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Sultan Abdülhamid II's Leadership in Caring for the Eldery and Mission of the Darülaceze He Founded

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Abstract: The organization of social services for the older adults needs a strong leadership and great societal responsibility. One can readily see both of them while looking the building of our civilization throughout the history. In particular, we see how Sultan Abdülhamid II provided social services to older adults in this area without delay even in the falling period of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, he showed how we were not behind the West in this field by building the Darülaceze Institution which is still active in 1895. That is why the leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid II is an important area to study the organization of social services. In this study, the parameters of leadership of Sultan Abdülhamid II are going to be examined in addition to looking how his gracious sensibility was developed historically. We all know he is a leader in realizing a vision, solving aging issue, having supernatural merits/skills and ability of critical-analytical thinking. For instance, the building of Darülaceze Institution's model is a result of all of them. That is because he was able to show himself as a mission man by making all his subjects build a consensus on his vision.
Keywords: Sultan Abdülhamid II, Leadership, Social Services, Aging and Darülaceze

INTRODUCTION

The organization of social services in the Ottoman Empire and consequently in Turkey differs somewhat in many countries of the world. Due to the tradition of a powerful state, the formation of such systems was constantly organized based on leadership. Nevertheless, by no means does this imply that civilians played no role in this system.

Indeed, they we also assigned with certain duties and responsibilities by this powerful leadership. There was a major distribution of responsibility in the organization of social services particularly in areas and places where the leadership was more relaxed. In the Ottoman Empire where the waqf (foundation) culture was established, significant duties regarding social services were entrusted to these waqfs. However, again this does not mean the leadership-based state was not a control mechanism.

Moreover, it is suggested that when the tendency of centralization began in the last years of the Ottoman period, a follow-up system began. We can say that despite the tendency of centralization, this facility in the social services was preserved even in the Republican Period. Although many dramatic changes were made to enable integration with the West for instance, a majority of the elements in the waqf culture of the social services remained the same for the public. Therefore, in this contribution emphasis will be placed on the leadership and practices of Sultan Abdülhamid II who formed, and preserved this facility in the organization of the social services from the Ottoman period until the present. In view of this, initially we will be discussing his leadership. Particular emphasis will be placed on the aspect of how modern the leadership classically represented in the Ottoman period was in providing social services to the elderly, as in the example of Darülaceze.

SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID'S LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a process in which an individual attempts to intentionally influence another individual or group to accomplish a goal [1]. Therefore, this means that leadership only emerges with performance/ applications. Introducing change and accomplishing social innovations within the society is the most evident sign of this. When studying Sultan Abdülhamid's works, we see these are all application orientated innovations. For example, Sultan Abdülhamid II, who had extensive knowledge of history, was certainly not a world leader unaware of the services provided for the elderly in the world and in Turkey. He was well informed regarding how the 19th century poorhouses in the West were transformed into nursing homes for the elderly. Due to his interest in photography, Sultan Abdülhamid II closely monitored world developments in this field, even if this was to acquire information and intelligence. He closely witnessed the formation of

the small units of elderly institutes established by the non-Muslim citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, in order to keep up with these developments and reveal innovations to the realization of the century, he founded the Darülaceze that is a great source of pride even at the present.

The purpose of leadership is to effectuate a specific vision. That is, leadership is formed around a mission. Accordingly, the leader has a mission and acts to materialize this objective. As we see in the example of Darülaceze, Sultan Abdülhamid was concerned for the deprived, elderly, abandoned and poverty stricken of the country. He founded the home of compassion for the elderly, the Darülaceze so these people would not be forced to live in the streets in a state of destitution, and depend on others. When taking the negative perception and prejudgment regarding nursing homes for the elderly of a majority of the people even today into consideration, we can understand the difficulties in encouraging all the people to accept this innovation more clearly. However, by employing this innovation Sultan Abdülhamid demonstrated that he was a powerful leader capable of influencing, involving and convincing the large masses. Of course we should also bear in mind that the Ottoman cultural background indirectly provided facilitating benefits. Indeed, when considering the history of this civilization, we see that the predecessors were a civilization that always protected and cared for the deprived, the poor, orphaned and homeless as a duty, a part of their religious belief and culture. The Ottoman civilization demonstrated the extent of the social service network it developed for its habitants/citizens not simply in theory, but in practice with social service institutions such as the waqfs and almshouses (imarethane), the charity stones, and the hostels and caravanserais built on the roadsides. Moreover, when studying historical monuments in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman civilization, we even see bird houses on these monuments.

Sultan Abdülhamid II recognizing, identifying and finding a solution to the issue of social services in that period and then influencing his followers to accept this reveals a totally different dimension of his leadership. This was certainly not a leader who imposed solutions or a leadership of dominance to reach personal objectives as suggested. On the contrary, this was a participative leadership perception in terms of executing the processes of identifying, determining, formulizing and solving issues together with the members of the administrative system.

Sultan Abdülhamid was far more than an average ruler, he was a remarkable leader. Indeed, while a majority of the administrators in that period depended on other aspects to fulfill their own roles, he focused on implementing what he sincerely believed. Therefore, while a majority of the rulers of that period saw no particular need for consideration when carrying out their routine duties, as a leader Sultan Abdülhamid II speculated like a man of action, but performed like a philosopher.

Sultan Abdülhamid II was a dedicated figure who bore the natural characteristics and skills of a leader. We are aware of his success as a leader from some of his qualities. In general, emphasis is placed on a leader's skills of intelligence. In view of this, German Prince Bismarck said "Of all intelligence of world diplomacy, Sultan Abdülhamid II has 90%, I have 5% and the other diplomats have the remaining 5%." In terms of the qualities required by an influential leader, when we study Sultan Abdülhamid II, these three features of leadership stand out.

Firstly, in addition to state affairs, he was also involved in photography and carpentry. One of the most excellent examples of the objects he made is the table in the administration building of Darülaceze. This originates from the Sultan's artistic mastery on objects. Reşat Ekrem Koçu explains this in these words:

"Sultan Abdülhamid II was extremely talented in detailed carpentry. He had his own private carpentry workshop in the Yıldız Palace. In this workshop he personally crafted elegant staffs from cherry and rose wood; in fact, he gave a banquet for the wounded veterans of the Greek-Turkish War in the Yıldız Palace, and after dinner personally presented a staff to each of the wounded soldiers in need." [2].

Secondly, Sultan Abdülhamid II was a person competent in the conceptual dimension of leadership capable of identifying events, interpreting and controlling these events in a critical-analytic manner. He was successful in containing complex issues that arose during his sultanate. This was due to the strong influence of the Sultan's opinions/ideas. Thirdly, which is another indispensable quality of a leader, the Sultan communicated with all the countries of the world for the sake of his people, country and his ideals, but even if he made sacrifices for the sake of his people he never made concessions regarding his principles towards others. For example, in order to reinitiate growth of the empire in economic terms, he personally covered the expenses of verifying there were 65 areas containing petrol that was presented to him in a report on 22 October 1901. This is also connected to the Sultan's influence, authority and motivation.

Historically, leadership was generally shaped around a certain figure. A classical form of leadership as such can cause certain problematic implementations [3]. [4]. Nevertheless, Sultan Abdülhamid II was a transformational leader who implemented changes based on consultation. When preparing the constitution of Darülaceze for example, residents

of different religions and nationalities were also taken into consideration [5]. This constitution that was prepared in accordance with the French codes of poverty, offers a characteristic as distinctive at today as it was then, that is, Darülaceze is managed under the same constitution at the present.

DARÜLACEZE: A PIONEER IN SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II'S PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Exactly 120 years ago, Sultan Abdülhamid II materialized what is believed to be a mark of his leadership, known today as the Chairmanship of Darülaceze. Ahmet Lutfi Effendi conveyed the founding of Darülaceze in these words:

See the extensiveness of Abdülhamid II, Sultan of the universe
He built this grand complex for the poor
Every corner of the country was encompassed by his seal of favor
By his virtue, the entire universe will benefit forever
May Allah increase his life for being honored in conducting these good deeds
O blessed history I began in the name of Allah
Abdülhamid built this complex, Darülaceze to the highest level
Abdülhamid built this place, this complex for the deprived out of his kindness and generosity [6].

Here the poet is briefly referring to the unique institution founded by Sultan Abdülhamid II for the needy including the elderly; his generosity, the building of the institution, his construction of many other buildings and the state of the deprived before they were taken into care. In brief, these verses signify the extensiveness of Sultan Abdülhamid II's leadership. The Sultan providing care and accommodation for deprived individuals of different religions and different ages together under one roof is a sign of his extensive leadership, his justice and compassion. The mosque, church, synagogue and children's department within the Darülaceze complex to maintain the connection between the generations is proof that both the Sultan's door and heart were open to the public.

As a leader, Sultan Abdülhamid II erecting the *Mefaret Sütünü* (Column of Honor) that became the symbol of Darülaceze in the final years of its construction proved that he was an outstanding leader who was not ashamed of the poor, but a leader who honored the poor. The construction of the complex in a period where there acts of defamation particularly targeting women in many parts of the world also bears great symbolic significance.

At the same time, a leader is selective and always personally involved in his duties. Sultan Abdülhamid II was extremely selective regarding the location of Darülaceze. Darülaceze's location in Kağıthane-Okmeydanı which is close to Pera (Beyoğlu), visible from many parts of historical Istanbul and an area where the wealthier classes lived is a clear sign of this. The widening and decorating of the roads leading to Darülaceze with palm trees for the opening of the institution is the result of his personal interest and involvement in the project [7]. In conclusion, the Sultan personally donating a fifth of the construction costs, and when this was insufficient donating his personal possessions for auction leaves nothing more to say [8].

FACTORS THAT HASTENED THE FOUNDING OF DARÜLACEZE

We know that throughout history, the Islamic faith, the culture based on this faith and the family structure developed methods for caring and formed institutes not only for the elderly, but also for the poor, destitute, disabled and orphans. Although modernization and rapid urbanization were fundamentally innocent processes, the form this acquired in this geography led to the citizens of Turkey becoming familiar with these elderly care institutions earlier than imagined. Particularly in the Ottoman capital Istanbul, we see that from 1832 smaller units of elderly care institutions began to emerge, then later in 1895 the Darülaceze was built on the directive of Sultan Abdülhamid II. This move by the Sultan was both viable for the realization of the century and in parallel with the developments of the elderly care institutions in the West. In fact, the design of Darülaceze according to the Ottoman society system, but institutionalized representing the three monotheistic religions with its mosque, church and synagogue is an example not existing in the world even at the present. In view of this, the initial reason for the founding of Darülaceze was to keep up with developments in elderly care, while constituting an example for other countries of the world.

Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II who had extensive knowledge of history, he was not a world leader oblivious to the services for the elderly in the world and in Turkey. He was presumably aware of how the poorhouses described by Katz were transformed into elderly care homes in the 19th century [9]. Without doubt, he observed the elderly institutes established by the non-Muslim Ottoman citizens since 1832. Therefore, in order to keep up with these developments and prove something to the perception of the century, Sultan Abdülhamid II founded the Darülaceze that is a monument of pride even today.

Secondly, contrary to Özbek's claim that after Mahmut II the Ottoman Empire began to centralize, we can say the Ottoman Empire displayed a tendency towards centralization to speed up activity in the social services sector and perform this in a more organized manner [7]. On the contrary, Sultan Abdülhamid II would not have reflected this in the example of the Darülaceze complex by building places of worship of the three monotheistic religions, unlike the smaller scale elderly care homes built by groups of different religions for their own communities. Clearly the Sultan's aim was to build a prototype of an institutionalized elderly care home non-existent in the world even today. The Sultan accommodating his own citizens under the same roof without the discrimination of race, religion, color or sex is an example for other countries of the world. Although the socio-demographic structure may have changed substantially, the construction of the Istanbul Directorate of Darülaceze in Kayışdağı displaying the same sensitivity during President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's term as mayor of Istanbul is extremely meaningful in terms of continuing this tradition.

The list of reasons for founding Darülaceze may be extended considerably. Finally, as in the case of all wars the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 also generated family tragedies [6]. Although the Ottoman-Turk family structure was strong, those who came to Istanbul due to forced migration faced the issue of poverty. Incidents of begging began to increase in certain parts of the city. Therefore, it may be suggested that Sultan Abdülhamid II hastened the construction of Darülaceze to prevent an increase in these kinds of scene that could be damaging to the image of this universal empire.

SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN FOUNDING DARÜLACEZE

First and foremost, we can understand the extent of Sultan Abdülhamid II's personal involvement in establishing the Darülaceze complex by his donation of a fifth of the total cost. Moreover, his donation of certain pieces from his personal belongings to contribute to the construction costs was an act that deserves immense respect and praise [8].

The Sultan's personal involvement is clear from his diligence in choosing the site for the location for Darülaceze. There were two reasons for the Sultan selecting the district known as Kağıthane at that time in particular [7]. Firstly, the district in question was the recreation area for the wealthier class of the society. Sultan Abdülhamid II possibly chose this location to attract the attention of this group to social aid and solidarity [5]. Secondly, this location was not only a place of interest for the wealthy, it was also one of the central points of Istanbul, and therefore a place that could inspire everyone in charitableness. In addition, the Sultan widening and decorating the roads leading to Darülaceze with palm trees is due to the importance he gave to the institution, and also to ensure the complex more visible.

As we see from this, even in times of hardship the Ottoman administration not only considered building institutes for the care of the elderly as a solution to the problem, but also perceived this as fulfilling a social responsibility. Nevertheless, while fulfilling this social responsibility, this was also classified as a residence of abundance that would embrace all the citizens living in Istanbul irrelevant of color, religion or language. This abundance is not only apparent in the three places of worship, namely the mosque, church and synagogue, but also in the resident's sense of belonging here. At this point, the choice of a location close to Pera, a district of prosperity in the system of the Ottoman society where Ottoman citizens of different faiths lived also bears great significance. Sultan Abdülhamid II's personal interest in Darülaceze is clearly recognized by the extensive coverage of the opening of the complex in the printed media of that period. At the same time, this also eliminates the claims of certain historians that the Sultan used the wars as an excuse to censor the media. On the contrary, the Sultan gave major importance to promoting the institution that was to be the gate of compassion to orphans, the poor and elderly through the media.

Sultan Abdülhamid's personal interest in the Darülaceze is evident from a special constitution he had prepared for the institute. Adding statutory/legal status to the complex signifies the importance the Sultan gave to the legal rights of both the applicants and residents of the institution.

As a result, it is clear that as a founding leader Sultan Abdülhamid II was a figure who organized and involved his citizens in a joint vision by the realization of the Darülaceze project. This meant delaying the routine duties of the Ottomans and forming a kind of social security for the Ottoman citizens that would cater for the joint benefit of all classes and denominations. Undoubtedly, the ability of determining, understanding and developing a suitable solution to the chronic problems of the society played a major role in this. In particular the Sultan's ability of gathering accurate information regarding the strength of social judgement and all kinds of social issues, organizing solutions to these problems in a logical manner and conveying this to the Ottoman citizens represents a model of a world leader even today.

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