



Book Review: Waqf and Economy

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The book 'Vakıf ve İktisat' was compiled by a team from the Turkish Directorate General of Foundations to reintroduce the role of waqf in the socio-economic life of Turkish society and the Islamic world. Originating from exhibitions and seminars held since 2006, the book was specifically conceived following a proposal in 2014 by the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, Bülent Arınç, to display waqf archives related to the economy. This work consists of two main parts: a collection of archives on the management of waqf related to economic activities and visual documentation of waqf properties. The selected archives include vakfiye (waqf deeds), administrative records, fodula defterleri (records of food consumption and distribution in imarets), kesif ve tamir belgesi (documents for the inspection and repair of waqf assets), as well as documents on istibdal and istikraz (conversion of waqf assets and loan records). Through these archives, the book asserts that waqf is not only of spiritual and social value but also served as a crucial instrument in supporting the economy, trade, and the equitable distribution of welfare during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. Overall, this book is an important contribution to the study of waqf history and Islamic economics, serving as a valuable primary source for researchers wishing to explore the dynamics of waqf management in both historical and contemporary contexts.

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Waqf is a dormant "economic hero." By shifting the paradigm from consumptive to productive waqf, and applying sound economic principles, waqf becomes not only an act of worship with flowing rewards, but also a driving force for an inclusive and sustainable people's economy. The synergy between religious fervor and sophisticated modern economic management is key to unlocking this enormous potential.

The topic of Waqf and Economics is a highly interesting and relevant one, especially in the context of sustainable economic development for the Muslim community. Essentially, waqf is not just a traditional charity (such as donating land for a cemetery or mosque), but rather a highly potential economic instrument if managed professionally and innovatively. This relationship is not simply a one-way "give and take," but rather a mutually symbiotic one in which both parties strengthen and sustainably benefit each other. The economy provides a framework for maximizing the potential of waqf, while waqf provides the foundation of values and instruments for achieving inclusive and equitable economic goals.

From an economic perspective, waqf plays a role in capital formation through productive asset management. Waqf land managed for modern agriculture, for example, generates profits that are then used to fund educational institutions or social services. This mechanism demonstrates how waqf can create a sustainable economic cycle while simultaneously driving national economic growth. Furthermore, waqf also has a multiplier effect. The management of waqf assets not only generates direct benefits in the form of social services but also stimulates new economic activity: employment creation, increased purchasing power, and faster economic growth. Another important function of waqf is poverty alleviation and reducing social inequality. The benefits of waqf, such as free education, affordable healthcare, and business capital, can help poor groups achieve economic independence. Unlike temporary, consumptive aid, waqf is sustainable because the principal assets remain constant, while the benefits continue to flow.

The book titled *Vakıf ve İktisat* (Waqf and Economy) was written by a team from the Directorate General of Foundations under the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The compilation team consists of experts in Islamic history and economics. They are Mevlüt Çam, Hasan Demirtaş, and Adem Şahin. The team was led by Mevlüt Çam, who was educated at the Develi Imam Hatip School. After completing his secondary education, Mevlüt Çam continued his studies

in the Arabic Language and Literature Department at Gazi University in Ankara. Currently, the Kayseri native serves as the Head of the Data Collection Bureau at the Directorate General of Foundations.

The creation of this book began when the Directorate General of Foundations organized various activities to introduce the culture of waqf more deeply to the Turkish people, who, often without realizing it, have this culture deeply ingrained in their lives. Through seminars, exhibitions, and promotional activities, it was hoped that the Turkish people would gain a deeper understanding of the waqf management system. The goal was not only for the culture of waqf to grow in their daily lives but also for it to be adopted into various applied systems. These activities have been regularly conducted by the Directorate General of Foundations since 2006. In 2014, the then-Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Bülent Arınç, proposed an exhibition of waqf archives, especially those related to the economic activities of the community. The exhibition was warmly received by various circles, as it was seen as an alternative model for Turkey's new economy. From there, the idea for this book was born. The long-collected archives at the Directorate General of Foundations were transcribed into Modern Turkish, adapted to current Turkish language standards, and then a selection of important archival examples was compiled into a book.

This book is divided into two parts. The first part contains a collection of various archives on the management of waqf properties related to the economy. The second part contains a collection of images of waqf properties closely related to the community's economic activities. Before presenting the various archives, the compilation team begins the book with a foreword that offers a profound message regarding the relationship between waqf and economic activities. As is known, waqf plays an extremely important role, not only as an instrument for sharing and helping others but also having a spiritual dimension and personal motives, especially for the one endowing the waqf. This is also affirmed by İsmet Kayaoğlu in his article (Kayaoğlu, 1976).

In the foreword, the compilation team emphasizes that waqf cannot be viewed merely as a charitable activity, a means to achieve spiritual satisfaction, or simply a way to pursue personal interests. Beyond that, waqf has a very strong dimension in promoting the economy within society. Moreover, waqf is also closely tied to trade activities (Bayartan, 2008). This can be seen from the archives mentioning that commercial activities in shops, markets, and *Kervansaray*

(inns) were the main sources of income for the management of waqf properties. This aspect is often overlooked by those who research waqf. The compilation team states that waqf was one of the most important instruments in ensuring the equitable distribution of welfare for the people of the Seljuk and Ottoman empires, whose territories spanned three continents. This is precisely as mentioned by Halil İnalçık (İnalçık, 2019).

Every waqf property, such as a *Darıışsıfa* (hospital), *imaret* (soup kitchen), school, library, public water supply, and even unique waqfs like street cleaning services and assistance for marriages, certainly required significant funding. The various archives related to waqf and the economy can answer the curiosity of waqf enthusiasts about how waqf management institutions generated income and managed their expenses. This book contains various types of waqf archives and records of economic activities, particularly the *Vakfiye* or Waqf Deed. Although these archives are not presented in their complete form, the important sections featured in the book provide a sufficient picture of how waqf was managed so meticulously and professionally in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. These archives are not only about waqf properties and their management; they also depict the economic conditions of the society and the social dynamics of that time. According to the compilation team, Ömer Lütfi Barkan was the Turkish academic who pioneered research into waqf and its role in the economic development of society. He added waqf administrative records to the economic history curriculum in Turkish universities.

In the first part, which contains scans of waqf archives along with their transcripts in modern Turkish, the compilation team includes examples from at least 24 waqf archives of various types, ranging from *Külliyeler* complexes, schools, *imarets*, and *kervansaraylar*, to shops. Several types of archives are included as examples in this book. Among them are waqf administrative records. This type of archive is very important as it contains the appointment of the waqf management body, its duties, and even the salary slips of the workers.

The next type of archive found in this book is the *Fodula Defterleri*. This type of archive contains records of income and expenditure of money and goods for an *imaret* that provided hundreds or even thousands of free meals daily. The *Fodula Defterleri* also list the food and drink ingredients used, their sources, and their measurements. This is closely related to the community's economy as it directly involves farmers, ranchers, and cooks.

Equally important, the book also includes the *Keşif ve Tamir Belgesi*. A *keşif* is a detailed record of the physical condition of a waqf property that must be periodically updated. Every part of the waqf property's building would be carefully inspected as a precaution against damage. If any part of the building was found not to be in prime condition, it would be recorded in the *keşif* archive for subsequent repair. The repair and renovation process, along with the costs, number of workers, and their wages, would be recorded neatly and clearly in the *tamir* archive.

Furthermore, this book also features extremely important archives that may still be little known: *İstibdal* and *İstikraz*. *İstibdal* is an archive in waqf that explains the change of function of a waqf property. For example, if a shop was endowed as waqf, the profits from this shop would be the income for managing other waqf properties like schools and *imarets*. Under certain conditions, this shop might become deserted and unprofitable. The shop could then be converted to another form with the hope of generating greater profit, for instance, by being converted into a hotel or a *hamam*. Similarly, unproductive agricultural land could be converted into shops through this *istibdal* archive. Meanwhile, *İstikraz* is an archive that records the debts of a waqf institution to other people or institutions when circumstances required the waqf institution to borrow for operational or repair needs. The *İstikraz* archive would detail the loan amount, its source, the terms and conditions, and the deadline. The compilation team also added several archives that are important and needed in the modern era, such as examples of *Vakfiye* for Cash Waqf, which began to develop during the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire.

In the second part of the book, the compilation team includes 30 photos related to waqf properties and the community's economic activities. In general, this book is considered highly necessary for those who wish to deepen their knowledge and conduct further research on waqf. This book makes it easier for researchers to study waqf from its primary sources, namely the various original archives related to waqf and economic activities

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