

RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE
IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

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RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT IN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To Munir and Samiha Sidani
Gone but not forgotten

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PREFACE

Whoever wants to accompany us, let him accompany us with five things: he conveys to us the needs of those whose needs do not reach us, he guides us to justice in cases where we are not guided to, he helps us in performing what is truthful, he fulfills the Amana (trust) to us and to people, and does not backbite anyone among us.
(Omar Ibn Abd-el-Aziz)

One personality in Islamic history that captures the fascination of the Muslim masses (An Egyptian TV series was even produced telling his story) is that of Omar Ibn Abd-el-Aziz (681 CE–720 CE). He was the eighth Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. As history reports, his life changed upside down when he became Caliph. The moment he was asked to accept the position he addressed his constituencies:

O people, I have been afflicted with this matter without an opinion on it from me and no advice from the Muslims, and I have relieved you from your pledge of allegiance to me, so (feel free to) choose (a Caliph) for yourselves (other than me). (Salabi, 2009)

People immediately responded: “We have chosen you.” He ruled for two years and five months after that speech, and died young in his late 30s. This short period, however, was full of accomplishments and reforms. He increasingly relied on *shura*, consultations, offering more voice to the public. He redressed the grievances related to actions of prior Caliphs and rulers. He developed advanced administrative systems based on merit, and made significant contributions as to how the state was to be governed. He adopted policies that were not only fair and kind to the Muslim community, but also to Christians living in the lands under his reign. He did all of that while leading an ascetic, deeply religious, and humble life.

The fascinating story of Omar Ibn Abd el-Aziz leads one to question as what might have caused a person who was just appointed to a position of power to suddenly act so responsibly? Why was it not somebody else of the Caliphs who preceded him in the Umayyad dynasty? What role did his

religious life, and attachment to religious principles, contribute to his emergence as an epitome of ethical and responsible leadership?

While this is not a book about Omar Ibn Abed el-Aziz, the concepts that I will discuss will hopefully shed some light in answering some of these questions. Granted, a religious perspective, let alone an Islamic one, cannot be advanced as the only way to have management that is effective *and* responsible. People have many reasons to identify as responsible individuals and behave responsibly. Some drivers might relate to a religious foundation; other drivers might have nothing related to religion. Yet, to some people, and certainly to a large segment in Muslim societies, religious drivers of behavior remain relevant. Irrespective of one's individual philosophy and source of moral grounding, understanding a religious perspective of responsible management might be fascinating. To all of those, I hope this book will be of benefit.