

Managing Islamic Organization: Some Preliminary Findings from the Mosques in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The managerial processes are keys to Islamic organizations to determine their direction and mission and plan actions to achieve them. The main purpose of this article is to investigate management practices of the mosques in Sri Lanka as a prime Islamic organization. The research design used mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The interview survey supplemented by the observation was conducted to evaluate management processes of mosques. In addition, unstructured interviews were conducted with selected Muslim professionals to obtain their experiences and explanations of the management components from the management inputs to its outputs (functions) of the mosques. The findings show that the mosques in Sri Lanka are managed in different ways influenced by social and economic factors. However, there are no greater levels of organizational structure and managerial processes that are necessary for trustees to articulate a dynamic mission and achieve it effectively. In considering the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that this study has contributed to the new knowledge on mosque management.

Keywords: Mosque management, Mosque in Sri Lanka, Islamic Organization

Background of the study

In Sri Lanka mosques are vital to the Muslims in many aspects of their life, therefore, the management of mosques has been focus of attention from early period. However, in the context of Muslim minority context, there is no traditional system of 'state' mosques¹ as in Muslim world, where the mosques are funded by regime, which are incorporated into the

state bureaucracy to control all related activities through the ministry or department in-charge for *awgaf* (plural of *waqf*) and religious affairs. This bureaucratic model was the dominant model around the world until the 1980s. And this model is aimed at bureaucrats to derive policies and translate government objectives and agenda into action. However in Sri Lanka, the tradition of *waqf* has not been allowed into the prevailing Muslim law and the recognized legal system. It was pointed out that "...and that the branch of law known as *waqf* was not introduced into Ceylon and did not become part of the customary law of the Ceylon Muslims." (Mahroof, 1980)

Referring to the stories of Khalid Ibn Bagaya, an Islamic scholar was sent by the caliph of Bagdad to lead Sri Lankan Muslims and the mosques along with justice court of *qadi* in Sri Lanka. It can be assumed that the mosques were likely managed by the learned person such as *qadi* during that time. This is in accordance to the Muslim tradition of the time. The encyclopedia of Islam elaborates the management of separate mosques by *qadi* under the title of 'nasirs of mosque' in a detail description (Pedersen et al, 2002).

However, in the course of time, changes were brought about by socio-historical factors. Erection of a mosque and its ownership, ancestral, social organization, village structure and economic growth seem to have impact on the governance of mosques' in Sri Lanka. There was a tradition that mosques had been maintained by individual persons, most probably the descendants of original donors. M.M.M. Mahroof (1987) indicates that,

The median mosque was managed by persons who usually did so, on the ground that their ancestors had been entrusted with the management of the mosque. In cases where the mosque premises or the mosque land had been gifted by deed, the line of ancestral management could be fixed.

Different types of social organizations among the Sri Lankan Muslims and village structures enumerated by M.M.M. Mahroof (1981), that prevailed fairly until the second half of the 20th century. These factors seem to have a strong affect on the community leadership, mosque management and its selection. In towns and townlets such as Colombo and Galle that were inseparable from the Kasbah-like existence of the Muslims in well-defined areas, "oor-kootam" (Tamil term means 'town meeting') of the principal Muslim house holders of the area, formed the *jama'at* or congregation necessary for religious, social functions and selection of mosque trustees and maintenance. The mosque trustees mostly were possessory elites who received their status through forms of wealth. Trusteeship doubled their status as they also are institutional elites. Almost similarly in the villages mainly of south western parts of Sri Lanka, the mosque trustees were drawn from the land proprietors and principal traders. This made them to become the traditional community leaders as they are known by "madicham"². With quite different in physical configuration, the *madige* villages of hill lands are located in central Sri Lanka where a number of traditional families were elites holding on administrative control of mosque. In eastern Sri Lanka where considerable Muslims live, there was a unique social system known as *kudi*³. Mosques of this region were managed by *maraikars* representing *kudis* as they were selected from them. It was noted that the influence of each *maraikar* generally depends on his wealth or wealth of his *kudi*, and to a certain extent on his exceptional learning. Some of the *kudimaraikars* were *ulama* (Mahroof, 1987). More obviously when a *maraikar* was a 'po'diyaar'⁴ he enjoys a privileged position to be selected as a trustee.

The main financial sources for maintenance of the mosque at this time were gained from local donations and the proceeds of the production from the

lands are benefited to the mosque. Those who managed the mosque were considered community leaders and the traditional elite in the community. The decision regarding the village or town is mostly taken by these trustees who had services of *ulama*. However, these traditional elites' position and control over the administration of the mosques was challenged by immense social, educational political and economic changes that occurred during the middle part of the 20th century. In the new environment, Muslim public, particularly educated persons were very strong critics to the existing trustees and their own way of managing mosques and properties. M.M.M. Mahroof (1985) observes,

Fresh income injected into erstwhile non-elites created more and more problems over the management of mosques. The presence of a large number of educated (though in indigenous languages) persons was a disturbing factor to the order trustees who were used to doing things in their own way

This discourse to reform the mosque management to regulate the proper use of mosque fund and property, urged 'the Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts of Waqfs Act' to be enacted by independent parliament of Sri Lanka in 1956. According to this act, a mosque has to be registered within six months from the time of opening for public worship and it must be governed by trustees selected by *jama'at* and approved by *waqfs* board. In the event of no trustees *waqf* board may appoint trustees from the *jama'at*. This resulted in mosques to be governed by a board of trustees from this time.

Research Methodology

This study employed the qualitative method which comprises multi- techniques. First, library survey was conducted to present the theoretical perspective and to lay the foundations of analysis used for the discussion in support of the findings. Second, it is built on the interview survey (quantitative), observation supplemented with interviews, and documents (qualitative) to gain empirical evidences. This study is a constructed reality, so it mainly focuses on meaning, ideas, and practices as the research has

been designed and carried out using a critical and evaluation approach. The research uses both inductive and deductive processes. The inductive process is used not to provide or disapprove a predetermined hypothesis but rather, to discover or uncover any interesting concepts or variables of mosque management. So, the entire process is deductive and explanatory.

The managerial practices of the mosques was approached via interpretive qualitative approach of the data received by survey, qualitative analyses of the data from observation, and available records and documents, and cross reference to the various views of the experts. Here, it was felt necessary to know: how the mosques are governed? How the members of the board of trustees are selected? What is the board size and organizational dynamic of the mosques people. How do mosque's board process the meetings? How the board execute the functions of the leadership role of trustees? How do the mosques make decision and manage the volunteers? What type of financial system, the mosques apply? What type of staff do the mosques possess? Whether the mosques developed the management policies and procedures?

At the time of data collection, there were 2000 mosques in Sri Lanka. For interview survey: the 68 electorates of 21 districts, where considerable numbers of Muslims are living were selected for sampling. Number of samples was allocated proportional to the number of mosques in each electorate. Mosques were selected within the electorate randomly. However, to an extent, the characteristics of the mosques such as location, type, ownership and ideological differences were also considered in sampling. The survey supplemented by observation was conducted from 218 respondents from the mosques. The persons contacted for unstructured interviews include the Director of Department of Religious and Cultural Affairs, the eminent Scholars, Muslim writers, Islamic activists, leaders of the Islamic movements, and the segment of Muslim professionals. The majority were leading figures in Islamic works. There were however, very few relevant persons who were failed to be interviewed, as they were not available, busy or sick at the fieldwork time. When electing interviewees a conscious effort was made to include people from different ideologies

and background. However, the effort to include as many as women, was not possible except one woman.

Results and Findings

According to the survey, almost all the mosques (94%) affirm that they are governed by its board of trustees in responding to the question of "how the mosque is governed. In the meanwhile very few mosques (2%) are managed either by a private or individual body or person and few other mosques(2%) are governed by their parent organizations. For instance a *Tawhid Jama'at* branch mosque is directly managed by the *jama'at* itself. Moreover very few mosques (2%) are controlled by an appointed board of a particular *jama'at*. It is noteworthy that the *jum'ah* mosques are governed by a mode other than board of trustees.

Nevertheless, the management of ordinary mosques can be represented by two kinds of models, based on their relationship with *jum'ah* mosques as subordinates or independences. It is found through observation that most of the ordinary mosques that are located in the vicinity of *jum'ah* mosques of high Muslim density population and are often seen as subordinate to *jum'ah* mosques. They are managed by a committee mostly appointed by *jum'ah* mosques. This committee mostly functions under a chairman of an administrative member of *jum'ah* mosques and the revenue and expenditure are usually under the control of the *Jum'ah* mosques; and main religious celebrations are also organized by the *jum'ah* mosques. However, the committee authorized to collect donations and have responsibilities including mosque maintenance, providing daily necessities, repairing or enlarging the mosque, purchasing or renewing utilities, organizing minor religious functions etc. For instance ten ordinary mosques in Sainthamarutu seem to be under centralized management of its *jum'ah* mosque.

A number of initially dependent ordinary mosques have developed and gradually become independent and separated from the administration of *jum'ah* mosques. These self-administered ordinary mosques have often challenged many traditional ideas, and exercised a profound and lasting impact. Generally

an ordinary mosque is small in size and has fewer functions than a *jum'ah* mosque. Therefore, the management and finance of their revenue and expenditure are usually simple. Most of the ordinary mosques are registered, but some are not regarded as independent because of its economic management is overseen by *jum'ah* mosques. Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs also regulate not to consider ordinary mosque as financially independent.

It is argued that the Act ensures the democratization of mosque authority. By rule the administration of mosques by these elites and *maraikars* has been largely taken over by trustees selected by *jama'at* and appointed by the *waqf* board. Consequently, power of elitism to control mosque was considerably reduced in the present scenario where much of the previously described local Muslim social organization have been disappeared or on the verge of disappearing. However, there are some salient features yet seen to have survived, particularly to a significant extent in mosque administration that individuals who exercise control over the administration of the mosques and their families being held in rather high esteem among the community. More obviously the *kudi* system in the Eastern Sri Lanka is still a strong factor in selection of board members and organizational structure of the mosque.

The investigation through the open-end interview question⁵ and observation into the Methods for selecting governing board trustees each have significant, independent effects on management of mosque and its efficiency. This reveals important actors and their preferences, and describes the differences in mosque trustees' selection. At Sri Lankan mosques, high percentage of the board of trustees is selected directly by *jama'at*. There is relatively a little variance in this method, where the members are elected by proposing and seconding of some bodies in the public meetings that often use to be held after *jum'ah* prayer. Sometime *jama'ats* are given a notice or open advertisement to call for board members. Sometimes, elections are conducted to choose members in competitive occasions. It is praiseworthy that the *'ulama* of the village or divisional branch of "All Ceylon *Jamiyyat al-Ulama*"⁶ are reported to supervise the selection process in some mosques.

Board of trustees in many *jum'ah* mosques in the Eastern region are still being selected from the *kudi* tradition. One or more *maraikars* from each *kudi* of village, depending on their relation to mosque governance and number of people belonging to, are selected to board of trustees. For instance, one of the mother villages, Sainthamaritujum'ah mosque board consist of twenty three members. All of them are selected from sixty *maraikars* of thirteen *kudis* of the village. They were lifetime members of mosque committee until the constitution was revised in 1999. Similarly eleven members of the board of Maruthmunai An-noor *jum'ah* Mosque are selected from forty two *mataikars* of seven *kudis* since 1989. However, some of the villages of the region revised this tradition to include the *maraikars* just as one representing body of several. A long-standing criticism of this process, some people view it as non-Islamic, and major barrier to bring efficient, pious and conscientious Muslims to the board⁷. Nevertheless, a religious scholar approves this tradition and recognizes this working system as it leads Muslims of this region to function smoothly and maintain the mosques with easy conformity (Athambawa, 2008). It is noteworthy to compare *kudi* tradition with the pre-Islamic "tribe" of Arabs. Islam firmly condemns "*al-'asabiyyah*" (tribalism) as "Whoever advocates *al-'asabiyyah* is not one of us" (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, 1998). On the other hand Islam recognizes some tribal element as it protects all useful and productive social groupings and associations. The main clauses of "*al-Wathiqah*" endorse payment of blood money and redeem of prisons according to the tribal custom (Mohamed Berween, 2003).

Apart from these methods of selection, there are minor practices in that: some boards are formed by members who are invited to serve mosques. *Tatiqah* mosques practices wield their *shaykh's* major influence in selecting all board members. Similarly, *'amirs* of Islamic organizations exercise authority to select members of board for their mosques. The trustees of few private's mosques are selected by their founding families. In the last three methods, the trustees seem to be appointed as life time members of the board in their respective mosques. There are some Muslim regions controlled by centralized bodies namely "Mosque Federation", "Islamic Foundation", "*Majlis*

ash-Shura” etc. These bodies are more likely to exercise controlling process of board selection and management for the mosques located under their administrative area. The controlling mechanism is relatively varies depending on their administrative structures. For instance, forty members of *Majlis ash-Shura* in Sammanthurai meet to select eight members out of fifteen trustees⁸ and they have right to vote for candidates to this eight membership in the board in a competitive scenario.

Generally there is a common view that the practices for the selection to the board of trustees for mosques are not based on the guidelines described in the *qur'an* and the internal and external actors threatening the whole process. An Islamic activist points out that,

.... the events clearly show the total involvement of wealth, and political people in selection of trustees and sometimes they use thuggery to dominate the process that eliminates efficient, knowledgeable persons from mosques. As result there are trustees to govern majority mosques, who no even minor knowledge about Islam.”

Particularly, the anecdotal evidence suggests that the exercising of political control and involvement over selecting new board members for the mosque are lager and prominent. The different kinds of instruments or combinations of instruments to acquire influence over the selection of new trustees is widely observed. Political control has several common indicators of power, including its contribution to mosque programs and *jama'at*. In practice, some political control is more likely to be involved in direct appointments of trustees. Or it may emerge endogenously from negotiating with concerned parties. Under the government structure, *waqf* board is empowered to appoint (and sometime remove) trustees of mosques simultneously when its director and seven members are appointed by the minister. This is more likely to enhance political exercising authority in selecting members. Consequently, this affects the nature of the board in managing the mosques.

Organizational structure, process, and functions

The Muslims of Sri Lanka mostly rely on a very traditional model of operating mosques, with a few exceptions. Thus the organization has a simple structure. The structural aspects of boards that were examined are: its size, the existence and use of sub-committees and the availability of job description for key position, term of the office, meeting frequency and process and training for board members. The board size ranges from 5 to 30 members and median overall board size is 11 members ranging from eight to thirteen. Table 1 illustrates the board size which significantly does not vary depending on factors such as type and affiliation. There is a minor exception that the board sizes in *zaviyah* mosques are relatively smaller than other types. However it was observed that the asset size and capacity and capability to provide the services to the *jama'at* also determine the board size. The boards are resized whenever new programs are introduced to the mosques. Therefore, as it is the commended practice, the mosques, to a certain extent, review its board size periodically to determine the most appropriate size to ensure effective governance and to meet their mission and goals.

Table 1:
Median and mean of board size of mosque trustee

Categories	Median	Mean
Type		
<i>Jum'ah</i> Mosque (N=143)	11	12.1
<i>Takkiyah</i> (N=35)	11	11.9
Ordinary Mosque (N=18)	11	12.7
<i>Zaviyyah</i> (N=7)	9	8.9
Other Type		
Affiliation		
<i>Tabligh Jama'at</i> (N=67)	11	12.3
<i>Madhhab Shafi'i</i> (N=54)	11	11.3
Non, General (N=32)	11	12.1
<i>Tawhid Jama'at</i> (N=16)	11	12.9
<i>Tariqah</i> (N=25)	13	12
Affiliated to others (N=5)	8	12
All (N=203)	11	11.95

Source: Survey

The larger boards do not mean better boards. Their effect depends on how efficiently and effectively board members share and fulfill their responsibilities. When a board exceeds a certain size and its operation becomes more complex, the board usually finds it difficult to carry out all of its responsibilities efficiently without dividing up into smaller groups or committees. These groups or committees conduct a detailed analysis of specific areas such as fund raising, planning, budgeting, or programs before they are discussed by the full board. This structure offers several advantages such as distribution of the workload, a more informal discussion of the pros and cons of various issues before the board for a formal resolution etc. Nevertheless, the use of sub-committees is not a wide spread practice of mosques management in Sri Lanka. However an examination of mosque constitutions and souvenirs would have found the references to sub-committees of mosques. That would probably have been limited to the possible use of a building committee. Today larger mosques are likely to extend to have more committees to focus on the mosque on particular issues. These committees might include outside persons for their expertise, generally chaired by trustees. For some types of subcommittees, for instance, Sainthamaruthu *Jum'ah* mosque includes finance committee, development committee for *Qur'an* madrasah and Islamic education, *janazah* welfare committee, *zakat* committee, disciplinary committee and audit committee.

Most generally a mosque's board of trustees consists of at least three regular positions namely a president or a chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. Some mosques include additional personnel such as deputy or vice president, an assistant secretary and an assistant treasurer. Some of the mosques developed by-laws specifying the number of officers and state the process by which they are selected. They also simply describe the power and duties of the key officers. In practice, the president is always a person of authority who is respected by all the parties concerned. The secretary is responsible for recording information accurately and maintaining the official records of meeting. The treasurer is responsible for dealing with finance and records. The deputy or vice president

mostly covers up duties of president on his absence. An assistant secretary or assistant treasurer is likely to assist the secretary or treasurer respectively in their responsibilities. Similarly few mosques outline the descriptions of jobs for sub-committees to be done. However most of the mosques surprisingly have no written 'job descriptions. In addition, as it is previously observed, the different opinions about mission of the mosque and the situation of not sharing a common mission by the board lead to the non-availability of firm and clear role and responsibilities of board officials and members.

The term of office of mosque board, in the case of the majority of the mosques' trustees (60%) are appointed for period of three years. The system that seems to work well is to have a three-year term with one opportunity for re-election of members. Trustee rotation offers a process for replacing weak board members with enthusiastic and committed trustees. However, all members are selected for the term of more than five years for some of the mosques (11%). Further it is found that some trustees assume their role position and serve the mosque indefinitely. There is a process for reappointment of a member several times due to no restricting on the number of times a trustee can be re-selected in most of mosques. A two year term in some mosques (15%) seem to be the shorter.

Frequency and process of board meetings are important management practices to strategically plan and achieve the mission and goals of an organization. Frequency of board meeting in mosques is mostly once a month. In addition, the board may call for a meeting in the event of exigencies. All the meetings are being held in the mosques and usually held on Fridays but to the less extent, over weekends and holidays. In most of the mosques, the announcement for an immediate special board meeting is made. This practice provides adequate preparation to discuss important issues meaningfully at the meeting. However, the meeting is convened by secretary with previous notice in writing and set of agenda to the members in some mosques. The usual routine tasks absorb much of the meetings. Therefore, it lacks a clearly structured agenda

with priority of important items. The minutes of a meeting as format of report, is read out to the members in the following meeting for their approval and correction if needed. Thus, there is much room for following up actions agreed by the board. The quorum for the board meeting is likely to be absolute majority of total members.

To equip mosques trustees and those at the helm of mosque leadership with the necessary administrative and management competencies, as well as to familiarize them with the nature and scope of work at the mosque there are no formal training or induction programs covering management aspects in mosques in Sri Lanka. However, the department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs is conducting a series of seminars for mosque trustees in each district of Sri Lanka. In terms of objective, contents and strategy, these seminars aimed at providing awareness and preliminary understanding to the trustees, rather than offering a wide and personalized training. The department agrees that training must be ambitious and continuous but it points out the questionable background of most of the trustees to a professional training and their desire for training, which is always not notable (Navavi, 2008).

The board members must be able to handle the conflict among themselves and between the board and staff and between board and the *jama'at* constructively. In relation to mosques' ability to manage the conflict and to identify the areas of potential disagreement, the respondents were asked if the mosque had experienced any disagreement or conflict in each of the six areas. The possible responds ranged from "not a problem" to a "very serious" problem. The first column in table 2 below summarizes the percentage of mosques reporting that each area was not a problem at all. The second and third column lists the percentage reporting problems of "moderately" or "very serious" levels respectively. And the third column lists the percentage of responses of "very serious" only.

Table 2:
Mosque experience of disagreements or conflicts in the following areas, during the last five years

Area	Not a problem	Moderately	Serious	Very serious
<i>Fiqh</i> /Islamic issues (N=199)	64.3%	28.6%	4.0%	3.0%
Maintenance/Trustee selection (N=202)	53.5%	35.6%	8.4%	2.5%
Decision making (N=200)	58%	34%	6.5%	1.5%
Program priorities (N=192)	57.8%	34.4%	7.3%	0.5%
Money, finance or budget (N=193)	38.9%	32.1%	22.3%	6.7%
Any others (n=5)	60%	20%	20%	

Source: Survey

Slightly more than one out of three of the respondent mosques reported having experience of disagreement or conflict over *fiqh* or Islamic issues during the past five years, with 28.6% reported problems at a moderate level and 7% serious or very serious level. About half of the mosques (46.5%) have reported problems in maintenance or trustees but it is mostly (35.6%) a moderate problem. In other two areas listed as decision-making, program priorities, the considerable mosques (about 34%) are experiencing moderate problems and few mosques (around 8%) face either serious or very serious problem. Money, finance or budgets are the areas in which disagreement or conflicts are experienced. Majority of the mosques (61.1%) report having experience of disagreement or conflict over those aspects, either moderately (32.1%), seriously (22.3%) or very seriously (6.7%). This clearly indicates the lack of managerial system of finance in the mosques. Very few mosques report any type of additional problems. Of the relatively few that did report other problems, that are described as "structural" or related to interpersonal or faction. Only some mosques (13.7%) report having experience of a "very serious" problem in any of the areas.

The management suggests approaches that may help board make better decision. The mosques need to make strategic choices and therefore they need to expose managerial assumptions and operations to get

the attainment of consensus in decision-making. The mosques were asked to answer to the question “who hold final decision making power in the mosques”. This is for dimension measures whether the mosques are doing the right things and for view of the variation.

The responses illustrate that in most of the mosques (69%) the *majlis ash-shura* in the form of board of trustees has the final decision making power. About quarter percentage of the mosques, in that power is held by chairperson of the board. It is relatively very rare case, the others (3%), that is described as *amir* of Islamic organization, *shaykh* of a *ufi* order or imam hold the final decision power. Another question related to authority and decision making was “which of the following do you prefer is the most proper approach in making Islamic decision? In responding to the question that is given in table3, the mosques report that they mostly (71.2%) prefer to make Islamic decisions by referring directly to the *qur’an* and *sunnah* and following an interpretation that takes into account the purposes of the texts as well as modern circumstances. Therefore, most mosques in Sri Lanka refer to the *qur’an* and *sunnah* for searching answer to solve the problem, at the same time they are willing to consider the context of the texts and the modern circumstances to which the law is to be applied. However considerable percentage of mosques (17.8%) prefers the well-established views of a particular *madhhab* (school of thought) and some mosques (9.6%) prefer only literal interpretation of Islamic source texts. It is important to note here that most of the responding mosques affirm their affiliation to the *shafi’i* (76.4%) prefer directly to Islamic sources and follow an interpretation based on modern circumstances.

Table 3: Mosque approaches to make an Islamic decision

Refer directly to the <i>qur’an</i> and <i>sunnah</i> and follow an interpretation that takes into account its purposes and modern circumstances	71.2%
Refer directly to the <i>qur’an</i> and <i>sunnah</i> and follow a literal interpretation	17.8%
Follow a well-established view of a particular <i>madhhab</i>	9.6%
None of the above	1.4%

(N= 208) Source: Survey

Volunteer management and leadership are not well-received by the mosques in Sri Lanka as the response rate is not up to the mark. Respondents were asked how easy or difficult it has been to recruit people for roles of volunteer in the mosque. Table4 shows the frequency of each of three possible responses. Less than half of the respondent mosques (43.9%) report not being able to find enough people to serve voluntarily while, around similar percentage of mosques (40.9%) reports that, despite the challenge in finding volunteers they are able to do so. The remaining mosques, small in number (15.2%) say that they are able to find enough volunteers even though it is a continual challenge.

**Table 4:
The situation of mosque in getting people as volunteers (Percentage giving each response)**

No problem getting people to accept volunteer leadership	15.2%
Recruiting volunteer leadership is continual challenge but possibility to find enough willing	43.9%
No enough people willing to serve	40.9%

(N= 132) Source: Survey

Characteristics of the head of management

The interview survey about selection and characteristic of the selected head of management in the mosques in the capacity of administrative and executive leadership in relation to the board and staff in the mosque governance. In addition, the efficiency of the board considerably falls on his shoulder as he is exhibiting the board behaviors such as facilitating interaction in the board, envisioning changes and innovation for the organization, providing useful and helpful information to the board, initiating and maintaining structure for the board, promoting board accomplishment and productivities, mediating tensions and resolving differences. According to the responses, the head of management in the mosques is a formal leader and he mostly (80.6%) holds the title “the president”. His title is a “chief trustee” in some mosques (15.8%). The Islamic title “*amir*” (Arabic term to denote leader) is rarely used in Sri Lankan mosques (2.9%). In a mosque, the leader holds none of these titles; he is specified by “*shaykh*”.

The investigation reveals some confusion as little is known about the process of choosing a new head of board management from empirical perspective. It is found that one of the key responsibilities of newly selected board members is selection of their chief to provide leadership. Therefore, when there is a new board, most likely one from the selected members is chosen as chief for his relative popularity among the community by members or otherwise directly by *jama'at*. The selection process in *kudi* tradition is known; there is still strong impact of tradition, that the management head is mostly selected from the prominent *kudis* of the village, as key officials are mostly chosen by rotation from the particular *kudis*. For instance, An-noor *jum'ah* mosque has a process that the key officials for the board; president, general secretary and treasurer are being selected from three *kudis* namely "Yavunakkudi", "Chairman Mohammad Hajikkudi" and "Vadakkanakudi". In few mosques the head is appointed by *amir* of the organization, sheikh of *ufi* order or founding family. Furthermore, some mosques fail to realize that a change in head can be a positive experience, affording them the opportunity to reaffirm organizational values and analyze needs not only for the present but for the future, as they have life time board chief who might be replaced by death. It is praiseworthy that the management head is preferably chosen from experienced members who served the board for several years, for their familiarity with the operation of the mosque.

Table 5 shows the selected characteristics of mosque management heads. They are generally not similar in terms of age and they are mostly over forty years of age. As the mosque people seem to view age of forty and above as preferable for mosque governance, arguing the attainment of the prophet hood at the age of forty in the prophet biography (*seerah*). Therefore, the majority of mosque's chiefs (53.1) belong to age group forty to fifty five years. Further, some people are interested in serving voluntarily to the community during the latter period of their age especially after the retirement, considerable heads are (27.8%) in the age group fifty five to sixty nine. This is witnessed by 11.9% of them retired being persons. But nearly half of chiefs (44.3%) have business outside the mosques as traders or self-employees. This

obviously indicates that the traders still continue their historical role in mosques governance as it is mentioned above. The professional in medical, legal firms and management etc. are relatively very few (3.8% and 5.4%) in mosques leadership and their role is still minimal in the governance.

Table 5:
Characteristics of management head in the responded mosques
(Percentage of each category)

Category	Percentage
<u>Age (N=194)</u>	
25 - 39 years	13.9%
40 - 54 years	53.1%
55 - 69 years	27.8%
70 years and above	5.2%
<u>Profession (N=185)</u>	
Retiree	11.9%
Trader/Self-employee	44.3%
Educator	18.4%
Farmer/fisherman	10.3%
Medicine, engineering or law professional	3.8%
Manager/ Administrator	5.4%
Others	6%
<u>General Education (N=168)</u>	
No formal education	2.4%
Primary education	16.1%
secondary education	64.8%
University degree	9.5%
Professional qualification	7.1%
<u>Islamic Education (N=123)</u>	
Elementary knowledge	32.5%
<i>Qur'an</i> Madrasah training	45.5%
Mawlawi Alim certificate	19.5%
Graduate degree of Islamic field	2.4%

Source: Survey

The table also highlights the response to the questions to examine the level of heads of management in general and Islamic education that is needed to understand the management system and financial possibilities which might affect the quality of governance. The table describes the educational qualification of the management heads and how they vary across sampled mosques with different levels in public as well as Islamic education. Under general education category, the vast majority of the heads (64.8) are qualified with secondary school education. Nearly one out of five mosques has the head who received primary education or no formal education (16.1% + 2.4%). Relatively small number of mosque board headed by chiefs who obtained graduate degrees (9.5%) or professional training (7.15). The

educational level of management heads in Islam as they are governing a prominent Islamic institution is not remarkable. The great majority of them gained either some kind of Islamic education through *qur'an madrasah* training (45.5%) or elementary knowledge of Islam (32.5%). However, nearly one out of five mosques management (19.5%) under the leadership of those were trained in Islamic way and received the *Mawlawi'Alim* certificate from the Islamic religious colleges. Fewer chiefs (2.4%) have a degree qualification in Islam.

Conclusion

Historically, the Sri Lankan mosques had a different type of governance influenced by social and economic factors. The enactment of "the Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trust or *Wakf* Act in 1956 in controlling the administrative structure of mosques. However, the traditional mode of mosques administration seems to be still continuing to some extent. However, the findings show that most of the mosques are governed by a board of trustees selected by the *jama'at*. The *kudy* tradition of Eastern Sri Lanka

is still found to dominate in the *jama'at* structure and the selection.

The traditional model of mosque governance has a simple structure in organization. The size of the board varies depending on the type and function of a mosque but sub-committees is not widely practiced. The board mostly consists of common key officers namely: president, secretary and treasurer. The considerable number of mosques articulated by-laws that simply describe the job of these key officers. The term of office of the board ranges 2 to 5 years. The board meeting is usually convened once a month but there is no systematically structured agenda. It is reported that the board of vast majority of the mosques are mostly able to manage the conflict and there was no potential disagreement in all affairs of management except of finance.

Decision-making is an important process of the management, the *majilis ash-shurain* the form of a board makes and executes the decision in majority of mosques. The board chief holds the power to make decision in some of the mosques. Moreover, the great

Endnotes

¹ There was an exceptional case when the government gazettes few famous mosques and shrines premises as holy lands.

² A word in Tamil language means arbitrator. As it was noted in previous chapter they served as arbitrators in cases of disputes within the community.

³ A Tamil word signifies 'tribe' or 'clan'. Every individual Muslim whoever male or female takes the *kudif* mother, tracing his or her decent in the in the maternal line. *Kudis* were named after an esteem ancestor, possibly a symbolic, occupational, mythic system. However it is not reflect to be relevant to the nature of the work of *kudi*. Each *kudi* has chief addressed as *maraikar* and exercised a considerable power in socio, cultural religious matters concerning the members of the *kudiin* olden days. A *maraikaris* mostly succeeded by his sisters' sons probable who got married his daughter. The origin and structure of this *kudi* social system is discussed in Dennis B. McGilvray, "Arabs, moors and muslims: Sri lankan muslim ethnicity in regional perspective," Contributions to Indian Sociology 32, no. 2 (1998); M.Z. Mohideen, "The kudi maraikayars," Moor Islamic Cultural Home Souvenir 1965.

⁴ A Tamil word means who owns large tracts of paddy fields and subordinated by various people related to paddy farming.

⁵ The mosques were asked to state method they follow to select trustees or board of management.

⁶ The All Ceylon *Jammiyyathul Ulama* (ACJU) is organization for religious scholars. It was established in the year 1924 and was incorporated by Act No 51 of 2000, of the Parliament of the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka. It works for the Muslim Community's spiritual and temporal advancement through its fifty five district and divisional branches in Sri Lanka.

⁷ Field notes, May13, 2008.

⁸ All 15 board trustees are selected as follow: 8 from *Majlish ash-Shoora*, 5 from 5 *jun'ah* mosques, 1 from *Jammiyyat al-Ulama* and 1 from *kudimaraikars*.

majority of mosques adapt an approach that directly refers to *qur'an* and *sunnah* with interpretation that takes into account its purposes and modern circumstance. The volunteer management is an important element in a non-profit organization but, it is not a well-received aspect by the mosques in Sri Lanka. Relatively knowledgeable and experienced member is used to be chosen from the selected trustees. However, the board chief is mostly aged between 40 – 54, either a trader or a self-employee. He had completed only a secondary school education and *qur'an madrasah* (Islamic) training.

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