

Islamic Public Administration Tradition: Historical, Theoretical and Practical Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the question of whether a distinctive Islamic public administration exists. Three arguments are made to demonstrate that it has a long and distinct history, although sharing commonalities with some Western traditions. The first is an historical argument that Islamic states and empires, drawing in part on long-standing, and sometimes quite sophisticated, bureaucratic practices in the region, developed a complex and highly functional public administration long before it appeared in Europe. The second argument examines the underlying principles of good governance and administration from the Qur'an and Sunnah, focusing on those aspects most relevant to the senior civil service, its development over time into a sophisticated and highly successful vizierate structure while governed by conceptions of social welfare and the development of the individual. The third section examines the contemporary empirical argument of Islamic public-administration systems and practices, focusing on four aspects that have received the most attention recently: organisational culture, human-resource management, policy and decision-making, and public-sector leadership. Finally, the article concludes with a comparison of key features of an Islamic public administration with those of some Western systems, focusing on the greater similarity the Islamic has with traditional public-administration mandarin and the contrasting nature both have with the New Public Management neoliberal managerialism.

Keywords: Islamic public administration, Islamic policy, Islamic human-resource management, neoliberalism, ancient administration

1. Introduction

Although Islamic contributions to the development of many disciplines and professional fields during its classical intellectual period are beginning to be appreciated, this lacuna is now addressed through a substantial and growing scholarship (e.g. Al-Khalili 2010; Freely 2009; Morgan 2007; Saliba 2007) in the history of the social

sciences, mathematics and natural sciences and professional fields like medicine and engineering. One field that has only recently received attention is Islam's administrative history and the possibilities of establishing new public systems grounded in Islamic principles and practices. Although the field assumes a homogeneity of systems (see Drechsler 2015), particularly since the globalised spread of the New Public Management, many countries, argue Painter and Peters (2010), have maintained distinctive national practices. They present historical institutionalism as one approach through which the "path" or administrative traditions of countries or regions can be traced; another is the cross-cultural studies literature like that of Hofstede (1984), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and the GLOBE studies (Chhokar et al. 2007) that demonstrate distinctive patterns of values and social structures that persist, even among Western nations, including that of Muslim countries.

An additional problem, noted by Branine and Pollard (2010), is a gap that exists between the theory of Islamic administration embedded in its values and principles and early history and the current practice of administration that is heavily informed by non-Islamic values, norms and practices from primarily Anglo-American countries, including the practice of seniority prevailing over merit, performance and qualifications coming from the colonial system. This influence initially came through European colonisation of the Middle East (Ali 1990), followed by the later "mismatch" with imported management practices under globalisation that tend to be adopted "ready-made" and also to many strong Arab political influences that do not conform to Islamic values (Zineldin 2002). There is also a conceptual problem in fusing Arab cultural practices of management with Islamic administrative practices – culture is a strong force that preceded Islam and continued to affect administration long after, such as the authoritative style of management that runs counter to Islamic principles of consensus and consultation (Branine and Pollard 2010). To the uninitiated, there is a tendency to assume that Arab cultural practices of management are Islamic, such as the strong paternalistic authoritarianism and top-down management style, often accompanied by micro-management (Ali 1990; Branine and Pollard 2010) and the extensive use of "wasta" or connections or family relationships (Branine and Pollard 2010; Metcalfe 2007).

Three arguments are made here to demonstrate that there has been and still is a distinctive Islamic public administration. The first section examines the historical argument – that Islamic states and empires, drawing in part on long-standing, and sometimes quite sophisticated, bureaucratic practices in the region, developed a complex and highly functional public administration long before it appeared in Europe, some aspects of which formed the massive influx of scholarship and professional knowledge from the Islamic world into the West during the Renaissance (Essa 2012; Makdisi 1999). Important developments in state administration were made during the Islamic "golden age", which are usually overlooked in the public-administration literature.

The second argument examines the underlying principles of good governance and administration from the Qur'an and Sunnah focusing on those aspects most relevant to the senior civil service, its development over time into a sophisticated and highly successful vizierate structure. An important feature of Islam and its administrative history is that the Qur'an and Sunnah, although serving as a guideline for how

one conducts one's life, did not determine what kind of governmental arrangements were to exist, apart from a number of general principles of morality and service to the human community. These principles addressed the character and personality of those in senior positions, the quality of knowledge and skills they should possess, the social and political ethic followed and a set of end, or substantive, values to which they should strive to maintain social order and balance. Essentially, public administration in the Islamic tradition is grounded in a conception of moral accountability and perfectible human nature similar to what Reinhold Niebuhr (1957, 89) called "the passion of moral good will." One aspect of this discussion is that although Islamic public administration is distinctive, it is related to some Western traditions and shares a number of important values.

The third section examines the contemporary empirical argument of Islamic public-administration systems and practices that are being planned and established in a number of Muslim states. The focus is on four aspects that have received the most attention recently in developing Islamic administration as a distinctive social institution in the modern world: organizational culture, human-resource management, policy and decision-making, and public-sector leadership.

Finally, the article concludes with a comparison of key features of an Islamic public administration with those of some Western systems, focusing on the greater similarity the Islamic has with traditional public-administration mandarin and the contrasting nature both have with the New Public Management neoliberal managerialism.

2. The Historical Argument

As with any form of administration system, the Islamic has a prior historical development that shapes its formation and is a complex one consisting of fundamental principles in Islam and the absorption of pre-Islamic roles and practices from the region. For over 6000 years the Middle East region has produced intellectual capital of an administrative nature that is far more sophisticated than assumed in many public-administration texts. Since the Qur'an and Sunnah do not address specific requirements of government structurally or functionally, it was to existing traditions and practices that people turned in the early phases of development during the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs in addition to establishing new practices conforming to Islamic values. Islam, by virtue of its emphasis on learning and knowledge, was explicitly open to the acquisition of knowledge and skills from other peoples, providing they did not contradict Islamic principles and values. The two traditions upon which Islamic communities, empires and states drew in establishing administrative institutions are the ancient administrations that formed in Mesopotamia and Egypt and subsequent regimes in the region and Bedouin administrative practices. It is the story of an evolution of a public administration tradition not unlike that in the West and East Asia in that it consists of a complex combination of principle, conditions, socio-cultural and political changes and economic characteristics.

What may be surprising for many is the amount of bureaucratic knowledge that already existed in public administration in the ancient world in a form that Weber

(1968) called patrimonial-bureaucratic, although at his time the oldest known was Pharaonic Egypt; however, he did recognise that even prior Mesopotamian cities had developed organised social structures and institutions that would have required some level of administrative capacity. Recent archaeological work has uncovered the existence of a bureaucratic-style administration in the oldest urban centres in ancient Mesopotamia, originating in the city of Uruk between 3800 and 3200 BCE (although more recent findings demonstrate that Tell Brak in Northern Mesopotamia may have developed a few centuries earlier, Oates et al. 2007).

By 3200 BCE, Uruk had developed a complex administrative system, producing a central agency (Liverani 2006) to manage agricultural and textile production, mass production of some other goods and specialised labour for the higher order crafts, professions, including administration, and political leadership with subdivisions within these groups consisting of three or four ranks (Nissen 1988). Their main duties consisted of coordinating the economic exchange system through written accounting that used a coding system for types of commodities, using a rational categorisation system and stamp seals for transportation and storage staffed by officials (Leick 2001). Over time a comprehensive administrative system developed of “receipts, tallies, allocations of goods and rations, allocations of responsibility to offices, projections of yields and expenditure of labour, distances of travel and so forth” as well as setting fixed values or prices and maintaining records of waste in metal production for long-distance trade as well as the development of contracts (Liverani 2006, 42). Writing evolved to provide for the needs of an “impersonal administration in central agencies” that displayed the functional character of work and transactions with regulatory practices and accountabilities so exact and complex they created the need for administrative training (Liverani 2006, 55). Urban design strategy also had a distinctively bureaucratic character in public facilities that accommodated many kinds of civic activities like religious, defense, economic and administrative ones that included public witnessing to ensure accountability.

Uruk’s success has been attributed to “technologies of the intellect”, “technologies of power” or “technologies of the mind”, which were forms of social control and systematic organization of labour, information, economic, agricultural and building activities constituting what Algaze (2008) calls “a new paradigm of the nature of social relations in human societies” that resulted in state formation (128). In other words, human civilization is a function of creating a standardised administrative system staffed by trained officials appointed through merit, essentially creating a bureaucratic profession sufficiently developed to manage complex institutionally organised societies with planning, functionally specialised and hierarchically organised labour with clear duties and responsibilities and detailed record-keeping capacity. An important feature of city bureaucracies of this period is the level of regulation, accountability and control practiced by state officials in all societal sectors from irrigation systems for agriculture to manufacture and trade and management of surrounding territories assisted by an already sophisticated system of seals and other types of documents that provided sophisticated reckoning and writing systems allowing for conveying knowledge over space and time with greater efficiency (Algaze 2008).

Similar practices have been found in repositories of bureaucratic documents at Shuruppak (3000-2200 BCE), Ur (2113-2029 BCE) and Nippur (ca. 2100 BCE). At the last site evidence from the schools for scribes demonstrate that their education consisted of a standardised curriculum based on Sumerian, emphasising skills of writing, vocabulary and linguistics, law, mathematics, literature, and history (Algaze 2008, 162-163). During the Akkadian Empire in the region, attempts were made to standardise administrative procedures and training and to employ a large numbers of scribes, all of whom were sustained on the public payroll. It is after these that the more well-known period of administrative history began associated with the reign of Hammurabi, well-known for his legal code, but less known for the administrative reforms he instituted. The accumulated evidence demonstrates that the main features of modern bureaucracy were already conceived of and put into practice at the beginning of human urban and imperial history, laying a foundation for many later empires that arose.

Other important pre-Islamic influence are Bedouin practices of organization, consisting primarily of elected chiefs who ruled by persuasion and under the influence of public opinion (Kennedy 2004, 19). Authority formed through personal allegiance, kinship as a cohering factor, election of leaders by preeminent families and a continual consultative process. While tribal practices are not usually associated with administration, the principles and practices by which tribes maintain internal order and inter-tribal relations are significant in the pre-Islamic period, many of which were reinforced in Islam. Internal organisation was relatively egalitarian with political authority, operating in a highly decentralised fashion through a democratic-consultative practice (Afsarrudin 2007). Tribal clans had sophisticated procedures in regulating their own affairs through what Thomas (2003) describes as “tribal law”, including codes of mediation in resolving personal, family and inter-tribal disputes, maintaining collective responsibility and having recognised scales of compensation, all features to which one finds correspondence in Islamic principles and administrative practices. Sarayrah (2004) has compared Bedouin leadership and administration with Greenleaf’s servant leadership model, which bears a close resemblance, focusing on personal qualities, skills, moral principles and end values, many of which were “assimilated” by Islam, particularly “the desert values of simplicity, generosity and protection of the weak” (59). In line with Bedouin democratic and egalitarian principles, the selection of a shaykh requires validation by sub-tribal chiefs and a council with whom he had to consult (shura) on major issues, since he is viewed as an equal but with high levels of wisdom and courage, seen by Sarayrah to form the basis of later consultative councils.

During the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliphs al-Rashidun, or rightly guided caliphs, administrative structures and practices were slowly evolving, with significant financial structures and personnel put in place under Abu Bakr and a more rapid expansion of a bureaucracy to consolidate the new empire under ‘Umar, requiring a more developed administrative apparatus. It was ‘Umar who first established the new Islamic state’s legislative, executive and administrative powers, as well as its record-keeping system, a tax administration and treasury, a personnel system, a census, minting coinage and codifying law (Hitti 1974; Sarayrah 2004). Sarayrah (2004) regards ‘Umar as a model of ruling administrative ability, presenting

him as an exemplar of those personal and leadership qualities characteristic of servant leadership that are part of Bedouin tradition: 1) the personal, including physical power, courage and endurance; human such as mercy, good manners, brotherhood, equality of mankind and freedom; 2) the social, in the form of generosity, justice, good example, honesty, responsibility and accountability; 3) more abstract personal attributes of practical ability, personal austerity, prestige, strength, firmness, roughness, perceptiveness, vision and far-sightedness; and 4) the religious of faithfulness, piety, respect for Allah, sternness, incorruptibility and monotheism. However, the guardian role is also implicit in Islam: protecting those one is responsible for from harm and promoting justice (ElKaleh and Samier 2013).

The main goals of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates were to transform the coalitions that existed among various groups into a cohesive empire, to establish a stable dynasty and to administer the new Islamic societies by drawing on Byzantine and Sassanid empires for administrative structures and practices, themselves drawing on ancient systems and Greco-Roman administration (Kennedy 2005). Although the Umayyad period has generally been regarded as deviating from Islamic principles of governance and administration, including tyrannical forms of rulership and discriminatory administrative practices (see Afsaruddin 2007), it was a period in which important practices formed and in which some long-lasting achievements were made. Arabic began to replace Greek and Persian as the language of administration and a qualification for administration, a new coinage without images and with Arabic text was introduced, a postal service primarily for government use was created (Spuler 2015), and a programme of public monuments was initiated (Hitti 1974; Kennedy 2005). They also instituted a systematisation of weights and measures (Donner 2010) and established a standing army paid out of general taxation (Kennedy 2005).

The Abbasid caliphate exemplified the tolerance of Islamic administrative practices in appointing non-Muslims, many of whom were Christian, to the civil service, including the most senior vizier positions, demonstrating the emphasis placed on merit, education and qualifications, although drawing on a long established practice of family heritage in providing senior administrators from Byzantine and Sassanian state institutional practice (Sirry 2011). The Abbasid caliphate recognised more strongly an “ummah” or supra-national Islamic community that allowed for greater status for non-Arabs (Afsaruddin 2007), while absorbing the intellectual traditions of ancient civilisations in fields we regard as professional like medicine. The Abbasids incorporated their educated and experienced people into the court, government and administrative systems. A large part of the civil service was drawn from Persian vizier families who exerted a strong influence over policies and the administration of the empire and through their high levels of education and skills built up a “highly organised and professionalised” bureaucracy consisting of functionally organised departments (diwans) – including the treasury, the chancellery, an intelligence bureau (in part to monitor government officials) and the court of appeal – employing thousands of staff (Afsaruddin 2007, 108). At the height of their power in the following Saljuq Empire, viziers supervised all aspects of the administration and deputised for the sultan in meeting representatives of foreign rulers, in court and in supervising religious institutions (Havemann 1989; Klausner 1973; Lambton 1968, 247-248).

These empires depended heavily on the attributes and decisions of the vizier – much like cabinet secretaries, they handled correspondence, managed financial affairs, auditing and inspection, and supervision of administration aspects of the military (Lambton 1968).

It was also at this time that many of the most important schools and universities were established, contributing to the Islamic golden age of scholarship and the development of Islamic humanism (in part modeled on Greek *paideia*) that was underway (Afsaruddin 2007), argued by Makdisi (1981) to be the models of university development in Europe. In part, this occurred, according to Saliba (2007), because of the requirement for senior administration to be highly educated and whose incoming requirement was to master Arabic by demonstrating proficiency in translating classic Greek scholarship into Arabic.

3. The Argument by Principle and Values

The development of a public-administration model that is Islamic is a complex venture that requires both understanding the basic precepts, principles and values and interpreting these into principles of practice for the modern world, not just identifying passages in the Qur'an and Hadith or trying to resurrect early Islamic institutions like the diwan, as Al-Buraey (2001) argues is often done. The argument by principle and values is found in the Qur'an and Sunnah and in an intellectual tradition consisting of scholarly texts and a body of guidance literature that includes a long and well-developed tradition of “mirrors of princes”. It also consists in a growing body of literature in public administration and management studies that aims at creating Islamic systems of administration that, while grounded in early principles and values, is interpreted for implementation in modern and modernising countries.

The main foundational principles of Islamic management that distinguish it from Anglo-American traditions of administration have been identified, for example, by Talaat et al. (2016) to include the following:

1. Al-Ubudiyyah, an organizing principle based in devotion to Allah
2. Al-Syura, that decisions are logical and informed and made through consultation with those who are knowledgeable, experienced and skilled
3. Al-Hurriyah, principles of human rights and freedom
4. Al-Musawah, principles of equality and equity
5. Al-Adalah, that thoughts and actions are grounded in justice (truthfulness, honesty, trustworthiness)

The values and principles upon which Islamic public administration rests can be organised into four main categories grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah: the qualities of character and personality that senior officials should have; the knowledge and skills they require; social, political and moral values that should be advanced; and the end values and goals, or substantive values, that an Islamic administration should aim at.

The qualities of character and personality that administrators should have are identified by al-Qudsy (2007) to include morality, virtues and integrity that conform in actions and attitudes to those recognised in Islam and described in relation to ‘Umar above that contribute to a stable society which maintains a balance of individuality and community. Kalantari (1998) also regards personal attributes and character as Islamic values that include: courage, valour, generosity and benevolence, patience and endurance, a helping and giving spirit, humility, love for people, a positive attitude, kindness and trustworthiness (1848-1849).

Al-Qudsy (2007) also identifies the kind of knowledge and skills they require, consisting of using higher-order values in making judgements rather than simply following procedures and rules, using conscience, being able to read people’s intentions and motivations, having strategic and tactical abilities for planning and implementation, having a knowledge of proper staffing allocations, making just and fair decisions, making appropriate salary allocations and rewarding people for professional work rather than their skill in the politics of organization. All administrators, regardless of rank, are also supposed to pursue personal growth through constant learning. Salleh and Mohamad (2012) approach knowledge and skills through four categories associated with key concepts: knowledge (‘Ilm), which includes staff selection and assignment of duties and appropriate decision-making in planning, organising, directing and supervising staff; trust (‘Amanah), emphasising obedience to Allah and regarding work as a form of worship; justice (‘Adalah), which involves treating people fairly and not assigning tasks they are not capable of doing as well as not being influenced by personal preferences and friendships; and showing responsibility for one’s staff, both rewarding as well as disciplining and supervising and following up on delegated duties.

Islamic administration is also distinguishable for the social, political and moral values that administrators should advance, ranging from how they treat others in an ethical system that includes behaviour, action, thinking and heart to major values of benevolence (Ihsan), discussed by al-Qudsy (2007) as an emphasis on “sincerity”, which should be an element in all of one’s actions and therefore applies in organizational politics where people do not behave insincerely. Also included are prohibitions against depriving others of their rights and using bribery. Kalantari (1998) approaches them as seven Islamic meta-values that govern thought and action for everyone in all spheres of life that are grounded in moral accountability and law aimed at maintaining social order and balance: equality and social equity, justice, kindness and compassion, righteousness and true conviction, self-control/self-discipline, respect for private property and personal growth through constant learning (1829). An important feature of the social-equity principle is a concentration on the welfare of others and the community and society at large reflecting the strong collectivist orientation of Islam. The conceptions of justice and kindness are interpreted to mean creating a balance between the material and spiritual worlds as well as others’ rights, as they guide one’s thoughts and actions along with self-control, which should delimit self-interest. Many aspects of this perspective are similar to the Kantian system (Tampio 2012) with an emphasis on higher-order values and intentionality, and it is also a perspective that does not lend itself to behavioural management schools or quantitative measurement typical of the current dominating managerialism.

The final category, end goals and values, consists of the strong humanistic tradition in Islam composed of substantive rationality as defined by Weber (1968). Al-Qudsy (2007) identifies these as: social order, people's betterment in health, welfare and personal development, development of faith, and socio-political accountability. Islamic values – justice, fairness, equity, and tolerance – integrate the material and spiritual realms aimed at people's "self-development and correction that can bring perfection to our belief (*iman*)" (al-Qudsy 2007, 35). As a system of work ethic, Syed and Metcalfe (2015) describe an Islamic administration as one aimed at *Falah*, or well-being, achieved through *Itqan* (excellence in work), *Amal Salih* (value of good and work as religious observance and contributing to society, and *Ihsan* (carried out in a professional manner).

Collectively these can be viewed as a betterment of humanity as a substantive end, which cannot be reduced to the materialist and economic values of neoliberal ideology. While overlapping with other administrative traditions in some respects, Islamic administration forms a distinctive approach, the main differentiation from current Western management systems being a belief system that consists of Islamic substantive values that should guide intentions, decision-making and actions in the way organizations are structured, the way people work in them and manage their social relations, and the ends which they aim at through policy and planning (Kazmi and Ahmad 2006).

In addition to a long history of administrative experience, there is also a long tradition of texts on Islamic public administration in the form of academic political, legal and historical commentaries like those of Ibn Khaldun and Al Ghazali and in chronicles by Ibn al-Qalanisi of 12th-century Damascus and Ibn al-'Adim, of 13th-century Aleppo. There is also the literature produced by government officials in the form of manuals, anecdotal accounts and mirrors of princes produced mostly by experienced viziers like al-Mulk and jurists like al-Mawardi (Havemann 1989). These, in effect, became the administrative textbooks of the period. Another major body of documents relevant here are the sets of correspondence, government procedural documents like those of the Saljuq governor investiture and commentaries by viziers. Some of the most successful viziers, like Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1192) contributed to the professionalisation of the civil service through the establishment of educational organisations (*madrasas*) for government officials, who would replace the secretarial class (Lambton 1968).

The Mirror of Princes literature deserves some additional description, even if limited here, because of its value in providing advice on being a ruler, descriptions of the character, responsibilities and duties of senior officials (what would now be called human-resource criteria of selection, training, duties and discipline), often organised into theoretical and practical sections, covering topics like justice, fairness and rules of punishment, moral and emotional attributes, competencies, attributes of governors, principles of consultation and advising, and duties and benevolence to subjects (Peacock 2016). One of the earliest ones, written in the 9th century, is by Ibn Qutaybah, an Abbasid judge who wrote the *Kitab al-Sultan* (Book of Authority), followed over the next 200 years by many, including Yusuf Khasn Hajib's *Kutadgu Bilig*, Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama*, Kai ibn Qabus ibn Washmgir's *A Mirror for Princes* (*Qābūs-nāma*), containing wisdom from ruling

father to succeeding son on perils and guidance for rulership, Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi's *The Ordinances of Government* (al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah), a handbook for Khalifah, amirs, wazirs and deputies on rights, duties and activities, and the anonymous text *The Sea of Precious Virtues* (Bahr al-Favā'id) focused on moral fitness of the ruler (see Crone 2004).

4. The Argument by Practice

The argument by practice is based on those derived from both historical precedent and principles and values, focused here mostly on scholarship in Malaysia, where a concerted effort has been made to Islamise administration and is relatively well documented. Whichever country's practices are used, differences of context will exist, varying with socio-political, economic and cultural traditions. Al-Buraey (2001) proposes that Islamic principles be applied to six key dimensions of a dynamic open systems view of administration, which requires a strategic approach, an understanding of change processes in the context it is applied to and implementation methods or techniques: the people, the organisation or agency, the problems, including demands on the administration, the process and procedures, planning, policy and programmes, and performance. Syed and Metcalfe (2015) have also stressed that socio-cultural, institutional arrangements and other conditions shape how Islamic values and principles are interpreted and applied. Four dimensions of administration that are the most common in the literature are examined here briefly to illustrate the distinctiveness of Islamic public administration from the "Western" model that dominates the field: organisation culture, human-resource management, policy and decision-making practices and public-sector leadership.

Hoque et al. (2013; see also Aldulaimi 2016) have explored a contemporary Islamic organisational culture based in the Qur'an, Sunnah and the Khalifas, the successors of Islam, through both Ijma, consensus of recognised authorities, and Quias, individual decisions, to help develop organisations that are distinctively Islamic in their values and practices. These include core values and beliefs that characterise an Islamic culture, and which form the foundation for Malaysia's Islamisation policy for society and its organizations (Endot 1995):

1. Tawakkul (keeping trust in Allah), through prayer and dressing modestly;
2. Having a "missionary zeal" in helping people perfect themselves (similar to the notion of German Bildung) through a collective sense of responsibility, suppression of self-interest, and working closely with others;
3. Hard work since work is considered a form of worship;
4. Striving for excellence in both the quality of work executed and in people's development, including following role models;
5. Maintaining honesty and truthfulness, required for trust in relationships, integrity of personality, a cooperative orientation with others, and mutual trust and respect;
6. Accountability at all organisational levels and fulfilling responsibilities;

7. Morality in the form of good character, good intentions, and being sincere (Ikhlass) in belief and oriented towards Allah, as well as good behaviour particularly towards subordinates in order to maintain motivation and respect (grounded in justice, fairness, equality and a “brotherly” treatment of others, emphasizing a common human bond and a familial metaphor);
8. Using shura, or consultative decision-making, which should include all relevant people across the organizational hierarchy;
9. Having knowledge of the Qur’an and Sunnah with regard to self-improvement and taking decisions and actions on the basis of solid knowledge;
10. “Sacrifice”, in the sense of selflessness, which contributes to group cohesiveness;
11. Accepting the prohibition against backbiting and slandering that cause hostility.

Al-Qudsy (2007, 36) similarly describes an Islamic organisational culture, grounded in eight factors that contribute to ethical culture in organisations and human-resource management:

1. Sincerity to Allah (al-Ikhlās);
2. An understanding of Islamic epistemology on ethics;
3. Self-determination (al-yaqīn);
4. Parental environment;
5. Social environment;
6. Organizational policy;
7. Training and motivation;
8. Recognition and support.

These are allied with a number of fundamental principles in Malaysia for establishing an Islamic society and necessary to civil-service organisational culture: creating a just and trustworthy government to ensure a free and independent people with a good quality of life, and cultural and moral integrity, and protect minority groups’ and women’s rights, safeguard natural resources and the environment, pursue a balanced and comprehensive economic development and provide strong defense capabilities (al-Qudsy 2007, 42). A number of initiatives have been undertaken to create such an organisational culture – using circular letters, redrafting policies, embedding values in strategic planning and in the Public Service Commission’s activities and releasing a National Integrity Plan to cultivate Islamic values – although the success of these have yet to be determined, but according to Sulaiman et al. (2014) and Ahmad and Ogunsola (2011), improvements in Islamic management practices in the country have begun to improve, showing similar results to those of Hossain (2012) in Bangladesh.

Alkahtani (2014) has examined an Islamic approach to human-resource management in order to redress the “dichotomy in the legal system (of the Muslim world), wherein social and family life is guarded by Islamic law, while the economic and management practices are governed by civil law, adapted from the West” (184; Ahmad and Ogunsola 2011; Tayeb 1997). He proposes ten principles of Islamic management that are most relevant to human-resource management:

1. Niya, in which the reward of deeds is based on intentions, not unintended errors;
2. Taqwa, piety in obedience to Allah in abstaining from prohibitions and steering one towards perfection, meaning that constructive criticism only should be used and present opinions that are oriented towards organisational betterment;
3. Ehsan, as seeking Allah’s pleasure, which means viewing work as a virtue and act of worship;
4. Adl, the pursuit of justice, fairness and equality, which means that rewards and punishments should be used only with fairness;
5. Amana, cultivating and maintaining trust necessary for a community of high morality and cohesiveness;
6. Sedq, the virtue of truth, including accepting responsibility for one’s good and bad actions and maintaining fairness;
7. Etqan, the attainment of perfection through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, continuously improved through professional development;
8. Ekhlas, being sincere, necessary for organisational trust and cooperation;
9. Shura, working through consultation at and with all organisational levels to create a sense of belonging and an openness to others, which can reduce the predilections towards arrogance and pride (and more importantly, narcissism);
10. Sabra, or patience, which can prevent one from overreacting and making mistakes through hasty decision-making (see also Branine and Pollard 2010).

An additional principle is Akhlaq, meaning having an inner disposition of thought, feeling and attitudes that contribute to morality and character (Ahmad 2008), especially a “noble” character in ethical conduct (Syed and Metcalfe 2015). As Tayeb (1997) points out, the virtues of self-discipline and self-control allow for the delegation of authority in the organisation, for trust in employees and for shura to play a larger role. This approach also places an emphasis on training and the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes and the cultivation of a strong Islamic work ethic (Aldulaimi 2016; Ali 1988; ElKaleh and Samier 2013; Yousef 2000), which contributes, as al-Qudsy (2007) argues, to strengthening integrity in the civil service, which forms a foundation for professionalism.

The Malaysia Islamisation process of institutions has led to the adoption of a

number of human-resource-management practices: offering employees interest-free loans in order to buy vehicles or houses and preparing for weddings, Islamic study circles for managers in order to develop an “Islamic personality”, short courses on Islam for employees to inculcate appropriate values, provision of prayer rooms, and adoption of appropriate dress codes (Tayeb 1997, 360).

There are a number of organisational problems that an implementation of Islamic principles should prevent or correct in destructive politics and practices, such as unfairness, bias, and prejudice and favouritism in recruitment and rewards. Also significant is the obligation for people to take responsibility for their actions that should reduce scapegoating and transferring blame. Syed and Ali (2010) discuss how Islamic values should prevent discrimination in the workplace and taking credit for work done by others, as well as practicing social justice in the workplace and, particularly for civil servants, the state providing for all of their livelihood requirements, which will facilitate a greater devotion to work. Kalantari (1998) also makes the argument that adequate remuneration prevents civil servants from being distracted from their work and emphasises the need for performance evaluation to be unbiased and fair and for accountability systems that are just and forgiving and encourage kindness in the civil service.

5. Policy & Decision-making

There are a number of principles involved in Islamic policy and decision-making that are distinguishable from Western models. The first most important characteristics are the end, or substantive, values towards which these processes are oriented, discussed above in terms of both individuals and society. These processes, while not wholly different from Western systems, is distinctive in the moral and religious requirement and responsibility to consult with people who are truly expert and knowledgeable and those who will have to implement and be affected by them, or *shura*, which can be achieved through a variety of means including consultative bodies to ensure that the quality of information used is sound (Kalantari 1998). This also requires policy and decision makers whose value orientations are at least compatible with Islam (in the case of many expatriates in a number of Muslim states). Also necessary are forms of clear and accurate communication as well as a well-functioning communication system throughout the organisation that invites both civil servants and the population to present their needs, problems, complaints and information (Kalantari 1998). One structure that is still used in many Muslim states is the *majlis* – a regularly convened opportunity for anyone to come to present their problems and requests. These principles have to inform the entire decision-making process from identifying problems, through developing and analysing alternatives to implementation and evaluation.

The final category, leadership, has been examined by Sarayrah (2004, 66-67), who proffers ‘Umar’s leadership style as exemplary of good leadership in the Islamic tradition in terms that are transferable to a modern Muslim context. Her model consists of six key characteristics:

1. An ability to listen to others and accept criticism where warranted if principles and facts are not correct;
2. The ability to plan, schedule and organise a comprehensive system of administration that is effective and has a functional logic;
3. The ability to use shura to promote participation of others in the decision-making process to aid understanding and commitment (which also contributes to the professional betterment of staff and their empowerment);
4. The ability to empathise with others, which aids the shura process and contributes to identifying and correcting problems;
5. The ability to implement change, including in crisis management situations;
6. The skill of incognito enquiry, which involves carrying out inspection tours independent of senior officials, which balances the tendency for them to bring only good news

Kalantari (1998) emphasises leadership in his work on an Islamic public administration paradigm since it plays a critical role in both maintaining a balance between the material and spiritual realms and in improving society. A leader also, given the power of such a position, must adhere to the religious and moral values of Islam. Because “public service is an extension of one’s obligation toward the community of the faithful and a form of worship” (1837), there is a heavier requirement for commitment to Islamic values and truthfulness on the part of leaders with their communities particularly in avoiding hypocrisy. Employees need to be treated with respect and kindness and an avoidance of an authoritarian style of administration. Tayeb (1997), in reviewing Islamic values, argues that a number of the attributes should lead to a “participative management” or leadership style that employs teamwork and a style that leads to a “diffuse power structure” and consultative decision-making processes: equality, “self-discipline, trustfulness, honesty, resolve, loyalty, and abstinence,” patience and a “family-like [set of] relationships (359).

6. Conclusion

In contrast with current Western public administration, which is secular, “legal”, grounded in technical-rational principles and Anglo-Saxon norms, whose core values are efficiency and effectiveness, aimed at sound decision-making and an impersonal hierarchy, Islamic administration is grounded in religious principles, heavily influenced by Arab and other non-Western cultures (although some features can deviate strongly from Islamic values), oriented towards service to society and aimed at wisdom and judgment and personal interaction.

An Islamic public administration is most removed from the prevailing neoliberal managerialism in the public sector, in which the value orientation is towards formal rationality (not values/ends), entrepreneurial private sector-mentality (preset results), overriding imperatives efficiency and technical effectiveness (which objectify human relations and roles), mercenary competitive self-interest, and living from the state, rather than for the state. In contrast, the Western mandarin tradition was

oriented towards substantive rationality, aspiring to a civil-society ideal, a traditional ethos governing manner of life and circle of contacts, an ethos of “official duty” and “public weal”, and living for the state, rather than from the state (Samier 2001).

An Islamic senior administration was much closer in mentality and education to the traditional mandarin in Anglo-American countries during the first two-thirds of the 20th century than the later New Public Management manager type, as displayed in the table below, primarily because of an adherence to higher order values than the economic, and a sense of duty that overrides self-interest.

Islamic Vizier	Mandarin	Manager
substantive rationality	substantive rationality	formal rationality (not values/ends)
aspires to a believing, better society	aspires to a civil-society ideal (justice, equality, fairness, legality)	entrepreneurial private-sector mentality (preset results)
overriding imperatives of Islamic values	traditional ethos governing manner of life & circle of contacts	overriding imperatives efficiency & technical effectiveness; objectifies human relations & roles
religious & moral ethos aimed at betterment	ethos of “official duty” & “public weal”	mercenary competitive self-interest
lives for Allah & community	lives for the state, rather than from the state	lives from the state, rather than for the state

The main areas where Western administrative and management systems do not correspond well to Muslim cultures are the emphasis on individualism, the lack of spiritual values and an emphasis on “performance-related and economic measure-based approaches” (Branine and Pollard 2010, 5; Rahwar and Al-Buraey 1992) that are more materially based, and have evolved through neoliberalism and the New Public Management and perhaps exacerbated in the New Public Governance. While Islamic public administration is different in many respects from these Western models, it is relatively similar to those traditions that embed end values for individual welfare and societal improvement, in particular those traditional forms like the mandarin that are grounded in a strong social ethos and service.

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