lebbe’ families no longer use names/surnames that are indicative of their ancestry.

served as the secretary of the Fez Committee that fought for the rights of the Moors to wear the fez in the courts instead of the horsehair wig (Ali, 1981; Azeez, 1970; Mahroof, 1981, 1990a).

Third, Urābī Pasha’s presence also led to the Moor elite developing an interest in the politics of Ceylon (Ali, 1981; Asad, 1993a; Samaweera, 1979; Wimalaratne, 1986). Driven by political exigency, both Siddi Lebbe and Abdul Aziz, through their writings and public orations, played a crucial role in promoting the Arab origins of Ceylon Moors. They strived to distinguish the Tamil-speaking Moors from the Tamils and became powerful advocates of separate Moor representation in the Legislative Council of Ceylon, which for almost fifty years since its founding in 1833 did not reserve a separate seat for the Moors, who were instead represented by the Tamil member. (Asad, 1993a; Wettimuny, 1889). Aziz drew parallels between the Ceylon Moors and the Parsees of Bombay, and he argued that if Parsees,¹⁴ who dress like the Indians and do not speak the language of their forebears, are identified as a distinct ethno-religious community, so should be the case of the Moors, whom he resolutely defended as the descendants of the Arabs (Abdul-Azeez, 1907; McGilvray, 1998).

Sir Ponnambalam Ràmanáthan—a Ceylonese Tamil lawyer and politician who served as Solicitor-General—propounded in his paper “Ethnology of the 'Moors' of Ceylon” (1888)—which was read before the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society—that the Tamil-speaking Moors were descendants of Tamils who had embraced Islam and called into question their Arab heritage. In response, Siddi Lebbe and Aziz penned numerous articles attacking Sir Ponnambalam Ràmanáthan. In defence of the Arab ancestry of Ceylon Moors, Aziz published a booklet titled *A Criticism of Mr. Ràmanáthan's 'Ethnology of the 'Moors' of Ceylon'* (1907) (Abdul-Azeez, 1907, 2011; Green, 2024; Ràmanáthan, 1888; Ramnath, 2023; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). Not only did Aziz claim that the Moors were descendants of the Arabs, but also that the first Arab migrants who settled in Ceylon were Hashemites, who belonged to the same clan as Prophet Muhammed (Abdul-Azeez, 1907; Ali, 1984; Wickramasinghe, 2015).¹⁵ All these developments eventually led to the

¹⁴ Parsees/Parsis are an ethno-religious community that practices Zoroastrianism. They are called “Parsee” as their forebears hailed from “Pars” (Persia). Sri Lanka is also home to a small Parsi community, who maintain a fire temple and cultural centre in Colombo.

¹⁵ Most of the Arab traders who travelled to the East Coast of Africa as well as South and Southeast Asia were from the Hadhramaut region of the Arab Peninsula (present-day Yemen). These Hadhrami Arabs proved pivotal in promoting Islam in countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Some of them espoused local women and sired children. It should be noted, however, that not all those who embraced Islam due to their contacts with Arabs are descendants of Arabs. Also to be highlighted is that the claim of Arab ancestry is much stronger among Tamil-speaking Muslims (Moors) of Sri

recognition of the Moors as a distinct ethnic group that was to be separately represented in Ceylonese politics. However, those from the Moor community who were nominated or elected to the legislative council were officially identified as a ‘Mohammedan Member’ and not as the ‘Moor Member’ (Wettimuny, 2024). The first Mohammedan member to be appointed to the legislative council was MC Abdul Rahman, a merchant of mixed Moor and North Indian parentage, who held the post from 1889 until 1899 (Asad, 1993a; Effendi, 1982).

Fourth, ideas of Pan-Islamism during Urābī Pasha’s exile in Ceylon also triggered the formation of unions particular to the Muslim community. In 1900, Aziz, along with other urban Moor elite, established the Moors’ Union and served as its founding president. It was in fact *Al-Jame-atul Islamia*, established in 1886 to address the grievances of the Muslims of Colombo, which was rechristened as Moors’ Union in 1900 (Mahroof, 1981). One of the key events organised during Aziz’s presidency was the felicitation ceremony to honour Ahmed Kemal Attaullah Effendi, the Consulate General of the Ottoman Empire to Singapore, who visited Colombo in October 1901 (Uçar, 2000). At this ceremony, Aziz delivered an oration in which he highlighted the allegiance of the Muslims of Ceylon to Sultan Abdülhamid II (Ismeth, 2022). Attaullah Effendi was also presented with an address in Arabic, thanking him for his visit.¹⁶ Attaullah Effendi later informed the Sublime Porte about the loyalty of the Muslim population of Ceylon to the Caliphate, the warm reception he received as he was an envoy of the Caliph, and how the Ceylonese Muslims generously contributed to the Hejaz railway (BOA, HR.SFR.3. 508/69; BOA, HR.SFR.3. 508/70).

The Moors’ Union, which served as an incubator of Moor unity, paved the way for the founding of other Muslim organisations, such as the Young Men’s Muslim Association in 1910, which was soon followed by the All-Ceylon Moors’ Association, which was established in 1913 (Green, 2024; Nuhman, 2007; Shukri, 1986). Given that Abdul Aziz was a journalist, president of the Moors’ Union, and the trustee of the Maradana Mosque, he exercised considerable influence over the Moors of Colombo (Mahroof, 1981).

Finally, it is reasonable to argue that Pan-Islamism and Islamic modernism were strategically exploited by the Tamil-speaking Muslim elite of Colombo to establish a new identity that would

Lanka compared to their religious counterparts in South India, the Maldives Islands, the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia and East Africa.

¹⁶ It is highly likely that Aziz presented an address in Arabic to give the impression that it was the language of the Ceylon Moors, also assuming that Attaullah Effendi was an Arab. It is worth noting that Aziz had only received education up to the sixth grade, and as Muslims of Ceylon possessed limited knowledge about the Ottoman Empire, they presumed all those from the Ottoman Empire spoke and understood Arabic.

serve their political and commercial interests. Some of these Moor elite went so far as to suggest abandoning their cultural mores and adopting the cultural habits of the Arabs instead. As mentioned earlier, Siddi Lebbe tried persuading the Moors to adopt Arabic as their mother tongue (Nuhman, 2007; Ramesh & Wong, 2020). Whereas Abdul Aziz, through his article series *Illankai Muslimkalin Cirtiruttam* (History of the Ceylonese Muslims), published in the *Muslim Guardian* between October 1907 and February 1908, expressed his discontent and abhorred some of the cultural practices of Ceylon Moors, such as the dowry system, *maulud* (panegyric poems generally in praise of the Prophet and his family) and *Kanturi/Kandoori*—annual celebration to mark the death anniversary of a Muslim saint (Ali, 1981, p. 7). He wanted the Moors to shed all the cultural practices that reflected their South Indian or Ceylonese Tamil heritage and instead embrace those of the Arabs. Aziz was even condemned by his opponents as a *Wahhabi*—a member of the strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim sect founded by Muhammed ibn Abd-al-Wahhab in the 18th century (Ali, 1981).

There is also evidence suggesting that in 1908, I.L.M. Abdul Aziz became a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, a messianic movement frowned upon as being heretical by mainstream Muslims (Nasir, 2024). The founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908)—believed by his followers to be the Promised *Mahdi* (Guided One) and Messiah—bitterly opposed the caliphal authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Basit, 2021). In return, Abdülhamid II reproached the claimants of Messiahship or Mahdship (Barlak, 2022; Stoddard, 1921). This casts doubts on whether Abdul Aziz was genuinely devoted to Hamidian Pan-Islamism or whether he exploited it for his personal gain.

3.3. Financial Backbone of Hamidian Pan-Islamism in Ceylon

Although M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, were actively involved in promoting Islamic modernism and Hamidian Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of Ceylon, they did not possess the material wealth to execute their envisioned plans. This is when the affluent Muslim businessmen stepped in to render their financial support. The most notable among the Moor merchants who were truly committed to Ottoman causes and made generous donations to express their reverence to Sultan Abdülhamid II were A.C. Wapchie Marikar and I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar. They set the example for others to follow, and the institutions they financed immortalised the name and glory of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Ceylon.

3.3.1. *A.M. Wapchie Marikar*

Arasi Marikar Wapchie Marikar was a notable contractor, Moor merchant, landed proprietor, and philanthropist in Ceylon. As mentioned earlier, his financial donations helped establish both Anglo-Mohammedan Boys' School *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia* in 1884 and *Al Madrasathul Zahira* in 1892 (Azeez, 1968, 1970; Pieris, 2013; Shukri, 1986; Wenzlhuemer, 2008; Wimalaratne, 1986). He also served as the manager of *Al Madrasathul Zahira*. He financed the construction of a new building for Zahira, and donated four rental properties for the upkeep of the school (Pieris, 2013).

3.3.2. *I.L.M. Noordeen Hajiar*

Also known by the sobriquets *Saapu Vaapu* and *Gordiel*, Idroos Lebbe Marikar Noordeen Hajiar was a prominent businessman, landed proprietor, and altruist of the late 19th century (Effendi, 1982; Hussein, 2007; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). He was the son of Fathumuthu Natchia and Idroos Lebbe Marikar Hajiar, who was a Moor merchant who served as trustee of Colombo Grand Mosque, the premier mosque in Ceylon, which continues to play a key role in announcing the most important dates of the Islamic calendar for religious observances such as the start of the Ramadan fasting (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). I.L.M. Noordeen Hajiar's company, which was located on Main Street, Pettah, was one of the oldest and largest importers of iron, steel, hardware, metal, and electrical goods (Asad, 1993a). It also held the rare honour of being the only company that was permitted by the British to import small firearms and ammunition from Britain, indicating that he maintained good rapport with the British officials in Ceylon (Asad, 1993a; Hussein, 2007). Drawn to Hamidian Islamism, he played an active role in supporting the educational and social reforms propounded by Urābī Pasha, Siddi Lebbe, and Abdul Aziz. In 1900, he assumed the office of the trustee of Colombo Grand Mosque, and for the upkeep of the mosque, he donated his properties in Hulftsdorp (Effendi, 1982; Ells, 2012; Hussein, 2007; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). It was within the grounds of the Colombo Grand Mosque that on the 31st of August 1900, the foundation stone was laid by the then Ottoman Consul to Colombo, H.L.M. Abdul Majid, for a new building of the Anglo-Mohammedan Boys' School *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia*.

The construction was financed by I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar, who proved instrumental in having the school rechristened as *Al Madrasathul Hameediah*, in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Effendi, 1982; Ells, 2012; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). He was also one of the founding members of the Hameedia Society, which handled the management of *Al Madrasathul Hameediah*. I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar was among those who entertained Ahmed Kemal Attaullah Effendi, the Consul General of the Ottoman Empire to Singapore, when he visited Ceylon in October, 1901 (Uçar, 2000). He also attended the meeting organised in honour of Attaullah Effendi by the Moor's Union, where I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, in his oration, expressed the unwavering loyalty of the Muslims of Ceylon to Sultan Abdülhamid II (Ismeth, 2022; Uçar, 2000). Noordeen Hajjar steadfastly defended Abdul Aziz's claim that the Moors were of Arab ancestry, and as a member of the Fez committee, he fought for the rights of the Moors to wear the Turkish fez instead of a barrister's horsehair wig in the law courts (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

When the *Muslim Guardian* announced the project of the Hejaz railway construction, Noordeen Hajjar was among the first from Ceylon to make a generous subscription. In recognition of his beneficence, in February 1909 the Sublime Porte sent the Ottoman Consulate in Colombo a receipt to be delivered to I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar (Ismeth, 2022). In March 1909, the then Ottoman Consul, O.L.M. Mohamed Macan Markar, informed the Ottoman authorities that the receipt had been delivered to I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar. In June 1909, the Sublime Porte sent a medal to the Ottoman Consulate in Colombo, instructing it to be presented to I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar (Ismeth, 2022). In the letter dispatched to the Sublime Porte in July 1909, the manager of the consulate, Mr. Samdideen (most likely Samsideen Macan Markar, brother of the Ottoman consul), acknowledged the receipt of the medal (BOA, HR. SFR.3. 603/18; Ismeth, 2022). Through the Ottoman consul, I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar conveyed his gratitude to the Ottoman Caliphate. Noordeen Hajjar closely followed the developments in the Ottoman Empire. It is said that during the First World War, at his palatial retreat, "Muirburn House," down Turret Road, Colombo, Noordeen Hajjar, with the help of "a wall map of Europe and Asia hung in his office room," closely followed "the fortunes of Turkey in the battlefield" (Effendi, 1982, p. 47; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965, p. 69). Therefore, it is evident that, unlike some of the other Moor leaders of his time, he did not switch allegiance and lose interest in the affairs of the Caliphate after Britain had declared war on the Ottomans in 1914.

3.3.3. *Carimjee Jafferjee: Shiite Pan-Islamist*

Another prominent businessman who made generous subscriptions to Ottoman projects was Carimjee Jafferjee, who was among those who built a good rapport with Urābī Pasha during his stay in Ceylon. In fact, in the weeks nearing his departure from Ceylon, Urābī Pasha and his family stayed at Jafferjee's residence, Essai Villa, where well-known photographer Charles H. Kerr took the famous photo of the aged Urābī Pasha seated next to his host, Jafferjee (Asad, 1993a; Dep, 1983; Effendi, 1982; Muthiah, 2003; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). On the day of his departure, Urābī Pasha and his family paid a visit to Jafferjee's office, from where they proceeded together to the Colombo Harbour, where Urābī Pasha, his family, and servants boarded the vessel *Princess Irene* and set sail to Egypt (Asad, 1993a; Ismeth, 2022). It was most likely his rapport with Urābī Pasha that sparked Jafferjee's interest in Muslim education, pan-Islamism, Abdülhamid II, and the Ottoman Caliphate.

Figure 12

Carimjee Jafferjee with Urābī Pasha at Essai Villa c.1901



Note. Photograph most likely taken by renowned photographer Charles H. Kerr at Essai Villa, residence of Carimjee Jafferjee, where Urābī Pasha spent a few weeks before his departure to Egypt in 1901. From *The Indo-Lankans, Their 200-year Saga* (p. 132), S. Muthiah, 2003, Indian Heritage Foundation.

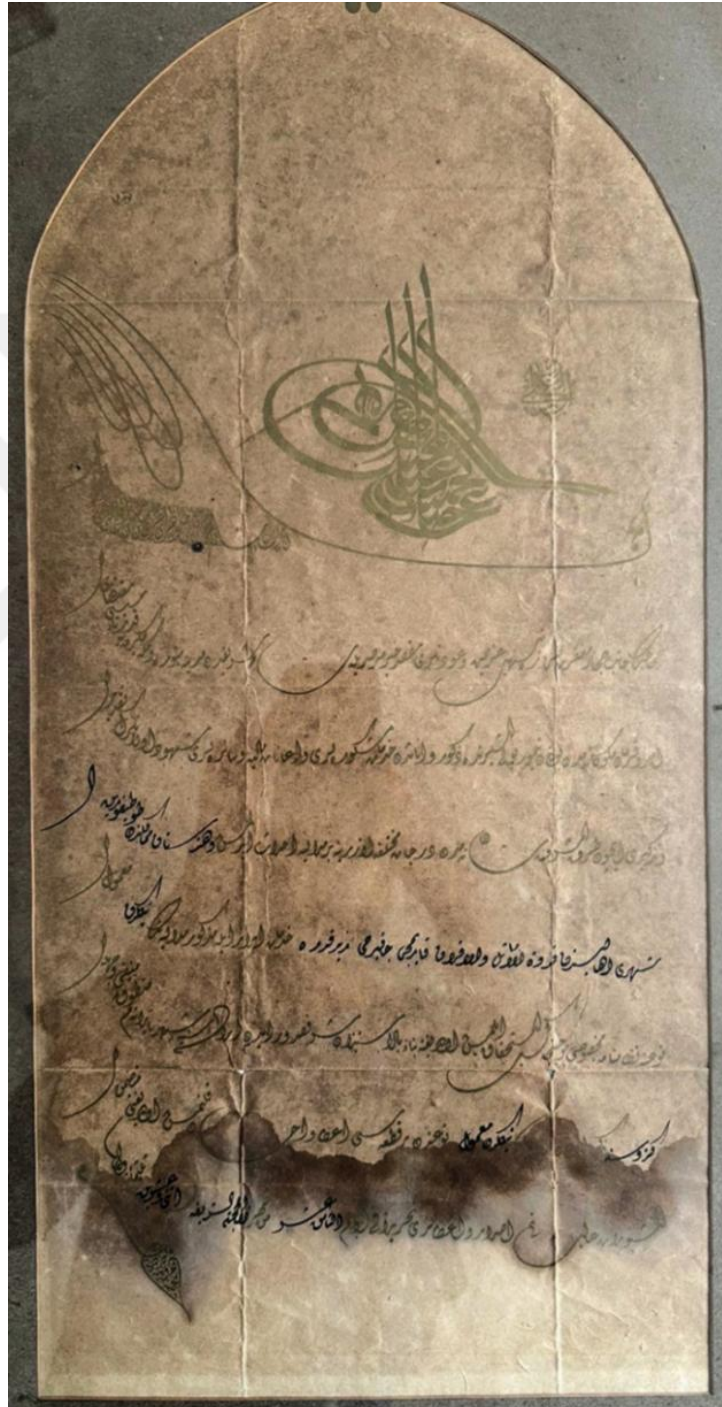
He financed the construction of a two-story building for *Al Madrasathul Zahira* in Colombo and made generous donations to the establishment of Muslim schools in his native town of Cutchmandvi, in present-day Gujarat, India (Dep, 1983; Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907). During the jubilee celebrations of Sultan Abdülhamid II, Jafferjee distributed gold coins to students and offered alms to the poor.

He was also among those who made a liberal subscription to the Hejaz railway project, in recognition of which the Sublime Porte honoured him with a nickel medal. What makes his contribution stand out is that he was not a Sunni Muslim but a Shia Ismaili Dawoodi Bohra, whose spiritual head (Da'i al-Mutlaq) was based in India. Given that Jafferjee was a devout Bohra who financed the construction of the Bohra Saifee (Karimee) masjid at Fourth Cross Street, Pettah, it is unlikely for him to have considered Abdülhamid II as his Caliph, yet he revered the Ottoman sultan and supported his causes (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907).

Also worth noting is that although he never replaced his turban for the Turkish fez, Jafferjee, as one of the members of the Fez Committee, fought fervently for the rights of Moor lawyer M.C. Abdul Cader to wear the Turkish fez instead of the barrister's horsehair wig at the courts (Mahroof, 1981, 1986). It was Jafferjee who brought down Indian barrister, journalist, and Queen Victoria's special envoy to Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1892, Sir Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad, to resolve the fez issue in December, 1905 (Ali, 1981; Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). In addition, Jafferjee financed the construction of the wall of the Kuppiyawatte Muslim burial grounds and subscribed generously to the Lady Havelock Hospital in Colombo (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907). Therefore, it is evident that Urābī Pasha and the Muslim press were not only able to persuade Sunni Moors but also Shia Bohras to support Hamidian Islamism and Ottoman causes. As Jafferjee was an influential figure among Shiite Bohras, it is likely that he convinced other well-to-do Shiites to contribute to Ottoman causes during the Hamidian Era.

Figure 13

Firman from Sultan Abdülhamid II to Carimjee Jafferjee in recognition of his contribution to Hejaz Railway. circa. 1904



Note. The Imperial Firman states that Carimjee Jafferjee was awarded a nickel medal. From Mrs Zenab Mohamedi nee Gulamabass Carimjee, granddaughter of Carimjee Jafferjee.

3.4. Conclusion

After centuries of isolationism, Ceylon rekindled contacts with the Middle East in 1863, when formal diplomatic relations were established between the Ottoman Empire and British Ceylon. Although the local businessmen who served as honorary Ottoman consuls helped strengthen Ottoman-Ceylon relations, there wasn't much interest among the Muslims of Ceylon in the Ottoman Caliphate and political developments that took place in the Ottoman Empire. It is reasonable to argue that until the arrival of Urābī Pasha, the Ceylonese Muslims didn't know much, if anything at all, about the Ottoman Empire. It was following his arrival that the Muslim community of Ceylon, particularly the urban Moors, were not only enlightened but also developed an interest in the socio-political affairs of the Ottoman Empire. His 19-year exile also led to Tamil-speaking Muslims developing a sense of belonging to the Middle East. They also started increasingly identifying themselves as 'Moors' instead of 'Mohammedan', which widened the gap between them and the natives of Ceylon. The revival of contacts with the Middle East after centuries of isolationism, and the presence of Urābī Pasha, led to the Tamil-speaking Muslims' claim that their forebears hailed from the Middle East, particularly from the territories that were part of the Ottoman Empire, such as Hejaz, Baghdad, Yemen and Konya.

Urābī Pasha's stay on the island also led to the Moors adopting the Turkish fez, Ottoman fashion, Arabic language, customs and even cuisine. As highlighted earlier, one of the main and most effective ways through which Urābī Pasha promoted interest in Ottoman affairs among the Muslims of Ceylon, particularly the urban Moors, was through the usage of print media. Siddi Lebbe's *Muslim Nesan*, which had commenced publication just a few weeks before Urābī Pasha's arrival in Ceylon, served as an effective tool to promote the key ideals of Pan-Islamism, such as the recognition of the caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II and unity among Muslims. Urābī Pasha's stay also led to the founding of many Muslim-centric newspapers, particularly by Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, who served as local actors of pan-Islamism.

These Muslim newspapers carried articles that delved into the political developments in the Ottoman Empire, thereby hoping that it would stir an interest in Ottoman affairs among the Muslims of Ceylon. Urābī also played a pivotal role in raising awareness on the need for education among the Muslims, particularly the Moors of Ceylon. He realised that unless the Muslims of Ceylon become literate and receptive of western technology, an ideology like Pan-Islamism can

never gain a foothold in Ceylon. If it hadn't been for Urābī Pasha's efforts, it is highly unlikely for Muslim schools to have been founded in Ceylon, for urban Muslim parents to have been convinced to send their children to schools that followed a western-style education, and for Muslim business barons to have financed the construction of schools, where crests, houses, flags and buildings reflect the influence of Pan-Islamism.

That said, promulgating pan-Islamism and establishing the caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II in Ceylon proved highly challenging. There are many reasons for this. First, unlike British India, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and British Malaya (present-day Malaysia and Singapore)—where dissemination of Pan-Islamism proved effective to a considerable extent—Ceylon did not have a substantial population of Muslims. In fact, only seven percent of Ceylon's population identified as Mohammedan (Muslim) during the Hamidian Era. Second, in colonies like British India, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies as well as in British protectorates such as Afghanistan and the Maldiv Islands, local Muslims, particularly royals, aristocrats, and landed gentry, wielded considerable power and influence, maintained regular contacts with the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim states, recognised the Caliphal authority of the Ottoman Sultan, and they served as patrons of mosques, religious schools, and *ulema*. In the case of Ceylon, however, the Muslims remained disconnected from the Middle East and Central Asia from the 16th till the mid-19th century. Moreover, there were no Muslim royals or squires to serve as patrons or leaders of the Muslim community of Ceylon. It was the main reason why Urābī Pasha, an Egyptian exile, became the *de facto* leader of the Ceylonese Muslims.

Third, Ceylon was a British crown colony from 1802 till 1948, and the British government in London had complete control over Ceylon's legislation, administration and foreign affairs. This made it difficult for an ideology like Pan-Islamism, centred around the leadership and spiritual authority of Abdülhamid II, to take root in Ceylon. Moreover, the Anglo-Ottoman relations weren't stable during the Hamidian Era, which further hindered the promulgation of Pan-Islamism in colonies like Ceylon.

Fourth, it was a political exile like Urābī Pasha—who was treated as a subject of the British crown during his stay in Ceylon—who became the chief proponent of pan-Islamism in Ceylon. As he was an exile, Urābī's workings were closely monitored by the British, and he himself was cautious about not getting himself embroiled in any controversy. This hindered the active involvement of Urābī, who instead relied on his disciples, mainly Siddi Lebbe and Abdul Aziz, to

promote Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism in Ceylon. Given that the honorary Ottoman consuls were businessmen who strove to remain in the good graces of the British, they too were chary of explicitly supporting Hamidian pan-Islamism. All these factors curtailed the dissemination of pan-Islamism among the Muslims of Ceylon.

However, as mentioned earlier, pan-Islamism, other than promoting unity among Muslims and establishing the Caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II, was employed strategically by the Tamil-speaking urban Muslims in founding a distinct ethnic group that distinguished them from other Tamil-speaking communities of Ceylon.



IV. CHAPTER

RESPONSE TO PAN-ISLAMISM BY MUSLIMS OF CEYLON

During the Hamidian era, Ceylon's Muslim community was highly heterogeneous and comprised of different ethnic groups, religious sects, and schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Moreover, it was a time when there were limited contacts between Muslims who lived in urban settings and their religious counterparts in the rural areas. As Muslims, particularly the Moors, were an educationally backward community, many remained oblivious to the political developments that took place in the Ottoman Empire, Anglo-Ottoman relations, and Hamidian Pan-Islamism, details of which were published only in the newspapers. Therefore, dissemination of Hamidian Pan-Islamism endured many challenges, as will be discussed in this chapter, which aims to answer the research question of how different segments of the Ceylonese Muslim community responded to Pan-Islamism and what factors influenced these responses.

This chapter begins by examining how the Ceylonese Muslims perceived Sultan Abdülhamid II and his call for unity among the Muslim brethren across the world and the ways through which Ceylonese Muslims expressed their reverence and allegiance to Sultan Abdülhamid and the Caliphate. Also analysed is how the Muslims of Ceylon responded to some of the key events of Abdülhamid's reign, such as the visit of the Ottoman frigate Ertuğrul in 1889, his silver jubilee in 1900, the official opening of the Hejaz Railway line, and the 33rd anniversary of his accession to the throne in 1908. Moreover, this chapter analyses how the Ceylonese Muslims, depending on their ethnicity, perceived the symbols of pan-Islamic ideology, such as the Turkish fez. Finally, this chapter examines how some of the Moor elites of Ceylon strategically employed pan-Islamism to bolster their claims for Arab ancestry and secure separate political representation in the legislative assembly. One of the key arguments advanced in this chapter is that it was largely the urban Moors who adulated Sultan Abdülhamid II and supported his pan-Islamist ideals.

4.1. Sultan Abdülhamid II: A Glorified Figure

Although Ceylon was home to two Ottoman consulates and maintained strong diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire between 1863 and 1914, there are only a handful of authors who have, in their respective works, at least mentioned in passing the influence of Abdülhamid II on the island's Muslim population. According to Vijaya Samaraweera (1986)—a preeminent

scholar of Ceylon's British colonial history—"the Sri Lankan Muslims, like Islamic peoples elsewhere, saw the relevant symbol of Islamism in the Sultan of Turkey, the 'Caliph of Islam'." (p. 376). Though the author does not elaborate on what he means by 'relevant symbol', it is evident that the Ottoman Sultan was recognised as the Caliph, at least by certain sections of the Ceylonese Muslim community. Ceylonese civil servant and senator A.M.A. Azeez (1964) made the following observation:

Every major event of Sultan Abdul Hamids reign was followed closely and discussed feelingly in all important gatherings, social and religious. His name was used weekly in mosques during the Friday sermons and thereby was he sentimentally associated with the Four Pious Caliphs. His picture, usually printed in Germany, adorned prominently the house of many a Muslim in nearly all the important towns. (p.137)

For his name to have been mentioned in Friday 'Khutbe' sermons, Sultan Abdülhamid II was not only a popular and revered figure but was also acknowledged as the Caliph and rightful successor of Prophet Mohamed by the Muslims of Ceylon. The only photo studio and publishing house of German connection in Ceylon at the time was Plâté Ltd (est. 1890) (Macmillan, 1928). However, it is unlikely for Plâté Ltd or any Ceylonese company at the time to have been granted permission by the British to import and sell photos of a foreign monarch, that too of the Ottoman Sultan. Therefore, the photos of Abdülhamid II printed in Germany must have most likely been purchased by affluent Muslim businessmen. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the Sultan's photo was a common sight only in the homes of a few well-to-do urban Muslim families.

Mahroof (1986) notes that "well into the 1950s a number of Muslim eating houses in Colombo and other places exhibited framed pictures of the Sultan of Turkey and his courtiers" (p. 94). This indicates that although Sultan Abdülhamid II was overthrown by the Young Turks movement in April 1909 and the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished on the 3rd of March, 1924, people continued to revere Abdülhamid II, whose popularity outlasted his reign and even lifespan. Most Ceylonese Muslims were oblivious to the political situation in the Ottoman Empire, even though newspapers and periodicals like *Muslim Nesan*, *Gñānadīpam*, and *Muslim Guardian*, among others, regularly published articles on the political developments that took place in the erstwhile Ottoman Empire (Mahroof, 1986). Also, given that Moors were largely an educationally backward community and only a minuscule percentage of their population were literate until the

first quarter of the twentieth century, they remained largely ignorant of the political situation in the Middle East (Azeez, 1964; Denham, 1912; Mahroof, 1986; Shukri, 1986). It is worth noting that in 1911, only 1.7 percent of Ceylon Moor males and only 0.1 percent of Ceylon Moor females were English literate (Denham, 1912). The fact that Mahroof (1986) specifically mentions ‘Colombo’ lends further credence to my argument that it was the urban Muslims who displayed portraits of the Ottoman Sultan with gusto, hinting that the Sultan’s popularity was limited to the ‘important towns,’ as observed by Azeez (1964).

Even in towns, it was largely the Moor merchants who were interested in Sultan Abdülhamid and Ottoman politics. According to A.M.A. Azeez (1964), “Wealthy merchants ignorant of the English language purchased books to acquire, through paid interpreters, knowledge of the sultans and their doings” (p. 137). This indicates that these well-heeled merchants who took great lengths to know more about their Caliph and his doings were most likely those who had also acquired photos printed in Germany to adorn the walls of their homes and business houses. Except for the affluent, the main source of information on the events unfolding in the Muslim world for the rest of the Muslim population was the Friday ‘Khutbah’ sermon, which was delivered by Imams (those who lead the prayer), who themselves possessed limited knowledge of the political affairs in the Muslim world.

Given that it was Abdülhamid II’s jubilees that were celebrated on an extravagant scale, as detailed in the following sections, and that business houses and institutions were named in his honour, the only Ottoman Sultan and Caliph that most Muslims of Ceylon were familiar with was Abdülhamid II, whose photos, as mentioned earlier, adorned the walls of the homes and businesses of urban Muslims until the mid-twentieth century (Azeez, 1964; Hussein, 2010; Mahroof, 1986; Shukri, 1986). Therefore, it is evident that the memory of Sultan Abdülhamid II among Ceylonese Muslims far outlived his lifetime (Hussein, 2010). As evinced by the writings of Asiff Hussein (2010) it was Abdülhamid II’s popularity that strengthened the devotion and allegiance of the Muslims of Ceylon to the Ottoman Caliphate. Even after Abdülhamid II was usurped from power, urban Muslims in Ceylon—many of whom were unaware of the political developments that took place in the Ottoman Empire—continued to revere the Ottoman Sultan and made generous donations to Ottoman charities, as it was seen as their religious duty to help and stand with the Ottoman Caliphate. Some of the well-to-do Ceylonese Muslims, particularly those from Colombo and Kandy, subscribed large sums of money to the Turkish Red Crescent Society (*Türk Kızılay-*

Hilâl-i Ahmer) and other charities to help the sick and wounded as well as the families of the martyrs during the Italo-Turkish War and the Balkan Wars (BOA, BEO.4130/309693; BOA, BEO.4137/310275; BOA, BEO.4138/310304; BOA, BEO.4142/310610; BOA, BEO.4144/310774; BOA, BEO.4150/311211; BOA, BEO.4156/311626; BOA, BEO.4186/313928; BOA, BEO.4202/315106; BOA, HR.SFR.3.705/50; BOA, HR.SYS.2019/2; BOA, HR.TO.542/172).¹⁷

4.2. Muslim Response to Ottoman Frigate *Ertuğrul*

In the fall of 1887, Prince Komatsu Akihito of Japan, who helped the Meiji government in a diplomatic capacity, visited Istanbul, where he had an audience with Sultan Abdülhamid II and presented him with the Order of the Chrysanthemum, Japan's highest order (Baloğlu, 2020; Esenbel, 1996, 2025). This meeting prompted Abdülhamid II to despatch to Japan the imperial frigate *Ertuğrul* on a goodwill voyage under the command of Rear Admiral Osman Pasha and his crew of 609 men (Bey, 1995; Karpas, 2001; Ozdemir, 2024; Peacock, 2018). In July, 1889, *Ertuğrul* set sail from Istanbul and stopped at Suez (Egypt), Aden (Yemen), Bombay (India), Colombo (Ceylon), Singapore, Saigon (Vietnam), Hong Kong, Nagasaki and Kobe before reaching Yokohama in June, 1899, after eleven months of treacherous voyage (Kadı, 2024; Kadı & Peacock, 2017; Worringer, 2014).

Apart from strengthening Ottoman-Japan relations, *Ertuğrul*, which strategically stopped at major ports with a substantial Muslim population, helped Abdülhamid II deepen his ties to the Muslims of Asia, gain support for the Ottoman Caliphate and demonstrate the might of the 'free' Ottoman Empire (Bey, 1995; Karpas, 2001; Ozdemir, 2024; Peacock, 2018). According to Selçuk Esenbel (2011)—one of the foremost authorities on Turkey-Asia relations—Abdülhamid II strategically deployed *Ertuğrul* to promote pan-Islamism in parts of Asia under European rule and promote the foreign policy that the Ottoman Sultan was 'concerned' with the welfare of the Muslims living in European colonies. In all the ports *Ertuğrul* called in, Osman Pasha and senior Ottoman officials made sure they attended prayers with the local Muslims, hosted local dignitaries, permitted the local Muslims to tour the vessel, and gave interviews to local journalists (Esenbel, 2011). Whether it be Aden, Bombay, Colombo, or Singapore, the local Muslim newspapers published lengthy articles heaping praises on the Ottoman officials and Sultan Abdülhamid II.

¹⁷ The most notable among the Ceylonese who contributed to the Italo-Turkish War was S.B. Bawa of Kandy, and the Ottoman State Archives holds records of his generous contributions to the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, it is clear that by the late 1880s, pan-Islamism was exploited as an effective stratagem by Abdülhamid II to garner the support of the Muslims who lived in British and French colonies across Asia to protect his fast-declining empire. The fact that *Ertuğrul* did not visit any of the ports of Siam (Thailand), which was an independent kingdom, makes it apparent that Abdülhamid II's focus was entirely on the Muslims under European rule. Also, the above excerpt brings to light that the entire journey was a well-orchestrated one and that almost every event that unfolded at ports, including attending prayers with the local Muslims and entertaining local Muslim dignitaries onboard, was planned and not happenstance.

Just as in other countries, the Ceylonese newspapers heavily publicised the impending visit of the Ottoman frigate. On Friday, the 1st of November, 1889, *Ertuğrul* arrived in Colombo, where the crew was warmly welcomed by a large assemblage of enthusiastic locals (Bey, 1995; Ismeth, 2022; Kutlay, 2022; Saltık, 2020; Ozdemir, 2024). It is reported that an estimated two hundred thousand Muslims surged into the capital from all quarters of the island, including a significant number from Kandy and Galle, to see the Ottoman frigate (Ismeth, 2022; Ozdemir, 2024). Akin to the case of Urābī Pasha's arrival six years prior in 1883, *Ertuğrul*'s visit to Colombo received wide coverage in Ceylon's Muslim newspapers, particularly in Siddi Lebbe's *Muslim Nesan* (Ismeth, 2022).

According to Shifaulislam Ismeth (2022), "the Ertuğrul frigates stopover at the Colombo port in 1889 and the immense crowd it attracted throughout its one week stay in Ceylon manifests success of Abdülhamid II's motive of including local Muslim populated ports on the itinerary of the frigate" (p.80). However, it is worth noting that a large assemblage of locals, particularly Muslims, was a common sight at the Colombo Port whenever a foreign vessel carrying dignitaries visited the island. For example, when Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, visited Ceylon in 1870, "funnel-capped Moormen and Malays all flocked to do honour to the son of the common sovereign" ("Prince Alfred in Ceylon", 1870). Also to be noted is that the Muslims ran their businesses, and many lived in the area surrounding the Colombo harbour; hence, it was not unlikely to find them flocking whenever a vessel docked at the port, mainly in the hopes of selling their goods to the crew and passengers.

Therefore, it is not fair to judge the influence of the Ottoman frigate simply based on the number that turned up to see it. That said, it is highly unlikely for two hundred thousand Muslims to have visited *Ertuğrul* as claimed by Shifaulislam Ismeth (2022) and Cagatay Ozdemir (2024).

According to the Census of Ceylon for the year 1891, there were only 211,993 Mohammedans (Muslims) on the island, of whom only around 36,000 lived in Colombo District and Municipality, 23,088 in Kandy and 10,079 in Galle (Lee, 1892; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). Moreover, it is also plausible that the *Muslim Nesan*, edited by M.C. Siddi Lebbe—a staunch pan-Islamist—and the Ottoman press published heavily exaggerated accounts of the interest shown by the Muslims toward the frigate *Ertuğrul* when it visited different ports en route to Japan in 1889-90. As the frigate arrived on a Friday, the crew, including Ali Osman Pasha, performed their Jummah congregational prayer at Colombo's mosque, where the Khutbah was delivered in the name of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Ismeth, 2022; Kutlay, 2022). This was a strategic move to win the favour of the local Muslims. At around 3.30 pm, *Ertuğrul*—as it was a warship that had docked at a foreign port—performed the customary 21-gun salute as a form of military and diplomatic courtesy (Ismeth, 2022; Saltık, 2020).

During their one week-long sojourn in Colombo, Osman Pasha and his crew, including the band of twenty-four musicians, were treated to city tours and lavish banquets, and many locals, particularly Moor businessmen, presented them with letters inviting them to dine at their residences (Ismeth, 2022; Kutlay, 2022). Osman Pasha paid a courtesy call at the office of the Ottoman Consul to Colombo, Hussain Lebbe Marikar Effendi, who was given a 7-gun salute when he was hosted on *Ertuğrul* (Ismeth, 2022). There is no information on what transpired during those meetings; however, based on the articles published in the *Muslim Nesan*, it is evident that Osman Pasha left a lasting impression on the Ottoman consul and vice versa. Also reported in the papers is that only a few officers on board barely spoke Arabic, but many were conversant in English (Ismeth, 2022). This signifies that the correspondent for *Muslim Nesan* was disappointed and plausibly puzzled over the fact that Ottoman officials didn't speak fluent Arabic, which was actively promoted by Urābī Pasha and his comrades as the language of pan-Islamic identity. Also to be noted is that there is no record of Osman Pasha or any of his crew having met with Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants, signalling that the Egyptian exiles were of no relevance to the Ottoman Caliphate. It is also likely that they were strictly instructed by the Sublime Porte to avoid meeting Urābī Pasha, in the fear that it would further exacerbate the strained Anglo-Ottoman relations. It should be noted that although in 1882 the British invaded Egypt, it remained a de jure Ottoman vilayet until November 1914. Therefore, Sultan Abdülhamid II was very cautious when it came to handling matters related to Egypt and often chose to not intervene.

After they received the confirmation that there was no outbreak of any contagious disease in Ceylon at the time, the Ottoman crew permitted the visitors to tour the ship, and they were treated to *sherbet* and Ottoman music (Ismeth, 2022; Kutlay, 2022). This again was a tactful approach to attracting more crowds to see *Ertuğrul*. On the 7th of November, 1889, the Ottoman frigate departed to Singapore, where it remained for four months, from the 15th of November, 1889, till the 22nd of March, 1890, due to technical problems and other mishaps (Worringer, 2014; Kadi, 2024). This delay of the frigate was viewed by the British as a ghastly debacle of Abdülhamid's plan, and the local newspapers in Ceylon, such as *Times* and *Colombo Observer*, made a mockery of the Ottoman Empire and its actual might. This was reported by the Ottoman Consul to Colombo, Hussein Lebbe Marikar, to the Sublime Porte, which denied the news as being fake (Ismeth, 2022). Siddi Lebbe, who was keen on promoting pan-Islamism and eulogising the Ottoman Sultan, refrained from publishing a single article on the prolonged stay of *Ertuğrul* in Singapore and of the technical problems it faced, indicating that the Muslims, particularly Tamil-speaking Moors, were left to think that the Ottoman frigate had sailed to its destination without a hitch.

After months of delay, *Ertuğrul* finally reached Yokohama, on the 7th of June, 1890, and at the state dinner organised at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Osman Pasha presented Abdülhamid II's letter, gifts and medal to Emperor Meiji (Worringer, 2014; Kadi, 2024). After a three-month stay in Japan, *Ertuğrul* embarked on its return voyage on the 15th of September 1890; however, the frigate sank after being hit by a typhoon off the island of Kii Ōshima, and Osman Pasha was among the 587 sailors and officers who perished (Edstrom, 2013; Kadi, 2024; Tepealtı, 2024). The news about the accident was covered in almost all major newspapers of the world, including those published in Ceylon (BOA, Y.PRK.ASK.67/41).

All the sixty-nine survivors were transported back to Istanbul on board the Japanese ironclad corvettes "Hiei" and "Kongō", which called at the port of Colombo on the morning of 16th of December 1890. The survivors were accompanied by Japanese officers and a journalist, Shotaro Noda, correspondent for *Jiji Shinpo* newspaper, who was tasked with handing over 18,907 French francs raised through public subscription, along with a letter from the Japanese Emperor to the right authorities in Istanbul (Fernando, 2014; Misawa & Akçadağ, 2007).

During their sojourn in Colombo, Shotaro Noda, along with six Turkish officers, paid a call on the Ottoman consul and paid their respects to the late consul Hussein Lebbe Marikar, who had died the previous month and been succeeded to the office of consul by his son, H.L.M. Abdul Majid

(Fernando, 2014). According to Shotaro Noda, when they walked out of the office, the Muslims who were returning to their homes and shops after their prayers crowded around the Turkish officers, made enquiries about *Ertuğrul*, and expressed their sympathies, with some crying bitterly over the tragic accident (Fernando, 2014).

This indicates that the Muslims of Colombo were genuinely concerned about the calamity that had befallen the Turks. The fact that some Muslims even wept signifies that they had developed a strong sense of belonging to the Ottoman Caliphate (Fernando, 2014). Shotaro Noda also mentions that he, along with the Turkish officers, was treated to a feast at the residence of the Ottoman consul, whom he mistook for an Arab (Fernando, 2014). In addition, he states that a great Arabian-style feast along with a range of delicacies had been laid out on the dining table. Therefore it is evident that by 1890, largely owing to the influence of Urābī Pasha, the Moor elite of Colombo had not only adopted Ottoman fashion but also Arabic language and cuisine. Given that there is no evidence of Abdul Majid having travelled to Istanbul, it is likely that he was of the opinion that the Turkish cuisine bore resemblance to the Egyptian (Arab) cuisine and hence chose to treat the Turkish officers to what Noda describes as an Arab-style feast (Fernando, 2014). The editor of the *Muslim Nesan*, M.C. Siddi Lebbe, is also reported to have met with Shotaro Noda and some of the Ottoman officers and interviewed Haydar Effendi, an engineer who was conversant in English. (Ismeth, 2022). Shotaro Noda also explained in detail to Siddi Lebbe the *Ertuğrul* accident and its aftermath, which was later published in *Muslim Nesan*. Moreover, Shotaro Noda writes that he met Urābī Pasha at his residence; however, he does not give any details of his meeting. (Fernando, 2014). When he arrived in Istanbul in January 1891, Shotaro Noda met with Sultan Abdülhamid II, who requested him to stay back and teach Japanese. He complied and remained in Istanbul for almost two years, during which time he learnt Turkish, converted to Islam and took the name Abdülhalim (Misawa & Akçadağ, 2007).

The Imperial frigate *Ertuğrul*, the first and only Ottoman vessel that visited Ceylon during the Hamidian era, appears to have made a lasting impression on the Ceylonese Muslims, to the extent that it influenced their folk art. According to Mahroof (1986), “There also flourished from the latter part of the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century the Muslim folk art of painting on glass. A favourite subject was a faunistic delineation of warships with very large

Turkish flags.” (p.94). Moreover, the Ceylonese Muslims gained their first exposure to Ottoman music during *Ertuğrul*’s visit to Colombo in 1889 (Kutlay, 2022).¹⁸

4.3. Visit of Enver Pasha in 1901

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901)—an anti-imperialist, anti-foreign and anti-Christian uprising—broke out in China, which led to the assassination of European diplomats, missionaries and Christian converts. As Chinese Muslims were also involved in the rebellion, German Kaiser Wilhelm II asked Sultan Abdülhamid II to use his Caliphal authority to dissuade Chinese Muslims from taking part in the rebellion (Karpas, 2001). In compliance with the Kaiser’s request, Abdülhamid II dispatched to Shanghai a nine-member counsel delegation (*Nasihah Heyeti*), comprising high-ranking Ottoman military officials, like Brigadier General (*Mirliva*) Enver Celalettin Pasha and Lieutenant Commander Omar Nazim Bey; Islamic scholars Mustafa Şükrü Efendi and Kadı Hacı Tahir Efendi; translators (Vincenzo Quignoli, his daughter Mademoiselle Hortense, and Mehmet Efendi from Istanbul); and two privates, Humuslu Mahmut and Hasan (Görez, 2024; Lee, 2018). As highlighted by Görez (2024), the military officials represented the strategic importance of the mission, while the inclusion of Islamic scholars reflected “Abdülhamid II’s Pan-Islamic policies and his efforts to strengthen the authority of the Ottoman Caliphate within the Muslim world” (p. 169).

The Ottoman delegation that set sail on April 18, 1901, aboard the Russian-flagged vessel *Nicola*, reached Suez on April 23rd, whenceforth they continued their journey aboard the German steamer *Sachsen* (*Sahzen*), which called at major ports with significant Muslim populations en route to Shanghai, including Colombo (May 4th) and Singapore (May 10th), where the Ottoman delegates were warmly welcomed by local Muslims, including the Ottoman consuls (Çelik, 2015; Görez, 2024; Lee, 2018; Seben, 2015; Sirma, 2022). It is reported that in both Colombo and Singapore, Muslims turned out in large numbers to meet and greet the Ottoman delegation, who offered prayers at the local mosques, where sermons were read in the name of Abdülhamid II and Ottoman flags had been hoisted to mark the Sultan’s silver jubilee (Akalin, 2015; Çelik, 2015; Çiçek et al., 2000; Lee, 2018). Local Muslims are also said to have expressed, in tears, their loyalty and devotion to the Ottoman Caliph (Çelik, 2015). Except for some basic details on the ‘Turkish

¹⁸ The tune of the *Hamidiye Marşı*, imperial anthem of the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian era, was popular among Muslims of Colombo and was played at the Sultan’s Silver Jubilee Celebration organised at the Al Masjithul Hamidiye in Colombo.

delegation' to China, the Ceylonese newspapers, including the *Muslim Guardian*, do not provide much information, if any at all, on the Muslims meeting Enver Pasha or of them expressing their devotion to the Ottoman Caliphate, signalling that it wasn't a major affair. However, Ottoman Consul Abdul Mejid's letter to the Sublime Porte frames Enver Pasha's visit as a significant event (Akalin, 2015; Ismeth, 2022). By the time the delegation reached China, the rebellion had been suppressed.

4.4. Abdülhamid II's Silver Jubilee

On the 31st of August, 1900, Muslims across the world celebrated with great *éclat* the Silver Jubilee of Sultan Abdülhamid II. (Koor, 1900). In Ceylon, preparations for the Sultan's Silver Jubilee commenced months in advance, and the newspaper *Muslim Nesan*, then edited by A.T. Shamsudeen, featured announcements of the meetings organised at mosques, schools and community centres to discuss the jubilee preparations in different localities as well as featured advertisements for the sale of items such as posters of Sultan Abdülhamid II and jubilee lamps (Ismeth, 2022). It was decided at these meetings—which were organised largely by Moor businessmen in cities like Colombo, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Jaffna, Badulla, Gampola, Dikoya, Galle and Matara—that the Sultan's Silver Jubilee will be commemorated on Friday, the 31st of August, 1900, and Imams were requested to acknowledge the name of Caliph Abdülhamid II at the Khutbah sermons and make special supplications for his prosperity, happiness and longevity. Muslims were asked to decorate their homes and streets, distribute food and clothing to the poor and close their shops for the day to celebrate the occasion (Ismeth, 2022).

As planned, the jubilee celebrations in Ceylon coincided on Friday, 31st of August, 1900 (Hassan, 1968; Hussein, 2007). Streets of Muslim neighbourhoods in Colombo were decorated with lamps, festoons of bunting, leaves and flowers, and triumphant arches. Some of the major mosques and Muslim-owned business houses of Colombo were lit with bright lights, just as they would be for Eid celebrations. Some of the key events to mark the jubilee were held at the Maradana Mosque in Colombo, where supplications were made for the Sultan during the Friday Jumma congregational prayer, students sang songs in honour of the Sultan, and alms were distributed to the poor and the sick (Ismeth, 2022). There was also a grand event organised in the mosque grounds, where canopies had been set up and adorned, and the guests were entertained by a band.

The Ottoman Consul to Colombo, Abdul Majid, the Russian and French Consuls, Wapchie Marikar, I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, and Meera Lebbe Marikar, were among the long list of dignitaries

who graced this event, where I.L.M. Abdul Aziz delivered a speech eulogising Sutan Abdülhamid II. (Azeez, 1970; Hussein, 2007). The fireworks display was among the highlights of this event, which ran late into the night. On the 31st of August, 1901, Ottoman Consul Abdul Majid laid the foundation stone for the new building of the Muslim school *Al Madrasathul Hameediyah*, named after Sultan Abdülhamid II. (Effendi, 1982; Saltık, 2020; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). He also laid the foundation stone for the new building of Ibrahim bin Ahmed on Main Street, Pettah, which came to be called “Hameedia Palace” in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid II. (Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). The celebration of Sultan Abdülhamid II’s Silver Jubilee wasn’t limited to Colombo. Even in towns and villages such as Galle, Kandy, Beruwela, Kurunegala, Hatton, Nuwara Eliya, Dikoya, Gampola, Aluthgama, and Thalawakale, Muslim homes, shops and mosques were lit with lights, streets were adorned with festoons and arches, the Ottoman flags bearing the star and crescent were hoisted, alms were given to the poor, supplications were made for the Sultan, and firework displays were organised to celebrate the silver jubilee of Sultan Abdülhamid II. (Ismeth, 2022).

Figure 14

Native decorations to mark Sultan Abdülhamid II’s Silver Jubilee in Kandy



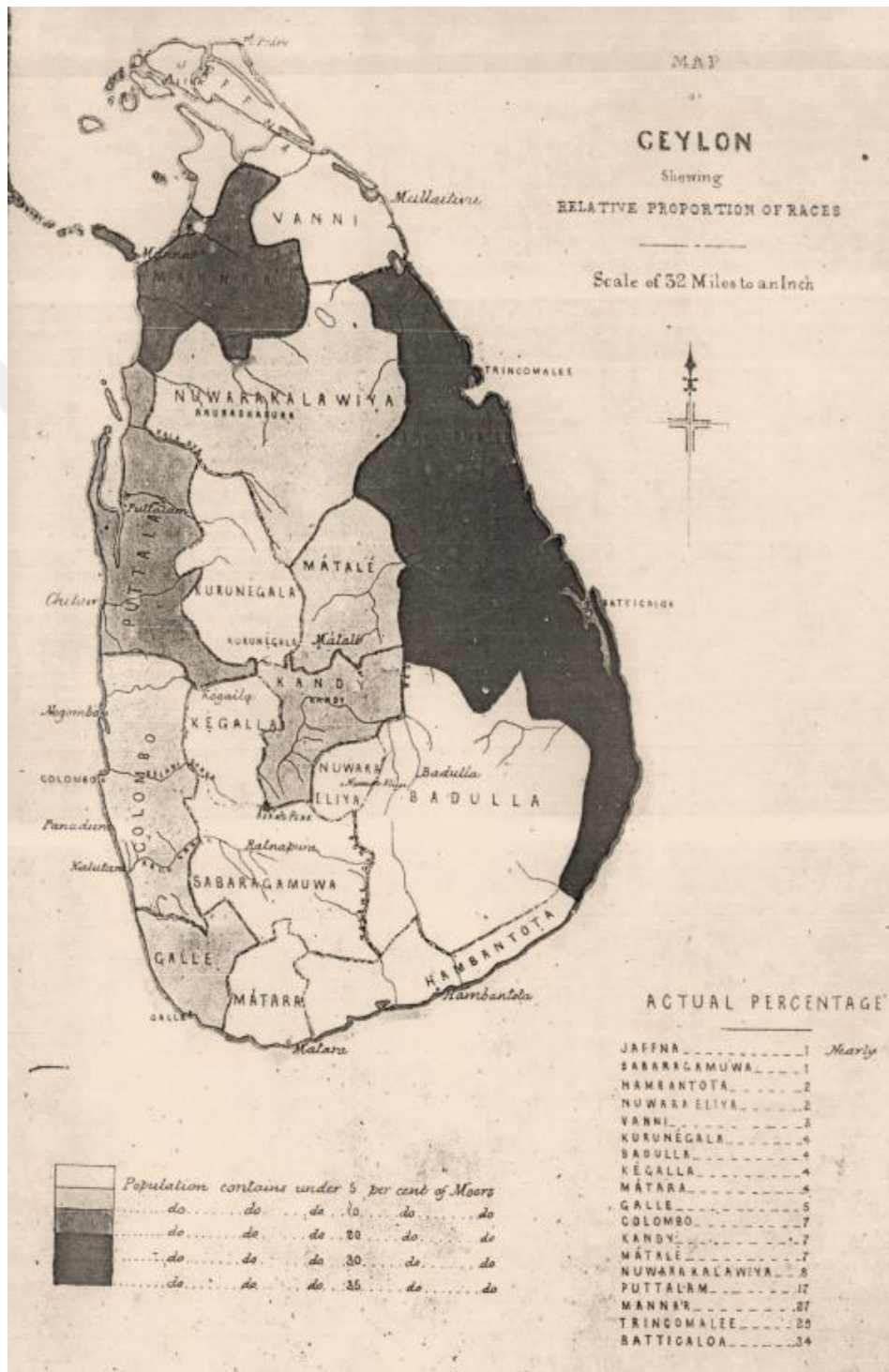
Note. From Native decorations in honor of the Sultan of Turkey, Kandy, Ceylon by White, H. C. (1902). [southasiacommons.net](https://southasiacommons.net/artifacts/5037391/native-decorations-in-honor-of-the-sultan-of-turkey-kandy-ceylon/5802784/). <https://southasiacommons.net/artifacts/5037391/native-decorations-in-honor-of-the-sultan-of-turkey-kandy-ceylon/5802784/>

The Silver Jubilee celebration in August 1901 was so popular among urban Muslims, that it gave rise to the custom of naming infants, Muslim business houses and institutions in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid II. (Azeez, 1964). Also to be noted that, it was mainly in Colombo where Muslim homes and shops displayed photos of the Sultan, particularly those printed in Germany. (Azeez, 1864; Shukri, 1986). Moreover, it was in towns where Muslim establishments were named in honour of the Ottoman Sultan. Based on the writings of Ismeth (2022) and publications such as *Muslim Nesan*, there appears to have been no event organised to mark Abdülhamid II's silver jubilee in the North-central province, which, according to the 1901 census, was home to 9,043 Muslims, as well as in the Eastern province, home to 63,504 Muslims, the highest in the entire country. (Denham, 1912; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). There appears to have been no event organised in honour of Abdülhamid's silver jubilee in the towns with the highest Muslim concentration, such as Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar and Puttalam, as well as in the largest Muslim villages on the island, such as Kattankudi, Eravur, Chayntamarutu, Chammanurai and Kalmunaikkudi. This situation invites further explanation which is to be given below.

As mentioned earlier, one of the major sources of information on Abdülhamid II was Muslim newspapers and periodicals, published mainly in Tamil, such as *Muslim Nesan* and *Muslim Guardian*, which proved pivotal in disseminating Hamidian pan-Islamism among the Muslims of Ceylon. According to A.M.A. Azeez (1964), “a disproportionate amount of space was devoted to the events of the Ottoman Empire and incidents connected with her ruler in the pamphlets and periodicals that were in circulation among the Muslims” (p. 137). However, Moors, who formed the majority of Ceylon's Muslim population, were an educationally backward community (Azeez, 1964; Denham, 1912; Shukri, 1986). According to Sir Edward Denham (1912)—who served as Superintendent of Census Operations—Batticaloa District, which was the most populous Moor district in Ceylon at the time, reported at the last census very low literacy among its inhabitants. Only 15 percent of males and 2 per every thousand females were able to read or write in Tamil.

Figure 15

Map of Ceylon showing relative proportion of Moors in the year 1871



Note. From *Census of the Island of Ceylon 1871* by Registrar General's Department, 1873. Copyright 1873 by Registrar General's Department.

Given that the literacy rate was so low, it can be deduced that Hamidian Islamism was not widespread in Batticaloa District, despite it being the most populous Moor district in the country. It is therefore evident that the success of Pan-Islamism as a modern ideology depended on literacy, as it was largely through print media that Pan-Islamism was disseminated in Ceylon. This was the main reason why Urābī Pasha and local ideologues like M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz encouraged the Muslims to seek education, as, unlike religion, for a political ideology to take root, literacy played a crucial role. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that there was not a single school established for Moors of the Eastern province during the Hamidian era (McGilvray, 1998; Samaraweera, 1979). It was largely the Moor elites of Colombo, Kandy, and the southwestern coast of the island who were part of the revivalist movement, and they prioritised the erection of schools and Madrasas in their hometowns and not for their religious counterparts in the Eastern and Northern provinces (McGilvray, 1998; Samaraweera, 1979; Thiranagama, 2011).

It was only in the first quarter of the 20th century that rail lines connecting Colombo to the Northern and Eastern Provinces were built; hence, until then, there was limited interaction between the Muslims in Colombo and their religious counterparts in the remote parts of the island (Cave, 1910; Wright, 1907). It is worth noting that most of the towns where Sultan Abdülhamid's silver jubilee was celebrated on a grand scale were those that were connected to Colombo through rail lines and main roads. Moreover, mail as well as periodicals, including Muslim newspapers, were largely conveyed by train. Therefore, transport services, particularly railways, proved vital in promulgating Pan-Islamism. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, the Muslim community of Ceylon was divided based on caste, ethnicity, sect, school of jurisprudence, etc.; therefore, convincing all Muslims to develop a liking for Hamidian Pan-Islamism was a herculean task. Urābī Pasha managed to only resolve the sectarian differences between the Muslims of Colombo, and as he was prohibited by the British from travelling to the Northern and Eastern Provinces, he had no influence on the Muslims living there. Therefore, except for the Muslims who lived in Colombo, Kandy, and other major towns, the rest didn't have much exposure to either English education or the main channels of Hamidian Islamism in Ceylon, such as Urābī Pasha, M.C. Siddi Lebbe, I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, and the Muslim press. Even in Colombo, it was largely a small circle of Moor businessmen

and literati who were driven by the ideals of Pan-Islamism; the rest only adopted symbols of Pan-Islamic identity, such as the fez.

4.5. Hejaz Railway & the Sultan's 33rd Anniversary

One of the key ways through which the urban Muslim elite of Ceylon expressed their support for Sultan Abdülhamid II and his Pan-Islamism policy was through their generous donations for Ottoman causes. Chief among the projects that symbolised Hamidian Pan-Islamism was the Hejaz Railway Line, construction of which started in 1900 and was completed by September 1908. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Abdul Aziz, through his articles in the *Muslim Guardian* (1901-1908), exhorted the Muslims of Ceylon to support their Caliph by subscribing to the Hejaz Railway, which he deemed the holy line (Azeez, 1970; Marikar, 1981; Ali, 1981). The Hejaz Railway was equated to the Hajj pilgrimage. Therefore, well-to-do Muslims were encouraged to donate to Hejaz as if it were a religious duty vested upon them.

Apart from the *Muslim Guardian*, other Muslim papers, including the *Muslim Nesan* edited by A.T. Shamsudeen, also published details of the progress of the railway project and announced the names of the donors and the amount they contributed (Ismeth, 2022). This encouraged the nascent Moor elite to make generous donations in the hopes of becoming more popular and better recognised in the society. According to McGilvray (1998), those who subscribed were “so proud of their financial donations to build the Hejaz Railway from Damascus to Medina” (p. 451). In 1902, the Turkish consul to Colombo, Abdul Majid, informed the Ottoman Embassy in London that Moors were willing to make substantial donations if they were to be honoured with a gold medal (Ismeth, 2022). Moreover, a petition was submitted by the Muslims of Ceylon requesting the Ottoman Empire to issue donation tickets or certificates to those who contributed to the Hejaz railway, indicating that most Muslims donated expecting fame and recognition, and not out of piety or reverence to the Caliphate (BOA, HR.SFR.3.501/40). The Ottoman Empire issued ‘donation tickets’ to Ceylonese Muslims who subscribed to the Hejaz railway (BOA, BEO.1696/127175; BOA, HR.TH.264/45; BOA, HR.TH.265/78).

At the time it was considered a significant accomplishment to be honoured by the Ottoman Caliph. Therefore, many who were hankering for the attention of the Caliph were willing to donate. However, to be awarded a gold medal, one was expected to donate more than a hundred lira. Those who donated between 5 and 50 were presented with a nickel medal, and between 51 and 100 liras, a silver medal. The only verified Ceylonese Moor to have received a nickel medal in recognition

of his generous donation to the Hejaz railway project was Moor business baron I.L.M. Noordeen Hadjiar (Ismeth, 2022). By the end of August, 1908, the first train from Damascus reached Medina, and the inauguration ceremony of the Medina railway station was held on the 1st of September, 1908, to coincide with the 33rd anniversary of Sultan Abdülhamid II's accession to the throne. Festivities to mark the event were organised by the Ceylon Moor Union, the Hameedia Society (also called the *Jemmiyathul Hameediah* Educational Association) and *El-Jamiathul Islamia*. (Akalin, 2015; Ismeth, 2022). The *Muslim Nesan* newspaper published articles encouraging the Muslims to offer prayers for the Sultan, make supplication for his longevity, give charity to the poor and decorate their streets, homes and mosques. Congratulatory messages and gifts were sent to the Ottoman Consul to Colombo at the time, Mohamed Macan Marcar, to be conveyed to the Sultan.

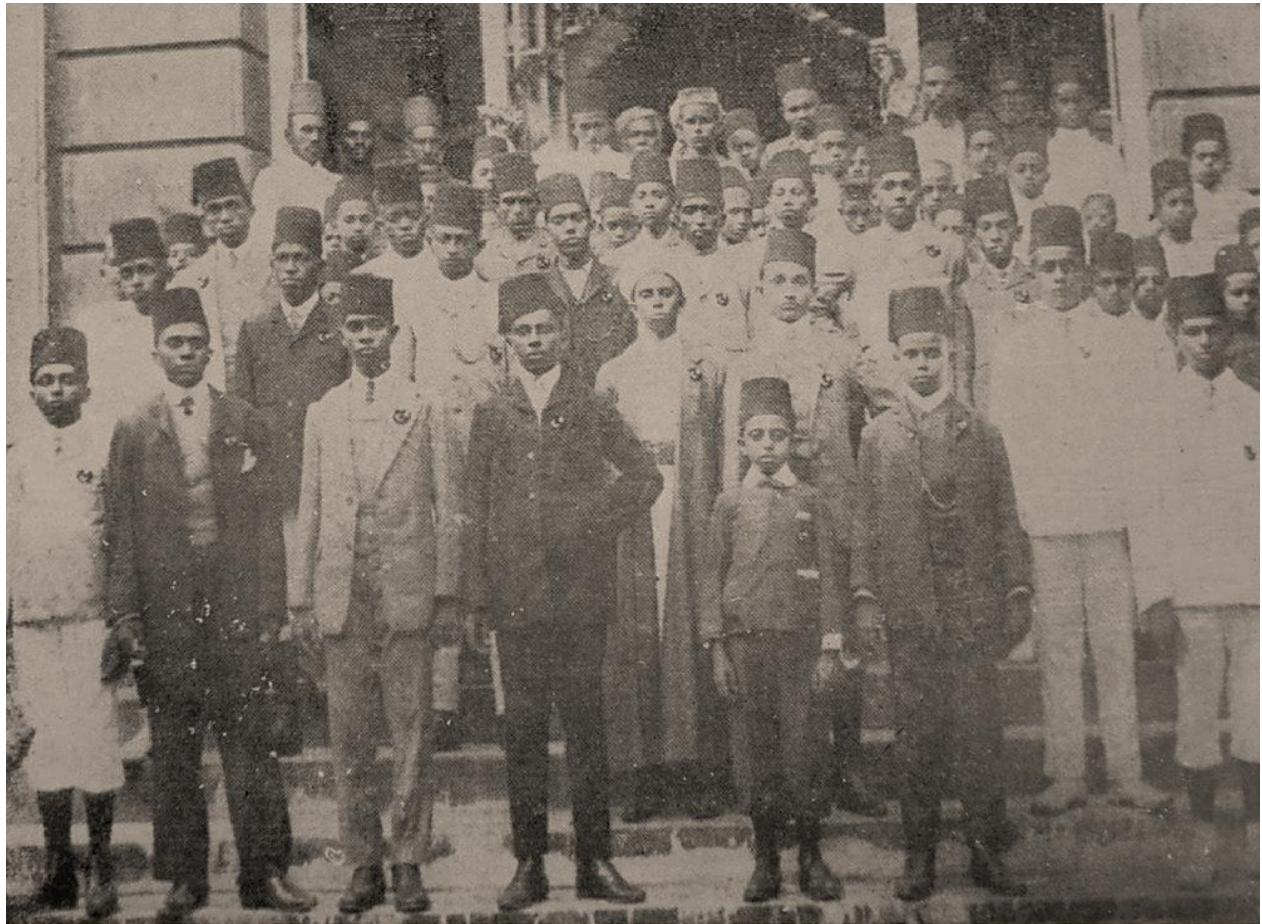
In his letter to the Sublime Porte, Mohamed Macan Marcar mentioned that he had been sent many congratulatory messages and telegrams expressing reverence and gratitude to the Sultan by the Muslims of Ceylon, whom he claims had organised numerous events in honour of the Sultan's 33rd anniversary (Akalin, 2015). In addition, he mentions that a local organisation called *Al-Fajriya*, headed by Sheikh Muhammed Ibrahim al Fasu'al Medeni Ishgatullah, a native of Mecca, sent him a special letter enclosed in a silver casket (Akalin, 2015). Macan Macar also states that events in honour of the Sultan were overseen by Sheikh Abdulwahab and Haji Izzadeen. He went on to add that the Ceylon Moor Union, the Hameedia Society and *El-Jamiathul Islamia* also organised events where speeches were delivered in honour of the Sultan (Akalin, 2015). He also states that the event organised by the Hameedia Society was graced by personages such as W.M. Abdul Rahman, member of the legislative council; Abdul Cader; I.L.M. Abdul Aziz; I.L.M. Noordeen Hadjiar; Meera Lebbe; and Muhammed Hadjiar, among others (Akalin, 2015). In addition, Macan Marcar mentions that at the reception organised by him, special prayers were offered for Sultan (Akalin, 2015). In February 1909, the Sublime Porte informed the Ottoman Embassy in London to notify the Ottoman Consul to Colombo that Sultan Abdülhamid II appreciates the affection expressed by the Ceylonese Muslims (Ismeth, 2022).

Based on the letter sent by the Ottoman Consul Md. Macan Marcar, it is quite evident that unlike the Sultan's Silver Jubilee celebration in 1900, the official opening of the Hejaz railway and the 33rd anniversary of his accession to the throne were commemorated only in Colombo, that too

by the Moor elite (Azeez, 1970; Mahroof, 1981). Therefore, it is fair to say that Abdülhamid's jubilees were urban-Muslim affairs and not celebrations of the entire Muslim community.

Figure 16

Gathering at Hameedia School Building to celebrate the opening of the Hejaz Railway c.1908



Note. Students of Masjidathul Hameedia standing in front of the school building on the 1st of September, 1908. From *Moors' Islamic Cultural Home Souvenir IV 1977-1982* by Moors' Islamic Cultural Home, 1983, Moors' Islamic Cultural Home.

4.6. Turkish Fez: Hallmark of Pan-Islamic identity

Apart from subscribing to Ottoman causes and celebrating some of the milestones of Abdülhamid's reign, one of the most outward manners in which the Muslims of Ceylon expressed their support for Hamidian Islamism was by wearing the Turkish fez. Although Urābī Pasha and his comrades who were exiled to Ceylon are credited with introducing and popularising the fez among the Ceylonese Muslims, it was never perceived as an Arab headgear but a symbol of Muslim identity and Ottoman sophistication (Ali, 1981; McGilvray, 1998). The most prominent among the

local leaders who observed the influence of Egyptian exiles on the fashion of the Moors was Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam—Ceylon civil servant, educationist, and member of the legislative and executive councils of Ceylon—who made a passing remark about it in the census report for the year 1901 (Ali, 1981). This makes it clear that by the turn of the 20th century, Moors of Ceylon had adopted what Arunachalam identified as “dress of European Turks” (Ali, 1981, p. 7). It was only after the arrival of Urābī Pasha that many urban Moors took to the wearing of Western suits, neckties, and collared shirts, as well as opted for shorter haircuts, as they were no longer seen as ‘Christian habits’.

Although popularised by Egyptian Arab exiles, Moors have identified the headgear only by the name '*Turukki Toppi*', which translates to 'Turkish hat' in Tamil (Ali, 1981; Hussein, 2010). It should be noted, however, that in the 19th century Europeans, used the term ‘Turk’ as a common misnomer to identify a Muslim, especially one of Middle Eastern origin or descent or a subject of the Ottoman sultan (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Likewise in South India, the Tamils used the word 'Tulukkar' to identify not only those of Turkic descent but also as a misnomer to identify Muslims, particularly those who lived along the Coromandel coast (Mohamad, 2005; More, 2004; Mydin & Saidumasudu, 2020). Therefore it is likely that in Ceylon, due to the influence of the British and South Indians, the local Muslims, particularly the Moors, associated the Tamil equivalents for the terms ‘Turk’ and ‘Turkish’ with anything related to Islam or Muslim identity. Moreover, as most Moors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries possessed limited, if any, knowledge of the Ottoman Empire, they most likely mistook Turkish people/Turks to be Arabs.¹⁹ Therefore anything related to Turkish identity was perceived as Islamic/Muslim identity.

Moreover, one of the key reasons why the fez was adopted by the Moor elite was because it was also worn by the Ottoman Sultan, the Caliph of the Sunni Muslims (Hussein, 2010). As mentioned earlier, Abdülhamid II was the first and only Ottoman Sultan and Caliph, whose photo was hung at the walls of Muslim homes, shops and schools, and there is no photo of him not donning the fez (Azeez, 1964; Hussein, 2010; Mahroof, 1986; Shukri, 1986). These photos served as a testimony that the Ottoman Sultans wore the Turkish fez and not any other headgear, thereby giving further impetus for its adoption by the Muslims of Ceylon as a symbol of loyalty to the Ottoman Caliph (Hussein, 2010; Wettimuny, 2021). This signifies not only the Ottoman influence

¹⁹ To date, Muslims living in the remote villages of Sri Lanka presume mistakenly that Türkiye is an Arab country, and its inhabitants are Arabs. Moreover, the Embassy of Türkiye in Colombo continues to receive letters in Arabic, indicating that the false notion that the Turkish are Arabic speakers persists to this day.

on the fashion but also on the psychology of the Moors, to whom the fez symbolised a sense of belonging to the wider Muslim community, particularly to the Middle East, which many claim as their ancestral land (Mohan, 1987).

4.6.1. *The Fez Controversy*

One of the first educated Muslims to don the fez was M.C. Abdul Cader (1879-1946), the first Ceylonese Moor graduate and advocate (Ali, 1981; Mahroof, 1981). When he graduated from Madras Presidency College and returned to Ceylon, he won the admiration and praise of many prominent Moors, including I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, who congratulated him in his newspaper, *The Muslim Guardian* (Mahroof, 1981). This proves that he was, in his mid-20s, a known figure among the Muslims of Ceylon. On the 7th of October, 1904, he took his oaths as an advocate, wearing the coat, trousers and the Turkish fez instead of a barrister's horsehair (Mahroof, 1981). Given that he pursued his studies in India, where pan-Islamism reached its apogee during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it is likely that Abdul Cader was influenced by it, which led him to adopt the dress of an educated Turk. Moreover, Muslim newspapers of Ceylon, such as *Muslim Nesan* and the *Muslim Guardian*, that advocated for pan-Islamism and the adoption of the Turkish fez, could most likely have also influenced his sartorial taste. He appeared in courts wearing the fez for the next seven months, during which time the Chief Justice of Ceylon, Sir Charles Peter Layard, was away in Britain. On the 2nd of May, 1905, when Abdul Cader appeared before the Supreme Court to defend his client in an appeal case, Layard peremptorily ordered him to either remove his fez or uncover his feet as a mark of respect to the court (Ali, 1981, 2001; Dewaraja, 1994; Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011).

Refusing to do either, Abdul Cader, after his futile attempts to convince the chief justice that the fez was a symbol of his Muslim identity and a mark of respect, stormed out of the court and did not return for almost a year (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). With the help of some of the influential Moor elite, Abdul Cader tried every means at his disposal of convincing Layard and other Supreme Court judges to grant him permission to wear the fez to the courts (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). One of the key personages who stood in Abdul Cader's defence was I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, the president of the Moor's Union, who, along with a coterie of Moor leaders, met with Layard at his private residence, to try and convince him to grant permission for the wearing of fezes in the law courts (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011; Wettimuny, 2021). The involvement of

the Moor's Union exacerbated the problem. On 19th September, 1905, Layard delivered a Minute, restating that the fez was prohibited to be worn in the courts. The Minute read:

If Mr. Cader's prayer was granted in its entirety, and he was allowed to appear with the red fez and gown and bands, this Court could not prevent other Advocates claiming to appear with their heads covered with turbans of various colours, which are quite incongruous to the gown and bands without which they have no right of audience in the Supreme Court (Thawfeeq, 2011, p. 444)

Undeterred by the Supreme Court verdict, Abdul Aziz met with the Muslim leaders at "Muirburn House," the then residence of I.L.M. Noordeen Hajjar, and established the Fez Committee, which comprised some of the influential business barons and the local representatives of foreign governments, including Mohamed Macan Markar, the Ottoman Consul, and MI Mohamed Ali, Vice Consul for Persia (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). The difference of opinion between Abdul Cader and Sir Charles Layard had, by December 1905, aggravated into a serious problem. The articles that were published in local newspapers, particularly the *Muslim Guardian*, framed Layard's ruling as an attack on Islam and Muslims by a Christian overlord rather than a colonial attack on the national culture (Ali, 1981). To address what had by then become known as the 'Fez question' and 'Fez controversy,' the Fez committee organised a meeting, which was held on Sunday, the 31st of December, 1905, at 4 pm at the grounds of the Maradana Mosque.

According to the article published on the 1st of January, 1906, in *the Times of Ceylon*, close to 30,000 Muslims were in attendance, and given that Ceylon in 1901 was home to 246,118 Muslims, more than 12 percent of the island's population had congregated, meaning there was strong support for the Fez Question (L.B., 1907; Wettimuny, 2021). The large assemblage of Muslims, including Indian Moors, Afghans, Persians, Arabs, Turks, and even those from 'Asia Minor,' exemplifies the transnational religious solidarity that had developed in Ceylon at the time. Also, it indicates that an attack on the fez was seen as an attack on the Muslim community (Ali, 1981). The Fez question received wide coverage in local print media, particularly in premier English newspapers such as *The Times of Ceylon*, *Ceylon Independent*, and *Ceylon Standard*, all of which highlighted the unity of the Mohammedan Community (Holt, 2011). It also received coverage overseas. For example, the August 1907 issue of the French magazine *Revue du monde musulman* (Review of the Muslim World) published an article titled "La Question du fez à Ceylan"

(The Question of the fez in Ceylon), indicating that the fez controversy in a far-flung British colony had created quite a stir across the globe (L.B., 1907). The Sublime Porte was also kept informed of the fez controversy in Ceylon (BOA, Y.A.HUS. 499/69).

It is therefore evident that by early 1906, Pan-Islamism had gained a foothold in Ceylon. Another important point that most newspapers mentioned is that there hadn't been such a crowd since the demonstration at Galle Face Green when Queen Victoria passed away in 1901 (Thawfeeq, 1972). Between 1901 and 1905, there were numerous rallies and public demonstrations, but none of them managed to attract as many people as the meeting organised by the Fez Committee (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). Therefore, it is evident that the British authorities in Ceylon were concerned and probably felt threatened over the large assemblage of Muslims that had gathered at the Maradana Mosque.

Not only did local Muslim leaders address the gathering, but also Sir Rafiuddin Ahmed, famously called Moulvi Rafi-Uddin, barrister at law from Bombay, hailed as "The Lion of the Bar", who had been invited by businessman Carimjee Jafferjee to attend the meeting as the guest of honour (Ali, 1981; L.B., 1907; Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011). In his oration, Rafi-Uddin highlighted that he had always appeared before the high courts in India clad in his Turkish fez and that lawyers in Egypt were also permitted to wear the fez in courts. He also stated that even during his audience with Queen Victoria at her chapel, he was permitted to wear the fez and that Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan had declared the fez as the national headgear, thereby arguing that Sir Charles Layard is completely alien to the British administration (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011; Wettimuny, 2021).

Moreover, he underscored the fact that the Muslims in French colonies and the Russian Empire were also permitted to don the fez, and he "raised the possibility of appealing to another source of power, one that could potentially be a more significant threat to the British than Ceylon's Muslims" (Wettimuny, 2021, p. 14). As noted by Wettimuny (2021), "Such comparisons also illustrated the geographical spread of the imagined religious community to which Ceylon's Muslims saw themselves as belonging and the flows of information between Muslims across empires" (p. 14). The Fez committee meeting not only made the Muslim elite of Colombo understand that they had the strong backing of the *ummah* but also that they could use the *ummah* to resolve their own problems and achieve their objectives. The participation of foreign Muslims,

particularly Rafi-Uddin, and his fiery oration at the meeting, indicates that the ‘question of fez’ was not treated as a Ceylonese problem but that of the *ummah*.

Chief among the local leaders who addressed the crowd was Abdul Aziz, who read out letters he had received from Messrs Canagasabai and Kadiravelupillai, two Tamil advocates from Jaffna, who mentioned that they wore the turban to the supreme courts and were not denied entry. (Wettimuny, 2021). Not only do these letters signify that the Tamils were permitted to wear their headdress, but also that some of the Tamil leaders wanted the Muslims to be granted equal rights and be allowed to wear the Turkish fez. The local intelligentsia, including Tamils, Sinhalese and Burghers, penned articles to newspapers in defence of M.C. Abdul Cader’s right to wear the fez to the courts. This shows that the ‘question of fez’ was perceived as a ‘common’ problem that transcended race, ethnicity and religion.

That said, not a single non-Muslim Ceylonese was invited by the Fez Committee to address the crowd, meaning it was viewed as a fight in defence of the rights of the Muslims and not the Ceylonese. Rather than treating the issue as a tussle between Muslims and Christian officialdom, it should rightfully have been used as an effective tool of resistance against British colonialism in Ceylon. As highlighted by Ameer Ali (1981), “the failure to exploit the issue as a national protest against colonial oppression was a missed opportunity” (p. 9). Nevertheless, the Fez committee submitted to the Governor a motion signed by the Muslims of Ceylon to be conveyed to King Edward VII via the secretary to the colonies.

Sir Charles Layard’s ruling was reversed, and in March, 1906, Abdul Cader was granted permission to wear the fez to the courts, and the Muslims of Ceylon were thereafter allowed to sport their fez in courts and other places (Mahroof, 1981; Thawfeeq, 2011; Wettimuny, 2021). The ‘Fez Controversy’ was the first incident in recorded history when Muslims across Ceylon “united to assert their civil rights as an ethnic and religious community to fight for a sartorial symbol of Ottoman Turkish colonial culture” (Thawfeeq, 2011, p. 441). In 1915, when the Sinhala-Moor riots broke out in Ceylon, the wearing of the fez by Moors became a serious issue, as the headgear symbolised support for pan-Islamism and the Ottoman Empire (Ràmanáthan, 2003). According to Tim Harper (2021), “Communal riots in Ceylon in 1915 also reflected the slow spread of pan-Islamic sentiment, such as the wearing of the fez among the coastal Moors of the island” (p. 274). Even Macan Markar, whose residence was attacked by angry mobs during the riots of 1915, gave up wearing the fez and instead wore the English hat until the riots subsided (Ràmanáthan, 2003).

It is worth highlighting that except for the Moors, other Mohammedan ethnic groups, such as the Afghans and Malays, were not attacked during the riots of 1915 (Dep, 2001). Moreover, the British deployed Malay policemen to suppress the riots (Dep, 2001).

Figure 17

Commemorative stamp to mark the 120th Birth Anniversary of M.C. Abdul Cader c. 1995



Note. The cover features the Turkish fez, the Scales of Justice, and the façade of the Hulftsdorp Court Complex in Colombo, the three symbols that best represent the Fez Controversy of 1905. From *Lanka Stamp*, by Lankastamp, n.d. (https://lankastamp.com/stamp_details.php?id=1235).

4.6.2. Rise and Fall of the Turkish Fez

No headgear in Ceylon's history has created a greater stir than the Turkish fez. It was also one of the articles of clothing that went from being “foreign” to “traditional” in less than three decades following its introduction. Also to be noted is that before the Turkish fez came into vogue, the affluent Ceylonese Moors wore the *Suratu Toppi* ‘headgear from Surat’—which was a thimble-shaped multicoloured cap made of either straw or silk and embellished with tinsel—while the Indian Moors sported the black cap (Ali, 1981; Azeez, 1964; Mohan, 1987). But within years following the arrival of the Egyptian exiles, the Moor elite gradually gave up wearing sarongs and

Surattu toppi, which had been worn by the Moor traders until the late 19th century, in favour of European trousers and the Turkish fez (Ali, 1981; Azeez, 1964; Mohan, 1987).

By 1907, as evinced by the photographs featured in Arnold Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* (1907), almost all prominent Moor businessmen on the island had started wearing the fez. Similarly, the group photograph of Ceylon Moors taken in 1908 at the entrance of *Al-Masjidathul Hameediah*, featured in the *Moors' Islamic Cultural Home Souvenir* (1983), shows many of them clad in three-piece suits but wearing the Turkish fez, while in the group photo taken in 1900 to mark Sultan Abdülhamid II's Silver Jubilee, there are many wearing the *Surati Toppi* and turban. This signifies that the 'Fez Controversy' of 1905 encouraged the Moors, particularly the younger generation, to adopt the fez as their headgear. Given that non-Moors did not adopt the fez and that Moor elites, particularly politicians who demanded separate representation for the Moors at the legislative council, wore it with pride and gusto, it prompted more and more Moors to take to the fez, to the extent that it had by the first quarter of the 20th century evolved into a symbol of Moor identity (Ali, 1981, 2001).

In Ceylon, the fez went from being a symbol of pan-Islamism and allegiance to the Caliph to becoming the traditional headwear of the Moors. Until the 1970s, it was uncommon to find Moors not wearing the fez on a daily basis, as it had by then become both a symbol of their ethnic and religious identity. Ameer Ali (1981) noted that "the Muslim (specially the Ceylon Moor) seen without a fez appeared the odd man out" (p.9). But its popularity gradually faded, and it was eventually replaced by the crochet skull cap (*toppi*) and other types of *topi* (cap) popular across the Indian subcontinent. Today, the fez is limited to weddings and cultural events.

4.6.3 Other Ottoman Symbols

In Ceylon, the conjoined representation of a star and crescent, which was a prominent symbol of the Ottoman Empire, gained popularity as a symbol of Islamic faith and pan-Islamism, mainly during the Hamidian era. According to M.C. Siddi Lebbe, the star and crescent not only symbolised the Ottoman Empire, but it also represented identities that evoke the ideas of pan-Islamism (Safeeha & Thowfeek, 2024; Wahab-Salman, 2016). The wide use of the star and crescent by the Muslims of Ceylon can be traced back to August, 1900, during the Silver Jubilee celebration of Sultan Abdülhamid II, when homes, mosques, shops and streets were decorated with festoons, streamers and flags featuring the star and crescent.

Likewise, the logos of many Muslim schools, organisations, newspapers and periodicals feature the star and crescent, which is also commonly found on the domes and as well as in the interiors of most mosques and Muslim restaurants (Hussein, 2010). As noted by Hussein (2010), it was hangovers from the days of the Ottoman sultans that led to the widespread use of the star and crescent symbol among Ceylon's Muslim community. It is also worth noting that unlike the fez, the star and crescent weren't adopted only by the Moors but the entire Muslim community, including the Malays, some of whom still adorn their headwear (*stangan kepala/songkok*) with the star and crescent brooch. Moreover, the flags of almost all Muslim schools, *madrassa* and organisations established during the Hamidian era feature the colours associated with the Ottoman Caliphate, such as red, white and maroon (the colour of the fez).

Another lesser-known Pan-Islamic tradition that took root in Ceylon during Urābī Pasha's exile was the firing of the *iftar* cannon for breaking the fast in the holy month of Ramadan (Fernando, 2022). It is widely believed that the tradition of firing the cannon originated either during the reign of Mamluk Sultan Sayf al-Din Khushqadam in the 15th century or in early 19th-century Egypt during the rule of Ottoman Khedive Muhammad Ali (Alaquil, 2018; Mohamed, 2020). The practice was eventually adopted by Muslim rulers across the Middle East and beyond. Although Ceylon maintained relations with Indian sultanates, where the tradition of firing the Ramadan cannon can be traced back to the 18th century, it was only in 1898, when Pan-Islamism had reached its apogee in Ceylon, that a cannon mounted on a wooden base was installed at the Colombo Grand Mosque, and it came to be known as the Ramadan Beerangi (Tamil for Ramadan Cannon) (Fernando, 2022). It was fired mainly in the month of Ramadan to indicate *Iftar*, time for breaking the fast, and the sighting of the new moon (Hussein, 2007; Thawfeeq, 1972). The British permitted the Muslims to fire the cannon even during the First and Second World Wars. The present cannon at the mosque was donated sometime around 1949 by A.A. Abdul Rahim (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

Figure 18

Canon, Colombo Grand Mosque



Note. From “How Muslims Lived in Colombo Many Moons Ago”, by Asiff Hussein, June 4, 2018, *roarmedia*. Copyright 2018 by Asiff Hussein.

4.7. Muslim Education and Arabic Language

Although M.C. Siddi Lebbe, under the influence of Urābī Pasha, strained every nerve to promote the Arabic language and Muslim education as part of his Pan-Islamist movement, his efforts proved largely ineffective. Except for *Madrasathul Hameedia* (now Hameed Al Husseinie College), and *Madrasathul Zahira* (Zahira College), most other schools founded by Siddi Lebbe became defunct or were closed after some years as they failed to attract sufficient students and funding (Asad, 1993a; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). Similarly, most of the government-assisted Muslim schools that were established by Lady Havelock and others lasted only for a few years. Although Siddi Lebbe published numerous articles in the local newspapers as well as in his own periodical, *Muslim Nesan*, urging the Muslims to send their sons and daughters to Muslim schools, it did little

to convince the Muslims. The enthusiasm surrounding the establishment of Muslim schools diminished within a few years (Nuhman, 2007). As indicated in Table 5, in 1895, out of 1096 government-assisted (GA) schools founded in Ceylon, only four were Muslim schools, and in 1905, when the number of GA schools had risen to 1582, the number of Muslim schools was only seven (Nuhman, 2007). The percentage of Muslim students in GA schools in Ceylon between 1895 and 1905 remained stagnant at 0.4 percent (Nuhman, 2007). This indicates that efforts to promote Muslim education, especially outside of Colombo, proved largely futile. Also to be noted is that Malays were included in the category of Muslims.

Table 5

Government Assisted (GA) Muslim schools and the Student Population from 1895 to 1915

	Total GAS	Muslim Schools	Total Students	Muslim Students	%
1895	1096	04	90229	377	0.4
1905	1582	07	156040	736	0.4
1915	2062	07	237420	7205	0.3

Note. From *Sri Lankan Muslims: Ethnic Identity Within Cultural Diversity* (p. 114), by M.A. Nuhman, 2007, International Centre for Ethnic Studies.

According to British journalist Arnold Wright (1999), the presence of the Egyptian exiles largely influenced the dressing style of the Moors and didn't do much in convincing them to seek education. It is therefore evident that although Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants tried to maintain a low profile and refrained from intervening in the domestic politics of Ceylon, the British authorities and foreign journalists like Wright were aware of Urābī Pasha's endeavours to promote English education and the Arabic language among the Muslims, particularly the Moors of Ceylon (Asad, 1993a; Wenzlhuemer, 2008; Wickramasinghe, 2003, 2006). However, there is no evidence of the British having perceived Urābī Pasha's doings in Ceylon as a threat (McGilvray, 2017, p. 93).

The plausible reason why the British did not treat Urābī Pasha's efforts to promote Muslim education with suspicion was because he "became a staunch colonial loyalist after arriving in Colombo" (McGilvray, 2017, p. 93). Again, it should be highlighted that Urābī Pasha was a

political exile who was treated as a British subject during his exile in Ceylon. In 1887, Urābī Pasha, Mahmoud Fehmi, and Yacoub Sami joined the procession organised in honour of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee and marched past the governor's pavilion; thereby, they "publicly demonstrated their loyalty to the British" (Asad, 1993a, p. 42). They also presented the governor with an address containing "expressions of loyalty, of congratulations, and also of gratitude for the gracious treatment accorded to them in Sri Lanka," which was conveyed to Queen Victoria (Asad, 1993a, p. 43). The wives of the Egyptian exiles also sent letters to Queen Victoria, pleading to pardon their husbands and to permit them to return to Egypt (Asad, 1993a). However, all their appeals for clemency to Queen Victoria were in vain. Urābī Pasha was permitted to return to Egypt only after the queen's passing in 1901. The Sublime Porte were well informed of Urābī's frequent appeals and that they were turned down by the British and Khedive (BOA, Y.A.HUS.246/11; BOA, Y.PRK.TKM.20/49). Moreover, Urābī Pasha's efforts to promote English and Arabic education saw marginal success, and that too in Colombo. Most Muslims chose not to send their children to schools; those who did preferred GA non-Muslim schools, as they offered better education compared to Muslim schools (Nuhman, 2007). As the Quran and Arabic were not taught in GA non-Muslim schools, not many Muslims learnt Arabic. Although Urābī Pasha and Siddi Lebbe wanted Moors to take up English at schools, many preferred Tamil (Nuhman, 2007). Arabic failed to gain a foothold, and Tamil remained the primary language among the Moors of Ceylon.

In less than five years after Urābī Pasha's departure, the fez controversy broke out in Ceylon. That was when the influence of Urābī Pasha on Ceylon's Muslim community came to light. M.C. Abdul Cader, who fought to wear the fez in the courts, was a Western-educated Moor advocate. Therefore it is evident that Western education in confluence with Pan-Islamist ideals had, by the early 20th century, proven to be a threat to British authority in Ceylon, as it did in the rest of the Indian subcontinent. That said, only a handful of Moors received English education during the Hamidian era. Based on the census records for the years 1881, 1891, 1901, and 1911, it is evident that there was no significant rise in literacy among the Moors of Ceylon. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that during the Hamidian era, Pan-Islamism in Ceylon was largely limited to the adoption of the fez and other symbols, such as the crescent and the star.

4.8. Ancestral ties to the Ottoman Caliphate

Apart from promoting the Arabic language and adopting Ottoman fashion, Hamidian Pan-Islamism also prompted some of the prominent Moor families to trace, if not concoct, ancestral ties to the Ottoman Caliphate. Some Moor families claim that they are descendants of a certain Prince Jamaldeen, son of Sultan Alaaddin and Ab'din of Konya in Asia Minor, who settled in Ceylon sometime in the 8th century and introduced *Unani* (Greko-Arabic medicine) to Ceylon (Effendi, 1982; Hussein, 2007; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965). Likewise, some Moor families whose forefathers bore the name 'Lebbe' claimed that their ancestors were descendants of Caliph Abu Bakr (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965). Given that there is no historical evidence of either a prince named Jamaldeen or Sultan Alaaddin having ruled Konya in the 8th century, such ancestral claims have been refuted as being “too farfetched temporally and spatially” (Saltık, 2022, p. 95). According to McGilvray (1998), the Ottoman consul Mohamed Macan Markar and business mogul N.D.H. Abdul Caffoor were of “recent Kerala origin” (p. 452). Moreover, as detailed in Chapter One popular surnames for Ceylonese Moors, such as 'Markar', 'Marikar Bawa', 'Sinne Lebbe' and 'Kariapper', are of South Indian origin (Balfour, 1885; Jeganathan & Ismail, 1995; Pandian, 1978; Sharif, 2017; Thurston, 1909a). This suggests that pan-Islamism coupled with political aspirations led to some of the influential Moor families that championed greater political representation for the Tamil-speaking ethnic ‘Moors’ to start claiming that their forebears hailed from the Middle East.

4.9. Hamidian Pan-Islamism: Take of the Malay Community

As observed by Arunachalam (1901), Wright (1907), Ali (1981) and McGilvray (1998), it was largely Ceylon’s Moor community that was influenced by Urābī Pasha. This raises the question as to how other Muslim ethnic groups of the island perceived Urābī Pasha and his pan-Islamism policy. After the Moors, the second largest Muslim ethnic group of Ceylon was its Malay community—whose population, according to the census for the year 1901, numbered around 12,000, of whom around 4500 lived in Colombo (Asad, 1993a; Denham, 1912; Shukri, 1986; Wenzlhuemer, 2008). Unlike Moors, who were mostly engaged in commerce or agriculture, Malays were largely employed in the police force and clerical service (Asad, 1993a; Denham, 1912; Ricci, 2019; Wright, 1907). In fact, when Urābī Pasha and his fellow exiles lived in Ceylon, each of them was assigned a police officer, many of whom were Malays. For example, when English-Australian

journalist Julian Thomas went to meet Urābī Pasha at his residence, he had to first meet and submit his card to the “Malay policeman”, whom he writes expressed “doubts” on whether the Pasha would see him (Ferguson, 1887, p. 359).

Although the Egyptian exiles were free to travel within the city limits, they were under strict “police surveillance” that came under the direct purview of the Inspector-General of Police (Asad, 1993a, p. 34). The Malay policemen were tasked with keeping a watchful eye on the activities of Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants and reporting all their daily activities to the senior officers. Therefore, it is highly unlikely for the Malay policemen, despite being Muslims by faith, to have been influenced by Urābī Pasha, who was nothing but a political exile to them. Given that a substantial percentage of the Malay population were English literate, second only to the Burghers (Eurasians), they most likely had read in the local newspapers about Urābī Pasha’s nationalist uprisings in Egypt (Denham, 1912). Moreover, as the majority of them were employed in government service, that too in the police force, the Malays must most likely have known that the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II did not support Urābī Pasha’s revolutionary activities.

It is also worth noting that the Malays of Ceylon even had their own newspapers published in the Malay language, such as *Alamat Langkapuri* (Address of Lanka) and *Wajah Selong* (Light of Ceylon), founded by Ceylon Malay literati and lithographer Baba Ounus Saldin (1832-1906), and these newspapers enjoyed wide readership not just among the Malays of Ceylon but also among those in Singapore, Malacca, Penang, Siam (Thailand), Java, and other parts of Southeast Asia (Hussainmiya, 1991; Kularatne, 2006; Ricci, 2019; Wright, 1907). Although *Alamat Langkapuri*, founded in 1869, it was arguably the first non-English newspaper in Ceylon and the first newspaper published by a Muslim to feature articles on the Ottoman Empire, particularly on Abdülhamid’s decision to go to war with Russia in 1876 and his eventual defeat in the Russo-Turkish War (Hussainmiya, 1991; Kularatne, 2006; Ricci, 2019; Wright, 1907).

Hussainmiya (1991) noted that in the newspaper *Alamat Lankapuri* “under the foreign news items considerable attention was paid to events related to Middle East and Istanbul involving the Turkish Empire and its confrontation with European powers” (p. 123). Proficient in Arabic, Baba Ounus Saldin was also an *alim* (scholar of Islamic law) and “an active promoter of the Shattariya school of Sufism” (Hussainmiya, 1991, p. 122; Ricci, 2019). However, there is no evidence of Baba Ounus Saldin having penned any articles in favour of Abdülhamid’s pan-Islamism or contributed to Ottoman causes, let alone visited *Ertuğrul* or attended the Sultan’s silver jubilee celebration. As

evinced by the photo featured in Arnold Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* (1907), Baba Ounus Saldin did not wear a Turkish fez; instead, he wore a Malay turban.

4.9.1. *Lack of 'Identity Crisis'*

In Ceylon, Malays formed a distinct community, with their own language, cuisine, rites and rituals, and even traditional clothing (Hussainmiya, 1990; Nordhoff, 2012; Ricci, 2019; Wickramasinghe, 1995, 2015). Except for some who wore bandanas like headwear made of batik, which closely resembles the 'blangkon', the rest wore the 'Stangan kepala' / 'songkok', a truncated cone-shaped cap made of batik, felt or silk (Fazal, 2013; Saldin, 1996). Under the British rule, the Malay community, though small in number, held influential positions disproportionate to their population size, with some of their leaders like Baba Hakim Muthaliph, Baba Thajul Arifin Doole, Baba Junoor Haji Bahar, and Ahamath Ibrahim Jainu-Deen serving as native chieftains and honoured with the ranks of Gate-Mudaliyar and Mudaliyar (The Ceylon Almanac, 1855; Woolf, 1963). They also maintained regular contacts with their counterparts in the Malay Archipelago, their ancestral land (Hussainmiya, 1990; Ricci, 2019; Saldin, 1996). Due to these reasons the Malays, unlike the Moors, did not suffer from an identity crisis or lack of representation in government, and as they had their own language and traditions, they were not considered part of the Tamil or Sinhala ethnic groups (Wickramasinghe, 1995, 2015). Therefore, the Malays did not have the necessity to create a 'new identity' by embracing Ottoman fashion, wearing Turkish fez, or "miming the theatrical loyalism of that exiled dissident, Arabi Pasha" (McGilvray, 1998, p. 450). Unlike the Moors, the Malays were largely a close-knit community with no major sectarian divisions among them, and they had their own leaders to resolve their problems; hence, there was no reason to approach Urābī Pasha or seek his guidance. The Malays were also far more westernised compared to the Moors, and many of their leaders were staunch Anglophiles (Fazal, 2013; Mohan, 1985).

That said, Urābī Pasha did try to establish contacts with Malay elites like Maas Sooma Jayah Akbar, a landed proprietor, planter and businessman, whose father, Maas Talip Akbar, in 1859 established the Masjidul Akbar 'Great Mosque' at Slave Island, Colombo. In October, 1883, when Urābī Pasha's friend Wilfrid Blunt and his wife visited Ceylon, they were treated to a breakfast party by M.S.J. Akbar at his residence at Kew Gardens, Slave Island (Asad, 1993b). However, unlike the Moor elite who emulated Urābī Pasha's sartorial taste and strived to establish

contacts with the Ottoman Caliphate, none of the Malay personages, including M.S.J. Akbar, declared explicit support for Hamidian Pan-Islamism, contributed to Ottoman causes or expressed willingness to serve as the Ottoman consul. Given their close ties to the British, it is likely that the Malays were more cautious on matters related to Sultan Abdülhamid II, during whose reign Anglo-Ottoman relations weren't stable. According to Ismeth (2022), on 31st August, 1900, on the day of Abdülhamid's silver jubilee, the Ottoman Consul Abdul Majid visited Slave Island's Akbar Mosque and Wekanda Mosque, both of which had been erected by the Malays. However, there is no information on whether the Malays organised specific events to mark the sultan's silver jubilee at these mosques. Also, there is no evidence of Malay military mosques having acknowledged Sultan Abdülhamid II in their *khutba*.

4.9.2. *Hamidian Pan-Islamism: A Moor Affair*

One of the possible reasons why most leaders of the Malay community were not in favour of Hamidian Islamism was because it was championed by the Moors, with whom they were at odds. It should be noted that at the turn of the 20th century there were serious tensions between some factions of the Moors and Malays (Wickramasinghe, 1995). For example, some Malay representatives at the legislative council even “contended in evidence that apart from their religion, they had no common interests with the Moors and that they should be definitely removed from the same compartment of communal representation” (Special Commission on the Ceylon Constitution, 1928, p. 94). Malay leaders like M.J. Majid even criticised the Moors as being a “backward” community, while Malay Justice, M.T. Akbar, wanted the British to abolish the ‘Mohammedan’ seat and instead allot separate seats for Malays and Moors (Asad, 1993a, p. 92; Wickramasinghe, 1995, p. 72). Moreover, some Moors excluded the Malays from managing the mosques, and there were “quarrels over the congregational rights of the Coast Moors and the Malays in Colombo mosques” (McGilvray, 1998). For example, N.H.M. Abdul Cadder (1879-1938), son of Noordeen Hadjiar, wanted the Malays out of the management of the Maradana Mosque, which served as an incubator for Hamidian Islamism in Ceylon (Asad, 1993a, pp. 79-80). Such tensions could also have resulted in Malays wantonly avoiding events such as the Sultan's jubilees organised by the Moors. Also to be noted is that almost all the local advocates of pan-Islamism, such as M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz, the founders of *Al Madrasathul Hameediyah*, the members of the Colombo Moslem Club, Hameedia society and Fez Committee as well as the Ceylonese who were appointed as Ottoman Consuls were all ethnic Moors.

According to Wickremasinghe (2015), the Malays distinguished “themselves from Moors by not wearing the red felt fez” (p. 108). This indicates that there was clear antipathy between the Moors and Malays during the Colonial period. Also worth noting is that the Malays were the most English-literate ethnic group in Ceylon after the Eurasians (Burghers) (Denham, 1912). Moreover, they maintained amicable relations with the British, who established ‘Malay’ mosques and regimental schools equipped with libraries stocked with ‘Malay’ books (Denham, 1911; Holt, 2011; Hussainmiya, 1986, 1990, 1991; Ricci, 2019). In addition, Malays of Colombo were staunch Anglophiles, who had by the late 19th century embraced the fashion, manners and even the recreational pursuits of the British. Therefore there was no reason for the Malays to join organisations established by Moors that aimed at promoting education and Arabic language. Moreover, from 1863 to 1903, the family of Abdul Majid held the office of Ottoman Consul to Colombo. As the first two consuls were Moors, the office of Ottoman Consul became a ‘Moor dynastic position.’ In addition, the fact that Anglo-Ottoman ties were unstable might have deterred the Malays from showing any interest in being appointed as Ottoman Consul.

Malay educationist, Ceylon’s first Muslim Puisne Justice of the Supreme Court and Cantabrigian scholar, Maas Thajon Akbar, son of M.S.J. Akbar was not on the Fez Committee. The fact that he chose to wear the horsehair wig instead of the Turkish fez signifies that the Malays associated symbols of Pan-Islamism with Moor identity. Therefore, it is clear that the Malays deliberately avoided anything that had to do with the Moors.

4.10. Pan-Islamism for Personal-Gain

The earliest recorded incident that helped reflect the interest in Ottoman affairs by the Ceylonese Muslims was their financial support for the relief fund for the victims of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. As detailed in the previous chapter, it was largely through the Colombo Moslem Club that the Ottoman Consul to Colombo, Hussain Lebbe Marikar Effendi, managed to raise 10,000 rupees, which was transferred to the Ottoman Consul to Bombay to be delivered to the Sublime Porte (“Turkish Sympathies in Ceylon”, 1878). The Colombo Moslem Club, as the name indicates, was a Muslim organisation based in Colombo, which comprised of Moor personages like Seyed Aboobecker Mawlana (patron), Ottoman Consul M. Hussein Lebbe Marikar (president), M. I. Mohamed Hanifa (chairman), S. Ismail Lebbe Marker Aaleem (deputy chairman), and the founder of the newspaper ‘*Sarvajana Nesan*’ A. L. C. Mohideen (trustee) (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1887, p. 578). In his letter to the Sublime Porte dated 3rd December, 1903,

Ottoman Consul Abdul Majid expressed his despondency over the fact that his late father, Hussein Lebbe Marikar, who served as Ottoman Consul, though promised a “high rank by the late Rustem Pasha for his generous contribution of Rs 10,000 to the Ottoman government to aid the wounded soldiers during the Turco-Russian war”, it never materialised (Ismeth, 2022, p. 59). Given that the munificent donation of Rs 10,000 was made either by M. Hussein Lebbe Marikar or the Colombo Moslem Club, it is not entirely accurate to consider it among the incidents that reflect “Ceylon Muslims unvarying need to be connected to the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world as means of protecting their identity” (Ismeth, 2022, p. 138). Although Hussein Lebbe Marikar sympathised with Abdülhamid II, there is no evidence of him having explicitly declared his support for Pan-Islamism. As he was a businessman, he was most likely cautious about not displeasing the British, as it would have affected his trade. There are two reasons to surmise so.

Firstly, starting from the late 19th century, the Muslims of Ceylon perceived the wearing of a fez as an “expression of sympathy with the Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East” (Mohan, 1987, p. xi). However, there is no proof of Marikar having donned the fez. The only illustration of him published in the *International Exhibition of Islamic Arts and Culture* (1983) features Marikar wearing a *Suratu Toppi* and not a Turkish Fez. Secondly, there is also no evidence of Marikar having hosted or being hosted by Urābī Pasha during the latter’s residence in Ceylon. Marikar was also keen on ensuring that his son would succeed him as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo. In November 1899, Marikar, who was gravely ill at the time, requested his secretary, Mohamed Ishaq Effendi, to convey to the Sublime Porte his intent of having his son, Abdul Majid, succeed him as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo upon his passing (HR. SFR.3.372/38; BOA, HR. SFR.3.373/99). Marikar passed away in November 1890, and a letter along with a paper cutting of his obituary was forthwith sent to the Sublime Porte (Ismeth, 2022). Therefore, it is evident that Marikar wanted the office of Ottoman Consul in Colombo to be hereditary so that his descendants could benefit from it.

Abdul Majid also highlighted in his letter to the Sublime Porte that his father served as the Ottoman consul for twenty-five years, during which time he spent large sums of money on entertaining guests from the Ottoman Empire, India and Egypt. However, it should be noted that the Ottoman consuls were permitted to “retain a part of the profit earned by the chancery service to cover their consulate expenditures” (Ismeth, 2022, p. 36). In addition, Majid mentioned that he had also rendered his service as Ottoman Consul for thirteen years and made an earnest request

“for a medal, any other decoration, or a high rank such as the Consular general in recognition of his service to the Majesty the Sultan and the Ottoman Empire” (Ismeth, 2022, p. 59). Majid did not receive any medal or promotion; instead, he was dismissed from the position of Ottoman Consul due to his unpalatable behaviour, and Mohamed Macan Markar succeeded him as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo in 1904 (Ismeth, 2022). This calls into question whether Majid supported Ottoman causes and organised grand festivities to mark Sultan Abdülhamid’s silver jubilee in the hopes of securing a medal, a higher rank and holding on to the position of Ottoman consul, and not necessarily because of his reverence for Abdülhamid II or interest in pan-Islamism. It is worth noting that by the first decade of the 20th century, Colombo port, known as 'The Clapham Junction of the East', had become the seventh busiest port globally by tonnage, surpassing major ports such as Liverpool and Singapore (Ilangamuwa, 2024; Jackson, 2009; Sivasundaram, 2017b). Therefore, for businessmen like Abdul Majid, serving as an Ottoman consul to Colombo must certainly have proved beneficial in expanding their business and improving their economic and social status.

4.10.1. Tussle Over Ottoman Consulship

It was the appointment of Mohd Macan Markar Effendi as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo in 1904 that triggered his adversaries, including the Ottoman Consul at the time, Abdul Majid, and secretary to the Hameedia society, S.L. Mahmood Hajiar, to send letters to relevant authorities not only expressing their grievances but also detailing the financial contributions made by their respective fathers to the Russo-Ottoman war efforts (BOA, HR.SFR.3. 548/7). In his letter to Shaykh al-Islām Abdullah Quilliam of Liverpool, dated 27th May, 1904, S.L. Mahmood Hajiar sabotaged the reputation of Macan Markar and highlighted that there are more deserving candidates who have established “the Madrasatol Hamidia in Commemoration of the Jubilee of His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan” (Ismeth, 2022, p. 61). In addition, he highlighted that his father, Packeer Thamby Sinna Lebbe, “remitted large sum of money from Colombo, through Hassain Naseeb Effendi, the then Ottoman Consul at Bombay” and that there are affluent Muslim businessmen who have travelled to Istanbul in the 1880s and met with “Gazee Osman Pacha, Fadel Pacha, Hassain Naseeb Effendi, and others” who should rightly be appointed as Ottoman Consul (Ismeth, 2022, p. 61). Abdullah Quilliam conveyed Mahmood Hajiar’s letter to the Sublime Porte, but to no avail (BOA, HR.SFR.3.548/7).

It wasn’t the first instance that Mahmood Hajiar expressed his interest in being appointed to the position of Ottoman Consul. When Hussain Lebbe Marikar, the first Ottoman consul to

Colombo, passed away and his position became vacant, Mahmood Hajjar dispatched a letter in February 1891 to the then Ottoman consul in London, Rustem Pasha, declaring his willingness to serve as the Ottoman consul to Colombo. (BOA, HR.SFR.3.383/34; Ismeth, 2022). His efforts, however, proved futile, as Abdul Majid succeeded his late father as the Ottoman consul to Colombo in 1891 (Asad, 1993a; Effendi, 1982). Born in 1868, Mahmood Hajjar was a scion of a wealthy Moor family based in Colombo. His father, Packeer Thamby Sinna Lebbe Marikar, was a prominent merchant of Pettah who admitted his son, Mahmood Hajjar, to Wesley College to receive English education (Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). Proficient in English, Arabic, Sinhala and Tamil, Mahmood successfully expanded his father's business, established trade ties with the Arab merchants—the majority of whom were Ottoman subjects—and grew to become one of the key exporters of Ceylonese produce to the Ottoman Empire (Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). Sometime in the mid-1880s he embarked on an extensive tour of the Middle East and visited some of the major cities of the Ottoman Empire, including its capital, Istanbul, where he made the acquaintance of "Osman Pasha the heroic defender of Plevna and Falool Pasha" (Ismeth, 2022, p. 55). Likewise, when he travelled to England, he met with Abdullah Quilliam, a pro-Ottoman pan-Islamist who founded England's first mosque and Islamic centre in Liverpool (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965).

In 1895, when Quilliam was bestowed with the honorific title '*Shaykh al-Islām*' (leader of the Muslims) by Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Ceylonese Muslims sent him "an engraved turban brooch with the letters *A salamo-aliek* (peace be upon you) in Arabic characters, picked out with 177 Ceylonese pearls" (Al-Dajani, 2023, pp. 56-57; Geaves, 2010). Mahmood Hajjar was the founding member and secretary of the Hameedia Society that helped run the new building of the Anglo-Mohammedan Boys' School *Al Madrasathul Khairiyathul Islamia*, which was renamed *Al Madrasathul Hameediyah* to commemorate Sultan Abdülhamid's silver jubilee in 1900 (Bajpai, 2019; Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965). Moreover, he made a generous donation of 2,000 rupees for the erection of new buildings for *Al Madrasathul Zahira* and was one of the members of the Fez committee that fought for the rights for Moors to don the Fez in law courts instead of the barrister's horsehair wig (Effendi, 1982; Marikar et al., 1976; Thawfeeq, 1972; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965).

He also tried to be nominated as the Mohammedan member at the legislative council when the seat became vacant in 1900, but to no effect (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). It is therefore

reasonable to argue that apart from piety and interest in promoting Muslim education, Mahmood Hajiar made generous donations, celebrated Sultan Abdülhamid's jubilees and supported the ideals of Pan-Islamism, also with the intent of being appointed as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo, which would certainly have helped improve his business, as well as elevate his influence and status within the Muslim community in Ceylon. Moreover, the fact that the information concerning Mohd Macan Markar shared by Mahmood Hajiar in his letter to Abdullah Quilliam was largely false and fabricated lends further credence to my argument that Hamidian Islamism was used by Mahmood Hajiar to realise his own ambitions.

Figure 19

M.L.M. Zainudeen Hajiar and his family



M. L. M. ZAINU DEEN AND FAMILY.

Note. By the early 20th century, it was common among men from prominent Moor families to be clad in three-piece suits and Turkish fezzes, while girls wore Western-style clothes, which epitomised their 'Ottoman sophistication.' From *Twentieth century impressions of Ceylon* (p. 501), by A. Wright, 1999 (Original work published 1907), Asian Educational Services.

Another prominent Moor merchant, who supported the cause of Hamidian Islamism and was among the key aspirants for the position of Ottoman Consul to Colombo, was Muhammad Lebbe Marikar Zainudeen Hajjar. Akin to the case of Mahmood Hajjar, M.L.M. Zainudeen Hajjar also sent letters to Ottoman officials in 1891 and in 1904, detailing his credentials and expressing his interest in being appointed Ottoman Consul, but all his efforts proved ineffective (Ismeth, 2022). Zainudeen was born into a well-to-do Moor family, which enabled him to receive English education at Wesley College, Colombo (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907). Thereafter, he joined his father's business and grew to become one of the largest exporters of Ceylonese goods to the Middle East (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907). He also entered politics and had the rare honour of being elected to the Colombo Municipal Council, representing the Pettah ward on three occasions (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907). He demonstrated his interest in Pan-Islamism by contributing to Ottoman causes, celebrating Sultan Abdülhamid's jubilees, rechristening his business centre on Main Street, Pettah, "Hameediah Buildings" in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid, and advocating for the rights of the Moors to wear the fez in law courts instead of a barrister's horsehair wig (Effendi, 1982; Marikar et al., 1976; Thawfeeq, 1972; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Wright, 1907).

It is worth noting that both Mahmood Hajjar and Zainudeen Hajjar, in their respective letters to Ottoman officials, highlighted their command over Arabic and their previous visits to the Ottoman Empire, thereby conveying the idea that they possess the knowhow (Ismeth, 2022). Moreover, following their visits to Egypt and the Levant, they travelled to Istanbul, met with Ottoman officials, and thereafter performed their Hajj before returning to Colombo. (*The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was customary to first visit Istanbul and pray at any mosque which had been visited by Caliph Abdülhamid II, as it symbolised seeking his permission and blessings before undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, it was during Zainudeen Hajjar's visit to Egypt in 1883, accompanied by his Arabic tutor, Sahib Doray Ismail Lebbe Marikar Alim, that Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants conveyed their message seeking clemency to the Khedive (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965). Given that M.L.M. Zainudeen Hajjar appealed twice to be appointed as Ottoman Consul and that he was a businessman cum politician, it is plausible that he too tried to leverage Hamidian Islamism for his own gain.

4.10.2. *Pan-Islamism for Social Mobility*

Akin to the case of Abdul Majid, Mohd Macan Markar too sent letters to the Sublime Porte, imploring to be honoured with a medal or a higher rank in recognition of his services as the Ottoman consul and for his contribution to collecting funds for the Hejaz Railway (BOA, HR.SFR.3.589/13). He also informed the Sublime Porte that the Ottoman Consulate has relocated from an obscure location to a splendid hotel, embellished with a brass pavilion, thereby hinting at the progress made after he assumed the duties of Ottoman Consul (Ismeth, 2022). He also requested that the Sublime Porte send flags and coats of arms of the Ottoman Empire to Colombo, but his requests were respectfully declined, as there existed no practice of furnishing honorary Consulates with official insignia (BOA, HR.SFR.3.565/93; BOA, HR.SFR.3.565/100). However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, his requests for special gifts for top students of *Al Madrasathul Hameediyah* and for a portrait of the Sultan to be hung in the reading room were complied with by the Sublime Porte (BOA, Y.A.HUS. 516/21; BOA, HR.TH. 326/77; BOA, BEO.3168/ 237591). Unlike Abdul Majid, Macan Markar did not fall out with the Ottoman officials and continued to serve as the Ottoman Consul to Colombo until 1914, when formal diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Ceylon were severed after Britain declared war on the Ottomans (Asad, 1993a; Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965).

Macan Markar had high-end clients across the Middle East and went on to establish showrooms in Shepherd's Hotel, Continental Savoy, and Semiramis in Cairo and King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which required him to make frequent trips to Egypt and the Levant (Ali, 1987; Elliott, 1938; Hulugalle, 2004; Macmillan, 1928). As he made regular trips to Ottoman domains, Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi maintained close contacts with some of the notable Ottoman officials. His position as the Ottoman consul certainly helped him expand his business further, particularly in the Ottoman Empire (Ali, 1987; Elliott, 1938; Hulugalle, 2004; Macmillan, 1928). As evinced by the writings of S. M. Tevfik—journalist to the Ottoman journal *Sebîlürreşâd* who visited Ceylon in November, 1913—Istanbul was among Macan Markar's favourite holiday destinations, where he was deeply drawn to the mansions (*yalı*) that lined the Bosphorus Strait, to the extent that he had his own sea-facing home in Colpetty, Colombo, built in the *yalı* style, which cost him a staggering

five thousand English pounds (Ismeth, 2022; Saltık, 2020, 2021).²⁰ Upon completion, he christened it *Villa Stamboul*, after Stamboul, an antiquated term to refer to central Istanbul (Dep, 2001; Effendi, 1982; Saltık, 2020; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; *The Times of Ceylon Green Book*, 1921).

Even the road on which the house stands is named Stamboul Place. He also maintained a tradition where every Friday, the Ottoman flag was hoisted at Villa Stamboul to signal his stay at the residence (Ismeth, 2022; Saltık, 2020). There is no evidence of other honorary consuls having flown the flags of the countries they represented at their private residence, let alone their office. And as mentioned earlier, his request for the Ottoman flag and insignia to be displayed at the Ottoman Consulate in Colombo had been respectfully declined by the Sublime Porte, as he was only an ‘honorary’ consul (BOA, HR.SFR.3.565/93; BOA, HR.SFR.3.565/100). Nonetheless he chose to fly the Ottoman flag at his private residence. Macan Markar was most likely trying to imitate the European tradition of flying the royal standard when the sovereign is in residence at the palace. This indicates that Markar was not only fond of a flamboyant and regal lifestyle but also that he was more likely drawn to the power and influence associated with the position of Ottoman Consul than to Hamidian Pan-Islamism.

Also worth noting is that, just months after Sultan Abdülhamid II was deposed, Mohamed Macan Markar visited Istanbul, where he met with the new Sultan Mehmed V, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As shown in Figure 20, Markar even posed for a photograph with the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which included the brother of Ahmed Niyazi Bey, one of the key figures of the Young Turks Movement that ousted Abdülhamid II from power (Effendi, 1982; Ismeth, 2022; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965).

Not only was Mohamed Macan Markar “convinced the Ottoman government is in the hands of capable officials”, but “he further believes the Young Turks would take forward Istanbul to the status it deserves” (Ismeth, 2022, p. 66). Following his return to Ceylon, he had the portrait of Sultan Mehmed V hung at his office at York Street and is said to have explained to the Muslims

²⁰ S. M. Tevfik was hosted by Macan Markar at his residence, Stamboul Villa, which the former described as being the most elegant and magnificent. He also noted that Macan Markar wore a ring bearing a green, emerald stone, which symbolised his immense wealth. According to Tevfik, the gem trade in early 20th century Ceylon was dominated by the Moor community.

about the new Sultan, constitutional reforms, the benefits it would bring to the Ottoman Empire and that the Sultan sends his greetings to the Ceylonese Muslims (Ismeth, 2022). Given that he was the Ottoman consul, he would most likely have conveyed only the pro-Ottoman sentiments of the Ceylonese Muslims to the Sublime Porte, that too written in the most *ad captandum* and exaggerated fashion.

Figure 20

Group Photograph featuring Mohamed Macan Markar c. 1909



Note. Mohd. Macan Markar in the Consul's uniform and Turkish fez (standing at far right marked by orange tag) with officials from the Sublime Porte. This photograph was donated along with the uniform and ceremonial sword by Hamza Macan Markar, grandson of Sir Mohd. Macan Markar, to the Embassy of Türkiye in Colombo in 2016. From *the Embassy of Türkiye in Colombo*.

In November, 1914, when Sultan Mehmed V declared *jihad* against the Triple Entente, it became a “source of great embarrassment to the Moorish community”, and most of the eminent Muslim personages and organisations not only pledged loyalty to the British but also instructed the mosques to offer prayers for British and allied success (Dep, 2001, p. 7; Wimalaratne, 1986, p.

430). In 1915, when the Sinhala-Moor riots broke out, Macan Markar, fearing that his fez “might attract a stone to his head”, switched to the wearing of the English hat instead (Ràmanáthan, 2003, p. 46). It is said that when Macan Markar, accompanied by Sir Ponnambalam Ràmanáthan, was heading to Town Hall, Colombo, a Sinhalese passerby exclaimed, "Anna Hambaya" (There goes a Hambaya), and Macan Markar "lost no time in doffing the fez and donning the foreign hat!" (Ràmanáthan, 2003, p. 46).²¹ This calls into question his real intentions in supporting Hamidian Pan-Islamism and the ‘Fez Controversy’. After the riots subsided, Macan Markar resumed wearing the Turkish fez, most likely to distinguish himself from the natives and for political opportunism.

Although no conclusive evidence could be found of Mohamed Macan Markar having openly declared his support for the British during the First World War, he most likely did; if not, it is unlikely for him to have had a successful career in business and be honoured with a knighthood by King George V in 1938 (Asad, 1993a; Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty One Years*, 1965). According to *Who's Who* (1961), Macan Markar also served as a director of the Bank of Ceylon, member for the Batticaloa South seat, State Council (1931-36), Minister of Communication and Works (1931-1936) and Chairman of the Ceylon Electricity Board (1936-37). If he had fallen out with the British, he certainly would not have held prominent positions in British Ceylon. His previous role as Ottoman Consul would most likely have helped him secure the votes of the Muslims.

Moreover, on the 5th of October, 1921, Macan Markar hosted a lavish reception called ‘Arabian Night’ at Stamboul Villa in honour of Lady Manning, wife of the then British Governor of Ceylon, Sir William Manning (Effendi, 1982; *The First Twenty-One Years*, 1965; Saltık, 2020).²² Macan Markar hosted many such ostentatious events at Stamboul Villa in the 1920s, at a time when the Khilafat movement (1919-22) in British India was at full swing and anti-British sentiments were on the rise among Muslims across the Indian subcontinent (ATASE, 110-9-1-11/5/0/101; ATASE, 110-9-1-11/6/0/29; ATASE, 110-9-1-11/15/0/57; BOA, Y.PRK.ŞH.12/64). There is no

²¹ Hambaya was a term used by Sinhalese to identify Coastal Moors of South Indian origin or descent, particularly those involved in the making of boats.

²² Governor William Manning strongly supported the Ceylonese Malays’ request for a separate seat at the legislative council, and the first Malay political association in Ceylon was also established in 1921. Therefore it is likely that Macan Markar, in the hopes of winning the favour of Governor Manning and securing a greater ‘Moor’ representation in local politics, hosted grand levees at Stamboul Villa. In 1924, Macan Markar became a member of the legislative council of Ceylon, indicating that he managed to realise his political ambitions.

evidence of Macan Markar, despite having served as the last Ottoman Consul to Colombo, having supported the Khilafat movement, steered by Indian Muslims to protect the Ottoman Caliphate. Therefore, it can be surmised that Mohamed Macan Markar supported Hamidian Pan-Islamism, commemorated Abdülhamid's jubilees and supported Ottoman causes—until Anglo-Ottoman relations had deteriorated beyond repair—mainly for personal benefit and not necessarily because he genuinely believed in the ideals of Pan-Islamism.

4.10.3. *Pan-Islamism for Political Opportunism*

Almost all key figures who made generous donations and organised grand festivities to mark the Sultan's jubilees were Moor businessmen who were themselves politicians or had close relatives in politics, if not those who aspired to be the Ottoman Consul to Colombo. According to McGilvray (1998), it was their "determination to foster a unique Ceylonese-Arab identity" that drew the Moor leadership to "extra-territorial allegiance." (p. 450). As discussed in the previous chapter, the Moors fought for separate representation at the legislative council by pointing to their Arab heritage; therefore, by "miming the theatrical loyalism of that exiled dissident, Arabi Pasha," the Moor elite attempted to establish themselves as a politically and economically strong community (McGilvray, 1998, p. 450). While the Moor elite laboured to strengthen their 'Arab heritage' by contributing to Ottoman causes and building stronger ties with the Ottoman Caliphate, they remained "conspicuously devoted to the British monarch." (McGilvray, 1998, p. 451). They were keen on maintaining good relations with both the British and the Ottomans, although the Moor elite might have been conscious of the fact that Anglo-Ottoman relations had begun to deteriorate after 1882.

Mohan (1987) notes that when Ceylon's independence became inevitable in 1940s, "the Muslim elite, comprising mostly the wealthy trading community, moved closer to the Sinhalese" (p. 27). Given that they were businessmen, their main concern was securing their trade, which made them shift their political allegiance whenever required. Therefore, when some Moor businessmen ventured into politics, they gained notoriety as political opportunists (McGilvray, 1998). Also to be noted is that most of the Moor elite who entered politics starting from the early twentieth century were those who were actively involved in the Fez Committee, Hameedia Society, and other organisations that championed Hamidian Islamism. According to Mohan (1987), even Muslim schools such as Zahira College and theological schools (*madrasa*) that taught Arabic and Islamic culture were established "to maintain and preserve the individuality of Ceylon Moors," which in

turn helped the Moors demand adequate representation in government (p. 27). Therefore, it is evident that self-interest, particularly political aspirations, was the main driving force for most Moor personages, particularly those who held the office of Ottoman consul to support Abdülhamid II and pan-Islamism at the turn of the twentieth century.

4.11. Conclusion

Almost all the books and articles that have hitherto delved into the history of the Ottoman Empire's relations with Ceylon have largely provided glorified accounts of the reverence accorded to Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II by the Muslim populace of Ceylon. However, as detailed in Chapter Four, it was largely urban Muslims, particularly Moors, who held Abdülhamid II in high regard, celebrated his jubilees and contributed to Ottoman causes. One of the key arguments put forth in this chapter is that the assemblage of large crowds—particularly in Ceylon, where locals are generally curious—cannot be considered as an indication of influence, power or popularity. In the case of the visit of *Ertuğrul*, the writings of Turkish and Sri Lankan Muslim authors mostly claim that throngs of people surged in from all quarters of the island to see the Ottoman frigate. Similarly, accounts of European travellers, particularly those that discuss the visits made by royals and dignitaries, claim that in Ceylon, myriads of locals turned up to welcome the visitors. It largely reflects the curiosity and hospitality of the Ceylonese and not necessarily the influence and popularity of the visitors, except in the case of the British Royals.

Another argument raised in this chapter is that most of those who supported Hamidian Pan-Islamism, particularly Moor businessmen, did so for personal gain rather than any special reverence for the Ottoman Caliphate. The grievances expressed in the letters penned by Ottoman consuls and Moor elites to the Sublime Porte indicate that they were hankering to be honoured with certificates, medals and ranks by the Ottoman Sultan. Again, it should be noted that recognition from the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Caliph, helped the Moor elite elevate their social status, expand their business and exercise greater influence over the Muslim populace. Hamidian Pan-Islamism seems to have had limited, if any, influence on Malays, Afghans and even the Moors who lived in rural areas. Another argument made in this chapter is that Urābī Pasha's endeavours to promote Arabic language and Muslim education only saw marginal success during the Hamidian Era.

Moreover, none of the Muslim newspapers established during Urābī's stay in Ceylon survived until the second decade of the twentieth century. Likewise, except for popular institutions such as Zahira College and Hameed Al Husseinie College, most of the schools and *madrasas*

established during the Hamidian era in Ceylon were discontinued after some years. Following the outbreak of the First World War, the diplomatic relations between Ceylon and the Ottoman Empire severed. Moreover, unlike the case of British India, there is no evidence of Muslim leaders of Ceylon having supported the Khilafat movement or expressed their concerns over the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the socio-political dynamics of Colonial Ceylon was very different from other countries where pan-Islamism was introduced during the Hamidian era.



V. CHAPTER

CONCLUSION

This study has been an attempt to deal with the research question of how Pan-Islamism reached and influenced the Muslim community in Ceylon during the Hamidian Era (1876-1909). Chapter Two has established the conceptual framework based on the concept of Pan-Islamism. Chapter Three has attempted to answer the first sub-question of what were the main channels and actors through which Pan-Islamist ideas were introduced to Ceylon. While Chapter Four has addressed the second sub question of how different segments of the Ceylonese Muslim community responded to Pan-Islamism and what factors influenced these responses.

Although Ceylon-Ottoman relations were established in 1863, there is no evidence of any interest in Ottoman affairs among the Muslims of Ceylon until 1877, when Hussein Lebbe Marikar, the first Ottoman consul to Colombo, raised funds to support the wounded soldiers and Mohammedan victims of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. Nevertheless, non-Muslims also contributed to the 'Turkish compassionate fund' and as the Anglo-Ottoman ties were cordial, people of Ceylon, particularly the well-to-do businessmen in Colombo were encouraged by the British authorities to help the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is fair to argue that subscription to the relief fund by the Muslims was mostly out of compassion rather than any special interest or devotion to the Ottoman Empire. It was the arrival of Urābī Pasha and his lieutenants in January 1883 that set the stage for the dissemination of Hamidian Pan-Islamism in Ceylon. Until then there was little, if not no, knowledge of Pan-Islamism in Ceylon. However, the fact that Maldivian personages like Ibrahim Didi Effendi—who served as Ottoman Consul to Galle—adopted the Turkish fez before the arrival of Urābī Pasha to Ceylon suggests that the scholars and gentry of the Maldivian Islands may have been familiar with some facets of Pan-Islamism before 1883. In addition, historical records suggest that the Caliphal authority of the Ottoman Sultans was officially recognised by the Sultans of the Maldivian Islands for over four hundred years, from the time of Suleiman the Magnificent till the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924.

However, in Ceylon it was only after 1883 that the Ottoman Empire began to be recognised as the Caliphate by the Ceylonese Muslims, and the term 'Caliph' became increasingly associated with the Ottoman Sultan. As Urābī Pasha was a notable revolutionary from Egypt who had pursued his education at Al Azhar, he was well cognisant of the Pan-Islamism movement spearheaded by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammed 'Abduh. Therefore, what came to be understood as Pan-

Islamism in Ceylon, especially in the early 1880s, were the reforms and ideas that were conceived at Al-Azhar and executed in Ottoman Egypt. That said, it should be highlighted that other than unity among Muslims and recognition of the Caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II, Hamidian Pan-Islamism, as an ideology, lacked any definite agreement on its content, scope, and goal. Therefore, what came to be understood as the nature, scope, goals and symbols of Pan-Islamism differed from region to region, particularly outside the Ottoman Empire, where it depended on what was disseminated in the name of Pan-Islamism by Ottoman consuls, agents and local actors. Urābī Pasha proved instrumental in justifying and promoting the Caliphal authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II as well as Islamic modernism, particularly through his efforts to persuade the Muslims to embrace a Western-style education in Ceylon. As Urābī Pasha was an Arab, Arabic language, culture, customs, and institutions were also actively promoted by local ideologues like M.C. Siddi Lebbe and I.L.M. Abdul Aziz as facets of Pan-Islamism. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that it was Urābī Pasha's 19-year exile that led to 'Arabisation'—in the guise of 'Pan-Islamism'—taking root in Ceylon.

Although he didn't partake in anti-colonial struggles, Urābī Pasha, proved instrumental in starting the Islamic modernism movement in Ceylon. Understanding the might of modern technology, especially the printing press, he encouraged local ideologues like Siddi Lebbe and Abdul Aziz to publish more articles in the local papers to promote Pan-Islamism. Urābī's stay also gave the impetus to establish more Muslim-centric periodicals, which focused on covering the political developments of the Ottoman Empire. As Pan-Islamism in Egypt was inexplicably linked to Islamic modernism, Urābī Pasha focused on promoting education among the Muslims, who were the most educationally backward religious community in British Ceylon. As a political ideology that evolved largely in the late 19th century, Pan-Islamism depended substantially more on 'literacy' and print media than religious zeal. Therefore, Urābī Pasha championed for Muslim education and helped ideologues like Siddi Lebbe in their educational, religious and social reforms.

Urābī Pasha also managed to convince Muslim merchants in Colombo to make generous donations to the establishment of schools and *madrassa* in Colombo. The fact that the first Mohammedan school was rechristened in honour of Sultan Abdülhamid's silver jubilee and that most of the houses in Muslim schools were named after cities and regions of the Ottoman Empire signifies the attempts to promote Pan-Islamism in Colombo. Another key aspect that Urābī Pasha worked on was promoting unity among the highly heterogenous Muslim community of Ceylon.

Apart from resolving sectarian differences between the Muslim elites, he also saw some success in promoting solidarity among the Sunnites and Shiites. Carimjee Jafferjee's contribution to Muslim education and Ottoman causes reveals the impact of Urābī Pasha on the Shia community of Ceylon.

Urābī Pasha was, however, cautious about not explicitly promoting anti-colonialism, one of the key aspects of Hamidian Pan-Islamism. As Urābī Pasha was a political exile yearning to return to Egypt, he made sure to not get himself embroiled in any anti-colonial conspiracy. It is also plausible that he was actively promoting Pan-Islamism in Ceylon in the hopes that it would please Sultan Abdülhamid and that the Sublime Porte would negotiate with the British government and allow his return to Egypt. Nevertheless, exposure to modern education and Western ideas eventually led to the rise of anti-colonial sentiments among Muslims of Ceylon, as it did in most countries. The best example of this is the fez controversy, which broke out in less than five years after Urābī's departure. By the early 20th century, the Muslim elite of Ceylon had come to realise the true potential of the *ummah*. Urābī Pasha's endeavours to promote pan-Islamism were, however, limited to the urban Muslims, particularly the Moor elite of Colombo. Although Urābī Pasha was in contact with Malay leaders, he failed to promote solidarity between the Malays and Moors. Moreover, the Malays, despite being Sunni Muslims, never acknowledged the Ottoman Sultan as their Caliph, and there is no evidence of them having contributed to Ottoman causes, taken part in Abdülhamid's jubilee celebrations, or shown any interest in establishing Muslim schools and *madrasa* during the Hamidian era. In addition, none of the Malays took to the wearing of Turkish fez and were not on the board of any Islamic organisation that worked towards promoting Pan-Islamism.

Active involvement of Moors in the pan-Islamic movement and the position of Ottoman consul to Colombo being held exclusively by Moors further discouraged the Malays from showing any interest in Pan-Islamism, which became an urban Moor affair in Ceylon. Moreover, the Moors who lived in the Eastern and Northern provinces were also not involved in Pan-Islamism. The main reason being that the Moors in those regions were illiterate and disconnected from the main cities of the island. Technology and literacy were the lifelines of Pan-Islamism. As most Muslims of Ceylon were wary of modernism, Urābī Pasha and his fellow ideologues' attempts to promote Islamic modernism and education only saw marginal success in major cities like Colombo, Galle and Kandy. Moreover, the number of Muslims who learnt Arabic, let alone English, did not improve significantly during Urābī Pasha's stay in Ceylon. Other than Urābī Pasha and the Moor literati

mentioned in the thesis, there were most likely other unsung pan-Islamists whose contributions went unreported and forgotten from history. For example, there is hardly any information about the contribution of the six other Egyptian exiles to promoting Pan-Islamism in Ceylon.

In the context of the Moor elite of Colombo, Pan-Islamism served three vital roles. First among them was the establishment of a separate ethnic identity that distinguished the Tamil-speaking Muslims from the ethnic Tamils and other natives of Ceylon. In the late 19th century, the nouveau riche Muslims of Colombo, who were striving to elevate their social status, tactfully used Hamidian Pan-Islamism to strengthen their ancestral claims to the Middle East. This helped them escape from the prejudices that were inherently associated with different castes and establish themselves as an elite community of 'Arab origin'. One of the ways through which they demonstrated their 'Arab heritage' was through the adoption of 'Ottoman fashion'. For example, the Turkish fez, which served as a symbol of Ottoman modernism and Pan-Islamism, was adopted by the nascent Moor elite of Ceylon, who made it their sartorial marker. To date the Moors wear the fez at weddings and celebrations. In modern-day Sri Lanka the fez is no longer considered a symbol of Pan-Islamism but a traditional headgear of the Ceylon Moors that represents their 'Arab' ancestry. Siddi Lebbe also tried persuading the Moors to adopt Arabic as their mother tongue but to no avail.

On the other hand, some Moors adopted Arabic titles and Arabic naming customs. They also embraced Arab culture and cuisine, as proven by the writings of Japanese journalist Shotaro Noda, who was hosted by Ceylonese Moor Ottoman Consul Abdul Majid, who was even mistaken for being an Arab. Since the late 19th century, the influence of Arabisation has slowly but gradually increased in Sri Lanka, particularly among Moors, threatening the age-old customs and cultures of the island's Muslim community.

Pan-Islamism also distanced the Moor elite from the largely non-Muslim native population. As highlighted by Ameer Ali (1981), the fez controversy of 1905, which could have rightfully served as an anti-colonial protest, ended up being a tussle between Muslims of Ceylon and Christian officialdom. Moreover, the Muslim elite permitted foreigners like Sir Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad to address the crowd on the fez question but not a single non-Muslim Ceylonese national leader, despite the non-Muslims having declared their support for Muslims in their fight to wear the fez instead of a horsehair wig in the courts.

The second major role played by Pan-Islamism in Ceylon was helping the Moor elite address their political exigencies. As political representation (appointed members) at the Ceylonese legislative and state councils during the British rule was based on ethnicity, the 'Arab identity', reinforced through Pan-Islamism, helped the Moors demand for separate political representation. This was secured in 1889 when a separate seat for 'Mohammedan representative' was established in the legislative assembly. Therefore, it is fair to argue that Pan-Islamism and Urābī Pasha's exile in Ceylon encouraged the Moors to demand separate political representation and played a vital role in stirring an interest in local politics among the Moor elite of Colombo.

The third vital role played by Pan-Islamism was helping the Moor elite serve their self-interests. Support for Hamidian Pan-Islamism was one of the keyways through which the Moor elite strove to establish themselves as prominent figures in Ceylon. Until the late 19th century, except for Malay soldiers who were awarded for their gallantry, none of the Muslims received medals or titles from foreign heads of state. Therefore, the wealthy Moor elite of Colombo made generous donations to Ottoman causes in the hopes of being appointed as the Ottoman Consul by the Ottoman Sultan or being presented with medals, ranks and titles. Serving as Ottoman Consul was a much-coveted position, as it helped Moor businessmen expand their trade and establish themselves as leaders of the Muslim community in Ceylon. Among other reasons, those who served as Ottoman consuls championed the Caliphal authority of Abdülhamid II and his successors, as it also helped them secure greater respect and elevate their own status among the Muslims of Ceylon. For example, Sir Mohamed Macan Markar Effendi's position as Ottoman Consul helped him win the favour of Muslims, expand his business in the Middle East and also become a successful politician.

However, not all those who championed Pan-Islamism were hankering for recognition from the Ottoman Sultan or trying to benefit themselves. For example, there is no evidence of the Ottoman Consul to Galle, Ibrahim Didi Effendi, having dispatched letters to the Sublime Porte imploring for promotion or medals. He also took to the wearing of the Turkish fez before the arrival of Urābī Pasha and maintained close camaraderie with the latter. There is again no proof of him having consulted with the British or Sublime Porte with regard to his dealings with Urābī Pasha. Nevertheless, it can be argued with tolerable authority that in Ceylon, Pan-Islamism was an ideology popular among urban and literate Moors, some of whom strategically exploited it to serve their self-interests and rise to prominence in Colonial Ceylon.

Also worth noting is that the socio-political situation in Ceylon was very different from other colonies where pan-Islamism was promulgated, especially British India, British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, which had substantial Muslim populations with local Muslim leaders wielding considerable power and influence. Moreover, the local Muslim populace in those colonies maintained regular contacts with the Islamic world and were not subject to centuries of isolationism, as in the case of the Muslims of Ceylon.

This thesis has made a humble contribution to the understanding of the history and development of Pan-Islamism in Ceylon during the Hamidian Era, the changing dynamics of Ceylon-Ottoman Empire relations during that period, as well as the sociology of Muslims in Colonial Ceylon. This thesis has focused largely on Pan-Islamism and Ceylon-Ottoman Empire relations during the 33-year reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, suggesting there is considerable scope for further research on the history of Pan-Islamism and the influence of the Ottoman Caliphate in the rest of South Asia during the Hamidian Era, the history of Arabisation in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, Ceylon-Ottoman Empire relations in the years that preceded and succeeded the Hamidian Era, and the Ottoman Empire's relations with other island states of the Indian Ocean, such as the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros, etc. Such investigations would not only complement this thesis but also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Pan-Islamism and the Ottoman Empire's relations with Muslims who lived beyond its realm. Further research would also fill the existing knowledge gaps in the domains of Ottoman studies, Islamic history, sociology, international relations and political science.

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