Dr Mohamed Adam Adham: politician, musician, and father of private medical practice in Sudan

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Dr Mohamed Adam Adham, better known as Dr Adham, was born in Khartoum in 1912. His parents belonged to a deeply rooted military family. They deserted the Turkish army and joined Al Mahdia Revolution offering their military expertise and became one of the best fighting force. During his childhood Adham went to Khalwat al Fakki Al Awad Wagi-allah and graduated from Kitchener School of Medicine (KSM) in 1937. He had considerable trouble while studying at the KMS due to his connections with Ali Abdul Latif and Zien Al AbdeenAbdeltam, who were considered as prominent military figures in the country.

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Corresponding author
Siddiq Ibrahim Khalil, Professor of Medicine
Email: psiddiq@gmail.com
leaders of the 1924 movement, and in an attempt to get rid of him he was labelled mentally defective, in order to remove him from medical school, a label that he challenged and consequently could not be applied. Following graduation, he was deliberately transferred to the South where he again met considerable difficulties and fierce confrontation from the British administration. He was declared unwanted and was sent back to Khartoum. When the Second World War broke out, he was drafted to the war fronts, but refused to comply and consequently was laid off from government service. To be off service at this early age the young Adham did not give up but became actively involved in civil societies and political parties fighting the colonial rule.

He joined the Graduate Club in 1948 as an active member and took the responsibility of carrying out the medical examination for all the Palestinian War volunteers and paid all expenses for vaccination and emergency treatment.

He was a social and political activist and worked hardly within the Society of Sudanese Unity, an organization which devoted itself to the unity of North and Southern Sudan. Following the creation of the Sudan Legislative Council in 1948 Dr Adham was elected member and through that appointment he was able to press further to fulfil his political aims of having one Sudan for all. Among his activities in the press field he published two newspapers; Africa and Al Ghalam all from his own resources.

In 1942, Dr Adham applied for license to work as private practitioner and despite some resistance from the health authorities he was issued a private practitioner’s license thus becoming the first Sudanese to own a private clinic, a job which was exclusively reserved for Syrians, Greeks, and Armenians. The clinic was first opened at Al Shawam Block in Omdurman and later moved to the house of Judge Abdel Majid Imam at Al Mawrada District. In the day of independence 01/01/1956, he transferred the clinic to Khartoum, Hurria Street. The clinic was located at the southern end of Hurria Bridge in the Jewish Quarter facing the present Jewish Cemetry.

The clinic, in all its three locations was met with warm welcome from the inhabitants of Omdurman and Khartoum; among them was Sayed Abdul Rahman Al Mahdi who appointed him to look after the health of all Ansars while Sayed Ali Al Mirghani ordered that his entire household be treated in Adham clinic. Visitors of the clinic enjoyed seeing the two signposts; one showed; assessment costs according to disease and consultation time, the second read free consultation and treatment on Fridays including cost of prescription and thanks go to God. The clinic included medical laboratory, a chest X-ray, one day surgery, physiotherapy including short wave and ultraviolet light. Dr Adham was a general practitioner, accordingly males, females and pediatrics patient attended his clinic. The clinic was more of a meeting place for most of the tribes of Sudan, for politicians and activists. The first patient who was examined by Adham was Al Sayda Magboula, mother of Al Sayed Abdel Rahmain Al Mahdi. Al Sayda Al Sharifa Fatma Al Marghania wife of Sayed Ali was also under his care.

His clinic, which was also his living quarters, opened 24 hours a day and patients who were unable to pay were treated free of charge. He developed the first domiciliary practice in Omdurman where his nurses were able to reach the very sick patients and those who were bed-ridden at their homes to nurse and dress wounds. Dr Adham was the first to start a geriatric clinic to serve the elderly.

Among his many talents Dr Adham was an avid musician and composer. He wrote and played several pieces of music collectively called Al Adhamiat, rated among the best Sudanese music ever played. One of the pieces of music he composed was Al Adhamia, adopted as the signature tune for Omdurman National Radio for several years. To him also goes the credit of the creation of the first Musicians’ Society which later developed into the Union of Sudanese Musicians and Singers (Professor Ali Shummo, personal communications).
In 1982, I was fortunate to have visited him personally at his last clinic along Hurria Street, immediately to the south of Hurria Bridge, by that time the signs of aging prevailed on his face, but he was pleasant, amiable and a most agreeable person.

Dr Mohamed Adam Adham Abdala Moussa died on 9/7/1991 aged 79 years. He left behind him a wealth of shining political achievements, outstanding contribution to Sudanese music and unforgettable history of medical care and compassion.

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