THE WAKF IN THE OTTOMAN PERIOD: A SOCIAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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"O son, never forget! Make the people live so that the state lives on."
—Siyah Edebiyat

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Because of their historical legacy and the diversity of their purposes, it is possible to study and evaluate the wakf (pious foundations) of the Ottoman Empire in different ways. In fact, the wakfs have been studied through various lenses of law, social and cultural history, legal status, and organizational structure. A notable number of works have devoted themselves to studying the role of the wakf in the Ottoman Empire and also its main characteristics as a social fabric. In the Ottoman ruling tradition, justice, sharia, authority, wealth, and the people, who were also the component parts of the circle of justice (hukumat-gaher), were the cornerstones of the state and the society. An absence or lack of one of these components meant the dissolution of the state. The belief that a just and country justice meant the safety and the well-being of its subjects, the well-being and the safety of the subjects meant more production and affluence, and more production and affluence meant more tax revenues by which a ruler could feed a large number of soldiers and have a strong state.

In the Ottoman State, the society was divided into two classes which were considered necessary components for the peace and order, and well-functioning of social life. The first class was the ruling class (asheiri ahlisi) made up of those to whom the sultan had delegated some administrative and religious rights by an official charter. The second class consisted of those who were ruled (nâyiye) which these people belonged to various religious and ethnic groups and had no part in ruling of the government. The duty of the nâyi was to support the asheiri class by producing and paying taxes regardless of their religious and ethnic affiliations. The duty of the asheiri class and the sultan was to provide the country with justice and welfare by applying the Ottoman Law which was based on Islamic sharia and tradition.

The Ottoman Ruling Class (Asheiri Ahlisi)

The Ottoman ruling class was divided into four sub-groups. These were the palace members, the military (asheiri or asheeri ahlisi) the ulama and the bureaucracy. The members of the ruling class who were exempt from paying taxes either received salaries or revenues in kind in return for their state services. The military (asheiri or asheeri ahlisi) were responsible for the application of the salutistic decrees; the ulama (ahlisi ilmi) provided judicial and educational services; and asheeri ahlisi (the bureaucracy) were the members of the Ottoman state bureaucracy.

In the Divan-i Hümâyûn (as the Ottoman cabinet or the Imperial Chancellery of State was named), the highest institution of the central administration representing the sultan’s legislative, executive and judicial powers, the asheiri were represented by hukumat-dar viziers (viziers appointed as members of the state) and the Commander-in-chief of the Janissaries (qâ'yim al-udâr). The representatives of the ulama in Divan-i Hümâyûn were the hukumat-lâl viziers (high officials in the Muslim Judiciary) of Anatolia and Rumelia. The Defterdar (Minister of Finance) and Nâzîm attended on behalf of the bureaucracy (hukumat-i âm). In early periods the institution was directed by the sultan himself but after the XV century it began to convene under the leadership of the Grand Vizier (Nâzîm-i âm). The ruled (Reaya)

In the Ottoman society, the people who were not a part of the ruling class and took no part in governing constituted the nâyiye. Their main obligation was to pay the tax. They managed to live either by means of farming or working in the industrial sector. Paying the tax was the plural form of the word nâyiye, which means the people living under the rule of a sovereign. It refers to the ruled.

In the Ottoman Empire the local organisation was divided into provinces (eyâlet). The centres of the provinces, which were called nâyiye, were the places of residence of vezir-i eyâlet (governor-general) who were the top rulers in the provinces. Every province was divided into sancaq districts which were ruled by sancaq beyi. Sancaq, which were governed by the subaşı, were the subdivisions of a sancaq, and they were divided into small administrative parts which belonged to the sipahi (cavalry soldiers). These small parts were called timar (sahane) (small military fief, township).

In the course of time there were increases and decreases in the numbers of eyâlet, sancaq and hukumat. At the end of the XVI century there were more than 50 provinces and more than 300 sancaq. At the XVII century the number of provinces increased to 32. D'Ossone reported the number of eyâlets as 26, the sancaq numbered as 165 and the hukumat numbered as 1800.

In the mid XVII century, 25 out of 32 eyâlets were allocated to the timar system, and 9 out of 32 for an annual tax referred to as safar. In the Middle East region, some lands were given to local notables as family estates (saâdâk-yourtem). The Ottoman Law recognised the right of private property for any kind of movable and, under certain conditions, for real estates. But the lands outside the dwelling centres, houses, shops, vineyards and gardens, and the lands whose previous owners were non-Muslims were deemed as merti, meaning that their owner was the state. They were divided into different categories as dâr, tamar and timar on the basis of their revenues and were left in the power of ruling class and for the cultivation of the nâyiye.

THE MAIN FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE FOUNDING OF THE WAKFS IN OTTOMAN HISTORY

According to ruling philosophy of the Ottomans, the primary duty of the state was to distribute justice, to provide the safety of the lives and property of the people, to give the people the opportunity to improve themselves and to respect for what they wished to believe in. The task of the fulfilling other public duties such as educational, cultural, health and social services, which
also demonstrate the level of development and welfare of a society, was left to civil society establishments.

The who were the people who established to many hospitals, bridges, soukikhans for the poor (mamshulat), fountains, Madrasa and the mosques, some of which have survived up to now and some of which have not? How and from where did these persons find the financial resources to build and sustain such institutions? What were their titles, jobs, professions, status and aims? What were the principal reasons which motivated them to establish such social service institutions? What was the motivating force behind the founding of the waqf which then placed the people in a kind of competition to undertake such a step, and made the institution of the waqf not only a successful establishment in so widely scattered areas of activity but also an important phenomenon of our social life today? What religious, political, social and cultural reasons, philosophical considerations and world views gave birth to the till then unpassed waqf civilization in the Ottoman State?

For what kind of considerations did the people devote with their free will, their private properties, economic values, real estates and movables which are vitally important phenomenon in the life of people and nation? To be sure, it is impossible to multiply these questions, but here we will try to grasp the prominent dynamics of the subject in question within the framework of the above stated questions.

Although the waqf as a word is not found in the Holy Quran, and it is only mentioned as sadaka-i carsyiye (good works) in hadiths, any kind of charity and benevolence (bircan o bakr) and (bircan o tabur), which are the main objectives of the waqf, are widely addressed in the main Islamic sources, and people were encouraged to perform such activities. This judgement of the Quran was summarised and interpreted as coming together and acting with solidarity in order to perform charity and benevolence, not to sin and feel enmity (Can and salum).

Charity (bircan) means to free ourselves from the egoism of the self and to endow our possessions to the needy, whereas tabur refers to the struggle with seduction (ipsu) with the help of a power bestowed by God. Sin and enmity are exact opposite kinds of legitimate and benevolent spending. God is not concerned with these divine ordinances. He also tests the believers to mature them and make them recognise the true meanings of the concepts. He advises the people as follows: “you will not attain uru piety until you spend of what you love.”

The prominent reasons leading the people to found the waqf can be located in the initial statements of the waqf documents (waqfýa). Some of them are quoted here to clarify the matter.

The document (waqfýa) of the waqf of Sultan Selim II (1566-1574) belonging to the Selimiye Complex in Edirne (Edirne Selimiye Kilisesi) begins as follows:

“Praise be to Allah whose power and strength create the reasons and intelligence. In contemplation of his spiritual kingdom, the comprehension of great sovereigns astonishes. Eternity belongs only to his glory and fame... Death finds everyone. Wealth never saves his master from entering into the grave. Neither Holy Prophet, sultan, vizier, prince, judge, and Subeymen the Magnificent, nor his son Selim II did escape from the death...”

“Wisdom is only to comprehend and worship God. The Ottoman Dynasty was honoured with a great and divine blessing. When a shining star of prosperity of one of them rose, his or her foremost job was to do good works which could help him/her in the Day of Judgement. This is the tradition of the Ottoman Dynasty which has been transmitted from generation to generation. In this way, they have done many charity and benevolence and have created a lot of enduring works.”

“The assets of this transitory and non-eternal world are just temporary shadows, and the man who lives in it is only a guest ready to leave it. Any intelligent human being does not act heedlessly in this world. By keeping his/her future in mind, he sees the seeds of good work and charity in the arable field of this world in order to gain higher ranks promised in the other world... So, by way of establishing a waqf he intends to live forever.”

“The goods and honour of this false world are uncertain, and its crown and throne are only trusts. Everything apart from God will be annihilated... If the world had been everlasting, the Prophet of God would have stayed there forever. Every adult human being should think the other world, thus, do good works and charity to the extent that the conditions permit him/her before growing old. Wajuf is the most excellent kind of form of charity and benevolence, and also the best one of the goodness which endure infinitely.”

No matter how long a man lives and how much wealth he possesses in this world, one day life ends. Yet, mankind desires to live on and to reach high positions, to be remembered after his death with respect by his close associates and to be a man who gained God’s approval.

In addition to the above stated factors, it is possible to identify other factors which led the people to found the waqf. The social and political changes in Islamic societies, the psychological desires to exhibit and transfer the wealth, social and economic needs, the cultural and intellectual structure of society and social morality are other factors. Furthermore, the intentions of the people to prevent the splitting of the wealth through inheritance and customized and to safely transmit it to the coming generations, the state’s desire to exhibit its power and strength and to manipulate the people and the like can also be seen as other considerations behind the founding of the waqf.

The conditions which gave birth to the waqf in the civilisations and societies were similar to the ones already mentioned above. But, it is an exaggeration to say that people always founded the waqf with religious considerations, and this does not correspond with historical realities. Again unlike the claims of some circles, it was not the sole reason behind the waqf peoples’ desire to save their wealth from confiscation.

All in all, if we take the motives behind the founding of the waqf we can say that our belief system, which is the most influential factor in the formation of our personal culture, and the philosophy which has the motto “if you make the people live in prosperity, the state lives forever,” an important component shaping our conception of the world, the state, the throne and the protection of the weak people against the mighty forces, come first.

THE ROLE OF THE WAKFS IN THE OTTOMAN STATE AND SOCIETY

The Ottoman waqfs are the sum total of the waqf established in the period of Seljukids and principalities. The registered documents of these waqfs are now preserved in the Archive of the General Directory of the waqfs (Vehiplar Genel Müdürlikleri Ajansı). The number of the waqf documents (waqfîa) of the state (mehsus) and joined (state) waqfs founded before 1976, which was also the date of the adoption of Turkish Civil Code, and in accordance to the old Code is 29,000. But this number is far from giving the sum total of the waqfs established in this period. As it is known, until the establishment of the Harunmayn Ertak Nizamiyeti (the Ministry of Harunmayn waqfs) in 1993/1386, then Harunmayn waqfs in 1188/1774, later Laleli and Mahmutpaşa waqf administrations and finally the Eraf-i Hicreti (1912) was established as part of the reorganisation of the state to administer and supervise the waqfs, there was no central registration system. In fact, in the case of 313 waqf concepts of 1663, which are found in the Archive of the General Directory of the waqfs (Vehiplar Genel Müdürlikleri), the oldest one is registered in the central records in 1111/1703. The foundation date of this waqf is 1071/1663.

Our estimate is that the number of the waqfs established in the Ottoman period is more than 35,000. In the Ottoman period a waqf could be established after passing three stages. First, the idea to found a waqf was developed. Then, the buildings, which also called philanthropic institutions (mektub-i hayriye), were built in accordance with the predetermined objectives, and the resources that were required to maintain the intended services were allocated. In the final stage, the prepared waqf document (waqfîa) was submitted to the consent of the court by way of a hearing in a lawsuit. The waqfâyet of the waqfs that were approved by the courts were copied into the file registers.
Although the figures pertaining to this subject are different in different periods, it is evident that the ṣawāfīs were involved in various economic activities ranging from agriculture, to manufacturing from trade centers and to housing and employment and the money policy of the economy of the country.

The ṣawāfīs were also actively engaged in maintaining the safety of the transportation system in order to sustain the dynamism of the economic life. For this purpose, they constructed the bridges on the river valleys (kertasenaye) and hans each 30-40 kilometers along the roads. They took necessary measures to maintain the continuity of the services in these caravansaries and hans. Nothing was demanded from the visitors unless they stayed more than three days. Their patients were cured. The revenues of the ṣawāfīs financed all of these activities. In addition to these caravansaries built along the roads, the hans, which were generally found in city centers and in a sense acted as a stock exchange in which foreign commodities were exchanged with the local ones, were acting under the control of the ṣawāfīs. Moreover, in most cases the shops, which were important places where goods and consumers met, restaurants and etc. were commercial buildings constructed by the ṣawāfīs.

We find in the Istanbul Vakiflari Tabiin Defteri that in Istanbul the public ṣawāfīs (omma ṣawāfīları) have as a source of revenue more than 4,000 houses, 5,717 shops, 28 caravansaries, 19 hans, 380 lodging centres (hobbanları), 18 undergroundsweetstores, 14 cellars, 68 bakeries, 195 villages, 40 arable fields and 288 mills. Again, the capital of the cash ṣawāfīs (mukād al-ṭakīl) was established in Istanbul between 1450-1456, whose number was 11,500, was about 23,585,786 silver coins (ṣuqa). In 1258/1842-1260/1844 the total revenue of the 3 year old Sultan’s ṣawāfīs (elātin vakiflari) was 11,929,914 kurush. After the expenditures brought on by the ṣawāfīs, these ṣawāfīs still had 2,794,086 kurush budget surplus. The revenues of the ṣawāfīs of Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861) between March 1267/1850-February 1269/1852 alone was 4,177,315 kurush, and their budget surplus was 2,069,102 kurush.

According to the records of the Hicindemir Liya- sua Tahtın Defteri dated from 986/1571, the volume of money held by the cash ṣawāfīs in Bursa was 3,490,040 silver coins, whereas their annual revenue reached 333,119 silver coins. In the same period and in the same place the ṣawāfīs earned 547,724 silver coins from their real estate undertakings.

In the last period of the Ottoman Empire, 8.23% of the total personnel, which were employed in the state services, were working in the ṣawāfī sector. The number of the personnel working in the same sector in early Republican period was 12,689,632 and in 1990s it was 0.76%. These figures do not include 30,000 merchants who organized their jobs as tenants by means of the various ṣawāfī apparatus like real estates, and as employees in the state (mumla) and independent ṣawāfīs (mumla) whose numbers exceeded 10,000 in the Ottoman period, and the number of the thousands of the people working in different areas of the activity of the ṣawāfīs established in the Republican period.

If the contribution of the ṣawāfīs to the employment of the country is evaluated through the above perspective, it becomes clear that at the end of the Ottoman period 12% and in the early republican period 15% of the total public personnel received their salaries from the ṣawāfīs which was also the case in other economic fields. Yet, by the 1990s the share of the ṣawāfīs in the employment of the country decreased sharply reaching the level of 1%.

The above given statistical figures firmly confirm that the ṣawāfīs in the Ottoman period, which had their own corporate identities, operated under the rules of free market economy and the principles of decentralization, and became an important sector in the daily affairs of the state and the society in social, political and cultural terms. The scope of their activities extended when the state was in rise, conversely, the decline of the state narrowed their activities. In this way, the ṣawāfīs regularized services of education, health, social insurance, public works, transportation and fine arts which all were important in realizing the potential of man. They established various institutions to help the people in their daily lives, and in a sense, they became a way of life for the state and the individual.

The OTTOMAN WAKES AS SEEN THROUGH THE SOCIAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE: A NEW APPROACH

Social policy is a discipline which aims to overcome the social sufferings stemming from the economic activities whose rules were supposed to operate according to the natural laws, and to create a prosperous society. That is why, social policy is also called the science of social ethics. In real life, social policy was implemented in countries where it was believed that life could not only be organized in the bases of the rules of economics, but also on the bases of moral values. Therefore, social policy is also defined as an economic policy whose boundaries are drawn by moral stimuli. Economics deals with economic activities and the distribution of national income, whereas social policy is concerned with the problem of "how economic activities should be organized and how the national income and wealth should be distributed on the basis of accepted ethical norms and justice? It is also the subjectmatter of social policy to take required measures to accomplish the above stated purpose." It is true that the ṣawāfīs were not initially directly transporting wealth from the upper to the lower social classes, but, they were socializing the wealth of the upper classes and, in this way, presenting it to the use of lower classes either in the form of income or services. Because of this, the ṣawāfī appears as important social policy (welfare policy) institutions.

In the Ottoman society and in the Orient in general, the sovereign and his relatives and the high statesmen constituted the most powerful group in economi-cal terms. Under this ruling (askeri) group, there were other social groups made up of their close associates, namely state sponsored feudal classes (local notables). The last components of this pyramid were the slaves, the religious leaders of Sufi orders who were respected persons in society and maintained close relations with the state and the members of the middle class, i.e. merchants, craftsmen and artisans.

Researchers conducted about the class origins of the people founding the ṣawāfī revealed a parallelism between founding a ṣawāfī and being a member of a
class which received relatively larger share of the national income. The first founders of the wāfīs, especially those who established large wāfīs, were the sultans, their close associates, princesses (gazdanâver), mother sultans and daughters of princes (kumam sultânları). The second group consisted of high administrative groups, viziers, governor-generals (hâkînak-beylerbeyî) and large fief and hât (a kind of fief) holders. Under them other wealthy people, some groups of the middle class, merchants, craftsmen and the artisans also appeared. 58

If the founders of the wāfīs are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the wāfīs operated as institutions enabling the transfer of the wealth, on the one hand, and providing income on the other. The preferences of the upper classes to found the wāfīs as their wealth increased implied that the wāfīs system also functioned as an instrument to overcome the problems stemming from the unusable nature of their positions in terms of wealth and distribution. In this way, the wāfīs fulfilled a social task, it does not matter whether this was done consciously or unconsciously, they produced at least a partial solution to an economic problem.

Although, since the matter has not been systematically analysed yet, and thus the conclusions are tentative, it can be stated that 89-90 % of the wāfī founders in the Ottoman society were members of the ruling (aeker) class. The people whose occupations were not specified constituted only 9 % of them. The wāfī founders who belonged to the ruling (maya) class were just 1 %. 59 The fact that 90 % of the founders were predominantly occupying positions which were responsible for keeping the state stable and just means that they took into account the social and political conditions of the country, and tried to answer the demands of society in accordance with socially recognised practices and procedures of the period and they believed that they had to do something enabling vertical and horizontal mobility among the social classes. In the Ottoman social tradition anybody who possessed adequate mean established charitable institutions. The people whose financial situations were relatively restricted repaired the mosques. Those whose economic conditions were lower than the above two groups built at least a fountain. Social responsibility was very high. The people who did nothing even if their economic conditions permitted it, were not seen as good persons in society. In fact, it was hardly possible to find such a man in society. 60 The tradition that the sultans founded great wāfīs, which were also used as the instruments to legitimise the political power in many of Anatolian principalities at the end of the Middle Ages, was also maintained by the Ottoman rulers in the XV and XVI centuries and its scope was widened. 61 It was only the privilege of the Ottoman sultans to build a mosque with more than one minaret. In addition to the religious, aesthetic and financial considerations, the political ones also instrumental in determining the decisions of those who built great buildings. These buildings served to legitimise the power of the sovereign in the eyes of the people. No doubt, the Ottoman caliph sultans' religious and other services delivered by way of the wāfīs in Mecia and Mâdi- na promoted their legitimacy in the eyes of other Muslim peoples. 62

The difficulties involved in transportation of building materials sometimes increased the costs of the buildings. In the construction of the Sîleymanıye Mosque one column out of four on which the central dome was set were brought from Alexandria/Egypt, and the other one from Baalbek/Syria. 63 The aim of these expensive operations were to exhibit the power of the state, on the one hand, and that of the sultans of the time (Sîleyman the Magnificent) on the other. 64

On the part of the rulers there were further considerations to maintain continuous communication, to provide necessary means for marketing commercial commodities in all parts of the empire, to enable everyone to get a share from the resources of the country, albeit not equal. When we analyse the wâfiyes (the main document of the wāfīs), we see that almost all of the caravansaries and bridges along the trade roads that were used by the caravans, large commercial buildings and central market buildings in which commercial goods were sold and stored, the educational and health institutions and the social aid and insurance institutions that assisted lower social strata and those who were exposed to direct physical or social hazards, were built either by the sultans or by the viziers. Although in the Islamic cultural tradition it is difficult to differentiate among those good deeds which aim at this world and those which aim at the other, we think that it is an auralistic explanation to claim that all of these deeds were only done due to the religious expectations pertaining to the next world. To be sure, in any socially useful job there is a hope to win the favour of God and there is psychological satisfaction, but this is not all. One example is given in the following from Sâdrazam Hanan Pâşa wāfī in order to describe the occurrence better.

"Sâdrazam Hanan Pâşa founded a wāfī on the first day of Safar (second month of the Arabic lunar year) 1116/1704 to secure the safety of the road along the route of Anokia, Birkenhusen and Pazar, which was also used by Sûr Regiments. 65 This wāfīye contains interesting rules about the accommodation of travellers and caravans and the provision of the security of the roads by means of the wāfī. Hanan Pâşa built a complex which comprises a caravanserai, a mosque, a Turkish bath, a large caravanserai with 90 fumars, a soup kitchen for the poor, school and shops in Kamun which is an Anatolia-Amb Peninsula door of the road reaching Aleppo, Damascus, Mecca and Mâdi- na. In order to protect the Complex 25 free schools, 8 wards of the own and 4 healthcenters have been employed. A group of 30 have been responsible for the security of the road, this group was made up of 26 cavalrymen, 1 horsebringer, 1 Yetiman, 1 sergeant and 1 commander (adil). All of these people have received their salaries from the revenues of the wāfī. In exchange for their wages, these guards are obliged to provide the caravans travelling along the Anokia, Birken and Pazar route with security, and they will not disturb the travellers in any way. God forbid! If anyone of the commercial caravans or travellers is damaged due to the fault of brigands, their damages will be met with the salaries of the guards which are responsible for the security of the travelers."

In fact, in this decision of this wāfīye there is more than one point which requires further attention, like giving the duty and competence together, privatisation of security and providing security and transport without an extra-financial burden on the state.

It is seen here that the Sâdrazam, who is the second man in the hierarchy of the state administration and who is directly responsible for the country's security and prosperity, is fulfilling a task of the state by establishing a wāfī and he is doing this in a way which was expected from a statesman.

A further important point in terms of economic sociology, which needs further elaboration, is the exhibition of the wealth and its relation to the wāfīs. Throughout history mankind tried to exhibit his wealth in different ways to satisfy a psychological weakness, and for this purpose he used different and indirect means which are difficult to understand. Different rituals in primitive societies and various feast rituals in old Turkish tribes, afterward (breaking one's fast) feasts and presents given to guests after dinner in Rana- nazar were nothing other than exhibitions of the wealth. Wehlen thinks that the parties, balls and festivities organised by the upper classes are the same as their counterparts in primitive societies in terms of their content. 66 We should not think that the psychological weakness of man to exhibit his wealth is a bad feature and needs to be eliminated. On the contrary, if it is directed as positive social goals, it gains a beneficial and innocent character. In this way, two aims are realised. First, the wealthy people are satisfied by exhibiting their wealth, and second, some social needs are fulfilled. It is at this point that the wāfīs institution enters into the process. It coincides the drive of individual satisfaction and social benefits in a most appropriate manner. It may be inevitable that if this weakness of man is not directed towards socially beneficial and satisfactory actions, like the establishment of the wāfīs, the wealth may then go to harmful activities, such as various exhibitions and luxury expenditures.

On the other hand, from the point of social policy, it is evident that if the appropriate channels, which are functional in the exhibition and spending of the wealth, are closed, the accumulation of the wealth loses its meaning. It decreases people's desire to engage in economic activities, thus, creates economic recessions in society. 67
CONCLUSION

It is not possible to see the waqf as institutions furnishing social peace and harmony only by themselves through providing social and economic equality in a miraculous way. Neither are they only the historical relics founded with religious and charitable considerations, thus negligible for us.

This brief work has shown that a deep analysis and elaboration of the social policy dimension of the Ottoman waqf is important as their role in education, and cultural and religious life.

50 of the waqf founded in the Ottoman period were endowed by the men of the sword (âbed-i nay), (i.e. the ruling class). In addition to the Caliphs, there were other considerations and which we are rear behind the founding of the waqf. The prominent one was that the hope would contribute to the administration of the state in a just and stable manner. Certainly, the fact that the funders were the extently the persons responsible for the equal distribution of national income, the installment of social peace and the setting up of a social insurance system played a significant role in the formation of the preferences that have already been mentioned.

The system, which was created in the Ottoman Empire, enabled the state to fulfill its state tasks through civil establishments, and initiated a kind of solidarity and consensus on the fundamental matters of the country. I think, the secret of establishing a world state which endured more than six centuries in three continents and kept people from different religious, languages and races in peace and prosperity lies in this point.
WAKF INSTITUTIONS IN BOSNIAN SANCAK UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

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With the beginning of the 17th century, more exactly from the year 1604, Bosnian Sancak was encompassing a large territory. It stretched from Novi Paša kadžiš in the Southeast to Bihać, Kamengrad and Konjic in the Southwest. The Turks conquered this territory bit by bit. In 1596 Kadžiš was stationed in Glušavica which was located near Novi Paša. In 1595 Bihać was conquered with its surrounding area. The conquered territory was subjected to the laws and regulations of Ottoman Empire which in turn had resulted in a gradual disappearance of Christian and Byzantine cultures. The new civilisation, especially characterised by the religion of Islam, was leaving completely new and different imprints on the life in this region.

Ottoman Empire became a cosmopolitan state which by the end of the 16th century had stretched over three continents. Within this vast empire the state took care of the social order while all other components that necessitated smooth functioning of its cities including education, welfare, trade, commerce and transit were taken care of by the partly autonomous institutions called wakfs. The wakf institution established its ethical principles according to the Islamic ethic’s code. Its moral principles emphasised the responsibility of an individual towards community as well as bringing about the state of mutual welfare in the post war period. In Islamic community this became a rule rather than exception. Therefore every well-off individual was setting up his own wakf in order to give up a part of his wealth for collective benefit.

Wakfs were established according to the Islamic law rooted in Koran and Sunna. The wakf concept was underscored by the will of wakfs. Wakfs could not be sold or given away. It was to preserve its purpose “until God remained the only lord of the earth and everything that is on it”. However, with the social and political changes taking place most wakfs were forcefully terminated.

Wakfs initiated the establishment of many urban settings on the territory which today belongs to Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this one should not ignore the fact that the state apparatus of Ottoman Sultanate provided the direction for establishing wakfs on locations which deemed the most efficient for the social and economic prosperity of the state. For example, on dangerous crossings where organized security was not enforced to protect trade routes, high state officials were setting up their wakfs. These institutions became the core of future urban settings. This way the governing body of Ottoman Sultanate encouraged the economic development and urbanisation of the vast territory under its control. This is how Sarajevo, Novi Pazar, Nova Varos, Mešarac Grad and other cities were developed during the dominance of Ottoman Sultanate. Thanks to this system over 80% of the cities on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina were developed. Some of them, even until this day, managed to maintain the original architectural concepts. Cities like Donji wakf, Gornji wakf and Varvar wakf even preserved the memory of wakf settings in their names.
The Great
Ottoman - Turkish
Civilisation
The Great
Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation

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The incredible fact that the Ottoman frontier beylik became an Empire over such a short period of time has attracted many Western researchers and scholars to delve into the history of the Ottomans and their state. It could be argued that there are many determinants and dimensions that created the possibility for such an incredible feat to be accomplished. This volume has been edited with the aim of focusing on the main factors that gave rise to such a great civilization. In the first place, the institutional and legal character of the Ottoman State is of utmost importance. In order to understand the basis of Ottoman civilization, the different patterns of its institutions should be studied, as the comprehensive analysis of the institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire might enable us to conceive how a small beylik was able to turn into one of the greatest Empires in the world. In this volume, the administrative, judiciary and military institutions of the Empire are set out as the main subject titles. In addition, there are various subjects which have been analysed, under such subtopics as bureaucracy, religion and law, shedding light on the main characteristics of Ottoman institutions.

In appreciation of the highly developed institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire, the ideational and philosophical sources cannot be underrated. Unless these sources are taken into consideration, it is impossible to grasp the various dynamics of Ottoman institutions. Therefore, this volume is entitled “Philosophy, Science and Institutions”, due to the close correlation and importance of these subjects to one another.

Contrary to conventional Euro-centric and Orientalist assumptions, which hold “science” as the peculiar praxis of the Renaissance and Enlightenment in
the West, in this volume it is generally argued that the Ottomans had a number of successes in scientific activities (iṣlm ü fen). The Ottoman State not only promoted the development of science within the borders of the Empire, but also facilitated several interactions with scientific activities outside of its territories. During this interaction, it both benefited from and contributed to the scientific improvements made in Europe.

Additionally, this volume dedicates an important place to the development of philosophy and thought in the Ottoman Empire; although in the Ottoman Empire such major philosophical schools as developed in Europe were not formed, rather the Ottomans focused mainly on Islamic philosophy. Yet this situation does not arise from the fact that the Ottomans lagged behind in speculative matters. On the contrary, they were not interested in philosophical issues that were outside the realm of Islamic tradition. From their point of view, Islam encompassed all ontological and epistemological matters, making any other philosophical concern dysfunctional.

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emergence of pan-islamism, pan-turkism and

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