



Islam And Mosque Management in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: *In the early days of Islam, a mosque was more than just a place of spiritual solace. It also served as an educational and community service Centre. Community affairs were deliberated upon in the sublime tranquility of the mosque. This is in line with the mosque being a multi-functional institution and its centrality as a prime agency to facilitate the creation of an excellent mosque community. In most Muslim communities in Ghana, it is not clear who are tasked with the responsibility of managing and maintaining the mosque. In some communities, it is the Imam. In others, it is manned by volunteers. In most urban communities in Ghana, it is the Mosque Management Committee which is tasked to manage the affairs of the mosque. Within this committee, there is no stipulated qualification for membership. This makes it difficult, if not impossible for them to deliver to expectation. The interesting thing is that this committee is not accountable to the congregation since there is lack of transparency in their operations. Therefore, in an increasingly challenging external environment, with an ever-demanding community, the need to know how mosques are managed and how they serve as community centers to maintain high standards of Muslim activities is as great as ever; hence the need for this paper.*

Keywords: Mosque, Management, Challenges, Prospects, Ghana.

Abstrak: *Pada masa awal Islam, masjid lebih dari sekadar tempat pelipur lara spiritual. Lebih dari itu, masjid juga berfungsi sebagai pusat pendidikan dan layanan masyarakat. Persoalan kelompok sosial dibahas dalam ketenangan masjid yang luhur. Hal ini sejalan dengan masjid sebagai lembaga multifungsi dan sentralitasnya sebagai lembaga utama untuk memfasilitasi terciptanya komunitas masjid yang unggul. Di sebagian besar komunitas Muslim di Ghana, tidak jelas siapa yang diberi wewenang mengelola dan memelihara masjid. Di beberapa komunitas, itu adalah Imam. Di tempat lain, itu dikelola oleh sukarelawan. Sementara, di sebagian besar masyarakat perkotaan di Ghana, Komite Manajemen Masjidlah yang bertugas mengelola urusan masjid. Dalam komite ini, tidak ada kualifikasi yang ditentukan untuk menjadi anggota. Ini menyulitkan, jika bukan tidak mungkin bagi mereka untuk memenuhi harapan. Menariknya, panitia ini tidak akuntabel kepada jemaah karena kurang transparan dalam operasionalnya. Oleh karena itu, dalam lingkungan eksternal yang semakin menantang, dengan komunitas yang selalu menuntut, kebutuhan untuk mengetahui bagaimana masjid dikelola dan bagaimana masjid berfungsi sebagai pusat komunitas untuk mempertahankan standar aktivitas Muslim yang tinggi menjadi semakin besar; maka diperlukan makalah ini.*

Kata Kunci: Masjid, Manajemen, Tantangan, Prospek, Ghana.

Introduction

According to Rasoul Abbasi (2012), social institutions are the most important collections to meet basic human needs. To meet the basic needs of society; there are five basic social institutions which have been established in all human societies. These institutions are the institutions of family, religion, government, economics and education. Without a doubt, the Mosque is considered to be one of the most important religious institutions.

The role of the Mosque in creating solidarity and sympathy among the public is well-known, aiming at guiding them towards human perfection and practical step to closeness to God. In this regard, it is very important to use all the capacities and possibilities of creating a coherent and efficient organization with strong management structure to achieve these lofty goals. Mosque has been the epitome of blending world and the Hereafter and the continuity of the individual and society in the view of Islam and is a symbol of culture and religion in Islamic society. The first step of the Prophet after the migration to Medina was establishing the Mosque and the reason is that the religious culture and everything should be centered on the mosque. God introduced the mosque as his house in the earth and determined there as his meeting place with the people and said: "Blessed are perceived at home and take me in the pilgrimage mosque."¹

Literature review

An overview of Islamic history shows that Mosque as the holiest religious sites have been considered the stronghold of Islam and has the greatest role in the consolidation and development of cultural infrastructure and it has always been a strong fortress against the cultural invasion of Islam's enemies and thus attract the attention of Western and foreign scholars.

Determining the real status of the mosque leads to the increase in its efficiency, strengthens, consolidates and expands the infrastructure of Islamic culture. A unique feature of the mosque renders it as a specific organization. The roots of this organization are located in the God-seeking nature of human kind and as the first social and political center of Islam, since the beginning of Islam to the present time has played a pivotal role among the Muslim Ummah especially in Ghana.

Historically, the mosque (mosque) has been one of the most important institutions in the Islamic community, and it plays a key role in the everyday lives of Muslims. One of the very first practices of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he migrated from Mecca to Medina was to establish a mosque. It was around the mosque that great universities, hospitals, observatories, hostels and other institutions grew up.

Mosque in its original position is the place of social and political discussions. The prophet is the first man who established the mosque in a political, social and intellectual framework. He set it as his base where guests both from within and outside the peninsula, came to visit him.² The mosque during the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) met the religious needs of the Muslim community, which was comprised of Meccan Immigrants (Muhajirun) and Medinese Helpers (Ansar). Although it began with a simple in structure, it became the center for communal prayer and a place from which the poor of Medina could come to receive food and alms (Karen Armstrong, 2007).³ In addition to being a place of prayer and charity, the Prophet's Mosque (al-masjed al-nabi), served many and varied functions within the early Muslim community:

“Laws were made here. The Muslim army was given training. This was the camp from where armies were dispatched to war fronts. Delegations from foreign tribes and countries were received here. There first school or University of Islamic learning was located here. The Prophet (peace be upon him) held his court here, and heard and decided disputes. And the transgressors were kept in confinement here.”⁴

In addition to the functions listed above, the Prophet's Mosque also became the center for distribution of booty acquired during the various caravan raids carried out by the Prophet and his army of believers. Thus, the Prophet's Mosque met not only the religious needs of the new community, but also its administrative, educational, military, and judicial needs as well (Karen Armstrong, 2007).

One thing that concerns us and should be considered in relation to the management of the mosque is its status as a public endowment. It is regarded as the house of God, and legally and lawfully owned by no specific individual. This means that as far as Islam is concern, no political party or groups have legal ownership rights over such places even though the property might be registered in their names. Accordingly, there is no justification in places like Ghana for government intervention in the affairs of mosques. Hadiths stated that it is better for you to build the mosques for Allah's rewards and not the government. For instance, Ali ibn Abi Talib reported a tradition from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that: “*Everyone who builds a mosque by his wealth for Allah, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise*”.⁵

In conjunction with these functions mentioned above, the site of the Prophet's Mosque also served as the Prophet's place of residence. Some Islamic scholars even argue that this was the original intent for the property that Muhammad purchased, and that its function as a mosque was secondary to its function as Muhammad's dwelling and there is some evidence to support this claim, but such claims are difficult to verify given the sheer number of accounts of the Prophet's life. Prior to

the advent of Islam the term *masjid* was used to describe “a shrine or a cult building rendered sacred by the ground upon which it was built or the idol that it housed.”

Karen Armstrong (2007) recounted that by this definition, the Ka’ba was a *masjid*. The plot of land which tradition states the Prophet’s camel wandered to and that the Prophet then selected as the construction site, fits neither of these specifications though the term *masjid* was, in any case, adopted to describe the mosque. Regardless of his intentions however, this location became both the site of the Prophet’s dwelling and the mosque for the Umma in Medina and, in the end, Muhammad’s primary objective is largely irrelevant; the site functioned as both mosque and dwelling. Around the edge of the courtyard located at the front of the mosque the Prophet had small huts built for each of his wives and in doing so he showed that “the sexual, the sacred, and the domestic could - and, indeed, must - be integrated.” In other words, the plurality of functions of the mosque was evident from the outset; it was meant to be both religious and social. For Muhammad, the mosque was meant to be the center of not only the community, but the family as well.

Mosques And Management In Islam

1. Management: A Definition

According to Sir Charles Reynold, “Management is the process of getting things done through the agency of a community. The functions of management are the handling of community with a view of fulfilling the purposes for which it exists.” With regards to *Islam and mosque management in Ghana*, Management is the integrating force in all organized activity. This is because, whenever two or more people work together to attain a common objective, they have to coordinate their activities. They also have to organize and utilize their resources in such a way as to optimize the results. Not only in business enterprises where costs and revenues can be ascertained accurately and objectively but also in service organizations such as government, hospitals, schools, clubs, etc., scarce resources including men, machines, materials and money have to be integrated in a productive relationship, and utilized efficiently towards the achievement of their gals (R.K., Sapru. 2013).⁶ Thus, management is not unique to business organizations but common to all kinds of social and religious organizations including the mosque.

These mosque as an institution became the hallmarks of the great Islamic civilization known to modern historians. It was in the mosque that great Islamic scholars, theologians, linguists, jurists, saints, and countless devout worshippers graduated, hence the need to know how it is managed. The womb of the mosque has produced men and women who have left indelible marks on the world as we see it today. The mosque has always been at the heart of the Muslim community –

serving as a house of worship, an educational Centre, a Centre for dispensing valuable social services, a meeting place, and a place for solace and refuge.

Unfortunately, many mosques today do not carry out all these roles. Instead, they have become focused on just fulfilling the main objective of the mosque: to cater for religious and spiritual needs. This in itself is very important. But we live in a time when most services are grouped together and delivered in the community, and it is important that mosques reflect this. By doing so, they will be true to their heritage and modern-day realities.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Administrative Approach to Management

The Administrative Approach theory of management, as presented by R.K. Sapru (2013), was pioneered by Henri Fayol, who developed his management theory in 1916. Influenced by Taylor's publication of *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911, it is unclear whether Fayol was a theorist with original ideas or whether he was a good manager who took management practices to their next level of evolution. Fayol believed that management was part of all aspects of our lives and society including home, work, and government. He believed that all of the tasks required to conduct our lives could be categorized into one of five functions: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. He believed that individuals could become good managers if they understood and implemented proper management principles.

- *Planning* refers to forecasting and determining what will be needed in the future.
- *Organizing* involves gathering all the necessary resources, both in terms of raw materials and manpower.
- *Commanding* results in all of the required activities being done, as needed.
- *Coordinating* is the logistics of ensuring that all jobs are conducted in a synchronized manner and that everyone involved is working as a unified team.
- *Controlling* means that all rules and regulations are followed and adhered to.

Hence, management in this article also covers the mosque environment, especially within the confines of Ghana.

3. The Mosque and Management in Ghana

Quran chapter 9: verse 108:

... لَمْ سَجِدْ أَسَسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ
أَنْ يَتَّطَهَّرُوا ...

'Certainly a mosque founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it: in it are men who love that they should be purified.'

From the Qur'anic verse stated above, piety is the most important factor in establishing a mosque in Islam. Sincerity and purity of intention and the lawful money of which the mosque is built must be considered. Mosques are the important centers of worship and virtue and have been known as the measures for human actions (Qur'an 5: 27).

In Ghana, the Larabanga mosque is seen as historical mosque with some mysteries attached to it. It is the oldest mosque in the country and one of the oldest in West Africa, and has been referred to as the "Mecca of West Africa" by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (2017). It is said to have been founded in 1421. Due to lack of proper management and maintenance, the size and nature of the mosque have been left in a deplorable state. The inside looks dusty and outdated. Surprisingly the mosque cannot even accommodate more than hundred people at a time. There are no modern facilities attached to the mosque. The only renovation the mosque undergoes is painting.

More often than not we do hear on Radio and Television promises and donations made by the community and individual Muslims contributing towards the development and the construction of mosques in various parts of the country. In spite of all these donations and contributions, little had been in transforming the mosque to carry out its role within the Muslim communities; all due to improper management.

The central mosque situated at Abossey okai, which was constructed in the 1970s to serve the Abossey Okai Muslim community is also one of the significant mosques in Accra. As a result of lack of proper planning, the current Central Mosque is the mushroom of the original plan. After completion, many organizations went to court to claim supremacy over the mosque.

The results collected on some mosques in Ghana indicate however that these mosques are mostly managed either by Mosque Management Committee (MMC), the Imam or individuals. They do this for free. The mosques rely solely on the contributions from the mosque and *Sadaqa* from individuals to fund it. Such funds are used for the payment of electricity and water bills. Worse of all is that only few mosques pay their Imams. The payment is not enough and not regularly.

Methodology

1. Data collection

The data collection involved selected mosques in Ghana. Initial telephone interviews were conducted to some Imams of the various mosques to seek their consent before a face-to-face interview. In all 10 mosques were selected around

Ghana for this study. Questionnaires were also administered to selected congregations of the various mosques as well as management committee members of these mosques. Some selected *ulamas* from these mosques were also interviewed. These respondents were able to provide most of the information on how mosques are managed in Ghana.

2. Results

Since the sample consists of just 10 selected mosques in Ghana, advanced statistical analysis was not undertaken. Only a descriptive analysis was done. Because of the need to preserve anonymity, there was no need to indicate names of the various mosques or individuals interviewed.

On the question of how individuals became Imams in the various mosques consulted during this research, majority of the Imams opined that they were either nominated by their relatives, the community, elders in the community, or appointed by the chief the owner of the mosque. It is also striking to note that most of the Imams interviewed attested to the fact that they are not paid for their role and service they provide. With the exception of token given them by individuals, or collection made on Fridays through charity, and other activities such as *Eid* collection, naming ceremonies, funeral prayers, and officiating marriage ceremonies, they are not officially entitled to any other salary.

Upon inquiring whether Imams in the various mosques do you upgrade their knowledge in terms of current affairs, technology, and science, most of them held that they do not because of lack of finance, sponsorship, secular education and other challenges. Surprisingly, there is no scholarship or sponsorship coming from the mosque as done by other religious organizations in Ghana. With regards to some of the challenges of the MMC, respondents were of the view that their greatest challenges are internal like lack of funds, lack of commitment among the membership of the MMC and the congregation, disunity among the congregation among others. Their concerns were that most people come in and out of the mosque but do not care how the mosque is maintained, and would not appreciate the efforts of the MMC. To some extent, some even accuse MMC members of embezzling funds.

They however indicated that some of the achievements of the MMC included, but not limited to internal achievements and that is improving upon sanitation, enhancement, and constant availability of water, electricity at all time. The provision of generators and introduction of *Makaranta* in the mosque are also among other achievements. On the other hand, some respondents indicated external factors for their achievement. They pointed out that they have been able to establish Islamic Primary and Junior High Schools. None of the respondents however ticked national

achievement. This goes a long way to indicate that most mosques have not achieved anything for the nation.

3. Other challenges of mosques in Ghana

The greatest challenges confronting management of Mosques in Ghana include but not limited to financial, the registration of Mosque as a legal entity, administrative and legal support on various aspects of the Mosque, offering suitable lands/locations for the erection of mosques, construction materials and equipment needed for the construction mosques, the expense of public water supply and electricity among others.

4. The mosque as agent of spiritual and moral attraction:

Mosque in Islam is supposed to serve as both moral and spiritual agent. It will be unfortunate if the mosque should have the highest physical features but it does not enlighten and guide Muslims; as this will ruin and destroy the Muslim community at large. Most of the Muslim youths today have difficulties in attending the mosques. From my experience as an Imam, my interaction with some of them revealed that they regard the content of most of the sermons to be poor. Some indicated that current issues affecting the youth in the society are not addressed in these sermons. The effects of these are that, both the spiritual and moral lives of these young men are in limbo. In sermon 361 of Nahjul-Balaghah, Imam Ali refers to the mosque which does not impact on the lives on individuals: *“Mosques built by people are prosperous in their construction and ruined in guiding them. His residents are the worst people on earth; they are the source of intrigue and wrong doing”* (Ibn Abil-Hadid, n.d.). The Mosque should therefore be such that most of the faithful, especially the young people be attracted willingly.

5. Financial management

Providing enough financial funds for the current activities of Mosque and its construction has been one of the main concerns of Mosque executives. Except a few of mosques which have adequate facilities and funds for whatever reason, most of the mosques in this area have faced with serious straits. Although the basic principle in the construction and repair of Mosques stated that these projects should be conducted by the support of cash and non-cash donations of faithful people.

6. Mosques as a borderline between tradition and modernity

One of the current challenges that resulted in loss of interest of people to the Mosques is inadequacy of their role in a society wandering between tradition and modernity. In recent decades, numerous changes have occurred in all communities, including the Ghanaian Muslim community. These developments cannot be

ignored, nor can be dealt with. The most logical way is to manage these changes. The subject of our discussion ‘concerning management of these changes by institutions such as Mosques means that Mosque officials with the knowledge of the complexities of contemporary society and understanding the necessity for the relationship of all non-governmental institutions with the states try to use from this interaction more productively and efficiently in the Mosque and for the achievement of related goals.

One of the requirements of modernity is the government’s presence in various spheres of social life. Government officials normally turn to religious institutions especially the mosques when they need prayers for their said goals. This is a prevailing incident in almost most electoral campaigns in Ghana. The assumption is that for most Muslim communities in Ghana, if government officials do not attend to some of these Islamic functions, they risk losing votes from electorates in those areas.

Prospects

From the data collected and analyzed, certain observations have been made. It is the hope of the researcher that the following recommendations are considered prospects for the management of mosques in Ghana. The designing and establishment of mosques should have departments dealing with various Islamic issues which should be made up of the following,

1. *Establishment of religious and cultural departments*

It is the hope of the researcher that all mosques in Ghana should be able to establish a religious and cultural department which shall cater for the collections and distributing of zakat and sadaqah funds in an equitable manner according to the principles of the Sharia. With respect to sadaqah, charity (*sadaqah*) boxes can be placed at vantage points along the street where every Muslim can drop his or her charity. Zakat account can also be opened where good individual Muslims can also channel their zakat. In addition to this, services like planning and organization of hajj, educating pilgrimages of the pillar and the steps and procedures involved in and after hajj should be handled by this department.

2. *Establishment of publication and social department*

This department should be responsible for handling Islamic articles, newsletters and events, books, Khutba texts among others. This should take the form of visual and audio which could be sold out to generate income for the management of the mosque. Also, the social department should take charge of the provision of social amenities like hospitals, schools, pipe borne water projects, graveyard, and

orphanages and among others. Its main focus should be to initiate such projects and maintaining after it has been established.

3. Establishment of educational and career development department

This department should be responsible for the counseling of the youth in the area of educational development. This is to enable them choose the right courses at the right time to enable them develop their full potential. The department should also take the initiative of handling marital problems which sometimes demands experts from various fields to handle. In addition, scholarships and sponsorship packages should be established for brilliant and needy students in these mosques. Added to that, this department should be able to create job opportunities, especially linking people to useful jobs, workshops and conferences to sensitize Muslims on career developments.

4. Management Team

This sector is to ensure that the other departments are in line with the Islamic principles. They supersede all other departments and make sure the entire mosque is managed in the right manner and framework. In doing so, the mosque will serve the purpose for which it was established.

Conclusion

From what have been gathered from the various respondents on the field of research, one may conclude that mosques in Ghana should be turned into a “one shop Centre”. We can build grocery shops, textiles (clothing), Islamic boutique, laundry services, petrol pump stations, and bank and among others is also a good source of generating income for the mosque. It is important to state that, these things should be done base totally on Islamic principles, philosophy and teachings. Moreover, it should be opened to all whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

The Muslim community should initiate fixed salaries for all the workers especially the Imams since they are rendering services to the Ummah. This is to help them cater for their household. In addition, provision of shelter, security and sponsoring them to do further studies whether locally or internationally is encouraging and should be provided.

They should ensure that qualified people are employed into the various departments. The criteria should be based on competency of delivering of service. It should not be linked with tribalism or other sentimental issues which could lead to chaos or anarchy.

Each and every sect should be given the opportunity to have a role in managing the mosque. They should be able to tolerate and accept each other's view for the sake of the development of the mosque and the welfare of the Muslim community.

Leadership structure especially the Imamship should be based on the Islamic principles. Priority should be on piety, knowledge, attitude among others. It should be devoid of tribal or close relations, hereditary which is contrary to Islamic principles.

The administration of the mosques should be open and transparent in its operation. Any initiative taken should be made known to the Muslim community. This is done to seek the views and inputs of the Muslim community to enhance the management of the mosque. Without cooperation, hard work and determination for all, the ideology of the whole mosque will not be effective. It is therefore necessary for every Muslim to inculcate such character into his inner being. This enables the individual to communicate and respond to people of different backgrounds.

Lastly, it is essential to note that Muslims are bound together with one Kalimah which is "There is none trustworthy of worship except Allah". It is therefore incumbent on every Muslim to help with the development of Islam. []

Endnotes

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2. Taha Alvali, *Mosque in Islam* (Beirut: Daral-Elm al-Malayeen, 1988).
3. Karen Armstrong, *Muhammed A Prophet for our Time* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007), p.102.
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5. Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājāh, *Sunan Ibn Mājāh* (Beirut: The Institute for the Revival of Arabic Heritage, 1975). P. 243.
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