

Maritime Crossroads: Unraveling the Maldives-Turkey Relations (1650-1900)

Deniz Ticaret Yolları Kesişim Noktası: Maldivler-Türkiye İlişkilerinin Çözümlemesi (1650-1900)

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Abstract: This article explores the historical relations between the Maldives and Turkey, with a specific focus on a period encompassing 250 years, ranging from 1650 to 1900. The Maldives, strategically situated at the confluence of ancient trade routes, played a central role in the sphere of maritime trade, contributing significantly to the broader landscape of international diplomacy and cross-cultural exchanges. Numerous historical cues affirm that the Maldives was far from an obscure entity to the Ottoman Turks. This is substantiated by explicit references to the Maldives found in historical sources, such as Ali Macar Reis' atlas from 1567, Katib Çelebi's 17th Century magnum opus 'Cihannüma', cartographic depictions by Mahmud Raif Effendi (1803), accounts documenting the sporadic anchoring of Ottoman vessels in Maldivian ports, a well-documented tradition tracing back to the 16th century of delivering 'hutbe' or Friday sermons in honour of the Ottoman Sultan, and the fact that during the latter part of the 16th century, the Maldives functioned as a vassal state under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, providing assistance in their conflicts against the Portuguese. The Ottoman influence left an indelible mark on various aspects of Maldivian society, permeating diverse facets, including the judiciary, cuisine, language, litera-

ture, coinage, symbols, titles, fashion and Maldivian Chess (Raazuvaa). Paradoxically, although these historical affiliations underscore substantial interconnectedness between the Maldives and Turkey, academic scholarship has been limited. Addressing this scholarly gap, this paper employs a comprehensive research methodology, integrating archival research, and comparative cultural analysis to reveal the nuanced facets of diplomatic, cultural, religious and political relations. This research aims to bridge knowledge gaps, shed light on overlooked history, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the enduring relationship between the Maldives and Turkey.

Keywords: Ceylon, history, Maldives, Ottoman Relations, Turkey

Öz: Bu makale, Maldivler ve Türkiye arasındaki tarihi ilişkileri 1650 ile 1900 arasındaki 250 yıllık kapsayan belirli bir döneme odaklanarak araştırmaktadır. Antik ticaret yollarının birleşim noktasında stratejik olarak konumlanan Maldivler, deniz ticareti alanında merkezi bir rol oynamış ve uluslararası diplomasi ile kültürel alışverişin geniş perspektifine önemli katkılarda bulunmuştur. Maldivler'in Osmanlı Türkleri için tamamen bilinmeyen bir varlık olmadığını gösteren birçok tarihi işaret bulunmaktadır. Bunun kanıtları, 1567 tarihli Ali Macar Reis'in atlasında, Katip Çelebi'nin 17. yüzyıl başyapıtı 'Cihannüma'da, Mahmud Raif Efendi'nin (1803) haritalarındaki Maldivler'e dair açık referanslarda, Osmanlı gemilerinin Maldiv limanlarına düzensiz olarak demirlemelerini belgeleyen kayıtlarda, Osmanlı Sultanı'nın onuruna 16. yüzyıla dayanan Cuma hutbelerinin düzenli bir geleneği olarak ve 16. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru Maldivler'in Portekizlilere karşı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun yanında vasal bir devlet olarak yer aldığı gerçeğindedir. Osmanlı etkisi, Maldivler toplumuna çeşitli şekillerde sirayet etti: Yargı, mutfak, dil, edebiyat, para, semboller, unvanlar, moda ve Maldivler Satranç (Raazuvaa) gibi çeşitli yönleri etkiledi. Paradoksal olarak, bu tarihsel bağlar Maldivler ve Türkiye arasındaki önemli bağlantıları vurgulasalar da, akademik araştırmalar sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu bilimsel boşluğa yanıt olarak, bu çalışma kapsamlı bir araştırma metodolojisi kullanarak, arşivsel araştırmayı ve karşılaştırmalı kültürel analizi entegre ederek diplomatik, kültürel, dini ve siyasi ilişkilerin nüanslı yönlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma, bilgi eksikliklerini gidermeyi, göz ardı edilmiş tarihleri aydınlatmayı ve Maldivler ile Türkiye arasındaki kalıcı ilişkinin daha derin bir anlayışına katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Seylan, tarih, Maldivler, Osmanlı İlişkileri, Türkiye

Introduction

The Maldives, officially known as the Republic of the Maldives, an archipelagic state situated in the Indian Ocean within South Asia, has garnered worldwide recognition for its pristine beaches, crystal-clear lagoons, and resplendent coral reefs. This island nation which occupies a distinct position within the annals of South Asian and Indian Ocean history is strategically located to the southwest of both Sri Lanka and India, approximately 750 kilometers from the Asian mainland. The geopolitical significance of the Maldives is accentuated by its geographical layout—a chain of 26 atolls extending across the equator from the Ihavandhipolhu Atoll in the north to the Addu Atoll in the south. The historical importance of the Maldives is underscored by its central role in ancient maritime trade net-

works. It served as a crucial nexus for trading vessels originating from diverse regions, including Sri Lanka, South India, and South East Asia. These vessels often sought refuge in the Maldivian atolls, undertaking vital refitting and replenishment activities prior to embarking on their voyages to prominent trading posts in Africa. Similarly, maritime traders hailing from Europe, Ottoman Empire, Arabia, Persia, and Africa used the Maldives as a key stopover point for similar purposes. (Forbes and Ali, 1980; Reynolds, 1975; Romero-Frias, 1999). This geopolitical positioning, with a history dating back to antiquity, imparts an intrinsic value to the Maldives as an object of scholarly inquiry.

The historical names linked to the Maldives across the ages serves as an indelible testament to its intricate and time-honoured history, reaching far into antiquity. Among the earliest names for the Maldives was Dheeva Mahal, derived from the legend that its initial inhabitants were known as Dheyvis, and its first kingdom was named Dheeva Maari. (Al Suood, 2014; Jabyn, 2016; Mohamed, 2005). During the period spanning 1100 to 1166, the Maldives bore the appellation Diva Kudha. This term extends further to encompass the Laccadive archipelago, which was an integral part of the Maldives and was identified as Diva Kanbar. These names were recorded by the eminent Persian scholar and polymath al-Biruni (973–1048), who holds the distinction of being recognized as the founder of Indology. Furthermore, Sanskrit texts denote the Maldives as *mālā-dvīpa*, with *mālā* signifying garland and *dvīpa* denoting island. (Robertson, et al. 2005; Ganzenmüller, 1891). This etymological derivation encapsulates the meaning of Maldives as a “garland-island” in Sanskrit. The Sinhala texts of Sri Lanka, refer to the Maldives as *Maala Divaina*, which translates to “Necklace Islands.”

The Maldives’ historical existence finds reference in various ancient chronicles and inscriptions. The *Mahavamsa*, a 5th-century chronicle of Sri Lanka, serves as an early reference point to the Maldives. Likewise, South Indian Pallava dynasty inscriptions dating to the 7th century AD refer to the Maldives as *Dvīpa Laksham*, signifying ‘a hundred thousand islands.’ A 10th-century Tamil record from the Chola dynasty further extends this nomenclature, describing the Maldives as *Munnir Palantivu Pannirayiram*, which alludes to ‘twelve thousand islands and the ocean where three waters meet.’ In most Tamil sources and maps, the Maldives is identified as *Mālaitivu*, a phrase connoting “Garland of Islands.” This term extends into the realms of Malayalam, with variants like *Maladweepu* and *Kannada*, where *Maledweepa* all translate to “Garland of Islands.”

The historical chronicles of the Maldives encompass its interactions with foreign civilizations. Hiuen-Tsang, a prominent Buddhist monk who traversed India for religious studies between AD 629 and 645, is credited as the first Chinese writer to mention the Maldives. His reference to the islands as *Na-lo-ki-lo-chou* underscores the identification of the Maldives as ‘coconut islands’ by early Chinese explorers. Subsequently, Maldivian emissaries are believed to have undertaken

diplomatic missions to Tang dynasty China during the reign of Maldivian king Baladitiya in AD 658 and AD 662. These missions were marked by the exchange of gifts and valuables from the Maldivian archipelago, presented to the Chinese monarch, reflecting the diplomatic and trade dimensions of early Maldivian history. The diffusion of Islam in the Maldives, commencing from the 12th century, is attributed to North African, Arab (Yemeni) and Persian seafarers and traders who frequented the islands for water, dried fish, and coconuts. These visitors often established prolonged stays and played a pivotal role in the introduction of Islam to the region. (Maniku, 1986). Esteemed explorers such as Sulaimān at-Tājir (850 A.D.), Al Masudi, Al Biruni (1030 A.D.), al-Jawālīqī, and Al Idrisi (1150 A.D.) have provided detailed accounts of Pre-Islamic Maldives, designating it as either Divah or Dibadjat. (Mohamed, 2002). Their writings offer valuable insights into the produce of the islands, including ambergris and cowries, as well as the consummate craftsmanship evident in fabric weaving, ship and house construction, and various forms of artistic work. These sources also highlight the unique matriarchal and matrilineal social systems in the Maldives, where women played a prominent role in arbitration, and the governance of the islands was overseen by queens.

Moroccan Berber traveler Ibn Battuta, whose extensive sojourn in the Maldives occurred in the 14th century, referred to the islands as Maḥal Dibīyāt, which at the time of his visit was ruled by a Sultana (Queen) named Khadeejah Sri Raadha Abaarana Mahaa Rehendhi. Ibn Battuta's stay in the Maldives included multiple marriages and concubinage, culminating in the birth of children. He also held the position of a Qadi, functioning as a Muslim judge responsible for adjudicating both religious and civil matters. (Bell, 1883; Gray & Defremery, 1999; Metcalf, 2009). Throughout his comprehensive travelogue, Ibn Battuta provides in-depth insights into a wide array of topics, including his observations on the Maldivians' steadfast adherence to Islam, and their exceptional hospitality, particularly in his commendations of the Grand Vizier, who served as the prime minister of the Maldivian realm. The 16th century ushered in a transformative phase for the Maldives with encounters with Portuguese conquistadors, who identified the islands as *ilhas Maldivas* and *Ilha Dywe* before eventually occupying the archipelago. Subsequent European powers, including the Dutch and the British, also employed their own variants to identify the Maldives. The Dutch name for the archipelago was *Maldivische Eilanden*, whereas during the time when the archipelago was a British protectorate, which lasted for 77 years until the Maldives gained independence on July 26, 1965, the British introduced an Anglicized version of the local name. (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). They initially referred to the islands as *Maldive* or *Maladiva* and later streamlined it to *Maldives*.

Considering the strategic geographic positioning of the Maldives and its historical significance in maritime trade, it is unsurprising that the Ottoman influ-

ence on Maldivian history, though often confined to archival records, has left a lasting mark. This study endeavors to rectify this historical oversight and comprehensively examine various dimensions of Turkey-Maldives relations, a subject heretofore insufficiently explored. Emphasizing the Ottoman era, a pivotal period when the Maldives established diplomatic ties with Turkey, this paper seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of this enduring relationship.

Research Question:

What were the key historical dynamics and dimensions of the diplomatic, cultural, religious and political relations between the Maldives and Turkey during the Ottoman era, particularly between 1650 and 1900?

Research Objectives:

- To explore the historical relations between the Maldives and Turkey, focusing on the period from 1650 to 1900, and unveil the intricate dynamics of diplomatic, cultural, and political interactions.
- To examine the multifaceted Ottoman influence on Maldivian society, encompassing the judiciary, language, literature, customs, symbols, titles, cuisine and elite fashion.
- To analyze historical cues and references that confirm the Maldives' significance within the context of the Ottoman Empire.
- To explore the impact of Ottoman influence on religious practices, cross-cultural exchange, and the broader narrative of Islamic diplomacy in the Indian Ocean region.
- To investigate the historical role of the Maldives as an Ottoman tributary during the latter half of the 16th century, particularly its support in Ottoman conflicts against the Portuguese, and understand its implications for the geopolitical landscape.

These research objectives aim to facilitate an academic exploration of the historical relations between the Maldives and Turkey during the Ottoman era, emphasizing their significance in the realms of diplomacy, culture, and politics, while rectifying the existing scholarly gap and contributing to a more profound comprehension of this enduring relationship. The ultimate objective however is to make this historical narrative accessible to contemporary researchers, academics, and the broader public, with a particular emphasis on younger generations of Maldivians and Turks who may be unaware of their shared history and heritage. This initiative is anticipated to contribute to a deeper understanding of these longstanding relations and fortify the bonds between the two nations.

Research Methodology

This study on “Turkey-Maldives Historical Relations” employs an interdisciplinary research methodology to explore their historical ties between 1650 and 1900. The methodology is designed to address the multifaceted nature of the topic and knowledge gaps:

- **Historical Documentation and Archival Research:** This comprehensive analysis involved an in-depth review of historical documents, archived materials, official records, manuscripts, books and correspondence from the specified period. Extensive archival research was conducted in both Sri Lanka (which houses significant archival information on the Maldives) and Turkey. This approach provides valuable insights into the diplomatic, cultural, and political relations between the Maldives and Turkey, shedding light on their historical context and interactions.
- **Comparative Cultural Analysis:** This method entails a detailed comparative analysis of Ottoman and Maldivian cultures, encompassing language, religious practices, symbols, titles, and fashion. It aims to understand the multifaceted influence of Ottoman culture on the Maldives.

By employing these research methodologies, this study aims to illuminate this overlooked facet of history, unveiling facts that have been confined to archives, libraries, and repositories, gradually fading into relative obscurity.

Literature Review

The historical narrative of the Maldives is characterized by its rich tapestry interwoven with linguistic, cultural, and geopolitical elements. Situated at the confluence of ancient trade networks and serving as a crossroads of civilizations, the historical discourse surrounding the Maldives presents a compelling subject of scholarly and international relations interest. Nevertheless, the historical interactions between the Maldives and Turkey during the Ottoman era have remained notably unexplored within academic literature. A comprehensive examination of this historical connection is conspicuously absent, even within works like “Ottoman-Southeast Asian Relations: Sources from the Ottoman Archives” (2020) by İsmail Hakkı Kadı and A.C.S. Peacock, which offer peripheral references to the Maldives, leaving the relationship largely unexamined.

The 16th and 17th centuries stand as a significant epoch in Maldivian history and its affiliation with the Ottoman Empire. Giancarlo Casale’s publications, namely, “His Majesty’s Servant Lutfi” (2005), “Global Politics in the 1580s” (2007), and “The Ottoman Age of Exploration” (2010), are notable references in this context. Casale’s works provide insights into the Ottoman influence, the correspon-

dences that transpired between the Ottoman Sultan, the Sultan of Aceh, and the Ottoman envoy Lord Lutfi and shed light on the profound allegiance and reverence of the Maldivians toward the Ottoman Sultan. Elizabeth Lambourn's "Khutba and Muslim Networks in the Indian Ocean" (2011) further highlights the Maldives' historical connections with the Ottoman Empire. While several works briefly allude to the Maldives within the broader context of Ottoman Empire and Turkish influence in the Indian Ocean, such as "Islam and Democracy in the Maldives; Interrogating Reformist Islam's Role in Politics" (2021) by Azim Zahir, "Winds of Spices" (2006) by K. S. Mathew and Joy Varkey, "Maritime India; Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean" (2010) by Pius Malekandathil, "Time, Place, and Connectivity in World History" (2018) by Aran MacKinnon, "Human Rights Commitments of Islamic States" (2021) by Paul McDonough, "The Ottomans; Khans, Caesars and Caliphs" (2021) by Marc David Baer, and "India in the Indian Ocean World" (2022) by Rila Mukherjee, none of these publications provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical relations between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire. Their primary focus predominantly centers on different areas of inquiry, relegating the subject of Maldives-Turkey relations to the periphery.

Furthermore, an intriguing yet unexplored facet of history pertains to the roles and contributions of elite Maldivians appointed as Ottoman representatives or shahbenders, who served in Ceylon during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their significance in fostering and strengthening the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Maldives remains inadequately examined, resulting in a substantial knowledge gap. cursory references to Maldivians appointed as Honorary Turkish Consuls can be found in more recent Turkish literature, such as "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Seylan Adası ile İlişkilerine Methal" (2020) by Ekrem Saltık and "140 yıllık miras: Güney Afrika'da Osmanlılar" (2000) by Ahmet Uçar. In light of these historical gaps, this article endeavors to address these omissions and offer a comprehensive exploration of the history of Maldives-Turkey relations.

Moreover, a review of theses and journal articles from academic institutions, both within Turkey and abroad, reveals that the Maldives is predominantly mentioned in works primarily focused on topics such as the environment, global warming, tourism, healthcare, Indian Ocean affairs, recent political developments within South Asia, SAARC, religious extremism, trade, and contemporary issues. Consequently, a comprehensive overview of these publications is refrained from, as they do not directly pertain to the core subject matter of this study.

Historical Context:

The earliest documented references to the Maldives within the context of the Ottoman Empire date back to the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566). This historical connection is preserved in the letters exchanged

between Sultan of Aceh Alauddin Kahhar and the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman I in 1566. These correspondences, meticulously transcribed and translated by Giancarlo Casale (2005, 2007, 2011), provide valuable insights into the Maldives' allegiance to the Ottoman Empire and the profound reverence bestowed upon the Ottoman Sultan, who was esteemed as the Caliph of the Islamic world. Casale (2005) speculates that the information provided about the Maldives in the letters, including its geography, people, conflicts with the Portuguese, recent political developments, and trade, was more likely furnished by Lutfi Reis Paşa, an Ottoman official who traveled to the archipelago, rather than the Sultan of Aceh himself. The flowery language and descriptive details in the report suggest a travelogue rather than diplomatic correspondence, leading to the hypothesis that an Ottoman official, most likely Lutfi, composed the letter for the Sultan of Aceh. This hypothesis is supported by various textual idiosyncrasies, including tone and content, underscoring the significance of Lutfi Reis's journey in bridging historical gaps in our understanding of the Maldives and its interactions with the Ottoman Empire.

The letters reveal a comprehensive portrayal of the Maldives, then collectively known as Diva, comprising a staggering twenty-four thousand islands, half of which were inhabited, and the other half remaining desolate and uninhabited. Within this expanse, the Maldivian populace emerged as devout adherents¹ of the Islamic faith, practicing the rituals and traditions of the Shafi'i² school of Islam. This letter conveys a profound sense of loyalty and reverence that the Maldivians held for the Ottoman Sultan, whom they esteemed as "your most high and most blessed Imperial Majesty, refuge of the world and shadow of God [on earth]." (Casale, 2010, p. 128). Mosques adorned every island within the Maldives, echoing with the noble name of the Ottoman Sultan during their calls to prayer. These expressions of devotion underscore the extent to which the Ottoman Sultan was cherished within the Maldivian atolls. (Casale, 2005, 2007, 2011; Kadi, & Peacock, 2019).

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- 1 During his maiden visit in 1343 AD, amidst the reign of Sultana Rehendhi Khadheeja, the famous explorer Ibn Battuta encountered a populace devoutly adhering to the Islamic faith, with no mention of alternative religious practices on the archipelago which he identifies as 'Dhibat-ul-mahal'. In his accounts, Battuta attests to the uprightness and religiosity of the island inhabitants, characterizing them as individuals of unwavering faith and noble intentions. He states that their dietary habits conformed to Islamic dietary laws, and their prayers were acknowledged by the Almighty God. Furthermore, Battuta observed the presence of mosques on every island in the archipelago, with many of these structures constructed primarily from wood. (Husain, 1953)
 - 2 The historical transformation of the Maldives from a predominantly Buddhist nation to an Islamic society in the year 1153 AD is ascribed to the renowned Moroccan scholar, Abul Barakat Yoosuf Al Barbary. The Maldives until the 17th century maintained adherence to the Maliki school of jurisprudence, which is prevalent across much of North Africa. The propagation of Islam in the Maldives was notably shaped by the influx of merchant vessels and Muslim missionaries from North and the Horn of Africa, Yemen, and Persia.

The Maldivian way of life, as described in the correspondences, centered on humble activities such as fishing, the weaving of Indian cotton, and the production of yarn from coconut fibers. These locally crafted products found their place in trade with the numerous ships that frequented the islands, with ambergris, a unique and highly sought-after substance, gracing many of these coastal regions. Yet, beyond the details of daily life and religious devotion, the letters shed light on the broader geopolitical context of the Maldives during this period. The Maldivian King, although unnamed in the correspondence, was depicted as a valiant defender of his faith and realm. It was noted that he sought refuge under the Ottomans in Mocha (Al-Mukhā) or Aden after being vanquished by the Portuguese in 1562-3, a move that emphasized the significance of the Maldives as a strategic and sought-after territory. (Casale, 2005, 2007, 2011; Kadi, & Peacock, 2019).

Furthermore, the correspondence illuminates the critical role of the Maldives within the network of trade routes facilitating the passage of merchant vessels and ships carrying Hajj pilgrims from South and South East Asia to Mecca. The Maldives, with its strategic location, was a pivotal point along these routes. However, the Portuguese conquests disrupted the safety of these waters, effectively endangering any vessel passing through the region. In these perilous circumstances, ships, including those of the Ottomans, fell prey to Portuguese aggression. Ships were looted, and if they resisted capture, they faced the destructive force of Portuguese cannons, leading to the loss of numerous lives, including men, women, and children en route to their sacred pilgrimage. (Casale, 2005, 2007, 2011; Kadi, & Peacock, 2019).

In the context of these correspondences, a notable incident is brought to the forefront, involving Lutfi Reis Paşa, a 16th-century Ottoman diplomat en route from Aceh to Mecca. Lutfi Paşa was aboard the vessel 'Samadi,' which belonged to a Gujrati lord and was laden with a valuable cargo of pepper, cinnamon, cloves, silk, camphor, hisal bend, and other highly prized commodities. During their passage through the Maldives, they encountered three galleots and seven galleys of the Portuguese. A fierce four-day and four-night battle ensued, during which the Ottomans successfully protected their vessel. However, the Portuguese resorted to the use of cannons, ultimately resulting in the tragic sinking of 'Samadi' and the loss of five hundred Muslim lives. Some survivors faced capture and enslavement by the Portuguese. (Casale, 2005, 2007, 2011; Kadi, & Peacock, 2019).

These correspondences, therefore, offer a rich tapestry of historical narratives, capturing the multifaceted relationship between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. This period was marked by profound religious devotion, reverence for the Ottoman Sultan, and the crucial role of the Maldives within the regional and global trade networks. It is through the lens of these correspondences that this pivotal era in the history of the Maldives is brought to life and scrutinized, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of the time.

The Ottoman Empire's persistent quest for dominance in the Indian Ocean did not wane with the passing of Sultan Suleiman I. This pursuit extended into the reign of his successor, Selim II, during which Sokollu Mehmed Paşa ascended to the position of Grand Vizier. Under Sokollu Mehmed Paşa's guidance, the Ottoman Empire adopted a policy aimed at displacing the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean. This endeavour involved forging alliances with various maritime Muslim rulers in the region, including those governing the Maldives. (Braginsky, 2015; Casale, 2005, 2007, 2011)

In the latter half of the 16th century, the Maldives functioned in a manner akin to a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, with the name of the Ottoman Sultan being invoked during the customary Friday sermon, commonly referred to as the 'hutbe'. (Kármán, & Kunčević, 2013).

Unfortunately, extant historical documentation remains somewhat limited with respect to the perpetuation of this tradition beyond the confines of the 16th century. However, certain customs, likely introduced by the Ottomans, endured. Comprehensive historical documentation pertaining to Ottoman engagement with the Maldives during the 17th and 18th centuries remains notably scarce.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge the enduring nature of multifaceted connections, encompassing cultural, military, religious, and trade aspects, between the Ottoman Empire and the Indian Subcontinent, the Sultanate of Aceh, and various other regions within Asia, persisting well into the early 20th century. This temporal longevity underscores the likelihood that Ottoman affiliations with the Maldives endured, notwithstanding the Dutch occupation of the archipelago during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Maldives on Literary and Cartographic Canvas

The Maldives holds a unique position within Ottoman cartography, etching its presence not solely in the realms of conflict and commerce but also within the prominent literary works, notably those pertaining to geography. This introduction sets the stage for a dedicated exploration of the Maldives' presence in renowned literature and its depiction on Ottoman maps, all of which bear testament to its enduring historical significance. In this section, I delve into the intricacies of these acknowledgments, shedding light on the archipelago's captivating portrayal in the broader context of literature and cartography during this period. My study commences with a well-known example of sixteenth-century Ottoman cartography found in the atlas of Ali Macar Reis, now housed in the Topkapı Palace Library. This map, completed in 1567, has undergone extensive examination by contemporary scholars like Giancarlo Casale and has been recognized as a creation deeply rooted in a Western prototype within the lineage of Italian cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi's school.

Ali Macar's map, presents an intriguing blend of Ottoman cartography and Western influence. While the map itself is based on a Western prototype, it features an array of Turkish-language captions that set it apart. These captions, as pointed out by Giancarlo Casale (2012) encompass a wide spectrum, including simple place names drawn from colloquial Turkish (such as "Ak deñiz" for the Mediterranean), terms rooted in classical Arabo-Islamic geography (like "Serendib" for Sri Lanka), and even neologisms with potential Western origins (e.g., "Portukāl İskeleyi" for the Isthmus of Panama). However, one striking aspect of this map is Ali Macar's choice to provide an extended description of the Maldives. He refers to the Maldives as "The Twenty-Four Thousand Islands, twelve of which are deserted and the other twelve of which are cultivated" [Yigirmi dört biñ cezire on ikisi vîrân ve on ikisi ma'mûr]. This detailed description of the Maldives on an Ottoman map raises questions about why this specific archipelago was chosen for such special treatment.

It's important to note that similar Western Gastaldi-type maps typically do not single out the Maldives or any other Indian Ocean islands for distinctive attention. However, Giancarlo Casale's (2005, 2012) research brings to light the possibility that the information provided about the Maldives in Ali Macar's map could be loosely linked to the intelligence report of Ottoman envoy Lutfi Reis, who undertook a covert diplomatic mission to the Sultan of Aceh in Southeast Asia from 1564 to 1566. This mission included traversing the Maldives and gathering valuable insights during the journey.

Another significant Ottoman literary work that delves into the subject of the Maldives is the renowned 17th century literary opus "Cihannüma," composed by the Turkish polymath and scholar, Kâtip Çelebi. In a manner akin to the correspondences exchanged with the Sultan of Aceh, Kâtip Çelebi's compendium provides an inclusive portrayal of the Maldives, encompassing meticulous geographical details, and insights into the socio-cultural milieu of its populace. The text also references the substantial fishery industry in the Maldives, noting that the catch is exported abroad. Çelebi's account details the practice of bead and mother-of-pearl collection among the Maldivians, noting their utilization as a form of currency in numerous localities. Additionally, Çelebi highlights the abundant presence of ambergris in the Maldives. Moreover, Kâtip Çelebi's observations include the Portuguese dominion over two major islands, namely Mâldîwâ and Qândâlûs. (Çelebi, 2021).

The inclusion of the Maldives in the scholarly works of Ottoman geographers, as exemplified by Mahmud Raif Effendi's detailed map of Asia from 1803, signifies the archipelago's recognized status within the Ottoman intellectual realm. The explicit mapping of atolls and the use of Ottoman Turkish (Lisân-ı Osmâni) to name major islands underscore its substantial presence in Ottoman scholarship, dispelling any notion of obscurity. The Maldives has also garnered mention with-

in the annals of ancient Persian and Arabic literature, among which stands the illustrious work 'Qiṣṣah-'i Sayf al-Mulūk va Badī' al-Jamāl.' This narrative unfolds the tale of Seyfel Molouk, an Egyptian prince whose heart is ensnared by a portrait. After devoting his youth to a quest for the original subject of the artwork, he ultimately unveils it to be a miniature depicting a daughter of the King of Chah-bal, a princess who lived contemporaneously with Solomon and was herself a beloved companion of the venerable prophet. (de La Croix, 1714; Dunlop, 1845).

Sacred Sojourns: Maldivian Hajj Pilgrims in Ottoman Hejaz

Another salient nexus that establishes a historical connection between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire pertains to the protracted Ottoman sovereignty over the Hijaz region, encompassing the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, which endured for a substantial period spanning from 1516 to 1918. Within this temporal expanse, devout Muslims from across the world, including the Maldivians, undertook their pilgrimages to the Hijaz, obliging them to traverse Ottoman territories. Remarkably, during this period, a tradition existed wherein Muslim pilgrims, while not obligatory, typically engaged in a preliminary visit to Istanbul before commencing their sacred 'Hajj' pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. In Istanbul, they would offer prayers at mosques where the Ottoman Sultan had previously prayed. This customary practice carried symbolic weight, signifying the bestowal of permission by the Ottoman Sultan, who occupied the revered role of the Caliph of the Islamic world. One of the earliest recorded instances of a Maldivian Sultan embarking on the Hajj pilgrimage can be traced back to an Arabic historical source originating in the mid-16th century, namely 'Kitab-al-Fawa'id al-Munazzama fi Akhbār al-Hajj' authored by 'Abd al-Qadir Muḥammad al-Jazirī, in which we find details of Sultan Ḥasan b. Abi Bakr's pilgrimage to Mecca in A.H. 838/ A.C. 1434-35. (Takahito, 1988). The Hajj pilgrimage held not only religious significance but also shaped the political landscape of the Maldives. As they embarked on their pilgrimage to the Ottoman Empire for Hajj or during their extended absences, particular Maldivian Sultans faced dethronement, thereby compelling them to endure a protracted state of exile. An extreme case is that of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din, who returned from Hajj, unaware of his deposition, only to be killed upon his return to the Maldives. Whereas Maldivian Sultan Haji Imaduddeen was dethroned while in Suez, part of the Ottoman Empire, where he married an Egyptian woman named Shereefa Hanim in 1903.

Cultural Contours: Ottoman Footprints in the Maldives

The multifaceted Ottoman influence on the Maldives extends beyond the realms of politics, trade, religious ties, and diplomacy, with one notable facet being its impact on the realm of fashion, particularly among the Royals and elites. Among the various Ottoman fashion influences that have left their mark on the Maldivian elite, the wearing of large turbans, referred to as 'fagudi' in Dhivehi,

stands out as a distinctive sartorial element exclusively reserved for erstwhile Maldivian royalty. (Bell, 1883; Wilson, 1841).

These turbans bear a striking resemblance to the 'kavuk,' a turban-sarik-wrapped hat donned by Ottoman Sultans prior to the 19th century. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the 'kavuk' adorned with a white 'sarik' (turban) signified adherence to the Islamic faith, underscoring the symbolic and religious connotations associated with this headgear. Notably, the National Museum of the Maldives curates a collection of turbans worn by the Maldivian Royals, in addition to their accompanying turban stands, regal accouterments, and crown jewels. Even the Grand Vizier (chief officer or minister of state), and the Khatib, the High Priest of the Maldives, adorned themselves with distinctive turbans³, notably of considerable size, evoking similarities to the headgear worn by their Ottoman Empire counterparts. This sartorial choice finds historical documentation in the travelogue of Ibn Battuta, who observed that some of the male folk of the Maldives chose to wear turbans, while others opted for smaller kerchiefs. (Husain, 1976). Nevertheless, by the 19th century, turbans and the Turkish Fez had assumed symbolic significance, designating status and privilege among the royalty and nobility.

Notably, the turban worn by Sultan Ghazi Hassan Izzuddeen (Dhon Bandaarain) (1759-1767) exhibits a close resemblance to the white 'sarik,' a style prominently favoured during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. During the era of Suleyman the Magnificent, under whose reign the Maldives functioned as a vassal state, this distinctive trend gained prevalence across diverse regions of the Ottoman Empire, raising the possibility that the Maldivian Royals might have adopted this sartorial tradition during that era or, conceivably, at a later juncture.

A notable historical episode during Sultan Izzuddeen's reign pertains to the military campaign launched by 'Turken' on the Maldives. It is documented that a fleet affiliated with the Mapilla from Malabar, comprising "Turken" soldiers, initiated an attack on the Maldives in 1760, culminating in the occupation of the uninhabited island of Funaadu, followed by a bombardment of the capital, Malé. (Bell, 1883, p. 33) In response, the Maldivians, with alacrity, outfitted a fleet and confronted the invaders, ultimately repelling them.

When considering the adoption of Ottoman Turkish-influenced fashion by the Maldivian elite during the early 17th century, valuable insights can be gleaned from the writings of François Pyrard de Laval (1578–1623), a French navigator renowned for his written account detailing his experiences in the Maldives Islands from 1602 to 1607. This account forms part of his decade-long sojourn

3 Maldivians were adept at crafting brass implements and manufacturing exquisite cotton fabrics, which they exported in the form of sarongs and lengths suitable for turbans. It is reasonable to infer that these indigenous enterprises relied on the procurement of imported raw materials

(1601–1611) in South Asia. In his narrative, Pyrard de Laval observes that the elite class in the Maldives embraced a particular component of this fashion, namely Turkish waistcoats, known as ‘saduriya’ in Dhivehi. These waistcoats were typically accompanied by distinctive coarse blue waistcloths adorned with red edging, and a red handkerchief, a combination that Pyrard de Laval notes served to distinguish Maldivians from other ethnic groups. (Bell, 1883; Pyrard, et al. 1887; Reynolds, 2003)

Another headgear attributed to Ottoman influence that played a significant role in shaping the sartorial expressions of the Maldivians starting from the 19th century is the fez, a distinctive red, rigid, felt hat characterized by its conical shape and a black tassel adorning its apex. This headwear, though bearing ancient origins, found a significant resurgence in the Ottoman Empire, notably during the rule of Sultan Mahmoud II (1808–1839). In the Dhivehi language, the fez is referred to as ‘Turukii,’ a term that unequivocally underscores its Turkish provenance. (Reynolds, 2003). This particular sartorial element, with its Turkish roots, left a substantial mark on the Maldivian fashion landscape. Historical evidence, in the form of vintage photographs featuring prominent figures such as HH Sultan Haji Muhammad Imaaduddeen VI Iskandar, Sultan Hassan Nooraddeen II, and Sultan Mohamed Fareed Didi I, the last reigning monarch of the Maldives, as well as depictions within book illustrations, serves as a compelling testament to the widespread popularity of the Turkish fez within Maldivian society, particularly among the higher echelons, a trend that endured from the late 19th century well into the third quarter of the twentieth century. These visual records not only underscore the pervasive influence of Ottoman fashion but also shed light on the cultural interplay that shaped the attire of the Maldivian elite and royalty during this era.

The Ottoman legacy has also manifested itself in the domain of traditional games, with a noteworthy influence observed in ‘Raazuvaa,’ a chess variant deeply rooted in the indigenous culture of the Maldives. (Markov, 2023) This unique chess variant remains relatively obscure within the broader domain of chess history and its various iterations, with limited references in the existing literature, exceptions being found in the works of authors like H. C. P. Bell (1883), Culin (1898), and de Voogt (2009), as pointed out by Markov (2023).

Furthermore, the culinary landscape of the Maldives bears the imprint of Ottoman culture, with a notable example being Turkish coffee, referred to by Maldivians in their native Dhivehi language as “Gahuva.” (Abdulla, & O’Shea, 2005; Reynolds, 2003; Wilson, 1841). This coffee variety holds a distinct cultural significance, frequently consumed by nursing mothers. Notably, the influence of this beverage has transcended the borders of the Maldives, extending to Sri Lanka, where a spicier version of it has gained popularity, becoming a customary beverage served at both funerals and weddings.

Another particularly significant example of Ottoman influence can be observed in the titles assumed by the Maldivian Sultans. As discerned by the scholarly insights of British numismatist Johan Allan (1912), titles such as “Lord of the Land and Sea” borne by Maldivian Sultans exhibit a conspicuous resonance with the historical conventions of the Seljuk and Ottoman empires, wherein the Sultans asserted their dominion by identifying themselves as the sovereigns presiding over both terrestrial and maritime domains. (Kadi, & Peacock, 2019). Furthermore, comparable to the practice observed among Ottoman Sultans and other Persianate rulers, the elite stratum of the Maldives embraced titles such as “Effendi,” a term denoting respect and courtesy within Ottoman Turkey. An exemplary illustration of this cultural assimilation can be found in the persona of Maldivian aristocrat and merchant A. Ibrahim Dídí Effendi, holding the esteemed position of Dorhiméná-kilagefánu, Maldivian Government Representative in Ceylon. He concurrently served as the prime minister to the Maldivian Sultan and held the office of consul for the Ottoman Empire in Galle, Ceylon. (Bell, 1924, 1927; Fritz, 2002; Hockly, 2003). Abdul Hamid Dídí, the son of Ibrahim Dídí, held the title ‘Effendi’ as a mark of respect and recognition for his role as the Maldivian Government Representative in Ceylon. (Bell, 1924).

Another enduring testament to Ottoman influence on the Maldives lies in the national flag of the Maldives, specifically in the incorporation of the crescent and star symbols. Notably, while the crescent moon and star symbol predates the advent of Islam, it was during the era of the Ottoman Empire that these symbols became closely associated with the Muslim world, solidifying their status as distinctive markers of Muslim states and cultures. (Bordeleau & Bordeleau, 2014; Reid, 2014).

Maldives-Turkey Relations since 1800

Although the historical, commercial, and cultural bonds between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire had their roots extending as far back as the 16th century, it was during the late 19th and early 20th centuries that diplomatic relations between these two regions underwent a substantial evolution. This period is of paramount significance in the annals of Maldivian history, marked by a series of transformative events and policy shifts. Central to this epoch is the pivotal agreement signed on the 16th of December, 1887. This accord, forged between the Sultan of the Maldives and the British Governor of Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka), effectively reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Maldives by rendering it a British protected state. The terms of the agreement entailed a relinquishment of sovereignty over matters pertaining to foreign policy, while retaining a semblance of internal self-governance. In return, the British Empire extended the umbrella of military protection and pledged non-interference in local administration.

This arrangement inaugurated a new era of governance in the Maldives, with the British Empire assuming a supervisory role in the administration of Maldivian affairs. A key facet of this governance was the imposition of travel documents issued by the British Empire, a requirement that extended to outbound travel for Maldivians, excluding journeys to Ceylon. As a result of these shifting dynamics, numerous Maldivians, particularly members of the royal family and the social elite, found themselves migrating to major urban centers in Ceylon, such as Colombo and Galle. Here, they embarked on diverse pursuits, including education, employment, and habitation. The educational landscape of Ceylon became a significant arena of influence for the Maldivian elite, with institutions such as Royal College, Saint Joseph's College, and Saint Peter's College serving as focal points for primary and secondary education. Notably, Royal College earned a reputation as 'Ceylon's Eton,' reflecting its preeminent status in the education of Maldivian elites. (Hockly, 1935).

The 1880s saw the gradual establishment of an influential and prosperous Maldivian community in Ceylon. This transformative phase, characterized by diplomatic, educational, and migratory exchanges, bore profound implications for the Maldives and further solidified its historical ties with both the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. By the 1880s, Ceylon had already been permeated by the cultural and sartorial influences of the Ottoman Empire, particularly among its Muslim elite. This cultural osmosis was characterized by overt displays of Ottoman affiliation, such as the hanging of Ottoman flags outside the residences of Muslim elites in British-controlled Ceylon. The distinguished Ceylonese figure, Sir Macan Markar Effendi, head of the firm of O. L. M. Macan Markar, jewellers and gem merchants, not only assumed the honorary role of Ottoman Shahbender but also adopted the distinguished attire of the Ottoman Turks, including the iconic Turkish Fez and waistcoat. (Careem, 2022; Cave, 1908; Wright, 1907; Nuḳamān, 2007; Roberts, 1993). Macar Effendi was so enamoured with the architectural elegance he encountered along the Bosphorus during his travels to Istanbul that he designed his residence, which he named 'Stamboul Villa' where on October 5, 1921, the Muslim women of Ceylon hosted a 'Arabian Night' reception in honour of Lady Manning, the wife of Governor Sir Henry Manning, in Colombo, the capital of Ceylon. (Careem, 2022; Dep, 2001; Moors' Islamic Cultural Home, 1965). Such events showcased the enthrallment with Ottoman aesthetics among the Muslim elite in Ceylon. Sir Macan even christened the road on which his villa was situated as 'Stamboul Place' in homage to the city that had so captivated him.

The 1880s also witnessed the inception of Muslim educational institutions for both boys and girls in Ceylon, marking an educational renaissance. The oldest of these institutions, 'Al Masjidathul Hameedia,' established in 1884, was dedicated to Sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Ottoman Empire, as symbolized by his grand por-

trait prominently displayed in the central hall of the school. Exceptional students at these institutions were rewarded with gilded Qurans sent all the way from the Ottoman Empire, underscoring the close ties between Ceylon and the Ottoman world. (Careem, 2022) These transformations, favouring and venerating the Ottoman Empire, extended their influence to the Maldivian elites and royals residing in Ceylon at the time. They too embraced Ottoman fashion, adopting Turkish Fezes and waistcoats for various occasions. Nevertheless, they retained a distinct British identity in their English language usage, adherence to British customs, and the occasional donning of British-style suits alongside their Ottoman-inspired attire.

Starting from the 1870s Ceylon evolved into a hub for foreign embassies and honorary consuls. Notably, this period witnessed the emergence of robust diplomatic ties between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire. Apart from the Ceylonese (Sri Lankans), Maldivians residing in Ceylon were appointed as honorary consuls for Turkey. They also played a significant role as Ottoman Shahbenders in Ceylon, particularly in the bustling port city of Point-de-Galle. (Cave, 1908; Hockly, 1935; Wright, 1907). As evidenced by the annual Ceylon blue books published by the Department of Census and Statistics in Ceylon from the final decades of the 19th century, it becomes apparent that a notable Maldivian aristocratic family spanning three generations assumed the role of Ottoman consuls in Galle. This lineage commenced with Haji Ali Didi, who, owing to his declining health, transferred the position to his son Hadji Ibrahim Didi Bin Hadji Ali Didi Effendi in 1882. (Bell, 1924, 1927; Fritz, 2002; Hockly, 2003; The Colonial Office List, 1905; Wright, 1907). Subsequently, the role was succeeded by his son Ahmet Didi. (Saltik, 2020).

The significant role of Ceylon at that time and the strength of the diplomatic ties between Turkey and Ceylon are underscored by the presence of two Ottoman consulates in the island nation, with one situated in Colombo and the other in Point-de-Galle. In stark contrast, the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic representation was limited to four consular offices namely Madras, Bombay, Karachi, and Rangoon, in the British Raj which covered a substantial expanse encompassing contemporary India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, and adjacent regions. The Colombo office was administered by affluent Moor merchants, while the Galle office was overseen mainly by Maldivians, prominently represented by the Didi clan. (Great Britain, 1906).

The influence of the Didi family extended not only within the Maldives but also within Ceylon, where, in their capacity as Ottoman Consuls, they played host to visiting dignitaries, including Turkish officials. For instance, Ebrahim Didi Effendi, residing at 'Gairloch' in Colpetty, Colombo, extended hospitality to the Hon. Ahmed Attaullah Effendi, who held the position of Turkish general in the straits (Singapore) from 1901 to 1903 during his visit to Ceylon. (Uçar, 2000). This histor-

ical context highlights the multi-faceted roles and diplomatic engagements that characterized the presence of the Didi family as Ottoman consuls in Ceylon, providing valuable insights into the cultural and diplomatic exchanges of the time.

Reflections of Legacy: President Amin Didi's Turkish Ties

During his address at the inauguration of Lale Youth International School in May 2009, President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives emphasized the long-standing diplomatic ties between the Maldives and Turkey, particularly focusing on the historical connections between the first Maldivian president's family and Ottoman Turkey. In his discourse, President Nasheed drew attention to the historical context surrounding Sumuvvul Ameer Mohamed Amin Dhoshimeynaa Kilegefaanu (1910-1954), famously called 'Amin Didi' who held the distinguished position of being the first President of the Maldives. As a scion of the illustrious Huraa Dynasty, President Amin Didi's familial heritage was intricately interwoven with the diplomatic relations between the Maldives and the Ottoman Empire. Within the pages of 'dhariyegge shukuru', a testament to familial bonds and heritage, President Amin Didi reveals a striking revelation – that his father held in high regard a 'tharikah'⁴ bestowed upon him by a Turkish school. ("Speech by His Excellency Mohamed Nasheed," 2009)

In his speech, President Nasheed further mentioned that Athireegey Ahmed Dhoshimeynaa Kilegefaan, the father of President Mohamed Amin Didi, had visited Turkey in the early 1900s. Additionally, he highlighted the role of Ibrahim Dhoshimeyna Kilegefaanu in the late 1800s, who served as the first councillor to Turkey from the Maldives and held the position of Turkish Ambassador to the South Asia Region. In the speech, President Nasheed highlighted the historical assistance from Turkish ships during a visit by Frederick Barbarossa in search of Maldivian values. ("Speech by His Excellency Mohamed Nasheed," 2009).

A New Era in the Maldives-Turkey Diplomatic Relations

After the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, diplomatic relations between Turkey and the Maldives were officially resumed in 1979. The Turkish Embassy in Sri Lanka, just like during the Ottoman Times, is accredited to the Maldives and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations Office in Geneva is accredited to Turkey.

4 It is noteworthy to elucidate the term 'tariqa', which finds its origins in Arabic, specifically 'tariqah.' This term conveys the notion of a spiritual path or way, and it holds particular significance within the realm of Islamic mysticism. In its broader sense, 'tariqa' signifies the path undertaken by individual Sufis, the mystics of Islam, in their earnest pursuit of direct knowledge (ma'rifah) of God or the ultimate Reality (haqq). This spiritual concept, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, experienced notable prominence during the 9th and 10th centuries, symbolizing the mystical journey embarked upon by those seeking a profound connection with the divine.

President Erdoğan's official visit to the Maldives, which occurred during his tenure as Prime Minister on February 9, 2005, was a significant event, marking the first official visit from Turkey to the Maldives since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Subsequently, the Foreign Minister of the Maldives, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, reciprocated with an official visit to Turkey from April 15 to 21, 2008, signifying the first official visit from the Maldives to Turkey. Furthermore, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Asim, embarked on an official visit to Turkey from August 28 to 29, 2018.

These diplomatic engagements were followed by Minister Asim's participation in Turkey's hosting of the Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Jerusalem on May 18, 2018, where he represented the President of the Maldives. Minister Asim also attended the Inaugural Ceremony of H.E. President Erdoğan on July 9, 2018, and engaged in discussions with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs during these visits. Notably, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yavuz Selim Kıran, represented H.E. President Erdoğan at the Inaugural Ceremony of the President of the Maldives, H.E. Mohamed Solih, on November 17, 2018. Further strengthening the ties between the two nations, Minister of Home Affairs of the Maldives, H.E. Imran Abdulla, visited Turkey from December 3 to 6, 2019, participating in a program organized by the Turkey Green Crescent Association and holding discussions with the Minister of Interior of Turkey, H.E. Süleyman Soylu, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yavuz Selim Kıran. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, paid a visit to the Maldives in January 2022.

The most recent high-level visit from the Maldives to Turkey was by Vice President Faisal Naseem, who attended the third inauguration of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the President of Turkey on June 3, 2023. These ongoing exchanges underscore the enduring strength of diplomatic relations between the Maldives and Turkey. Notably, both nations have entered into numerous agreements aimed at bolstering economic, trade, diplomatic, cultural, and academic ties, with the latter steadily gaining momentum.

Conclusion

This cursory study which delves into the rich historical relations between the Maldives and Turkey, spanning a significant 250-year period from 1650 to 1900 firmly challenges the perception of the Maldives as an obscure entity to the Ottoman Turks. Through meticulous analysis of historical sources and the Ottoman influence on Maldivian society, it becomes evident that the enduring relationship between the Maldives and Turkey holds a crucial place in the annals of diplomatic, cultural, and economic history. This study serves as a foundation for further research and understanding of the profound interconnectedness between these two nations and this research article aims to catalyze an increased interest

in exploring the historical relations between Turkey and Indian Ocean island nations such as the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, and Mauritius, as well as other smaller nations that have yet to receive ample attention in historical research in both Turkey and these respective nations. It is a call to scholars to continue unearthing the nuanced facets of this enduring relationship and to shed light on overlooked history. Ultimately, the legacy of these historical affiliations enriches our comprehension of global interactions and the lasting impact of diplomatic relations.

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