

## HOW TO MAINTAIN RELIGIO-INSTITUTIONS: THE CASE OF ALMS-TAX IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC STATE<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims at exploring the process of maintaining religio-institutions particularly by using a qualitative abductive approach. Institutional theorists accept religion -among others such as state, market, professions and family etc.- as an institutional sector which also produces unquestionable institutional arrangements (e.g., halal, pray, zekat) in order first to provide and then to assure an earthly order, in turn a happy life after death to its proponents. Depending on these, this study's focus is to explore and define the rationales, strategies of, and tools for maintaining religio-institutions basing on a clear case (i.e., rebellion of chief of Butah Tribe Malik bin Nuwayra in an effort not to give alms and various attempts of Caliph Abu Bakr for maintenance of existing religio-institutional order). To this end, data have been collected from secondary data resources (i.e., archival documents such as verses, hadiths, historical documents and texts), and analyzed by using qualitative data analysis technics such as content analysis.*

**Keywords:** Religio-Institutions, Institutional Maintenance, Alms-Tax.

**Jel Codes:** K34, P43, Z18.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Although institutions are thought to have different mechanisms for self-reproducing (Jepperson, 1991), Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) put forth that relatively few institutions have such powerful mechanisms that no ongoing maintenance is necessary. As brought forward by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) in terms of actors who can interact with institutions and then mentioned by Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009) that actors who can be active not only in creation of institutions but also in maintaining and disrupting them may perform works different from their ordinary works as institutional work more or less purposefully (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Smets and Jarzabkowski, 2013). It is understood that such activities, which can only be fulfill through undertaking an agency role, are

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inescapable in terms of structuring and maintaining the social order, as Chia and Holt (2009) suggest. For institutional maintenance, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006: 230) defined six different works under two different groups. First group of works (i.e. enabling, policing and deterring) are devoted to ensuring adherence to rule systems, and the latter three (i.e. valourizing/demonizing, mythologizing and embedding and routinizing) are focused on reproducing existing norms and belief systems. To put it briefly, maintenance work entails supporting, repairing and recreating social mechanisms that ensure compliance with existing institutional norms (Canning and O'Dwyer, 2016: 4).

Although there have been some studies focused on institutional maintenance (e.g. Currie, Lockett, Finn, Martin and Waring, 2012; Raynard, Kodeih and Greenwood, 2021; Pas, Wolter and Lauche, 2021) in general, it is difficult to argue that too much attention has been given to the maintenance of religio-institutions. Additionally, neither Lawrence nor other researchers have differentiated the work to be done in maintaining religio-institutional arrangements and mundane institutional arrangements. Moreover, Tracey (2012) claims that it is surprising that organization theorists have not explored the intersection between religion and organization in a more meaningful and determined way. Similarly, Tracey, Phillip and Lounsbury (2014) also emphasize the relatively neglected role of religion in organization studies. Nowadays, some scholars attempt to illuminate and explain the relationship between religions and organizations (e.g. Gumusay, Smets and Morris, 2020; Tracey, 2012). Recent theoretical developments particularly within institutional theory offer a means to re-connect these streams of research and advance the understanding about the macro-social level impact of religion on organizations (Gumusay, 2020).

This study, in this scope, will likely contribute to the literature of institutional works for maintaining institutions, which, as Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) and Scott (2001) suggest, has not been studied enough, by dealing with institutional resistance as a strategic agentic attempts that also cover institutional works performed to maintain the institutions.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) dealt also with a highly controversial field in terms of institutional theory, with a thorough study they conducted in the context of institutional work concept. Accordingly, institutional work was introduced with reference to actors who are able to make active and strategic choice(s) beyond that at a time when institutional theorists have not yet solved the dilemma of institutional embeddedness in the context of institutional entrepreneur defined by DiMaggio (1988). In fact, it can be argued that this situation which caused Suddaby and Viale (2011) to be concerned of deviations from basic assumptions of institutional theory was subject to the warnings of Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum, (2009) as it requires the process of researches in the difficult path between "rational choice theory of agency" and "structural determinism". Nevertheless, it seems quite plausible that institutional works, which were defined under the categories of creating, maintaining and disrupting

institutions by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) based on the concept of work but should be distinguished from daily tasks and activities according to Kaghan and Lounsbury (2011) and Smets and Jarzabkowski (2013), are performed by individuals (Suddaby, 2010).

Although some scholars (such as Clemens and Cook, 1999; Jepperson, 1991) argued that institutions are self-maintained durable structures, existence of individuals who represent institutions at micro level and enable them to stay alive by repeating actions, technology and means seems necessary for maintaining those institutions (Powell and Colyvas, 2008). However, there is an important difference between repeating the existing institutions through actions, means and technologies and performing institutional works consciously or unconsciously for maintaining institutions in terms of agency orientation (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). In particular, there is passive acting/institutional compliance rather than individual agency in the first situation and an active individual, in other words an actor who can act strategically to maintain the institutional order in the second situation (DiMaggio, 1988; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Oliver, 1991). It is obvious that religious purposes and their organizational expression should naturally be accepted very different to those of the market, family, government bureaucracies, and so on (Greenwood, Hinings and Whetten, 2014).

### **3. METHOD**

This study aims to analyze institutional maintenance in the example of religio-institutions by focusing on giving alms-tax. Maintaining the institutions especially religio-institutions has not deeply been investigated and broadly understood phenomenon heretofore. Thus, the main question of the research is designed and formulated to understand maintaining process for getting some insights and illuminating the process. The main question of the research in this context is “What are the rationales and strategies (and tools) for, maintaining religio-institutions?” In concert with the answer(s) of this question, it is expected to get some findings, relevant strategies and tools using by authorized actors in the field. To this end, Alms-tax issues, which had actually been first turmoil after prophet Muhammad (pbuh), were chosen as a case for analysis. The main reason of elaborating this case is its well documented processes and well-known results.

In the case analysis, we worked on a large number of documents such as verses, hadiths, historical narratives and other documents related to our topic. Data from those documents was obtained and analyzed to understand and explore resistance of apostates on one hand, and on the other hand define the rationales, strategies and tools of defenders of religio-institutional order by undertaking an agency role. An abductive approach was taken by us and we iteratively moved between data and theory (Thorngbeg, 2022: 252). For analysis, we conducted a content analysis by using its procedures since we attempted to conduct a systematic coding and categorizing approach for exploring large amounts of textual information (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). In addition to this, we conducted a

document analysis in order to establish a chronological overview of the critical moments in times al Ridda wars.

We used obtained data to construct a chronology of events. Below given table presents this chronology.

**Table 1. Critical Events**

Year	Critical events
632	Death of prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
632	Beginning of Abu Bakr's caliphate
632	Collecting beyat by caliph
632-633	Emergence of false prophets
632-633	Emergence of tribes that don't want to pay alms-tax
632-633	Starting a struggle against those who don't want to pay alms-tax
632	Murder of Malik bin Nuwayra by Halid bin Velid
632-633	Apostates' allegiance to Abu Bakr

### **The Case: Alms-Tax Crisis in the Beginning of Abu Bakr's Reign**

While Muhammad (pbuh) was alive, almost all of the Arabian Peninsula accepted his prophethood and converted to Islam or accepted Islamic rule by allegiance to prophet (e.g. Constitution of Medina). Yet there were also people made false prophecy claims, motivated by its success. Some of them started their activities towards the end of the life of the prophet and found courage from Muhammad's (pbuh) illness (Sarıçam and Fayda, 1999: 236). After Muhammad's (pbuh) death (June 8, 632), some Bedouin tribes declared that they would pray but would not pay alms-tax, and it expanded and turned into a rebellion (Fayda, 2008: 91).

It was Abu Bakr's stated intention to follow in all regard the policies and practices of Muhammad (pbuh) as a caliph. He adopted the official title of Successor or Vicegerent of the Messenger of God, Calipha Rasul Allah. Abu Bakr also explained his immediate demand that all Arab tribes pay him first beyat and in this direction for example give the Islamic alms-tax through his responsibility as the heir of Muhammad (pbuh) to obey the direction of the Prophet. In the year 630, the duty of Muslims to pay a daily annual tax instead of providing voluntary alms seems to have been initiated (Madelung, 1997: 46).

Four false prophets and other rebel groups were fought in the Ridda wars. These four false prophets are al-Aswad al-Ansi in the Yemen, Musaylima among the tribe of Hanifa in the Yamama, Tulayha in the tribes of Asad and Ghatafan, and the prophetess Sadjah in the tribe of Tamim. The form of the ridda differed depending on local circumstances in each center; it involved the refusal to send taxes to Medina and to obey the agents sent by Medina. Ridda started in Yemen before the death of Muhammad (pbuh). (Watt, 1986: 110; Fayda, 2008: 91-93).

Perhaps the most different period of the Rashidun period in terms of alms-tax is the Abu Bakr period. Because, in this period, alms-tax became the subject of war for purposes such as the recognition of the political authority of the state and the establishment of state security. When Abu Bakr came up with the idea of fighting those who do not give alms-tax, various companions, especially Umar, did not lean towards this idea. When Umar stated that he did not find it appropriate to fight people who say "la ilaha illallah" and "perform prayers", Abu Bakr stated that he would fight those who decoupled prayer from alms-tax and those who did not give alms-tax to the Prophet, and he defined this as a matter of the recognition of political authority. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, it is seen that the practice of the Prophet period in matters such as the method of collecting alms-tax and assigning alms-tax officers. The most striking document regarding the period is the letter Abu Bakr sent to Bahrain to Enes bin Malik, which he appointed as alms-tax officer. At the beginning of this letter, Abu Bakr stated that the amounts written in the letter were determined by the Prophet himself, and then ordered those who were asked to give alms-tax as written here, and if they wanted something different from what is written here, not to give it (Duman, 2018: 68).

Malik, one of the apostates according to some Islamic historians, assigned by Muhammad (pbuh) and served as his people's tax collector. When Muhammad (pbuh) died, he did not give the camels he had collected as sadaka to Medina, but instead returned them to his tribesmen (Landau-Tasseron, 1991: 267). Because he put forth that if the prophet died, it is unnecessary to pay alms-tax. Because in the verse it is said that "take alms from them and pray for them". Since the prophet is dead, there will be no opportunity to pray. For this reason, Malik b. Nuwayrah did not find it appropriate to pay alms-tax.

Considering Nuwayrah's situation, Abu Bakr sent an army to his tribe. However, he instructed the army to recite the adhan and to monitor whether those concerned participated in the prayer. When Halid b. Velid as chief of the commander, who moved to Butâh, the homeland of the Tamîm tribe, could not find anyone there, he sent detachments to various parts of the region. One of these detachments caught Malik b. Nuwayrah and brought him to Halid. When Malik learned about the death of the Messenger of Allah, he returned the camels he collected as alms-tax to their owners, and said that if his tribe was not requested alms-tax, they could take place with the Qurayshi who would replace the Messenger of Allah and that these properties were their own rights. The Muslims who caught Malik disagreed about whether he was an apostate or not, after all, he was killed by the order of Halid b. Walid, who believed he was an apostate (Fayda, 2008: 92).

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Our studies' main aim is to define the process of religio-institutional maintenance by analyzing a well-structured case known as Ridda Wars. Religio-institutions as distinct from mundane ones require different treatments to be maintained. Their divine qualities require, for one thing, an expertise in

religious law, for Islam Fiqh. Otherwise, an ordinary person cannot be expected to intervene to maintain religio-institutions.

#### **4.1. Rationales for Religio-institutional Maintenance**

Most of the Islamic historians think that the primer reason of agency's attempts to maintain existing religio-order in Islamic state is the strong concerns that if there was a deviation from Islamic rules and if it became widespread, the Islamic state would also be dissolved. The sayings of Abu Bakr against those groups may clearly explain this concern (Arı, 1996; İnce, 2008; al Tabari, 1993).

“Arabs apostatized in general or in particular. There is apostasy incident in every tribe. discord has arisen. Muslims have become a flock of sheep that scatter from right to left because they have lost their prophets, their numbers are few and their enemies are many.”

This thoughts were actually not just Abu Bakr's but also some of the Muslim thought this way. For this reason, the Islamic army was used against people who were thought to be Muslims. That is, a legitimate reason for using the Islamic army is the protection of the ummah and the state.

For second rationale, it can be said that Abu Bakr did not want to lose or weaken the authority of the caliphate. For this reason, he did not refrain from using force despite the warnings of people like Umar. In fact, Abu Bakr, as the caliph, wanted the continuation of the public order formed (İnce, 2008). Additionally, it was also thought that the apostate movements turned into a show of power or hostility against the central authority (Balçı, 2006).

Lastly, Abu Bakr as caliph had also different concerns that others tribes might also apostatize. Fear of increase of likely uprising also led Abu Bakr, as a caliph, to take drastic measures. He believed that the rebels had to be stopped before they took over the whole country (Eceoğlu, 2019; Madelung, 1997).

According to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) institutional agency can attempt to save institutional order by doing right works institutionally. One of the institutional works they defined in their book chapter is “policing”. In this work's repertoire agency should take some measures to ensure compliance through enforcement, auditing and monitoring.

#### **4.2. Strategies for Religio-institutional Maintenance**

##### **Persuasion**

When the apostasy movements first began, Abu Bakr was in favor of calming the events without using force. The majority of the Companions also advised him in this way (Balçı, 2006). Abu Bakr first sought persuasion against apostates. The main reason of this strategy is the prophetic practice. Because the prophet said that “the sword will not be lifted for those who say *la ilaha illallah*”. Of course, there are also reasons such as not wanting the situation to worsen. Al Tabari, on the other hand, argue that

Abu Bakr, before sending a commander to the rebellious tribes, sent a letter to them and tried to dissuade them from the rebellion (al Tabari, 1993).

First of all, it is known that the Caliph followed a softer policy to persuade the rebellious tribes and tried to persuade them. As a matter of fact, he sent sincere Muslims, especially from his own tribe, to the rebellious tribes and tried to calm the events through diplomatic means (Balçı, 2006).

Although it could not find a place among the institutional works defined by Lawrence, persuasion has been expressed as a form of institutional work in many studies (e.g. Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005).

### **Coercion**

Abu Bakr showed his determination to take deterrent measures to suppress the events and convinced his friends to do so (Eceoğlu, 2019). Al Tabari explains the main reason for doing this as follows: “If they refuse to give me even a camel bridle they gave to the Prophet, I will fight them (Arı, 1996; al Tabari, 1993). In addition to this, according to Azimli (2019) it is appropriate to take coercive measures against these people. He further puts forth that people could not be forced into religion, but there was reason enough to fight against these people who promised a political union and then reneged.

Here the strategy of coercion is like Lawrence and Suddaby's policing work. This type of works may involve the use of both sanctions and inducements (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Like this, Holm (1995) and Townley (2002) argue a new type of institutional work as “detering”. According to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), in coercion strategy some barriers may be established to institutional change.

### **4.3. Tools for Religio-institutional Maintenance**

#### **Soft power**

As stated before, Abu Bakr did not want to resort to coercion in the first analysis. for this reason, he was thinking of using soft power and preventing apostasy movements with more persuasion and political maneuvers. And he gave such an advice to his commander: “When you stay in a (residential) place, stop there and say the adhan. If the people also call the adhan and do not leave their places, do not touch them.” (al Tabari, 1993). Hence, Abu Bakr ordered the soldiers not to punish the people in the areas they reached without questioning them, and if they did not hear the call to prayer and did not see that they were praying, they raided, killed them and burned their houses, not themselves (Balçı, 2006). Cheney, Christensen, Conrad and Lair (2004), put forth that using symbols to persuade others to change their attitudes, beliefs, values and actions is one of the prominent strategies in organizations.

## **Hard power**

Since soft power did not work for some tribes, Abu Bakr resorted to hard power, although some of the Companions were dissatisfied (Balci, 2006; Eceoğlu, 2019).

In this sense, the following thoughts of Abu Bakr are interesting:

“If they do not recite the adhan after you say it, there is no other choice but to march on them. After attacking them, kill them with all kinds of torture, including burning them.” (al Tabari, 1993)

“Strive earnestly to keep the commandments of Allah. Don't show slack. If you capture those who killed Muslims, take revenge by killing them as an example to others” (Balci, 2006). Therefore, hard force was used to suppress the apostasy movements and it was witnessed that some people were killed. It is obvious that it has been possible to forcefully give up people who do not give up their apostate movements through persuasion or soft power.

Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009) also argue that social position and power plays an important role in maintaining institutions.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The Prophet's and his companions' missionary efforts were often crowned with success: Many of Yamama's inhabitants adopted Islam, returned to their homeland, and spread Islam. In addition, in order to teach the new believers the principles of Islam, to reinforce their relations with Medina and to gather the alms-tax, the Prophet thoughtfully sent emissaries to the small Muslim communities in Yamama. Later, these groups helped Abu Bakr battle the ridda and became part and parcel of the political body of the Medina. The new converts were given full Muslim rights. In exchange for paying the jizya, the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians were granted the status of Dhimmis. The Muslim alms-tax and the Dhimmis jizya were sent to the Medina authorities (Kister, 2002: 1).

In this study we found the strategies for maintaining religio-institutions as persuasion and coercion. And the tools are soft power, hard power. Its rationales are; concern on falling the state (Caliphate), fear of losing authority, fear of uprising of other tribes like this one (fear of increase of likely uprising). Deciding how to use tools, hard or soft, is a privilege for actors like caliph who are allowed by religio-institutions to act to some extent out of control of institutions.

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