

**OTTOMAN VAKIFS: THEIR IMPACT ON OTTOMAN
SOCIETY AND OTTOMAN LAND REGIME**

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Özet: “Osmanlı Vakıfları ve Vakıfların Osmanlı Toplumunu ve Toprak Rejimi Üzerindeki Etkileri”

Osmanlı Devletindeki vakıfların sosyal, ekonomik, idari bir çok yönü bulunmaktaydı. Osmanlı Devletinde toprak yönetimi diğer çağdaş devletlerde olduğu gibi oldukça önemliydi ve devlet gelirlerinin önemli bir kısmı toprak gelirlerinden elde ediliyordu. Toprak rejimi açısından vakıflar Osmanlıda oldukça tartışmalıdır. Özellikle “evladiyelik vakıflar” kanalıyla özel şahısların vakıfları özel mülkleri gibi kullandıkları ve devleti zarara uğrattıkları genel bir yargı halini almıştır. Bu araştırma özet olarak Osmanlı’da vakıf sisteminin işleyişi ve toprak rejimi üzerindeki etkileri konu edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vakıf, miri arazi, malikane, evladiyelik vakıflar, temlik, tekke, zaviye, ulema.

Abstract:

Ottoman vakıfs were multi-purposed endowments serving social, economic and administration services. Similar to other empires, land administration was crucial to Ottoman state that state acquired most of the state revenue from land incomes. Ottoman vakıfs were very controversial according to the Ottoman land regime. According to the common sense, especially, via “evladiyelik vakıfs” private persons used the vakıf land

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as if their private land and therefore, they weakened state's economic power. This paper briefly deals with Ottoman vakıf system and its influence on Ottoman land regime.

Keywords: Vakıf, miri land, malikane, evladiyelik vakıfs, temlik, tekke, zaviye, ulema

VAKIF FOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC SERVICES

The "Vakıf" was one of the most important social institutions in the Ottoman Empire. Vakıfs were religious establishments formed for humanitarian purposes. Their impact was felt in many parts of Ottoman life. Vakıfs took on large obligations--from social welfare to the creation of Ottoman art and culture to the representation of Ottoman civilization in conquered lands.

The work of the Vakıfs benefited the Empire's entire population. Vakıfs expressed individuals' contributions to the culture, society, and propaganda in the conquered lands. In addition, the Vakıfs provided public services.

All Ottoman religious institutions and--until the 19th century--educational institutions (excluding some military-palace schools), were created and supported solely by Vakıfs. Almost all subjects in the Empire benefited from the Vakıfs' services. Ahmet Akgündüz colorfully described the Vakıfs' several functions: "Because of [the] Vakıfs, a man was born in [a] Vakıf house, slept in a Vakıf cradle; he was fed by [a] Vakıf income, studied at Vakıf schools and read Vakıf books. Then, he taught at Vakıf schools and received [a] salary from the Vakıfs. When he died, he was put in a Vakıf coffin and buried in [a] Vakıf cemetery" (Akgündüz, 1988: 2)

Vakıfs functioned with great freedom and minimal governmental interference; they ensured the continued existence of public services and institutions. It was a legal tradition that only God had proprietary rights over a Vakıf, superceding the government and initially rendering the government powerless in Vakıf affairs; on the other hand, the state controlled and confirmed all Vakıfs since they had the character of freehold property.

The Vakıf system had a deep impact on the Ottoman land regime, since the biggest portion of Vakıf income came from land. But increases of Vakıfs on temlik, state land, created a great controversy. Religious and educational endowments were the majority in Vakıf institutions. The state did not spend money for religious and educational expenses. Mosques and schools were built and kept in service by Vakıfs. Vakıfs also paid the salaries of employees.¹

¹ There were variety of people worked for mosques; Hatip, Imam, Müezzini, Vaiz, Hafız, Akşam Müezzini, Ferraş, Muvakkıt (there were also muvakkithanes in the empire to schedule prayer hours), Kandili etc. for more information, see, H. Baki Kunter, (1939) *Türk Vakıfları ve Vakfiyeleri* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası)

Mosques were everywhere in the Empire. Mahalles (neighborhoods) were established by building a mosque. Newly conquered territories were dotted with mosques. According to the Turkish tradition, mosques were signs of Muslim-Ottoman rule. Every city and town had at least one great mosque. According to Islamic and Ottoman tradition, the biggest church in a newly conquered land was converted to a mosque, and the others remained in Christian hands. The most striking example was the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into the Mosque. Mehmet II, the Conqueror, ordered the construction of a bedestan (shopping center) in order to create an income source that would keep the Hagia Sophia in service. (İnalçık, 1973: 143)

Ottoman mosques are some of the best examples of Ottoman art and architecture. Large, semi-circular dome mosques with long and thin minarets with up to three şerefes represented Ottoman-style mosque-building architecture. Tile and woodwork in the mosques--along with "hatt" and the famous Turkish rug--made numerable Ottoman mosques art treasures. Vakıfs supplied monetary income for the building of these mosques.

Medreses (schools) were the second-most popular endowments after the mosques. The Medrese school system began in the primary grades and extended to higher education. Traditionally, the medreses were built next to mosques. During the Ottoman Empire, all the medreses were built and run by Vakıfs. Because of the Vakıfs, medreses enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Vakıfs not only built schools and paid instructors' salaries; they also granted scholarships to students, fed them, and supplied their needs. Moreover, some Vakıfs entertained students, providing picnics for relaxation. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 169)

In the eighteenth century, most of the founders of the medreses were müderrises (medrese instructors.) Generally, these müderrises made their Vakıfs conditional. First, they assigned themselves as instructors of the medreses. Second, they appointed their children and grandchildren as inherited beneficiaries.(Yediyıldız, 1986: 169) This tradition increased the corruption of Ottoman education. Pseudo-instructors were created to teach at the schools, and they did a poor job of educating their students. Their fortune was to be children or grandchildren of the founder of the Vakıf. Because of this malpractice of Vakıf schools, "Beşik Uleması" (Cradle Ulema) came into existence.

The library had an important place in Ottoman society. Most of the public libraries, generally located in mosques, schools, tekkes, zaviyes, and hospitals, were Vakıf libraries. Private libraries were also very rich, and these libraries were merged into Vakıf libraries, since offering books to the public was a pious duty. Ottoman libraries preserved large numbers of books--including more than 200,000 manuscripts that have survived down to our times. These collections form one of the richest sources for the history and culture of Islam. (İnalçık, 1973: 174)

In big centers, the public buildings--mosque, medrese, library, hamam, (bathhouse), imaret, and hospital--were constructed as a complex called a "Küllüye" in the town's center, and the town grew around the Küllüye. But Küllüyes were better known as academic institutions rather than public ones. In small cities and towns, these social institutions were called imarets. The imaret would supply food to poor people, students, travelers, and prisoners. Some imarets aimed to feed birds, and some of them were established to offer fresh fruit to people. In the eighteenth century, more than

30,000 people benefited from imarets' free food in Istanbul alone. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 171)

In the Ottoman Empire, all the külliyes were created by Vakıfs. (Hatipoğlu, 1993: 1646) Fatih Külliyesi and Süleymaniye Külliyesi were the most famous. Süleymaniye Külliye's endowed estate, which was designed to meet the expense of the külliye, gives us an idea how large of a role the külliye played. The külliye's Vakıf consisted of one bath house, many shops and houses. There was an income of 217 villages, 30 hamlets, 2 mahalles, 7 mills, 2 fisheries, 2 docks, one grazing pasture, 2 çiftliks and 2 islands. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 160)

Vakıfs had huge government-provided resources. A sizable percentage of the Ottoman land was Vakıf-owned land. Three-out-of-four land holdings belonged to the Vakıfs. (Köprülü, 1983: 351) The Vakıfs' budget was twelve percent of the entire state income. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 160) At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the land and estates of Istanbul were Vakıf-owned. (Köprülü, 1983: 389) Because they offered public services, most Vakıfs were exempt from taxation. With few exceptions, each sultan approved older Vakıfs, and new Sultans extended them when they came to power.

Vakıfs were considered sacred institutions that nobody, including the sultans, had the right to abolish or confiscate. They were Islamic institutions, however, and Vakıf institutions were later incorporated into Islam. Vakıfs are not mentioned in the Kuran and Hadis.² According to Neşet Çağatay, Ebu Hanife did not accept the Vakıf as an Islamic institution since it was not mentioned in either the Kuran or the Hadis. His student--Ebu Yusuf--brought the vakıf institution forward, declaring it being a "vacib." (Çağatay, 1993: 1616)

According to Islamic law, men and women and non-Muslims could establish Vakıfs. Thus, a very large number of people established Vakıfs, and almost every single person in the Ottoman lands benefited from them. In Vakıf accords, usage of the Vakıf institutions was strongly mentioned without gender and religious segregation.*

Vakıfs gave Ottomans the ability to lead and shape society. Ottoman individuals, not the government, built infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, water supplies, bridges, schools, libraries, and hospitals. Vakıf institutions gave individuals enormous power to achieve their goals. Vakıfs aimed to achieve social peace and tried to improve human equality. In addition, Vakıfs decreased the bureaucracy in the empire.

Although supervised by the state, the Vakıfs enjoyed a great deal of freedom. The state opened the way for individuals to be more active in society. Individuals played a crucial role through Vakıf institutions in helping the government. Vakıfs

² According to some sources, prophet Muhammed endowed his 7 date trees for public use. (Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü, III*, (Istanbul: MEB Basımevi, 1972), According to Fuad Köprülü, vakıfs were to be formed after the conquests of Syria and Egypt. (Köprülü, *İslam ve Türk Hukuk Tarihi*, 312.) Neşet Çağatay wrote that the first vakıf was Umayyad mosque in Damascus built in 706. (Neşet Çağatay, "Türk Vakıflarının Özellikleri" *X Tarih Kongresi*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1993), 1615.)

* Vakıf of Mehmet II is best example for equal usage.

burdened government's public duties, and, moreover, Vakıfs strengthened Ottoman culture and the state's power wherever they were established.

Early Vakıfs in the Balkans were established by marchers and warlords. Still, the government allowed a chunk of miri land to become Vakıf land after the conquests stopped in the Balkans and elsewhere. Ironically, most of the Vakıfs in the Balkans were established by military men and governmental officers, so one may expect that those Vakıfs dealt with the state interests, cloaked with being pious and private foundations. The sultans bestowed a sizable number of lands to the "*Colonizer Dervishes*" in the Balkans. Dervishes converted those lands to Vakıfs, and they played important roles in the settlement of the Turks in the Balkans. Pious endowments--tekkes in the towns and zaviyes along with the Ottoman highways--functioned as more than merely religious institutions. Tekkes and zaviyes (lodges run by Dervishes) were Vakıfs. Tekkes, which were a kind of folk religion, were open to the public--Muslim or non-Muslim--as well as mosques. Tekkes practiced folk religion. Dervishes preached in a colloquial language and prayed with music and dance. Instead, Mosque libraries retained the books about Islamic law, hadis, and other books, which were written in Arabic or in very sophisticated Turkish that was very hard for the ordinary people to understand, the tekke and zaviyes retained books written about sufism and philanthropic purposes with colloquial language. Tekke and zaviyes attracted Muslim and non-Muslims alike, and these institutions supplied welfare services to the public.

Mutasavvıfs and dervishes traveled from one place to another, spreading the Ottoman culture. Conversions to Islam in the Balkans were on individual bases because of Muslim individuals and their Vakıf services. If the government had intended to have cultural programs to assimilate natives into the Ottoman culture and religion, it would have created a reaction in the Balkans, and if the government had forced the people, mass conversions would have taken place.

The Ottomans established and maintained a well-organized road system. The roads were important in keeping the state's far-reaching order. Because of well-organized roads, the state could transfer its huge army from one front to another. Additionally, roads were the channels along which Ottoman culture and power spread. Vakıf foundations, constructed at regular intervals along the highways, show the spread of Ottoman civilization. In the Ottoman period, 232 inns, 18 kervansarays, 32 hostels, 10 bedestans, and 42 bridges were built in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone. To ensure the ease and safety of travel on the main roads, the sultans created establishments supported by Vakıfs, and they encouraged government and Palace officials by granting them large estates to do the same. (İnalçık, 1973: 147)

In the Ottoman Empire, roads were kept open by tax-exempted village dwellers around the roads, and some Vakıf institutions in addition to the highways. Zaviyes and hostels were established along with the roads, and they supplied free food to travelers and fed their horses for three days. Menzils were established everywhere along with the highways and small roads for the same purposes. Seventy percent of endowed buildings were menzils in the entire Vakıf system. (Yediyıldız, 1984: 9)

After the abolishment of the Janissary Corps, Sultan Mahmut II began to persecute Janissary sympathizers. Because of the affiliation of Bektaşî religious groups with the Janissaries, the Sultan forbade this religious order and confiscated its Vakıf

lands, tekkes, and zaviyes. The other dominant religious orders, Mevlevis and Nakşibendis, also lost a sizable number of their Vakıf incomes to the central treasury.³

Vakıf institutions influenced Ottoman urbanization. In many cases, Vakıf infrastructure became the nuclei of the towns and cities. In most cases, Vakıfs were major public buildings in the towns and cities. In some cases, the city and town developed after the establishment of Vakıf infrastructure. Damad İbrahim Pasha established some Vakıf infrastructure in his birthplace, the village of Muskara. After a while, the village became a city called “Nevşehir.” (Yediyıldız, 1986: 170) After building a Vakıf bridge, the town of Uzunköprü came into existence in Edirne. When Hersek Ahmed Pasha constructed a road along the İzmit Gulf, the town of Hersek was created after that. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the frontier lords created similar foundations on the land, which they had conquered, and these nuclei were later to become Ottoman cultural and administrative centers. The city of Sarajevo grew up around the imaret, which the frontier lord İsa Bey had endowed. The imaret, which was established by Minnet Bey on the Sofia-Edirne road, became the nucleus of Tatar-Pazarjik. (İnalçık, 1973: 147)

VAKIFS AND OTTOMAN LAND SYSTEM

According to Islamic law, owned land (mülk arazi) and estates can be endowed. These types of Vakıfs are called “*sahih Vakıf*” (genuine Vakıf). (Yediyıldız, 1986: 157) Besides mülk arazi, *mevat arazi* (dead land) could become Vakıf after mevat land converted to mülk land. *Metruk arazi*, which was left for public usage, could never be endowed. (Akgündüz, 1988: 446) According to some estimates, Vakıf lands were one of three or three of four of kinds of arable land in the empire. (Yediyıldız, 1984: 25) Endowed land comprised 40 percent of Vakıf income. (Yediyıldız, 1984: 25)

Mütevelli supervised the Vakıf land. *Mütevelli* were obligated to keep land cultivated. Otherwise, the land would be confiscated or given to other Vakıfs. Vakıf land was rented in two ways: *icareteyn* and *mukaata*. In the *icareteyn* system, Vakıf land was rented by peasants for a maximum of three years, with a fixed annual rental price. The *mukaata* system was more complicated, and *mukaata* land was bigger than the *icareteyn* land. In the *mukaata* system, Vakıf land was rented with a fixed annual price, but the tenant used the land for a lifetime and had the right to give it to his children.

CREATION OF VAKIFS ON MIRI LAND

The creation of the Vakıfs on miri, state land, was a long lasting debate in the Ottoman land system. According to the Islamic and Ottoman laws, miri lands could not be endowed. Only the income of miri land, not the *rakabe* (ownership) of the land, could be endowed. It was possible, however, to endow miri land’s income, but the Vakıfs, which were created by miri land’s income, were considered “*pseudo Vakıfs*,”

³ John Robert Barnes devoted a chapter in his book, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire*, to the government’s takeover of Bektaşî and other religious groups’ properties.

because they were innovated. If the miri land became *malikhane* and if the sultan granted the malikhane “mülkname-i hümayun” then, the Vakıf, which was established on this land became a genuine one.

During the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, sultans converted a sizable number of “has land” to Vakıf lands in order to find income resources on their Vakıfs. The sultans also granted (temlik) land to marchers and warlords in order to reward their military triumphs. Temlik land, technically privately owned land, remained as miri land. The state had rakabe right but the owner of temlik had tasarruf (management) rights. Most of the early temlik lands were endowed for the Vakıfs. (Netayıcı’l-Vukuat, 1979: 136)

The Temlik system worked well during the conquests. When the conquests stopped, the tradition of granting temliks did not cease. Instead, the number of grants increased. Most of the temliks became Vakıf lands, and the state lost a big chunk of the miri land’s income. Temliks were not only given to warriors, but also to high-ranking bureaucrats. Basically, statesmen or Palace women could apply to the sultan with a project for a charitable undertaking and receive from him the freehold of a piece of land, which in some cases included several villages. (İnalçık, 1973: 149)

According to the regulations, there were different systems for the usage of miri lands’ tax incomes by Vakıfs. As mentioned earlier, Vakıfs on miri lands did not have the right to retain rakabe but were only retained to use tax incomes. In some cases, the state retained the rights of rakabe and tasarruf of the land. Vakıfs used both şer’i (religious) and örfi (secular) tax incomes. In some miri Vakıfs, the state collected all taxes, but members of the Vakıf or the Vakıf beneficiaries cultivated the land without paying any rent, and income from the land went into the Vakıf. Some miri Vakıfs retained both tasarruf and taxation rights. The state just retained rakabe rights without receiving income from this land. In another practice, miri land became private mülks, these mülks paid öşür and haraç land taxes to the Vakıfs. (Akgündüz, 1988: 452)

Ottoman noblemen and influential families made their temliks Vakıfs in order to prevent the confiscation of the land and to make possible the inheritance of miri land. Besides has and zeamets, timar land also became available for the establishment of Vakıfs on it. The distribution of the miri land for the Vakıfs reduced the state income and threatened sipahis’ income resources.

Every Vakıf had its own Vakfiye. Through the Vakfiye, the founder of vakıf decided where to spend the Vakıf income and who controlled the Vakıf. The founders either gave the right to kadıs, the judges, to choose mütevellı, or he directly appointed the mütevellı. If the Vakfiye conditioned the appointment of mütevellı from the founder’s children and grandchildren, this type of Vakıf--called “evladiyelik Vakıf” or “aile Vakıfları” (family Vakıfs.) With the evladiyelik Vakıfs, the land was always retained by the founder’s family, generation after generation. With evladiyelik Vakıfs, the founders secured their livelihood for their own families and descendants by appointing them mütevellıs of the Vakıfs. The second-and-third-generation descendants of Ottoman notables enjoyed a comfortable retirement as mütevellıs. These descendants formed a type of class of absentee landlords. (İnalçık, 1973: 149)

As parallel to Beyazid I, and Mehmet II’s centralization policies, these sultans limited temliks and confiscated some Vakıf land, making those lands timars, claiming that they were functioning inappropriately. During the interregnum after Beyazid I,

influential Anatolian families, who held the land as Vakıfs and temlik, opposed the centralized administration of the empire, demanding expanded rights on their lands. (İnalçık, 1973: 18)

Mehmet II brought some 20,000 villages and farms previously held as Vakıf or emlak under state control and distributed them as timars. Mehmet II established the principle that all Vakıfs not receiving the sultan's sanction or whose buildings or purpose no longer existed should revert to the state. (İnalçık, 1973: 109) This measure caused widespread discontent, especially among old and influential families, the ulema and dervishes. Dissatisfied groups formed a propaganda campaign and rallied around Mehmet II's eldest son, Bayezid, in a power struggle against Cem. (İnalçık, 1973: 30) When Beyazid II ascended to the throne, he redistributed confiscated Vakıf lands to their former owners. But his son--Selim I--strictly opposed the grant of temliks to prevent the establishments of new Vakıfs on miri land. (Akgündüz, 1988: 450)

Two important Ottoman sources, *Koçi Bey Risalesi* and *Netayic'ül- Vukuat*, criticize the Vakıfs on miri land. In the Risale, which was submitted to Murat IV, Koçi Bey argues that there were pseudo Vakıfs and temliks in the empire. According to Bey, miri land could be given as temliks only to those who fought in wars for the conquests. Otherwise, giving temliks to someone else was against the şeriat. (Koçi Bey Risalesi, 1972: 57) Sultans' Vakıfs on conquered lands were genuine. Besides these Vakıfs, conquerors such as Gazi Evrenos, Turhan Bey, and Mihaloğlu were given temliks by the sultans, and these conquerors made their lands Vakıfs for the people's benefits. According to Koçi Bey, only their Vakıfs were "caiz" (legal), and other Vakıfs on miri lands were illegal. (Koçi Bey Risalesi, 1972: 58) He advised the Sultan that searching all Vakıfs and temliks going two hundred years back. After this scrutiny, genuine ones should be allowed, but pseudo ones should be confiscated. According to Koçi Bey, confiscation of pseudo Vakıfs and temliks would increase the income of the central treasury and the number of soldiers. (Koçi Bey Risalesi, 1972: 59)

Mustafa Nuri Pasha shares same ideas with Koçi Bey about the Vakıfs on miri land in his book *Netayic'ül- Vukuat*. According to Nuri Pasha, except early marchers' Vakıfs, temlik Vakıfs, having incomes from zeamets, timars and mukaatas, were not "sahih." According to Mustafa Nuri Pasha, in Istanbul, Edirne, and Bursa many mosques were built more than need, causing the endowment of big chunks of land. This incorrect policy resulted in a decrease of soldiers, who were dependent on land income. (Netayicü'l-Vukuat, 1979: 312)

Unlike Koçi Bey, Mustafa Nuri Pasha did not propose the confiscation of pseudo Vakıfs. He stated that even if their source of accumulation of wealth was questionable; however, it was good that these statesmen spent money on good deeds instead of luxuries. He opposes the thesis that, first and foremost, influential statesmen established Vakıfs in order to have their children inherit land. If they did so, it was expected that the Vakıfs were small but that their incomes were big. However, Vakıfs' sizes were big enough parallel to their incomes. (Netayicü'l-Vukuat, 1979: 310-311)

Three distinguished historians--Fuad Köprülü, Ömer Lütfi Barkan and Bahaeddin Yediyıldız--wrote about miri land Vakıf abuses in their works. According to Köprülü, Vakıfs had a dichotomy. Besides Vakıfs' proposed purposes, certain parts of the Vakıfs served to keep the land under control of the founders' families or trusted ones, making land capital, retaining it whole forever without dividing through

inheritance and freeing it from the danger of confiscation. (Köprülü, 1983: 372) Beginning from Süleyman I's reign, the establishment of Vakıfs on miri land became popular. In the seventeenth century, a number of these Vakıfs enormously increased in size. As a result, the Ottoman treasury was deprived of a sizable income and, especially, Vakıfs on timar lands weakened the military power of the empire. (Köprülü, 1983: 394-397)

Although Yediyıldız gives us some numerical data about Vakıfs, the classification of Vakıfs is very hard to complete. There are thousands of Vakfiyes in the Ottoman archives. Reading these Vakfiyes requires the time of many specialists. Yediyıldız conducted a case study about the Vakıfs of the eighteenth century, choosing some sample Vakfiyes. According to his studies, 81 percent of Vakıfs in the eighteenth century established by "askeri" (military men), the remaining portion was created by "reaya"(people.) (Yediyıldız, 1986: 160) If this 81 percent of Vakıfs consisted of the same percentage of land, which is not clearly mentioned in the data, it is not hard to guess that "askeri" used miri land for their Vakıfs, so large numbers of miri landholdings were endowed in the eighteenth century. In the sixteenth century, 20 percent of the empire's land was Vakıf land. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 159) In the preceding centuries, the Vakıfs held the largest portion of the cultivated land in comparison to other institutions, parallel to some estimations, which were given earlier.

In the eighteenth century, 64 percent of mütevellis of Vakıfs were appointed by kadis. Only 36 percent of Vakıfs were conditioned to appoint their mütevellis, but 56 percent of these Vakıfs decided to appoint mütevellis someone from the founder's family. (Yediyıldız, 1986: 152) According to this calculation, less than 20 percent of the Vakıfs in the empire were "evladiyelik Vakıfs." This fact challenges the ideas that the primary concern of founders and landholders was to make the land inheritable to their children.

Barkan makes good premises about land-Vakıf relations. According to Barkan, the centralization policies of the Ottoman Empire and şeriat law prevented the creation of a noble class with strong roots on the land, which was under danger of confiscation by the state. According to Islamic law, land was divided between inheritors and landowners and could not prevent this division or could not favor only one child to take the entire chunk of land. Endowment of the land was a good way to prevent confiscation and division of the land. (Barkan, 1980: 211-212)

According to Barkan, şeriat law was a major concern in evladiyelik Vakıfs. His statement creates confusion because Vakıfs were considered essential religious institutions in the Empire. But according to Barkan's thesis, evladiyelik Vakıfs were established to escape from the şeriat law. The irony of this situation was that the Ottoman Empire's flexibility in şeriat law and the representation of empire's secular institutions increased under Islamic character.

According to the regulations about evladiyelik Vakıfs, the mütevellis could retain only ten or twenty percent of the land as income. These percentages were too small to ensure mütevellis' and their children's lives. With evladiyelik Vakıfs, the founder was able to pass the holding to his inheritor and had the right to choose only one inheritor to hold the land, thus violating Islamic law. (Barkan, 1980: 212-216) Additionally, the Vakıf founder gained honor and fame as long as his or her Vakıf was operational. This was an important part of the establishment of Vakıfs. Today, the wife of Mahmut II,

Bezmi Alem Valide Sultan, is a very well known Ottoman woman because of her large Vakıfs.

Finally, these three scholars and others concluded that even if the Vakıf system was abused, Vakıfs still served a very important purpose in society. Vakıfs achieved a great success in public services.

In conclusion, the Vakıf system in the Ottoman Empire, socially and publicly, functioned in such a way that no other Ottoman institution could match. Although there exists several debates on the Vakıf issue, they were quite successful. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the state controlled the Vakıfs under one hand. By 1840, the control of all Vakıfs, except Haremeyn Vakıfs, was brought under the Vakıf Ministry. (Barnes, 1986: 12) The state began closely monitoring the Vakıfs. Gradually, Vakıfs began losing their independent status. The Vakıf lands, which belonged to the chief dervish orders, were taken over by the government. The lands belonging to Eyalet of Hüdavendigâr were to be tithed. Tanzimat reforms reorganized the Vakıfs, and Vakıf lands were taxed by the Ministry of Finance. (Barnes, 1986: 12) On the same hand, Ottoman governments gradually abolished the Vakıfs, which were established on miri land. Ultimately, the Turkish Republic abolished Vakıf institutions in 1924. However, the Vakıfs left behind numerous bits of infrastructure and their legacy.

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