



WAQF SYSTEM AS A MODEL OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

DEFINITION OF POVERTY

- *Fakir*(poor) as defined in the Ottoman texts does not only mean the economic situation of the person but also modesty, pious asceticism and humbleness to the authorities.
- The concept of “*Fakr u zarurete duçar olmak*” is often seen in the texts and it means that the person is poor and needy temporarily and as a result of unexpected events. This person can be anybody.
- *Muhtacin* is used to define continuous poverty
- *Musabin* means people who were exposed to a disaster
- *Aceze* refer to those who cannot work and earn their living
- Other groups of the poor and the needy were the orphans, widows, families of the martyrs, those who are dismissed from a post and veterans.

POVERTY AND CHARITY

- Institutionalized and non-institutionalized types of help for the poor: sadaqa
 - zakat
 - waqf
- Both Islamic and non-Islamic heritage on these lands formed the bases for institutionalized charity acts
- *Sadaqa*(charity) is an important characteristic of the Islamic societies
- *Zakat*(annual giving of alms) is among the five obligations of a Muslim

TYPES OF CHARITY

- One of the earliest commands of Islam. Ottoman Empire turned it into a tax which was collected annually by the state and redistributed to the poor.
- Sadaqa is not an obligation but it is believed to be a means of getting closer to God.
- Waqf is one of the most enduring institutions founded for the giving of property for charitable use. It was the most common way for the circulation of wealth among the society.

THE WAQF

- Waqf: property given in the name of God.
- Waqf was institutionalized by the Abbasids.
- Ottoman Empire was the heir of the waqf tradition that already existed on its lands.
- Waqfs were endowments whose beneficiaries were decided by the waqf founder and defined by a treatise (*vakfiyye*).
- Beneficiaries were not only Muslims. Waqfs served the society as a whole.
- Group of keepers and controllers (*mütevelli*) were appointed by the owner.
- The *mütevelli* should control the waqf, keep it in good condition and collect the revenues of the lands given to the waqf and control the people who work in the waqf.

EVOLVEMENT OF THE WAQF INSTITUTION

- Waqf institution reached its peak at the time of the Ottoman Empire
- In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II centralized imperial endowments and those of other state officials under auspices of the Ministry of Waqf Affairs
- With Tanzimat reforms, powers of the Ministry of Waqf Affairs were broadened and it was granted authority to collect waqf revenues
- Waqfs were no longer autonomous and the *mütevelli* had become salaried state officials
- In the nineteenth century social assistance had become state obligation and the local municipalities were given the role of social helper

POVERTY REDUCTION IN THE EARLY TURKISH REPUBLIC

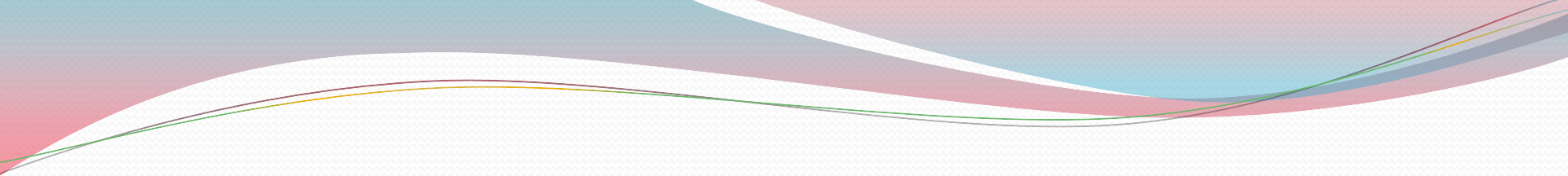
- First institution founded in 1935 was the Children's Protection Society. Turkish Red Crescent Society was also an institution aimed at helping the poor and the needy.
- Waqfs continued to exist
- Today some very big institutions such as the Süleymaniye Külliyesi and Haseki Sultan İmaretı in İstanbul still administered as waqfs for the benefit of the society.
- Social Assistance and Solidarity waqfs of the states which were first formed in 1986 are autonomous legal beings, but they are given their resources by the state. Their workers are not state officials, but their salaries is given by the state.

GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY WAQFS

- Turkish Republic also accepted social assistance as a state obligation and a fund was formed in 1986 to help the poor and the needy.
- With time, this fund turned into General Directorate of Social Assistance which is the state's organ for managing the fund through its social assistance Waqfs all around the country.

CONTINUITY and CHANGE

- The concept “*fakr u zaruret*” still exists in the definition of the target group of the GDSA waqfs.
- Waqf *mütevelli* still contains high rank state officials.
- Definition of the poor is made centrally.
- Differences in the kind of charitable activities.
- The institution continues but its main characteristics alter.

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- Charity acts are institutionalized under the waqf institution.
 - Although the institution seems to continue, there are changes in the activities, due to the changing definition and perception of poverty and the poor.
 - As long as there is change in societies, poverty alleviation strategies will also change while some institutions endure in their basic forms.