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INFORMATION ON WAQF PROPERTIES IN ARCHIVAL SOURCES OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract: This article examines information on waqf properties in Central Asia during the nineteenth century based on archival sources. The study analyzes the role of waqf institutions in the social, economic, and religious life of society, as well as their contribution to the maintenance of mosques, madrasas, and charitable establishments. Archival documents, including waqf deeds, financial reports, and administrative records, provide valuable insights into the management and utilization of waqf properties. The article highlights the significance of these sources for understanding the historical development of waqf institutions in the region.

Keywords: waqf property, archival sources, waqf deed, Central Asia, Bukhara Emirate, mosque.

Introduction

Waqf institutions played a crucial role in the social and economic structure of Muslim societies. In nineteenth-century Central Asia, particularly in the territories of the Bukhara Emirate, Khiva Khanate, and Kokand Khanate, waqf properties served as the primary source of financial support for religious and educational institutions. These properties included agricultural lands, gardens, markets, shops, mills, and caravanserais, the revenues of which were allocated to public and charitable purposes. Archival records from the nineteenth century provide important evidence regarding the administration, economic significance, and legal status of waqf properties. Through the analysis of these documents, researchers can better understand the functioning of waqf institutions and their contribution to the development of local communities.

Main Part

Archival materials reveal that waqf properties constituted a significant portion of landownership in Central Asia during the nineteenth century. Waqf deeds (waqfnamas) contain detailed information about the location, boundaries, ownership status, and intended use of endowed properties. These documents demonstrate that wealthy individuals, rulers, and religious leaders frequently dedicated property to support mosques, madrasas, and other charitable institutions. The archives also contain financial records documenting the revenues generated by waqf properties. Income from agricultural production, rental payments from shops and markets, and taxes collected from certain economic activities were used to fund the salaries of religious scholars, teachers, caretakers, and administrative personnel. In many cases, waqf revenues also supported students through scholarships and covered the maintenance of educational facilities.

The incorporation of Central Asian territories into the Russian Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century led to increased governmental interest in the regulation and documentation of waqf properties. Administrative reports and statistical records compiled by Russian officials provide detailed information regarding the size, value, and management of waqf lands. These records are particularly valuable because they offer quantitative data that complement traditional waqf documents. Archival evidence further indicates that waqf institutions played an important role in ensuring social welfare. Revenues

from endowed properties were often allocated to assist the poor, maintain public infrastructure, and provide services to local communities. However, some documents also reveal cases of mismanagement and disputes over the control and distribution of waqf income. Such records provide historians with important insights into the challenges faced by waqf administrators and local authorities.

The study of archival sources demonstrates that waqf institutions were not only religious foundations but also significant economic organizations that influenced land use, education, and social welfare throughout the nineteenth century. Their activities contributed substantially to the stability and development of Central Asian society.

The Legal Foundations of Waqf Properties

Waqf was an Islamic legal institution through which private property was permanently dedicated to religious, educational, or charitable purposes. Once declared as waqf, the property could not be sold, inherited, or transferred. The founder (waqif) specified the objectives of the endowment and the beneficiaries who would receive its revenues. Archival waqf deeds from the nineteenth century provide detailed information regarding the legal procedures for establishing waqf properties and the obligations of trustees responsible for their administration.

The majority of waqf documents preserved in Central Asian archives contain descriptions of agricultural lands, orchards, water resources, shops, caravanserais, and residential buildings. These records demonstrate that waqf properties formed an important component of the regional economy and were managed according to Islamic legal principles.

Types of Waqf Properties in the Nineteenth Century

Archival evidence indicates that waqf properties existed in various forms. Agricultural lands represented the largest category of endowed assets. The income generated from farming activities was used to support mosques, madrasas, shrines, and charitable institutions. In urban centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Kokand, commercial properties—including shops, markets, bathhouses, and caravanserais—constituted an important source of waqf revenue.

Many waqf documents describe the boundaries and dimensions of endowed lands in great detail. Such information enables historians to reconstruct patterns of land ownership and economic activity in nineteenth-century Central Asia. In some cases, entire villages or extensive irrigation systems were designated as waqf property, demonstrating the significant economic power of these institutions.

Economic Functions of Waqf Institutions

The financial records preserved in archival collections reveal the economic importance of waqf institutions. Revenue from waqf properties financed the salaries of imams, mudarris (teachers), muezzins, and administrators. These funds also covered the maintenance of religious buildings, libraries, and educational facilities.

Madrasas depended heavily on waqf revenues for their daily operations. Archival documents indicate that many students received accommodation, food, and educational materials through waqf-funded programs. In addition, some endowments provided stipends for scholars and supported the copying and preservation of manuscripts. Consequently, waqf institutions contributed significantly to the development of intellectual and cultural life in the region.

Waqf Administration and Management

The administration of waqf properties was generally entrusted to a mutawalli (trustee), who was responsible for ensuring that revenues were distributed according to the founder's intentions. Archival records contain numerous reports concerning the appointment of trustees,

financial accountability, and the supervision of endowed assets. Nineteenth-century documents show that local religious authorities and state officials often participated in the monitoring of waqf activities. Financial audits and inspections were conducted to verify that income was used appropriately. However, archival materials also reveal cases of corruption, misuse of resources, and disputes among trustees and beneficiaries. These records provide valuable evidence regarding the practical challenges of waqf administration.

Russian Colonial Policy and Waqf Properties

Following the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the imperial administration undertook efforts to document and regulate waqf holdings. Russian officials conducted surveys and prepared statistical reports concerning the size, value, and distribution of waqf lands.

These administrative records constitute an important source for understanding the transformation of waqf institutions under colonial rule. While the Russian authorities generally allowed religious endowments to continue functioning, they increasingly subjected them to bureaucratic oversight. As a result, a large number of documents relating to waqf registration, taxation, and management were produced and preserved in archives.

Social and educational significance of Waqf

Beyond their economic functions, waqf institutions played a crucial role in promoting social welfare. Revenues from endowed properties were often used to assist poor families, travelers, widows, and orphans. Public fountains, roads, bridges, and cemeteries were also maintained through waqf funding.

Educationally, waqf institutions ensured the sustainability of Islamic learning. Many of the most prominent madrasas in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand relied on waqf income for centuries. Archival evidence demonstrates that these endowments facilitated the transmission of religious knowledge and contributed to the preservation of cultural traditions throughout the nineteenth century.

Historical importance of archival sources

Archival materials provide historians with direct evidence concerning the operation of waqf institutions. Waqf deeds, judicial records, financial accounts, land registers, and administrative reports collectively offer a comprehensive picture of the economic and social role of waqf properties. These documents enable scholars to analyze patterns of land ownership, institutional development, and state-society relations in nineteenth-century Central Asia.

Therefore, archival sources remain indispensable for reconstructing the history of waqf institutions and understanding their contribution to the religious, educational, and economic development of the region.

Archival sources from the nineteenth century provide extensive information about the structure, administration, and economic significance of waqf properties in Central Asia. Waqf, as an Islamic charitable endowment, represented one of the most important institutions supporting religious, educational, and social activities. According to archival documents preserved in the state archives of Uzbekistan and neighboring countries, waqf properties included agricultural lands, orchards, vineyards, mills, caravanserais, markets, shops, bathhouses, and residential buildings. The revenues generated from these properties were dedicated to maintaining mosques, madrasas, shrines, and other public institutions.

Waqf deeds (waqfnamas) constitute one of the most valuable categories of archival materials. These documents contain detailed descriptions of endowed properties, including their geographical location, boundaries, ownership status, estimated income, and intended beneficiaries. They also specify the obligations of trustees responsible for managing the

endowments. Through the examination of waqf deeds, historians can reconstruct patterns of land ownership and gain insight into the legal and economic foundations of Islamic charitable institutions in nineteenth-century Central Asia.

The archival records indicate that waqf properties played a central role in financing educational institutions. Many madrasas depended almost entirely on revenues derived from endowed lands and commercial establishments. Income from waqf assets was used to pay the salaries of teachers, imams, muezzins, and administrative staff, while also covering the costs of building maintenance, educational materials, and student support. Some records mention the allocation of scholarships and food provisions for students, demonstrating the contribution of waqf institutions to the promotion of learning and scholarship. Economic reports preserved in archival collections reveal that waqf estates were often among the most productive agricultural properties in the region. Agricultural income was generated through the cultivation of wheat, barley, cotton, fruits, and other crops. In urban areas, rental income from shops, markets, and caravanserais provided a stable financial foundation for religious and charitable organizations.

These revenues ensured the continuity of institutional activities and reduced dependence on direct state support. Archival documents further demonstrate that waqf institutions served important social welfare functions. Funds obtained from endowed properties were frequently used to support poor families, widows, orphans, travelers, and other vulnerable groups. In some cases, waqf revenues financed the maintenance of roads, bridges, water reservoirs, and public fountains. Such activities contributed to social stability and improved living conditions within local communities.

Conclusion

Archival sources from the nineteenth century provide comprehensive information about the structure, administration, and economic significance of waqf properties in Central Asia. Waqf institutions played a vital role in supporting religious, educational, and charitable activities, while also contributing to local economic development. The analysis of waqf deeds, financial records, and administrative documents allows researchers to reconstruct the historical functioning of these institutions and to better understand their place in the social history of the region. Therefore, archival materials remain indispensable sources for studying the history of waqf properties and their impact on nineteenth-century Central Asian society.

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