

The Role of the Ottoman Rulers in Algeria in Supporting the Endowments (Awqāf) of Public Facilities and Charitable Institutions

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Received: 20/12/2025 Accepted: 20-08-2026 Published: 18-08-2026

Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role played by the Ottoman rulers and political elite in the Regency of Algeria (Eyālat al-Jazā'ir) in establishing, regulating, and expanding the institution of pious endowments (awqāf). Positioned as a key strategic bastion against European naval incursions in the Western Mediterranean, the Regency relied heavily on endowments to sustain its public utilities, urban infrastructure, and defense apparatus. Rather than functioning solely as a traditional religious practice, the endowment system evolved into a dynamic model of public governance and financial management. This paper analyzes the institutional framework of key endowment bodies—such as the Endowments of Springs and Roads (Aḥbās al-'Uyūn wa-al-Ṭuruqāt), the Paths of Good Deeds (Subul al-Khayrāt), the Office of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Dukkān al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn), and the specialized military endowments of the Janissary Corps (Al-Ojaq). It demonstrates how endowment revenues systematically funded vital urban projects (aqueducts, public fountains, thoroughfares), social welfare initiatives (poor relief, healthcare, ransoming captives), and military readiness (fortresses, defense towers, barracks maintenance). By fulfilling the higher objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah) through the preservation of public interest, life, and territorial defense, the waqf system provided a self-sustaining mechanism that significantly relieved the financial burdens of the state treasury throughout the Ottoman era.

Keywords: Ottoman Algiers; Pious Endowments (Awqāf); Public Utilities; Military Infrastructure; Islamic Institutions.

Introduction:

Throughout the Ottoman era, the institution of pious endowments (awqāf, sing. waqf) served as one of the most prominent structural pillars sustaining the socio-economic, religious, and infrastructural fabric of the Regency of Algiers (Eyālat al-Jazā'ir). Operating beyond the scope of a mere traditional socio-religious practice, the endowment system evolved into an indispensable mechanism for urban governance, public welfare, and statecraft. In a maritime state frequently positioned as the western bastion of the Ottoman Empire against Mediterranean rivalries and European naval incursions, the allocation of state and private resources toward awqāf became inextricably linked with the core objectives of Islamic jurisprudence (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah)—namely, safeguarding public interest (al-ṣāliḥ al-'āmm), preserving human life, and defending the frontiers of the Islamic realm (al-thughūr).

The central state authority in Algiers, represented by the Deys, Pashas, and high-ranking civil and military dignitaries, recognized early on that the sustainability of urban centers and military readiness could not rely solely on direct treasury outlays. Consequently, they actively engaged as primary founders (*wāqifūn*) of public infrastructure and charitable foundations. Through the institutionalization of specialized endowment bodies—such as the Endowments of Springs and Roads (*Aḥbās al-‘Uyūn wa-al-Ṭuruqāt*), the Paths of Good Deeds (*Subul al-Khayrāt*), the Office of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (*Dukkān al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn*), the Public Treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*), and the military endowments of the Janissary Corps (*Al-Ojaq*)—the Ottoman rulers established a comprehensive socio-economic safety net. These bodies efficiently managed the construction and maintenance of vital urban water networks, aqueducts, public fountains (*asbilah*), and thoroughfares, while simultaneously funding hospices for the elderly, poor relief, educational institutions, and the ransoming of Muslim captives.

Moreover, the strategic intersection between the endowment system and military preparedness underscores the unique nature of Ottoman rule in Algiers. Endowment revenues were systematically channeled into constructing, maintaining, and equipping garrisons, sea forts, defense towers (*abrāj*), and city walls, while providing sustainable economic support for the quartered troops.

This study examines the multifaceted role played by the Ottoman rulers of Algiers in fostering, regulating, and expanding the *waqf* system. By analyzing local court registers (*sijillāt al-maḥākim al-shar‘iyyah*), endowment deeds (*waqfiyyāt*), and historical accounts, this paper demonstrates how the Ottoman elite utilized pious endowments not only as a religious imperative to seek divine favor, but also as an effective, self-sustaining model of urban administration and strategic defense that alleviated the financial burdens of the state treasury during crucial historical junctures.

1. Water, Springs, and Roads:

Water is one of the necessities of life; indeed, it is the foundation of every living thing. Muslims have paid great attention to it since the early era of Islam (*Aṣr al-Ṣadr al-Islāmī*). The first water endowment (*Waqf*) in Islam was that of Our Master ‘Uthmān [ibn ‘Affān], who endowed the Well of Roūmah (*Bi’r Rūmah*) in the cause of God (*Fī Sabīl Allāh*)¹. Subsequently, public fountains (*Subul*) and water dispensaries (*Saqāyāt*) became prominent social institutions adorning Islamic cities to provide drinking water for passersby. The practical reality of Islamic history illustrates their deep commitment to water and the necessity of securing it for the populace to ensure their well-being and elevate their standard of living.

The Ottoman authority in Algiers was no exception to this rule, considering the provision of the necessities of life for Muslims to be among the higher objectives of Islamic Law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah*). Great importance was attached to providing water for the inhabitants, and a dedicated institution was established for this purpose. An official,

¹ ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥujaylī, *The Endowments of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 2011, p. 59.

designated as the "Khawjah of the Springs" (Khōjah al-‘Uyūn)¹, was appointed to oversee the maintenance of springs and reservoirs using funds from the endowments (Awqāf).

He functioned under the direct authority of the Dey and, together with the Commanders of the Streets (Quyyād al-Shawāri‘), monitored the public's water consumption, safeguarding the public interest (Al-Ṣāliḥ al-‘Āmm) in this regard. Strict laws were enacted in this domain².

The Institution of the Endowments of Springs and Roads (Aḥbās al-‘Uyūn wa-al-Turuqāt) was unique in its overlap of municipal functions with the pious endowments (Aḥbās³.

In view of its purely technical role, some European scholars tend to classify it as a secular institution⁴. However, this classification is contrary to truth, as its establishment cannot be divorced from the religious factor; Islamic legal texts actively encourage engagement in water-related endowments (Al-Ḥabs al-Mā’ī). The inclination of Algerians toward this type of endowment (Aḥbās) stemmed from a desire to perform acts of charity (Fi‘l al-Khayr), and this included the rulers who served as the founders/endowers (Wāqifūn) of these public facilities, which were locally referred to as "Sabīl" and "Sabālah".

The general role of the endowments of springs (Aḥbās al-‘Uyūn) manifested in funding the repair, maintenance, and guarding of aqueducts and natural springs. It was customary in Ottoman Algiers for real estate properties to be endowed for the benefit of springs and public fountains after their construction, so that their revenue would be reallocated to that specific aqueduct or spring. Furthermore, there were dedicated endowments (Aḥbās) for the maintenance of roads; an overseer (Amīn) was entrusted with managing these thoroughfares, and each route possessed its own small operational workforce (Sharikatuḥ al-Ṣaghīrah)⁵.

The endowment of water springs encompassed, alongside the general populace, the Pashas and high-ranking officials. The Ottoman rulers of Algiers demonstrated great concern for supplying the city with water and ensuring its continuous provision. This extended from constructing an aqueduct network for water conveyance and distribution to endowing several properties whose revenues were allocated to the repair, maintenance, and restoration of the aqueducts. Most endowment deeds (Waqfiyyāt) pertaining to the spring aqueduct (Sāqiyyat al-‘Uyūn) recorded in the registers of the Sharia courts date back to the Pashas and state officials. Dey ‘Alī Bāshā Naksīs was among the rulers most attentive to springs and aqueducts due to the damage the latter sustained during the consecutive earthquakes that lasted for two months in 1755 CE⁶.

Among the examples of this as well is the endowment (Taḥbīs) by Muṣṭafā Āghā of a shop from his personal properties, situated in the Market of the Cap-Makers (Sūq al-Farrāghīyyah), for the benefit of the aqueduct supplying the ablution facility (Mīḍa’ah) of the

¹ Muṣṭafā ibn Ḥammūsh, *The Mosques, Sufi Lodges (Zawāyā), and Shrines of the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Era through the Devoulx Manuscript and Ottoman Documents*, Dār al-Ummah, Algiers, 2007, p. 18.

² Mūlāy Buḥamīsī, "Water Problems in the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Era", Vol. 02, n°. 01, June 15, 1994, p. 48.

³ Muṣṭafā ibn Ḥammūsh, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴ Joseph François Aumerat, "Urban Cleanliness and the Muslim Charity Bureau," in *African Review*, n°. 41, 1897, p. 326

⁵ Joseph François Aumerat, *op. cit.*, n°. 41, 1897, p. 330.

⁶ André Raymond, *Major Arab cities during the Ottoman era*, Sindbad, Paris, 1985, pp. 165–166.

Zāwiyah of the Mālikī Judge (Qāḍī). He stipulated that its revenues be spent on the repair of the aqueduct and on the necessary expenses required for its maintenance¹.

Furthermore, certain Sharia legal documents point to the construction of a water reservoir funded by endowment (Aḥbās) assets in the year 1177 AH, as well as the recovery of a plot of idle land and its development for the benefit of the Endowments of Springs (Aḥbās al-‘Uyūn) in 1183 AH².

Al-Zahhār likewise mentions the initiative of Muḥammad Bāshā ibn ‘Uthmān in renovating the aqueduct channels of the Ḥammah Spring (Sāqiyat al-Ḥāmmah), as he conveyed the waters of Al-Ḥāmmah to the city, constructed an aqueduct for it, instituted endowments (Awqāf) for its upkeep, and ordered its distribution to military towers (Abrāj), mosques, barracks, ablution facilities (Mīḍa’āt), and other locations³.

Among the rulers were those who dug wells, an example being Muḥammad Bāshā, who excavated a well near Rās al-Taffūrah. He employed a laborer for it, paying him a monthly wage, while allocating any surplus revenue toward the maintenance of the well, dedicating several endowments (Awqāf) for this purpose⁴.

The records of the Sharia courts demonstrate the extent of Dey Muḥammad Bāshā ibn ‘Uthmān's (1766–1791 CE) dedication to religious and military structures, as he established numerous endowments for the benefit of mosques, springs, and even barracks and cemeteries⁵. In 1189 AH / 1775 CE, he endowed an upper story (‘Ulwī) located beneath the bakery (Kūshah) of the righteous saint (Al-Walī al-Ṣāliḥ) Sīdī Yūsuf al-Kawwāsh, allocating its revenues to the individual charged with providing water to the public from the well he had built at Al-Qubbah, as well as to the poor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Fuqarā’ al-Ḥaramayn)⁶.

As for Dey Aḥmad Bāshā (1805–1808 CE), he purchased a shop for manufacturing milk vessels/pitchers (Ḥallābiyyah) located near the High Seat of Government (Dār al-Imārah al-‘Aliyyah), and subsequently endowed it to the Ḥammah Aqueduct (Sāqiyat al-Ḥāmmah) in exchange for the water he had piped into his residence situated near the shrine of the righteous saint Sīdī ‘Alī al-Fāsī. Indeed, some rulers stipulated that their personal residences benefit from the water of these springs in return; this was explicitly stipulated by Dey Muṣṭafā Bāshā when he endowed a shop to the water aqueduct coming from the springs of Ḥaydarah, which

¹ Kamāl Laḥmar, *The Image of Algerian Society in the African Review (1856–1962)*, Doctoral dissertation in the Sociology of Development, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, Mentouri University, Constantine, 2010–2011, p. 382.

² This matter was not exclusive to rulers; members of society likewise contributed to improving the services of this institution by placing their real estate at its service. The management of water resources, as well as the construction and maintenance of aqueducts and springs, was entrusted to an official designated as the Khawjah of the Springs (Khōjah al-‘Uyūn). Muṣṭafā ibn Ḥammūsh, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³ Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Zahhār, *Memoirs of Al-Ḥāj Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Zahhār*, Naqīb al-Ashrāf, edited and annotated by Aḥmad Tawfīq al-Madanī, SNED, Algiers, 1974, p. 24.

⁴ Wāfiyah Naḥfī, *Endowment in the City of Algiers from the Late 18th Century to the Mid-19th Century* (, Doctoral dissertation in Modern and Contemporary History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History and Archaeology, Batna 1 University, 2016–2017, pp. 474–475.

⁵ Yūsuf Amīr, *The Endowments of the Deys in the City of Algiers and Its Outskirts (Faḥs) through the Registers of the Sharia Courts 1081–1246 AH / 1671–1830 CE*, Master's thesis in Modern History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History, University of Algiers 2, 2009–2010, p. 135.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 166.

discharged into his home. The endowment deed (‘Aqd al-Waqf) reads: "...in exchange for the water entering the aforementioned house, provided that no one shall prevent the said water from entering the aforementioned house, whether for a long or short period, under any pretext or circumstance whatsoever"¹.

Likewise, he endowed the hostel/caravanserai (Funduq) designated for tethering beasts of burden outside Bāb ‘Azzūn to the water aqueduct in mid-Jumādā al-Ūlā 1181 AH / March 1767 CE, [as well as] the tenancy right (Jalsat Ḥānūt) of a shop in the Woodturners' Market (Sūq al-Kharrāṭīn) designated for perfume making, for the benefit of the well he constructed in early Sha‘bān 1201 AH / July 1786 CE².

Husayn Bāshā also took a keen interest in constructing water channels and aqueducts, endowing numerous properties whose revenues were spent on equipping and restoring them. Among these was the tenancy right of a shop in the Little Market of Bāb al-Wād (Suwayqat Bāb al-Wād) allocated to the water aqueduct in mid-Jumādā al-Ūlā 1245 AH / October 1829 CE³.

The endowments (Awqāf) in the city of Algiers and its surrounding areas (Faḥṣ) contributed to the establishment of many springs, reaching 100 in number by the mid-18th century. In the city of Constantine, the trustee (Wakīl) of the Endowments of Springs spent approximately 500 francs to transport water to seven basins distributed throughout the center of the city, at a rate of two loads per basin daily⁴.

On certain occasions, the endowments of springs were insufficient for their repair and maintenance, leading to borrowing from other endowment institutions. This was sometimes done by direct command of the rulers given the vital importance of providing water to the population. This was precisely what Dey ‘Abdī Bāshā⁵ undertook, for instance, when he sought to renovate the water aqueduct supplying the city of Algiers with water from the outskirts (Faḥṣ) of Ḥaydarah in the year 1137 AH (1724–1725 CE). Since the funds of its specific endowment were inadequate for this purpose, he ordered a loan to be taken from the Store/Office (Dukkān) of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn), provided that the funds be repaid whenever God granted them ease. The loan amounted to 1,982 riyals, which were spent on purchasing construction supplies for the aqueduct, such as oil jars (Qilāl al-Zayt) and terracotta water pipes (Qawādīs)⁶.

The religious factor was the most paramount and frequently invoked consideration in selecting the location for establishing public fountains (Asbilah). It was preferred to erect them in close proximity to mosques in order to supply water for their ablution facilities (Mīda’āt), a

¹ Muḥammad Būshanāfī, "Endowments of Officials and Soldiers in the Regency of Algiers during the Ottoman Era", *Algerian Journal of Mediterranean Historical Studies and Research*, Vol. 01, n°. 01, June 1, 2015, pp. 191–192.

² Wāfiyah Naḥfī, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁴ Zayn al-Dīn Qāsimī, "Endowment in the Kabylie Region from 1817 to 1878" (Al-Waqf bi-Mintaqat al-Qabā’il min 1817 ilā 1878), *Journal of Human Studies, Special Issue on Endowment*, Algiers, 2002, p. 225.

⁵ ‘Abdī Bāshā ruled between the years (1132–1145 AH / 1724–1732 CE).

⁶ Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, "The Store of the Two Holy Sanctuaries in the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Era," *Al-Dārah Journal*, n°. 01, Vol. 33, Muḥarram 1431 AH, pp. 113–114.

circumstance that led many families to prefer residing near the Great Mosque (Al-Jāmi‘ al-A‘zam)¹.

The Ottomans are considered the first to establish a comprehensive system of water aqueducts to meet the needs of the city of Algiers, exploiting the valleys surrounding it; they excavated wells that supplied the outskirts (Faḥṣ, pl. Fuḥūṣ) and searched for additional water sources².

All aqueducts terminated in a reservoir and were distributed to mosques, public baths (Ḥammāmāt), and public facilities³.

The endowment institution (Al-Mu‘assasah al-Waqfiyyah) also paid attention to other activities that varied according to regional needs, such as modifying riverbeds, constructing bridges, and paving roads. Although some tend to strip public facilities—such as springs and roads—of their religious character, their establishment in Islamic lands in general, and Algiers in particular, was inextricably linked throughout Islamic eras to religious motives aimed at quenching the thirst of wayfarers (‘Ābirī al-Sabīl) and caring for them through the maintenance of roads and springs and the digging of aqueducts and wells⁴.

Consequently, they were termed "Sabīl", a term that continues to be used to this day to denote public road utilities and general infrastructure⁵. Despite the scarcity of documents pertaining to public facilities, we infer their importance from the large number of springs established both inside and outside Algiers, which numbered over one hundred. We can likewise infer the significance of public facility endowments from the massive sums of money they provided, which by the late Ottoman period amounted to no less than 150,000 francs⁶.

Thus, the Ottoman rulers of Algiers fulfilled a great objective of Islamic Law (Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah) regarding endowment, as they provided the inhabitants with their most essential needs—namely drinking water—and supplied the ablution facilities (Mīḍa’āt) of mosques with their required water.

2. Expenditure on Armament and Equipping the Army:

Expenditure on arming and equipping Muslim armies is considered one of the primary acts of devotion (Awjuh al-Qurubāt) in Islam. Many were keen to establish endowments (Awqāf) for this purpose, particularly during periods when the Islamic state confronted its enemies—a practice dating back to the inception of Islam (Ṣadr al-Islām). Among the authentic traditions (Al-Āthār al-Ṣaḥīḥah) is the Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding Khālīd ibn al-Walīd endowing his armor (Silāḥ) in the cause of God (Fī Sabīl Allāh⁷. Islam

¹ Wāfiyah Naftī, op. cit., p. 401.

² Marius Dalloni, "The drinking water supply problem in the city of Algiers", Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Algiers and North Africa, 33rd year, 1st quarter, n°. 113, Algiers, 1928, p. 8.

³ Jean-André Peyssonnel, Journey through the Regencies of Tunis and Algiers, La Découverte Publishing, Paris, 1987, p. 251.

⁴ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa‘īdūnī, The Financial System of Algiers during the Ottoman Period 1800–1830, 2nd ed, Dār al-Baṣā’ir, Algiers, n.d, p. 135.

⁵ Ramaḍān Qanfūd, Disputes Related to Endowment Property under Substantive Law, Doctoral dissertation in Law, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, 2014–2015, p. 19.

⁶ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa‘īdūnī, Studies in Real Estate Ownership, ENAL, Algiers, 1986, p. 100.

⁷ Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥujaylī, op. cit., p. 60.

encouraged this form of expenditure, as explicitly articulated in Verse 41 of Surah at-Tawbah¹. Consequently, there were dedicated endowments for the fighting army when the state was unable to fund all its members; thus, the path of spending in the cause of God was rendered accessible to anyone wishing to offer their wealth².

Islam designated a portion of perpetual charity (Al-Ṣadaqah al-Jāriyah) for this purpose, which was ordained to safeguard religion, life, and property. This is because defending the borders of the Islamic state and defending the honor and wealth of Muslims are among the duties prescribed and obligated by God upon all Muslims, as stated in Verse 60 of Surah al-Anfāl³.

In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, may God be pleased with him, on the authority of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, he said: “Whoever dedicates a horse to the cause of God, believing in God and trusting in His promise, then its food, drink, dung, and urine will be in his balance on the Day of Resurrection.” Proceeding from this premise, Muslims were eager to contribute with their wealth and to establish ribats (Ribāṭāt) and fortresses along the frontiers (Thughūr) of the Islamic world to shelter Muslims in defense of Islamic lands, serving as storehouses for their arms, equipment, and provisions. Historians indicate that the Ribat of Monastir in North Africa is considered the first ribat constructed for this purpose, after which the erection of ribats continued throughout the Islamic world⁴.

During the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras, and as a consequence of the Crusader campaigns in that period, the importance of the relationship between endowment (Waqf) and the domain of armament, equipment, and military expenditure came to the fore. Endowment rendered a monumental service in constructing military structures—such as towers, castles, and armories—ransoming Muslim captives, equipping the Islamic army, and securing a constant financial revenue for it⁵.

During the Ottoman era, Algiers served as a shield for the Islamic world against Crusader threats. This prompted its rulers not to overlook the matter of endowing (Waqf) resources for soldiers and military installations. Their endowments (Aḥbās) can be classified under the category of charitable endowments (Al-Aḥbās al-Khayriyyah), established to seek proximity to God Almighty, as explicitly stated in their endowment deeds (Waqfiyyāt), as well as to prioritize the defensive posture of the city. This endeavor falls within the scope of protecting the Regency (Eyālah), which was frequently subjected to European raids⁶.

Given the military nature of the Ottoman presence in Algiers, the Ottomans devoted special attention to this category of endowments. Indeed, endowment revenues contributed

¹ Quran, Surah at-Tawbah.

² Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, Islamic Institutions, Dār al-‘Ilm, Beirut, Lebanon, 6th ed., 1982, p. 369.

³ Quran, Surah al-Anfāl.

⁴ "Toward a Knowledge Society" Publication Series, The Role of Endowment in Human Development Services Through the Ages, King Abdulaziz University Strategic Studies Center, Vol. 2008, n°. 19, Saudi Arabia, April 30, 2008, p. 99.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Wāfiyah Naftī, op. cit., p. 147.

significantly to the construction and maintenance of barracks, fortresses, military towers (Abrāj), castles, and defense structures, as well as the upkeep of city walls¹.

Each of the seven barracks located inside the city of Algiers, as well as those situated outside its walls, possessed its own dedicated endowments whose revenues reverted to the troops quartered therein². Credit for establishing these endowments goes to the rulers, Pashas, and high-ranking state officials. Examples of such military structures include the Tower of Rās al-Taffūrah³ at Bāb ‘Azzūn, the Tower of Mūlāy Ḥasan, the Lighthouse Tower (Bordj al-Fanār), the Tower of Qal‘at al-Fūl⁴, and the Tower of Al-Zawbiyah⁵. For the latter, Muṣṭafā Bāshā (1798–1805 CE) endowed several buildings and purchased a shop in the Ghee Market (Sūq al-Samn), designating its rental income for the benefit of the tower in late Muḥarram 1219 AH / April 1804 CE⁶.

Likewise, Dey ‘Umar Bāshā (1815–1817 CE) endowed a shop he owned, bearing the registration number (232), for the benefit of the soldiers of his military corps (Ojaq)⁷.

This phenomenon was not unique to the rulers of the Regency (Eyālah) alone, even the rulers of the Beyliks actively embraced this type of endowment (Awqāf). Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr, the conqueror of Oran, and Bey Būkābūs each endowed an orchard near the Island Gate (Bāb al-Jazīrah). The annual revenue of the first orchard amounted to 30 dinars, while the second yielded 100 Būjū riyals (Riyāl Būjū). This was in addition to endowing numerous coffeehouses for the same purpose, such as the coffeehouse known as the Butchers' Coffeehouse (Qahwat al-Jazzārīn), whose lease generated fifty Būjū riyals⁸.

Furthermore, support for the ribāṭs and their students was directed toward bolstering their resistance against the Crusader dangers threatening Algiers, given that the primary objective behind establishing these ribāṭs was the protection of the frontiers (Thughūr). These were prominently present, particularly in the Western Beylik (Beylik al-Gharb), where rulers were keen to allocate a share of their endowments (Aḥbās) to fund the army and its equipment in order to confront the Spaniards through dedicating endowments for this purpose. The majority of these endowments were concentrated in the city of Algiers and its adjacent regions,

¹ Ḥassān Kashrūr, *Pay of Soldiers and General Officials, and Their Socio-Economic Conditions in Ottoman Algiers: 1659–1830*, Master's thesis, Mentouri University, Constantine, 2007, p. 10.

² Wāfiyah Naftī, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³ When the Taffūrah Tower fell into ruin, Muṣṭafā Bāshā constructed another tower in its place. This required acquiring the adjacent land, which was a cemetery belonging to the descendants of Aḥmad Khōjah, the Daftardār (chief accountant). He sought a legal opinion (Fatwā) regarding this matter from the Hanafite Judge (Qāḍī), Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm, who permitted him to build the tower on the cemetery grounds. Muṣṭafā Bāshā paid the owners of the cemetery one hundred Sultani gold dinars (Dīnār Sultānī) to purchase land to serve as a replacement cemetery in mid-Rabī‘ al-Awwal 1218 AH / July 1803 CE. See: Wāfiyah Naftī, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁴ Muṣṭafā Bāshā constructed a tower near Qal‘at al-Fūl outside Bāb al-Wād to fight the Christians, enemies of the faith. He subsequently connected the tower to a water supply from the spring of the outskirts (Faḥṣ) of Zughārah, following an agreement reached with the owners of private properties and endowments that had posed an obstacle to piping the water to the tower. He paid an amount of one hundred and forty-eight Sultani gold dinars, "seeking thereby the face of God the Almighty and hoping for His immense reward." See: Muḥammad Būshanāfī, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

⁵ Erected by Muṣṭafā Bāshā around 1215 AH / 1800–1801 CE. See: Wāfiyah Naftī, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷ Muḥammad Būshanāfī, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

where the barracks received a bountiful share of endowment revenues, which was spent on maintaining troops and servicing facilities therein, while various fortresses benefited from the endowments allocated to them¹.

The religious character of these endeavors pertaining to the defense of the city is clearly evidenced by the participation of the inhabitants of the city of Algiers as a manual workforce in constructing military towers (Abrāj). During the reign of Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Bāshā, following the O'Reilly expedition in 1775 CE, the population contributed to the reconstruction of several towers—such as the Sardine Tower (Borj Sardīnah), the New Tower (Al-Borj al-Jadīd), and the Tower of Rās ‘Ammār—seeking thereby the face of God and hoping for His reward².

In the same context, Professor Khalīfah Ḥammāsh notes that among the funds dedicated to general social services belonging to the Store/Office (Dukkān) of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn), there was a fund established to collect monies directed toward ransoming Algerian captives in Europe. This is demonstrated by the trust brought to the Store in mid-Muḥarram 1145 AH / 1732 CE by the "Mujāhid Sayyid Muṣṭafā Ra’īs Qubṭān, known as Al-Jāqmāqjī", which consisted of a "Fanīq" (i.e., a chest/casket) containing riyals and dinars [...] "from what was gathered therein from booty and what will be gathered therein, God willing," designated for the liberation of Muslim captives. The phrase "what will be gathered therein, God willing" indicates that the fund remained open for collecting money in the future³.

The Public Treasury (Bayt al-Māl) used to allocate a portion of its funds for the ransom of Muslim captives (Fidyat al-Asrā) in Christian lands; however, this practice was neglected during the late Ottoman period according to Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa’īdūnī⁴. According to Professor Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, endowments dedicated to ransoming captives appear to have been substantial, yet they did not fully meet the required purpose. He indicates that out of a sample of 1,844 endowment deeds (Waqfiyyāt), only a single endowment deed was found where the beneficiary was designated as the ransoming of captives, which was a family/lineage endowment (Waqf Dhurrī)⁵.

There were seven large barracks in Algiers, each divided into a number of rooms/chambers (Oda, pl. Odāt) that housed between 100 and 200 Janissary soldiers. Each of these rooms constituted a company that possessed several buildings managed by an agent (Wakīl) appointed by the room. There were poor rooms and wealthy ones; this was due to the

¹ Maḥmūd Aḥmad Maḥdī, *the Waqf System in Contemporary Application*, King Fahd National Library, Jeddah, 2003, p. 31.

² Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Zaḥhār, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³ The exact text reads as follows: "A trust of a chest containing riyals and dinars was brought by the honored Mujāhid Sayyid Muṣṭafā Ra’īs Qubṭān, known as Al-Jāqmāqjī, from what was gathered therein from booty and what will be gathered therein," in mid-Muḥarram 1145, "awaiting the liberation of Muslim captives." See: Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, *Dukkān al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn*, p. 127.

⁴ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa’īdūnī, *The Financial System*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁵ Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, "Algerian Captives in Europe during the Ottoman Era through Local Sources", *Proceedings of the First Scientific Symposium*, May 2008: *Sociology of Algerian Migration in Past and Present History*, Publications of the Laboratory of Socio-Historical Studies and Research on Migration and Travel, Mentouri University, Constantine, Alexandre Press, Constantine, June 2009, p. 38.

fact that some members of these rooms attained higher ranks and consequently donated to their former comrades the buildings that belonged to them¹.

There existed a dedicated endowment institution (Mu'assasah Waqfiyyah) for the Janissary Corps (Al-Ojaq), and the revenues of these endowments were spent on the troops quartered in those barracks², as well as on maintaining the barracks, military towers (Abrāj), and fortresses. The surplus from these funds contributed to the construction of new barracks. Furthermore, these endowments contributed to improving the financial condition of the soldiers; in addition to their wages, they utilized these endowments to engage in economic activities that kept them away from need and poverty through the income generated for them³.

This leads us to state that the endowment (Waqf) in Ottoman Algiers fulfilled another objective of Islamic Law (Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah), namely the defense of the land of Islam, an endeavor in which the contribution of state officials played a significant role.

3. Expenditure on the Poor and the Needy:

Expenditure on the poor and the needy was considered one of the most vital avenues of righteousness (Awjuh al-Birr) embraced by founders of endowments (Wāqifūn), whether they were rulers or subjects. Endowment institutions filled a major financial void and substituted for the state in supporting and showing solidarity with this socio-economic class. Indeed, a large portion of the funds endowed to various religious institutions was specifically designated for their benefit. Zāwiyahs (Sufi lodges) undertook the duty of extending hospitality to wayfarers, strangers, Muslim foreigners, and even outlaws, not to mention providing sustenance and housing to impoverished students unable to secure accommodation⁴. The revenues generated from endowed properties constituted the sole financial source for funding these services⁵.

Some zāwiyahs were wealthy, such as Zāwiyah of Al-Majjājī and the Zāwiyah of Al-Qaytanah. Both provided food, shelter, and education to large numbers of visitors. Furthermore, certain zāwiyahs specialized in receiving specific categories of guests as explicitly stipulated in their endowment deeds (Nuṣuṣ Awqāfiḥā). The Zāwiyah of Mūlāy Ḥasan in the capital served as a residential hospice for bachelors; the Zāwiyah of Sīdī Abī 'Atīqah received the poor, the sick, and the infirm; and the Zāwiyah of Sa'īd Qaddūrah was dedicated to receiving impoverished scholars (Fuqarā' al-'Ulamā')⁶.

¹ Joseph François Aumerat, op. cit, n°. 41, 1897, p. 329.

² Adrien Berbrugger, Albert Devoulx, "The Janissary Barracks in Algiers," in African Review, n°. 3, 1858–1859, pp. 133.

³ Muḥammad Būshanāfī, op. cit, p. 290.

⁴ 'Ā'ishah Ghaṭṭās, The Modern Algerian State and Its Institutions, Publications of the National Center for Studies and Research on the National Movement and the 1 November 1954 Revolution, July 2007, p. 300.

⁵ 'Ā'ishah Ghaṭṭās, Crafts and Craftsmen in the City of Algiers 1700–1830, State Doctoral dissertation in Modern History, Vol. 1, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History, University of Algiers, 2000–2001, p. 129.

⁶ Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd Allāh, The Cultural History of Algeria (1500–1830), Vol. 1, 1st ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1998, p. 270.

Faced with competition from madrasas (formal Islamic colleges), urban *zāwiyahs* shifted toward social roles, such as housing the poor, the infirm, strangers, and even the destitute/homeless, in addition to receiving students arriving from outside the city¹.

Similarly, the Andalusian Endowment Institution (Mu'assasat Awqāf al-Andalusiyyīn) oversaw services for Andalusian emigrants in Algiers. Wealthy members of the Andalusian community donated their properties to assist their impoverished brethren in their plight². The Andalusian *Zāwiyah* rendered assistance to poor and needy individuals whose lineage to the Andalusian community could be established³, an endeavor encouraged and sympathized with by the state authority⁴. Thus, the Andalusian Foundation contributed significantly to providing relief to the poor and needy of Andalusian descent⁵.

The Institution of Subul al-Khayrāt (Paths of Good Deeds) accepted endowments (Awqāf) directed toward serving the poor, scholars ('Ulamā'), students (Ṭalabā), and the home for the infirm/aged. It was charged with paying a stipend to approximately eighty-eight students or readers (Qāri's) attached to the mosques under its administration, as well as contributing to the relief of the poor who received alms every Thursday. On certain occasions, these alms were delivered directly to the beneficiaries at their homes when they were unable to attend in person to receive them. This was in addition to funding various charitable projects, such as repairing roads and irrigation channels, and assisting victims of disasters, the needy, and persons with disabilities (Dhawū al-Āhāt), who were allocated between one and three francs every Thursday, with Andalusians and women being the primary beneficiaries⁶. This was supplemented by covering the expenses of educational institutes (Al-Ma'āhid al-Ilmiyyah) and purchasing books to endow them to students and scholars⁷.

As for the *Zāwiyah* of the Ashrāf (Descendants of the Prophet), founded by Dey Muḥammad Bakdāsh, it designated a portion of its endowments specifically for the poor among the Sharīfs (Fuqarā' al-Shurafā') in the city of Algiers⁸.

At the Great Mosque (Al-Jāmi' al-A'zam), there was a hospice for the elderly/infirm (Dār al-Ajazah); historical sources indicate that the Mufti Sīdī Sa'īd Qaddūrah, who also served as the trustee (Amīn) of the Endowments of the Great Mosque in Algiers, restored this hospice using surplus funds from endowment revenues in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal in the year 1052 AH / 1642 CE⁹.

A similar function was performed by the Institution of the Public Treasury (Bayt al-Māl), which undertook the relief of wayfarers (Abnā' al-Sabīl), orphans, and the poor¹⁰.

¹ Albert Devoulx, "The religious buildings of old Algiers," in *African Review*, n°. 06, 1862, p. 380.

² Muṣṭafā ibn Ḥammūsh, op. cit., p. 17.

³ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, *The Financial System*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴ Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd Allāh, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 237.

⁵ Fullah al-Qashshā'ī Mūsawī, "The Endowments of the Andalusians in the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Era", *Studies in Human and Social Sciences*, Vol. 01, N°. 02, December 31, 2001, p. 168.

⁶ Marcel Émerit, "The intellectual and moral state of Algeria in 1830," in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, Vol. 1, no. 3, July–September 1954, p. 200.

⁷ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, *Studies in Real Estate Ownership*, op. cit., p. 89.

⁸ Henri Klein, "Muslim Cemeteries," in *Les Feuilles d'El-Djezaïr*, Vol. 3, 1912, pp. 11–16.

⁹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jilālī, *General History of Algeria*, Vol. 3, *Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyyah*, Algiers, 1994, p. 426.

¹⁰ Muṣṭafā ibn Ḥammūsh, *The Mosques of the City of Algiers...*, op. cit., p. 18.

Among its charitable activities were conducting burials for impoverished Muslims, distributing alms to approximately two hundred poor individuals every Thursday, presenting gifts on every 'Īd holiday to the Pasha, his entourage, and his servants, and paying specific monthly sums into the state treasury¹.

As for the Institution of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn), in addition to the funds it dispatched to the poor of Mecca and Medina, it allocated a portion of its endowment revenues as relief aid for the poor of the city of Algiers². Deductions were made from its funds for social and educational purposes and distributed among poor Algerians, who were provided with money and bread every Thursday. This included paying pensions to residents of the Two Holy Sanctuaries living in Algiers, as well as paying gratuities to certain religious figures and judges (Quḍāh) in Algiers, alongside carrying out repairs for religious institutions³.

Moreover, the Store/Office of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Dukkān Al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn) extended loans to persons in financial hardship based on an Islamic social philosophy aimed at assisting the insolvent and alleviating hardship for members of society by contributing to the resolution of financial crises they encountered. This was expressed through the terms "al-Iḥsān" (charity/benevolence) and "al-Tawsi'ah" (relief/easing of hardship), which were paired with these loans when recorded in the registers, such as stating: "by way of benevolence and relief" ('alā wajhi al-iḥsān wa-al-tawsi'ah)⁴. It also provided the service of safeguarding people's trusts (Amanāt), particularly those belonging to orphans and individuals absent from the city of Algiers, including travelers and captives (Asrā)⁵.

The Public Treasury (Bayt al-Māl) used to allocate a portion of its funds for the ransom of Muslim captives (Fidyat al-Asrā) in Christian lands; however, this practice was neglected during the late Ottoman period according to Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī⁶. According to Professor Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, endowments dedicated to ransoming captives appear to have been substantial, yet they did not fully meet the required purpose. He indicates that out of a sample of 1,844 endowment deeds (Waqfiyyāt), only a single endowment deed was found where the beneficiary was designated as the ransoming of captives, which was a family endowment (Waqf Dhurri)⁷.

Nevertheless, the community's contribution toward providing funds for ransoming captives was not restricted solely to endowments (Waqf), testamentary bequests (Waṣiyyah), and gifts (Hibah). Rather, it was accomplished through another means, namely the utilization of booty (Ghanā'im) acquired from Europeans. However, this appears not to have been an organized or widespread undertaking so much as an individual endeavor subject to personal

¹ Joseph François Aumerat, op. cit., n°. 41, 1897, p. 325.

² Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, *Studies in Real Estate Ownership*, op. cit., p. 84.

³ Aumerat, op. cit., p. 327; Table of the situation of French establishments in Algeria, Royal Printing Office, Paris, February 1838, p. 221.

⁴ Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, op. cit., p. 117.

⁵ According to Venture de Paradis, the population considered the Store of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Dukkān al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn) a sacred place; hence, no one dared to steal its funds. See Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis, *Tunis and Algiers in the 18th century*, A. Jourdan, Algiers, 1898, p. 262.

⁶ Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, *The Financial System*, op. cit., p. 132.

⁷ Khalīfah Ḥammāsh, *The Algerian Captives...*, op. cit., p. 38.

inclinations that occasionally motivated certain corsair captains (Ru'asā' al-Baḥr), as it was considered a form of charity (Ṣadaqāt) on the one hand, and a manifestation of chivalry (Shahāmah) distinguishing them within society on the other hand¹.

It becomes evident to us from the foregoing that the Algerian endowment institution (Al-Mu'assasāt al-Waqfiyyah) experienced a vast expansion during the Ottoman era, to the extent that the proportion of endowment properties surpassed that of private properties. This reflects the widespread prevalence of an endowment culture among Algerians during this period and their Ottoman rulers alike, which enabled these institutions to assume a pivotal role on the social, economic, and cultural levels through social welfare provision, the maintenance and restoration of public facilities, and the management of the properties of minors, the infirm, and other affairs of daily life².

Thus, it can be concluded that the endowment institutions (Al-Mu'assasāt al-Waqfiyyah) during this period constituted what closely resembled a ministry of social solidarity or charitable associations that rendered immense services to the needy and destitute classes in society. They also relieved the state treasury of substantial expenditure and embodied forms of Islamic solidarity that were not limited to Algiers alone, but extended even to the Holy Places (Al-Biqā' al-Muqaddasah), whose poor received alms from various parts of the Algerian territory—a process in which Algerians participated as both rulers and subjects. The role of the authority was active and influential, whether through organizing the operation of endowment institutions, supervising them, or through the direct participation of high officials, as the Ottoman rulers in Algiers were among the primary donors to endowments (Awqāf) of all types.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the institution of pious endowments (awqāf) in Ottoman Algiers was far more than a mechanism for private piety; it constituted a vital instrument of institutional governance, public welfare, and national defense. As this study has demonstrated, the Ottoman ruling elite—ranging from the highest-ranking Deys and Pashas to provincial Beys—strategically harnessed the endowment system to address core administrative and military imperatives. By systematically funding public infrastructure, such as water supply systems, roads, hospices, and religious institutions, the waqf system effectively sustained the socioeconomic vitality of the Regency's urban centers without imposing prohibitive burdens on the state treasury.

Crucially, the military dimension of these endowments underscores the unique synthesis of religious duty and pragmatic statecraft that defined Ottoman rule in the region. The allocation of dedicated awqāf for the Janissary Corps (Al-Ojaq), barracks, watchtowers (abrāj), sea fortresses, and the ransoming of Muslim captives transformed the endowment institution into a permanent defensive shield along the Mediterranean frontier (thughūr). This strategic integration not only guaranteed a continuous stream of revenue for maintaining military structures and safeguarding soldiers' livelihoods, but it also mobilized civil participation—as seen in the voluntary labor for constructing key defense towers.

¹ Ibid, p. 38.

² Nāṣir al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, *Studies in Real Estate Ownership*, op. cit., p. 89.

Ultimately, the historical experience of Ottoman Algiers illustrates how the Islamic institution of waqf adaptively fulfilled the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāsid al-sharī‘ah*) by preserving human life, protecting property, and defending the realm. The durable legacy of these foundations highlights the profound extent to which pious endowments functioned as a self-sustaining model of public administration and strategic resilience throughout the Ottoman period.

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