THE BEGINNINGS OF HAJJ ORGANIZATION IN TURKEY
(1978-1981)

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Introduction

One of the five fundamentals of Islam is the duty of Hajj (Pilgrimage) to Mecca. Historically and today a large number of Muslims, regardless of their color, language and ethnic origin, get together at a particular time each year in the Holy Places. The Hajj is the medium of expressing of human inability against the sublime powers of God and seen by the Muslims as an instance of Doomsday in this world owing to the large attendance.

Despite the temporal and spiritual benefits of the Hajj, the journey of Hajj, in our age, with the advancements in transportation and communication, has increasingly become easier and the number of the participants have sharply increased. These developments have been posing a particular problem for the modern nation states concerning the question of how to organize such a largely-attended-journey as the Hajj. In this essay, I shall attempt to give a glimpse of history of the Hajj organization in the Modern Turkish Republic, especially of the early history of large scale organizations that began after 1950’s.

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The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey gives freedom of traveling to the citizens under article 18, and freedom of religion and conscience with article 19. The Turkish people have been using this Constitutional right to go Hajj for a long time now.

It should be strongly emphasized that there are huge differences between the journeys made to other countries and the journey made to Saudi Arabia during the season of Hajj. The Hajj as a form of prayer needs to be performed within a certain time limit and at certain places, a fact which makes the case, today, that all the participating millions happen to be in the same places at the same time. For this reason, the duty of the governments should not be limited merely to giving passports, supplying foreign currency and conducting some necessary bureaucracies. The government and the related governmental and non-governmental organizations should increase their involve in improving the smoothness and betterment of the organization of Hajj journey. The various governments of Turkey seems to be aware of the special case of this great duty as they have already made certain arrangements to make the performance of this duty in an organized manner.

But after the experiences gained from the past experiences, it was clear that during the journeys before and after arriving the destinations as well as the time of the performance of the Hajj and the chaos continued to persist and people were observed to be facing many problems in the Holy Places. After these initial organizations, there arose a general consensus among the envos of the Department of Religious Affairs who had been sent to Mecca, Madina and Jeddah then for a long time as well as by the reports of the Turkish Embassy in Jeddah, that the organization of the Hajj journeys should be conducted by the Department of Religious Affairs. There has been some big changes made in the rules and regulations related to Hajj. It is without hesitation that with every new application, there will be some problems. With goodwill and determination and with the amendments to be made in the applications according to the changing needs, the problems will be solved and the organization will be better with every passing year.

1-The rules and regulations related to Hajj until 1979 and theirs evaluations:

The administration of the matters related to the beliefs, prayers and moral duties in the Turkish Republic has been delegated to the Department of Religious
Affairs, according to the 1st article of the decree no. 633 on the Establishment of the Department of Religious Affairs. Since no clear provision is present in the said decree about the obligation of the Hajj, a unit for the affairs of Hajj has yet to be formed within the organization of the Department.

Upon the developments mentioned above and the Embassy reports, a new Declaration was published with the decision of the Council of Ministers dated 28/9/1974 and no. 7/8984. Later on, changes were made on some articles and these changes were published in the Official Gazette, no. 16388 dated 25/8 1978. The workouts of these rules and regulations will be summarized now.

The rules and regulations consists of four parts. In the first part, “The Hajj Commission” and “Permanent Hajj Committee” were founded and the members of these Commission and the Committee as well as their working conditions were explained. In the said rules and regulations, it is decided that the Hajj Commission meets six months prior to Hajj season and the permanent Hajj Committee meets continuously under the coordination of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs.

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The second part of the rules and regulations explains the passport arrangements; the third part explains the matters concerning the journey and the means of transportation; and finally, the fourth part speaks of the things to be made in case a pilgrim dies. In the rules and regulations, it is observed that only the part of the journey within the country is put into order and decisions do not extend abroad. Aside from this, in the years after the jurisdictions to be applied within the country were rejected according to the reports submitted.

In 1974 a new amendment was proposed to the decree no. 633 by the initiation of the Directorate of the Department of Religious Affairs who prepared and submitted the proposal to the Parliament. In this proposal, the establishment of a unit do undertake the Hajj affairs was foreseen. This proposal did not go through, but “Directorate of Hajj Affairs” was established within the Central Organization of the Department with the decision of the Council of Ministers no. 7/12993 dated 10/12 1976.
The Department of Religious Affairs taking into consideration the probability of the project to be passed on as a decree, and in order to prepare to this expected new situation, had organized a Hajj journey through the land in 1977 in cooperation with the Turkish Religious Foundation. This experiment, though on a small scale, was successful. In 1978 the decisions and the precautions taken by the Government of the Turkish Republic for the Hajj season was considerably different than of the previous years. These decisions and precautions although not enough to solve the problem of Hajj in Turkey in all, should be accepted as an important step towards the solution of the problem.

The evaluations of these decisions and precautions and their application can be summarized as follows:

a. In 1978, an application period of 15 days were given to those who want to go on to Hajj.

The limitations of the application period with a certain date; was proved beneficial because the number of the candidates was known before and the necessary planning and transitions were carried out and the preparations inside and outside the country were concluded accordingly. But the 15 day period was found short and in the years after this was fixed as 1 month.

b. In 1978 again, for the first time, the single type of clothes were made obligatory for the candidates. The purpose of these applications was to have the candidates in an orderly form and to ease the finding of those that might lost themselves in a foreign land due to lack of foreign language.

c. In 1978, permission was not given to those who went on to Hajj previously due to the space.

As is known, Hajj is obligatory once in a lifetime to those Moslems who are wealthy enough. Making more than once, however, is considered as Hajj in vain, though it still gets rewards without doubt. Until recently, Hajj was done with ease and comfort in the Holy Places, i.e. without any restrictions. Today with the developments in transport and communications, the number of people coming to the Holy Places increased tremendously and the facilities here are no longer sufficient.
for such a huge number of people, especially in Mecca, Madina and Mena. Now, one can very often come across people who were crushed, crying and dying due to immense crowd in the Holy Places.

Every Muslim who wants to perform this duty of Hajj once in his life-time goes on this journey wishing to make his prayer in comfort. This is his natural right, but it is also true that he would not be able to fulfill his duties as he expects due to this new phenomenon. Seen from this perspective, The Government’s decision to restrict the Hajj to once seems to be appropriate, as it allows those who have not yet performed their duties for the first time, to perform it in a more comfortable way. From the perspective of freedom of travel articulated in the 18th article of the Constitution, however, it is open for criticism. It suffices to say here that, this is not only a problem of Turkey, as we know that all Muslim countries experience the same problem. It is our belief that to prevent the grave events as much as deaths due to crushing in the crowd, a congress among the Muslims has to be organized and the subject must be discussed in detail in order to find a solution that will satisfy all the parties. We will return this question in the conclusion.

2. The Hajj Organization until 1978

As can be understood from the explanation until here, in the period before 1978, the Hajj Journeys were handled by private companies; but the Governments have established rules for these journeys which are different from other travels abroad. In 1978, Department of Religious Affairs, a government establishment, together with Turkish Religious Foundation had organized an experimental Hajj Journey. 4468 Pilgrim candidates joined this journey under the leadership of Tayyar Altıkulaç, Head of the Department of Religious Affairs. On this journey, our citizens were helped in passport and exchange transactions and the visas were obtained in groups.

In 1978 Hajj Caravan of the Department of Religious Affairs, the expenses were calculated and announced before hand; the carrier coaches collected the Pilgrim candidates from appointed places. 76 coaches gathered in the gathering place in İskenderun at prefixed day and night. Foreign currencies were distributed to the pilgrims as short a time as two hours and the journey started out in three convoys.
In 1978 each and every coach had a religious officer, and for each of ten coaches, a group leader and an assistant were appointed. For the planes, one religious officer was appointed for every forty candidate. In each group, one ambulance was present; and for all groups, three specialized doctors and seven health officers were allocated.

Outside the country, all arrangements were conducted by the official people on duty, and the candidates were trained in various topics. They were also trained by religious officers on how to fulfill rites of Hajj in a perfect manner.

The pilgrims were settled in the houses that were previously rented in Mecca and Madina. In Mecca, Madina and Mena, liaison tents were erected and here officers were on duty day and night, and services were rendered to the candidates on 24-hour basis. The 1978 Hajj organization contributed invaluable experience to the Department of Religious Affairs for the subsequent Hajj organizations.

3. The Hajj Journey Organizations Between 1979 and 1981

In the Republic of Turkey, the rules and regulations related to Hajj and applied until 1979 were noted in the related reports far from being sufficient, and the foreseen decree amendment proposal, mentioned above was delayed due to some reasons. Therefore, necessity to fill in the gaps in the rules and regulations arose. Upon this necessity a new set of rules and regulations were put to practice upon the decision of the Council of Ministers no. 7/17439 dated 26/4/1979. The fundamentals of the decision of the Council of Ministers can be summarized as follows:

a. The Hajj Journeys will be handled by the Department of Religious Affairs and no individual or private establishment, company or agency can organize Hajj journeys.

b. A Hajj Commission will consist of the following members: Under the control and coordination of the assistant Prime Minister, Undersecretaries of the Ministries of Interior, Finance, Health and Social Assistance, Customs and State Monopolies, Communications, Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Head of the Department of Religious Affairs and the representative of the Red Crescent General Directorate.

c. The Department of Religious Affairs will announce every year the duration of the Hajj after consulting the Commission of Hajj. The citizens who wish to
go on Hajj will apply to the Department of Religious Affairs in waiting four months before the Holiday of Sacrifice.

d. The Department will prepare the accommodations in Saudi Arabia in advance and the foreign currency for this will be supplied by the Ministry of Finance.

e. The candidates will obtain a health report of being in satisfactory health conditions if their age is over 60 for land and 65 for air transportation.

f. Those candidates which have not been to the Hajj between 1979 and 1981 will be eligible to join the Hajj Journey.

In the days when the preparation of the mentioned decision of the Council of Ministers was made, it was not possible to establish a working capital to handle the financial matters of the Hajj organization. The Department, therefore, was instructed to cooperate with the Religious Foundation of Turkey. So, the Hajj affairs in Turkey obtained a status of an organization that runs “In the management of the State handled by the funds formed from the money of the candidates”

In the decision of the Council of Ministry, arrangement of other details related to the Hajj journeys have been delegated to the Department of Religious Affairs in consultation with the Hajj Commission.

4. Department of Religious Affairs’ Regulation of Hajj 1979

Department of Religious Affairs’ Regulation of Hajj was announced with the official Gazettee dated 24/ 4/ 1979, numbered 16650 and has been effective from then on. With this Regulation the following matters were tied to certain rules and conditions:

The formalities about the declaration of Hajj period,

application to go to Hajj,

passport,

health report,

vaccinations,

the conditions required for the candidates of Hajj,
the settlement of Hajj Bureaus and their coordination, 
visas and foreign exchange arrangements, 
formalities about the transportation means, 
appointment and training of the personnel, 
training of Hajj candidates 
and liquidation of the accounts of those who cannot go to Hajj.

In sum, with this regulation, official methods and procedures from the application to go to the Hajj till the end of the Hajj were determined.

Following the decision taken at the Board of Ministers in 1979, with the concerning regulation issued, several changes took place in 1980. Moreover, from 1980 on, conformity and unanimity in implementation was secured with informational circulars and bulletins about changes; and new developments in regulations were periodically sent to Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Director General of Security and Religious Affairs' foundation of Turkey.

5. First Actual Official Hajj Organization

Up to now, the improvements in the regulations that arrange the Hajj in the past years till 1980 are explained. In the following pages, we will attempt to account how this regulations have been implemented between 1979-1981 and come to a conclusion.

A. Works Done Within The Country

For the implementation of the regulations mentioned in the past occasions, the first thing done was the organization of a seminar aiming with the participation of the regional muftis between 25-27 May 1979. In this seminar, the participants were informed of basic principles of the decree and regulation and of the duties that should be performed by the muftis in the areas under their own jurisdiction.

Following the decree no 213 dated 31/5 1979, Hajj organization has been officially launched and with the proposal of mufti and the approval of city governor, a Hajj Office has been established in each city. Recruitment of the necessary personnel has been realized for the Hajj Offices. To those who intend to make the Hajj it's
announced that they should apply to Hajj offices or direct to the Department between the dates June 1st -July the 2nd of 1979. All necessary documents for Hajj candidates have been printed thanks to financial support given by the Turkish Foundation of Religious Affairs, and distributed to Hajj offices.

Due to the daily fluctuations in TL against foreign exchanges candidates are required to deposit some of their one of the Branches’ of Turkish Agricultural Bank.

A dossier was kept for each application made to Hajj offices. After the deadline of application period, the number of applicants has been reported to the Department, thereby statistical data about age, sex, and preferred means of transportation of the candidates were obtained.

Following the appeal of the President of the Department of Religious Affairs, the Hajj commission has been assembled again in which decisions about the itinerary, beginning the date of the travel and the amount of foreign exchange in accordance with the Saudi Hajj Regulations have been decided. Past experiences have taught us that one of the most important problems occurring in Hajj organization to be solved was the fact that pilgrims often were loosing their way in the Holy Lands. Thus, for each pilgrim candidate an identity card was prepared in which his name, surname, group leader’s name, plate number of his bus, his group and his address were indicated. In this way, also information for the pilgrims who would have an accident or have been lost could be easily obtained.

It would be appropriate to talk about the selection and training of the personnel in charge, preparation of groups, and their transfer to meeting zones, which were very important aspects of the in-land works.

a. Formation of the Groups:

In 1979 Hajj season, while the visa passport and foreign exchange allocation formalities were continuing, preparative works for the formation of the candidate groups were made. Thanks to the past experiences, it’s decided that each group would be formed by 6 coaches. In each coach, one religious person was to be appointed as a leader; for each group one communication car as well as one doctor and two sanitary employees were assigned. For airway candidates, one religious officer per forty candidates.
b. Selection and training of the personnel in charge:

Religious personnel who will be in charge during Hajj organization, were largely selected among those whom the city muftis recommended. In Hajj organization 1979, 347 personnel were in charge, they assisted the candidates from the beginning till the end during the Hajj. The personnel including three nurses and twenty-one sanitary employees participated in a two-day-seminar in Ankara before the departure.

c. Transfer of Hajj groups to meeting zones:

According to the pre-arranged plan, Hajj groups were transferred to İskenderun; the foreign exchanges taken from the Central Bank by the organization employees were distributed to the candidates. All the.

Mostly the same procedures have been followed in 1980 and 1981 Hajj Organizations. However some improvements in implementation and regulation have been made. The Hajj season 1980 opening has been announced following the meeting of the Hajj commission on 10/6/1980. In this meeting some changes in the regulations have been introduced. As mentioned before, the candidates’ passports had been issued at security Department General Directorate in Ankara. However, in practice, some difficulties and disadvantages of this practice was noted. In 1980, for example, it’s decided that it would be better that the passports should be delivered to the Hajj employees in charge by the security Departments of each city.

In 1980 the İskenderun Airport was chosen as a gathering point. All the Soldiers, with the commander in chief of the İskenderun Garrison, did their best to give services. The Pilgrims prayed and rested in tents directed by the soldiers, had food and beverages from canteens prepared by the Garrison.

In 1981, the Hajj period started by a decree of the Hajj Commission which held a meeting on 20-21 April 1981. During this first meeting, the results of 1980’s were discussed. Then decisions were taken concerning the applications and the amount of foreign exchange allocated to each Pilgrim; thus, new measures were made public for 1981 Hajj. Emphasis was placed on the training programs of the personnel; three seminars were organized to explain the details of the organization for all
participants. Booklets were published and distributed to the workers. 1264 responsible personnel were assigned to the organization of 1981 Hajj. Of these, 878 were imams, 23 people were on duty in Mecca and Madina before the arrival of the groups, 73 doctors, 9 nurses and 87 medical staff.

In 1981, all departures and arrivals were organized from İskenderun Airport.

B. Works Undertaken Abroad

The organization efforts abroad started in 1979 with the assignment of 16 persons to Mecca and Madina for leasing houses in view of the Hajj and deciding the itinerary for the vehicles. The responsible person gave a report to the Prime Minister on the proposed itinerary. Mr. Tayyar Altikulaç, president of the Department of Religious Affairs, visited Damascus to have meetings with officials on problems faced in previous land journeys and the measures to be taken to solve them.

A group of five officials worked two weeks in Mecca and Madina to reach an agreement with the house owners, then another group of nine workers went to sign the leases and supervise the furnishing of these houses. Thus, accommodations were prepared before the Pilgrims left Turkey, and each group knew where to stay in advance. In conformity with the agreements at every border point on the transit road, an official from the Turkish Embassy and a member of the Department of Religious Affairs were present to help solve the problems which might arise. In 1979, as planned groups of Pilgrim traveled to Damascus, visited Madina and finally arrived at Mecca. They were met at the entry of Mecca, and were forwarded to their prearranged accommodations. The Pilgrims who had chosen the transportation by airlines were welcomed at Jeddah airport by three officials. Then they were transferred to Mecca where they stayed in the houses reserved for them.

During the Hajj period, the religious leaders were all the time with the candidates to help them with their prayers. Medical assistance was given from three small hospitals and mobile units. Other services were organized from six offices where officers worked on 24 hour-basis.

The Pilgrims, after their visit to Mecca, left for Madina where they stayed for eight days. They lived in the houses especially rented for them and started the re-
turn journey from this city. The same measures were applied on their way back to Turkey at the borders and the customs. Once in Turkey the groups were escorted until the Pilgrims' home town.

In 1980, a group of 18 officials worked in the leasing operations of the houses. Of this group 11 officials were assigned to Mecca, 7 to Madina. The same year 2 translators and 1 embassy representative helped the Pilgrims through the customs clearances at the Syrian and Jordanian borders.

Their stay in Mecca and Madina was organized in the same disciplined manner as in 1979. The only difference was in the medical care compared to 1979. The Department of Religious Affairs proposed that the Turkish Red Crescent should provide the medical care. An agreement was signed and in 1980 the medical care was given by the red Crescent.

In 1981, following the past experiences, the Hajj Organization was led most carefully with the aim of decreasing the difficulties encountered in the previous years, in Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. With the governmental decree Mr. Tayyar Altikulaç, President of the Department of Religious Affairs, was asked to affect an official visit of seven days to Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. During these visits, he met with the officials, and had talked on medical services, houses to rent, tent places in Mena and Arafat and finally transit crossing of the borders.

In 1981, with governmental approval, 23 officials were sent to Mecca and Madina to rent and prepare lodging for the candidates; 13 of them worked in Mecca, 10 were assigned to Madina. Two buildings were transformed into hospitals, one main and 8 branch office centers were prepared for commodities.

In 1981, another new application was giving advance notices of the plate numbers of the busses to Syrian, Jordanian and Saudi authorities before the start of the Hajj period. Again, a representative of the Turkish Embassy and two officials of the Religious Affairs Department were present at each border to help with the smooth running of the organization.

The stay of the Pilgrims at Mecca and Madina, the organization of their prayers, their return trip were organized as planned in the previous years.
Conclusion

In this essay, we have examined the early beginnings of professional Hajj organization in the Modern Turkish Republic. The following conclusions can be drawn from the above examination:

1. The laws and regulations related to Hajj organizations came into existence as a result of the past experiences and developments and, in such short period as three years, they had significant improvements in order to meet the needs of pilgrim candidates.

2. Department of Turkish Religious Affairs, together with Turkish Religious Foundation, gained a considerable experience from these Hajj organizations. This experience can be used to develop much more convenient Hajj provisions.

3. Organizing seminars proved to be extremely useful; this practice can further be developed by extending its scope and including not only the staff but also the pilgrim candidates.

4. Introducing the laws and regulations as well as uniformity in the process, Hajj travels have been rescued of being unsolicited income source for Private Companies.

5. Turkish experience gained through these organizations can be extended to other Muslim Countries thereby enabling more coherent and cooperative Hajj strategies.

Finally, Muslim Countries must cooperate and organize seminars in order to reveal the problems and execute the agreements through diplomacy and to allow the blessed Hajj Worship to be fulfilled in peace and ease.

We have to work very hard to be successful and may the divine assistance be with us.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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دراسة في كتاب الخراج

للقاضي أبي يوسف يعقوب بن إبراهيم (182هـ/798م)

د. محمد إرقال

1- مؤلف الكتاب:

هو يعقوب بن إبراهيم بن حبيب الأنصاري الكوفي البغدادي، وكتبه أبو يوسف، صاحب الإمام أبي حنيفة وتعليمه وأول من نشر مذهبه.

ولد أبو يوسف في الكوفة عام 113هـ، وهي في ذلك الوقت من أهم المراكز العلمية في العالم الإسلامي، وكان يغشى مجالس العلماء في مختلف الفنون، وله مشاركة في كثير منها، ويقال: إنه كان يحفظ التفسير والمغازي وأيام العرب، وقد قرأ على هشام بن عروة وأبي إسحاق الشافعي وسليمان التميمي وحمد بن إسحاق.

وكان من شيوخه في الفقه محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن أبي ليلى وأبو حنيفة، واقتصر بعد ذلك على دروس أبي حنيفة فقط فامتنع كل جهد حتى إن أسرته الفقيرة تحوّلت إلى أبي حنيفة لسوء التغذية، وتقديرًا لموهبة تلميذه فرض أبو حنيفة هذه الأسرة رابعًا تعيش منه، وقد لزم أبو يوسف أبا حنيفة، وثقه عليه وصار واحدًا من أهـم أصحابه، وولي القضاء ببغداد أيام المهدي والهدى والرشيد، ويقال إنه كان أول من خوطُب بقضية القضاة حتى يقال له قاضي قضية الدنيا.

كان أبو يوسف فقيها من الطراز الأول، فقد خالف أستاده وإمامه أبا حنيفة في كثير من المواضع وأقام الحجة على ما ذهب إليه من الآراء، وكان في مذهبه الفقهي يتعزف بعيداً الرأي، ومع ذلك فقد كان هناك فرق بينه وبين شيخه أبي حنيفة في أنه كان يعتمد على الحديث أكثر من شيخه (إذ كانت شروط أبي حنيفة لقبول الحديث أكثر).

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