

Evaluation of estates as an information source for the protection of the cultural heritage: the sample of Turkey

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Abstract. Estates are one of the primary sources used as historical data in terms of revealing the socio-economic and cultural photograph of a region. These sources are document types which are either issued in the form of records as detached, or commonly used in Kadı Registers.

Estates which is the name given to those who were left behind by a deceased person are very important information sources in the field of Ottoman economic and social history studies, because in these sources, there are crucial clues about economic and social life of the deceased person. On the other hand, estate records can be evaluate as a type of cultural heritage to shed light on Ottoman cultural life for researchers.

As a result, this study will focus on how to use the estate records which are considered as the primary sources as an information source and the usage areas in Turkey.

Keywords : estates, records, Kadı Registers, information source, Turkey.

1. Introduction

The estate records that include the detailed list of all the goods, belongings, and other wealth items left to the heirs of the deceased persons constitute an important source series in Ottoman social history studies. Due to its rich content, the estate records attracted the attention of many researchers since 1950's. Especially in the last two decades, a significant increase occurred in the number of the estate records works. (Bozkurt, 2012: 94)

Economic historians have been the first to recognize the importance of the estate records which has been taken over by the division of the heritage which has been transferred to the court. This group has evaluated the estate records in terms of economic, especially they focused as the elements of wealth, the distribution of wealth among groups, and the sources of wealth of people from different societies. (Bozkurt, 2012: 95)

On the other hand, an important part of the estate records works consists of publications at the article level based on the estate records of a high-ranking state official or a trader, who is influential and wealthy or a military class. Among these, there are publications of researchers who try to see the original or typical position in the social environment where they are members of the owners of estates, by comparing these estate records in different ways and comparing them with each other. (Bozkurt, 2012: 95)

2. Examples of Research Studies on Estates in Turkey

Estate records have been used indirectly in numerous articles and reports on socio-economic and socio-cultural history since they contain details and on a wide range of topics. Also there are studies that consider these records as the primary source. Among these, the best example we can call the premise work is the work of Ömer Lutfi Barkan's "The Estate Records Belonging to Edirne Military Kassam". (Barkan, 1966) This work is a cornerstone of Ottoman historiography, for Barkan has introduced the Ottoman historiography to a source with vast possibilities dating to the history of economics. (Canbakal: 1)

As far as we can determine Halil İnalcık is at the forefront of those who voiced the importance of the book of records and provided us with access to important data about these sources. He said that the estate records were the oldest ones and he gave important information about these by going out of the estate records in Bursa Museum and it was an opportunity to see the results that can be reached from the estate records by going to the way of evaluating the estate records reached from the books he worked. (Altuntaş, 2004: 4)

With the being of Halil İnalcık (İnalcık, 1993), who first pointed out the significance of the estate records in terms of social history, the realization of this source with the true meaning of daylight came with the work of Barkan in 1966. (Canbakal: 1)

"Barkan's work covers a total of 62 years, spreading between 1545-1659 and it is based on 21 notebooks and the estate records of 3128 people. The study can be dealt with in three chapters: the introduction of the information items contained in the estate records, which can be divided into identity information and wealth information. The identification information includes family information of the deceased due to registration of the vans. Wealth item, as it is known, includes all kinds of property, as well as debt, receivables and cash information. Barkan goes into the analysis of a few institutions that he gives particular importance to after he summarizes the data in the books he inspects by these items. They relate to slavery, debt and credit relations, military farms, and the economic life of the military in general. It classifies the content of 175 estate records in order to portray the economic activities of the military. The third dimension of the work is discussion of the value of the estate records as a source. Here Barkan enters the Islamic heritage law in order to place the estate records into legal context, and also gives

examples of questions that the estate records can not answer because of his own interests. For example, in his studies with long-term perspective, he points to the necessity of knowing the value and the price movements of his money, and trying to create a price list." (Canbakal: 1)

A work similar to Barkan's work was prepared for Bursa by Huseyin Ozdeger. (Ozdeger, 1988) Ozdeger has tried to deal with the numerous numbers of the estate records between 1463-1640 with numerical expressions and tables. More recently, research has been conducted on the subject such as family, wealth distribution, used goods and everyday life.

In another group, the estate records studies, the focus of interest has shifted the social history more than the source. Some of them tend to multifaceted a large group the estate records and aim to give a kind of social panorama. For example, Ozlu's 18th century Antep study (2002) is a comprehensive panorama study based entirely on the estate records. (Canbakal: 2)

A much broader group of studies focuses on one or more data items on the estate records, such as clothing materials, home furnishing, books or family structures. (Canbakal: 2) This group exemplified by the following studies :
Omer Demirel, "The Quantitative Structure of Family in Ankara in the Period of 1700-1730", Belleten 54 (1990);

Omer Demirel, A Gurbuz, M Tuş, "The Household, Goods and Clothing (XVI-XIXth Centuries)" and "An Analysis Trial of the Demographic Structure of the Ottoman Family in Anatolia", "The Turkish Family in the Process of Socio-Cultural Change" (Turkish Republic: Prime Ministry Family Institution, 1992);

Rıfat Ozdemir, "Socio-economic Structure of the Family in Tokat (1771-1810)", "Tokat Symposium on Turkish History and Turkish Culture" (July 2-6, 1986) (Ankara, 1987);

Serap Yılmaz, "A Persian Armenian Trader's Estate Records and Thoughts on Commercial Activity" History Review Magazine 3/15 (1992);

Zubeyde Guneş-Yağcı, Serdar Genç, "The Clothing Pleasure and A Fabric Trader in Balıkesir in XIX.Century", Turkish Studies 2/1 (2007).

Hulya Canbakal says that the effort to go beyond the specific data groups in the name of "The Estate Records Studies Since Barkan" has been seen only in some studies made outside of Turkey until the 2000's.

The studies given above are mainly the ones that have been put forward by considering the quantitative direction of the estate records. These examinations which have seen their samples since the 1970's, generally examine the property details of the estate records belonging to the important people and give

important information on the history of material cultural apart from shedding light on the lives of the owner and the belonging people. Furthermore, in recent years, the work has been carried out on the basis of everyday objects recorded in the muhallefat lists to study the way of life and the reconstruction of the cultures of the period studied. (Canbakal: 3) The most important of these were taken by Ismail E. Erunsal. Focusing more on the social and cultural history, Erunsal deals with the estate records as a primary source in his work in this area.

Erunsal who pioneered the studies on the history of Turkish librarianship, also used "books" on the muhallefat lists as a source in this studies. Beside the quantitative evaluations he made on the estate records, he has started to shed light on our Turkish cultural history by making qualitative evaluations. Here are some sample works that Erunsal has done in this area:

Ismail E. Erunsal, Poet Nedim's Muhallefat, The Archival Sources of Turkish Literary History, Harvard University, 2008.

Ismail E. Erunsal, The History of Turkish Libraries II, The Ottoman Foundation Libraries From Establishing to Tanzimat, Ataturk Culture Center Publishing, Ankara 1988.

Ismail E. Erunsal, Ottoman Foundation Libraries: Historical Development and Organization, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara 2008.

Ismail E. Erunsal, The Second-Hand Book Trade and the Second-Hand Booksellers, Timaş, İstanbul 2013.

With the light that Ismail Erunsal has kept on the cultural history, there has also been an increase in the thesis studies that have been used in the recent years, especially as a source of the estate records. The book titled "The Book in Ottoman Social Life" which was prepared by Ekrem Saltık in 2007 and also a thesis study titled "The Book Culture in Uskudar in XVII.Century" which was prepared by Esra Muhacir in 2013 are the examples of these studies. I am also working on my master thesis titled "The Book Culture in Ottoman Empire According to the Estate Records in Galata in XVIII.Century".

Canbakal wrote in his writing about the importance of interdisciplinary studies on the estate records. Among them, an important project seperated from all others by way of methodology is the work of Tripoli which S.Weber combines with the sources and methods of the estate records, registers, narrative sources, archeology and artistic and architectural historical sources. The streets, residential buildings and interior furnishings in the 19th-20th century in Tripoli are being re-created to represent in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin by Weber and his team. This project is a good example of the horizons of interdisciplinary work, as well as inter-country institutional co-operation. (Canbakal: 4)

The interdisciplinary approach has also directed a number of other studies that deal with a wide range of intersections of economics, society and cultural history and another group study which use methodological advanced statistical techniques. The first example bearing these characteristics is F.M. Gocek's doctoral work in 1988. (Canbakal: 4)

We can see more extensive examples of this approach in the work of Emine Karababa (2006) studying the consumption culture in Bursa and Ergene-Berker (2008, 2009) in Kastamonu in wealthy taxation, transfer of wealth between generations and exchange of social status. (Canbakal: 5)

Considering both the long-term comparative perspective and the methods of analysis Canbakal describe the project titled "The Distribution of Wealth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1820: An Estate Records Study" carried out by Canbakal's executive team as the most extensive of the works about the estate records. (Canbakal: 5)

3. Problems in the Estate Records Studies

Despite all these horizons, the estate records we have described as the primary source are not entirely unproblematic and a significant part of these problems are not only specific to the Ottoman estates, but are a common problem of working with the estate records based on different cultures. These can be summarized as follows: (Canbakal: 6)

- i. The relationship between the estate records prices and real market prices is unknown.
- ii. It can not be assumed that any the estate records reflects real wealth.
- iii. The value of the representation of the estate records recorded in the court is not known. Not all segments of the society have the same tendency to go to the court for the distribution of the estates.
- iv. The tendency of different section of the society to use the court may also change over time. For example, a long-term decline in average wealth does not necessarily indicate a general impoverishment.
- v. Interest in Islamic heritage law is essential in the population studies of the Ottoman estates. Contrary to popular assumption the heir figures on the estates do not give the household size.

4- Conclusion

In summary, the estate records have to be read through a sharp criticism filter like any other source, and their boundaries must be known, especially for inductive and quantitative studies. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that, despite the mentioned problems, the estate records have been successfully and widely used in world history since the 1970s. The effects of some of the above

mentioned problems are being tried to be reduced by using outsourcing sources. The Ottoman estates also expects similar creative solutions from its researcher. (Canbakal: 7)

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