

# Long-Term Changes in the Creation of New Cash Waqfs in Istanbul\*

Erol Özvar\*\*

Sadullah Yıldırım\*\*\*

## Abstract

In this paper, relying on information from almost 4,500 waqf deeds (*vakfiye*) available in Istanbul sharia court registers for the period 1550-1900, we study long-term changes in the creation of new cash waqfs including the periods of expansion, stagnation and crises. We also examine the participation of different groups—namely, officials (*askeri*), civilians (*reaya*), and women—as cash-waqf founders. We find that women were significant contributors to the waqf sector and that, contrary to a common assumption in the literature, officials' participation as benefactors was proportional to that of other groups. Furthermore, we show that the relative shares of social groups as benefactors in the waqf sector fluctuated significantly over time. Thus, researchers should be cautious about making generalizations based on a single, set ratio of involvement as if it applies to all times and places.

## Keywords

Cash waqf, Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, waqf deed, benefactors.

---

\* Date of Arrival: 24 September 2021 – Date of Acceptance: 26 April 2022

You can refer to this article as follows:

Özvar, Erol, and Sadullah Yıldırım. "Long-Term Changes in the Creation of New Cash Waqfs in Istanbul." *bilig*, no. 102, 2022, pp. 27-51.

\*\* Prof. Dr., The Council of Higher Education – Ankara/Turkey

ORCID: 0000-0003-2339-3698

erolozvar@gmail.com

\*\*\* Asst. Prof. Dr., Marmara University, Department of Economics – Istanbul/Turkey

ORCID: 0000-0001-8742-0478

sadullah.yildirim@marmara.edu.tr

## Introduction

Cash waqfs (monetary foundations) were one of the most important constituents of Ottoman social and economic life. These institutions channeled private charitable giving into the provision of public services including education, infrastructure, and social welfare. Though prohibitions on usury limited their popularity in other parts of the Islamic world, cash waqfs flourished in the Ottoman realm, particularly in Anatolia and the Balkans, where they introduced extraordinary dynamism into social and economic life by enabling a wide segment of Ottoman society, including those with modest material means, to participate in the waqf sector as benefactors (Genç 14). However, the literature is still meager on characterizing this dynamism from a long-term perspective with a data driven approach.

In this paper, relying a large data set compiled from waqf deeds, we aim to gauge and evaluate trends and changes in the establishment of new cash waqfs over the long term in the context of Istanbul. Specifically, we ask three questions: How did the number of new cash waqfs being founded change over time? How did the participation of different groups—namely, officials (*askeri*), civilians (*reaya*), and women—as cash-waqf founders fluctuate over time? Were there any systematic differences between the social groups in their founding of cash waqfs? We answer these questions using information from almost 4,500 waqf deeds (*vakfiye*) available in Istanbul sharia court registers for the period 1550-1900.

The empirical analysis reveals several trends in waqf formation. First, we observe a period of expansion by the last quarter of the 17th century, followed by a sharp decline and a period of stagnation by the mid-18th century. Subsequently, a period of revival and a long-term increase in waqf formation took place by the last quarter of the 19th century, which was followed by a sharp decline over the next twenty-five years. Adopting a social stratification model based on gender and tax status, we also illustrate the extent to which different social groups joined in the waqf sector as founders. We find that women were significant contributors to the waqf sector and that, contrary to a common assumption in the literature, officials' participation as benefactors was proportional to that of other groups. We also find that the relative shares of social groups as benefactors in the waqf sector varied significantly over time, suggesting that researchers should avoid

generalizations based on a single, set ratio of involvement as if it applies to all times and places.

There is a strand of literature on the microeconomic aspects of cash waqfs, such as legal matters regarding the legitimacy of cash waqfs, financial instruments used for moneylending, and managerial problems (Çizakça 15-26, Öztürk 63-89, Özcan 10-65, Kurt 17-106). Although our study does not deal directly with these issues, it contributes to this literature by providing a macro context in which crises, stagnations, and expansions of the waqf sector are documented from a very long-term perspective, which may potentially help the researchers dealing with these issues to evaluate and better understand their findings.

Our results are also related to the literature that has been concerned with the identity of waqf founders (Baer 10, Gerber 37, Yediyıldız 151). The common view in the literature is that officials overwhelmingly dominated the waqf sector as benefactors, with women and civilians contributing in only a limited fashion (Yediyıldız 151). Our findings do not support this view, and show that the relative position of different social groups as waqf benefactors varied greatly over time, and that women and civilians contributed as much or more to the creation of new cash waqfs as officials, indicating that researchers should avoid generalizations based on a single ratio calculated based on a sample from a limited period, and take a long run view instead.

Our study is also related to the work of Mandaville (291), who illustrates the number of cash waqfs in Istanbul for the 15th and early 16th centuries using data from waqf surveys conducted in the year 1546. Different from this study, we use waqf deeds and focus on a different period, namely, the years between 1550 and 1900.

## **Data**

For an empirical analysis, we use information from waqf deeds (*vakfiye*) available in the *Waqf Catalog of the Istanbul Sharia Court Registers (İstanbul Şer'iyye Sicilleri Vakfiyeler Kataloğu)*, published by Center for Islamic Studies (ISAM) (Bilgin et al.). The waqf deed was a waqf's founding document, required by law to be registered in and approved by the court. These deeds contain rich information on a number of subjects, including waqf

founders, managers, and beneficiaries, as well as assets donated to the waqf. The *Waqf Catalog* compiles registers from 26 local sharia courts in Istanbul and tabulates the information contained in the waqf deeds like the name and title of the founder, the date of the waqf's establishment, the list of its beneficiaries, and the types of assets donated. Note that in our data source we do not observe the stock of waqfs at any given time but the flow—that is, the number of new waqfs established in a particular date.

Having a representative sample is crucial for the accuracy and general validity of an empirical analysis. We do not expect any selection problem harming the representativeness of the data at least at the registration phase of waqfs because of the rule that every waqf deed had to be approved by a judge and registered in a court. That is, all of the waqfs created during the period we examine should have been registered in our sources. But given the historical nature of the data, there is a question about whether the court records that have survived are representative. For example, if older documents are less likely to have survived than recent ones, this will lead us to the conclusion that the number of waqfs established in the early period was lower, even if it was not the case. And indeed, when we look at our data, we observe fewer waqf deeds for early dates. Thus, we chose the year 1550 as the starting point for our empirical analysis, because it is only from that point onward that the data appears complete. Because waqf deeds were not organized according to gender or social status, the distribution of the deeds belonging to male and female founders and different social groups appears random in the registers. Thus, we do not expect the potentially spotty nature of the surviving records to affect our analysis of the involvement of different social groups in the creation of new waqfs.

### **The Motivation Behind Waqf Formation**

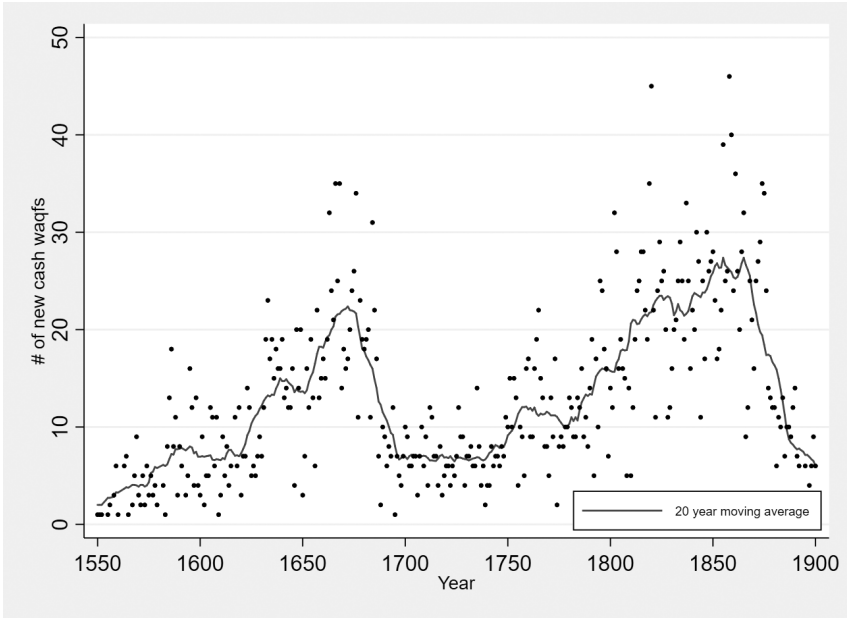
Discussing the motivations that led people in Ottoman society to establish waqfs may help us better understand the changing patterns in waqf creation over time. Three main motivations are pointed out in the literature. First, establishing a waqf was a pious act. Religion motivated people to engage in charitable giving, which became institutionalized under the waqf system. Religious motivation is also easily discernible from the dense religious references made in waqf deeds. Baer (25-26) states that such motivation was especially pronounced among women. Second, people might have

wanted to shift their wealth into the waqf sector by establishing waqfs because assets within waqf jurisdiction were immune from third-party intervention including the state. It has been suggested that this motivation was particularly pronounced among officials, as their wealth might have been at greater risk of expropriation by the ruler. This explanation has been used to account for why the waqf sector was apparently dominated by officials (Kuran 854). The third principal motivation noted in the literature was a desire for political legitimacy and social prestige (Peri 172-174, Orbay 144). Such motivation may have been particularly significant among the ruling elite.

### **Long-Term Changes in the Number of New Cash Waqfs Established in Istanbul**

In this section, we will focus on the temporal change in the creation of new cash waqfs. We illustrate how the number of newly established cash waqfs evolved and provide a tentative explanation for the reasons behind the temporal changes in waqf formation by highlighting major events that took place at the same time in Istanbul.

Figure 1 shows the annual change in the number of newly established cash waqfs in Istanbul from 1550 to 1900, and the solid line in the figure represents 20-year moving averages (MAs). A cursory look at the figure reveals four broad patterns in waqf formation. From 1550 to the third quarter of the 17th century, there was an upward trend in the total number of newly founded waqfs. In the subsequent years, we observe a decline and stagnation by the middle of the 18th century. Then, from the middle of the 18th century, the number of newly founded waqfs started to take off again, and this trend continued for more than a hundred years until the third quarter of the 19th century, which was followed by a sharp decline in the late 19th century.



**Figure 1.** *Cash Waqfs over Time in Istanbul*

What were the reasons behind these changes? Though a comprehensive analysis of each would exceed the scope of this paper, these fluctuations largely coincided with major events taking place in the empire, which points to a likely association between waqf formation and such factors as wars, political instability, urbanization, migration, pandemics, natural disasters, and political struggles. More detailed studies on particular peaks and troughs will no doubt shed greater light on the nature of this association in the future.

The first upward trend coincided with a turbulent era. There was intense population growth in Ottoman land in the second half of the 16th century (Akdağ). This demographic growth and ensuing migration from Anatolia to Istanbul led to a sharp increase in security problems, difficulties accommodating an influx of migrants, and a rising cost of living in the city. The concomitant boom in the establishment of cash waqfs was likely tied to efforts to address these issues through the provision of public services and relief for the poor.

The turbulence that marked the late 16th century only deepened in the 17th, a period that European and Ottoman historians define as a “century of crisis” (Parker 2-25). Natural, economic, military, and political crises rocked societies from the westernmost point of Europe to the far east of Asia. Climatic anomalies spurred a “little ice age” that deeply affected early modern societies (Parker 2-25, 185-210). Economic and financial factors played a role as well, and political and military conflicts deeply shook traditional societies. In response, early modern societies sought to develop institutional resilience to survive these major adverse shocks, and it was likely their institutional flexibility that allowed the Ottomans to meet the challenges of political instability, prolonged wars, demographic upheavals, and natural disasters the century brought with it. The large increase in the number of new cash foundations created in Istanbul during the century of crisis, seen in Figure 1, suggests that the residents of Istanbul responded to the crises they faced by establishing more cash waqfs.

Istanbul, as the capital city of the empire, must have been affected by political uncertainty prevalent during this period. The degree of political uncertainty can be measured by the turnover rates of high officials. Between 1644 and 1656, the empire witnessed the change of eighteen *sadrâzam*, twelve *Şeyhülislam*, twenty-three *başdefterdar* and eighteen *kapudanpaşa* (Mantran 239). Such unstable political environment may have increasingly motivated the residents of Istanbul to move their wealth into waqf sector.

Catastrophic events like fires may have had an impact on waqf creation as well in this period. The city suffered immensely from fires because of the fact that wood, which holds fire easily, was widely used construction material for residential houses in Istanbul. Mantran (250) mentions twenty-three great fires that happened in Istanbul between 1613 and 1780, fourteen of which took place in the 17th century. In order to recover and restore the city and social life ruined by the fire, the residents of Istanbul may have taken responsibility and increasingly participated into waqf sector as benefactors.

This boom in the creation of new waqfs was also likely tied to the rising tax burden driven by the period’s military conflicts. Such conflicts, which grew in duration and frequency from the end of the 16th century, imposed an increased the tax burden on Ottoman subjects. Although it remains unclear exactly how much the tax burden Ottoman taxpayers faced changed

over time, the information we have shows that extraordinary taxes (*avarız*) became commonplace during this century and the tax burden became heavier. We know that in various cities, there were waqf founders who formed cash or real-estate waqfs so that they and their children could avoid the *avarız* tax liability (Ergenç). Besides other motives, we observe that the desire to avoid this tax burden played a role in the increase in the number of cash waqfs. Furthermore, establishing a cash waqf for *avarız* not only provided an advantage for its founder but also benefited the residents of the neighborhood where it was founded, because some portion of the revenues from the waqf was allocated to pay the *avarız* taxes of the residents.

The sharp decline observed in Figure 1 at the late 17th century coincides with the prolonged absence of sultans from Istanbul. Ottoman sultans especially Ahmed II (1691-95) and Mustafa II (1695-1703) spent most of their time in Edirne leaving Istanbul at the hands of officials. The lack of sultanic supervision led officials to ignore the city affairs, which gave rise to disrepair and disorder in Istanbul (Özcan 52, 225). It is likely that the lack of attention to Istanbul from officials may have manifested itself in establishing fewer waqfs. Supporting this contention, the number of new waqfs founded by officials, rather than civilians, underwent the biggest fall during this period (see Figure 4).

In Figure 1 we observe that the number of newly established waqfs, after a sharp decline in the last quarter of the 17th century, remained stagnant through the middle of the 18th century. When we look at the general characteristics of this period, we see political stability, the absence of prolonged wars, and a return to economic expansion (Tabakoğlu 183). Interestingly, the introduction of newly established cash waqf remained at low levels in this environment of peace and economic progress, perhaps because of a concomitant lessening of demand for the services for the poor and needy the waqfs provided. Similarly, the political and economic stability that dominated the period may have made people feel that there would be no external interference with their wealth, thus easing the desire of people to shift their assets into the waqf sector.

Following this stagnation period, there was a revival and expansion in new waqf creation by the third quarter of the 19th century. The 20-year MAs indicates that the average number of new waqfs established per year rose



from almost 10 to 30 in the course of this period. This period was, like the era of growth that occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries, an age marked by political instability, long-lasting wars with military defeats, and reform efforts to stop worsening political conditions. In this period, territorial losses against Russia resulted in intense migration to Istanbul that again undermined order and security in the city. In addition, in the face of ongoing military failures, Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) attempted to start a reformation in the military. As a result, he was dethroned, and Istanbul was dragged into turmoil. Political struggles during the reign of his successor, Sultan Mustafa IV (1807-1808), further shook the city and spurred outbreaks of bloodshed. Though Sultan Mahmud (1808-1839)'s accession to the throne restored order in Istanbul, his reign inaugurated the far-reaching Tanzimat (1839) reforms intended to reorganize the empire into a modern and centralized state (Boyar and Fleet 3-4). It seems that those living in Istanbul responded to these adverse events and challenges by boosting the number of waqfs they established, again perhaps in an effort to meet the needs of the people in a turbulent era and to avoid the potential risks political instability posed to private property, much as occurred in the 17th century.

But the close correlation witnessed thus far between socio-political instability and the creation of new cash waqfs then tapers off after the second half of the 19th century. Despite the wars, political instability, and migration to Istanbul that marked the period, there was a great decline in new cash waqf formation, unlike the previous period. This is most likely due to the establishment of a new institution called the *Şehremaneti* as an extension of the centralization movements that started with the Tanzimat. This office, which ran municipal affairs in Istanbul, was established by the decision of the *Meclis-i Ali-i Tanzimat* on 13 June 1855, beginning with the 6th Municipal Office, which oversaw the municipal affairs in Galata and Beyoğlu. Upon the success of this institution, municipal services were expanded to other regions of Istanbul with the Dersaadet Administrative Municipality Regulation on 6 October 1868 (Erdoğan 10-12). The services provided by the *Şehremaneti* and the municipalities overlapped with those traditionally provided by waqfs, and it seems that the increasing role of the former over time may have reduced the need for services provided by the latter.

## Social Groups and Waqf Formation

In this section, we shift the focus to the social groups and their role in the founding of new cash waqfs. To examine the differences among social groups as waqf founders we first need to formulate a model of social stratification of Ottoman society that reflects the socio-economic reality. Second, we need to be able to assign the waqf founders in our data to the appropriate strata of the model according to their socio-economic status.

The fundamental divide that defined Ottoman society was the one between officials (*askeri*) and civilians (*reaya*). Officials were exempted from paying taxes and provided security, law and order for the public, and civilians paid taxes to the state and were free to engage in economic activity. Officials also differed among themselves based on the training they received and the type of services they provided. The members of the *ilmiye* class were engaged in educational and legal affairs, the members of the *seyfiye* were engaged in military and administrative affairs, and the members of the *kalemiye* were engaged in bureaucratic affairs. In general, officials occupied higher socio-economic status in Ottoman society, enjoyed much better material conditions than civilians, and had easy access to state resources and the ability to mobilize them.

Because gender, too, plays a significant role in determining one's socio-economic status in society, whether modern or traditional, we also differentiate social groups in the Ottoman Empire based on gender. This distinction is applicable in the waqf formation context, for we observe a significant number of female waqf founders in our data set.

How can we assign waqf founders into these social groups? Unfortunately, waqf deeds do not contain explicit information regarding the social status of waqf founders. However, they provide information on founders' names and titles. Adopting the common method in the literature, we also use these names and titles to determine which social groups the founders belonged to (Coşgel and Ergene 115-119).

Given the model of social stratification defined above and the limitations of our data set, we use the following procedure to sort out waqf founders. We use distinctly female names and take advantage of certain phrases in the full names of benefactors indicating gender, such as "bint" (daughter of) and "zevcesi"

(his wife), to differentiate women from men. We differentiate between officials and civilians based on the titles benefactors hold. We assign the founders into the learned class (*ilmiye*) if they or their fathers held such titles as *çelebi*, *dede*, *derviş*, *efendi*, *şeyh*, *hace*, *hoca*, *kadı*, *molla*, *şeyh*, *şeyhülislam*, and *sufi*, and into the administrative-bureaucratic class if they or their fathers were *ağa*, *beşe*, *çavuş*, *defterdar*, *halife*, *kaptan*, *kethüda*, *matbah emini*, *nazır*, *odabaşı*, *paşa*, *reis*, *subaşı*, *topçubaşı*, *zaim*, *ruznameci*, and *kazasker*. Among male founders, those who have no title indicative of being an official are treated as civilians. Consequently, according to this stratification model, officials (whether part of the learned or the administrative-bureaucratic class), women, and civilians constitute mutually exclusive social units making up Ottoman society in the context of waqf founders.

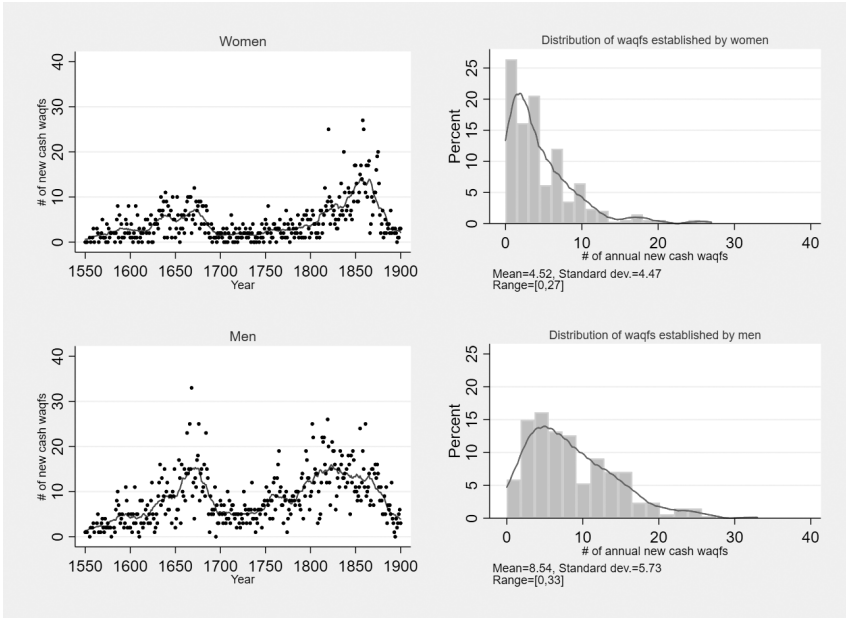
### **Gender of Founders**

Were there systematic differences between males and females in their role as founders of new cash waqfs? And if so, how did these differences change or evolve over time? On the one hand, it is natural to expect that men might have been more active as waqf founders because they were on average wealthier than women in the Ottoman world, as was the case in all early modern societies. On the other hand, if women were indeed more religious than men, as has been suggested in the literature (Baer 25-26), then this might have led them to establish more waqfs than men did. So, we might well expect to see a trend favoring the one side or the other, or the two opposite tendencies might well cancel each other out. Namely, the degree of women's involvement as waqf founders compared to men is ambiguous.

Several studies have explored women's participation as waqf founders. For example, using data from the waqf registers of 1546, Baer (10) shows that 36.8 percent of waqfs in Istanbul were established by women. But women's share as waqf founders differed in various parts and times of the empire. For example, 26-41.1 percent of waqfs were established by women in Cairo in the 17th and 18th centuries (Crecelius 179). Similarly, 20 percent of waqfs in Edirne in the early 16th century were established by women (Gerber 37). Note that these numbers are based on data from both cash and non-cash waqfs.

Figure 2 shows the new cash waqfs founded by men and women. On the left column of the figure, the number of newly established waqfs is plotted

against time with 20-year MAs, indicated by a solid line; while on the right column, the distribution of the number of annual cash waqfs founded is presented.



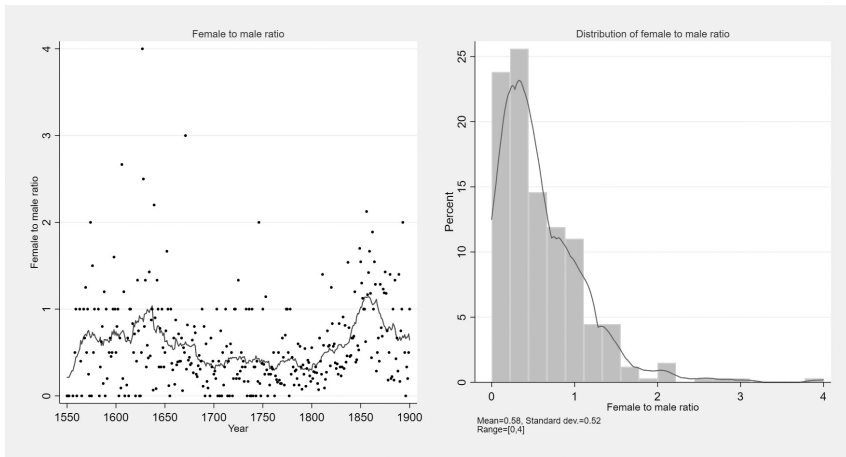
**Figure 2.** *New Cash Waqfs Established by Women and Men*

The general trends described previously in Figure 1 for the total number of cash waqfs apply to the waqfs established by women and men as well. During the first period of expansion by the last quarter of the 17th century, the number of waqfs established by men increased at a higher rate than that of women. The number of cash waqfs established by both gender groups remained low during the period of stagnation in the 18th century, which seems to have lasted longer for women than for men. In the second period of expansion, waqf formation reached its peak in the middle of the 19th century for men and in the last quarter of the 19th century for women. We also observe a steeper increase for women in waqf formation during this period. In the late 19th century, we see a rapid decline in new waqf creation by both groups.

The distribution of waqfs founded by men and women is given in the right column of Figure 2. While women founded an average of 4.47 cash waqfs per year, men founded 8.46. The maximum values are 27 and 33 for women

and men, respectively. Also, the standard deviation of the distribution for men is greater than that of women, indicating a greater variation in waqf formation by men over the years.

Although the waqf-founding behavior of women and men followed similar trends over time, the two were far from parallel. To see better the relative position of women against men, we calculate the female to male ratio, which is defined as the number of waqfs founded by women divided by the number established by men in a given year.



**Figure 3.** *The Female-to-Male Ratio*

Figure 3 shows the plot of the female-to-male ratio by year, and the 20-year MAs, represented by a solid line. The 20-year MAs shows that the ratio remained at levels lower than 1 most of the time, indicating the number of female founders was less than that of men. The degree to which women took part in the waqf sector varied significantly over time. For example, the ratio rises around to 1 circa 1640 and 1850, indicating that women founded waqfs as often as men did during these periods. Furthermore, women were adversely affected more than men during the period of stagnation in the 18th century. The female-to-male ratio during this period fluctuates around and below 0.5, indicating that women established waqf significantly less often than men.

The distribution of the annual female-to-male ratio is given in the right column of Figure 3. Although the ratio is clustered between 0 and 1,

there are cases where it is significantly higher than 1. The average of this distribution is 0.56, with a minimum value of 0 and a maximum value of 4.

Our findings in this section are in agreement with the literature in the sense that they show that women participated significantly in the waqf sector as founders. However, as indicated by the female-to-male ratio, the relative position of women varied considerably over time and from period to period. Hence, one needs to be cautious about generalizing based on a single ratio, as often done in the literature.

### **Class of Founders: Officials and Civilians**

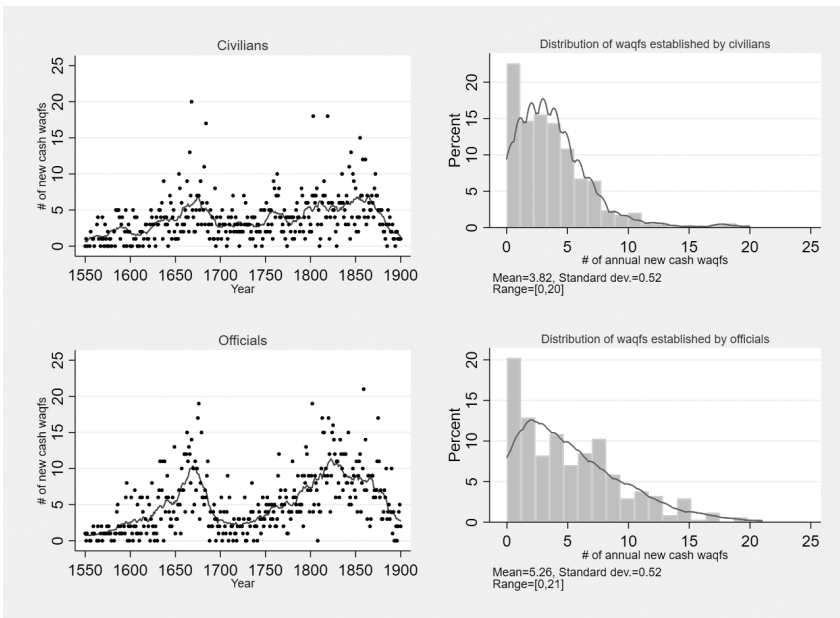
Now, we examine the differences between officials and civilians in the creation of new cash waqfs. Here, we expected a disproportional representation of officials as waqf founders for two reasons. First, considering the likely positive relationship between income and waqf formation, officials, who were on average wealthier than their civilian peers, would have been better positioned to establish more waqfs. Second, officials' assets would have been more open to the intervention of the central authority than civilians', because the state tended to regard it as legitimate to confiscate officials' assets in times of crisis, since officials' wealth was generated out of state resources granted to them by the sultan. This situation might well have incentivized officials to transfer their assets into the waqf sector, which was immune from external interventions.

The participation of officials and civilians in the waqf sector has been the subject of many studies. One of the most well-known of these is that of Yediyıldız (151), who argues that in the 18th century, 80–90 percent of waqfs were founded by officials. This finding has led many researchers to conclude that officials overwhelmingly dominated the waqf sector not just in that century but generally, largely because they sought to shelter their assets from state confiscation. In this section, we will examine if this conclusion holds up against our data and whether it applies over the long term as well.

Figure 4 illustrates the number of cash waqfs founded by civilians and officials. The trends in the figure are similar to those in Figure 1. We observe a period of expansion in the number of waqfs founded by both groups by the last quarter 17th century, a change particularly noticeable for officials.

After a sharp decline in waqf creation in the following years—a decline again especially pronounced for officials, dropping, roughly speaking, from an average of 10 to 4 per year—waqf formation entered a period of stagnation for both groups by the mid-18th century. The subsequent period of revival in waqf creation extended to the first quarter of the 19th century for officials and the last quarter of the 19th century for civilians. Following this period of expansion, we observe years with a rapid decline in waqf creation by both groups. The figure also indicates that the number of waqfs founded by officials experienced higher volatility over the years compared to civilians. These observations suggest that officials’ responsiveness to potential factors affecting waqf creation such as wars, political instability and migration might have been different than that of civilians.

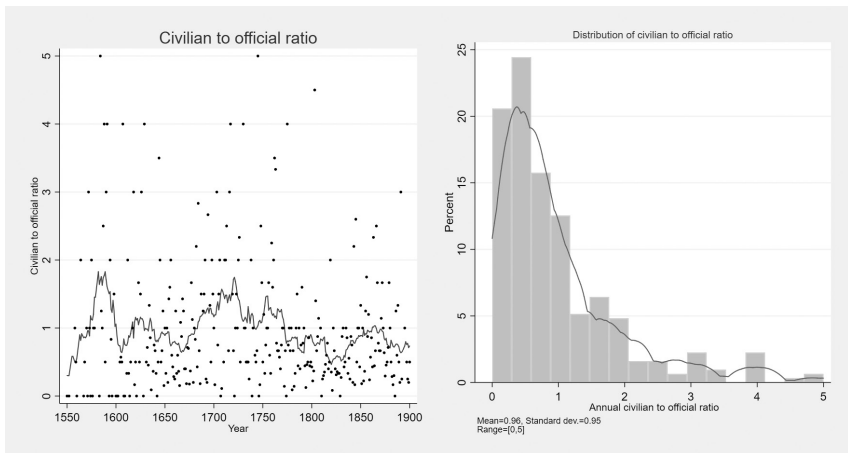
The distribution of new cash waqfs founded annually by officials and civilians is given on the right column of Figure 4. While civilians founded an average of 3.82 cash waqfs per year, officials founded 5.26. The number of waqfs clustered in the range of 0-5 for civilians and 0-10 for officials.



**Figure 4.** *New Cash Waqfs Established by Civilians and Officials*

To illustrate the differences between officials and civilians more clearly, we employ a civilian-to-official ratio, which is defined as the number of cash waqfs founded by civilians divided by the number of cash waqfs founded by officials. Figure 5 plots this ratio against time in the left column and shows the distribution of the annual value of the ratio in the right column. Looking at the 20-year MAs reveals that the civilian-to-official ratio fluctuates considerably over time. During the 16th century, the ratio was mostly above a value of 1, meaning that there were more civilian waqf founders than official. The sharp increase in waqf formation by officials during the 17th century drives this ratio below 1. However, in the period of stagnation, the ratio remained above 1. Towards the 19th century, it again dropped below 1 as a result of a sharp increase in waqf creation by officials, as illustrated in Figure 4.

The left panel of Figure 5 shows the distribution of the annual civilian-to-official ratio. The ratio fluctuates between 0 and 5, indicating that there were years in which civilians introduced no waqfs and years in which they founded five times as many waqfs as officials did. The average of the distribution is 0.96. In other words, when all years are taken into account, civilians established on average almost as many waqfs as officials.



**Figure 5.** *The Civilian-to-Official Ratio*

These results run counter to the common view in the literature that officials dominated the waqf sector as founders. If the definition of civilians is expanded to include women, the significance of officials weakens further. How can we

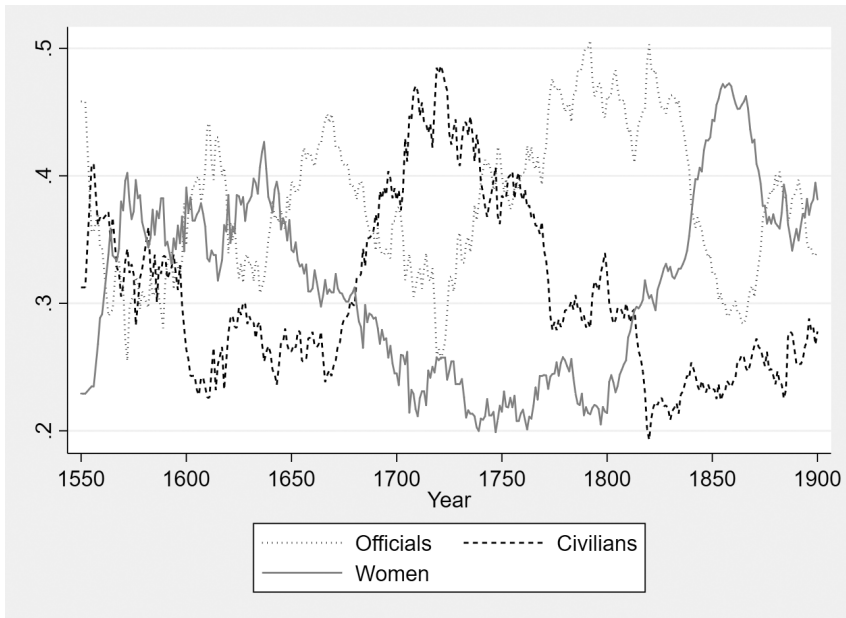


explain this finding? We nominate the ease of establishing cash waqf as a likely explanation for the difference. In other words, cash waqfs enabled individuals even with modest material means to participate in the waqf sector as founders, thus easing the likely income constraint in waqf creation.

Another important point revealed by these graphs is that the civilian-to-official ratio varies greatly over the years and from period to period, casting doubt on generalizations applicable to all periods based on a single set ratio, as is often done in the literature.

### The Weights of Social Groups in the Waqf Sector

So far, we have illustrated both the absolute and the relative position of social groups (men vs. women, and officials vs. civilians) in waqf creation. In this section, adopting the customary approach in the literature, we focus on the fractional representation of social groups as founders in the waqf sector. Different from the previous sections, we also discuss the participation of sub-groups of officials—namely, the learned (*ilmīye*) and administrative-bureaucratic class.



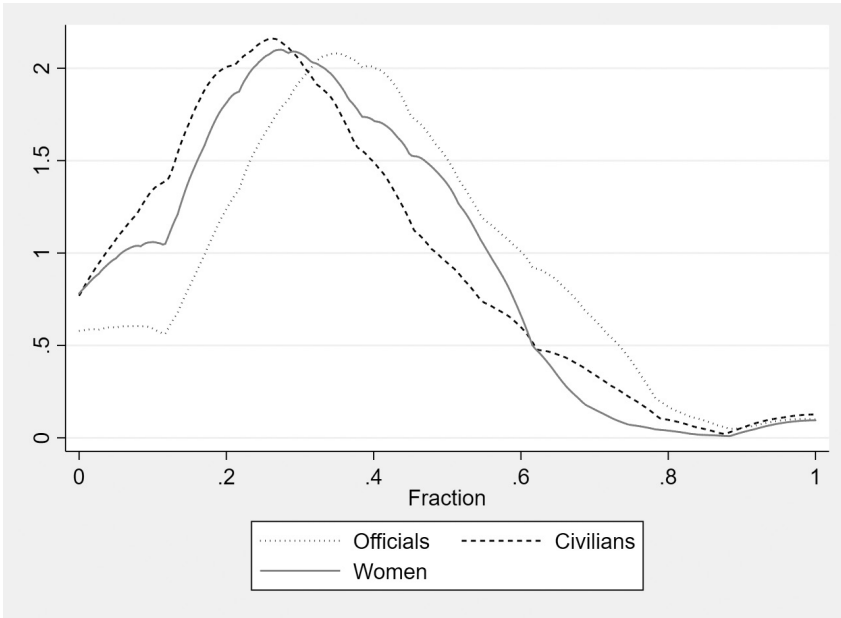
**Figure 6.** *The fraction of Officials, Civilians, and Women as Waqf Founders over Time*

Figure 6 shows the 20-year MAs of the fraction of new cash waqf established by officials, civilians, and women for the period 1550-1900. It is obvious from the figure that these shares varied greatly over time. When we look at the social groups separately, we observe that the fraction of female waqf founders fluctuated within the 30-40 percent range through the mid-17th century. It then declined to a low of 20 percent in the mid-18th century and remained low, in the 20-30 percent range, until the early 19th century. After that, it rebounded to reach an all-time high by mid-century, when it accounted for more than 40 percent of all new cash waqfs established during the period, a rise that came mostly at the expense of officials.

On the other hand, the fraction of civilian waqf founders was lower than 30 percent for most of the 17th century. It then rose to values higher than 40 percent in the first half of the 18th century. As can be seen in previous figures, this change was due not to a real increase in waqf formation by civilians but rather to an overall fall in the number of waqfs established by women and officials during this period. Over the following fifty years, the share again fell below 30 percent, as it had in the 17th century.

The fraction of officials fluctuated mostly between 30 and 40 percent through the mid-18th century. However, it rose as high as 40-50 percent from the 1750s to the 1840s, after which it declined in favor of women. We further break down the fraction of officials into administrator-bureaucrats and learned (*ilmiye*) groups, which is presented in Appendix Figure 1. It seems that the share of administrator-bureaucrats is higher than that of the learned groups. Interestingly, the fraction of administrator-bureaucrats tended to move in a direction that was opposite to that of the learned (*ilmiye*) group.

Evaluating Figure 6 in conjunction with the general trends of waqf creation observed in Figure 1 reveals that during the time of expansion in waqf creation the fractions of women and officials rose, while during the period of stagnation the share of civilians increased. Moreover, the fluctuations in new waqf creation seem to be due to the behavior of women and officials given the higher volatility of waqf formation by these groups as observed in the previous section.



**Figure 7.** *The Distribution of the Annual Fraction of Officials, Civilians, and Women*

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the annual proportion of women, civilians, and officials. The mean of the distribution is 38 percent for officials, 30.8 percent for civilians, and 31.2 percent for women; the standard deviation is 20.72 for officials, 20.78 for civilians, and 19.2 for women. Although the figure illustrates that the mean value of the distribution for officials is larger than that for the other groups, it is far from high enough to suggest that they were the predominant group in waqf formation in the context of Istanbul cash waqfs.

These findings emerged from the analysis of data from Istanbul cash waqfs suggest that a conclusion based on a timeless, universal ratio regarding the participation of social groups as founders in the waqf sector can be seriously misleading. There is a great variation in the engagement of social groups in waqf formation over time.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined temporal change in the number of newly founded cash waqfs in Istanbul and the differences between social groups—women, officials, and civilians—in waqf creation. For the empirical analysis, we use information from almost 4,500 waqf deeds covering the period 1550-1900.

In the empirical analysis, we identify the periods of expansion, stagnation, and decline that took place in waqf creation over the long term. Our analysis shows that although these periods were experienced similarly by all social groups, there was considerable variation in the intensity of their responses to the potential factors affecting waqf creation. Moreover, the results show that, in contrast to what is often assumed, female benefactors were a significant part of the waqf sector and officials were not as dominant a force as some have argued, though both findings might not hold beyond the specific case of cash waqfs we have examined here. Our analysis also reveals that the degree of involvement of different social groups as founders in the waqf sector varied significantly over time. Thus, researchers should avoid generalizations based on a single ratio of involvement as if it applies to all times and places.

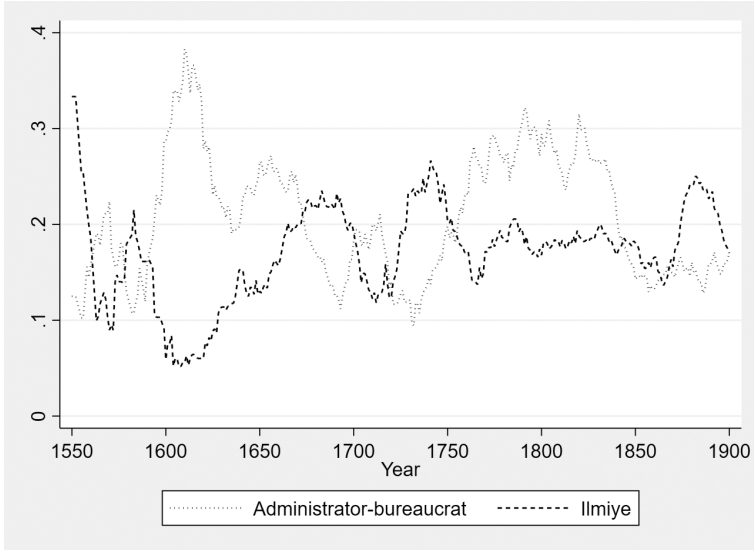
Unveiling the forces behind the temporal changes we have identified in the waqf sector requires more detailed studies. Although we have speculated, within the limited scope of this paper, on the association between waqf creation and factors such as war, political instability, migration, and economic expansion, future studies can examine in detail the extent to which such factors played role in waqf creation in a systematic way with a data-driven approach.

## References

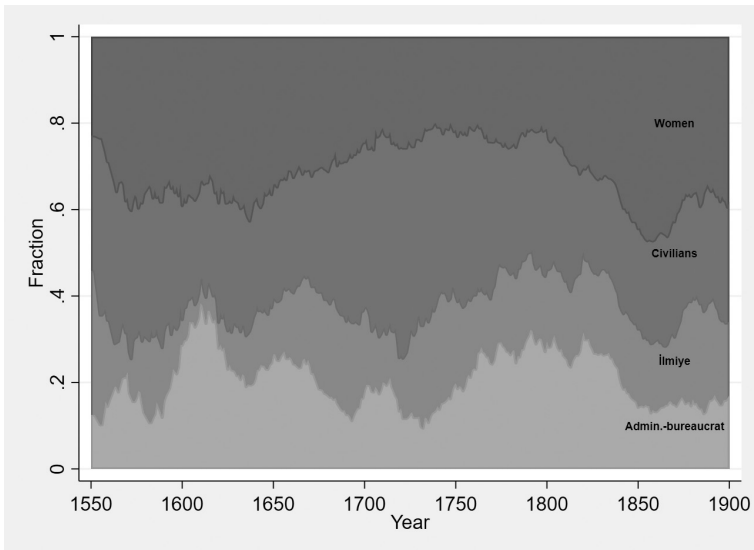
- Akdağ, Mustafa. *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası*. Bilgi Yayınevi, 1975.
- Aydın, Bilgin, et al. *İstanbul Şer'iyeye Sicilleri Vakfiyeler Kataloğu*. İSAM Yayınları, 2015.
- Baer, Gabriel. "Women and Waqf: An Analysis of the Istanbul Tahrir of 1546." *Asian and African Studies: Journal of the Israel Oriental Society*, vol. 17, no. 1-3, 1983, pp. 9-27.
- Boyar, Ebru, and Kate Fleet. *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- Coşgel, Metin, and Boğaç Ergene. *The Economics of Ottoman Justice*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Crecelius, Daniel. "Incidences of Waqf Cases in Three Cairo Courts: 1640-1802." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, no. 2, 1986, pp. 176-89.
- Çizakça, Murat. *Risk Sermayesi Özel Finans Kurumları ve Para Vakıfları*. İslami İlimler Araştırma Vakfı (İSAV) Yayınları, 1993.
- Erdoğan, Öner. *İstanbul Şehremâneti (Belediyesi)'nin Kuruluşu ve 1917 Yılı Bütçesi*. TC Maliye Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı Yayınları, Yayın no. 2008/386.
- Ergenç, Özer. *XVI. Yüzyılın Sonlarında Bursa: Yerleşimi, Yönetimi, Ekonomik ve Sosyal Durumu Üzerine bir Araştırma*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2006.
- Genç, Mehmet. "Klasik Osmanlı Sosyal-iktisadi Sistemi ve Vakıflar." Unpublished paper, 2020.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press, 2013.
- Gerber, Haim. "The Waqf Institution in Early Ottoman Edirne." *Asian and African Studies: Journal of the Israel Oriental Society*, vol. 17, no. 1-3, 1983, pp. 29-45.
- Kuran, Timur. "The Provision of Public Goods under Islamic Law: Origins, Impact, and Limitations of the Waqf System." *Law and Society Review*, no. 4, 2001, p. 841-98.
- Kurt, İsmail. *Para Vakıfları: Nazariyat ve Tatbikat*. Ensar Neşriyat, 1996.
- Mandaville, Jon E. "Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 3, 1979, p. 289-308.
- Mantran, Robert. *İstanbul Tarihi*. İletişim Yayınları, 2001.
- Özcan, Abdülkadir (ed.), *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099-1116/1688-1704)*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000.
- Öztürk, Nazif. *Türk Yenileşme Tarihi Çerçevesinde Vakıf Müessesesi*. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1995.
- Orbay, Kayhan. "Imperial Waqfs within the Ottoman Waqf System." *Endowment Studies* 1, no. 2, 2017, p. 135-53.
- Özcan, Tahsin. *Osmanlı Para Vakıfları: Kanunı Dönemi Üsküdar Örneği*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2003.
- Peri, Oded. "Waqf and Ottoman Welfare Policy." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, no. 2, 1992, p. 167-86.
- Tabakoğlu, Ahmet. *Türk İktisat Tarihi*. Dergâh Yayınları, 2000.
- Yediyıldız, Bahaeddin. "Türk Vakıf Kurucularının Sosyal Tabakalaşmadaki Yeri 1700-1800." *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, no. 3, 1982, pp. 143-64.

## Appendix



**Appendix Figure 1.** *Fraction of Administrator-Bureaucrats and Ilmiye Members as Waqf Founders*



**Appendix Figure 2.** *Fraction of All Social Groups as Waqf Founders*

In Appendix Figure 2 we present the fraction of social groups as benefactors in the form of an area graph to get an alternative view to those presented in Figure 6 and Appendix Table 1. After calculating the proportion of each group as waqf founder in a given year, we take the 20-year MAs for each series to get a smooth graph to better show the long-term changes over time. Overlaid areas in the figure represent the share of administrator-bureaucrats, learned groups (*ilmiye*), civilians, and women from the bottom to top, respectively. The vertical distance in a given area indicates the share of that group and an increase or decrease in the area over time means an increase or decrease in the share of that social group.

# İstanbul'da Para Vakıflarının Kuruluşunda Yaşanan Uzun Vadeli Değişimler\*

Erol Özvar\*\*

Sadullah Yıldırım\*\*\*

## Öz

Bu çalışmada, İstanbul Şer'iyye Sicilleri Vakfiyeler Kataloğu'nda bulunan yaklaşık 4.500 vakfiye kullanılarak 1550 ila 1900 arası dönemde İstanbul'da yeni kurulan vakıf sayısının zaman içinde nasıl değiştiği analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca Osmanlı sosyal tabakalaşmasını teşkil eden askeri, reaya ve kadınlar gibi farklı kesimlerin vakıf kurma davranışları bakımından aralarında bir farkın olup olmadığı ortaya konulmuştur. Makalenin bulguları askerilerin vakıf sektörüne hakim olduğu yönündeki yaygın görüşün aksine, reaya ve kadınların askeriler kadar vakıf sektöründe kurucu olarak yer aldıklarını göstermektedir. Kadınlar ve reayanın bu derece vakıf sektöründe aktif görünmesi para vakfı kurmanın küçük maddi imkanlarla dahi mümkün olmasının bir sonucu olarak yorumlanabilir. Analizimiz ayrıca, farklı toplum kesimlerinin vakıf sektörüne kurucu olarak katılma oranının yıldan yıla önemli ölçüde değiştiğini göstermekte ve bu sebeple tek bir evrensel orana dayalı kapsamlı genellemeler yapmanın yanıltıcı olabileceğine dikkat çekmektedir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Para vakfı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, İstanbul, vakfiye, vâkıf.

\* Geliş Tarihi: 24 Eylül 2021 – Kabul Tarihi: 26 Nisan 2022

Bu makaleyi şu şekilde kaynak gösterebilirsiniz:

Özvar, Erol, ve Sadullah Yıldırım. "Long-Term Changes in the Creation of New Cash Waqfs in Istanbul." *bilig*, no. 102, 2022, ss. 27-51.

\*\* Prof. Dr., Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı – Ankara/Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0003-2339-3698

erolozvar@gmail.com

\*\*\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Marmara Üniversitesi, İktisat Fakültesi, İktisat Bölümü – İstanbul/Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0001-8742-0478

sadullah.yildirim@marmara.edu.tr



# Долгосрочные изменения в создании новых денежных вакуффов в Стамбуле\*

Эрол Озвар\*\*

Садуллах Йылдырым\*\*\*

## Аннотация

В данной работе, опирающейся на информацию из почти 4500 вакуфных актов (вакфийе), имеющихся в реестрах шариатских судов Стамбула за период 1550–1900 гг., авторы рассматривают долгосрочные изменения в создании новых денежных вакуффов, прослеживая периоды развития, зстоя и кризисов. Также в работе исследуется участие различных групп — а именно, чиновников, гражданских лиц и женщин — в качестве учредителей денежного вакуфа. Выявлено, что женщины вносили значительный вклад в сектор вакуффов и что, вопреки распространенному в литературе предположению, участие чиновников в качестве благотворителей было пропорционально участию других групп. Кроме того, мы показываем, что относительные доли социальных групп как благотворителей в секторе вакуфа значительно изменялись с течением времени. Таким образом, исследователи должны избегать обобщений о некоем едином установленном соотношении вовлеченности, как не имеющем оснований к применению ко всякому времени и месту.

## Ключевые слова

Денежные вакуфы, Османская империя, Стамбул, вакфийе, благотворители.

\* Поступило в редакцию: 24 сентября 2021 г. – Принято в номер: 26 апреля 2022 г.

Ссылка на статью:

Özvar, Erol, and Sadullah Yıldırım. “Long-Term Changes in the Creation of New Cash Waqfs in Istanbul.” *bilig*, no. 102, 2022, pp. 27-51.

\*\* Проф., д-р, Совет по высшему образованию Анкара / Турция

ORCID: 0000-0003-2339-3698

erolozvar@gmail.com

\*\*\* Д-р, Университет Мармара, кафедра экономики – Стамбул / Турция

ORCID: 0000-0001-8742-0478

sadullah.yildirim@marmara.edu.tr

