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Abdürreşid İbrahim'in Japonya İdeali: Doğu Birliği ve Osmanlı Hilafeti

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Öz

Türk/Tatar Hoca Abdürreşid İbrahim, Türkler ile Japonların birbirlerini tanımalarına önemli katkılar sağlamış bir fikir ve hareket insanıdır. O, Rusya Müslümanları için yürüttüğü faaliyetler sırasında Rus baskısı artınca büyük bir kısmını Japonya'ya ayırdığı uzun bir seyahate çıkmıştır. 20. yüzyılın başlarında gittiği Japonya'da hem İslam dinini tanıtmış hem de birtakım siyasi çalışmalar yapmıştır. Burada dostluk kurduğu Japonlara Doğu milletlerinin Batı'ya karşı ittifak kurmaları gerektiğini anlatmıştır. İlişki kurduğu çevre ağırlıklı olarak Asya yayılcılığına taraftar olan Japon milliyetçilerinden oluştuğundan önerileri beğenilmiş ve bir derece desteklenmiştir. Onun Şark birliği projesi Osmanlı Devleti'nin lider olarak düşünüldüğü geniş bir coğrafyayı ve kalabalık bir nüfusu içine alan büyük bir idealdi. Böyle bir proje için güçlü ve Müslüman bir müttefike ihtiyaç vardı. Abdürreşid İbrahim bu düşünce ile, Müslüman olan veya Müslüman olma temayülü gösteren Japon dostlarına hilafet makamına bağlanmanın gerekliliğinden bahsetmiş ve bu yönde bazı girişimlerde bulunmuştur. Bu makalede Abdürreşid İbrahim'in Doğu birliği ve Japonları Osmanlı hilafetine bağlama düşüncesi incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Abdürreşid İbrahim, Japonya, Doğu Birliği, İslam, Osmanlı Hilafeti

Abstract

Turkish/Tatar Hodja Abdürreşid İbrahim is a thinker and activist who has played a significant role for Turks and Japanese to get to know each other. When the Russian pressure increased during his activities for the Muslims of Russia, he went on a long trip, most of which he devoted to Japan. In the early 20th century he went to Japan, where he introduced the religion of Islam and made some political studies. He explained the Japanese with whom he made friends that the eastern nations should form an alliance against the West. His proposals were appreciated and supported to some extent as his circle of friends with whom he had developed good relations was predominantly made up of Japanese nationalists who supported Asian expansionism. His oriental union project was a great ideal that encompassed a large geography and a crowded population, where the Ottoman Empire was thought to be the leader. A strong and Muslim ally was needed for such a project. Abdürreşid İbrahim, with the idea of attaching the Japanese to the Ottoman caliphate, mentioned the necessity of attaching to the authority of the caliphate to his Japanese friends who were either Muslims or tended to become Muslims and he made some attempts in this direction. In this article, Abdürreşid İbrahim's view on getting the Eastern unity and Japanese join the Ottoman caliphate has been examined.

Keywords: Abdürreşid İbrahim, Japan, Eastern Union, Islam, Ottoman Caliphate

Introduction

After their defeat in the Crimean War (1854-1856), the Russians, who made some reforms in the economic and military fields, continued to spread in the direction of the Turkestan Khanates in Central Asia¹. The peoples of the region, who experienced great disturbance due to the occupations in the Asian Turkish territory, turned their eyes to the Ottoman State during this process². The Ottoman State suffered significant losses in the Balkans after the Berlin Congress. Tunisia and Egypt were occupied in North Africa. Despite these shocks, thanks to the caliphate, the Ottoman Sultan had an influence on the Muslims in the colonies of Russia, Britain, France and the Netherlands rather than the non-Turkish Muslim population within the borders of the empire, and took on a more attractive appearance for them³. During this period, Asian Muslims, including India, developed a great affinity and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire and to the Ottoman Sultan as the caliph⁴.

The activist hodja from Kazan, Abdürreşid İbrahim, also thought that a close contact with the Ottomans could be a gateway to salvation for the Turks living under Russian captivity. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who frequently visited the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, also published his work titled *Çolpan (Çoban) Yıldızı [Shepherd Star]*, some of which was devoted to the injustices that Russia inflicted on Muslims⁵, in Istanbul in 1895⁶. Abdürreşid İbrahim had a special affection for Anatolian Turks. He said, *if there is a hope about the future of Islam, it will be in Anatolia thanks to Anatolian people*. Thus, he revealed both his love for the Turkish people and his expectation from them in the name of Islam⁷. While, on one hand, Abdürreşid İbrahim emphasized the importance of unity and solidarity for Muslims in the face of the West by defending Islamic unity⁸, on the other hand, taking a Panturanist approach, he deemed the common movement of the Turkish peoples was necessary for the future of the Turks and the whole Islamic world⁹.

Abdürreşid İbrahim had secretly gone to Japan at the beginning of the 20th century to avoid Russian pressure. On this trip, the Russian Consulate in Tokyo was disturbed by his anti-Russian propaganda and they deported him from Russia. The Japanese victory in the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905 made him happy, like other Asian nationalists. Three or four years after the war, he made a new trip to Japan between December 1908 and June 1909, which was officially sanctioned by Japan. During this visit, he contacted high-level bureaucrats such as Prime Minister Itō and Count Okuma. He had close contacts with extraordinary personalities such as Tōkutōmi Sohō, Uchida Ryōhei and Tōyama Mitsuru, members of the Asian Black Dragons Society (Kokuryūkai). names were from the liberal-nationalist team that started to increase their power in Japan. He was also active in Asianist circles represented by people like Inukai Ki, with whom he was as friends until he was assassinated¹⁰.

¹ Mehmet Saray, *Rus İşgali Devrinde Osmanlı Devleti ile Türkistan Hanlıkları Arasındaki Siyasi Münasebetler (1775-1875)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2017), p. 3.

² K. H. Karpat, *İslâm'ın Siyasallaşması*, trans. Şiar Yalçın, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005), p. 148-149.

³ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı'da Değişim ve Anayasal Rejim Sorunu*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019), p. 297-298.

⁴ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-İslamizm: Osmanlı Devleti, Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngiltere (1877-1924)*, (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1997), p. 39.

⁵ Abdürreşid İbrahimof, *Çoban Yıldızı*, (1907, s.n.), p. 39-45.

⁶ Mustafa Uzun, "Abdürreşid İbrahim", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. I (1988), p. 295-296.

⁷ Abdürreşid, "Anadolu'da Bir Cevelân", *İslâm Dünyası*, 16 (1331), p. 244.

⁸ Abdürreşid İbrahim, "İttihad-ı İslam", *Teârîf-i Müslimin*, 1:23 (11 Teşrinisani 1326), p. 363-364.

⁹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, "Panturanizm", *Teârîf-i Müslimin*, 1:2 (15 Nisan 1326), p. 17-20.

¹⁰ Selçuk Esenbel, *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı: Japonya'nın Türk Dünyası ve İslam Politikaları*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), p. 321.

Although Abdürreşid İbrahim had a grasp of Islamic sciences, he was not a great Islamic scholar or philosopher. He was a person of ideas and politics¹¹. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who had serious political goals besides his religious identity, wanted the Japanese to embrace the religion of Islam¹² and affiliate themselves with the Ottoman caliphate. Having seen a tendency in that direction, he mentioned the idea regarding Eastern alliance to the Japanese with whom he had developed a good contact to pave the way for the acceptability of his two ideals, both of which were marvelous. In this process, the expansion policy of Japan in Asia gave him a great advantage in sharing his ideas.

Abdürreşid İbrahim's thought of getting the Japanese to accept and comply with the rules of the Ottoman caliphate was interesting. He was not yet an Ottoman subject and his adoption of Ottoman nationality would take place in October 1913¹³. However, in the Islamic world, political nationality was not required for accepting and being loyalty to the position of the caliphate. In any case, his opinion about getting the Muslim Japanese to join the Ottoman caliphate was hardly odd in Japan. He attracted great attention in Japan and established firm friendships. The Ottoman Empire's friendly relations with Japan in the last 30-40 years should have a share in the gentle attitude of the Japanese towards him. Especially the contacts that took place during the reign of Abdülhamid II made both sides have a warmer relationship with each other. In this respect, it would be appropriate to take a brief look at the Turkish-Japanese relations during this period.

1. Turkish-Japanese Relations

Japan started to contact the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century¹⁴. Prince Komatsu's visit to Istanbul in 1887 had a positive effect on the relations between the two countries¹⁵. After this visit, the Japanese Emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito) sent The Chrysanthemum Medal to Abdulhamid II, and the Ottoman Sultan sent İmtiyaz Nişanı (the Order of Concession) to the Japanese Emperor, which made the relations more intimate¹⁶. The Frigate Ertuğrul, which was sent to Japan in 1889¹⁷, has a special place in the friendship of both sides. After staying in Japan for about three months, Ertuğrul, which departed from Yokohama Port to return to Istanbul¹⁸, sank in a storm off Kashinozaki on September 16, 1890. Only 69 people survived the disaster¹⁹. The contribution of this tragic incident to the Turkish-Japanese rapprochement was really great.

The Japanese won the war between Japan and Russia in 1904-1905 as a result of the capture of the great Russian fortress in Port Arthur in January 1905, the victory at Mukden, and the losses inflicted on the Russians by Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (1847-1934) in May 1905²⁰. The Ottoman



¹¹ İsmail Türkoğlu, *Sibiryalı Meşhur Seyyah Abdürreşid İbrahim*, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), p. 135.

¹² Hasan Barlak, "Japonya'da İslâm Davetçisi Bir Türk: Abdürreşid İbrahim "Dinî Fikirleri ve Stratejisi", *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 22:3 (2020), p. 671-692.

¹³ BOA (Directorate of State Archives Ottoman Archives), *İrade Hariciye (BOA. İ.HR.)*, 432/47, 24 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1331 (25 October 1913); *Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BOA. BEO.)*, 4226/316911, 25 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1331 (26 October 1913); *Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları (BOA. MV.)*, 230/28, 22 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1331 (23 October 1913).

¹⁴ Yuzo Nagata, "Japonya" (Japonya-Osmanlı İlişkileri), *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XXIII (2001), p. 574.

¹⁵ BOA, İ.HR. 307/19553, 25 Dhu'l-Hijja 1304 (15 August 1887); *Yıldız Esas Evrakı (BOA. Y.EE)*, 89/32; *İrade Dahiliye (BOA. İ.DH.)*, 1049/82428, 14 September 1303 (26 September 1887); BOA. İ.DH., 1049/82389, 5 Muharram 1305 (23 Eylül 1887).

¹⁶ BOA, *Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (BOA. Y.A.HUS.)*, 221/14, 05 Jumada al-awwal 1306 (7 January 1889).

¹⁷ BOA, İ.DH. 1295/102366, 08 Sha'ban 1306 (9 April 1889).

¹⁸ Ziya Şakir, *Sultan Abdülhamid ve Mikado*, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1994), p. 44-46.

¹⁹ BOA, *Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat (BOA. Y.MTV.)*, 47/87, 10 Tashriniawwal 1890.

²⁰ R. H. P. Mason & J. G. Caiger, *A History of Japan*, (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 1997), p. 268.

Empire kept a close watch on the Russian-Japanese war²¹. The victory of Japan in the war was welcomed with great joy in Asian countries. In Turkey, intellectuals such as Mehmed Akif (Ersoy), Halide Edip (Adivar) and Ziya Gökalp expressed the success of the Japanese in their works²².

Considering these developments, only a limited part of which has been mentioned here, it can be said that Abdürreşid İbrahim's trip to Japan took place in an advantageous period. Earlier times of his trip to Japan were at the time of Sultan Abdulhamid II, and the later times coincided with the reign of Sultan Mehmed Reşad. It is known that Abdulhamid II sent special envoys to some countries such as China for religious or political purposes²³. His religion-oriented policy and his policy of caliphate²⁴ bring to mind the question of whether Abdürreşid İbrahim was sent to Japan within a project.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was aware of Abdürreşid İbrahim's activities in Japan, and he was of the opinion that he was an open-minded and intellectual religious scholar²⁵. However, there is no information or indication that Abdulhamid II sent him to Japan. Abdürreşid İbrahim's view about Abdulhamid II was not positive. Moreover, he, oddly enough, said that Abdulhamid II was against Islamic unity, that he used the policy of Islamic unity only to frighten foreign diplomats, and that he could not do well enough to deserve the position of the caliphate²⁶. In this case, it is understood that Abdürreşid İbrahim designed his project regarding Japan by himself.

2. The Ideal of Eastern Union (İttihad-ı Şark)

At the beginning of the 20th century, Japan was making greater efforts than Britain, Russia and the United States to gain a privileged position in East Asia, and especially in China. The Japanese regarded Korea and South Manchuria as an area of prime strategic importance. In order to gain political hegemony, Japan fought two great wars. Conflicts brought about high costs both financially and in terms of lives lost. However, the victories reinforced the feelings of nationalism and the successes sanctified the Japanese rights in Korea and Manchuria as a matter of honor²⁷.

There was a certain group of people who believed in the necessity of pursuing a policy towards Muslims in Japan, which was expanding into Asia. In this process, there were more studies on Islam, and some organizations established in Japan sought a way for cooperation between the Japanese and Muslims. Organizations such as DNKK (Dai Nippon Kaikyō Kyōkai - Great Japan Islamic Society) led by General Hayashi Senjirō, Murata Shōzō and Abdürreşid İbrahim have conducted very influential activities since the beginning of the 20th century. Tatars such as İbrahim Efendi, Chinese Muslims, Indian Muslims and Southeast Asian Muslims aimed to build up an alliance with Japan. As for the Japanese, many Japanese who were involved in Asianist and Islamist movements, especially in the late Meiji years, considered that Asia's liberation from the yoke of Western imperialism would be possible only by the aid of the rapidly developing Japan.

²¹ BOA, *Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Yaveran ve Maiyyet-i Seniyye Erkan-ı Harbiye Dairesi* (BOA. Y.PRK.MYD), 25/116, 29 Mayıs 1320 (11 June 1904); *Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Elçilik, Şehbenderlik ve Ateşemiliterlik* (BOA. Y.PRK.EŞA), 45/66, 14.04.1904; *Hariciye Nezareti Londra Sefareti* (BOA. HR.SFR.3.549/45), 11.06.1905.

²² Nagata, "Japonya", p. 574.

²³ BOA, *İrade Hususi* (BOA. İ.HUS), 151/114, 07 Muharram 1325 (20 February 1907).

²⁴ Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat A.Ş., 2019), p. 185.

²⁵ Fethi Okyar, *Üç Devirde Bir Adam*, ed. Cemal Kutay, (İstanbul: Tercüman Tarih Yayınları, 1980), p. 101-103.

²⁶ Reşid Efendi İbrahim, *Tarihin Unutulmuş Sahifeleri*, [Musa Carullah published two booklets of Abdürreşid İbrahim's memories, which was named "What Was the Real Reason for Sultan Aziz's Martyrdom?" and "A Horrible Memoir of the Starvation of the Muslims of Russia."], (Berlin 1933), p. 11.

²⁷ James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 3-4.

However, the main long-term goal of many organizations was to build a perception of Japanese leadership among Asian Muslims²⁸.

Abdürreşid İbrahim came to Japan in a process in which such political calculations were made, and he frequently expressed his idea about unification of the peoples in the East to the Japanese with whom he had a dialogue during his stay here. Unity in religion was a great advantage for the joint political movement for him. If there was no religious unity, a common political movement and the acquisition of common or individual interests could be achieved through the unity of the eastern peoples. Let's take a look at his anecdotes about that issue.

In his book of travels with the title *Âlem-i İslâm ve Japonya'da İntişarı İslâmiyet (The World of Islam and the Spread of Islam in Japan)*, Abdürreşid İbrahim mentioned a meeting he had with the Japanese Imperial Palace Minister Hijikata. While the two were talking about Tatars, Russians and Turks, Abdürreşid İbrahim brought up the issue of the Orient. Stating that they hope for a help from the Japanese in this regard, he said that Europeans are looking for their own lives in the disaster of Muslims and that they didn't seem to want the Japanese to maintain their current lives, so it was possible for the Japanese to unite with the Turks. On the other hand, Hijikata, who made a supportive but cautious comment, said that the Japanese and Tatars were close in origin and linked the issue with the love of the Japanese for Tatars²⁹.

Japan, at the time of Meiji, was an example for its economic and industrial developments³⁰ as well as its devotion to tradition and culture, and Mehmed Akif, a friend of Abdürreşid İbrahim's in Istanbul, appreciated the progress and development in Japan in this respect³¹. Modernization without breaking tradition was suggested by many Muslim intellectuals at that time.

In his speech he made in a village in Japan, Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that they expect the whole Orient, especially Muslims, to benefit from the benefits of Japanese development and added that if they cannot protect their existing structures, they will be responsible to the whole Orient. Again, after expressing that the lives of the Japanese means the lives of the whole Orient, he added that they should avoid the trouble of Europeanization (Francification) in order not to destroy these hopes. These praiseworthy words were welcomed by those who were present and appreciative applause followed them³². Abdürreşid İbrahim's belief in rapprochement with the Japanese as an Asian society is an important foresight. In more than eighty years after these attempts, Japan has reached a power enough to challenge Western economies³³.

From what Abdürreşid İbrahim reports, it is understood that the Japanese also has a tendency towards the Eastern union. For example, Hayashita, the first secretary of the Japanese parliament, in a speech he made in a small meeting, stated that the Japanese were respected by the Eastern peoples as an example of the Oriental nations, and complained that they forgot the Tatars (Turks), whom he called *our brothers*. Then, as a person who knows the West very well, he stated that the Japanese cannot have any expectations from the West and that the lives of the people from the Orient will exist in and with the Orient. Therefore, he said that the peoples of the Orient should get to know each other without wasting time. After expressing his hopes that Abdürreşid İbrahim's visit to Japan would provide another activity for the Orient, he ended his words by

²⁸ Esenbel, *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı*, p. 318-319.

²⁹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslâm ve Japonya'da İntişarı İslâmiyet*, vol. I, ed. Ebu'l-Ulâ ve Eşref Edib, (İstanbul: Ahmed Sakî Bey Matbaası, 1328), p. 284.

³⁰ Mason & Caiger, *A History of Japan*, p. 270-280.

³¹ Mehmed Akif, *Safahat: İkinci Kitap Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde*, (Sebilürreşad Kütüphanesi: 1, 1330), p. 30-31.

³² Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslâm*, p. 339-340.

³³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (Summer, 1993), p. 39.

saying *Long live our Tatar brothers*, and then the words *Long live Tatars* were repeated collectively³⁴.

There was a process in which Europeans felt powerful and superior in the world³⁵. On the other hand, the attitude of the Europeans towards the Japanese led them to pursue a policy about the East. Sasaki, a member of the Japanese parliament, could not help expressing the negative attitudes and actions of Europeans regarding the Orient, especially Japan, through flagrant examples in a conversation with Abdürreşid İbrahim. He stated that, despite all the progress of the Japanese, they were defeated in diplomatic relations with the Europeans. He likened the Ottoman Empire and Japan to each other, and stated that they shared the same fate, just as the Ottomans lost at the table after the glorious battles. Thereupon, İbrahim Efendi made an interpretation of his words saying that the Orientals were not greedy and that they were content with the little they had, so they were short-sighted³⁶.

Sasaki's words also revealed the grudge against the West behind Japanese nationalism³⁷. Sasaki, who showed the mischief of the Europeans lengthily and in an uncompromising manner, expressed that he was also amazed that they could convince some Japanese diplomats that everything they had done was a requirement of civilization. He stated that the Eastern unity was a very important issue for the Japanese from now on, and asked Abdürreşid İbrahim to make a comprehensive explanation about the unity of the Orient, its future and possible effects of Islam on the Orient. Thereupon İbrahim Efendi explained the issue as follows:

“The effect that Islam will have on the East or the West is the unity of nations. The main creed of Islam is *tevhid* (oneness) as well as its spiritual duty is *tevhid*. Islam, which has made a Tatar and an Arab brother to each other today, will make a British or even French brothers to both of them if they accept Islam, or more precisely, the real fears of the Europeans lie here; if we accept Islam, we are worried that it will prevent our brutality, which is in our nature. Otherwise, there is nothing contrary to reason and comprehension in Islam”³⁸.

One of the prominent bureaucrats of Meiji-era Japan in the constitutional process is Itō Hirobumi. He made great contributions to Japanese modernization with his studies in Europe³⁹. He served as finance and industry minister and prime minister in Japan⁴⁰. Abdürreşid İbrahim met with Itō Hirobumi and they exchanged opinions on Europe, the Turkish world, the Orient, Turkey, Japanese development and Islam. İbrahim Efendi told Itō that all the politics of Europeans were based on anti-Islam, and he implied that the Orient issue would turn into a race problem as it expanded, which would affect the Japanese in the future. Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that the Westerners always make people see Islam as an enemy and mould public opinion accordingly. On the other hand, he stated that if the Ottoman Turks could use the power stemming from religion, they could influence the world seriously⁴¹.

In addition to these statements, we see that İbrahim Efendi refers to the politics of Turkish unity. As a matter of fact, Yusuf Akçura, a Tatar / Turk from Kazan, also explained the benefits of the politics of Turkish unity in the near future, and he wrote that the unification of Turks, who spread across the east of Europe and a large part of the Asian continent, would create a serious

³⁴ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslâm*, p. 248-249.

³⁵ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.759.

³⁶ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 371-372.

³⁷ James L. Huffman, *Japonya Tarihi*, trans. Cengiz Yücel, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi Yayın Sanayi ve Ticaret AŞ., 2020), p. 99.

³⁸ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 373-374.

³⁹ Albert M. Craig, *The Heritage of Japanese Civilization*, (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011), p. 107.

⁴⁰ Milton W. Meyer, *Japonya Tarihi*, trans. Lizet Deatato, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi Yayın Sanayi ve Ticaret AŞ., 2019), p. 146.

⁴¹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 263-265.

political force and Ottoman Empire, which was the strongest and the most civilized Turkish communities, could play the most important role in this large community⁴².

Similarly, İbrahim Efendi said that the Turkish-Tatar belonging to the same nation and religion spread over a wide geography from Western China to Central Asia, from Azerbaijan to Anatolia, and that this great power remained as a map on paper. Moreover, he added that with the inclusion of Turks living in different countries in the East, there would be no force to confront this power, which consists of Muslims. When İtō talked to İbrahim Efendi about the negative articles written by some European newspapers about Turkey and Turkish statesmen for a while, and told anecdotes showing that Europeans did not look at Japan very differently, İbrahim Efendi stated that whatever Turks do, the view of Europeans towards Turks will not change⁴³. Some of İtō's remarkable comments about the Ottoman Empire, in which he compared it with Japan, are as follows:

“... Our situation was like the current state of Turkey forty or fifty years ago, maybe more recently. Besides the inner conflict and sedition all over the country the Dutch on the one hand and the Americans on the other would pose severe threats. Fortunately, our geographical location helped us a little, we were able hold together by not allowing foreign intervention, but in Turkey it is worse, the enemy has already surrounded and entered in it. Therefore, the current situation of the Turks is more difficult. It needs the supervision and consultancy of foreigners to develop the country, and they think that the collapse of Turkey will benefit them...”⁴⁴

In the dialogues, both of them agreed that the West's view of the Orient is almost the same. However, Prince İtō did not respond to Abdürreşid İbrahim's search for political rapprochement and followed a more independent line. Nevertheless, the main point of the speeches they agreed on was justified once again with the First World War, which broke out after a while. The Japanese sided with the Entente states in the war, but their expectations were not met to a large extent in the 1919 Paris Peace Treaty, although they were on the winning side⁴⁵.

Abdürreşid İbrahim expressed the aggression of the Westerners against the East at every opportunity. His main views on this issue are that Europeans sought their lives in the death of the people in the Orient, that they saw the Orient as a prisoner, and that all of the plans they made about their interests meant to harm Easterners. He stated that the Japanese were able to resist these attacks to some extent and that the Westerners were uncomfortable with the resilient attitude of Japan, and he defended the idea that the eastern nations could maintain their lives by helping each other⁴⁶. The level of development Abdürreşid İbrahim saw in Japan had a significant share in his insistence on cooperation with Japan. According to many economists, Japan experienced its first industrial revolution in the early 20th century. In the 1890s, exports doubled by three, imports by four, and factories by five. The 360 million Yen that the Sino-Japanese war reparations brought to the economy was reflected in the industry, doubling the number of workers in the country to one million⁴⁷.

Abdürreşid İbrahim believed that Japan would be the strongest support for Eastern countries due to its promising social and political situation. Eastern nations could only defend themselves by forming a broad political coalition⁴⁸. He also prepared a forty-one-item program on the

⁴² Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*, ed. Mehmet Ali Erdem, (Ankara: Lotus Yayınları, 2005), p. 58-59.

⁴³ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 265-266.

⁴⁴ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 266-267.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Clements, *Japonya Nasıl Japonya Oldu?* trans. Cansen Mavituna, (İstanbul: Metropolis Yayıncılık, 2020), p. 15-16.

⁴⁶ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 351.

⁴⁷ Huffman, *Japonya Tarihi*, p. 101.

⁴⁸ Nadir Özbek, “Abdürreşid İbrahim (1857-1944): The Life and Thought of a Muslim Activist”, *Master Thesis*, (Boğaziçi University, 1994), p. 63.



unification of the Orient with these thoughts in mind. He thought that the Japanese were in a position to guide the Eastern union and expressed this in the settings he deemed appropriate. China, Java (Indonesia) and Malay (Malaysia) islands has drawn attention to the large number of Muslims in India and the surrounding areas, and their geographic proximity to Japan, and tried to convince their interlocutors that the Japanese could influence them. Abdürreşid İbrahim did not hesitate to say that the project in question would only be possible with a serious Islamic organization in Japan⁴⁹.

The role of the new political project that the Japanese were trying to prepare for Asian expansion had a big share in the recognition of Abdürreşid İbrahim's ideas in Japan. The Japanese, who thought that they had to pursue an Islamic policy in order to open up to Asia, included religion and ethnicity into their projects and chose Turkish Tatars as their target group. Abdürreşid İbrahim's influence on the preference of Tatars is highly probable. As a matter of fact, they tried to spread the idea that Japanese and Central Asian Muslims should cooperate with Japan in order to break the Russian resistance and liberate Central Asians, and some activities were carried out in this manner⁵⁰. Misawa, explained Abdürreşid İbrahim-Japanese rapprochement in two ways; the first one is acting together for the same purpose in a sincere relationship, and the second one is working together for common interests until each party achieves its own goals⁵¹.

The 1900s was a period when interest in Islam increased in Japan⁵². Abdürreşid İbrahim wholeheartedly wanted Islam to spread in this country, which he loves very much. He and a group of Japanese nationalist established a community with the name *Ajia Gikai* (*Asian Association of Justice*). Abdürreşid İbrahim said that his aim was to make it easier and faster for Islam to spread in Japan. However, *Ajia Gikai* also had the ideal of defending and resurrecting Asia⁵³. These two issues, intertwined in Abdürreşid İbrahim's mind, can be expressed as the ideal of *Islamizing Japan and Resisting Asia*. While the Society acted on the principle in the hadith, *O servants of Allah, be brothers*⁵⁴. The ones to join the society were told to take the verse ... *and fulfil / (Every) engagement, / for (every) engagement / Will be enquired into / (On the Day of Reckoning)*⁵⁵ as a guide⁵⁶.

The declaration of *Ajia Gikai* was published in the journal of *Sırât-ı Müstakîm* dated March 10, 1326 (23.03.1910), together with a four-article general orders and a fifteen-article regulation about the activities of the society. In the first article of the general order it was stated that the society would work to ensure the political, economic, military etc. development of Asia⁵⁷. The political goals of *Ajia Gikai* for the Japanese can be determined from the names signed in the text prepared on behalf of the society. These were either members of *Kokuryūkai* who were active in

⁴⁹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 355-357.

⁵⁰ Ali Merthan Dündar, *Panislâmizm'den Büyük Asyacılaşma: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Japonya ve Orta Asya*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat A.Ş., 2006), p. 147-148.

⁵¹ Nobuo Misawa, "Abdürreşid İbrahim'in Japonya'daki İzleri Üzerine", *Japonya Seyyahı Abdürreşid İbrahim'in İzinde*, ed. A. Merthan Dündar, (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2020), p. 30.

⁵² F. Şayan Ulusan Şahin, *Türk-Japon İlişkileri (1876-1908)*, (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), p. 185.

⁵³ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 427.

⁵⁴ al-Bukhari, Abû Abdillâh Muhammad b. İsmâ'îl b. İbrahim al-Ju'fî, *al-Djâmi' al-Sahih*, vol. IV, critical ed. M. Fuâd Abdalbâky, (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyya, 1400), "Adab", 57; Abu'l-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hadjdjadj al-Kushayri, *al-Djâmi' al-Sahih*, vol. III-IV, critical ed. Muhammad Fuâd b. Abdalbâki, (Beirut: Dâr İhyâ' al-Turâs, n.d.), "Birr and as-Silâ", 28, 4/1985; Abû Dâ'ud, Sulayman b. al-Ash'ath al-Azdi al-Sidjîstânî, *Sunan Abî Dâ'ud*, vol. VII, critical ed. Shuayb al-Arnaût et al., (Beirut: Dâr al-Risâlah al-Âlamiyya, m. 2012-h. 1433), "Adab" 54.

⁵⁵ Sûrah Al-İsrâ', 17/34. The verse of the Qur'ân translations in the text are taken from here: *The Holy Qur'ân and Its Meaning*, prepared by: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, proofreading: Ali Osman Demir, Ayşe Zuhâl Sarı, (İstanbul: Publications of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018).

⁵⁶ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 427.

⁵⁷ *Sırât-ı Müstakîm*, "Japonya'da Dayto Mecellesi ve «Asya Gi Kay» Cemiyetinin Beyannamesi", 6:133 (10 Mart 1326), p. 42-44.

Japanese nationalism and imperialism, or people with very close ties to Kokuryūkai. For example, Ōhara Bukeiji was a lieutenant colonel in the Japanese army. Tōyama Mitsuru was the spiritual leader of Kokuryūkai and the leader of the Japanese ultra-nationalist movement behind the scenes. Nakano Tsunetarō and Nakayama Yasuzo were Kokuryūkai activists. Among those who signed the text of the oath were three Chinese Muslims⁵⁸.

Abdürreşid İbrahim's frequent emphasis on the geopolitical importance of the Islamic world may have attracted the attention of the Japanese General Staff. It is understood that names such as the Japanese Deputy General Staff Lieutenant General Yasumasa Fukushima and the Chief of the Second Bureau of the General Staff, Major General Taro Utsunomiya, had some interest in Abdürreşid İbrahim. Utsunomiya established sincere relations with Mr. Fazli from Egypt and helped him, considering that Japan could be beneficial for future Asia and especially for Islamic politics. It is possible that he thought that they could likewise benefit from İbrahim Efendi⁵⁹. In fact, Japan had been in search of something new politically in more recent times⁶⁰.

Apart from Abdürreşid İbrahim, it is understood that Muslims who came to Japan for commercial, political or religious reasons evoke certain feelings of closeness towards the East in the Japanese. In the period between the First World War and the October Revolution, the Japanese authorities used the previously established relationships between Japanese Pan-Asianists and Muslims, as well as adding new relationships to them. While the Meiji dialogue favored a liberal and nationalist Asian awakening between Pan-Asian and Pan-Islam, the Pan-Asian and Muslim platform would gain an anti-communist and right-wing character for military purposes. *The Altai brotherhood* is based on the view that there is a special bond between the Japanese and the peoples of North Asia who speak Altai languages. This argument presents the parties as the partners of the future in the image of the *Rising Sun and the Turkish Crescent* with an ideological framework that brings together Japanese military elements and their Muslim allies⁶¹.

3. Abdürreşid İbrahim's Ideal to get the Japanese Join the Ottoman Caliphate

Throughout the 19th century, political consciousness among Muslims increased day by day. An idea of resurrection and resistance began to emerge around the caliph in a large part of the Islamic geography. The spread of the idea of Islamic unity led to the support of the caliphate against the imperialist powers. The independence of the Ottoman Empire and the fact that it was almost the only Muslim state resisting imperialist powers enabled the Ottoman Empire to stand out as a unifying power and made it easier to accept the claim that the Ottoman sultan was the head of all Muslims⁶². Acting as a representative of this understanding, Abdürreşid İbrahim did not only act as a religious messenger in Japan, but also realized that it was necessary in terms of religion and politics that the Japanese who were converted to Islam should accept the caliph and follow him, and expressed it explicitly.

An anecdote quoted by Abdürreşid İbrahim shows that the respectability of the Ottoman sultan stemming from the caliphate reached Japan. In Japan, two Japanese friends his who received the news that Abdulhamid II had been deposed came to him and said: *Why is this man who is the caliph of the prophet insulted so badly. Even though his persecution has exceeded the limit, it is necessary to respect his position....* When he tried to calm these friends, who were very disturbed,

⁵⁸ Esenbel, *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı*, p. 394-395.

⁵⁹ Hisao Komatsu, "Japonlar Açısından Alem-i İslam", *Türk - Japon İlişkilerinin Dönüm Noktasında Abdürreşid İbrahim: Uluslararası Abdürreşid İbrahim ve Türk-Japon İlişkileri Bilgi Şöleni, Bildiriler*, (Konya: Konya Japon Kültür Merkezi, 2012), p. 90-93.

⁶⁰ Samizâde Süreyya, *Day Nipon: Büyük Japonya*, ed. Cemiyet Kütüphanesi, (Kostantınıyye 1917), p. 43.

⁶¹ Esenbel, *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı*, p. 396-398.

⁶² Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 50; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 108-109.

which could be noticed in their faces, by the incident, they said with sorrow *Caliphate authority, great authority. I guess this authority should be respected...* Even İbrahim Efendi states that if they were to get a little sign of approval from him, there were even those who would hold meetings and send telegrams to the *Meclis-i Mebûsan (National Assembly)*⁶³.

Abdürreşid İbrahim appreciated it that the Japanese preserved their innate character and did not make great concessions regarding their traditions in order to become civilized. In addition, the civilized human relations in Japan, the decency of daily life, moral maturity, sensitivity to education, high interest in modern sciences, and the desire of the Japanese to contribute to the development of their country also affected him deeply⁶⁴. In fact, Japan did not go through the development process perfectly in terms of all segments of the society. Towards the 20th century, workers in the newly established factories worked under very harsh conditions, escapes from work and suicides were widespread, especially among women workers. The new tax system has affected farmers badly. Miners had to work underground in extreme temperatures, many lost their lives in explosions and collapsed mines⁶⁵.

Despite everything, Japan had developed and continued to develop. Advancing as an eastern nation, the Japanese had more than discontent with the West. The Japanese approach to Muslims was positive. The current picture was promising for Abdürreşid İbrahim. If the Japanese adopted Islam, they could stand by the Muslim peoples and the Ottoman Empire, which represented Muslims. Such a development would increase the political prestige of the Ottomans in addition to supporting the political goals of the Japanese.

Seeing the behaviours of the Japanese which overlapped with the religion of Islam made the idea of converting the Japanese to Islam attractive for Abdürreşid İbrahim. Although he thought that Islam in Japan could be built on a solid foundation, he had a tendency to attach the Islamic formation here to the position of the caliphate in the future. It was not enough for a few Japanese to convert. In essence, he wanted to show the great political benefit that the Japanese would gain from becoming a Muslim, and then to promote the interests of the Muslims and Ottomans in this process. Of course, this intention could not be immediately explained to the Japanese. It had to be in a way that the Japanese would demand it before he said it. For this, it was necessary not be in a hurry, but act slowly and steadily⁶⁶.

With this idea in mind, Abdürreşid İbrahim made several statements to his friends in Japan about the issue of the caliphate when the situation called for it. One of them was Count Matsuura. During the dialogues that took place about the religion and politics, Matsuura asked about the devotion of the Muslims living in Russia to religion and the caliphate, and Abdürreşid İbrahim made the following explanation:

“... Caliph means a religious presidency with no spirituality, since Islam is a religion that clearly reveals every truth, even politics are united in this presidency, in this case, the person who will be the caliph has the title of president in his own country both religiously and politically, and also has the position of presidency for Muslims living in foreign countries from a religious point of view.”⁶⁷

Then he stated that it was a religious obligation for all Muslims to recognize their caliph and obey him⁶⁸, and that there was a hadith stating that the lives of Muslims who died with the belief

⁶³ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 312.

⁶⁴ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 450- 452.

⁶⁵ Huffman, *Japonya Tarihi*, p. 96-99.

⁶⁶ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 365-366.

⁶⁷ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 219.

⁶⁸ “O ye who believe! / Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, / And those charged / With authority among you” (Sûrah Al Nisâ’,17/59); “Those who obey me obey Allah, those who rebel against me rebel against Allah, those who obey those charged with authority among you obey me, those who rebel against those charged with authority among you

that it is not necessary to know their imam would end in heresy⁶⁹. After this preliminary statement, he said:

“Today, as the aggression of Europeans against the Islamic world increase, the attacks on Muslims’ religious and national rights have increased at the same rate..., because of that the bond with the caliphate office was damaged financially. Especially those under the administration of the Russian government lost more of their legitimate rights. However, our spiritual commitment will never be incomplete, it will never be able to destroy it. If there is a power that Muslims can take pride in, that is it. Therefore, all Muslims in the world band together. By time, with the grace of God, this spirituality changes into material things. From now on, the duty of all those who are followers of Islam is to work for this goal⁷⁰.”

It is accepted that politicization in Islam started especially in the 19th century⁷¹. However, Islam, since the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad’s invitation, has been associated with the political and social organization of the society. The fact that religion regulates almost all the relations in life has also influenced the attitude of Muslim societies to political events⁷². With his explanations above, Abdürreşid İbrahim actually wanted to give the message that Muslim peoples stand by the caliph in universal Islamic politics anyway.

After a while, in another conversation with Abdürreşid İbrahim, Count Matsuura asked him to give more details about the subject of the caliphate. Then Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that the rulers of Muslims after the Prophet Muhammad were called the caliph, that whatever the caliph ordered in accord with Islam was legitimate and obedience to him was also obligatory. He then stated that the caliphate was a very important religious and political issue in Islam, and that the authority of the caliphate of all world Muslims is Istanbul and the caliph of the world is Sultan Fifth Mehmed (Reşad) He then stated that the caliphate was a very important religious and political issue in Islam, and that the authority of the caliphate of all world Muslims is Istanbul and the caliph of the world is Sultan Fifth Mehmed (Reşad)⁷³.

Islamic trends in the Ottoman Empire was not neglected even during the Second Constitutional Period. Major events that shook the empire reinforced the tendency of the Muslim people to religion, and many publications representing Islamic intellectual movements, especially *Sırât-ı Müstakim* and *Sebîlürreşad* were published⁷⁴. In this process, the peak of the Islamist movement was experienced when the Ottoman State under the rule of Union and Progress entered the First World War with the declaration of Jihad-i Akbar made by Sultan Mehmed Reşad⁷⁵.

Moreover, Said Halim Pasha, who was the grand vizier between 17 June 1913 and 3 February 1917⁷⁶, in his work published immediately after the war, stated that one day the realities of Islam

rebel against me. Head of the state is a shield people fight behind it and protected by it...” (al-Bukhârî, *al-Djâmi’ al-Sahih*, “Jihâd”, 109; Muslim, *al-Djâmi’ al-Sahih*, “Imâra”, 32).

⁶⁹ “Whoever prevent someone from obeying the authority will meet Allah without an evidence with him. And whoever dies without proclaiming allegiance to the caliph will die like the pagans die.” (Muslim, *al-Djâmi’ al-Sahih*, “Imâra”, 58); “Whoever refuses to obey and leaves the society and dies in this situation will die like the pagans die.” (Muslim, *al-Djâmi’ al-Sahih*, “Imâra”, 53).

⁷⁰ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 219.

⁷¹ Karpat, *İslâm’ın Siyasallaşması*, p. 32.

⁷² Watt, *Islamic Political Thought*, p. 28-29.

⁷³ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 297.

⁷⁴ Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i ‘Aliyye: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar-IV Âyânlar, Tanzimat, Meşrutiyet*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2016), p. 308.

⁷⁵ İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, vol. IV, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınları, 1972), p. 419-420; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi: İkinci Meşrutiyet ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1908 - 1918)*, vol. IX, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), p. 399-402.

⁷⁶ M. Hanefi Bostan, “Said Halim Paşa”, *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XXXV, (2008), p. 557-558.

will overcome the heresy against Islam once again and that the Ottoman Empire, whose ruler is the caliph of the Muslims in the world, will once again be in charge of the Muslim peoples⁷⁷.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, it was seen that the Ottoman caliphate found a certain support among Muslims other than Turks. Examples, at the time of Sultan Abdulhamid II, include Ahmad b. Zaynî Dahlan shafii mufti in Mecca⁷⁸, intellectual Tunisian Abdulaziz Châvish, who stands out with his considerable identities in the troubled conditions of the time they lived⁷⁹, and Sheikh Hasan Attar, who was the rector of the Egyptian Azhar University⁸⁰. As can be understood from the brief information we gave in the introduction of our article, the Japanese, who had been pursuing a policy of rapprochement with Turkey for a long time, also leaned towards the Ottoman Empire⁸¹.

Some of the feedback Abdürreşid İbrahim received on this issue are as follows: In his speech on the future of the Ottomans, the Japanese intellectual Tomiju stated that the Turks were a very strong and solid nation, that the Europeans were very afraid of the Ottomans, and that they would not be so hostile to the Ottomans if they had not been afraid. He stated that despite all the plots and intrigues of Europeans, Turks were not afraid of Europeans at all. Stating that he saw the future of the Turks very bright, Tomiju linked the fear of Turks in Europeans to the aptitude of the Turks. On the other hand, he explained the policy of Europeans against Turks with a striking key sentence: *That talent is to find a remedy to kill*. At the end of his speech, Tomijū declared that he regarded the survival of the Ottoman Empire as a great honor for the Japanese and ended his words with the wishes and desire the Turks will always be exalted and progress⁸².

There were the Japanese who considered the position of the Ottomans very important in a strong alliance to be established in Asia. Hatano, one of the first Japanese Muslims, expressed his views on the Japanese-Ottoman unity and described these two states as castles on both sides of Asia and wrote that if Japan and the Ottoman Empire established a sincere alliance, they could prevent all kinds of movements of Europeans in Asia⁸³.

As for building a mosque in Tokyo, we see that the issue is associated with the caliphate. Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that permission should be obtained from the authority of the caliphate and the Sheikh-ul-Islam for the mosque, and he wanted to create constant bond between the Muslim Japanese and the authority of the caliphate⁸⁴. He spoke of a meeting where some issues regarding the future of Islam in Japan and especially the mosque were discussed. Those who were present in this assembly, where very sincere speeches took place, were former businessman Tōyama, parliamentarian Kawanō and Inukai Ki, journalist Nakano, a high-ranking soldier Ōhara and Nakayama. Here, Ōhara said to Abdürreşid İbrahim that they were extremely eager for the spread of Islam in Japan. On the other hand, İbrahim Efendi stated that he would never be negligent in teaching Islam to the Japanese after he stated that it was enough to be a Muslim, to

⁷⁷ Mehmed Said Halim Paşa, *İslamlaşmak*, (Dârü'l-Hilâfe: Sebülürreşad Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1337), p. 20.

⁷⁸ Ahmad b. Zaynî Dahlan, *al-Futūhāt al-Islāmīyah ba'da muđī al-Futūhāt al-Nabawīyah* vol. II, (Cairo: Muassasah al-Halabi, 1968/1387), p. 290.

⁷⁹ Abdulaziz Chavish, *al-Hilafat al-Islamiya*, (Dâr al-Hilafah al-'Uzma: Matbaah al-Adl, 1334), p. 20.

⁸⁰ Hasan Attar, *İslamda Hilafet ve Osmanlı Hilafetinin Önemi*, critical ed. Ahmed Abdullah Necm, trans. Mustafa Özcan, (İstanbul: Ark Kitapları Özgü Yayıncılık, 2011), p. 76-80.

⁸¹ *Bir Dostluk Öyküsü: Belgelerle Türk-Japon İlişkileri, A Friendship Story Turkish-Japanese Relations with the Documents*, ed. Ahmet Cihan, M. Metin Hülagü, (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011).

⁸² Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 349-350.

⁸³ Hatano (Uho), *Asya Tehlikede*, trans. Muhammed Hilmi Nakawa, Abdürreşid İbrahim, (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1328), p. 17.

⁸⁴ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 389.

know God and to serve Him, but that an official permission was necessary for the work to be complete and that he was completely devoted to the supreme caliphate position⁸⁵.

Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that when the mosque was officially built upon the request of his Japanese friends to build a mosque in Tokyo as soon as possible, those who will be assigned to fulfill their religious duties here should be appointed by the Sheikh-ul-Islam and the officials should work under the office of Sheikh al-Islam. He continued his words with the following explanation:

“... The essence of our Islam consists of tying the human world to a rope of brotherhood, and the shriest and blessed shari'ah is the rope that will be used to tie it, and the caliphate is a great pillar that connects the ends of those ropes. In order to preserve the brotherhood, it is necessary to walk around that column, the tree that gives roots to the whole world. Even though most of the people of Islam present in the world today are of foreign nationality, they are essentially attached to that center of caliphate”⁸⁶.

Reading the khutbah in mosques on behalf of the caliph significantly explains the connection between the mosque and the caliphate. Mentioning the Sultan's name in the khutbahs, especially in Mecca (Masjid-i Haram), which was under the Ottoman administration⁸⁷, and the recitation of a sermon on behalf of the sultan (caliph) and praying for him in countries outside the Ottoman land, such as India, show the importance given to this link⁸⁸.

Abdürreşid İbrahim, who stated that, after a few people left, in the session above he had some conversations with Ōhara, Nakano and Nakayama, but he could not explain them, yet he gave some clue about the dialogues in question, stating that such reputable figures are interested in the political philosophy of Islam more than anything else⁸⁹. It can be said that in the 19th and 20th centuries, the idea of political Islam was shaped according to the attitudes of the West towards Muslim societies. In this era, Muslim intellectuals tried to revive Islam by associating some of the ideas seen in the West with Islam or by directly turning to revelation, and in any case they did not neglect to analyze and evaluate Islamic and European cultures in terms of history. Muslim intellectuals or activists, regardless of their affiliation, have set the ultimate goal of liberating Islamic societies from Western hegemony⁹⁰.

Abdürreşid İbrahim and his Japanese friends were aware of the fact that if Japan and Turkey opened embassies mutually, they could realize their ideas more easily and they were also designing some initiatives in this regard⁹¹. On the other hand, the issue of getting permission from the caliphate authority for a mosque in Japan was brought up almost every time they mentioned building a mosque. I should be pointed out that the people with whom Abdürreşid İbrahim spoke about these issues were either Japanese who accepted Islam or who were more or less positive about Islam. In the private sessions of Abdürreşid İbrahim, the spread of Islam in Japan and East-West relations constituted the basis of the negotiations. In such small assemblies, it was stressed that the mosque was a very powerful means for the spread of the religion of Islam in Japan, and the unification of the Eastern nations and the necessity of the bond with the caliphate was expressed repeatedly⁹².

⁸⁵ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 390-392.

⁸⁶ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 390-392.

⁸⁷ İbrahim Rifat Pasha, *Mir'ât al-Haramayn ew er-Rahalât al-Hijaziyya we al-Hajj ve Masha'iruhu ad-Dîniyya*, vol. I, (Cairo: Matba'ah Dâr al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1925/1344), p. 254-255.

⁸⁸ BOA, *Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (BOA. Y.A.HUS.)*, 200/88, 19 Jumada al-thani 1304 (15 March 1887).

⁸⁹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 393.

⁹⁰ Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present*, (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 281.

⁹¹ Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 394-395.

⁹² Abdürreşid İbrahim, *Âlem-i İslam*, p. 402-405.

Abdürreşid İbrahim left Japan, where he had great ambitions, in June 1909. He went to Hejaz and made the pilgrimage with a Muslim Japanese named Ömer Yamaoka. After returning to Turkey, he was assigned a number of roles on behalf of the Ottoman Empire⁹³. Meanwhile, the reconciliation between Russia and Britain and the Japanese-British alliance agreement had negative influence on Ottoman-Japanese rapprochement⁹⁴. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who went back to Tokyo from Turkey in 1933 upon the proposal of Lieutenant Colonel Masatane Kanda, was not as active as before in Japan⁹⁵. The Ottoman Empire he dreamed of in order to realize his ideals no longer existed. Considering the changes in the world, Abdürreşid İbrahim, whose age was well advanced, did not have much reason not to lose his political hopes for the future of Asia.

Conclusion

Abdürreşid İbrahim was in a constant struggle for the liberation of the Turkish/Tatar people under Russian pressure. In his visit to Japan in 1909, he was fairly hopeful about all the Muslims oppressed, especially Tatars. Abdürreşid İbrahim contacted many respected people in Japan, from Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi to Captain Ōhara. Abdürreşid İbrahim really loved the Japanese, and the high moral values such as sincerity, trust and diligence impressed him. He thought that the Japanese could be a powerful ally for the Islamic world, which was oppressed by Europe. Undoubtedly, the inclination of the Japanese in this direction also had an effect on this thought. In the same period, the Japanese were pursuing a policy of expansion towards Asia. Japan had won the war with Russia in 1904-1905. They had also won the war with China before. However, in order to advance in Asia, it was necessary to gain the favor of the Muslim Turks living in this geography. For this purpose, the Japanese thought that they could benefit from certain Muslim figures such as Abdürreşid İbrahim.

Although Abdürreşid İbrahim explained Islam to his Japanese friends at every opportunity in order to realize his ideals, he did not conduct an intensive invitation activity in order to convert them to Islam. He wanted the Japanese to become Muslim. However, it was not enough for him to have a certain number of individual Japanese Muslims. He knew well the power of politics in guiding societies. He was of the opinion that the Japanese should mainly be convinced politically. Japan was developing rapidly and gaining strength. In that case, an alliance could be formed with them. To achieve his goal, he explained to the Japanese the importance and necessity of Eastern unity against the West. On the other hand, the Japanese view of Islam seemed positive. In many ways, the Japanese lived like Muslims. There was no reason why they should not be Muslims. He was telling his friends who were Muslim and who were ready to embrace Islam that Muslims should be attached to the Ottoman caliph and gave the message of an Ottoman-centered East-Islamic union. The Japanese hardly denied this.

For a person who was not born and raised in Japan, the closeness he felt towards them was remarkable. Abdürreşid İbrahim's ideals about the Japanese were so high compared to the opportunities he had and the crowded mass he targeted. Despite the size of his projects, he did not act under a religious or political centre. His ideas and projects were his own. He was sincere, honest and open-minded in his dealings. This must be one of the main reasons why the Japanese found him close to them. There is no doubt that his approaches and expectations were affected by the fact that he lived in a time when relations between states and nations were extremely ominous. It can be thought that his desire to benefit from the Japanese, especially in terms of his political goals, and that the Japanese wanted to benefit from him, was related to this ominousness of the

⁹³ Uzun, "Abdürreşid İbrahim", p. 295-296.

⁹⁴ Hee-Soo Lee, *İslâm ve Türk Kültürünün Uzak Doğu'ya Yayılması*, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1988), p. 233.

⁹⁵ Nobuo Misawa, "Yeni Kaynaklar ile Abdürreşid İbrahim'in Japonya'daki Hayatı", *Japonya Seyyahı Abdürreşid İbrahim'in İzinde*, ed. A. Merthan Dünder, (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2020), p. 35-36.

time. In any case, Abdürreşid İbrahim had an unwavering religious and political trust in the values of Islam, and he saw the Japanese fit to the ideal of eastern unity although he had originally designed that ideal for Muslims. Also, he considered the dissatisfaction of the Japanese with the Westerners as an important advantage for his ideals.

At the beginning of the 20th century, stopping the Western powers' conspiracies and attempts to dominate the Eastern nations was one of the priorities of Muslims. According to Abdürreşid İbrahim, it was possible to act together with the Japanese for this opposition. The eastern alliance, especially loyalty of the Japanese to the caliphate, were elusive ideals. Moreover, in order to establish a link between the Japanese and the Ottoman caliphate, the Japanese had to adopt Islam first. Strong and effective state support was essential to teach and promote Islam in Japan. In this process, however, Muslims were weaker than ever, and the imperialist states of the West were growing more and more powerful. The Ottoman State, which Abdürreşid İbrahim had expected to support him, was being dragged into a political vortex which would result in disintegration. Under these conditions, neither the Eastern unity nor the ideals of connecting Japanese Muslims to the Ottoman caliphate could be in question. Yet, these high ideals showed how strong belief and a solid sense of responsibility can push a person's limits. However, these thoughts, which he wanted to realize with a strong belief and a solid sense of responsibility, were examples of to what extent a person can push his limits for the sake of his ideals.



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