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The Intent to Give and Receive: Charitable Islam, Compassion and the Concept of *Hak* in Contemporary Turkey

As the recent financial crisis rippled through world economies, debates were reinvigorated about the immorality of global capitalism and the free market economy. While greedy financiers and inept economists were crucified in the media, the ideal of entrepreneurship arose as the moral panacea to rising extremism and poverty. Newsweek declared in "Economics versus Extremism" that overregulated economies that "stifled entrepreneurship" were to blame for Islamist extremism. In turn, charitable entrepreneurs were hailed as the panacea to the ills of poverty and underdevelopment with the decline of the welfare state; the April 2010 Obama summit with Middle Eastern entrepreneurs is a good example of this trend.

Since the 1980s, Turkey has continuously witnessed the formation and rise of the Anatolia-based yet nationally and internationally well-connected entrepreneur. Several research studies have traced this historical process that is closely intertwined with the developing power of a pious electoral base who expresses diverse and at times contradictory responses to the possibility of EU accession, economic transformations, JDP policies, and the changing tapestry of Turkish daily life as AVMs (shopping malls) and Turkish television serials become national pastimes. Understudied and underexamined in current research is the concomitant rise of charitable associations that are largely founded by conservative entrepreneurs and supported by this conservative electoral base.

Charitable associations provide spaces where Turkish citizens increasingly rethink and reformulate the meanings and practices of charitable giving, Turkish state, daily life, piety, and Muslim practice, while at the same time providing a venue to fulfill their religious obligations and form charitable communities. Based on ongoing ethnographic research in Turkey, this paper will examine the contours of charitable giving and nostalgia for an idealized Ottoman rule as both a response to, and a result of corrupt governance and the decline of the welfare state. Under the current Justice and Development Party (JDP) government, welfare provision and associations that spearheaded such provision became effective strategies to consolidate the neoliberal state. Additionally, the poor is deemed to have a *hak* (right) to part of the riches of the elite. Hence the delegation of poor relief to conservative entrepreneurs and civil society organizations increasingly support and enable both the representational and real existence of a new neo-moral order supported by the neoliberal state. Ironically, though, charitable giving also provides a space where the neoliberal state and governance are questioned, analyzed, and challenged.

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