



Book Review: Waqf as a Pillar of Civilization

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The book 'Bir Medeniyetin İz Düşümü Vakıflar' (Waqf as a Pillar of Civilization), written by a team of Turkish history and economics experts under the Directorate General of Waqf, presents a comprehensive study of the development of waqf from the pre-Islamic era to the glory of the Ottomans. This book emphasizes the spiritual and socio-political dimensions of waqf, by describing various definitions of scholars, the practice of waqf by the Prophet and his companions, and its evolution in classical Muslim, Seljuk, and Ottoman societies. The authors classify the types of waqf, present profiles of waqf donors from the elite to the general public, and provide real examples of waqf objects such as mosques, madrasas, hospitals, caravanserais, libraries, as well as cash waqf and avarız. The analysis also highlights the dual function of waqf as a means of worship and a social instrument for equitable welfare, while remaining closely linked to political interests. Written in a communicative style, with illustrations and rich references, this book offers an important foundation for readers and researchers who wish to understand the role of waqf in building Islamic civilization, particularly during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras.

Keywords: Waqf; Civilization; Ottoman

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2985-3257 (Online)

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Received: 17 November 2024

Accepted: 3 December 2024

Published: 31 December 2024

Citation:

(2024) Book Review: Waqf as a

Pillar of Civilization.

Islamic Social Finance, 4.2.

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The book, titled *Bir Medeniyetin İz Düşümü Vakıflar* (Waqf as a Pillar of Civilization), was written by a team from the Directorate General of Waqf under the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The team of authors consists of experts in Turkish history and economics. They are Prof. Dr. Ufuk Gülsoy, Prof. Dr. Vahdettin Engin, Dr. Dr. Ömer İşbilir, Doc. Dr. Ali Fuat Orenç, Doc. Dr. Mesut Aydiner, Dr. Ekrem Tak, and Dr. Arif Kolay. This team is chaired by Prof. Ufuk Gülsoy, Professor at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Marmara University, Istanbul. He is also known as an expert in the field of history.

The book consists of five parts. The chapters in this book are divided based on an in-depth study of the term waqf and combine it with a historical approach from the Pre-Islamic Era, the Prophetic Era, the Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Umayyad Dynasty, the Abbasid Dynasty, the Seljuk Dynasty, to the Ottoman Dynasty. The first part contains an introduction that explains the various definitions of waqf put forward by the Ulama. The first chapter contains an explanation of the general types of waqf that developed in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. The second chapter explains the classification of waqf based on the waqif or founder. The third chapter provides real examples of various waqf objects that developed in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. The fourth chapter emphasizes the explanation of the functions of these various types of waqf.

The introduction to this book plays a very important role because it provides a comprehensive overview of waqf, serving as an introduction to understanding the subsequent chapters. The Introduction explains various definitions of waqf put forward by scholars. This section emphasizes that waqf has a very important place in Islamic tradition. This is because Islam contains teachings that strongly encourage mutual assistance and sharing among fellow human beings. In addition, Islamic teachings motivate its followers to perform every good deed in the hope of receiving the blessing of Allah SWT. This confirms the difference in worldview or perspective in the culture of sharing and mutual assistance between Islamic civilization and other civilizations. That is, the work of sharing and mutual assistance is not only based on love between fellow human beings, but also in the hope of receiving the blessing of Allah SWT.

However, in this Introduction, the Authors does not deny that there are elements of group and personal interests in the Islamic Waqf Culture, especially in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. According to the Authors, sociologically, the Waqf Culture can fulfill two

needs at once. The spiritual need to hope for rewards and the blessing of Allah, as well as worldly needs such as the motivation to be remembered, respected, and recognized by many people. This is also agreed upon by Ismet Kayaoglu in his article (Kayaoglu, 1976).

In this introduction, the authors also cite various definitions and opinions of scholars related to waqf. In particular, the explanations of Abu Hanifah and his students, such as Abu Yusuf and Muhammad, are given relatively more space than those of other Imams. This is understandable, because the Ottomans adopted many of Abu Yusuf's opinions on the management of waqf, which are known to be more flexible than other opinions (Karaman, 1982).

After discussing the background of the development of the culture of waqf and the explanations of the scholars regarding waqf, the Authors explains quite comprehensively the origins of the culture of waqf, which is said to have existed since the time of Prophet Ibrahim AS. The Authors also explains how the culture of sharing and mutual assistance developed, as seen in the societies of Ancient Greece, Ancient Egypt, Rome, the pre-Islamic Turkish peoples of Central Asia, and the Arab society before Islam. Regarding the culture of waqf in Arab society before Islam, the Authors mentions that the Kaaba itself was the first waqf object that ever existed. The Kaaba was endowed by Prophet Ibrahim AS and then managed by his descendants until it was managed by the Abu Saybah family (Abdul Muthalib). This means that the family of the Prophet Muhammad SAW was the manager or Nazir Wakaf (Kazıcı, 2003).

In this introduction, the authors also clearly explain how waqf developed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Although the word waqf or its synonym, *habs*, is not found in the Qur'an, the teachings of doing good for the sake of Allah SWT and putting the interests of others first are some of the most important teachings of Islam. In the Hadith, the term *sadakah jariyah* is mentioned, which can be interpreted as waqf.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also invited his companions to give waqf and set an example himself. For example, he gave waqf in the form of a well to provide water and land for housing for the Muslim community. This culture continued after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) passed away. This can be seen when Umar bin Khattab gave waqf in the form of a date palm garden (Turgut, 2018).

The authors also explain how the culture of waqf continued to develop during the Umayyad era. At that time, family waqf began to emerge as a result of the

increasing prosperity of the Muslim community. The culture of waqf continued to develop during the Abbasid era.

The culture of waqf grew rapidly during the Seljuk era. According to the Authors, one of the triggers was the status of the Seljuks, who at that time played a protective role for the Muslim community amid various threats to their existence due to divisions, the influx of various deviant ideas, and the Mongol invasion that was beginning to be heard. Waqf became one of the main pillars of the Seljuks in maintaining the Muslim community's existence and power with various facilities ranging from education to health (Turan, 1996).

Still in the introduction, the authors also briefly explain how the culture of waqf reached its golden age during the Ottoman era. Waqf played an important role in ensuring equitable welfare throughout the Ottoman territories, which stretched across three continents. The Waqf culture was also supported by a neat, systematic, and productive management system. According to the Authors, this system had never been implemented by any civilization before the Ottomans.

At the end of this introduction, the authors explain the ups and downs of waqf management in the Ottoman era until its collapse in 1924. The authors also briefly explain how waqf is managed in the Turkish Republic era.

In Chapter One, the Authors provides a comprehensive explanation of the various classifications of waqf. This division is reviewed from four aspects. Among others, based on the purpose of the waqf, the condition of the object being donated, the source of waqf income, and the waqf manager. The Authors also provides direct examples of these various classifications based on waqf objects that existed in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras.

The classification of waqf from various aspects is important to provide complete and comprehensive information to readers regarding waqf, which developed mainly during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. This is also considered to assist researchers in conducting further research on waqf objects that will be used as research material.

In addition, in Chapter One, the Authors also explains the elements that form a waqf object so that it can exist and be sustainable. The Authors explains in detail how the Waqf Management Agency operates, examples of the profiles and backgrounds of the Wakif and what motivates them to give waqf, the general conditions of the objects given as waqf, an overview of

the beneficiaries of waqf, and an explanation of Vakfiye or Waqf Deeds.

Vakfiye is given special attention in Chapter One, as it is discussed in greater depth than other topics. Vakfiye plays a crucial role in ensuring that waqf can continue to be managed in an orderly, transparent, honest, targeted, and sustainable manner (Berki, 1964). The Authors also explains the characteristics of the language used in Vakfiye, the standard paper used, and the type of writing commonly used to write a Vakfiye.

This chapter also explains the structure of a complete Vakfiye. It begins with an introduction, a general explanation of the waqf and what is being donated, a definition of the objects to be donated and their sources of income, the conditions of the waqf set by the Wakif, the appointment of the Waqf Management Agency, and a prayer of condemnation for those who violate the Vakfiye. The Vakfiye is also accompanied by the date and the names of the witnesses along with their signatures (Şeker, 1993).

Chapter One concludes with an explanation of the Waqf Management Agency and its general division of tasks. It also explains the procedures for managing waqf income and expenditure.

In Chapter Two, the authors provide an explanation of waqf based on the profiles of the waqf donors. This chapter begins with an explanation of Waqf carried out by Sultans and royal families. In addition, it also explains how Waqf is carried out by government officials who are not members of the royal family, as well as Waqf originating from scholars, celebrities, and conglomerates. The Authors emphasizes the importance of setting an example from the country's elite and first-class citizens in fostering a culture of Waqf.

The Authors also explains the impact of the waqf culture, which began among the elite, in sparking enthusiasm for waqf among ordinary people. Chapter Two explains how waqf developed among the Ottoman people, from Muslims to non-Muslims.

The discussion in Chapter Three becomes even more interesting with the presentation of various direct examples of waqf that once existed along with their management characteristics. From places of worship, educational institutions such as Medrese and Sahn-i Seman, free food sharing programs, provision of free water, provision of comprehensive health access, lodging facilities for traders such as Kervansaray and Han, to the role of libraries in ensuring the growth of the spirit of seeking knowledge, are explained in detail by the Authors. In addition, various types of waqf that are still unfamiliar are also explained, such as Avariz,

which is intended for emergency preparedness in facing various extraordinary conditions such as war and natural disasters (Sari, 2022).

Not only that, the authors also explain a type of waqf that has developed recently, namely Money Waqf. This type of waqf is also given a special explanation, starting from examples of the application of money waqf in the Ottoman era, its management system, to various opinions of scholars regarding its application.

This chapter also explains how the Ottomans prospered the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina with Waqf. In addition, the authors also provide examples of various unique waqfs that developed in Ottoman society, such as waqfs to encourage the less fortunate to go on vacation and waqfs to help young people get married.

The book concludes with Chapter Four, which discusses the general functions of waqf. As explained in the Introduction, the culture of waqf not only contains spiritual elements but also worldly interests. This chapter explains in more detail how waqf plays an important role in ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth among the people. Waqf is seen not as an end in itself, but as a "trace" or "projection" of the values, social structures, economic forces, and worldview of that civilization. Like a shadow that follows its true form, waqf reveals the form of the civilization that gave birth to it.

This book explains how the Islamic concepts of charity (infak), social solidarity (yardımlaşma), and community responsibility are embodied in a solid legal and institutional form, namely waqf. Furthermore, waqf embodies the concept of sustainability. Waqf demonstrates long-term thinking. It is not a one-time aid, but a lasting investment in the well-being of society.

In addition, the authors also mention that waqf cannot be separated from political elements. Especially if the waqf is from the country's elite, it is highly likely that there are political motives behind it. Among other things, to strengthen their existence and ensure that their names will be remembered (Kozak, 1994).

"Bir Medeniyetin İz Düşümü: Vakıflar" is more than just a history book. It is a lens into the soul of a civilization. Focusing on the waqf system, it promises a profound understanding of how a society built itself not only with bricks and mortar, but also with institutionalized values, laws, and a spirit of mutual assistance. It demonstrates that the greatness of a civilization lies in its ability to care for its weakest members and build a lasting legacy for future generations.

This book is highly recommended for those who want to start learning more about the world of waqf. Written in easy-to-understand Turkish and accompanied by various illustrations, this book is accessible to a wide audience. Because it explains the role of waqf in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras in a broad and general manner, this book can also serve as a starting point for further study of waqf. The book also includes extensive footnotes and references, which will facilitate further research.

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BOOK INFORMATION

Book Title : Bir Medeniyetin İz Düşümü Vakıflar.
The Legacy of a Civilization: Waqfs (Waqf as a Pillar of Civilization).

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Publisher : Directorate General of Foundations (Directorate General of Waqf), Ankara
Year of Publication : 2014
Number of Pages : 261 pages
ISBN : 978-975-19-6039-9