

THE TURKISH-RUSSIAN WAR: A MALAY PERSPECTIVE*

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INTRODUCTION

Research on manuscripts is a challenging and exciting endeavour given the nature and the scarcity of the texts. The narratives are explicit where every incident which occurred, persons and places involved meticulously recorded indeed too, each scribe employs literary styles prevalent at his time.

According to the scribe, the manuscript was written based English, Persian, Indian and Egyptian sources in addition to oral interviews conducted with a Turk named Ahmad Efendi.

This manuscript, which elucidates the Turkish-Russian war between Muslims and non-Muslims in Turkey, is historical proof that relations between the Turkish Empire and the Malay World existed during the 16th century.¹ Although the above-mentioned manuscript was copied in Penang there were, however, no direct contact between Turkey and the Malay Peninsula. Aceh was the only direct link between Turkey and the Malay World at the time where religion, commerce² and military interests formed the basis of that relation.

It is perhaps appropriate to suggest that the writing of this manuscript was a manifestation of sentiments shared by the peoples of the Malay World toward events affecting those of the same faith living in Turkey. That the scribe should attempt to write on events of this war implies that the impact of the relations between Turkey and Aceh³ was also felt by the people living elsewhere in the Malay World thus arose the need to record and impart information on important events.⁴

* This manuscript was copied by Muhamad Saman Ibni Al-Marhum Haji Muhamad Amin, a clerk at the British Residence office in Penang, Malaya on the 9th of Rabi' al-akhir in the year 1312H/1st October 1894.

¹ Research on the early relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Malay World has been carried out by Nabir Hj. Abdullah, *Turki dan Alam Melayu : tinjauan terhadap sejarah hubungan keduanya*, in **Jebat bil. 15**, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, p. 131.

² G. W. F. Stirling, **The Ottoman Turks and The Arabs**, 1511-1574, Philadelphia, Percupine Press, 1977, pp. 10-15.

³ Nuru'd-din ar-Raniri, **Bustanu's-Salatin**, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, pp. 31-32. Cf. Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, **Pensejarahan Melay : Kajian tentang Tradisi Sejarah Melayu Nusantara**, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1992, p. 230.

⁴ Andrew C. Hess, The Ottoman conquest of Egypt (1517) and the beginning of the sixteenth-century world war, **International Journal Middle East Studies**, vol. 4, 1973, pp. 55.

The aim of the scribe was to warn the Muslims of the threats by western Christian missionaries who were actively halting the spread of Islam and converting Muslims living in their dominions into Christianity. The West were, at the time, looking for new colonies in the Malay World to monopolise the spice trade. The Turks were seen to be defenders of the faith and the scribe intended to encourage the Muslims to join in the struggle against the enemy.

That the manuscript should be produced too could be viewed as an attempt by the British colonialists to consolidate its expansion ambition on this side of the world. The British Empire, the most powerful imperialist and colonialist at the time, perceived Russia to be an obstacle in its attempt to dominate the spice trade route and the Near East. Any advancement on the part of the Russians towards Istanbul, located near the trade route to the east and subsequently the 'doorway' to India was viewed as a threat to the former's interests in the east. British ministers encouraged and supported any attempt to secure and consolidate the Turkish Ottoman Empire as a buffer state to prevent the spread and influence of the Russians in the Near East. Indeed, the Crimean War (1854-1856) occurred precisely for similar reasons.

In this regard, the British encouraged the writing of this manuscript to record the war between Turkey and Russia. Considering that one of the sources of the manuscript is English and the fact that the said text was a gift from R.J. Wilkinson to the Cambridge University library, this argument is acceptable.

This chronicle which was completed in October 1894, is the only available text elucidating the war between Russia and Turkey which took place during the second half of the 19th century. It supplies rich information on the events of the war and it will go some way to shedding light on the history and civilization of nations.

The researcher shall attempt to describe the physical and linguistic aspects of the manuscript as well as a brief discussion on the contents of the text.

General Description of the Manuscript

The manuscript elucidating the war between Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan Ghazi (Turkey) and King Francis Alexander (Russia) was donated by R. J. Wilkinson to the Cambridge University library in November 1900. The manuscript code is MS. Add 3763 (complete). There is no pagination of the folios. However, based on the number of written pages, it consists of 145 folios.

The text was written on hard "European Paper" measuring 320cm in length, 205 cm in breadth and 15 cm in width. The title' *Inilah Hikayat Peperangan Al-Maulana Sultan Istanbul yang bernama Abdul Majid Khan Ghazi dengan Raja Rushin yang bernama Francis Alexander*' (This is a war between al-Maulana Sultan Istanbul namely Abdul Majid Khan Ghazi with The king of Russia, namely

Francis Alexander) is precisely written on the front of the manuscript. It consists of 180 pages but only 145 pages were written on.

The manuscript is in good condition where there is no discernible difference in the neat handwriting. However, on several places the writing looked thick due probably to excessive flow of ink⁵ because these incidences did not seem intentional. The scribe used black ink rendering the text legible. Arabic and Roman words and cancellation of errors were highlighted in red ink.⁶

To indicate indentations, straight lines were pencil drawn on the left and right sides of each page. There are 21 sentences on folio 4 up to folio 144. On the other hand, there are only 9 sentences on folio 1, 15 sentences on folios 2 and 3 and 16 sentences on folio 145. This means that there is consistency on the number of sentences on each page. The discrepancies on folios 1, 2, 3 and folio 145 are due to the fact that these folios contains respectively the introduction and conclusion of the manuscript.

Although there is no pagination, the text was correctly arranged in sequence beginning with the sentence '*Inilah Hikayat Peperangan Al-Maulana Sultan Istanbul yang bernama Abdul Hamid Khan Ibni Al-Markhum Al-Maulana Abdul Majid Khan Ghazi dengan Raja Rushin yang bernama Francis Alexander*'⁷ (This is a war between al-Maulana Sultan Istanbul namely Abdul Majid Khan Ghazi with The king of Russia, namely Francis Alexander) and ending with '*Telah tamatlah menshâlinkan hikayat ini kepada 17 haribulan September 1896 mulai pukul 10 petang malam Jumaat. Jikalau ada tersalah atau khilafnya, maka hamba minta ampun dan maaf kerana hamba bukan ahli yang demikian itu adanya. Wa katibuhu Muhammad Saman Ibni Al-Marhum Haji Muhamad Amin kepada 9 haribulan Rabiulakhir sahat 1312.*'⁸

Several marginal additions have been made to the manuscript⁹ to produce new points or to elaborate on some existing discussion. The author of the manuscript had also rewritten parts of the sentence from a folio onto the following folio. The contents of folios 66-69 were repeated in folios 70-73. This probably occurred during the process of printing the manuscript or during the process of making the microfilm since it is unlikely that the author was unaware of such an error as the manuscript was handwritten.

There are also quotation from the al-Quran¹⁰ in the text although some are misquoted¹¹ due perhaps to sentiments which influenced the author during

⁵ Folio 55, Folio 57, Folio 61, Folio 63, Folio 85, Folio 94, Folio 98, Folio 105, Folio 123.

⁶ Folio 21, Folio 38, Folio 45, Folio 96 and Folio 112.

⁷ Folio 1.

⁸ Folio 145.

⁹ cf, For instance, *ibid*, Folios 3b, 9a, 10a/b.

¹⁰ Folios 37, 64, 99, 100 and Folio 101.

¹¹ Folio 37.

writing or it could be because he misheard the quotes during the copying process. Quotations from the al-Quran occurred during conversations between Fahlun and Muhammad Syamili i.e, two highly esteemed muslim generals.

The sources of the manuscript were derived from Egyptian, English, Indian and Persian sources besides oral narratives from a Turk, Ahmad Efendi who arrived in Penang in 1877.¹² The manuscript was written with the intention of arousing the awareness of the Muslims over the crisis which was prevalent between Muslim and non-Muslims at the time. Given the paucity of documents written by Muslims compared to those written by non-Muslims, this manuscript is a valuable document indeed.

The General Contents of the MS.

The war between Turkey and Russian was said to be sparked off by the mass murder of Christians in Bulgaria at the hands of the Muslims. Disagreement over the position of Prophet Isa as the son of God or the Spirit of God¹³ culminated into a bloody war.

On the whole, the manuscript described the series of wars which took place between the Turkish and the Russian armies on the Turkish-Russian border i.e, in Asia Minor. The war was in actuality the extension of animosity from the Crimean war. The places, weapons, and strategies employed by the warring parties, the states and kings involved in the war are precisely described although sometimes misspelt in the manuscript.

The narration begins by describing the attacks by the Russians on the states around Mycale; on the mountainous areas of Caucasus i.e, in Checheno-Ingush which spread into Kutaisi, Poti, Ardahan and Armenia. The Muslim army and its general had retreated into these areas following their defeat in one of the battles. Muhammad Shamwili, the Turkish general was extremely dissatisfied with his defeat at the hands of the Russian army led by General M.T. Louis Melikov. Due to the onset of the winter season, the Turkish army were given leave before resuming duties to fight the enemy. The narration in the manuscript ended at this point in time.

The manuscript, on the whole, describes the spread and the influence of Islam in Asia Minor during the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. It relates the will of the Muslims to resist the advancement and domination of the non-Muslims. The author concluded his narrative at this stage of the war, stating his intention of resuming his narrative in the future. It may be prudent to state that this manuscript was recorded by a Muslim for Muslims and therefore the perspective and approach of the narrative reflected the author's bias.

¹² Folio 2.

¹³ Folio 3.

Linguistic Analysis

Upon examination of the linguistic aspects of the manuscript, one outstanding feature encountered is the extensive usage of old Malay language. From numerous words and sentence constructions throughout the manuscript, this fact is unmistakably clear. For example, most sentences begin with *maka*,¹⁴ *alkisah*,¹⁵ *dami*,¹⁶ *hatta*,¹⁷ *nescaya*,¹⁸ *seraya*,¹⁹ *shahadan*,²⁰ and *tatkala*,²¹ words no longer or rarely used in the modern Malay language nowadays. Other words for example *empunya*,²² *cetera*,²³ *pehduli*²⁴ and *baharu*²⁵ are compatible to the literary style of the era in which this manuscript was written i.e, the early 19th century.

The markedly conspicuous presence of Arabic words for example *muafakat*²⁶, *sanat*²⁷, *fi'il*,²⁸ *kalam*²⁹ and *thawab*,³⁰ *sahib*³¹ and *sulh*³² in the chronicle, can perhaps be attributed to the existing relation between the local populace and those from West Asia particularly the Arab and Persians at the time of writing. Perhaps too, the author aims to convince his readers of the authenticity of his work through the usage of these foreign words.

The approach used in this edition has been to preserve the language used by the chronicler as it holds great interest to scholars. Thus, an attempt has been made to copy as accurately as possible the original manuscript. However, to facilitate reading, the researcher has taken the liberty to insert paragraphs and to add punctuation marks to the text due to the absence of fullstops, commas and small and capital letters in the original manuscript. The text has also been transcribed from Jawi script into Latin script.

¹⁴ Folio 30, Folio 71, Folio 77, Folio 112 and Folio 113.

¹⁵ Folio 31 and Folio 103.

¹⁶ Folio 49, Folio 51, Folio 53 and Folio 78.

¹⁷ Folio 24, Folio 45, Folio 53, Folio 56, Folio 76 and Folio 96.

¹⁸ Folio 25.

¹⁹ Folio 34.

²⁰ Folio 54, Folio 55, Folio 83 and Folio 139.

²¹ Folio 108.

²² Folio 1.

²³ Folio 33.

²⁴ Folio 11.

²⁵ Folio 37.

²⁶ Folio 1

²⁷ **ibid.**

²⁸ Folio 2.

²⁹ Folio 16.

³⁰ Folio 8.

³¹ Folio 3.

³² Folio 14.

Orthography

Orthography is the study of a spelling system. A number of spelling errors have been detected in the manuscript. These may have occurred because firstly the words were spelt phonetically or secondly the words are rarely heard of or used during the time. Some examples are as follows:

1. Names of Places

St. Petersburg as Sin Pash Bak,³³ Serbia as Sarwiyah,³⁴ Bulgaria as Bulghariyah,³⁵ Rom as Romaniyah³⁶, Constantinople as Konstantiniyah,³⁷ Rusia as Rushin,³⁸ Checheno-Ingush mountain as Sarkasnia,³⁹ Mycale as Myforia,⁴⁰ Moscow as Maskub,⁴¹ Kutaisi as Kuti,⁴² Poti as Puti⁴³ and Tbilisi as Tufflis⁴⁴. Some places were given their Arabic names for example Egypt was named as Al-Masriyah,⁴⁵ India as Al-Hindiyah,⁴⁶ Farsi as Al-Farisiyah,⁴⁷ English as Al-Inggliziyah⁴⁸ and Caucasus as Qauqof.⁴⁹

2. Names of Persons

Names of persons were written according to their pronunciations in Arabic. For example, Gendral K.P Kaufman was written as Jenderal Kat Jacob,⁵⁰ Jenderal M/D Skobelev @ Skobelev becomes Jenderal Sekubilop,⁵¹ Herclius becomes Harqal,⁵² The Checheno-Ingush becomes Sarkis,⁵³ General M.T. Lois Melikov becomes General Lois Mylikoff,⁵⁴ the Georgians become Gusyik,⁵⁵ and the population of Abkhazia becomes Abrisyia,⁵⁶

³³ Folio 2.

³⁴ Folio 3.

³⁵ **ibid.**

³⁶ Folio 6, Folio 11 and Folio 18.

³⁷ Folio 2.

³⁸ Folio 1, Folio 2 and Folio 21.

³⁹ Folio 20.

⁴⁰ Folio 23.

⁴¹ Folio 30.

⁴² Folio 50.

⁴³ Folio 51, Folio 58, Folio 59 and Folio 103.

⁴⁴ Folio 112 and Folio 125.

⁴⁵ Folio 2.

⁴⁶ **ibid.**

⁴⁷ **ibid.**

⁴⁸ **ibid.**

⁴⁹ Folio 24.

⁵⁰ Folio 10 and Folio 16.

⁵¹ Folio 13.

⁵² Folio 16.

⁵³ Folio 20.

⁵⁴ Folio 22, Folio 54, Folio 103 and Folio 104.

⁵⁵ Folio 29, Folio 32, Folio 34, Folio 46, Folio 48 and Folio 52.

⁵⁶ Folio 91, Folio 92, Folio 93 and Folio 95.

The spelling of old Malay as oppose to modern Malay Language, for example, the word peduli was written as pehduli⁵⁷, kalah as alah,⁵⁸ hantar as antar,⁵⁹ demi as dami,⁶⁰ kerana as karana,⁶¹ mudarat as mudharat,⁶² tua as tuha,⁶³ seorang as sorang,⁶⁴ baru as baharu,⁶⁵ lupa as alpa,⁶⁶ hiraukan as endahkan,⁶⁷ tidak as ta',⁶⁸ temasya as termasya,⁶⁹ ditutup as dikatub,⁷⁰ aniaya as iniaya,⁷¹ kah as gah,⁷² pula as pulak,⁷³ lapan as delapan,⁷⁴ bawa as bawak,⁷⁵ nampak as tampak,⁷⁶ cerita as cetera,⁷⁷ otak as hotak,⁷⁸ binasa as pinasa,⁷⁹ pencuri as pencurit,⁸⁰ and gembira as gemira.⁸¹

Misspelling due to an omission or addition of a letter in the Malay language for instance, dibayangkan was written as dibayangkan,⁸² jangan as ja,⁸³ keberatan as kebaratan,⁸⁴ duduklah as duduhlah,⁸⁵ dibuangkan as dibungkan,⁸⁶ belajar as berlajar,⁸⁷ and memanggil as memenggal,⁸⁸

⁵⁷ Folio 7 and Folio 11.

⁵⁸ Folio 5.

⁵⁹ Folio 5 and Folio 70.

⁶⁰ Folio 9 and Folio 127.

⁶¹ Folio 7, Folio 8 and Folio 16.

⁶² Folio 10.

⁶³ Folio 11.

⁶⁴ Folio 12.

⁶⁵ Folio 12 and Folio 135.

⁶⁶ Folio 12.

⁶⁷ Folio 13.

⁶⁸ Folio 13, Folio 14 and Folio 18.

⁶⁹ Folio 14.

⁷⁰ **ibid.**

⁷¹ Folio 16.

⁷² Folio 21.

⁷³ Folio 26.

⁷⁴ Folio 28.

⁷⁵ **ibid.**

⁷⁶ **ibid.**

⁷⁷ Folio 33 and Folio 112.

⁷⁸ Folio 39.

⁷⁹ Folio 40.

⁸⁰ Folio 41.

⁸¹ Folio 45.

⁸² Folio 6.

⁸³ Folio 11.

⁸⁴ Folio 17.

⁸⁵ Folio 25.

⁸⁶ Folio 28.

⁸⁷ Folio 42.

⁸⁸ Folio 69.

Morphology and Syntax

1. Incorrect suffix or prefix.
2. Incorrect prepositions.
3. Incomplete sentences.

The author had adopted local slang words in his narrative.

Several Important Findings

1. Dissention over the victorious party between the author and western writers.

The writer of this manuscript credited victory to the Muslims but on the other hand, according to western sources, the Russians won the war. This difference in opinion may have arosed firstly because the narration of the war in the manuscript ended until the winter season and the writer had stated his intention to continue his narrative at a later date. Secondly, each party had only recorded victorious events of their preferred army while neglecting to mention any losses each army had suffered.

2. Errors which occurred during the process of copying quotes from the Quran is quite unacceptable because the Quran is the holy book of the Muslims.

3. Spelling errors of foreign word are prevalent throughout the manuscript which occurred because of the difficulty in faced by the author during transcription of Latin words into Jawi script.

4. Sentences structured, words used and the literary style of the author is old Malay which differs significantly with modern Malay. This manuscript may interest the researchers of languages to study the development of the Malay language through the century.

5. The extensive use of Arabic terms indicates the influence of foreign merchants notably the Arab and Persians on the lives of the local populace. This development is compatable to the spread of Islam in the region during the time.

CONCLUSION

In general, this manuscript is about the war between Turkey under the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan Ghazi and the Russians under the rule of King Francis Alexander which took place in Asia Minor. The war was led by Muhamad Shamwili on the Muslim side and General M.T. Loris Melikov on the Russian side.

Analysis on the text reveals that the description and linguistic aspects of this manuscript is more orderly than compared to other manuscripts for example **Hikayat Raja Pasai and Hikayat Raja Handak.**

Despite several linguistics errors which occurred in the text and the old Malay used, the manuscript is easily understood and is invaluable as a rich source of information on the development which occurred during the early 19th century.

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