



The Forgotten Allure in Ottoman Archives: Tracing the Bengal's Financial Solidarity to Ottoman Wars, 1911-1913

Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Unutulan Cazibe: Osmanlı Savaşlarında Bengal'in Mali Dayanışmasının İzini Sürmek, 1911-1913

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Abstract

This research examines the historical tapestry of the Bengal region's charitable campaign for Ottoman soldiers and refugees during the Balkan and Tripoli Wars (1911-1913). The study meticulously explores how money flow occurred through various factors, such as banks, individuals, and the Ottoman Red Crescent Society, highlighting these transactions' complex and diverse nature. This topic is significant as it sheds light on a lesser-known aspect of history and underscores the enduring relevance of archival and historical research.

The research uses archival resources and historical methods to reconsider forgotten narratives. It focuses on the economic dynamics that shaped this financial solidarity. As the investigation unfolds, it uncovers challenges associated with financial receipts, providing valuable insights into the intricacies of historical financial networks. In essence, "the forgotten allure" contributes to our understanding of Bengal's financial aid to the Ottomans and highlights the enduring relevance of archival and historical research in unraveling the hidden threads of historical connections.

Keywords: Bengal Region, Financial Aid, the Tripoli and Balkan Wars, Ottomans, Hilal-i Ahmer.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri ışığında Bengal bölgesinin Balkan ve Trablusgarp Savaşları (1911-1913) sırasında Osmanlı askerleri ve mültecileri için düzenlediği mali dayanışma kampanyasını incelemektedir. Araştırma, bankalar, bireyler ve Hilâliahmer Cemiyeti gibi farklı faktörler aracılığıyla para akışının nasıl gerçekleştiğini ve bu işlemlerin karmaşık ve çeşitli yapısını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu konu, tarihin daha az bilinen bir yönüne ışık tuttuğu ve arşiv ile tarih araştırmalarının kalıcı önemini vurguladığı için önemlidir.

Araştırma, arşiv kaynakları ve tarihsel yöntemler kullanarak unutulmuş anlatıları yeniden ele almıştır. Bu çalışma, mali dayanışmayı şekillendiren ekonomik dinamiklere odaklanmaktadır. Arşiv kaynakları, finansal makbuzlarla ilişkili zorlukları ve bu zorlukların üstesinden nasıl geldiğini detaylandırarak tarihsel finansal ağların inceliklerine dair değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Özüde, "Unutulan Cazibe", Bengal'in Osmanlılara mali yardımını anlama çabamıza katkıda bulunmakta ve tarihsel bağlantıların gizli ipçiklerini çözmede arşiv ve tarihsel araştırmanın kalıcı önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bengal Bölgesi, Malî Yardım, Trablusgarp ve Balkan Savaşları, Osmanlılar, Hilâl-i Ahmer.

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Introduction

The historical alliance between the Turks and Bengalis dates back to the early 13th century when Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad began his rule over Bengal (a South Asian region).¹ Over the next seven centuries, numerous Turkic dynasties from Central Asia held power in Bengal and other parts of India. Conversely, the Indians established their connections with the Ottoman Turks in the late 1400s.²

Özcan & Uzunçarşılı exclusively portray these relations as the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in 1453, which made them famous and respected worldwide. This led some Muslim rulers of South India to seek diplomatic ties with them. Moreover, when Sultan Yavuz Selim claimed to be the leader of all Muslims after the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517³, it brought them into direct contact with the Indian subcontinent. It provided access to the Indian Ocean, sparking hopes of challenging Portuguese dominance. While successful in securing the spice trade from the Portuguese and aiding pilgrims to Mecca, the Turks failed to assist an Ottoman seaborne in the Indian Ocean permanently.⁴ This scenario suggests that the Ottoman navy and its merchants may have traveled to Bengal (the port of Calcutta) because of the Portuguese connection. Historical proceedings also imply that they had a long-term trade with Bengal, starting from the mid-seventeenth century. However, the normalization and development of trade (India-Jeddah/Iraq-Istanbul) began in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵ Moreover, in 1887, they planned to launch an Ottoman consulate in Calcutta.⁶

The study also explores an unrecognized state described in *Miratul Mamalik*, a work by 16th century's prominent Ottoman admiral Seydi Ali Reis (known as Kemal Reis or Hızır Reis), where he not only described the political and cultural aspects of the sixteenth century across India but also provided details about the people and places encountered during his challenging journey. Throughout India, Muslims recognized him

¹ Abdur Rahman Fuad, 'Türk Komutanı İhtiyârüddin Muhammed'in Bengal Bölgesinin Fethi ve Buna Dair Tabakat-ı Nasiri'deki Rivayetlerin Değerlendirilmesi', *İSTEM*, no. 40 (2022): 473–75, <https://doi.org/10.31591/istem.1227131>; Minhaj-i Saraj, *The Tabakat-i Nasiri*, trans. H. G. Reverty (London: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), 554; Abdur Rahman Fuad, 'Bengal Bölgesinde İslâmiyet'in Yayılışı ve Sosyal Etkileri (1203-1757)' (Master's Thesis, Konya, Necmettin Erbakan University, 2018).

² Muhammed Yakub Mughul, *Kanuni Devri Osmanlıların Hint Okyanusu Politikası ve Osmanlı - Hint Müslümanları Münasebeti 1517 - 1538 - 1974* (Istanbul: Fatih Yayınevi, 1974), 9.

³ Azmi Özcan, 'Pan-Islamizm: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)', in *The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Halil Inalcik, vol. 12 (Leiden, New York & Köln: Brill, 1997), 1; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 6 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 157.

⁴ Halil Inalcik, 'The Heyday and Decline of the Ottoman Empire', in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1A (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 331–32; Svat Soucek, ed., 'The Portuguese and the Turks in the Persian Gulf', in *Studies in Ottoman Naval History and Maritime Geography* (Istanbul & Piscataway: The ISIS Press & Gorgias Press, 2011), 84.

⁵ Serap Yılmaz, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu İle Ekonomik İlişkileri: XVIII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı - Hint Ticareti İle İlgili Bir Araştırma', *Bellekten* 56, no. 215 (1992): 33–56, <https://doi.org/10.37879/bellekten.1992.31>.

⁶ Hariciye Nezâreti Sefaret, [BOA], HR.SFR.3, 335/78.

as an envoy of the Ottoman Sultan, receiving proclamations of loyalty from Mughal ruler Humayun. Ali Reis underscored the Ottoman Sultan's greatness and asserted sovereignty over Muslim lands, expressing the desire for Ottoman rule to extend to Gujarat and India.⁷ As an admiral, the following citation relates to Ali Reis's lifespan. For his excellent contribution to the Indian oceans, the Bengalis might have remembered him as Khizir, a savior from (sea) calamities, because they believed he rescued Indian Muslims from such catastrophes. Additionally, he was considered a saint with significant expertise and experience in prophecy.⁸

After Ali Reis's unofficial diplomacy, the Indian Mughals in Ottoman sources began to appear in the early 16th century, though official connections were not recorded until Jahangir's reign (1605-1627). The delay in formal ties may be linked to some historical factors, potentially influenced by Timur's victory over the Ottomans in 1402 at the Battle of Ankara.⁹ After an extended period, Shah Jahan (1627-1658) pioneered formal Mughal-Ottoman diplomatic relations. Despite subsequent Ottoman reluctance, he addressed Sultan Murad-IV as the "Khan of the Muslim kings" in their correspondence.¹⁰ During Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707), diplomatic relations between the Mughals and Ottomans reached a minimal point, and this trend persisted in the subsequent years.¹¹

1. Background of the Study

Within the diplomatic ties, Ottoman Sultans were aware of the contemporary Bengal. In a letter, the Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar (1713-1719) notified Sultan Ahmed-III (1703-1730) that,

"During my father's life, he entrusted me with the territories of Deccan, Bengal, and Chandauli, located near Sarandip, for defense against potential threats. Following my father's death, concerned about the Chagatai invasions, state officials appointed Gandahar as the ruler. Nevertheless, the Chagatais arrived, defeated Gandahar, eliminated his brothers, and seized control of Shah Jahanabad (Delhi) and its adjacent regions..."¹²

In return, the Ottoman Sultan sent a letter. This letter provides the political situations of the Deccan and Bengal regions, highlighting victories and congratulating the

⁷ Seydi Ali Reis, *Mir'at-ül Memalik* (Istanbul: Kervan Kitapçılık, n.d.), 31–110.

⁸ Garcin de Tassy, 'On Certain Peculiarities in The Mohammedanism of India', *Asiatic Journal And Monthly Register* 7 (1832): 142.

⁹ Naimur Rahman Farooqi, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations Between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, 1556-1748*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1986), 40–41; Bernard Lewis, 'The Mughals and the Ottomans', in *From Babel to Dragomans Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 112–13.

¹⁰ Lewis, 'The Mughals and the Ottomans', 110–11; Abdur Rashid, 'Ottoman Mughal Relations During the Seventeen Century', in *VI. Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Türk Tarihi Kongresi, Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1967), 537.

¹¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 6:268.

¹² Bâb-ı Asâfi Divan-ı Hümâyûn Sicilleri Nâme-i Hümâyûn Defterleri, [BOA], *A.DVNSNMH.d.*, 6/238.

Indian ruler's ascent to the throne. Furthermore, it notes the Ottoman army's direction towards Edirne for war and expedition. The document underscores the significance of ensuring devout individuals persist in their prayers.¹³ In another letter, Tipu Sultan (d. 1799), widely known as the "Tiger of Mysore" in South India, affirmed that the Ottoman Sultans maintained an interest in staying informed about the condition of Muslims in India, including the Bengal region. The document describes,

"... Europeans, through cunning trade strategies, established colonies on coastal areas. After gaining insight into the conditions of Deccan and other places, they brought immigrants and acquired control over many parts of India. They generated an annual revenue of thirty-five Kurus (Ottoman currency starting in 1687) and took possession of Bengal and numerous other areas. They forcibly converted around ten thousand Muslim children, both boys and girls, into Christians..."¹⁴

Though the bilateral relations felt, initial contacts of the late 17th century paved the way for closer cultural and commercial ties between the Ottomans and Mughal India. The Mughals convey that the Ottomans gained increased attention from Indian Muslims, mainly through the constant pilgrimage flow to Mecca, under its protection. Factors like the popularity of Sufi orders and cultural exchanges further strengthened the connection. Renowned Indian scholars, including Faizi, Abul Fazl, Abdul Hakim Sialkoti, Shahabuddin Ahmad, Umara-ul Hind, and Abdul Hai Dihlawi, contributed to Ottoman intellectual circles, with their books preserved in Istanbul's libraries for study by Ottoman scholars.¹⁵

Following these intellectual exchanges, the Bengal Young Muslim Society requested the Ottoman government in 1698 to fulfill specific demands. The demands are as follows¹⁶:

- Some Muslim children of India wanted to be educated in Istanbul.
- The Society appealed to establish a commercial facility in India where Ottoman products were exhibited.
- They request some Ottoman officials' participation in India's Hijaz Railway Fund collection.

Following the ruler Aurangzeb's death (1707), the Mughal Empire declined, leading to its gradual disintegration. Independent rulers emerged across the subcontinent, confining Mughal influence on the region around Delhi. According to Özcan, this fragmentation facilitated British expansion. The onset of British rule profoundly affected the Indo-Muslim psyche, marking their first experience as subjects of a foreign power.¹⁷ The British rule from Bengal to across India primarily had adverse effects, particularly

¹³ BOA, *A.DVNSNMH.d.*, 6/239.

¹⁴ BOA, *A.DVNSNMH.d.*, 9/183.

¹⁵ M. Yakub Mughal, 'Turco-Pakistan Relations in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Grassroot* 12, no. 1 (1988): 8, <https://sujo.usindh.edu.pk/index.php/Grassroots/article/view/3744/2804>.

¹⁶ Bâb-ı Âli Evrak Odası, [BOA], *BEO*, 3804/285248.

¹⁷ Özcan, 'Pan-Islamism', 9–10.

on Muslims. Unlike Hindus, for whom the change in rulers was generally a political shift, Muslims faced more profound implications. Beyond political subjugation, particularly intensified after adopting English as the official language in 1836, their cultural identity was also threatened. The added concern about missionary activities further fueled Muslim apprehensions about the potential Christianization imposed by the British.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Indian Muslims sought their last hope from the Ottoman ruler. In the late 19th century, they widely recognized the Ottoman sultan as the caliph, symbolizing Islamic unity and historical glory. Imams began mentioning the sultan in Friday's sermon. During Ottoman conflicts like the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) and the Greco-Turkish War (1897), Indian Muslims organized fund drives to support the Ottoman. These actions reflected political support and a sense of Muslim solidarity within and beyond India.¹⁹ Ravenshaw guessed the ongoing situation and submitted a report (3 March 1828) to the former Governor General of India, William Bentinck, as "... The Turk is rousing the spirit of his people (for war against Russia) ... This may affect you in India if the cause is taken up as is not unlikely by the whole Mussulman race — Mahomed established his religion by the sword".²⁰

Ravenshaw's prediction could influence Barbara and Thomas's political perspectives, potentially shaping their understanding of Indian Muslim society. According to them, this era witnessed a gradual shift from 'vertical' to 'horizontal' forms of solidarity. Unlike 'vertical' structures characterized by hierarchical connections, 'horizontal' solidarities developed among individuals in the same profession, geographic area, sect, or voluntary association, providing a basis for conflict resolution and promoting unity.²¹ Moreover, as mentioned, facts, such as the reversal of the Bengal partition in 1912, shocked Muslim opinion. Britain's reluctance to support the Ottoman Empire against Russia and the uprisings in Greece and the Balkans directed Bengali Muslims to the horizontal sidelines.

Among these situations, outside the Indian border, the ulama, especially the Shah Waliullah Dehlawi school, played a prominent role in raising the people's voices from Makkah, where it propagated to the Indian Muslims in favor of the Ottoman.²²

¹⁸ Afzal Iqbal, *The Life and Times of Mohamed Ali: An Analysis of the Hopes, Fears, and Aspirations of Muslim India from 1778-1931* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic culture, 1974), 3; Rafiq Zakariya, *Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics: An Analysis of Developments from 1885 to 1906* (Bombay: Somaiya Publication Pvt. Ltd., 1970), 31.

¹⁹ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5.

²⁰ C.H. Philips, ed., *The Correspondence Of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 16.

²¹ Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History Of Modern India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 162.

²² Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 63.

2. Literature Review

The Ottoman Empire has been extensively studied and documented in historical literature, with many books and scholarly works covering various facets of its history. Despite the diversity of sources, this title has limited scope and objectives. That is why the current topic requires a comprehensive literary overview. In this procedure, the ongoing research seeks to synthesize extensive literature over time and identify a study gap to provide a holistic understanding of the current study.

The research will initially concentrate on existing works in Turkish and English, as many studies related to the topic have already been conducted. Below is a compilation of the research efforts carried out over time.

Existing Turkish Titles
Çabuk, Mustafa, "93 Harbi'nde Hindistan Müslümanlarının Osmanlı Devleti'ne Yardımları", 2019.
Cöhce, Salim, "Türk İstiklal Mücadelesi ve Hindistan", 2006.
Görgün, Hatice, "Balkan Savaşları Döneminde Hindistan Müslümanlarının Faaliyetleri", 2022.
Kerimoğlu, Hasan Taner, "Trablusgarp ve Balkan Savaşlarında Hint Müslümanlarının Osmanlı Devleti'ne Yaptığı Yardımlar", 2012.
Keskin, Mustafa, <i>Hindistan Müslümanlarının Millî Mücadele'de Türkiye'ye Yardımları (1919-1923)</i> , 1991.
Khan, Ali Asghar, "Hint Müslümanlarının Türk Kurtuluş Hareketine Mali Yardımı (1919-1923)", 1993.
Khan, Ali Asghar, <i>İstiklal Savaşında Hindistan Müslümanlarının Davranışı (1919-1923)</i> , 1971.
Kişi, Şule Sevinç, "Hint Müslümanlarının Osmanlı Devleti ve Türkiye'ye Yardımları (1911-1923)", 2020.
Kişi, Şule Sevinç, Mübadele Sürecinde Hint Müslümanlarının Türkiye'ye Yaptıkları Yardımların Soruna Dönüşmesi (1923-1925)
Müderrişoğlu, Alptekin, Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın Mali Kaynakları, 1990.
Öke, Mim Kemal, <i>Güney Asya Müslümanlarının İstiklal Davası ve Türk Millî Mücadelesi 'Hilafet Hareketi'</i> , 1988
Özcan, Azmi, <i>Pan-İslamizm: Osmanlı Devleti Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngiltere (1877-1924)</i> , 1992.
Şahin, H. Hilal, "Osmanlı Devleti ile Hindistan Müslümanlarının Tarihi Bağı ve Hindistan Hilafet Hareketi", 2019.
Sezer, Cemal & METİN, Ömer, "Balkan Savaşlarından Millî Mücadeleye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Yardım Faaliyetleri (1912-1922)", 2013.

Soyluer, Serdal, "Balkan Savaşları Sırasında Hint Müslümanlarının Osmanlı Devleti'ne Yardım Kampanyalarının Osmanlı Basınına Yansımaları", 2008.

Yıldırım, M. Zahit, "Moris Müslümanlarından Trablusgarb ve Balkan Savaşları Mağdurlarına Yapılan Yardımlar", 2009.

Existing English Titles

Akçapar, Burak, "The Indian Medical Mission in Turkey", 2014.

Ali, Shamsad, *Indian Muslims, and Ottoman Empire, (1876).-1924*, 1990.

Çevik, Burcu, *Empire, and War: Turkish and Indian Experiences and Remembrance of the First World War*, 2016.

Kadi, Ismail Hakkı, "Religious Ties, Propaganda and Ottoman Interest in the Affairs of Muslims in Southeast Asia", 2020.

O'Sullivan, Michael & Others, "Pan-Islamic bonds and interest: Ottoman bonds, Red Crescent remittances and the limits of Indian Muslim capital, 1877–1924", 2018.

Ozaydin, Zuhail, "The Indian Muslims Red Crescent Society's Aid to the Ottoman State During the Balkan War in 1912", 2003.

Özcan, Azmi, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, 1997.

Rauf, Abdul, "Pan-Islamism and the Northwest Frontier Province of British India (1897-1918)", 2007.

Shukla, R.L., "Some Aspects of Indian Muslim Response to Balkan War," 1974.

Wasti, Syed Tanvir, "The Indian Red Crescent Mission to the Balkan Wars", 2009.

Wasti, Syed Tanvir, "The Political Aspirations of Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Nexus", 2006.

Specific differences become apparent when evaluating the two tables mentioned above in the context of the current study. Addressing these disparities constitutes the primary objective of this research. Now, focusing on the differences, firstly, neither of the works from the two tables mentions Bengal as their central theme, instead of the whole of India. In other words, researchers have predominantly concentrated on Indian Muslims, not Bengal Muslims. Secondly, though Bengal is given less priority, most scholarly works mentioned above engage with political bonding between the two nations. Thirdly, none drew Bengal-Ottoman relations throughout history and its financial implications to the Turco-Italian (1911-12) and Balkan (1912-13) War victims. Fourthly, the foundation of this study is based on the Ottoman Archives, which is a significant issue for this study.

3. Research Methodology

Researchers use research methods as crucial instruments to explore, analyze, and collect information to address questions or resolve problems. To this end, the study will investigate Bengal's financial contribution to Ottoman wars based on the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office—*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi* (BOA).

Secondly, the study defines Archival and Historical Research Analysis as a qualitative research methodology to incorporate appropriate strategies for this study. The former National Archivist of Canada and ICA President Jean-Pierre Wallot prioritizes archival research methods. In his view, it constructs a dynamic record for the history of our current times. As Cook cites, this repository will hold the essential elements that serve as “the keys to the collective memory” of nations and communities.²³ That is why archival data are presently seen as primary reservoirs for generating new ideas and research rather than mere repositories for locating already-known information.

To facilitate the progression of the ongoing research, the keywords “Bengal” and “Kalküta (Calcutta)” were designated for substantial archival data. The archive's comprehensive findings are organized into five sections: 1) transmitting funds through newspapers, 2) channeling contributions through the Ottoman Red Crescent Society (Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti²⁴), 3) sending money via various banks, 4) transferring funds through crucial contacts, and 5) addressing receipt challenges with practical solutions. These aspects will be elaborated in the next.

As mentioned above, the study follows the archival reference code system as H.R.SYS. (Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi), BEO (Bâb-1 Âli Evrak Odası), HR.TO. (Hariciye Nezareti Tercüme Odası), D.H.MTV (Dahiliye Nezareti Mütenevvia), Y. PRK.HR (Yıldız Perakende Hariciye Nezareti), A.MKT.MHM (Sadâret Mektubî Kalemî Mühimme Odası), A.DVNSNMH.D. (Bâb-1 Asâfi Divan-ı Hümâyûn Sicilleri Nâme-i Hümâyûn Defterleri). When examining the documents, the archival date (document recorded date) is sometimes noted as Hijri or Roman. The study's approach, in this case, will remain the same as applied in the references. However, we use the Turkish Historical Society (TTK) date conversion policy in the Hijri/Roman calendar text for better understanding. Outside of the date's procedure, a combination of Turkish and English sources complemented the study. When necessary, the study included excerpts from these data, ranging from brief references to more extensive content. Lastly, translating the archive's Ottoman Turkish handwritten into transcription and English posed a notable challenge.

²³ Terry Cook, ‘What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift’, *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 18, <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12175>.

²⁴ The Hilal-i Ahmer Society, originally known as the Ottoman Red Crescent, was a national and international non-profit aid organisation that commenced its operations on April 14, 1877. Over time, it underwent a name change. From this point onward, this study will refer to it as Hilal-i Ahmer.

4. Road to the Close Bonds

The commencement of the Crimean War in 1853, where the Ottomans allied with the British and French against the Russians, marked the initial occurrence highlighting Indo-Muslim support and empathy for the Ottomans, which was clearly expressed through diverse channels.²⁵ From then on, funds were raised to support Ottoman soldiers, war wounded, and victims. Here, Humanitarian aid worked behind other policies. The goal was to address immediate needs and enhance the overall well-being of the communities affected.

On the other hand, Abdulhamid II's ascension to the throne in 1876 marked a shift in the Ottoman Empire's influence on Muslims worldwide. Following his accession, he witnessed the diminishing significance of the Ottoman identity and demonstrated a commitment to the principle of Islamic unity called Pan-Islamism. Some researchers address his tenure as the "Hamidian regime."²⁶ He prioritized the concept of Pan-Islamism over Ottomanism and pursued a political strategy aligned with this principle in domestic and foreign affairs.²⁷ With the effects of Pan-Islam, a recorded letter of 25 September 1877 claims that the people of Bengal of that time's objective in supporting the Ottoman Empire was not merely to contribute a nominal amount of aid to the families of victims but also to capitalize on this opportunity and foster a robust unity under the Ottoman Sultan.²⁸

Conversely, Sultan Abdul Hamid was troubled by Western powers' dominance over the Muslim-majority world. Despite this, he believed that unity through the Caliphate could overcome this obstacle, foreseeing enhanced diplomatic leverage for the Ottoman Empire with European states. He actively addressed global Muslim issues through diplomatic initiatives during his thirty-year rule.²⁹ His actions under the Islamic unity policy garnered significant enthusiasm among Muslims worldwide, mainly Indian Muslims. Their tangible and moral support for the Ottoman Empire in challenging times served as a visible manifestation of their interest and loyalty. Azmi Özcan narrates a quote from the following from the Urdu newspaper Akhbar:

"It is no doubt incumbent upon the Muhammadan community to do all it can on behalf of Turkey in its present distressed condition... It is no secret that all the honor and dignity that the Muhammadans command in India or any other country is due to the maintenance of the Great Turkish Empire, and if that Empire ceased to exist,

²⁵ Özcan, 'Pan-Islamism', 14–15.

²⁶ Michael O'Sullivan, 'Pan-Islamic Bonds and Interest: Ottoman Bonds, Red Crescent Remittances and the Limits of Indian Muslim Capital, 1877–1924', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 55, no. 2 (2018): 191, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464618760453>; Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850* (London: Routledge, 2000), 192–94.

²⁷ Sultan Abdul Hamid, *Siyasi Hatiratim* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1975), 178,180.

²⁸ Hariciye Nezareti Tercüme Odası, [BOA], *HR.TO.*, 519/59.

²⁹ Abdul Hamid, *Siyasi Hatiratim*, 176–77, 178.

the Muhammadans would at once fall into insignificance and be utterly neglected".³⁰

Besides, during the initial Balkan crisis in the 1870s, interest emerged between Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Empire. A letter from Baghdad claims that the Ottoman Empire's internal situation could have been better. It indicates that borrowing or collecting alms within the state was no longer feasible. As a solution, Indian Muslims expressed their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire and supported it financially.³¹

For the first time, Indian Muslims actively began a campaign to collect funds for the Ottomans. The booths were established across India, especially in cities such as Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Hyderabad, to raise funds for the Ottoman Empire. The activities of the prominent Society *Anjuman-i Islam*, which stood out in campaigns, gained attention in the Hijaz region. In response, scholars, orators, and notable figures of Mecca prepared a 12-page letter to support the campaign. This letter had a significant impact on Indian Muslims, accelerating the fund collection process.³²

Meanwhile, in a news article dated 5 July 1877, the correspondent of *The Times* in Calcutta described the people of Bengal as follows: The affection between Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Empire is steadily growing. Even women donate their jewels and valuable belongings. Prayers are being offered in mosques nationwide for the Ottoman Empire to achieve victory. Like India, there is no other example of fundraising efforts worldwide.³³ With it, following their daily prayers, the Islamic community of Bengal would engage in diverse supplications, seeking success and victory for the Ottoman army.³⁴ Therefore, identical customs, traditions, aspirations, and affection persisted from 1911 to 1913 until the Caliphate movements unfolded in 1924.³⁵

5. Documentation and Discussion

As mentioned earlier in the text, the Bengal Muslim community responded strongly to Turkey's challenges. They actively organized campaigns to express support for the Turkish cause and raise funds for the war. The substantial amount collected by the Hilali Ahmer reflected the widespread sympathy among Muslims in Bengal. Speakers at these public meetings often portrayed the conflict as a clash between "Cross and Crescent," emphasizing the atrocities committed by the Balkan allies against the Turks.³⁶ The Turco-Italian war coincided in the same manner. Next, we will endeavor to assess

³⁰ Özcan, 'Pan-Islamism', 65.

³¹ Sadâret Mektubi Kalemî Mühimme Odası, [BOA], *A.MKT.MHM.*, 480/31.

³² Yıldız Perakende Hariciye Nezareti, BOA, *Y.PRK.HR.*, 1/23.

³³ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 59/24.2.

³⁴ BOA, *BEO.*, 4157/311771.3.

³⁵ O'Sullivan, 'Pan-Islamic Bonds and Interest: Ottoman Bonds, Red Crescent Remittances and the Limits of Indian Muslim Capital, 1877–1924', 184.

³⁶ R.L. Shukla, 'Some Aspects of Indian Muslim Response to Balkan War', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 35 (1974): 417, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44138810>.

the monetary backing provided by the residents of Bengal in response to the specified wars, categorizing the support under different headings.

5.1. Transmitting Funds via Newspaper Companions

At first, in this segment, it is seen that Deutsche Bank issued a cheque amounting to 400 GBP (British pound sterling) to aid those sufferers at the Battle of Tripoli. The cheque was delivered to the Bank of Bengal for further transmission to the Imperial Ottoman Bank. This marks the initial installment of dedicated donations for those in distress, with an assurance that additional contributions will be dispatched progressively.³⁷ The Imperial Bank received the amount on 20 February 1912 and promptly transferred it to the Hilal-i Ahmer account, according to the instructions of Comrade Newspaper editor Mehmed Ali.³⁸

The Calcutta-based newspaper described above was regularly presented to prominent people, and it published the names of the people who participated in the aid campaign with suitable words. According to the paper, other installments due to the war occurred shortly after.³⁹

On 3 February 1913, the editor-in-chief of al-Hilal, Abul Kalam, transmitted 700 GBP to the Prime Ministry through Telegram. He said this amount was not intended for use by the Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer but possibly to address the Ottoman government's requirements for the Balkan War.⁴⁰ However, there were suspicions within the Prime Ministry regarding whether the money was received, so no receipt was sent. In this case, there is uncertainty about where and how the money was sent, whether individually or with other aids. It was also emphasized that the information about where the money was sent and the date the reported news was sent should be quickly reported through the consulate.⁴¹

5.2. Channelling Contributions through Hilal-i Ahmer

Bengal residents typically provided financial assistance to the Ottoman Empire through established official channels. The Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer organization was crucial in addressing and managing such concerns.

According to the study's limitation, on 6 March 1912, a sum of 5 GBP and 10 shillings was handed over to Hilal-i Ahmer, bearing the signature of Saheb Zada Habib Alim, a resident of the Taliganj neighborhood in Calcutta. The original copy of the money order, duly registered, was presented to the Deutsche (Spanish) Bank. The

³⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4005/300317.

³⁸ BOA, *BEO*, 4014/301013, 3, 5.

³⁹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 594/25.

⁴⁰ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 601/12.

⁴¹ Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi, [BOA], *HR.SYS.*, 2020/10.

organization has promptly requested that the receipt from Istanbul be delivered as soon as possible.⁴²

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry issued a telegram on 23 July 1912, seeking support from the Muslims of India. In response to this directive, the Society declared its commitment to ongoing fundraising efforts, collecting an additional 250 GBP on 31 July 1912 through the Deutsche Bank.⁴³

Table 1. The Sum of Money Sent to the Head of The Hilal-i Ahmer (2nd Stage)⁴⁴

Date	Amount	Issuing Authority/To
7 September 1912	900 GBP	Indian Commercial Bank
7 September 1912	601 GBP 3 Shillings 6 Pence	Deutsche Bank (Calcutta) to Deutsche Bank (Istanbul)
14 September 1912	100 GBP	Deutsche Bank (Calcutta) to Deutsche Bank (Istanbul)
14 September 1912	2000 GBP	National Bank of India to Deutsche Bank (Istanbul)
27 September 1912	2000 GBP	Deutsche Bank (Calcutta)

Then, the Hilal-i Ahmer, Calcutta, acknowledged that they were delighted to receive information regarding the receipts totaling 5,601 GBP, which were also transmitted through the postal service.⁴⁵

On 25 November 1912, Jamiyat-i Islamiyyah in Medinipur sent a legitimate postal money order valued at 7 GBP to the Hilal-i Ahmer. On 4 December 1912, a translated copy of the money receipt was sent to Istanbul.⁴⁶ However, the Head of the Hilal-i Ahmer, Nesim Ömer, claimed to the Turkish PM in a statement dated 7 January 1913 that a valid postal money order from Jamiyat-i Islamiyyah had been received. However, there is an issue concerning the deposited amount, which is 6 GBP instead of 7. This discrepancy raises doubts about whether the sum belongs to Nazmul Haq Efendi, the treasurer of the Society mentioned.⁴⁷

Besides, 191 GBP was dispatched from Calcutta to the Henry S. King Company. After deducting the associated expenses, the remaining amount was submitted to the Grand Vezir (Prime Minister) through the Imperial Ottoman Bank on 19 December 1912. Additionally, a telegram was sent, instructing the Grand Vezir to deliver the funds

⁴² BOA, *HR.TO.*, 544/69.

⁴³ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 601/6.

⁴⁴ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 599/6,1-2.

⁴⁵ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 543/89.

⁴⁶ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 543/8.

⁴⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309941,3.

to the Hilal-i Ahmer Society.⁴⁸ The contributors to this donation include the following individuals.⁴⁹

- The Baniachong Society in Sylhet contributed 52 GBP.
- Bahadır Kerim contributed 62 GBP.
- Bidbir Kayar contributed 11 GBP.
- Asmani, a person whose identity is specified, contributed 66 GBP.

It is presumed that these contributors are Bengali individuals residing in London. Consequently, they directed the funds to Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer, an organization they were familiar with.

On 5 December 1912, a letter documented the dispatch of 140 GBP by the Hilal-i Ahmer from Calcutta to assist war-wounded people. The aid, in the form of a pound check, was directed to the Grand Vezir. The accompanying check explicitly mentioned that the assistance was intended for the Hilal-i Ahmer Society. Consequently, the request was made to collect the aid from the bank and furnish a receipt accordingly.⁵⁰ Shortly after 5 December, the Society above gathered 189 GBP within two days and submitted it to the Grand Vezir as a bank check. Following the successful receipt of the transmitted funds, a request was made to provide receipts.⁵¹

Following these events, the Chief Secretary of the Hyderabad Hilal-i Ahmer and the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer Society transmitted 1,107 Ottoman Liras (O.L.) and 35 Kuruş, as well as 86 Lira and 8 Kuruş. This monetary sum was sent through the London branch of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, and the bank subsequently forwarded the funds to the Grand Vezir along with memoranda numbered 784, dated 7 December 1912.⁵²

Then, on 20 December 1912, 210 OL and 11 kuruş, previously prepared in the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer Society account, were transmitted to the Grand Vezir through the London branch of the Ottoman Bank. It is imperative to sign the receipt corresponding to this amount and forward it to the Hilal-i Ahmer Society in Calcutta.⁵³ On 2 January 1913, the Ottoman Ministry of Finance officially recorded the received amount as war funds. Afterward, the corresponding receipt document, 7874, was submitted to the Prime Minister's Office in acknowledgment.⁵⁴

Again, Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer came into the light discussion. In a letter dated 23 January 1913, the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer reported the receipt of two letters from the President of Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer, dated 12 December 1912, and 1 January 1913, confirming the reception of 7601 GBP, 3 shillings, and 5 pence in various installments.

⁴⁸ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309903,5.

⁴⁹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 543/40.

⁵⁰ BOA, *BEO*, 4121/309002.

⁵¹ BOA, *BEO*, 4121/309042.

⁵² BOA, *BEO*, 4122/309147.

⁵³ BOA, *BEO*, 4128/309552,3.

⁵⁴ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309903,2.

Locally, they have also obtained five receipts covering the declared amount. Responding to the President, they communicated that 2000 GBP was sent on 12 December 1912 and an additional remittance of 2000 GBP on 30 December 1912. Therefore, they hope the President will take some initial initiatives regarding receipts for these two sums at his earliest convenience.⁵⁵

Furthermore, in the same letter, it is cited that a Telegraphic Transfer was initiated on 23 January 1913 through the Deutsch Bank in Calcutta to the Constantinople Branch of the same bank, involving the amount of 3000 GBP, and the receipt of this transfer is appreciated as promptly as possible. Also, Hilal-i Ahmer Calcutta stated that they received a Cablegram on the evening of 22 January 1913 from the President of Hilal-i Ahmer. The Cablegram confirmed the total amount received, which was 11,601 GBP, 3 shillings, and 5 pence up to that date.⁵⁶

5.3. Sending Money via Varied Banks

The Bank of Bengal at that time might be famous for its outstanding service. In this instance, a check containing 1,700 GBP signed by Haji Ahmad Abdul Latif, Treasurer of the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer Society, to be spent on the families of the martyrs in the Battle of Tripolitan and to provide the needs of the wounded was sent to the London branch of the Chartered Bank of India China Calcutta on 24 December 1911. The receipt of this aid was delivered to the Ottoman Empire via the London Embassy. Then, this check was sent to the Ministry of War based on the decision of the Special Parliament.⁵⁷ However, the payment intended for the Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer, Istanbul, was mistakenly delivered to the Ministry of War. In response, on 18 March 1912, the Hilal-i Ahmer, Istanbul, sent a letter to the Calcutta branch requesting that the funds be transferred to the Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer Society. Subsequently, the Ottoman Ministry of War returned 191,862 kuruş, equivalent to 1,700 GBP.⁵⁸

On 24 September 1912, the Ottoman Prime Minister's Office asked the Finance Ministry to deposit 106 GBP and 13 Shilling from Lahore through the Bank of Bengal to the family of the Tripoli martyrs. The funds were intended to be deposited via the British Embassy, with the transfer executed on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The acknowledgment of receipt is emphasized.⁵⁹ The receipt details were documented in the memoirs dated 2 October 1912, with serial number 932, and subsequently forwarded to the proprietor.⁶⁰

A check amounting to 200 GBP, dated 12 May 1913, was submitted to the Grand Vizier on behalf of the Red Crescent by the National Bank of India in Calcutta. The check bore the signature of Muhammed Ahmed, the director of the Darul Ulum

⁵⁵ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309917,7.

⁵⁶ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309917,7.

⁵⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 3981/298513,3-5.

⁵⁸ BOA, *BEO*, 4019/301396,1-3.

⁵⁹ BOA, *BEO*, 4087/306490.

⁶⁰ BOA, *BEO*, 4297/322236,3.

Newspaper. Additionally, a sum of 65,000 rupees was also presented. While confident that the specified amount has been received on time, a courteous request has been made to forward the funds to the intended recipient along with the details of a continental receipt as a respectful means of presenting the donation.⁶¹

5.4. Transferring Funds through Key Contacts

A letter, sealed by Ruzzatullah by 24 January 1912, reported that the heirs and wounded of the Turco-Italian warriors had deposited 20 GBP at the Domar Post Office, Rangpur. In return, he wanted an update on receiving the amount.⁶² In reply, it was said that an inquiry revealed that the British Post Office lacked information on the source of the 20 GBP sent by Ruzaatullah for the specified individuals. Moreover, the inter-banks need a transparent investigation and a detailed report on the incident.⁶³ Then, on 15 February 1912, the Ottoman Finance Ministry revealed a report that, though it was late, the amount was well-received.⁶⁴

Following the appeal for assistance from the Ottoman government, the residents of Bengal started to offer their support. The current document compiles to begin with a Telegram message. Here, Mawlavi Mehmed Hüseyin, the Secretary of the Rammohan Hassan Committee, presented a letter to the Ottoman Government in Calcutta on 26 September 1912 and requested the payment of 202 GBP from the Deutsche Bank to be spent by the Hilal-i Ahmer Society.⁶⁵ It is necessary to either issue a check from the Prime Minister's Office in the name of Hilal-i Ahmer or draft a letter elucidating the circumstances to Deutsche Bank. This communication was officially issued on 22 December 1912.⁶⁶

Following these, Mawlavi Muhammad Hasan sent 201 GBP and 15 shillings, equal to 223 Lira 17 Kurus 10 Para, from Calcutta through Deutsche Bank. The Ottoman Bank received and disbursed this amount on December 9, 1912, categorizing it for war victims. Receipts for these funds were subsequently dispatched to their designated destinations. The letter informs that the Ottoman Empire expressed gratitude for this assistance.⁶⁷

A sum of 47 GBP, dispatched through a postal money order by Karim Ullah Efendi from Malda in West Bengal, the former annexation of Rangpur, was received and acknowledged with gratitude on behalf of the government. Besides, on 28 January 1913, the Istanbul Prime Minister's Office informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the

⁶¹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 600/46.

⁶² BOA, *BEO*, 3994/299486.

⁶³ BOA, *BEO*, 4006/300443.

⁶⁴ BOA, *BEO*, 4006/300443,3.

⁶⁵ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 542/175.

⁶⁶ BOA, *BEO*, 4127/309525,3.

⁶⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4124/309243,1-5.

funds had been received, and the acknowledgment receipt was dispatched to the designated address.⁶⁸

Another letter, dated 6 December 1912, was mailed through the Mohanganj post office in Mymensingh and signed by Ibn Muhammad Rustam al-Abdi's-sheikh Muzaffer al-Din Ahmed. It was addressed to the Ottoman Prime Minister (Sadaret-i Uzma) and indicated the dispatch of a contribution amounting to 6 GBP, 13 Shillings, and 4 Pence (100 rupees). This financial aid was intended to support the orphans of Ottoman soldiers who had lost their lives in the Balkan wars. An announcement confirming their approval was issued on 22 January 1913.⁶⁹

Mawlavi Abdul Gafur, residing in Arjullapur, West Bengal, signed a letter indicating that he forwarded a cash check of 22 GBP as a deposit on 16 July 1913. He requested confirmation from the French bank in Bombay regarding receiving the proceeds from the bonds he had acquired. The translated letter and the check were sent to the Prime Minister. Upon his request, the Prime Minister requested the Finance Ministry (14 August 1913) to make an update on the dissemination of information about the bond price and facilitate the preparation and issuance of a receipt for the amount of 22 GBP.⁷⁰ In feedback, Ottoman Foreign Affairs informed that on 2 April 1913, 30 rubbles were paid for bonds numbered 230 to 233, scheduled to be issued from Istanbul Deutsche Bank. Following a three-stage process, the last value of bond 2112 was reduced to 7 rubbles by 27 June 1913. Meanwhile, 22 GBP, equivalent to 15 rupees and three paise, were exchanged for 331 rupees.⁷¹ Besides, the acknowledgment receipt for the acceptance of this check was dispatched to his residence on 21 September 1913.⁷²

Apart from that, according to the record of the Prime Ministry dated 19 April 1913, 23 lira 80 kuruş was sent to the Ottoman Bank in Istanbul by Ashraf Ali Efendi in Calcutta for the account of the Hilal-i Ahmer.⁷³ The Prime Ministry's correspondence department mentioned that a letter of acknowledgment and receipt was dispatched to the provided address on 28 April 1913.⁷⁴ Another cross-border postal transfer originated from Baniachong, Sylhet, stipulating the addition of 15 GBP to the official military account, and the corresponding receipt was dispatched.⁷⁵ On 1 December 1913, a letter of thanks and a receipt were sent to its owner.⁷⁶

Afterward, Ali Sajid, a responsible person of Qadiriyya Lodge from Shambhupur, Sylhet, sent a letter (27 March 1913) to the Ottoman Sultan. In his view, they raised funds consistently in the last two years and sent them to the Ottoman government

⁶⁸ BOA, *BEO*, 4138/310303.

⁶⁹ BOA, *BEO*, 4136/310176,3.

⁷⁰ BOA, *BEO*, 4205/315352; BOA, *HR.TO.*, 600/40.

⁷¹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 600/40.

⁷² BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/8,28.

⁷³ BOA, *BEO*, 4165/312308.

⁷⁴ BOA, *BEO*, 4167/312514.

⁷⁵ BOA, *BEO*, 4211/315815,3.

⁷⁶ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/12,12.

through postal channels. Additionally, a request is made for specific instructions to be issued to those obligated by the government, ensuring the proper presentation of authorized funds to the Caliphate authorities. He also said we seek increased efforts on our part to extend assistance to the government. Though the amount is not precise, after the end of an investigation, the Foreign Ministry stated on 2 April 1913 that the banks did not have any information about the existence of the money; they said the post office had no information about the existence of the funds, and authorized serves to investigate the records mentioned in the complaint, on what date, by what means, and to return the documents.⁷⁷

The aids promptly came from different corners of the region. This time, on 24 March 1913, Abdul Gani Ahmad, from Dhubri District, Assam, penned a letter conveying details about assistance provided to the Ottoman Sultan. According to the letter, telegraphic transfers of 22 GBP on 31 December 1912, 5 GBP on 25 December 1912, and 15 GBP on 2 March 1912 were made to benefit Balkan war victims. The letter anticipates the imminent presentation of an additional amount. It underscores the importance of directing the specified sum to military personnel and staying informed about the war's progress. Additionally, the receipt of 6 GBP was dispatched on 9 October 1912, and 11 GBP sent on 19 October 1912 was received with gratitude but left the sender somewhat incapacitated.⁷⁸

In addition to the financial assistance mentioned, aid was extended in both Lira and Pound denominations on various specified dates. Nevertheless, uncertainty lingered regarding any potential correlation between these instances and the substantial sum referenced earlier and in the receipt challenges with effective solutions part discussion. Despite the ambiguity, it is noteworthy to acknowledge these occurrences as they are documented in the records.

Table 2. Additional Financial Support of the People of Bengal for War-Wounded

Sender	Amount	Received By	Confirmed by the Gov.
Sayed Ali Ahmad	3.60 Liras	Ottoman Bank	28.06.1913 ⁷⁹
Rahman Efendi	109.85 Liras	Ottoman Bank	09.04.1913 ⁸⁰
	9.55 Liras	Hilal-i Ahmer	27.01.1913 ⁸¹
Deutsche Bank, Calcutta	234 GBP	Prime Ministry Office	15.03.1913 ⁸²
Rahman Efendi	100.03 Liras	Ottoman Bank	03.04.1913 ⁸³

⁷⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4157/ 311771,3; BOA, *HR.SFR.3..*, 695/17.

⁷⁸ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 545/7.

⁷⁹ BOA, *BEO*, 4188/314035.

⁸⁰ BOA, *BEO*, 4162/312096.

⁸¹ BOA, *BEO*, 4137/310273.

⁸² BOA, *BEO*, 4154/311500.

⁸³ BOA, *BEO*, 4160/311991.

Table 3. Additional Financial Support of the People of Bengal for War-wounded⁸⁴

From	Sender	Amounts	Date
Rangon	Ibrahim Ali Molla & Abdul karim Cemal Efendi	3,500 GBP	23.01.1912
Calcutta	Comrade Newspaper	44,120 Kurus	12.02.1912
Calcutta	Bengal Residents	1470 Kurus	16.03.1912
Calcutta	Hilal-i Ahmer Secretary Abdul Latif Efendi	1,700 GBP	16.03.1912
Calcutta	Hilal-i Ahmer Secretary Abdul Latif Efendi	50 GBP & 5,509 Kurus 40 Pare	
Calcutta	Bank of Bengal	65,850 Kurus	25.05.1912
Lakhnow	Red Crescent Society	15,381 Kurus	02.06.1912
Calcutta	Soyoran Mohammedan Association	4,500 Kurus	22.02. 1912
Calcutta	Abdur Rahman Efendi	7,653 Kurus	22.02.1912
Calcutta	Mawlawi Abdul Gafur	73 Kurus 50 Pare	22.02.1912
Calcutta	Elson Ali	10 GBP 15 Shillings	22.02.1912
Calcutta	Mawlawi Balayan	660 GBP	23.02.1912

Table 4. Additional Financial Support⁸⁵

Region	Received By	Amounts	Date
Calcutta	Prime Ministry	3,485 Kurus	16.01.1913
Calcutta	Hilal-i Ahmer	22,100 Kurus	31.01.1913
Kalküta		2,19,725 Kurus	31.01.1913
Muhammad Newspaper Editor Arif Khan, Calcutta	National Bank of India	77,044 Kurus	05.02.1913
Hilal-i Ahmer Society, Cal- cutta		11,006 Kurus	05.02.1913
Bengal Residents, Calcutta	Ottoman Bank	3,37,565 Kurus	05.02.1913
Nawab Bakar Efendi, Cal- cutta		7,312 Kurus	11.02.1913
Haji Kasim Arif Efendi, Cal- cutta		3,30,600 Kurus	17.02.1913
Anjuman-i Mufidul Islam, Calcutta Anjuman-i Mufidul Islam, Calcutta		13,407 Kurus	17.02.1913
Abul Khayr, Calcutta		1,811 Kurus	21.02.1913

⁸⁴ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/17, 30-34.⁸⁵ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/17, 32-33.

5.5. Addressing Receipt Challenges with Effective Solutions

The head of the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer Society, Gulam Arif Efendi, wrote a letter (5 December 1912) to the President of Hilal-i Ahmer, Istanbul, concerning the inquiry into the reception of the “relief for Turkish Sufferers” he had dispatched on various dates. In his view, no receipt was received regarding the 5601 GBP, 3 shillings, and 6 pence.⁸⁶

It had been reported in the same letter that 2,000 GBP were delivered to the head of the Hilal-i Ahmer Society from the Calcutta branch of the German Hispanic Bank on 27 November 1912. Similarly, in a letter sent by Mehmet Ali, the President of the Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer, it was indicated that this amount pertained to the last 2,000 GBP sent. A letter from the Calcutta branch of the Deutsche Bank stated that, according to this letter, it was understood that the two payments of 1,000 GBP each, sent on the 6th and 12th of the month, had yet to be received. Because the receipts, checks, and promissory notes had not yet arrived in Calcutta, there was an expression of regret regarding the status of the funds towards the individuals who had made the donations.⁸⁷ As a result of the mistake and error committed by the Istanbul branch of the Anadolu Deutsche Bank, it would be remedied by the detained party.⁸⁸ Later (26 March 1913), the Prime Minister’s Office declared that it had been entrusted to the Ottoman Bank.⁸⁹

In a different case, with a concise letter, the Prime Minister’s Editorial Office communicated to the Foreign Ministry regarding receipt investigations conducted on behalf of Haji Abdul Latif, the Chief Treasurer of Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer. The inquiry focused on interrogating 350 GBP sent to Hilal-i Ahmer on 31 July 1912 through the Deutsche Spanish Bank.⁹⁰ The need for receipt information raised concerns about potential interruptions in the financial aid process. Moreover, the report stated that the residents of this area would prefer to avoid failing to adhere to straightforward and uncomplicated procedures and principles in transactions.⁹¹

Appeals and threats do not make a solution effective. Moreover, the troubles continued for a while. Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer noted another misunderstanding in the telegram concerning the arrival of 3,000 GBP following the initial sum of 5601 GBP. According to its official statement, the 3,000 GBP should be corrected to 4,000 GBP. This correction is based on the dispatch of 4,000 GBP, split into two installments of 2,000 GBP each, on the 6th and 12th of October of the preceding year, 1912. In their view, they eagerly await a response to the letter dated 26 October 1912. After approving the specified sums, they remitted another instalment of 2,000 GBP on 30 October 1912. Regarding the installment of 2,000 GBP dated 29 September 1912, Hilal-i Ahmer,

⁸⁶ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309917,9.

⁸⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309917,15.

⁸⁸ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 544/40,2-3.

⁸⁹ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2019/2,20.

⁹⁰ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/8,15.

⁹¹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 601/6,2.

Calcutta Branch, received a continental receipt from the complainant Deutsche Spanish Bank indicating the reception of only 1997 GBP and 15 shillings. They need clarification on the reason for this reduction.⁹²

The Hilal-i Ahmer has made another petition (15 January 1913) to the Istanbul Office for reliable and valid receipt information. Even the request presented to the Prime Minister on 5 October 1912 has yet to be answered. Abdul Latif, the treasurer of this office, said that the current predicament has become considerably challenging due to the non-implementation of specific measures, impacting our relationship and standing with those who follow our guidance.⁹³ This means that they sent another aid package after the mentioned date. It had yet to receive feedback.

The al-Hilal newspaper, edited by Abul Kalam, depicted the current situation in its report on 11 September 1912. According to a concise report, despite efforts to collect information from deceased individuals, the people of India prefer signed receipt information over telegrams. The absence of these signed receipts has created a challenge in conveying news to donors. To enhance public enthusiasm and expedite our work, we urgently request the submission of the relevant receipt information. Political reasons have caused uncertainty about the documents collected for the Ottoman government, and assuring donors of these receipts is imperative. The capture of Edirne by the Ottomans has fuelled patriotism and enthusiasm, providing an opportunity to raise substantial funds. We commit to fulfilling this service under your command.⁹⁴

Besides, a resident of Calcutta (Ibrahim Fasohi Masar?) wrote on the same subject: Indian Muslims, who reside in Calcutta and the surrounding area, are the most loyal governors of the Ottoman Empire. They have conveyed their complaints in every way. The Foreign Affairs Office recorded this on 14 May 1914.⁹⁵ He may have indicated the issue of a valid receipt.

After all the receipt issues, in written communication, the representative of the Hilal-i Ahmer expressed gratitude to all contributors before 5 January 1913 and mentioned that receipts for all received donations had already been dispatched. He further stated that receipts for forthcoming donations would be sent promptly as new contributions are made.⁹⁶ The proof of this example can be seen in the following instance: the allocation of 20.5 liras from the Calcutta Hilal-i Ahmer on 25 December 1912, officially documented as war aid on 2 January 1913. Subsequently, the corresponding receipt, numbered 7870, was provided and forwarded to the Grand Vezir's office for distribution to the specified location.⁹⁷

⁹² BOA, 'HR.TO.', 1912d. *HR.TO.*, 543/89.

⁹³ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 543/67.

⁹⁴ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 601/12,1-2.

⁹⁵ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 1330/602,29.

⁹⁶ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309917,17.

⁹⁷ BOA, *BEO*, 4133/309904.

The second example is also related to this announcement. According to the document, a notification and report arrived through a telegram from the Ottoman Bank in London. A 550 GBP and 31 pence were dispatched from Calcutta to convert into funds for Hilal-i Ahmer. The Grand Vezir's Office was urged to organize the receipt document for the transmitted money following the established procedure. This communication was authored by the general manager of the Ottoman Bank on 27 January 1913.⁹⁸ These two incidents occurred a few days before/after the date Hilal-i Ahmer mentioned. They are now starting to pay attention to the issue.

However, the donors generated some problems. They did not know the right way to donate. Sometimes, the transfers could have been more accurate due to exaggerated information, or sometimes, they would have been a problem because they needed to know the overall system. Here, the issues at hand and potential solutions are deliberated.

- Donors should express politeness and brotherhood; it is customary to attach a random note on a green piece of paper next to the money sent from distant places as war aid. This note should state that a person sent the specified amount on a specific date.⁹⁹
- A suggestion was made on 7 October 1913, stating that receipts acknowledging the donations received from the Bombay Chief Consulate should include the names and addresses of the owners in their original language along with Turkish, using the original script. However, since the names and addresses of donors from India and other places were written in local languages, no additional information could be added to the receipts. A decision on 3 December 1913 proposed that if there was a compass in English letters showing the names and addresses of the donors in English, the blank spaces of the receipts issued by the treasury should be filled with English letters, which was hoped to resolve this issue. This situation has been requested by the Ministry of Finance and communicated to other consulates, including the Bombay consulate.¹⁰⁰
- Moreover, after scrutinizing the documents, it was discovered that the funds sent were incorrectly directed to the Ottoman Bank. It is reported that later, there was an acknowledgment of the error, and the individual withdrew the money from the mentioned bank, depositing it into the war fund. This incident is one example of the complexities surrounding the receipts.¹⁰¹

After all these considerations, according to a document dated 17 January 1914, during the times of the Tripoli and the Balkan Wars, the Muslim population of India provided significant assistance to the Red Crescent Society. This demonstrates the loyalty and servitude of the Muslim population of India towards the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the central secretary of the Red Crescent Society, Dr Adnan, and the delegation, including Kemal Ömer Bey, visited Bombay to express their gratitude.¹⁰² However,

⁹⁸ BOA, *BEO*, 4138/310317,3.

⁹⁹ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/12,28.

¹⁰⁰ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/12.

¹⁰¹ BOA, *BEO*, 4162/312096.

¹⁰² BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 2020/14.

before it, during the initial phase of the two wars spanning from 1911 to 1913, Ottoman officials in India highlighted the significant support extended by the Bengali population to the Ottoman Government. Consequently, on 21 December 1911, it was proposed that individuals of prominence who played a crucial role in gathering aid in Calcutta should be honored with a medal.¹⁰³

Discussion and Conclusions

This study uncovers the intricate narrative within the Ottoman archives, illustrating the dynamic yet challenging financial assistance process between Bengal donors and the Ottoman state during wartime. The multi-layered obstacles—administrative delays, language barriers, banking inefficiencies, inaccurate postal details, and inter-ministerial communication lapses—provide valuable insights into external and internal pressures that shaped the flow of funds. These points reveal a financial solidarity effort that, despite its noble intent, was hindered by systemic and logistical constraints.

The Ottoman state, overwhelmed by war demands, struggled to prioritize the timely acknowledgment of donations and the efficient distribution of funds. This limitation has likely affected donor trust, which is essential to sustaining ongoing financial support. Language barring and postal service delays further complicated relations with donors, demonstrating how translation and delivery timelines affected the continuity and confidence in the support network. The problems faced by London-based banks and others outside Bengal highlight the period's more significant financial infrastructure challenges, reflecting either an inadequacy in banking practices or bureaucratic issues exacerbated by the wartime economy, which hindered prompt fund transfers.

The investigation revealed additional issues with some receipts needing to be included or unregistered, adding further complications to the transparency and accountability of the donation process. Missing receipts likely resulted from administrative oversights, postal issues, or general wartime disruptions. Unregistered receipts, on the other hand, suggest that not all transactions were systematically recorded, potentially due to incomplete filing procedures or human error. A centralized tracking system for every donation and receipt would be crucial to address these issues. Each receipt could be assigned a unique identification number within a master database, enabling administrators to verify and track transactions accurately.

Moreover, a double verification process could have further strengthened accountability, where separate departments confirm the issuance and receipt of documents. Regular audits of these records would also help catch and resolve discrepancies early on, minimizing the risk of lost or unrecorded receipts. Creating digital records as backups could offer an added layer of security, allowing for easy retrieval and verification of receipt details if originals are missing. These steps would collectively enhance the reliability and transparency of the financial solidarity system, ensuring that all transactions

¹⁰³ BOA, *DH.MTV.*, 1352/4,52.

are properly documented and accounted for. This work should have been done on time, but unaccustomed to the technological support was a matter of fact.

Though seemingly minor, inaccurate postal addresses further disrupted the financial network. The failure to deliver receipts correctly frustrated donors navigating complex transnational financial procedures, reducing the system's reliability. Additionally, communication delays within Ottoman state departments revealed a fragmented coordination process. Even internal correspondence struggled to keep pace with wartime demands, stressing the need for more integrated governmental mechanisms.

A striking observation from the archival records is the absence of victim testimonies or detailed government documentation indicating how funds were allocated to those affected by the war. Instead, the Ottoman Bank appeared to be the primary recipient of donations, with limited transparency on how these funds were subsequently disbursed. This lack of visibility points to insufficient documentation practices or deeper structural issues that largely undocumented the final beneficiaries' aid claims. Such opacity in financial transactions raises critical questions about the efficiency and accountability of the aid distribution network, potentially impacting public perception and donor confidence.

Ultimately, this archival investigation highlights the complex reality of wartime financial solidarity. The nuanced challenges uncovered—from logistical delays and linguistic barriers to infrastructural limitations and transparency gaps—illustrate how the structure of aid delivery can impact the effectiveness of relief efforts. By revealing these intricacies, the study underscores the importance of well-coordinated and transparent systems, especially in times of crisis. Addressing these historical insights could serve as a basis for developing more robust frameworks to handle financial solidarity in similar future contexts, ensuring aid reaches its intended recipients with greater efficacy and accountability. Through these findings, the study contributes to our understanding of Bengal's financial solidarity with the Ottomans. It offers lessons for humans on the critical role of operational efficiency in achieving successful humanitarian outcomes.

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Appendix

Document (example) 1. The Postal Money Order from Baniachong, Sylhet.
(BOA. BEO. 4211. 315815.2)

دائرة صادرات بحريات تللي ١ شعبه				ميشي	مسودي	نورتي كوسولاس
قلمه دورودي	قلمه دورودي	قلمه دورودي	قلمه دورودي			
مقايه اديتور	٢٨	٢٨	٢٨	تاريخ تبليغ	تاريخ تسويه	قلمه دورودي تاريخ
				٨	٨	٢٨

بكاله ورتو رويو سيلينه قفنه مقاد بانايغ شوره سكو اورده انكيد
رسته رله رطه برنه موله ناكه لغا صوبه كيدنه كونه رطه مين مورت
بمهرخانه جوبه حسانه ابراهيم بر يقود سديت نيانه گنه

OSMANLI ARŞIVI
BEO
4211 315815 1

Document (example) 2. Financial Aid Sent from Sylhet Recorded as Revenue in the Military Account.

TC. BASBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARSIVI DAIRE BASKANLIGI (BOA)

OSMANLI ARSIVI		
BEO		
4211	315815	2

۶۷۵۶۰ نورو لو بونته حواله نامه

اوبه بيه (۱۵) عدد انگز
براشي ناطقه

صند شانك بنكاله ولاينه
مربوطه "سيلهت" قضا
مضاف "با نيا هنج" شهريه
ايسال اولموشد.

خلطه ره كي انگز بونته خانه كنده
افذونه جمله

حواله نامه در بيلك افنده هفتدينك نودنه در
۶۷۵۶۰

BEO.004211.315815.002