

# THE ETHICAL CHARACTER OF SULTAN MUHAMMAD AL-FATIH IN LEADERSHIP

Mohd Hasrul Shuhari, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin

Mohd Safri Ali, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin

Aman Daima Md. Zain, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin

Mohammed Muneer'deen Olodo Al-Shafi'i, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin

Siti Aisyah Mohamad Zin, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin

Omar, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

## ABSTRACT

*The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih marked the end of the Byzantine Empire. The success of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih to conquer Constantinople has succeeded in attaining prestige in the history of the development of Islam. Although there are scholarly discussions on the success of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in the conquest of Constantinople, his ethical character's aspect has not been comprehensively presented. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to analyze and examine the ethical character's aspect of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in leadership. This qualitative study uses content analysis study design and historical studies. Data collected through texts were obtained and analyzed deductively and inductively. This method of data collection is the basis for identifying an ethical character's aspect of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih as a determining factor for success in the conquest of Constantinople. Hence, the results of the study show that the success of the Islamic army highlighted the leadership of Sultan al-Fatih in planning the tactics and strategies of warfare, his willingness to take part in the tribulation with the Muslim army in the face of the enemy. His characteristic aspect and noble values led to the conquest of Constantinople.*

**Keywords:** Ethic, Character, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, Leadership.

## INTRODUCTION

“Ethics” means; first, referring to knowledge of moral or moral principles, secondly, referring to the principle of moral (or *akhlaq*) or moral values that became a guidance towards an individual or a group such as association, occupation and others (Fauzi & Hasrul, 2017). The formation of characters is irresistible to many important facets of life, namely learning process, gift, talent, and the process of cognitive maturation, affective and psychomotor. There are different views and opinions regarding the factors that characterize the formation of human characters. Characters can be characterized by personality; an individual human being, a common individual (the individual in general), a living human body; self (private); and distinctive personal character. According to Mujib (2007), character is an organism that includes nature, talents, and the organs in the individual, which determine his own unique or distinctive

ways of adapting to his environment. Some flows have different views on the things that characterize the formation of human characters. One of the opinions is that character is determined by carrier. Experience, environment, and education have no effect. This opinion is that of the nativists, spearheaded by the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). The second opinion is the trend that character education carries a moral education, the type of education that makes a person noble and well behaved, as specifically outlined by Islamic law, in directly dealing with self, others or Allah S.W.T. (Iqbal, 2013).

The weakness in the management of the leadership, military and defense systems of the state is one of the factors causing the collapse of a government. This can be seen through the history of the past civilization that almost all civilizations have been destroyed due to the negligence of the government in managing the country's military and defense system better. With this, it is clear that the military and defense aspects of the country need to be taken care of as both are the most important assets in a country's politics (Ibrahim & Ermy, 2017). For finding the best leader examples, Islamic history has recorded many leaders of good characters, one of whom is Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih. His life story and success in the conquest of the City of Constantinople can be used as motivation and teaching for a new generation to be an example in forming a true Muslim personality. The characters of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, who obeyed the commandments of Allah S.W.T, made him to be respected and feared by his opponents (Amni, 2015). Muhammad al-Fatih is an exceptional leader, an embodiment of all the characteristics of a credible leader needed in the contemporary society of today (Fikri, 2010). There have been some scholarly discussions on the success of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in the conquest of Constantinople though, this study is centrally structured to focus on the ethical character of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, an aspect of him yet to be comprehensively presented. The sole structure and the objective of the paper is thus to analyze and examine the ethical character's aspect of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in leadership, using a qualitative and analytical study approaches. The qualitative method of using content analysis and historical studies is used to collect data through texts deductively and inductively.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A Brief Biographical Background of Sultan Muhammad Al-Fatih

Al-Fatih's (1432-1482) real name is Muhammad bin Murad, better known as Sultan Muhammad II, or Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, referring to his success as the "*pioneer or conqueror of Constantinople*" (Izrin et al., 2017). He was born on March 29, 1432CE in Adrianapolis (Turkish border-Bulgaria). He was the fourth son of Sultan Murad II, and had himself two sons, Huma and Hatun. The title of al-Fatih (Conqueror) was given to him for his success in liberating Constantinople (Mahayudin, 2014). He was an authoritative Sultan of Uthmaniyyah as an administrator, military chief. He was a man who was proficient in history, geography, astronomy, poetry, and languages. He mastered seven languages; Turkish, Arabic, Latin, Greek, Serbian, Hebrew and Persian. He trained on a simple life, was educated with religious knowledge and war science. He officially ascended the throne at the age of 19, on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1451CE after the death of Sultan Murad II (8<sup>th</sup> February 1451CE at age 47). He died on May 3, 1481CE at the age of 49 (pronounced poisoned by one of his personal doctors, Maestro Jakopa (or Yakop Pasya). His body was interred in Stambul, the old town south of Tanjung

Emas, near the historical panorama of 70 Ottoman ships from the top of the hill to the Constantinople City (Talib, 2014).

Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih during his childhood was a mischievous child and did not want to memorize the Qur'an. Sultan Murad II appointed Shaykh Ahmad Ismail al-Kurani as Muhammad al-Fatih's teacher, instructing the latter to be firm and to force his son for learning. He was afterwards not only quick in memorizing the Quran but equally learnt to respect scholars until the end of his life. When he was 12 years old, he was sent to Manisa (the largest training center of Turkish leadership) to study. He was a wise, warrior and obedient to the teachings of religion, as far as he had since been educated with various knowledge. Dozens of teachers taught him religious knowledge and art of warfare. He mastered the knowledge of grammar and balaghah, and was proficient in the field of fiqh. He was trained in the art of war and military sciences by his own uncle, Panglima Tharhan, and he also received religious guidance from the great scholars, one of whom was Shaykh Shamsuddin al-Wali. Although he was 19 years old when he officially ascended the throne, he was already a wise and matured man in administering and managing the Ottoman government (Mahayudin, 2014).

### **An Ethical Character in Leadership**

Constantinople, located at a meeting point between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, and strategically positioned either from geo-trade or geo-politics, was the most prosperous and richest city in Europe for centuries. Napoleon Bonaparte once stated: "*if this world is a country, Constantinople is the most deserving of being the capital of the country*" (Syaari, 2013). Napoleon also once said: "*If I had control of Constantinople then I would be in control of the world*" (Talib, 2014; Fikri, 2010). Constantinople was built by the Great Constantine Emperor in 330CE and became the capital of the Byzantine functioning as the capital and center of the Byzantine Empire of Eastern Rome for over 10 centuries. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih marked the end of the Byzantine Empire and gave a blow to the West Christian kingdom, while the Turks strengthened their position in Europe and expanded their dominance in the Balkans and the Mediterranean (Syaari, 2013).

Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih was the only one of the sultan and army chiefs who defeated Constantine IX, penetrated the Byzantine defense line and conquered Constantinople that had never been done by the sultans and predecessors of Islam before (Ezad, 2014). He was appointed to occupy Ottoman Empire in 1451AD when he was 19 years old, after the death of Sultan Murad II (Ammalina et al., 2014). The city of Constantinople was conquered by an Islamic army led by Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih on May 29, 1453CE-20<sup>th</sup> Jumadal Awal 857AH when he was 21 years old (Talib, 2014; Ammalina et al., 2014; Ezad, 2014, Freely, 2010). After 800 years of the hadiths of the Prophet S.A.W to that effect, it came to reality (Sukki & Muhammad, 2014). In the reign of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, besides being the leader of the state, he also set himself as the head of a wise and full-fledged military force. Almost all of the series of wars he led was successful. The tactics and strategies of warfare adopted include a variety of humanitarian, guarantees as well as preserving the environment (Aziz, 2004) as forbids killing women, children, parents and damaging property (Irwan, 2014). This proves that Islam is a religion that carries the idea of universal grace and salvation. This statement contradicts the views of some

communities, especially Westerners who label Islamic religion as terror and sponsors of terrorism (Zuhdi, 2015)

Before Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih opened the Constantine City, he carefully planned and organized the army. He built the walls of Rumeli Hissari to prevent the Roman invasion and build sophisticated military equipment like a large cannon created by Urban (Fahmi, 1993). In addition, he also increased his charity and military training. After preparing the military from physical and spiritual aspects, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih carried out such a planned attack, he attacked the Constantinople City for 53 days and succeeded in conquering it (Islamweb, 2018). His success in capturing the city was one of the most important milestones in the development of Islamic history (Fahmi, 1993). By practicing the element and the precise spirit of the Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, he succeeded in realizing the hadith of the Prophet S.A.W, where he S.A.W said: *“The city of Constantinople will fall into the hands of the Muslim army; the king is the best king and his army is the best army”*.

Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih once said: *“I am on the verge of journey back to God's side. But I hope I am not worried because I am leaving someone like you. Be a just, righteous and caring leader. Raise your protection for your people without exception. Working to spread Islam, it is the obligation of the caliphs on earth. Prioritize religious affairs from any other matters. Do not be tired and bored to keep going. Do not go as an officer, neither a person who does not care about your religion, nor a person who does not keep away from the great sin and who drowns in sin”*.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study uses content analysis study design and historical studies. Data collected through texts were obtained and analyzed deductively and inductively. This method of data collection is the basis for identifying an ethical character's aspect of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih as a determining factor for success in the conquest of Constantinople.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership principles of *sidq* (trust), *tabligh*, and *fatanah* were practiced in the process of promoting the country and reviving the community in showing Islam as a *deen* (Syaari, 2013). The purpose is to worship God (to have a feeling of self-humility towards Allah, who possesses all the supreme characteristics that qualify Him as Allah, The Supreme Almighty) (Omar et al., 2017). At the young age, his father, Sultan Murad II, had entrusted him to lead an area with the guidance of scholars. Guidance received from these scholars was expected to be a guide to form the thinking of Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih in conjunction with the real understanding of Islam. It has been applied by Sultan Murad II so his son soon realized that himself as Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih would have a great responsibility someday. Before the death, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih as a leader had delegated to his heirs, the Sultan Bayazid II to always approach and co-exist with the scholars, always being fair, not deceived by the world's property and really caring for the religion either for personal, and the government. Hence, the results of the study show that the success of the Islamic army highlighted the leadership of Sultan al-Fatih in planning the tactics and strategies of warfare, his willingness to take part in the tribulation with the Muslim army in

the face of the enemy. His characteristic aspect and noble values led to the conquest of Constantinople.

## CONCLUSION

The persistence and struggle of Sultan Muhammad Al-Fatih in spreading the teachings Islam has had a profound effect on the Islamic government at that time. His leadership, based on the true faith, the Qur'an, as well as the Sunnah, became the *qudwah* of all time and should be modeled today. His administration has a great impact on the excellence of Islamic rule, especially in terms of military and defense. The head of military plays important roles in maintaining national security. Among the qualities he possessed as a leader throughout the conquest Constantinople were efficiency, wisdom and high discipline in managing the defense line.

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