

The system of charitable endowments in modern Turkey

Dr. Mustapha Rabahi ¹

¹ University of Ghardaia, Algeria. Email: rabahi.mustapha@univ-ghardaia.edu.dz

Abstract---This study aims to explore the channels of continuity in the culture of charitable endowment between modern Turkish society and its Ottoman ancestors. Through in-depth research, it becomes evident that contemporary Turkish society continues to embody the values of giving, generosity, and charitable spending that prevailed during the Ottoman period, transforming them from individual practices into a social phenomenon, and from isolated acts into a continuous cultural tradition. Undoubtedly, material heritage is accompanied by moral, intellectual, and cultural heritage. Just as the Ottoman ancestors bequeathed to their Turkish descendants urban complexes and other endowment-based buildings, they also transmitted a sense of pride, dignity, and honor, along with an awareness of humanity's role as God's steward on earth and the responsibility to protect religion and cultivate the land through the ongoing practice of spending, giving, generosity, and assisting others among the needy, the poor, and the disadvantaged. Evidence of this continuity is found in the examples presented in this study of modern endowment institutions that engage in charitable activities and humanitarian assistance. These activities and forms of aid represent an extension of history, a continuation of culture, a connection to heritage, and a deep association with religion.

Keywords---Charitable Endowments, Modern Turkey, Religious Endowments, Endowment Institution, Endowment Association.

INTRODUCTION

Modern Turkey particularly Istanbul contains diverse forms of Ottoman charitable endowment heritage that astonish the intellect and captivate the imagination, such as architectural complexes, schools,

How to Cite:

Rabahi, M. (2025). The system of charitable endowments in modern Turkey. *The International Tax Journal*, 52(6), 5188–5196. Retrieved from <https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/544>

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370 © 2025

ITJ is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Submitted: 06 June 2025 | Revised: 04 October 2025 | Accepted: 05 November 2025

mosques, hospitals, inns, public baths, and other endowed buildings. The Ottoman Caliphate is undoubtedly regarded as the cradle of endowment civilization. From this perspective, Ottoman endowment heritage warrants serious study and research, as it genuinely reflects the active will of the Muslim to shape the self and build society. Within it emerges a creative image rooted in faith and belief. Ziya al-Din Qazji defines charitable endowment as “the dedication of property by its owner for the benefit of people in pursuit of God’s pleasure.” It is an Islamic institution because the principles of cooperation, solidarity, and assisting others are derived from the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Sunnah. For this reason, the institution of endowment developed rapidly and extensively in the Islamic world, giving rise to a vast diversity of endowments, ranging from hospitals to schools, from mosques to inns, from public kitchens to libraries, and from trees to orchards¹.

1– THE CENTRALITY OF CHARITABLE ENDOWMENT IN THE LIFE OF THE OTTOMAN INDIVIDUAL

The central and pivotal role of charitable endowment in the life of the individual during the Ottoman Caliphate from birth to death is truly remarkable. A child was born at the hands of a midwife who had devoted herself to God through this endowed service. The infant would spend childhood in a cradle donated as an endowment for God’s sake, wear clothing endowed by others for God’s sake, and receive treatment in a hospital endowed for God’s sake by a physician who had dedicated himself to this service as an endowment. The child would study in a school built as an endowment, taught by a teacher whose salary was paid from endowment revenues. Throughout life, a person might work in an occupation affiliated with an endowment institution. Upon death, the deceased would be prayed over in a mosque built as an endowment, led by an imam whose salary was paid not by the state but by endowments. The body would then be carried on a bier endowed for God’s sake and buried in a cemetery that itself constituted an endowment. This did not even mark the end of the matter, for there were those who devoted themselves to God in worldly life to bring happiness to others even after death in the hereafter².

Yavuz Bahadır Oğlı states that the establishment of charitable endowments represents “an Islamic ethical value realized through the encouragement of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions toward expansive charitable spending, which embodies cooperation and assistance to others. These meanings permeated all stages of human life and flowed through the veins of the social body. The objective was to ensure that no person remained hungry, unclothed, homeless, isolated, or lonely, and to relieve individuals of their worries and hardships. Through this process, human beings achieve both material and spiritual liberation, for a person dependent on others cannot fully turn toward God, whereas a liberated individual is able to direct oneself to God with complete will, body, and consciousness. In this way, the true meaning of servitude to God Almighty is realized.”

2– OTTOMAN ENDOWMENT HERITAGE: AN IMAGE OF FAITH, CREATIVITY, AND REFINEMENT

The Ottoman Caliphate bequeathed to modern Turkey an immense legacy of charitable endowments, among which public fountains and water spigots constitute the vast majority of Ottoman endowments. This is due to the fact that water is the source of life for all beings, and also because acts of worship cannot be properly performed without purification through water. Another notable element of this heritage is the charity stone encountered in the streets of Istanbul. Although simple in form, it is profound in meaning: the wealthy would place charitable coins into an opening in the stone, and the poor would take from it according to their need.

¹ Ziya Kazici, *Osmali Vakif Medeniyeti*, Bilge Yayıncılık İstanbul, Turkey, B1, Sh 33.

² Arsebuk Esat, *Medeni Huku C.1 Baslangic Ve Sahisin Hukuku*, Ankara, 1938, Sh 279.

Among this vast legacy are also the architectural complexes, in which the mosque occupies a central position, surrounded by and integrated with schools, libraries, public baths, charitable kitchens, travelers' lodgings, hospitals, and other facilities, forming what resembles a small, self-contained village. In Istanbul alone, there are dozens of such architectural complexes, while in Anatolia and other regions formerly under Ottoman rule there are hundreds. One of the most important of these complexes in Istanbul is the Sultan Ahmed Complex, located near the former Hagia Sophia Museum. This complex is known as the Blue Mosque, named after the color of the ceramic tiles adorning its interior walls, which number more than twenty thousand. This vast architectural complex includes a mosque, a public kitchen, a school, a royal pavilion for the sultan, a public bath, a hospital, a Qur'ānic school, water fountains, as well as rooms, houses, and rental warehouses, making it akin to an independent miniature village. The magnificent Süleymaniye Complex must also be mentioned among these outstanding examples.

The Ottomans did not practice charitable endowment only during times of prosperity; rather, they maintained it even during periods of hardship and extended it to non-Muslims as well. When Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent set out to conquer the island of Rhodes, he traveled by land while dispatching the fleet by sea. The fleet arrived before him and anchored at a port located behind a populated area. While awaiting the sultan's arrival, the commander, Muhammad Pasha, instructed his soldiers to go out and perform acts of charity, kindness, and good deeds. One of the soldiers remarked, "For whom shall we perform good deeds? There are no Muslims in this area." The commander replied, "*We are not tasked with doing good only for Muslims, but also for non-Muslims and for all living beings.*" Consequently, everyone disembarked to engage in acts of goodness, benevolence, and compassion³.

Charitable endowments in the Ottoman state were not limited to human beings alone; they also extended to animals. In the city of Bursa, for example, there existed a hospital dedicated to storks known as the House of Strangers for Storks. Numerous charming accounts from the Ottoman period recount the manner in which people treated birds. Individuals would go to bird sellers, purchase a cage filled with birds, then open the cage and release them all, believing that they would earn spiritual reward when the birds flapped their wings and flew freely in the sky. Special birdhouses were constructed on the outer walls of homes, designed in proportion to the size and grandeur of the building itself. If a house was large and elegant, the birdhouse was likewise built with care and refinement, as this was regarded as one of the rightful claims of birds.

The Ottoman Caliphate attached great importance to public health, and for this reason numerous endowed hospitals were established during the Ottoman era. Patients were not only exempted from paying fees, but they were also provided with necessary medicines free of charge. Moreover, upon discharge, patients were granted a sum of money to prevent them from being forced to work during their recovery period. During a visit to Edirne⁴, one encounters a particularly remarkable hospital: the hospital of the Bayezid II Complex, where treatment through music was practiced. This method was not fully understood by Muslims until European universities later established departments and branches dedicated to music therapy and adopted it as a recognized form of treatment. In this extraordinary hospital, four or five musical performances were organized, featuring four instrumentalists and five vocalists. Each musical mode was believed to cure specific illnesses: for example, the Rāwāḥī mode was used to treat headaches, the Rast mode was used for fever and paralysis, and the Zangūla mode was used for heart diseases, in addition to other ailments treated through the sound of flowing water and various musical compositions. This stood in stark contrast to contemporary European practices, where it was believed that mental illness resulted from demonic possession and that the most effective treatment was burning the afflicted individual.

³ The original text is preserved at *Maktabat al-Sulaymaniyya*, Majmu'at As'ad Afandi, shelfmark no. 3752/1.

⁴ A personal visit conducted at the hospital (August 2007).

Other endowments included caravanserais or endowments for travelers. These institutions, whose origins date back to the period of the Turkish Seljuks, were initially constructed for military purposes and later transformed into facilities where travelers could rest free of charge, receive food for up to three days, perform acts of worship, and attend to their needs. There were also endowments dedicated to organizing journeys and providing clothing for students during the summer of each year, as well as endowments for cleaning lakes, established in Edirne. Additional endowments supported marriage expenses for young women facing financial hardship, protected bridges from flooding in the city of Amasya, compensated merchants for broken goods by purchasing replacements, assisted debtors, ensured that every person received fruit, and even provided grain scattered on snow so that birds could feed. All of these examples represent only a small and delightful portion of the Ottoman endowment tradition, which stemmed from the deep faith of the Ottoman individual and their sense of being God's steward on earth. Consequently, individuals in Ottoman society assumed responsibility for cultivating the world and safeguarding religion. Charitable endowments experienced widespread proliferation during the Ottoman period across all social strata. Remarkably, approximately seventy percent of endowments were established by ordinary people. This is not surprising when one considers that many Ottoman sultans endowed their personal wealth and resources, for societies often emulate the conduct of their rulers. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror wrote an endowment charter in which he stated: "I, the humble servant Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, have endowed three hundred and sixty shops from properties that I purchased with my own money and earned through my own labor, according to the conditions recorded below, as a valid endowment. I built a public kitchen within my complex to provide food for the families of martyrs, the needy, and the poor of the city of Istanbul. Those who are unable to attend the complex shall have food delivered to their homes discreetly at sunset so that no one may see them. I have appointed ten surgeons, ten physicians, and three attendants to treat the sick. Members of this team shall patrol the streets of Istanbul on designated days of each month and, without exception, treat patients free of charge. If a case proves beyond their capacity, the patient shall be transferred to the hospital."⁵

From this endowment charter, it becomes evident that Muhammad al-Fātiḥ did not merely conquer Constantinople; he also conquered hearts, and it is in this sense that he is remembered among the Turks. Despite the greatness and prestige he enjoyed, he consistently extended assistance and support to others. His grandson, Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent, endowed a library that is today known by his name, the Süleymaniye Library, which contains manuscripts, books, and endowed buildings. Many Ottoman princesses likewise endowed their personal wealth. Sultan Hürrem, the wife of Sultan Süleiman, wrote in her endowment charter: "In every kitchen and at every meal, food shall be given to four hundred individuals among the poor, the needy, the weak, and the destitute, with each two persons sharing food from a single bowl. In addition, a meat dish shall be provided on the night of Friday. No one shall remove food from the kitchen except servants; otherwise, it shall be forbidden to them." She also endowed a hospital using her own funds, along with numerous commercial shops. Her only daughter, Princess Mihrimah, constructed a mosque in Üsküdar as a charitable endowment, which still bears her name today.

General statistics indicate the existence of more than two thousand five hundred endowed institutions in Istanbul. While it was commonly believed that endowments were established primarily by the wives of sultans, wealthy individuals, or high-ranking officials, evidence reveals that ordinary people also played a substantial role in founding endowments, following the example set by their rulers.

3- MODERN ENDOWMENT INSTITUTIONS: CONTINUITY WITH RELIGION AND HERITAGE

What truly draws attention is the transformation of giving, generosity, and charitable spending during the Ottoman period from an individual practice into a social phenomenon, and from isolated acts into a

⁵ This waqf document, along with several of its copies and the waqf deeds of Rustam Pasha and his daughter 'A'isha Sultana, are preserved in the archive of the General Directorate of Awqaf.

continuous cultural tradition. The central question this study seeks to address is whether modern Turkish society continues to uphold the Ottoman ancestral culture of charitable endowment, or whether it has abandoned it.

Undoubtedly, material heritage is accompanied by moral, intellectual, and cultural heritage. Just as ancestors bequeathed to their descendants architectural complexes and other endowed buildings, they also transmitted a sense of pride, dignity, and honor, along with an awareness of humanity's role as God's steward on earth and the responsibility to protect religion and cultivate the world through the ongoing practices of spending, giving, generosity, and assisting the needy, the poor, and the disadvantaged. Accordingly, this section presents several examples of modern endowment institutions engaged in charitable work and humanitarian assistance. These activities clearly represent an extension of history, a continuation of culture, a connection to heritage, and a deep attachment to religion.

A) The "Is Anyone There?" Endowment (Kimse Yok Mu?)⁶

This is the name of one of the solidarity-based charitable institutions, founded in Turkey in 2002 with the aim of providing relief to the poor and the needy, alleviating their suffering, and meeting their basic needs through donations collected from benefactors and volunteers. Over time, the organization expanded its activities internationally, contributing aid to victims of natural disasters and assisting those affected by famines in various parts of the world. It can be noted that the number of contributors who donated to this institution reached approximately 960,000 individuals.

One of the most innovative initiatives for which the organization became known is the "Partner Families" project. The principle of this project is based on pairing a financially stable family with a financially disadvantaged family in order to provide assistance and reduce hardship. This model of solidarity implemented by the institution is inspired by the Qur'ānic verse, ⁷﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ (10)﴾, and follows the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who established bonds of brotherhood between the emigrants and the helpers after his migration to Medina.

B) The Search And Rescue Endowment:

This endowment was established following the August 1999 earthquake, when thousands of volunteers from all regions of Turkey rushed to the disaster area. These volunteers included women, students, factory workers, business owners, and professionals from various fields and age groups. However, those who participated in rescue operations were not organized; they arrived individually or in small informal groups and lacked prior experience in rescue efforts. This situation led to the idea of unifying and organizing these efforts, which resulted in the establishment of the Search and Rescue Endowment.

Today, this organization ranks first in Turkey in the field of rescue operations in terms of organization, continuous activity, standardized uniform, and extensive experience. It currently operates twenty-five teams across twenty-five different regions within Turkey. While the number of founders initially consisted of only seven individuals, the number of volunteers has since grown to approximately 1,200.

In essence, the Search and Rescue Endowment represents a continuation of Ottoman endowment heritage. It traces its historical roots to an endowment established by Khosrow Pasha in 1588, when he commissioned a fully equipped rescue vessel on Lake Van—the largest lake in Turkey to assist ships and fishermen facing danger. After a span of 422 years, the Search and Rescue Endowment was established as a modern revival of this historical charitable initiative.

C) The Foundation For The Evaluation Of Women's Efforts:

This foundation was established in 1986, approximately three decades ago, with the aim of improving the conditions of women with limited opportunities. Its mission focuses on supporting women in their work and assisting them in improving their own circumstances, the well-being of their children, and their social

⁶ Kimse Yok Me, Heber Bulteni, Kimse Yok Mede Ramazan Heyecani, Sayı 29, 2013, S32.

⁷ Surat al-Hujurat, verse 10.

standing within their communities, in addition to empowering them for leadership roles in both professional life and society at large.

The foundation currently undertakes several activities, including the promotion of early childhood education in impoverished areas, particularly at the preschool level. It has also established childcare centers in disadvantaged neighborhoods known as “Women and Childhood Centers.” Furthermore, the foundation works to develop women’s skills and competencies by fostering self-confidence, enabling women to better integrate within their families and communities, and providing training in various professions and handicrafts. It also promotes teamwork among women, equipping them with the ability to address problems within their families and neighborhoods, thereby contributing simultaneously to the development of both the family unit and the local community.

There is no doubt that women possess a keen awareness of the details of daily life and attend to them with great precision. Consequently, effective and appropriate solutions to many human problems often rooted in the hidden corners of life and urban settings—can be achieved through women’s initiatives as well. It is noteworthy that 27 percent of public water fountains existing in 1930 were endowed by women. This demonstrates that the idea of establishing charitable endowments among women is not a recent phenomenon, but rather one that dates back to the Ottoman period. An examination of the archives of the General Directorate of Foundations in Turkey reveals that out of approximately 30,000 endowment documents from the Ottoman era, 2,039 were established by women.

As previously mentioned, the endowments of Sultan Hürrem, the wife of Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent, and her daughter Sultan Mihrimah provide notable examples. In addition, the mothers of Sultan Murad and Sultan Abdülmecid, as well as Sultan Hafiza and Sultan Urbanah, established endowments, some of whose hospitals and educational institutions remained operational until 1927. General statistics indicate the existence of more than 26,000 endowments during the Ottoman period, of which approximately 2,500 were founded by women. Registration records of historical monuments in Istanbul indicate the presence of 2,517 endowments in the city, 903 of which were established by women.

D) The “Single Point” Foundation For The Blind:

This foundation was established to assist individuals deprived of the sense of sight. It created an electronic library that enables visually impaired individuals to access books, with volunteers reading texts aloud for them. The concept of this library foundation was inspired by the Süleymaniye Library, which was endowed by Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent.

E) The Foundation For Humanitarian Relief, Human Rights, And Freedoms (Ihh):

This foundation was established to extend material and moral assistance to orphans, refugees, widows, and the wounded who have been affected by wars and armed conflicts around the world⁸. It provides its services without regard to religion, ethnicity, nationality, or race, operating on the basis of its faith-inspired humanitarian principles. The organization is active in 120 countries, 57 of which are Muslim-majority states, while the remainder are non-Muslim countries, and it operates with continuous and sustained activity⁹.

In May 2010, this endowment institution organized a humanitarian relief mission to Gaza with the aim of breaking the blockade imposed by the Zionist occupation, mobilizing global public opinion, and drawing international attention to the situation. This mission was titled *Our Direction Is Palestine* and involved eight ships from thirty-six countries. The convoy, which became known as the Freedom Flotilla¹⁰, was attacked by the forces of the Zionist occupation in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Its contents, including humanitarian aid belonging to the endowment, were confiscated.

In essence, the relief efforts directed toward Gaza and the defense of Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites can be traced back to the historical concept of the *Surra Convoy* during the reign of the Ottoman sultan

⁸ Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *Tariḫ al-Najah 1995–2011*, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, Türkiye, Introduction.

⁹ Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *al-Khayr fi Kull Zaman wa-Makan*, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, Türkiye, n.d., n.ed., p. 1.

¹⁰ Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *Ma fi Marmara (Freedom Flotilla to Gaza)*, trans. Khalil Ibrahim Qashar, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, 1st ed., 2012, pp. 24–29.

Mehmed Çelebi, son of Sultan Bayezid. This convoy consisted of financial and material assistance sent by the sultan to Jerusalem, the site of the Prophet's ascension, and it was not limited to Jerusalem alone but also extended to Mecca and Medina. At that time, these territories were not under Ottoman political authority; however, the sultan's commitment to protecting sacred places and his profound love and reverence for the Prophet motivated him to undertake this noble initiative.

In this sense, the Foundation for Humanitarian Relief, Human Rights, and Freedoms represents the modern continuation of the Surrâ Convoy of the Ottoman era. Through this humanitarian work, modern Turkish society—via this relief institution—has transmitted a noble legacy to future generations, ensuring continuity between ancestors and descendants.

F) Educational Endowment Institutions Of The Fethullah Gülen Movement:

Fethullah Gülen is regarded as one of the most prominent contemporary Islamic reformist scholars and preachers worldwide¹¹. His concept of charitable endowment is not limited to financial donations or the dedication of property; rather, for Gülen, endowment encompasses the dedication of wealth, lifetime, knowledge, and even migration from one's homeland for the purpose of reviving the lives of others¹². Through the charitable efforts and voluntary activities undertaken by his followers under his guidance, a civil, intellectual, and voluntary movement emerged, later known as the Gülen Movement or the Volunteers' Movement. This movement developed an independent methodology and distinctive approach in the field of education.

Fethullah Gülen recognized that Islamic societies suffer from three major afflictions: ignorance, poverty, and internal division. Consequently, he devoted himself to calling for knowledge and productive work in order to activate a comprehensive educational project, while encouraging wealthy individuals to invest in education and upbringing—what he described as the formation of human beings¹³. Over many years, through his sermons and public addresses, both directly and indirectly, Gülen sought to persuade conservative social circles of the value of educational projects, while also convincing governmental circles of the civic nature of these initiatives and their service to the public good and collective spirit.

The first school established with Gülen's encouragement and support from committed benefactors was the Yamanlar Private School for Natural Sciences in the province of Izmir in western Turkey in 1982. In the same year, the Fatih Private Schools were opened in Istanbul. Subsequently, the establishment of schools continued, eventually reaching approximately one thousand private schools across more than 130 countries. Within Turkey, around 800 private primary and secondary schools were founded, along with 500 preparatory and training centers for university entrance examinations, student residential complexes, and dozens of applied universities.

Today, these schools occupy leading positions in Turkey in terms of their students' achievements, particularly their attainment of numerous gold medals in national and international science Olympiads. In the domains of education and technology, the expansion of schools beyond Turkey began in the early 1990s, especially in Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the aim of supporting development, advancement, and social reconstruction¹⁴.

If these modern Gülen-inspired educational endowment institutions are linked to educational activity during the Ottoman period, this continuity becomes evident in the historical schools and educational buildings that combined the teaching of transmitted religious sciences with rational sciences. Education gained particular importance after the conquest of Istanbul, and schools at that time adopted a system of

¹¹ Ranked first on the list of the Top 100 Public Intellectuals in the poll conducted in 2008 by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the well-known British magazine *Prospect*.

¹² 'Ali Karamanli, "Nazra Jadida ila al-Waqf wa-l-Tarbiya (Harakat al-Muthaqqaf wa-l-'Alim al-Turki Fath Allah Gulen Namudhajan)," *Majallat al-Awqaf*, al-Amana al-'Ammah li-l-Awqaf, al-Kuwayt, no. 22, p. 191.

¹³ Muhammad Fath Allah Gulen, "al-Insan al-Jadid," *Majallat Hira*, Istanbul, Turkiye, no. 11, lead article.

¹⁴ 'Ali Karamanli, Op.Cit, p. 198.

continuous learning, in which success in core subjects was a prerequisite for academic progression. Both religious sciences and rational disciplines—ranging from astronomy to linguistics—were taught at advanced levels. This model remained in place until the establishment of vocational schools toward the end of the Ottoman period.

Despite the passage of four and a half centuries since the construction of the school endowed by Bayram Pasha in 1634, its walls still bear witness to the movement of students hurrying toward its halls. Its corridors continue to evoke images of students sharpening their pens and teachers carrying their books on pack animals. These schools served as meeting points for Eastern and Western sciences alike, absorbing the knowledge of others while producing and disseminating their own. Education, in this sense, truly constitutes the gateway to civilization.

G) The Nursi Endowments: Servants Of Faith And The Qur'an:

As previously noted in the discussion of the centrality of charitable endowment in the life of the Turkish individual, endowment accompanies human life from birth until death, and does not end there. There have even been individuals who dedicated themselves to ensuring human happiness after their own passing. Among the most prominent of these figures is Bediüzzaman Sa'id al-Nursi¹⁵. In his case, the concept of charitable endowment was embodied both in his person and in his magnum opus, *The Epistles of Light Collection*. He devoted his entire life to God, and his writings are permeated with concepts that express the spirit of endowment, such as sacrifice, self-giving, renunciation, devotion, vow, and sincerity. He expresses this state with both sincerity of intention and eloquence of expression when he states: "I decided to sacrifice myself for the truth of the Noble Qur'an, not for my worldly happiness, but for my happiness in the hereafter as well."¹⁶ He further expresses his aspiration for the highest degree of altruistic sacrifice by declaring his willingness to endure punishment in order to save others through faith, echoing the famous statement attributed to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq: "I ask God Almighty to enlarge my body so that it may fill Hell entirely, leaving no place in it for a believer to suffer."¹⁷ In this sense, Said Nursi represents an exemplary model of this Siddiqian form of sacrifice.

He spent his entire life in sacrifice, dedicating himself wholly as an endowment for God. In truth, he found no opportunity to contemplate marriage or to have biological children; instead, he gave birth to children of faith—namely, the Students of Light, who may be described as human endowments. These students devoted their lives to God in emulation of their teacher and inherited from him the *Epistles of Light*, which became a guiding constitution for their lives.

The Students of Light are characterized as sensitive, unique, and distinguished individuals with broad existential horizons, possessing comprehensive intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and ethical qualities. They view themselves as God's stewards on earth and experience inner peace, psychological serenity, harmony with the universe and creation, and deep trust in God. They gather in Houses of Light or endowed Nursi schools, each of which hosts a group of students supervised by a dedicated student who guides newcomers and manages the affairs of the institution.

Within these schools, gatherings devoted to the Epistles of Light are held, during which halls fill with listeners who gather attentively around a teacher reading passages from the Epistles. Participants of all ages—children, youth, adults, and elders—direct their attention toward the reader, who pours forth words that fill their hearts with faith, reassurance, love, and certainty, situating them at the heart of existence and propelling them toward a cosmic and metaphysical horizon.

Many of the Nursi endowments consist of donations offered by benefactors as ongoing charity, including houses, vehicles, household furnishings, food supplies, and other necessities. The abundance of these endowments is rooted in a deep attachment to religion and faith, as well as in the spirit of voluntary service inherited from Ottoman ancestors.

¹⁵ Sa'id al-Nursi (b. 1877, Nurs, Türkiye), a leading figure of religious reform and spiritual revival in Türkiye and the author of *Kulliyat Rasa'il al-Nur*, d. 1960.

¹⁶ Sa'id al-Nursi, *al-Sira al-Dhatiyya*, Sözlür, al-Qahira, Misr, p. 493.

¹⁷ Sa'id al-Nursi, *al-Malahiq*, Sözlür, al-Qahira, Misr, p. 387.

CONCLUSION

Modern Turkish society continues to embody the culture of charitable endowment inherited from its Ottoman ancestors. It has likewise succeeded in transforming giving, generosity, and charitable spending—just as in the Ottoman era—from individual behavior into a social phenomenon, and from isolated acts into a continuous cultural tradition. Undoubtedly, material heritage is accompanied by moral, intellectual, and cultural heritage. Just as the Ottoman ancestors bequeathed to their Turkish descendants architectural complexes and other endowed buildings, they also transmitted a sense of pride, dignity, and honor, along with an awareness of humanity's role as God's steward on earth and the responsibility to protect religion and cultivate the world through the ongoing practices of spending, giving, generosity, and assisting those in need, including the poor, the disadvantaged, and the vulnerable.

The evidence for this continuity is found in the examples presented in this study of modern endowment institutions engaged in charitable and humanitarian activities. These efforts clearly demonstrate that such works are nothing other than an extension of history, a continuation of culture, a living connection to heritage, and a profound attachment to religion.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- 1- 'Ali Karamanli, "Nazra Jadida ila al-Waqf wa-l-Tarbiya (Harakat al-Muthaqqaf wa-l-'Alim al-Turki Fath Allah Gulen Namudhajan)," *Majallat al-Awqaf*, al-Amana al-'Amm li-l-Awqaf, al-Kuwayt, no. 22.
- 2- Arsebuk Esat, *Medeni Hukuk*, vol. 1: *Baslangic ve Sabsin Hukuku*, Ankara, 1938.
- 3- *Kimse Yok Mu Haber Bulteni*, "Kimse Yok Mu'da Ramazan Heyecani," no. 29, 2013.
- 4- *Maktabat al-Sulaymaniyya*, Majmu'at As'ad Afandi, shelfmark no. 3752/1.
- 5- Sa'id al-Nursi, *al-Sira al-Dhatiyya*, Sözlür, al-Qahira, Misr.
- 6- The waqf deeds of Rustam Pasha and his daughter 'A'isha Sultana are preserved in the archive of the General Directorate of Awqaf.
- 7- Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *al-Khayr fi Kull Zaman wa-Makan*, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, Turkiye, n.d., n.ed.
- 8- Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *Ma fi Marmara (Freedom Flotilla to Gaza)*, trans. Khalil Ibrahim Qashar, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, 1st ed., 2012.
- 9- Waqf al-Ighatha al-Insaniyya, *Tarih al-Najah 1995–2011*, IHH Kitap, Istanbul, Turkiye.
- 10- Ziya Kazici, *Osmanli Vakif Medeniyeti*, Bilge Yayıncılık, Istanbul, Turkiye, n.ed.