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The Era of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz's Reign: The Hiring and Dismissal Complex System in Government Officials

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Abstract

The government officials are pivotal to economic politic of the country's success and the smooth administration. This situation makes the hiring and dismissal of government officials need to have a good system. This article is specifically focused on the system of hiring and dismissal of government official's era of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's regin. The study was done based on textual analysis found that the Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was decisive in the hiring and dismissal of the government officers. The hiring of officers based on the knowledge and personality of the individual who wants to be appointed. The Dismissal of government officers was made in the event of breach of trust, bloodshed and cruelty. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz has appointed investigators to monitor the government officers during that era.

Keywords: Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, political economics, government officials, hiring, dismissal

Introduction

Establishing a successful organization does not only depends on its good leader but also on individuals as workers who contribute to the success of the organization. This applies to the governmental organization too. A good governmental organization is comprised of trustful and authoritative government officers elected based on an established government appointment system.

The system of hiring and dismissal of government officers established during the era of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's reign is an example of the best system which made the administrative works at his time systematic and smooth. It is considered the best due to the fact that through it Umar ibn Abdul Aziz successfully established a strong economy and political system within two years and six months of his reign (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 125). The strong economy and political economy system made the kingdom prosperous under his reign.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz began by restructuring the administrative organizations on his appointment as caliph. The restructuring of the organization is in accord with the view of the ulama such as Salim ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 125). The stressed organizational structure by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was evident during his first day as caliph. Even though he was at a funeral upon the demise of Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was prompt in writing three letters related to his administrative matters. Two of the three letters were about the dismissal of his unjust officers (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 44).

Methodology

The study was conducted based on textual analysis of scriptures related to the history of Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. History is written by earlier scholars filtered and analyzed as soon as possible to see the action taken by the caliph in his efforts to curb cruelty and injustice that occurred before his reign.

Results and Discussion

Government Officer Appointment System

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz imposed several conditions in appointing officers. They must be obedient personal and are available for consultation (Al-Salabi, 2007: 31). In establishing an organization with the best officers, strict conditions are imposed to them. The evaluation for the appointment was conducted by looking at the outward aspects as well as the internal aspects (Al-'Ahl, 1964: 131). Umar ibn Abdul Aziz also issued a circular on appointing trustful officers. The contents of the letter made as the circular regarding the officer appointment sent to provincial governors which stressed on trustfulness are as follows:

“Do not choose a person who administers the affairs of the Muslims except those who are known of giving advice to the Muslims on upholding the trust, the trust in saving the Muslims and the trust in fulfilling their needs”.

(Al-Salabi, 2007: 78-79)

The appointment of officers such as palace officer, zakat collector, judge, *qisas* task conductor, letter sender, army, judge, teacher, secretary and other officers, they all went through a strict procedure before being appointed (Al-'Ahl, 1964: 131). Umar ibn Abdul Aziz appointed a person based on his external and internal virtues. He also placed different conditions for each position. For instances, he outlined five conditions for appointing judges. These five conditions are understanding of the *sunnah*, patient, abstaining oneself from bad deeds and preference of *musyawarah* (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1984: 231). Umar ibn Abdul Aziz also outlined conditions for appointing officers. One of the conditions is appointing those who understood the content of al-Qur'an and practice it. If this condition cannot be met, individuals who possess the most good virtues from among the people can be elected. If this condition also cannot be met, individuals who possess more good virtues as compared to others can be appointed (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 301).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was meticulous while appointing his officers. His meticulousness in appointing his officers was evident during the appointment of Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah as a judge in Africa. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz knew Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah's honesty since the reign of Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. According to an incident during Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik's reign, the Caliph was questioning the state of the wage money collected by his ten officers. These officers were assigned to do the task in Africa under the command of Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. One of these officers was Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah.

While Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik was asking about the way they obtained the collected wage money, Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah was silent and did not join in answering it as the other nine officers. Was it collected justly or otherwise? The silence of Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah was noticed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. At the time Umar ibn Abdul Aziz did not hold any position. After the crowd went away, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz sought Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah's explanation. Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah explained that he was silent to avoid from lying. According to him, the money was actually collected unjustly (Al-Maliki, 1983: 81). On his appointment as the Caliph, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz appointed Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah as a judge because of his honesty.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's meticulousness in seeking further information about a personal caused him to send al-'Ala' ibn al-Mughirah ibn al-Badar as a spy to test Bilal ibn Abu Burdat. He sent a spy to examine the internal aspects in Bilal ibn Abu Burdat as he looked hardworking in performing ibadah,

fluent and brilliant. The cleverness of al-‘Ala` ibn al-Mughirat ibn al-Badar in using his position as a trusted individual by the Caliph was fruitful. Al-‘Ala` ibn al-Mughirah ibn al-Badar pretended to offer a service to Bilal ibn Abu Burdat to advise Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to appoint Bilal ibn Abu Burdah as the Governor of Iraq. However, al-‘Ala` ibn al-Mughirah ibn al-Badar gave a condition of rewarding him. It was obvious that after being tested, Bilal ibn Abu Burdah was an individual who sought a title and position (Al-`Ahl, 1964: 133-134).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz preferred to choose individuals with *ulama* status such as Maymun ibn Muhran. He was the writer for Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and an individual who performed prayer and fasting a lot (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 485). He was a humble person that he admitted never do a good deed while serving Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 488). Maymun ibn Muhran was also appointed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz as the Governor of Jazirah (Arabian Peninsula) who was responsible in administering the legal and material affairs in Jazirah. However, Maymun ibn Muhran refused by writing letters many times to the Caliph stating the reasons such as his inability to do the difficult duty, that he was aged and he was emotionally very sensitive concerning certain matters (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 490). Umar ibn Abdul Aziz understood Maymun ibn Muhran’s circumstances and explained that Maymun ibn Muhran only had to collect taxes from the people and executed punishment only if there were evidences. If Maymun ibn Muhran faced difficulty in judging a case, it can be referred to Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1984: 119).

The selection of judges in Basrah was also held by selecting those who master the discipline of *fiqh*. ‘Adiy ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz was assigned to select the personal. He painstakingly sought the qualified individual. Finally he appointed ‘Iyas al-Dhakiy as the judge of Basrah (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 517). Other personal appointed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to join his administration was ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu’awiyah ibn Khuzaymah as the judge of Egypt. He was assigned with the task to establish the law in the territory as he was a knowledgeable person and narrated many hadith (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 170).

Other than ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu’awiyah ibn Khuzaymah, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz had also suggested Hasan al-Basri as the judge in Basrah. Hasan al-Basri was a famous knowledgeable *ulama* at that time. However Hasan al-Basri refused the appointment. The position was then taken by Iyyas ibn Mu’awiyah, a brilliant and famous person at the time (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 262).

It is clear that the strict selection which was held by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz upon his officers was very important because they hold the trust in protecting the affairs of his community. The honesty possessed by his officers made them avoiding things contradicted with the Shari’a laws. For example, the honesty of Wahab ibn Munabbih who wrote a letter to Umar ibn Abdul Aziz reporting about the loss of several dinar from the *baitulmal* under his administration in Yaman. The honesty of Wahab ibn Munabbih about the loss of the money was not causing Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to suspect him because Umar ibn Abdul Aziz knew Wahab ibn Munabbih’s personality. On the other hand Umar ibn Abdul Aziz asked Wahab ibn Munabbih to swear to the Muslimin society that he did not take the money but it happened due to his carelessness (Ibn ‘Abd Hakam, 1994: 77 and Ibn al-Jawzi, 1984: 104).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz’s meticulousness on the *baitulmal* fund causing him to appoint a treasurer from among good ordinary citizen. In addition to that, a treasurer must not leaving the truth and seeking falsity. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz advised officers not to trust a person who is only capable of doing what is commanded and do not trust a person who is obvious of his evil conducts (Ibn ‘Abd Hakam, 1994: 166).

The conditions outlined by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz made his line of officers are from knowledgeable *ulamas* and they can be trusted externally and internally. They were highly intelligent and capable of analyzing and practicing the truth well. Allah SWT said that only a knowledgeable person understands things. Below are His Words which means:

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge”.

(Surah Al-‘Ankabut, verse 43)

A well-structured administration developed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz indirectly affected the political economy during his reign tremendously. Officers who were in the administration structure also contributed to the successful political economy at the time.

The System of Officer Dismissal

A government officer whose service has been ended or dismissed is not a common practice in an organization. However, an organization reshuffle involved the dismissal of governmental officers was a typical practice during the reign of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was stern in selecting his officers. He did not want his officers are those who had committed murder on the innocent Muslims and those who had transgressed. Among those officers who had been fired due to transgression was Abdullah ibn al-Ahtam from Khurasan, 'Usamah ibn Zaid dari Mesir, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab and Saleh ibn 'Abd al-Rahman from Iraq, Harith ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Thaqafiy from Andalus, Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Muslim from Africa, Khalid ibn al-Rayyan and the officers of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafiy, most of them from Iraq (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994:37 and Ibn Kathir, 2005: 130-131).

The personals from the descendant of Bani Umayyah were not exempted from being dismissed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz due to wrong doings. Although they were of an elite group as well as members of his family, he was stern in dismissing officers who committed wrongdoing. Among others was Umar ibn al-Walid who is the son of Caliph al-Walid ibn Abdul Malik. His dismissal caused Umar ibn al-Walid accused Umar ibn Abdul Aziz of transgression and confiscation of Bani Umayyah's wealth. However, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was determined in his decision to dismiss Umar ibn al-Walid. This decision was made due to the fact that Umar ibn al-Walid did not possess any ability to lead. Umar ibn al-Walid preferred to lead based on his own opinion in many occasions particularly in executing punishment and in matters concerning Muslim's wealth. He was also an unjust leader. He was appointed by Caliph al-Walid ibn Abdul Malik only because he is a beloved son of his father, Caliph al-Walid ibn Abdul Malik (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1984: 133 and Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 150).

Officer dismissal was not done easily. On the other hand Umar ibn Abdul Aziz sought the advice of Salim ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab about the matter. Salim ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab advised Umar ibn Abdul Aziz not to be doubtful in dismissing his officers. Salim ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said that Allah SWT will replace a suitable person for the position although there were no qualified individuals for replacement at the time of the dismissal (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 125). Other than Salim ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, there were many *ulamas* assisted in advising Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. Among them were Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab, Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qarziy, Hasan al-Basriy and Matrif ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Syakhir (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1984: 16 and Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 125).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's action in strengthening his administration was clear while he was promptly writing three letters although he was still at the funeral of Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. The letters commanded Maslamah ibn Abdul Malik and Muslim armies to retreat from the battle field in Constantinople and return to Syria, their place of origin. This retreat was commanded because of insufficient food supply and other necessities of the Muslim armies that there were soldiers who had to eat animal's food in their surroundings to survive. There were also those who sold their vehicles for several dirham to get food. After Muslim armies retreated and returned to Syria, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz sent food supply and 500 horses to them. Muslim armies were very happy with the new development (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 262). The second and third letters were about the dismissal of Usamah ibn Zaid al-Tanukhi in Egypt and Yazid ibn Abu Muslim in Africa. They had committed a transgression. Among others are; executing the *hudud* laws contradictory to the Islamic *shari'a* and brutal torture on the people (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 44-45).

Two final letters of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz were about the dismissal of Usamah ibn Zaid al-Tanukhi in Egypt and Yazid ibn Abu Muslim in Africa showed that he was meticulous in selecting personals to join his administration. The members of his administration ought to be trustful and responsible. The

appointed officers molded his administration of justice. Justice is very important in an administration. It involved efforts in making the nation prosperous.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's meticulousness in selecting his officers can be seen in the event of the appointment of Khurasan Governor. There were three appointments of Khurasan Governor within two years and five months Umar ibn Abdul Aziz being a Caliph. He fired two Khurasan Governors because of untruthfulness and untruthfulness. Two of those individuals were Yazid ibn al-Muhallab and al-Jarrah ibn 'Abdullah al-Hakamiy (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 262).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz also dismissed Yazid ibn al-Muhallab who was the Governor of Iraq and Khurasan and his family members due to their irrational actions and decisions. This incident occurred during the reign of Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. Yazid ibn al-Muhallab was appointed by Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik as the Governor of Iraq and Khurasan. Yazid ibn al-Muhallab was a person who sought power that he was behind the event which caused Waki' ibn Abu Sawd being dismissed as the Governor of Khurasan. The dismissal occurred because of the slander done by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ahtam who was given 100 thousands dinar by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab. However, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab broke his promise to give the wage even after being appointed as Governor of Khurasan by Khalifah Sulaiman ibn Abd Malik (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 242).

The slander done by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab did not stop at that point. He sent his son, Makhlad ibn Yazid to represent him to Khurasan by bringing a letter from Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik which reported about Qutaybah ibn Muslim, Governor of Khurasan before Waki' ibn Abu Sawd. The content of the letter said that Waki' ibn Abu Sawd should be detained and sent to the Caliph if he murdered Qutaybah ibn Muslim due to Qutaybah ibn Muslim's betraying. The detention was done because Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik thought that Qutaybah ibn Muslim did not betray. Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik's letter which was brought by Makhlad ibn Yazid was as follows:

“If Waki' opposed and attacked Qutaybah due to his betrayal but in fact Qutaybah did not betray, thus arrest him (Waki') and send him to me”.

Ibn Kathir, 2005: 242)

In fact Qutaybah ibn Muslim had an intention to overthrow Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik but he was resisted by the army of Qutaybah ibn Muslim which led by Waki' ibn Abu Sawd. Waki' ibn Abu Sawd finally succeeded murdering Qutaybah ibn Muslim. The success of Waki' ibn Abu Sawd in murdering Qutaybah ibn Muslim caused Waki' ibn Abu Sawd being appointed by Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik as the Governor of Khurasan. However, his appointment as the Governor of Khurasan was not long due the slander spread by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab. Upon his arriving in Khurasan, Makhlad ibn Yazid arrested Waki' ibn Abu Sawd then tortured him and detained him before returning to his father, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 242).

Yazid ibn al-Muhallab had also received a handful amount of money from Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. On his appointment as the new Caliph, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz commanded that Yazid ibn al-Muhallab came to meet him. Upon Yazid ibn al-Muhallab arrival in front of him, he asked him to return the money which Caliph Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik gave to him because the money belongs to Muslim's *baitulmal*. However Yazid ibn al-Muhallab did not want to hand it in but he hid it. Eventually Yazid ibn al-Muhallab was prisoned for not returning the money (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 268-269).

Yazid ibn al-Muhallab's transgression before Umar ibn Abdul Aziz being appointed as the Caliph, causing Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to dismiss Yazid ibn al-Muhallab. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz then appointed al-Jarrah ibn 'Abdullah al-Hakamiy as the Governor of Khurasan. However, al-Jarrah ibn 'Abdullah al-Hakamiy was fired from the post for not collecting *jizyah* from non-Muslims. Al-Jarrah ibn 'Abdullah al-Hakamiy did not collect it assuming that by collecting *jizyah*, non-Muslims under the Islamic reign would shunned away from Islam. This opinion was not agreed by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz dismissed al-Jarrah ibn 'Abdullah al-Hakamiy and replaced him with 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Nu'aym al-Qashayriy. He administered the territory of Al-Harb and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Abdullah

as the administrator of al-Kharraj (Ibn Kathir, 2005: 269-270). Based only on this event of Khurasan Governor appointment, the meticulousness of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz is obvious in selecting the most qualified individuals as officers in his administration. This thoroughness indirectly affected the state of the political economy at that time.

The checking on officers was not only done before their appointment. The intelligence was also conducted while a personnel performing his job in order to watch their action and behavior. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz would warn them on their mistakes. If the misconducts were severe, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz would dismissed them from the post. This happened to 'Adi ibn Artah who was an officer in Kufah. 'Adi ibn Artah was warned through a letter sent to him from Umar ibn Abdul Aziz for not fulfilling the trust accordingly based on the intelligence done by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (Al-'Ahl, 1964: 141).

Other than 'Adi ibn Artah, Abdullah ibn Abd al-A'la who was assigned as an ambassador to meet the Roman King, all his movements were watched by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz did not send Abdullah ibn Abd al-A'la to go alone but AbdulLah ibn Abd al-A'la was accompanied by a man from Bani Abbas. This man was a spy sent by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to watch AbdulLah ibn Abd al-A'la's behavior. However, AbdulLah ibn Abd al-A'la did not realise that the Bani Abbas man was a spy. On the other hand he assumed the man was sent along to accompany him in meeting Roman King (Ibn Abd Hakam: 1994: 168).

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was also meticulous in appointing army intelligent. His letter to Manswur ibn Ghalib who was sent by him to fight `ahl al-Harb commanded the appointment of Muslim army intelligents from those who are reliable and trustful. Additionally, the appointed intelligents must be honest (Ibn 'Abd Hakam, 1994: 90). These attributes are important so that the delivered messages to the Muslim army about the enemy are *sahih* or true. The *sahih* information is important for strategic planning.

Conclusion

The political economy of a nation cannot progress without a good organizational system. This good system includes the system for appointing and dismissing governmental officers to build a strong administration. It is closely related to the process of organizing leadership and moving the community forward to achieve the objectives which have been planned by the leader. Therefore, the system of appointment and dismissal practiced during the time of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz can be modelled and adapted in the present organizational system.

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