

## Land and Financial Administration in the Ottoman Empire According to the Law Book of Buda (Budapest)

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The Ottoman Empire constituted a system on the basis of sharia law provisions throughout the territories in three continents where it had prevailed for more than six-hundred years. The sustainability of the economic system based on land was crucial due to the growth of the Empire's widespread sovereignty over a vast geographical area which was restored along with the wars. Since the land was utilized as a means of both maintaining livelihood and financing the wars, overall supervision of agricultural activities was rendered vital for the economic system. Various statute books had been issued in order to ensure the supervision and control in the states, provinces, districts and subdistricts within the Empire. The legal laws that constitute the legal basis of the land administration are seen especially during the era of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and written by the famous spiritual figure named Ebussuud Efendi. In accordance with the changing circumstances of the time, the books of law to which attachments were made had been issued in order to clarify a variety of issues ranging from taxation to division of inheritance.

Ottoman land ownership has been tried to be explained in various ways in the literature within the framework of different ideas. Some of them described it in the form of flow toward the feudalism, while others described it as a type of feudal society or nomadic mode of production. According to Barkan, it must be considered as a part of a large-scale, fortified army organization for warfare and an economic system which commissioned the whole country for this purpose. Since the foundation of the Empire, the conquered lands were divided into two parts as Anatolia and Rumelia, and some portion of these lands were defined as State Lands (*Arâzi-i Memleket*). The bare ownership of these lands did belong to the State. The lands in question were consigned to be used as "*Arazi-i Emiriyye*" in exchange for a certain amount of tax.

In 1476, records were made by Mehmed II (the Conqueror), and the lands were given to the military class as "*timar*" (small fief) and "*zeamet*" (feudal tenure), and to the Sultan and the viziers as "*has*" (large fief). In this context, *timar* included the lands with tax revenues between three thousand and twenty thousand akches, while *zeamet* included the lands with tax revenues between twenty thousand and a hundred thousand akches. *Has*, on the other hand, included the lands with tax revenues more than a hundred thousand akches. The continuity of the system was ensured through the issued laws. For example, according to the principles set by Osman Gazi, it was assured that timar holders had not been deprived of their lands in vain and timar lands had devolved on the deceased timar holder's son.

Issues related to financing, such as keeping the land cultivated and adjustment of tithes in accordance with the quality of the land, had made the community strictly tied to the land. On the other hand, the widespread use of firearms and the resulting decline in sipahi requirement led to the need for cash money to finance the war, leading to the weakening of the fief system.

The topic of the study is the land administration in the Ottoman Empire and its financial dimension within the framework of the law book of Buda (Budapest) prepared by Ebussuud Efendi. The statute book was consecrated by Sheikh al-Islam Uryanzade Ahmet Es'at Efendi. Although it is not known

exactly when it may have been written in 1673 or 1746 due to the addition of the fatwas given by Sheikh al-Islam Yahya Efendi and Huseyn Efendi (successors of Ebussud Efendi). The statute book, which included many different topics related to land administration such as the acquisition, usage, taxation and inheritance of land; tax payments to sipahi; the transfers to storage or nearby bazaars, constitutes the original aspect of this study in terms of giving information about the financing of Ottoman war logistics. In this context, the financial aspect of land administration, in particular, is the focal point of the study.

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