

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of *Fodula*
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)***

Merve Uçar Nurcan**

Abstract

This study examines the *fodula* allocations of the Hamidiye waqf imâret (soup kitchen), established by Sultan Abdülhamid I in the late 18th century. *Fodula* was a type of bread baked in the palace, janissary, and waqf imâret ovens, distributed to entitled recipients alongside their salaries. Waqf employees, residents of madrasas and tekkes (dervish lodges), *duâgû* (designated prayer reciters), and the poor were the primary beneficiaries of the *fodula* cooked in waqf imârets. Based on the waqf charter (*vakfiye*) (1781), its supplement (*zeyl vakfiye*) (1789), and the *fodula* register (1823-1903), the Hamidiye imâret alone distributed more than 1,000 loaves of *fodula* daily. A notable share of *fodula* baked in the Hamidiye imâret oven went to Khalwatiyya and Naqshbandi lodges, reflecting the state's strategic use of waqf funds to control religious institutions and leverage their societal influence. The paper discusses the political, fiscal, and social dimensions of bread distribution in the Ottoman capital through the example of the Hamidiye waqf.

Keywords: Hamidiye waqf, *vakfiye*, imâret, *fodula* bread, dervish lodges, beneficiaries

**Ekmek Yoluyla Hayır: Hamidiye İmâreti ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda
Fodula Dağıtım Politikası (1781-1903)**

Öz

Bu çalışma, Sultan I. Abdülhamid tarafından 18. yüzyılın sonlarında kurulan Hamidiye Vakfî imâretinin *fodula* tahsisatlarını incelemektedir. *Fodula*; saray, yeniçeri ve vakıf imâret fırınlarında pişirilen ve hak sahiplerine maaşlarının yanında dağıtılan bir ekmek çeşidiydi. Vakfın çalışanları, medrese ve tekke sakinleri, *duâgûlar* ve yoksullar imârette pişen *fodula*'nın temel yararlanıcılarıydılar. *Vakfiye* (1781), *zeyl vakfiye* (1789) ve *fodula* defterine (1823-1903) dayanarak yapılan bu çalışmada, Hamidiye imâretinin tek başına günde binin üzerinde *fodula* ekmeği dağıttığı tespit edilmiştir. Hamidiye imâret fırınında pişen *fodula*'nın önemli bir kısmı da Halvetî-Nakşibendî tekkelerine ayrılmıştı ve bu durum devletin dini kurumları kontrol etmek ve toplumsal nüfuzunu artırmak için vakıf fonlarını stratejik olarak kullandığını gösteriyordu. Makalede, Hamidiye Vakfî örneği üzerinden pâyitahtta ekmek dağıtımının siyasi, mali ve toplumsal boyutları tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hamidiye vakfî, *vakfiye*, imâret, *fodula* ekmeği, tekkeler, faydalananlar

* DOI: 10.16971/vakiflar.1669947

Makalenin Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: Nisan 2025 / April 2025

Makalenin Kabul Tarihi / Accepted Date: Ekim 2025 / October 2025

** Dr., İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi, Rektörlük; İstanbul-Türkiye; e-mail: merveucar89@gmail.com;

ORCID: 0000-0003-0768-863X

Introduction

Subsistence was one of the most important issues for the states, particularly for early modern agrarian states like the Ottoman Empire, where productivity was low and transportation was limited and expensive. Therefore, ensuring the provisioning of the capital and providing a safe food chain from planting to harvesting to transportation, and distribution had always primary concern of the governors. Presenting the products into the market with affordable prices was also another responsibility of the state. The availability of foods from the far corners of the empire in the capital was also an indication of the sultan's sovereignty over his lands. A failed food system could reveal the "vulnerabilities" of the central authority and the reigning sultan, which means that they would become the target of hunger-driven violence due to the food shortages (Türkkan, 2021: 36-61). The weakening central authority would have eventually caused the disruption of the security and order in the capital and then lead to unpredictable turmoil all over the empire. But what was more important, the sultan would lose his legitimacy in the eyes of his subject as the protector and would face to forfeit his right on the throne.

In spite of all the care taken by the Ottoman central authority to provide the needs of the capital, the people of Istanbul suffered from high prices, food shortages, and at times hunger (Karademir, 2017). However, Ottoman authorities in some way managed to get through the inadequacies due to the wars, fires, droughts and population growth. Bread, as the primary subsistence product played a pivotal role in the provisioning the capital. According to the first census conducted in the early 19th century, the average population of Istanbul is estimated at around 450 thousand. If it is assumed that the annual wheat need of a person is 205 kg (approximately 8 *kile*) on average, the annual wheat need of a population of 450 thousand people will be 3,6 million *kile* (92,4 thousand tons). Indeed, according to the census of Istanbul bakeries conducted at the end of the 18th century, the annual bread-making capacity of Istanbul bakeries was around this level. (Güran, 1986: 247)

In the mid-18th century, 91.4% of the grain needed for Istanbul was brought in by private merchants, while only 8.6% came through state-funded channels. State-supplied grain was transported directly to the shipyard warehouses (*tersane ambarı*), bypassing the traditional grain market at Unkapanı (Güçer, 1949: 408-411). Between 1755 and 1762, 85.8% of the grain coming to Istanbul was supplied from the Black Sea and 14.2% from the Mediterranean. 70.1% of the grain coming from the Black Sea in total was wheat. This rate was 23.6% for barley (*arpa*) and 0.8% for millet (*darı*) (Aynural, 2001:65). In contrast, between 1845 and 1880, Rumelian wheat dominated Istanbul's markets by 60-80%. (Camgöz, 2017: 137-140). The reason of this change in the nineteenth century was basically the Crimean War that led to increase in the population of Istanbul, black-marketeering, uncultivated fields, and locust invasion. In the subsequent years, the drought and famine in the mid-Anatolia and high depreciation of Ottoman new currency (*kaime*) exacerbated the scarcity of the bread in the market and caused prices to increase by an average of 200 percent over the century (Camgöz, 2017: 145-156).

It seems that the problems with the supply of wheat to the capital and the production of bread began in the previous century. In the great fires that broke out in Istanbul in 1756 and 1782, many mills and bakeries were burned down, and the people suffered from bread shortages. (Aynural, 2001: 36-37). There were also many problems with bread reflected in Ottoman chronicles. Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi reported in his history that during the reign of Sultan Mustafa III, there was a bread shortage in the capital and people gathered in front of the bakeries and took the bread that was not baked. For this reason, old people, women and children were starving. (Şemdanî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, 1978: 16) As Taylesanizâde Hâfız Abdullah Efendi (2003: 39) stated in *The Long Four Years of Istanbul* that some Albanian bakers in Istanbul were strangled for baking black and poor-quality bread, and the chief baker was dismissed and exiled in 1788. The head bakers continued to be punished with banishment in later periods for making bread of such poor quality as to be unfit for human consumption (Taylesanizâde, 2003: 46) but no radical solution to the problem was found that same chronicle also mentions that the baked bread was like a clay and the bakeries were plundered because of the famine on August 29, 1789. (Taylesanizâde, 2003: 54). Sultan Abdülhamid I, in his disguise, inspected the bakeries and was personally witness to the fact that the bread was black and inedible (Saricaoğlu, 2001: 201; Şaşmaz, 2000: 24). Moreover, the council convened for a solution to the increase in bread prices as a result of the war and winter conditions, approved a reduction in the weight of bread in 1789 (Saricaoğlu, 2001: 246). Many

European travelers had also mentioned about the adulterated nature of the Ottoman bread by describing it as tasteless, lacking delicacy and insipid made of ill-grounded flour. (Dursteler, 2014: 209-210)

The Ministry of Grain (Zahire Nezareti) was established in 1793, in the reign of Sultan Selim III, to solve Istanbul's food problems.¹ In this way, the state wanted to bring the supply and the transport of grain under a strict control. However, during the reign of Sultan Selim, despite all the efforts made, there were still problems with the color, quality, doneness and availability of bread in the market. This situation was due in large part to the negligence and dereliction of duty on the part of those responsible for the supply of grain. The wheat suppliers would sell some of the grain they brought in. They would mix some straw with the rest and pour some water on it to make it heavier. When this bad and mixed grain was put into the *miri* storehouses, it soon began to smell. This grain was distributed to the bakers. Those who ate the bread made from this staple food would contract various diseases. For this reason, the rancid bread, which even animals could not eat, was thrown into the sea (Tızlak, 2015: 339). Despite countless of imperial edicts issued by the sultan on this issue, problems such as the unavailability of bread in bakeries, and even if bread was available, it was sold at a reduced grammage and sold at a higher price, continued in the following periods (Tızlak, 2015: 348). For this reason, it is noted in the chronicle of court historian Nuri Efendi (2015: 538-539) that an imperial decree (*hatt-ı hümayun*) was issued in November 1797 concerning the quality of *fodula* bread produced in the *imâret* bakeries of the *Haremeyn-i Şerifeyn* that the bread was to be made not from the standard grade of flour known as *ekmekçi hassı*, but rather from the superior quality flour referred to as *çörekeçi hassı*. To this end, the treasurer of the *İrad-ı Cedit* was charged to purchase 50,000 *kile* of cleaned and sifted flour from the Danube and Black Sea regions at the prevailing market price.

In fact, Sultan Selim III, who set up the Grain Administration to address issues related to the grain supply, lost his throne following a popular uprising that included complaints about the poor quality of bread. Even if there aren't many examples of grain riots in the Ottoman era, the lack of bread and its poor quality most likely threatened public order. As Yıldız marked that during the uprising of 1807, one of the leaders of riot displayed two loaves of bread to highlight the glaring disparity in society. He presented a low-quality loaf, not even made from corn or barley, to show what the poor had to eat, and then compared it to the white bread that ate by the elite. Through this symbolic act, he emphasized the deep divide between the ruling class and ordinary people, drawing attention to the economic hardship and unfair treatment endured by the poor. (Yıldız, 2008: 723, Ağır, 2013: 591)

Through the reforms carried out by reformers of the period of Sultan Selim III, the Ottoman state started moving away from strict pricing controls and decentralized provisioning systems in favor of a more centralized and flexible strategy as a result of increasing challenges in securing grain supplies and escalating conflicts in local markets. During this transition, set prices were gradually replaced by market-responsive pricing, and centralized bureaucratic organizations were established to supervise grain distribution. Instead of completely liberalizing the grain market, the Ottomans attempted to find a balance between market forces and government regulation, resulting in a hybrid system that combined a less coercive price policy with a more proactive effort to combat smuggling and corruption in the supply regions. (Ağır, 2013: 597-598)

In a way, the Ottoman ruling elite succeed to manage the administrative and bureaucratic problems they experienced regarding the provision of the city with the support of another institution. "Waqfs" contributed great deal to the Ottoman classical socio-economic system consist of provisionalism, traditionalism and fiscalism with its regulatory and redistributive mechanism (Genç, 2014: 9-18). As Ağır pointed out that Ottoman grain policy in the late 18th century—particularly the establishment of a centralized grain institution and the abandonment of fixed prices—indeed aimed to ensure consumer access to essential goods under changing market conditions which is in line with provisionalism principle of the classical system. Apart from this, the centralization of grain regulation reflects fiscalist concerns, improving state oversight and potentially increasing revenue efficiency. The reforms did not represent a radical break from tradition, but rather a controlled transformation—maintaining institutional continuity aligns with traditionalism. Thus, the evolution of Ottoman grain policy fits within Genç's conceptual triangle, balancing state control, public welfare, and systemic stability.

1 For more information see: Yeşil (2004).

Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)

In particular, soup kitchens, which were an important part of the waqf institution, filled deficiencies and gaps in the state's food supply and distribution. Every day, thousands of loaves of bread and two meals were distributed to hundreds of people made up of the poor, widows, orphans, guests and students of the madrasa from the Ottoman imârets. (Ertuğ, 2000: 219-220; Pakalın II, 2004: 61) According to the Barkan's calculations based on the waqfiyya records, while 3300 loaves of bread were daily distributed from the Fatih soup kitchen, one of the largest soup kitchens in Istanbul (Barkan, 1963: 272), 1946 loaves of bread were allocated to the 976 people from the imâret of Beyazid II in Edirne (Barkan, 1963: 273).² Therefore, the needy people of the capital have been subsidized through the waqf institution, which has an organizationally and financially independent from the state. Inclusion of "the poor and the humble and the weak and needy" as the beneficiaries into the waqf system functioned not only as a means of social support but also as a strategic tool of governance for the Ottoman governing elites. Through the waqf Ottomans also "enhance their influence and hold on the [both central and] local population, far beyond what they could achieve through the formal frameworks of power that were under their hand." (Peri, 1992: 174) This points to the pragmatic dimensions of Ottoman welfare policy operated over the charity activities.

This study aims to explore political, fiscal, and social dimensions of bread distribution from imârets through Sultan Abdülhamid I's Hamidiye waqf. For this purpose, the basis will be "fodula" bread, a special type of bread baked in foundation soup kitchens and distributed in certain quantities to a certain group of people. The waqfiyya, supplementary waqfiyya (zeyl) and fodula book records of the Hamidiye waqf as primary sources would be carefully studied to answer the certain questions: How many loaves of bread were baked in the foundation soup kitchen per day and to how many people were these loaves distributed? What do we know about the gender and social status of those who receive bread from the foundation? Have there been changes in the people and places stipulated in the foundation charter in subsequent years? Has there been an increase or decrease in the amount of bread baked according to economic conditions?

For this purpose, the first section will discuss the characteristics of fodula bread and a literature review will be conducted on where, how and to whom it was distributed. In the second section, a brief information will be given about the history of the Hamidiye soup kitchen and the transformation of foundation soup kitchens in the nineteenth century onwards will be discussed. In the third section, an attempt will be made to determine the number of fodula baked in the soup kitchen from the departure point of foundation deed and fodula book records. Based on these records, answers will be sought to the aforementioned research questions and the limits of the extant registers will be debated. In last part of the study, the contribution of the Hamidiye imâret to the provision of the capital will be revealed and the relationship of the foundations with the city's economy regarding income redistribution will be discussed.

A Loaf of Bread: Fodula

Fodula was a loaf of bread made of thin, over-leavened, coreless dough, similar to Ramadan pita. It was generally cooked in palace kitchens, imârets and janissary bakeries and distributed to the officials in baskets along with their salaries according to their merit. (Emecen, 1996: 167-168; Pakalın I, 2004: 634). The bakeries operating in the bread market of the Ottoman Empire were divided into various sections. These can be listed as palace, army, *imâret*, consulate, and public ovens. *Matbah-ı Âmire* (palace kitchen) was one of the most important parts of the Topkapı Palace, and the meals of all the people living in the palace were cooked here. The kitchen where the Sultan's meals were cooked was separate and it was called the *Kuşhane* (matbah-ı has). The breads produced in palace bakeries were generally of two types: *nan-ı has* and *nan-ı harci*. The flour needs of the palace bakeries were generally allocated from the revenues of the Bursa *Mukataa*, and it was ensured that the flour arriving at the palace was of very high quality, "has flour". The Sultan's bread was made with flour milled from the exquisite Bursa wheat, and only the highest quality products were brought to the palace kitchen. The *ekmekçibaşı* was

2 Kayhan Orbay stated that these calculations are questionable from a methodological standpoint since the rough figures are rather misleading. In addition, the number of people entitled to receive bread may not always reflect the number of people eating meals. See: Orbay (2007: 194).

responsible for the supply of flour and the *simitçi* was responsible for its distribution (Demirtaş, 2014: 45-53).

The bakeries in the palaces of Istanbul did not only produce *has* bread. In addition, a type of bread called *harci* bread, which was of lower quality than *has* bread, was also produced. This bread was consumed by various palace employees. Another type of bread produced in *harci* bread ovens was *fodula* (Demirtaş, 2014: 60). *Fodlacıs* were a separate class/guild in the palace kitchen. They had their own chefs (*fodula ustası*), sifter (*elekçi*) and cooker apprentices (*fodla şakirdi*). There were even *imams* of the bakers who baked *fodula* (Demirtaş, 2014: 60). Although their supervision belonged to the chief of the kitchen (*matbah emini*), they were subject to the chief butler (*kilerci*) in the palace (Uzunçarşılı, 2014: 442). Among those who bought *fodula* bread from the *harci* oven were those who had retired from the profession. In addition, those who worked in the *has* oven consumed *fodula* bread instead of the *has* bread they made. Because *has* bread was a first-class bread made of high-quality and white flour and was made for the sultan and high-ranking officials. (Demirtaş, 2014: 60).

In the Ottoman Empire, there were only ovens that baked bread for the military wards, and these were called *fodula* ovens. The first of these ovens, established during the reign of Mehmed II for the food of hunting dogs, was also called *Sekban* ovens, was located near Hagia Sophia.³ Because these ovens were first opened to bake *fodula* for the hunting dogs fed in the regiments (*orta*) of *sekban*, *zagarci* and *haseki*, and later became ovens that provided bread for the military wards. (Demirtaş, 2014: 61; Emecen, 1996: 167; Sakin, 2019: 262). At the beginning of the 17th century, fifty to sixty young novices (*acemi*) were working at the *fodula* bakery. The number of these had reached 105 in 1717 (Emecen, 1996: 167).

The hierarchical structure in the janissary *fodula* bakeries was similar to that in the palace bakeries. There were also bakers, dough makers, sifters and apprentices in these bakeries. All employees were called the bread squad (*ekmekçi bölüğü*). The promotion system in these bakeries was the same as in the palace bakery employees. The *Fodula* bakery employees were subordinate to the *Kapıkulu* head of breadmaker (*kapıkulu ekmekçi*). The chief breadmaker was selected from the most senior novice boys trained in the *sekban* bakery and received a daily wage of 14 akçe. He was responsible for the proper baking of the *fodulas* in the bakeries, the discipline of the bread squad and the accounting of the flour and grain consumed (Demirtaş, 2014: 61).

When the chief breadmaker was promoted, he would rise to the position of *kapıcıbaşı*. The assistants of the chief baker were the caliph (*halife*), the dough maker (*hamurkar*) and the *simit* maker (*simitçi*). Those who could be promoted among them would be promoted to the position of chief baker. In addition to the bread makers, there were also other employees in the *Sekban* bakery, such as the weigher (*kantarci*), the warehouseman (*ambarcı*), the counter (*sayıcı*) and the “*küçük*” *fodula* clerk, who kept the daily account of the bread distributed (Demirtaş, 2014: 61). According to *Kavânîn-i Yeniçeriyân*, “*büyük*” *fodula* clerk was responsible for the purchase of flour for the bakeries. His duties were to provide flour and wood to the bakery, take the money from the treasury and distribute half *akçe* a day or nine *şiniks* of flour every three months to the Janissary orphans. To become a *büyük* *fodula* clerk, one had to first work as an *acemi katibi* (novice clerk), then be registered to *ruûs defter* and join the cavalry group (*sipahi*). Without being *sipahi*, one could not be appointed as a *fodula* clerk (Emecen, 1996: 169; Sakin, 2019: 336). The path to promotion was to become a janissary clerk. (Sakin, 2019: 188)

Those who were entitled to receive bread from the *fodula* bakery were determined by law. It includes Commander of Janissary corps, *sekbanbaşı*, janissary clerk and steward, employees of the bakery, *sekban*, *zagarci*, *saksoncus*, *turnacıs*, great aghas of novices, agha imam, master sergeant, *muhzirbaşı*, artillerymen. (Sertoğlu, 2015, 180) In the 17th and 18th centuries, the names of other officials can also be found among those who received allocations from the *harci* *fodula* bakery. *Fodula* was also given to the sons of the Janissaries. They were recorded at the end of the *ulûfe* registers under the title of *nan-hôrân* or *fodula-hôrân* and received a pair of *fodula* in addition to their salaries. The number of *fodula-hôrân*, which was around 600 in the 16th century, reached 1655 in the 17th century according to Ayn Ali⁴ (Ayni

3 According to Reşad Ekrem Koçu, the Janissary *fodula* bakery was located next to the bath of the *Acemi* barracks in Şeh-zadebaşı. See: Koçu (1971: 5813).

4 Most likely, those who received *fodula* were not all Janissary children, but the poor and the orphaned. See: Sertoğlu (2015: 180).

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

Ali Efendi, 2021, 72; Emecen, 1996:169).

Bakeries were also established to meet the bread needs of those fed in waqf imârets. In the Ottoman country, large soup kitchens had ovens that produced fodula bread. At the beginning of the 17th century, there were 15 large soup kitchens in Istanbul alone. They were distributing meals to thousands of people a day and even more loaves of bread (Demirtaş, 2014: 64). In general, waqf employees, the students of madrasa of the complex, the poor and the guests were beneficiaries of fodula. In accounting books, fodulas were named as whole (tam) or large (fodula-i büzürg), half (yarım) or small (fodula-i kûçek). The size of a full fodula varied between 90-110 dirhams (Emecen, 1996: 168).⁵ Like the janissaries, the fodulas made in the soup kitchens and given to the students of the madrasah were 94 or 45 dirhams. A student who had just entered the madrasa received a full fodula as a necessary ration. If he became the owner of a room, it was doubled. He could receive up to three or four fodulas from each waqf if he also had a deservedness (Pakalın I, 2004: 634). Amy Singer (2002: 59) stated that, in Haseki Sultan İmaret in Jarusalem a loaf of fodula baked from flour, salt, and water weighed a standard 90 *dirhems* after baking.

There were also some irregularities in the distribution fodulas from imârets and janissary bakeries. Some madrasa students found a way to receive fodula from several soup kitchens, selling more than needed to bakers or the public. Over time, this became a very common practice. Some janissaries were also selling the remaining fodulas in the same way. The term “fodulacı”, a popular expression, probably originated from this irregular treatment. In addition, from time to time, Janissaries were reported to complains about the deterioration or quality of their fodulas, and sometimes they interfered with the bakery works in order to get too much fodulas (Emecen, 1996: 170).

After the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826, the janissary fodula oven was removed. However, it is known that fodula-type bread was made for some officials in the palace and this old palace custom continued until the beginning of the 20th century. The fact that the right to receive fodula from the imâret became tradable led to the disorganization of this service for the poor and the guests. Because, there were no specific information in the endowment deeds regarding the amount and conditions of allocation of the duâgû-fodulas, they were given based on the promissory notes (senet). These promissory notes, which were circulated from hand to hand for capital increase, were causing losses to the foundations because they were paid in cash and were a burden on the foundation’s budget every year because they could not be followed up.⁶As a result, an instruction (talimatnâme) consisting of ten articles and one conclusion was issued to make a census of those who received fodula from the existing imârets in Istanbul. According to the instruction, a commission was formed under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Imperial Waqfs (Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâreti). This commission divided Istanbul into three districts, Üsküdar, Hagia Sophia and Eyüp, and three committees were organized to conduct the census in each district. In addition to the breadmaker, it was decided that two people selected by the servants of the mosque would be present to count and determine the fodulas of the waqf employees, and two students selected by themselves would be present to count the fodulas of the students. However, these efforts must not have yielded any results either, because the Waqf administration of the time decided to abolish the prayer (duâgû) fodulas and duties which were cooked and distributed by the ministry, by paying their costs as of 1327/1909. Physically crippled, blind, lame, paralyzed persons and helpless women were exempted from this provision. However, such persons were to be paid a cash pension ranging from 8 to 4 Ottoman liras, fodulas were never to be transferred, and if it was determined that the children were not in need, the pensions would not be transferred to the children (Öztürk, 1995: 177). Finally, with a law enacted in 1911, the foundations were relieved of this burden by paying the annual prayer fodula fees of 12 thousand *liras* to their owners through savings made in the waqf treasury budget (İbnülemin and Hüseyin Hüsameddin, 1335: 230). With another law passed on the same day, all but two of the 20 imârets in the capital, one in Istanbul and the other in Üsküdar, were closed down

5 Fahri Unan, with reference to Ünver’s work *Fatih Devri Yemekleri*, says that there are two types of fodula, half and whole, and that the whole fodula was 200 dirhams (600 gr). In the following lines, he stated that the weight of the fodula cooked for the students in the Fatih Complex was 100 dirhams (Unan, 2003: 306).

6 Some foundations assigned certain people to pray for the continuation of religion and state in their foundation deeds. The bread given to the duâgû, meaning those who recite prayers, in return for this duty in soup kitchens, dervish lodges and zawiya was called duâgû fodula. İbnülemin Mahmud Kemâl and Hüseyin Hüsameddin (1335: 229).

and the revenues of their foundations were allocated to students. (İbnülemin and Hüseyin Hüsameddin, 1335: 231; Öztürk, 1995: 177).

We learn from the verses of the Hevâî (d. 1017/1608-1609), who was the poet of late sixteenth century, that *fodula* was a popular type of bread in the early periods of its implementation. In his one of the verses, he remarked that there were so many suitors that the door of the *imâret* distributing *fodula* was blocked by the crowd and there was no way to get inside. So much so that the only place left to enter the *imâret* was its chimney. Here, the poet's emphasis on the gathering of people in front of the *imâret*, which was established to distribute food to the poor, is also a criticism of the level of poverty in society. It also gives the impression that *fodula* is a cheap, low-quality type of bread, which is in tune with Evliya Çelebi's description of *fodula* as "a delicious bread made from low-quality flour".⁷ (Kahraman and Dağlı, 2019: 491).

It seems that *fodula* bread has maintained its importance over the centuries, because of economic fluctuations, and has been an important source of nutrition for the poor. As Murphy correctly noted regarding the *fodula* that it was a "unique form of social insurance developed by Ottomans" and continued "such seeming generosity was based on the anticipation that greater worker productivity and warrior devotion would result from an improved diet. Providing wage supplements for food or giving meals to workers also increased the percentage of disposable income and increased domestic potential for input into other sectors of the economy." (Murphy, 1987: 243). So, the distribution of *fodula* meant hitting two birds with one stone for the state. First, the state was helping the poor, widows, orphans, guests and students in need through foundations without burdening the state budget. In this way, the legitimacy of the sultan's power was strengthened (Köç, 2015: 20) and a group of servants who were grateful to the sultan, other than those with a military background, was formed within the society. Second, in an early modern economy, where money was already scarce, providing a basic daily necessity such as bread to disadvantaged groups for free created surplus value within the household economy, allowing it to be used in other areas of the economy. Thus, the spending of this group helped to revive the economy and prevented the formation of violent opposition to the state. On the other hand, price indexes between 1460 and 1860 indicated that an Ottoman urban dweller spent 75-80% of their budget on food. Flour accounted for 24-32% of this total. As these values demonstrate, the staple of the Ottoman people was wheat and the bread produced from it. (Özcumur-Pamuk, 2002: 298; Karademir, 2014: 218) For this reason, The state's support of a large segment of society through *fodula* allocation made a significant contribution to the household economy.

Hamid-i evvel Waqfs: Hamidiye Soup Kitchen in Bahçekapı

Sultan Abdulhamid I, who came to the throne at a time of turmoil when the Treaty of "Küçük Kaynarca" was signed, had desired to build a mosque in the city, following the charitable path of his ancestors. However, it was seen that the places where the construction was to be carried out were full of mosques and masjids. Therefore, it was considered necessary to build a soup kitchen near the Valide Mosque in Bahçekapı. (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, 2018: 47). The vacant land of deceased İbrahim Pasha-zâde *Reisülküt-tâb* İsmail Râif Pasha, who was dismissed from her post and sent into exile at that time was deemed suitable for the construction. (Mehmed Ziya Bey, 2016: 425) Thus, on October 7, 1776, the building of the soup kitchen was laid at this location with a ceremony attended by the grand vizier and the chief mufti. The inauguration of the soup kitchen whose construction was completed in a short period of fourteen months, was held on December 14, 1777. (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, 2018: 82; Bülbül, 2012: 9; Haskan, 2018: 27). The Sultan himself attended the opening ceremony of the soup kitchen and distributed food to thousands of poor people in Istanbul. (Koçu, 1958: 92, Bülbül, 2012: 10). Other structures belonging to the complex were completed with the construction of the primary school in 1777, madrasa, library, masjids and bazaar in 1780, and the tomb in 1789, respectively. (Bülbül, 2012:9; Alpay, 1978: 37) İsmail Efendi was appointed as the manager of the *imâret*, school, *sebil* and fountains (bina emini) (Haskan, 2018: 91) while Şehremîni Mustafa Efendi was the director of madrasa and tomb (Ayvansârâyî, 1281: 177; Mehmed Ziya Bey, 2016: 426; Cunbur, 1964: 19). One of the rooms in the soup kitchen was reserved for the trustees for the foundation's affairs. The insurance maps dated October 1904 prepared

7 "Kapatmış halk imâret kapusını fodla istersen/ Tolaş tam üstüne çık bacadan zenbiller sarkıt" [Hevâî Dîvânı, G10/3] quoted from Gürbüz (2019: 359-360).

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

by Charles Edouard Goad showed that the soup kitchen, school and public fountain of the social complex were seen side by side in the north of Hamidiye Street while library, madrasa, masjid, tomb and shops in the opposite (Bülbül, 2012: 10).

In his waqf charter dated January 11, 1781, Sultan Abdülhamid I endowed various income-generating sources to ensure that the charitable works he built could carry out their activities without interruption (Cunbur, 1964: 17-69). According to waqfiyya, the imâret was established to feed the strong and weak, the poor, the needy, the students and the dervishes in every morning and evening. 2866 *okka* copper pots and pans 496,5 *okka* kitchenware from iron was supplied for the imâret. A director (*şeyh*), a sealsmith (*mühürdar*) and a steward (*vekil-i harc*), a cellar clerk (*kâtib-i kiler*), a cellar shopkeeper (*kiler-i anbar*), 2 doorkeepers (*bevîvâb*) who are also cleaners (*ferrâş*), and a garbage carrier (*mezbelekeş*), a *meremmati* (repairman), a cleaner of the ovens (*ferraş-ı ocakha*), four chef (*aşçı*) and four chef apprentices (*aşçı yamağı*), a carrier of wood (*himekeş*), a carrier of flour and wheat (*hamal-ı dakik ve hınta*), a dishwasher (*taskes and taşşuy*) from chef's apprentices, four bakers (*ekmekçi*), four baker apprentices (*ekmekçi şâkirdi*) and another carrier of wood (*himekeş*), a porters of flour and wheat (*hamal-ı dakik ve hınta*), a dishwasher (*taskes and taşşuy*) from baker's apprentices and the interns of the chef and baker's helpers (*aşçı ve ekmekçi şâkirdleri mülâzımları*) and a placer of crockery were assigned. Their salaries were also meticulously specified in the waqfiya. (Cunbur, 1964: 47-48). As a result, we can state that 41 people are actively employed in Hamidiye imâret and 394 akçe per day were paid for their work (Uçar Nurcan, 2023: 86-87).

Table 1: The Personnel and Salaries of the Soup Kitchen According to Waqfiyya (11 January 1781)

Personnel	Number	Salary (daily)
Director	1	30 akçe
Sealsmith	1	20 akçe
Steward	1	20 akçe
Cellar clerk	1	10 akçe
Cellar shopkeeper	1	4 akçe
1.Doorkeeper/Cleaner	1	15/5=20 akçe
2.Doorkeeper/Cleaner	1	15/5 =20 akçe
Garbage Carrier	1	5 akçe
Repairman	1	5 akçe
Cleaner of ovens	1	2 akçe
Chef	4	15 akçe (head =20 akçe)
Chef apprentices	4	7 akçe
Carrier of wood	2	5 akçe
Carrier of flour and wheat	2	5 akçe
Dishwasher	2	5 akçe
Baker	4	15 akçe (head =20 akçe)
Baker apprentices	4	7 akçe
Interns of the chef and baker's helpers	8	5 akçe
Placer of crockery	1	2 akçe
Total	41	394 akçe

In addition to these, the grain and fuel to be used for cooking *pilav*, *zerde*, soup, and as well as fodula in the imâret are also stated in the waqf deed in detail with its daily and annual amounts. According to this, the flour as the basic production and consumption item of the agricultural societies forms the largest demand of the imâret. Winnowed wheat, rice, butter, honey, mutton chickpea, pepper, saffron, salt, sesame, onion were the primary ingredients of the meals cooked in the imâret. A certain amount of wood was also allocated (Cunbur, 1964: 57-58). Table 2 indicates the ingredients and their purchasing annual amounts.

Table 2: *The Materials Purchased for the Soup-Kitchen According to Waqfiyya*

Products	Amounts (annual/ <i>kiyye</i> ⁸)
Wheat for Fodula	6300
Winnowed Wheat	952
Egyptian Rice	2628
Plain Butter	3972
Plain Honey	6240
Mutton	3852
Chickpea	1868
Pepper	60
Saffron	58,5
Salt	350
Sesame	525
Onion	2720
Wood	1450 <i>çeki</i>

Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1971: 5813) in his spectacular work *Encyclopedia of Istanbul* claimed that the soup kitchen fodulas were baked in the bazaar ovens according to the agreement between the trustee of the foundation and the owner of the oven. However, according to the foundation charter of the Hamidiye foundation drawn up at the end of the eighteenth century, the purchase of wood to burn in the soup kitchen oven and the employment of two people responsible for cleaning the soup kitchen ovens indicate that the foundation had its own oven and that the fodulas were cooked in this oven. It should be kept in mind that ovens and wood could still be used for baking meals instead of fodulas, or if Koçu was right, the task of fodula production could have been transferred from the imârets to the bazaar ovens in the 19th century for various reasons such as hygiene, lack of personnel or economic. In contrast, Müftüzâde Esâd Bey mentioned that fodulas were baked in special ovens in soup kitchens. Those who would work in these institutions should not have any diseases. To make the work healthier and more timely, the homes of those who would work in the soup kitchens should also be near the soup kitchens. Those who would work in the soup kitchen oven were examined by a committee. The examination committee included a group of bakers formed by ser-habbaz (chief bakers) who were on duty at the Imperial Inspection Court of Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn. In this examination, technical knowledge and skills such as keeping yeast, kneading, adjusting the amount of salt, baking, lighting the oven and adjusting the heat were put into practice. If the candidate passed all the tests, he was given the job (Müftü-zâde Esad Bey, *İstanbul Medreseleri*, 190-191 quoted from Kazıcı, 2019: 176-177).

The Hamidiye soup kitchen, which served two meals a day, managed to survive until the beginning of the 20th century. However, after the foundation of *Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâreti*, soup-kitchen's expenditure was covered from Nezâret's budget's allocated to the soup kitchens every year, and with this, the soup kitchens provided the students, waqf servants, poor and guest with bread called fodula and meals. In time, as a result of the increasing corruption in the soup kitchens like stealing money from the funds, misconducts of the imâret's employees and decreasing quality of the food led to complaints. The students of the *madrâsa* applied to the Ministry of Evkâf and stated that they did not want to eat from the soup kitchens and wanted the fee instead. Thereupon, a commission was established in 1909 and the issue was examined; cash payment instead of payments was accepted and an allocation was included in the 1910 budget for this work. In addition, it has been decided by the Ottoman parliament to close down certain soup kitchens in Istanbul, including the soup kitchen of Hamidiye (Bülbül, 2012: 14).

With another law enacted in 1327/1911, it was decided to sell waqf buildings and lands that are in a dilapidated condition and no longer needed to be preserved thereby new buildings that generate an

8 It is a unit of weight used as a measure of volume for liquids and dry substances. 1 *kiyye* /*vukiye*/ *okka* is equal to approximately 1.28 kg or 1,85 litres (Kallek, 2007: 338).

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

income for the waqf would be constructed. In the wake of this decision, Hamidiye soup-kitchen and primary school, located in one of the busiest commercial centers of Istanbul, was demolished in 1912 on the basis of those laws, and the 4th Waqf Inn was built in its place. (İbnülemin and Hüseyin Hüsameddin, 1335: 233; Haskan, 2018: 41). The *sebil* and fountains next to the soup kitchen were moved to the corner of the Zeynep Sultan Complex on Alemdar Street in Gülhane (Bülbül, 2012: 12). The inn, which was built by the famous architect Kemaleddin during the ministry of sheikulislam Hayri Efendi to bring high income to the administration of *Evkaf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâret*, was completed in 1918 (Haskan, 2018: 43).

Fodula Distribution from the Hamidiye Soup-Kitchen:

In the waqf charter, 6300 *keyl*⁹ flour for 350 days (18 *keyl* per day) was allotted for fodula production. The amount of breads and the recipients were also listed in detail. The list includes the executives of the Hamidiye foundation such as trustee and *nazır*, the servants working in the waqf's charity buildings, various madrasas and dervish lodges, and finally the poor and needy.

The wheat for the fodula bread to be baked in the soup kitchen of the foundation came from the Galos region (Tırhala sanjak, Rumelia province). According to an early document registered in 1196, 13000 *keyl/kiles* of wheat were purchased from the Tersane-i Âmire storehouses¹⁰ for the Hamidiye soup kitchen and it was paid in 4 installments.¹¹ Another document stated that the quality of the wheat was high and it was a new crop.¹² From this point of view, it could be assumed that the complaints of the people about the quality, taste and color of the fodula bread in the 18th century were not valid for the breads coming out of the Hamidiye imâret.

As it is seen in Table 3, the number of the fodula changes according to the rank of the person within the waqf structure. The trustee as the highest position in the waqf administration took 10 loaves of fodula in a day. While the employees of the waqf received 303 pairs of fodula, various mosques, dervish lodges and madrasas entitled to 269 fodulas from waqf. In addition, the needy (*erbâb-ı ihtiyaç*) received 252 loaves, the beggars and indigents took 100 loaves of fodula from the imâret each day. In other words, totally 924 fodulas were cooked in the *imâret* and distributed to the waqf employees and beneficiaries. (Uçar Nurcan, 2023: 90)

Table 3: The Fodula Distribution According to Waqfiyya

Place	Amount (daily/pair)
Administrators	28
Bahçekapı Soup-kitchen	68
Bahçekapı Fountain	9
Bahçekapı Tomb	12
Bahçekapı Madrasa	59
Bahçekapı School	32
Bahçekapı Library	16
Beylerbeyi Mosque	67
Emirgan Mosque	12
Eminönü Valide Mosque	100
Kabasakal Mosque	18

9 A kile/keyl (bushel) is a unit of weight used to measure agricultural products such as grains and pulses. In the 16th century, the Istanbul kile was equivalent to 20 okkas, or 25.65 kg of wheat and flour (Kallek, 2022: 567).

10 The miri (state-owned) wheat was stored in the certain storehouses in Istanbul including Tersane, Üsküdar, Öküzlimanı, and İsakçı Anbarları. This flour coming from different localities distributed not only official bakeries but also other suitors like waqf imârets. Laleli soup kitchen like Hamidiye received its wheat from the Tersane storehouse for the production of fodula (Erefe, 1997: 26).

11 BOA. C.BLD. 73/3618 03 M 1196/ 19 December 1781.

12 BOA. C.EV. 609/30725 7 Ra 1199/18 January 1785.

Merve Uçar Nurcan

Madrasa in Otlukçu Yokuşu	10
Serbostaniyan-ı esbak (Cezayirli) Ahmed Paşa Madrasa	5
Ferhad Paşa Madrasa (Musalla Madrasa)	8
Ahmed Paşa Madrasa	5
Hacı Beşir Ağa Madrasa	12
Kayış Mustafa Ağa Madrasa	12
Zaviye-i Çâlâk	6
Vani Efendi Madrasa	10
Tabutçular Şeyhi Saçlı Hüseyin Efendi Lodge (Üsküdar)	5
Sadiler Lodge, (Balaban Lodges)	5
Bektaşî Lodge in Liman-ı Gav (Yarımca Dede Lodge)	3
Aydın (zâde) Dede Tekkesi (Salkımsöğüt)	5
Yıldız Lodge	5
Şeyh İsmail Lodge (Şeyh Hafız İsmail Efendi Lodge)	5
Hamza-zâde Lodge (Fatih, Yeninişancı)	6
[Y]ahya-zâde Lodge	6
Cemalizade Lodge (Hiramî Ahmet Paşa Mosque)	6
Ebu Şeybe el-Hudri Lodge	3
Dülger-zâde Efendi Lodge (Neccarzade Dergahı)	7
Durmuş Dede Lodge	5
Yahya Efendi Lodge	5
Dolmabahçeli Hafız Efendi Lodge	5
Hamid Efendi Lodge in Galata	4
Mahmud Efendi Lodge in Yenibağçe (Keçeciler Lodge)	3
Baba Cafer Prison	5
Poor	252
Needy	100
Total	924

Sultan Abdülhamid I made some arrangements in his waqfiyya shortly before his death in 1789 and added the new allocations to his waqf deed as an appendix. With regard to the issue of fodula, as he increased the number of fodula allotted to his charitable buildings, he also created new fodula. For example, Şebsefa Sultan, the sixth wife of Sultan Abdülhamid, transferred the management of her endowments to the Hamidiye Waqf and her endowment deed was added to the waqf charter of the Hamidiye Waqf. As a result, her mosque and school in Zeyrek were considered as Hamidiye Waqf's own buildings and the employees were entitled to receive fodula from the imâret. In addition, two loaves of fodula were allocated to the Agha Mosque in Topkapı Palace.

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

Table 4: *Fodula Distribution According to Zeyl Waqfiyya (5 February 1789)*

Place	Amount (daily/pair)
Topkapı Palace Harem Ağa's Mosque	2
Emirgan Mosque	2
Emirgan School	12
Emirgan Bostancı Ocak	7
School in Zeyrek	25
Şebsafa Kadın Mosque	31
Şebsafa Kadın School	22
Bahçekapı Imâret	6
Total	107

Another important source concerning fodula breads is a separate ledger that shows the quantity and distribution locations of the fodula provided by the waqf between 1823 and 1903. This ledger offers critical insights into the changes in fodula distribution between the waqf's foundation period and subsequent years. As can be seen in Table 5 generated using the datas of this book, the number of fodula distributed by the waqf soup kitchen increased in the 19th century. A total of 1596 pairs of fodula were distributed daily to the beneficiaries, including 1081 pairs to the employees of the foundation, 50 pairs to the poor, and 465 pairs to those who prayed for the reign of the Sultan and the continuation of the state (duâgû). In addition to the foundation's own charitable institutions, the employees of many madrasas, mosques, and lodges were also distributed. The number of people who received duâgû fodulas from the waqf reached 358. The number of fodulas varied according to the status of the person, as half, one, two, three and maximum four pairs. It is noteworthy that those who received large amounts of fodula, such as 4 pairs, were generally high-ranking palace servants such as the Sultan's barber, *ser-çukadar*, and steward (kethüda). Women also benefited from the duâgû fodulas as much as men.

As mentioned before, there was no stipulation in the Hamidiye foundation charter regarding the allocation of duâgû fodulas. Probably from the 18th century onwards, the rightship of fodula has been contingent on the certificates (temessük, hüccet or berat) obtained from the Imperial Treasury. (Arslanmirza, 2017: 44-45) The prayer fodulas distributed from the Hamidiye imâret was also given with the permission of waqf administration. Those who had privilege of receiving fodula from several soup kitchens at the same time most likely sold their surplus bread on the market, due to the deficiencies in the administration of the waqf. (Koçu, 1971: 5813). Moreover, sometimes these fodulas were sold under the supervision of the waqf administration. For example, when the scribe of the Valide Sultan Mosque passed away, it was decided to separate the salary from the fodula allocation and to sell the fodula to someone else in return for a fee (muaccele) as a duâgû fodula.¹³ This raises speculative questions, such as whether the foundation was trying to generate additional income by selling the fodulas allocated to the foundation's employees. However, the official registers were silent about how much the fodulas were sold for in the market.

On the other hand, the detailed survey of fodula records of Hamidiye waqf showed that fodula allotments changed hands from one beneficiary to another when they became vacant (mahlul) due to death or renunciation (ferâğ). Beneficiaries was also transferring their allotments to their children and relatives.¹⁴ For example, the *muezzin* of Hobyar Mosque, Molla Ali owner of two loaves of fodula in 1191/1777, died after seven years and his right passed on to his daughter Ayşe Hatun. She also transferred his right into Fatma Hatun daughter of Mehmed Emîn who resided in district of Çakır Ağa near Alaca Masjid in 1263/1847. Besides, İsmail son of Ali renounced his right to fodula of his own will in 1234/1819 and Esmâ Hatun daughter of Abdullah came in his place in 1240/1824. If the beneficiary has only one fodula right and two children, half of the share goes to the children upon their death, but

¹³ VGMA.d. 1021/3a.

¹⁴ Kayhan Orbay presented more examples from fodula registers of various waqfs. See: Orbay (2007: 175-185).

generally one of the siblings renounces it in favor of the other.¹⁵ Since the employees of the foundation are named in the records according to their duties, we do not have much information about the social status of these people. However, since the duâgâ fodulas mention the names of the people, and sometimes also their place of residence and family relationships, we have more information about the identity and social status of the people who received the duâgû fodulas.

Table 5: *Fodula Distribution According to Fodula Book (1823-1903) (VGMA.d. 1021)*

Place	Amount (daily/pair)
Administrators	31
Bahçekapı Soup-Kitchen	59
Bahçekapı Fountain	9
Bahçekapı School	31
Bahçekapı Library	16
Bahçekapı Madrasa	60
Bahçekapı Tomb	23+2=25
Beylerbeyi Mosque	100
Emirgan Mosque	27
Kabasakal Mosque	16
Valide Sultan Mosque	97
Saliha Sultan School in Zeyrek	25
Şebsafa Sultan Mosque and School	59
Hırka-i Saadet	15
Nusret Mosque	91
Hüdayi Mosque	19,5
Adliye Mosque in Şemsi Paşa	14
Abad Mosque	8
Valide Sultan Tomb	30,5
Tahir Efendi Mosque	3
Rami Farm Mosque	30
Tevfik Mosque in Arnavudköy	15
Sinan Paşa Mosque	12
Sultan Mehmed II Tomb	25
Seyyid Mustafa Efendi	2
Yeni Cami Tomb	2
Abadim (?) Mosque	22
Molla Ali Mosque	6
Sultan Ahmed II Tomb	28
Kara Şakir	1
Şeyh Yahya Efendi Tomb	4
Rukiye Hanım	2
Nakşibendi Lodge	4
Süleyman fountain and time-house	22
Ayşe b. el-Hac Ömer Efendi	2

15 VGMA.d. 1021/12a.

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

Arab Mosque	53
Lodge in Otlukçu Yokuşu	10
Serbostani Madrasa	5
Ferhad Paşa Madrasa	8
Ahmed Paşa Madrasa	5
Hacı Beşir Ağa Madrasa	10
Kayış Mustafa Ağa Madrasa	13
Vani Efendi Madrasa	10
Çâlâk Lodge	6
Saçlı Hüseyin Efendi Lodge	5
Sadiler Lodge	5
Aydinzâde Lodge	5
Yıldız Dede Lodge	5
Şeyh İsmail Efendi Lodge	5
Hamzazâde Lodge	6
Yahya Efendi Lodge in Eyüp	6
Cemalizâde Lodge	6
Ebu Şeybe el-Hudri Lodge	3
Dülgerzâde Lodge	6
Maçka Lodge	1
Durmuş Dede Lodge	5
Şeyh Yahya Efendi Lodge in Beşiktaş	5
Hafız Lodge in Dolmabahçe	5
Galatalı Hamid Efendi Lodge	4
Yenibahçeli Şeyh Mahmud Efendi	3
Şeyh Nebi Lodge in Salı Pazarı	3
Şeyh İbrahim Lodge	3
Balat Lodge	5
(...) Kapan	15
Total	1134 ¹⁶

The comparison between the waqfiyya and zeyl/ waqfiyya documents and the fodula book reveals notable differences in the allocation of aid and support within the institution. The number of servants significantly increased from 679 in the waqfiyya documents to 1,081 in the fodula book, suggesting either an expansion of staff or a broader definition of service roles over time. While the poor (252) and the needy (100) received considerable support in the original waqfiyya, their presence is notably reduced or absent in the fodula book, with only 50 poor individuals listed and no mention of the needy. Conversely, the fodula book introduces a new category, the duâgû, with 465 fodulas entitled to 358 individuals, indicating a new privileged status within the institutional structure and expansion of the *askerî* class in the society. Overall, the total number of beneficiaries increased from 1,031 to 1,596, reflecting a significant enlargement in the scope and perhaps the function of the foundation over time.

16 This number was higher than the total number of fodula registered at the end of the book. It was probably the result of vacant fodula being transferred to the waqf when the owner died childless. In addition, some of the allocations belongs to person instead of dervish lodge but due to the fact that it is listed under the title of lodge, they categorized under the lodges.

Table 6: Comparison of Number of Fodulas According to Waqfiyyas and Fodula Book

	Vakfiye + Zeyl Vakfiye (572 +107) 679	Fodula Book
Servants		1081
Poor	252	50
Needy	100	-
Duâgû	-	465 (358 people)
Total	1031	1596

As it is seen in the table 7, the comparison between the waqfiyya and the fodula book reveals a high degree of consistency in fodula allocations for most dervish lodges. Out of the lodges with data from both sources, the vast majority -12 out of 13- show identical amounts, indicating that the fodulas promised in endowment deeds were generally upheld by the state in practice. This alignment suggests a stable administrative relationship between waqf institutions and imperial financial oversight. However, there is one notable discrepancy: Dülger-zâde Efendi Lodge received 6 fodula according to the waqfiyya, but 7 in the fodula book, suggesting an increase in support over time. There are no cases where the waqfiyya amount exceeds that of the fodula book. These findings point to a system in which most financial commitments remained consistent, with occasional adjustments likely due to changing institutional needs or shifting political priorities. On the other hand, some lodges appear only in the waqfiyya or only in the fodula book, which suggests that some allocations of the foundation charter have changed over time or certain lodges were incorporated into state support at a later stage. For example, the Naqshbandi lodge in Otlukçu Yokuşu, which received a high fodula allocation, appears only in the Fodula Book, while others like the Maçka or Balat lodges are recorded solely in the waqfiyya.

Another noteworthy aspect formulated in the table 7 is the distribution of fodula allocations to various dervish lodges and zawiya, particularly those affiliated with major Sufi orders such as the Khalwatiyya and Naqshbandiyya. As reflected in both the waqfiyya and fodula book records, these allocations were not limited to cash payments but often included provisions such as rice, meat, sacrificial lambs, fodula bread, and *taamiye*¹⁷. Through this material support, the Ottoman state was able to both assist and monitor these religious institutions. This dual function of aid and oversight allowed the state to intervene promptly in cases of internal disorder or corruption (Karagöz, 2020: 112). The prominent presence of Naqshbandi lodges in the data, such as the Yahya Efendi Lodge and the Otlukçu Yokuşu Lodge (which received one of the highest fodula allocations), was in tune with the state's broader political goal of leveraging the Naqshbandi order's influence to ensure public support, legitimize reforms, and enhance the sultan's spiritual prestige.

Following the creation of the Ministry of Imperial Waqfs, many of the financial needs of the lodges continued to be met through waqf revenues instead of directly from the imperial treasury just like before. Over time, this practice extended to a wide network of lodges, as the number of applications to the ministry increased. Under the ministry's supervision, supplementary aid was provided to eligible dervish lodges from surplus foundation funds, ensuring their sustainability and integration into the state (Varol, 2022: 155-163). Furthermore, the fodulas allocated from the waqfs to individuals became *taamiye* in time. Duâgû fodulas, specifically those given to lodge sheikhs, continued to be distributed to the lodges as *taamiye* in the wake of the sheikh's death. While the purpose of fodula distribution was to pray for the soul of the founder of the waqf and distribute bread to the poor, this transformation was permitted because the *taamiye* would also serve the same purpose. Moreover, since allocating a separate budget for the lodges for food would have brought an additional burden to the treasury, converting the vacant fodulas into *taamiye* seems a practical solution (Varol, 2022: 161). In this context, the growing fodula allocations from sources such as the Hamidiye waqf can be seen not merely as religious patronage, but as part of a broader state strategy to institutionalize and regulate dervish lodges and zawiya within the empire.

17 Taamiye is the name of the price given to the lodge residents, the poor or the guests to meet their basic needs such as food and drink. Mehmet Zeki Pakalın (1983). "Taamiye". Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü. III. İstanbul: MEB. p.363

**Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)**

In Istanbul, the Khalwatiyya was the most widespread religious order in terms of both number and space. Özcan identified 157 Khalwatiyya lodges in Istanbul, and stated that they were mostly concentrated in the *Suriçi* region. The second most important order following the Khalwatiyya order with 119 lodges was the Naqshbandiyya order and this was also concentrated in the Eyüp region. (Özcan, 2020: 104) In accordance with Özcan's work, our analysis of the waqfiyya and fodula book reveals that the Khalwatiyya lodges received the biggest allotment of fodula, followed by the Nakshibendi lodges. The predominance of Khalwatiyya and Naqshbandiyya lodges is consistent with their strong urban presence and close ties to Ottoman state structures in the 19th century, suggesting that fodula distribution was not merely charitable but also strategically directed toward influential Sufi networks.¹⁸

Table 7: Tariqah Affiliation

Name of Lodges	Tariqah Affiliation	Fodula (Waqfiyya)	Fodula (Fodula Book)
Naqshbandi Lodge	Naqshbandiyya	-	4
Lodge in Otlukçu Yokuşu ¹⁹	Naqshbandiyya	-	10
Zaviye-i Çâlâk	Khalwatiyya	6	6
Tabutçular Şeyhi Saçlı Hüseyin Efendi Lodge (Üs-küdar)	Khalwatiyya	5	5
Sadiler Lodge, (Balaban Lodges)	Sadiyya	5	5
Bektaşî Lodge in Liman-ı Gav (Yarımca Dede Lodge)	Bektashi, Qadiriyya	-	3
Aydın (zâde) Dede Tekkesi (Salkımsöğüt)	Khalwatiyya	5	5
Yıldız Lodge	Khalwatiyya	5	5
Şeyh İsmail Lodge (Şeyh Hafız İsmail Efendi Lodge)	Khalwatiyya	5	5
Hamza-zâde Lodge (Fatih, Yeninişancı)	Khalwatiyya	6	6
[Y]ahya-zâde Lodge	Rifaiyya	6	6
Cemalizade Lodge (Hıramî Ahmet Paşa Mosque)	Khalwatiyya	6	6
Ebu Şeybe el-Hudri Lodge	Naqshbandiyya	3	3
Dülger-zâde Efendi Lodge (Neccarzade Dergahı)	Qadiriyya	6	7
Maçka Lodge	Khalwatiyya	1	-
Durmuş Dede Lodge	Khalwatiyya	5	5
Yahya Efendi Lodge in Beşiktaş	Naqshbandiyya	5	5
Dolmabahçeli Hafız Efendi Lodge	-	5	5
Hamid Efendi Lodge in Galata	-	4	4
Mahmud Efendi Lodge in Yenibağçe (Keçeciler Lodge)	Khalwatiyya, Uşshaqiyya	3	3
Şeyh Nebi Lodge in Salı Pazarı	-	3	-
Şeyh İbrahim Lodge	Bayramiyya	3	-
Balat Lodge	Khalwatiyya	3	-

¹⁸ For the relationship between dervish lodges and state see; Neumann (1996), Köç (2012; 2016).

¹⁹ This lodge could be Abid Çelebi lodge or Samanizâde/Misîfî Âlî Efendi Lodge in Otlukçu Yokuşu. Both are Naqshbandiyya.

Conclusion

Distribution of bread was not the merely nourishment of the indigents, widows, orphans and disabled in the Ottoman context, it was the state's method of management of the poverty, natural disasters, wars and even political turmoil. Imperial waqfs founded by the sultans, dynasty members and high-ranking bureaucrats contributed the maintenance of the security and order of the empire and prevent to social explosions that may occur due to the food shortages. Therefore, waqfs were the most important complements to the principles of provisionalism, traditionalism and fiscalism, which were the pillars on which Ottoman economic system was based. The reforms carried out in the Ottoman grain policy in the late 18th century which were establishment of a centralized grain institution and the abandonment of fixed prices, did not represent a radical break from tradition, but rather a controlled transformation.

Soup kitchens stand out as the most visible and productive part of this transformation. Distribution of bread from the waqf imârets functioned as a kind of social insurance policy for beneficiaries and produced legitimacy for the reigning dynasty. Moreover, as people's daily expenditures on the staple food remained in their pockets, these sums were channeled into other needs, creating surplus value within the household economy.

If we consider the Hamidiye foundation, where more than 1,000 fodula breads were distributed every day, and the other soup kitchens in Istanbul, there were thousands of fodula-hôrâns in Istanbul. These can be divided into four groups: primarily the waqf's own employees, residents of various madrasas and lodges, those who pray for the continuation of the state and the paupers. In the 19th century, the number of fodula recipients increased, and allocations were made to others besides the madrasas and lodges whose names were mentioned in the foundation charter. In addition, duâgûs who pray for the continuation of the state gained a right to take fodula breads, despite the silence of the waqfiyya about this issue, also emerged. The expanded number of beneficiaries led to commodification of the fodulas. This required keeping more rigorous records of the fodula-hôrâns. In the fodula book of Hamidiye waqf, it is possible to find detailed information about the names of these people, sometimes the place where they lived, the date they acquired the fodula right, and to whom, when and why they transferred this right. However, the records do not indicate for how much these fodulas were sold on the market because it was an illegal act. Moreover, in keeping with the state's strategic use of aid to retain control over religious organizations and capitalize on their social impact, a sizable amount of the fodula allocations went to lodges linked with Khalwatiyya and Naqshbandiyya. Over time, these supports were institutionalized through the Ministry of Imperial Waqfs, with lodge needs increasingly met via endowment funds rather than treasury resources.

As a result, the distribution of fodula bread by the waqf imârets had multiple functions for the state: poverty alleviation, creation of surplus in the household economy, glorification of the Sultan, and alleviation of political discontent. Moreover, all of this has been at no cost to the central treasury. Despite complaints about the quality of the bread, the distribution of fodula continued until almost the end of the empire and became an important example of Ottoman longevity and pragmatic socio-political practices of the Ottoman state.

Bibliography

1. Archival Sources

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Arşivi (BOA).

BOA, C.BLD. 73/3618 03 Muharrem 1196/ 19 December 1781.

BOA, C.EV. 609/30725 7 Rebiülevvel 1199/18 January 1785.

Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (VGMA)

VGMA.d. 1021 Fodula Book of Hamidiye (1823-1903)

2. Published Sources

Ağır, Seven. (2013) "The Evolution of Grain Policy: The Ottoman Experience". *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, (43) 4, 571-598.

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (2018). *Târîh-i Cevdet*. ed. by Şevki Nezihi Aykut. V. II (1. Book). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.

Alpay, Birol (1978). "I. Abdülhamid Külliyesi ve Hamidiye Medresesi". *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, (8), 1-22.

Arslanmirza, Özge (2017). *Surplus-Receiver (Zevaid-Horan) From Imperial Waqfs: Between Philanthropy and Political Economy*. Master Thesis. Ankara: Middle East Technical University.

Bülbül, Ahmed Hamdi (2012). "IV. Vakıf Han'ın Yerindeki Önemli Eser: Hamidiye İmâreti" *Vakıf Restorasyon Yıllığı*, (4), 7-16.

Atik Gürbüz, İnci. (2019). "Osmanlı Dönemi Metinlerinde Ekmek ve Ekmekle İlgili Anlam Çerçevesi", *Akademik Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi*, 3 (4), 348-376.

Ayn Ali Efendi (2021). *Osmanlı Kanunları ve Devlet Teşkilatı*. ed. by Seyit Ali Kahraman. İstanbul: Yeditepe.

Aynural, Salih (2002). *İstanbul Değirmenleri ve Fırınları, Zahire Ticareti (1740-1840)*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

Barkan, Ömer Lütfi (1963). "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İmâret Sitelerinin Kuruluş ve İşleyiş Tarzına Âit Araştırmalar". *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fak. Mecmuası*, 23 (1- 2), 239-296.

Camgöz, Mevlüt (2017). *Ekmek, Buğday ve Şehir: 19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda İaşe Meselesi*. İstanbul: Kitabevi.

Cunbur, Müjgan (1964). "I. Abdülhamid Vakfiyesi ve Hamidiye Kütüphanesi." *Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, (22), 17-69.

Demirtaş, Mehmed (2014). *Osmanlı'da Fırıncılık: On Yedinci Yüzyıl İstanbul Örneği*. Ankara: Atf.

Dursteler, E.R. (2014). "Bad Bread and the "Outrageous Drunkenness of the Turks": Food and Identity in the Accounts of Early Modern European Travelers to the Ottoman Empire". *Journal of World History*, 25 (2), 203-228. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2014.0023>.

Emecen, Feridun (1996). "Fodula". *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. V. 13. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. 167-170.

Erefe, Oya İklil (1997). *Bread and Provisioning in the Ottoman Empire (1750-1860)*. Master Thesis. Ankara: Bilkent University.

Ertuğ Tarım, Zeynep (2000). «İmâret». *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. V. 22. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. 219-220.

Genç, Mehmed (2014). "Klasik Osmanlı Sosyal-İktisadi Sistemi ve Vakıflar." *Vakıflar Dergisi*, (42), 9-18.

Güçer, Lütfi (1949). "XVIII. Yüzyıl Ortalarında İstanbul'un İaşesi İçin Lüzumlu Hububatın Temini Meselesi". *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 11 (1-4), 397-416.

Güran, Tefik (1986). "İstanbul'un İaşesinde Devletin Rolü (1793-1839)". *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*. 44 (1-4). 245-275.

Haskan, Mehmed Nermi (2018). *Hamid-i Evvel Külliyesi ve Çevresi*. İstanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Borsası Yayınları.

Hüseyin Ayyansarâyî (1281). *Hadikâtü'l-Cevâmi*. İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire.

İbnülemin Mahmud Kemâl and Hüseyin Hüsameddin (1335). *Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâreti'nin Tarihçesi ve*

- Nüzzârın Terâcim-i Ahvâli*. İstanbul: Şehzâdebaşı Evkâf-ı İslâmiyye Matbaası.
- Kahraman, Seyit Ali and Yücel Dağlı (ed.) (2019). *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. V. I (2. Book). İstanbul: YKY.
- Kallek, Cengiz (2022). "Kile". *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. V. 25. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. 567-570.
- Kallek, Cengiz (2007). "Okka" *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. V. 33. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. 338-339.
- Karademir, Zafer (2017). *İmparatorluğun Açlıkla İmtihanı Osmanlı Toplumunda Kitliklar (1560-1660)*. İstanbul: Kitap
- Karagöz, Kübra (2020). "II. Mahmud Dönemi Nakşibendi Tekke ve Zaviyelerine Yapılan Yardımlar (1808-1839)". *Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4 (2), 105-122.
- Kazıcı, Ziya (2019). *Osmanlıda Vakıf Medeniyeti*, İstanbul: Kayıhan.
- Koçu, Reşad Ekrem (1958). "Abdülhamid I İmaretı". *Encyclopedia of Istanbul*. V. I. İstanbul: Tan Matbaası.
- Koçu, Reşad Ekrem (1971). "Fodula" *Encyclopedia of Istanbul*. V.11. İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi.
- Köç, Ahmet (2012). "Mevlevîler ve Devlet: Ankara Mevlevîhanesi Örneği: Ekonomik Statü, Vakıflar ve Yönetim". *Bellekten*, 76 (276), 527-552.
- Köç, Ahmet (2015). "Free Food Distribution in Ottoman Imarets or the Social Aspects of Power of Nutrition". In *Turkey at the Beginning of 21st Century: Past and Present*, 11-30, Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press.
- Köç, Ahmet (2016). "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Devlet-Tekke İlişkinin Önemli Bir Tanığı: Halveti Şeyhi Sofyalı Bâlî Efendi ve Vakıfları". *Bellekten*, 80 (289), 797-822.
- Mehmed Ziya Bey (2016). *İstanbul ve Boğaziçi: Bizans ve Osmanlı Medeniyetlerinin Âsâr-ı Bâkiyesi*. İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları.
- Murphey, Rhoads (1987). "Provisioning İstanbul: The state and subsistence in the early Modern Middle East". *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, 2 (1), 217-263.
- Neumann, Christoph K. (1996). "19. Yüzyıla Girenken Konya Mevlavî Asitanesi ile Devlet-Arasındaki İlişkiler". *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (II), 167-179.
- Orbay, Kayhan (2007). "Distributing Food, Bread and Cash: Vakıf Taamhoran and Fodulahoran Registers as Archival Sources for Imârets". in *Feeding People, Feeding Power; Imârets in the Ottoman Empire*. İstanbul: Eren. 171-196.
- Özcan, Serpil. (2020). XIX. Yüzyıl İstanbul Tekkeleri ve Mekânsal Konumlanışları. Yüksek Lisans Tezi. İstanbul: Şehir Üniversitesi.
- Özmucur, S., & Ş. Pamuk (2002). Real Wages and Standards of Living in the Ottoman Empire, 1489-1914. *The Journal of Economic History*, 62 (2), 293-321. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2698182>.
- Pakalın, Osman Zeki (2004). *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*. V. I, II. III. İstanbul: MEB.
- Peri, Oded (1992). "Waqf and Ottoman Welfare Policy. The Poor Kitchen of Hasseki Sultan in Eighteenth-Century Jerusalem". *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 35 (2), 167-186.
- Sakin, Orhan (2019). *Yeniçeri Ocağı Tarihi ve Yasaları [Mebde-i Kanun-ı Yeniçeri Ocağı Tarihi]*. İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi.
- Sarıcaoğlu, Fikret (2001). *Kendi Kaleminden Bir Padişahın Portresi: Sultan I. Abdülhamid (1774-1789)*. İstanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı.
- Sertoğlu, Mithat (2015). *Osmanlı Tarih Lügati*. İstanbul: Kurtuba.
- Singer, Amy (2002). *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Şaşmazer, Lynne M. (2000). "Policing Bread Price and Production in Ottoman İstanbul, 1793-1807". *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 24 (1), 21-40.
- Şemdâni-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi (1978). *Mür'it-Tevârih*. V. II. ed by Münir Aktepe. İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası.
- Taylesanizâde Hâfız Abdullah Efendi (2003). *İstanbul'un Uzun Dört Yılı (1785-1789)*. V. I, ed. by Feridun

Emecen. İstanbul: Tatav.

Tızlak, Fahrettin. (2015). "Hatt-ı Hümayunlar Işığında III. Selim Dönemi'nde İstanbul'da Fırınların ve Ekmeklerin Tebdil-i Kıyafetle Denetimi". *Cedrus*, (III), 337-350.

Türkkan, Candan. (2021). *Feeding Istanbul: The Political Economy of Urban Provisioning*. Leiden: Brill.

Uçar Nurcan, Merve (2023). Making of a Sultanic Waqf: Hamidiye Endowments and Its Institutionalization on the Eve of Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâret (1781-1826). PhD Thesis. İstanbul: Marmara University.

Unan, Fahri (2003). *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Fatih Külliyesi*. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Yayınları.

Varol, Muharrem (2022). *Islahat, Siyaset, Tarikat: Bektaşiliğin İlgası Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tarikat Politikaları (1826-1866)*. İstanbul: Dergah.

Vak'anüvis Halil Nuri Bey (2015). *Nûrî Tarihi*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları.

Yeşil, Fatih (2004). "İstanbul'un İaşesinde Nizam-ı Cedid: Zahire Nezareti'nin Kuruluşu ve İşleyişi (1793-1839)". *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (15), 113-142.

Yıldız, Aysel (2008). *Vaka-yı Selimiyye or the Selimiyye Incident: A Study of May 1807 Rebellion*. Ph.D. Thesis. İstanbul: Sabancı University.

Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula
Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)

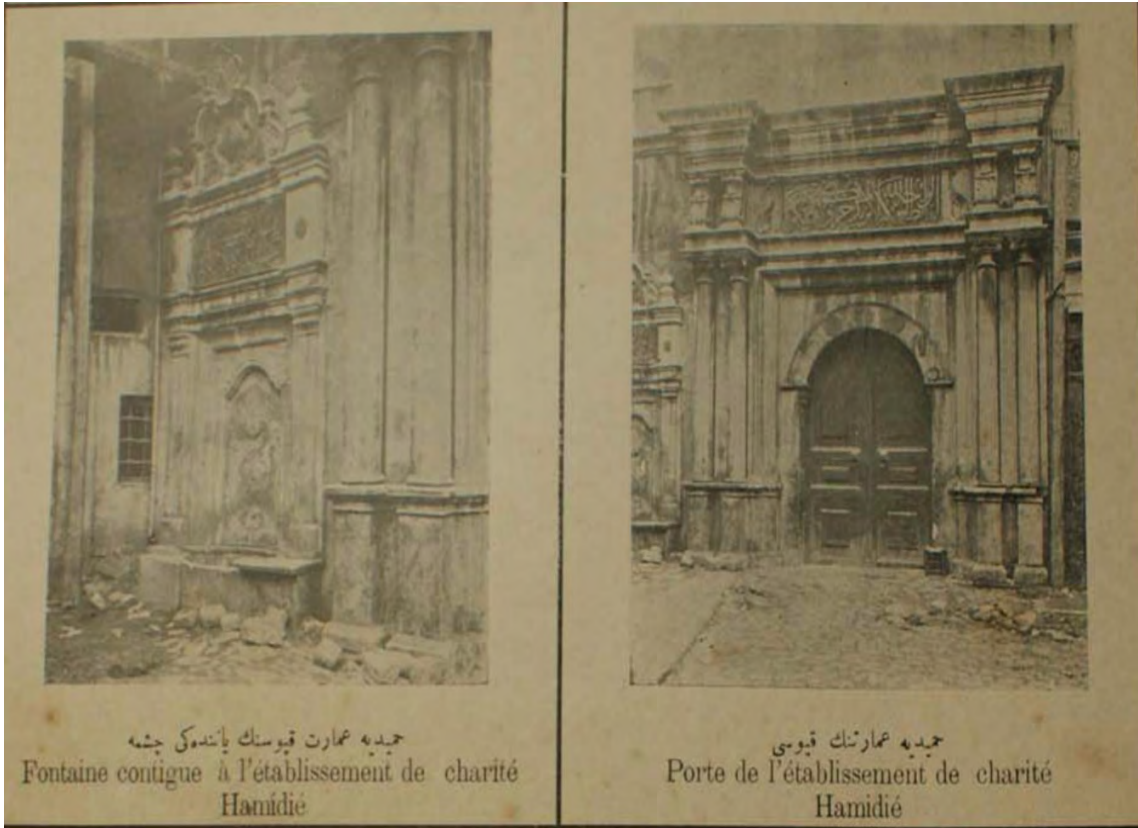


Figure 2: Hamidiye Sebil and Soup Kitchen in Bahçekapı in 1890s

Sebah&Joallier Collection :

<https://www.sebahjoallier.com/cesmeler?pgid=jnykkojz-2f2ebec7-37c0-482c-b951-62e7f4c36824>

Figure 3: Hamidiye İmâret around 1910s (Nevsal-i Osmani 1328, p. 145)



Charity Through Bread: The Hamidiye Imâret and the Politics of Fodula Distribution in the Ottoman Empire (1781-1903)

Figure 4: First Page of the Fodula Book of Hamidiye Waqf

