

Two Countries, One Mission: Comparing Member of Ottoman and  
English Pay-to-Pray Institutions (XVI and XVII. Centuries)

İki Ülke, Tek Görev: Osmanlı ve İngiliz Ücretli Duacılarının  
Karşılaştırması (XVI ve XVII. Yüzyıllar)

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**Abstract**

This article compares paid prayer workers employed in the Ottoman Empire and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Throughout history, clergy in all societies undertook the duty of offering prayers. However, English and Ottoman pay-to-pray workers were specifically obligated to pray for the souls of those who provided them with dedicated income. These individuals were often in need of state protection and care and were in need of support and assistance. Using studies conducted on paid prayer workers and documents from Ottoman archives, this article seeks to identify the similarities and differences between the prayer workers of these two countries. The article argues that the similarities were shaped by the requirements of religion and social life, while the differences were shaped by the economic and cultural conditions of the time. Following a brief introduction to prayer workers, the article highlights the working conditions, qualifications, responsibilities, and income of

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those who received a salary or, for various reasons, acquired income and thus prayed for the state, the ruler, and the income provider. Due to the lack of in-depth studies on the topic and the absence of detailed publications on such prayer workers in both states, this article is of an essay.

**Keywords:** Beadsman, beadswoman, pay-to-pray, almsman, almswoman, monasteries, social aid.

### Öz

Bu makale, XVI ve XVII. yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Devleti ve İngiltere’de istihdam edilmiş olan ücretli duacılar arasında temel bir karşılaştırmaya odaklanmaktadır. Tarih boyunca, tüm toplumlarda dua etme görevini üstlenmiş din adamları vardı. İngiliz ve Osmanlı ücretli duacıları ise kendilerine ayrılmış geliri sağlayanların ruhları için duâ etmekle yükümlüydü. Bu insanlar çoğunlukla devlet tarafından korunmaya ve bakılmaya ihtiyaç duyan, destek ve yardıma muhtaç kişilerdi. Ücretli duacılar ile ilgili yapılmış çalışmalardan ve Osmanlı arşivindeki belgelerden yararlanarak hazırlanan makalede, iki farklı ülkenin ücretli duacılarının benzerlik ve farklılıkları tespit edilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Makale, benzerliklerin din ve sosyal yaşantının gerekliliklerine göre, farklılıkların ise dönemin ekonomik ve kültürel koşullarına göre şekillendiğini savunmaktadır. Duacılar hakkında kısa bir girişle bilgi verildikten sonra duâ edip maaş alan ya da bir sebeple gelir sahibi olup bunun neticesinde devlete, hükümdara ve geliri sağlayanlara duâ eden zümrenin çalışma şartları, nitelikleri, sorumlulukları ve gelirlerine dikkat çekilmektedir. Konunun henüz detaylı bir şekilde çalışılmaması ve her iki devletin de söz konusu duâcıları hakkında ayrıntılı yayınların olmaması sebebiyle makale bir deneme niteliğindedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Duâgûy, maaşlı duacı, zevâid-horan, manastır, imarethane, sosyal yardım.

### Introduction

One of the foundational elements of culture is religion. The need to pray, which is the source of motivation for religion, is a value found in all primitive and celestial religions. In its simplest definition, praying is when a person implores God<sup>1</sup>. On the

1 “To speak to a God either privately or in a religious ceremony in order to Express love, admiration, or thanks or in order to ask for something”, *Oxford Wordpower*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 513. For more on prayer, see Osman Cilâci, “Duâ”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, İstanbul 1994, pp. 529-539, Ferit Devellioğlu, *Osmanlıca - Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat*, Aydın Kitabevi, Ankara 2007, s. 190, Şemseddin Sami, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî*, Çağrı Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, p. 610.

other hand, the sense of cooperation inherent in human beings has been observed in all cultures throughout history, despite differences such as religion, language, race, and geography. As social creatures, humans desire to help those weaker than themselves due to the influence of living in a community<sup>2</sup>. In the Ottoman State, the concept of cooperation permeated all segments of society through the institution of pious foundations. Christian societies also established mutual aid networks and organizations with social roles similar to those of Turkish-Islamic waqfs<sup>3</sup>. In both Islamic and Christian societies, the primary aim of the founders of charitable and endowment foundations<sup>4</sup> (waqf) and similar institutions, regardless of their social backgrounds, was to obtain blessings by sharing the worldly wealth bestowed upon them by God with those in need. Receiving the prayers of those in need was deemed crucial; thus, officials whose sole duty was to pray for the founders of such institutions were employed. In both countries, individuals were assigned to pray for the survival and continuity of the state, as well as for the souls of the founders of charitable institutions established for charitable purposes.

Considering their social aspects, the article discusses the prayer readers employed in these two institutions due to the similar roles of monasteries and waqfs. In the Ottoman classical period, waqfs played a crucial role in the lives of ordinary people, shaping the sociological landscape of cities and significantly contributing to areas such as education, health, and social services. The same level of importance applies to monasteries<sup>5</sup> in the Christian world. Certainly, monasteries served

- 2 For examples of social relief practices in England, see Ferhat Akyüz, “Sosyal Yardımdan Sosyal Sigortaya: Bismarckyan ve İngiltere Sosyal Güvenlik Sistemlerinin Tarihsel Dönüşümü”, *The Journal of International Social Research*, Vol. 1/5, 2008, pp. 58-70, Eleanor Chance, Christina Colvin, Janet Cooper, C. J. Day, T.G. Hassall, Mary Jessup and Nesta Selwyn, “Charities for the Poor”, in *A History of the County of Oxford*, Vol. 4, 1979, pp. 462-475. And for social relief practices in Ottoman State, see Mehmet Genç - Erol Özvar, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma”, *Osmanlı Ekonomisine Dair Konuşmalar-1*, Ötüken Yayınevi, İstanbul 2021, Oded Peri, “Waqf and Ottoman Welfare Policy: The Poor Kitchen of Haseki Sultan in Eighteenth-Century Jerusalem,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 35/No. 2, 1992, pp. 167-186, Mustafa Özcan Taşkesen, “Osmanlı Döneminde Sosyal Refah Sistemi Olarak Vakıflar”, *İş ve Hayat*, Vol. 3/No. 5, 2017, pp. 57-66.
- 3 For the detailed information on the comparison between the Ottoman and the West, see Nihal Cihan Temizer, “Waqf System: Comparative of in the Ottoman and in The West”, *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies*, Vol. 2, 2021, pp. 141-162.
- 4 From now on, only the term “waqf” will be used.
- 5 For information on monasteries, see Salime Leyla Gürkan, “Manastır”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 27, 2003, pp. 558-560. For information about alms-houses established for charity and social aid purposes, see Sarah Marion Lennard-Brown, *Almshouses of London and Westminster: their role*

needy and sick people from all classes, establishing institutions within themselves to meet basic human needs such as hospitals, libraries, and social assistance programs. They functioned as vital centers of support and care within Christian communities. The presence of structures within monasteries, such as hospitals, nursing homes (yaşlılar evi), cisterns (sarnıç), schools, and baths (hamam), that address social needs indicates that they played a similar role to that of Ottoman waqfs<sup>6</sup>.

This article will attempt to compare the positions of individuals employed in monasteries and waqfs in England and the Ottoman State, who were responsible for praying for the health of the state and the waqf founder. Although these organizations shared similarities with waqfs, their unique characteristics and functions often took precedence<sup>7</sup>. This difference also extended to those responsible for prayer. This article aims to comprehend the dynamics of pay-to-pray, which emerges from the policy of assisting the poor, homeless, and needy, undertaken by waqfs in the Ottoman State and by almshouses within monasteries in England.

The institution of pay-to-pray, which completed its institutionalization process in long-established states, is a result of the conditions of the period. Members of this institution are referred to as duâgûy in the Ottoman Empire and almsman/ almswomen in England, and detailed information will be provided as needed. With a clearer expression, the institution of pay-to-pray has gradually become established in states that have existed for a long time throughout history. This institution emerged due to the social, economic, and religious conditions of that period. Stereotyping the position of those who pray in a society is impossible<sup>8</sup>. When it comes to praying, it is clear that many people were officially employed in this role. In Ottoman waqf, numerous individuals were employed solely to recite prayers. In Europe, those who pray are often privileged individuals who do not contribute to production and have the right to direct society. For example, sheikhs (şeyhler) or priests (rahipler) can be considered among these individuals.

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*in lay piety and the relief of poverty, 1330-1600*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London 2020.

6 For a comparative analysis of a monastery and a külliye located in Istanbul see, İlnur Türkoğlu, "İstanbul'da Kentsel Hafızanın Devamlılığı: Pantokrator Manastırını ile Süleymaniye Külliyesi'nin Karşılaştırılması", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, Vol. 53, 2020, pp. 199-219.

7 Temizer, "Waqf System", p. 156.

8 Hüseyin Özlü, "Feodal Topluma alternatif Bir Bakış: Tipler", *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 6/ No. 6, 2018, 859-867, at p. 863.

While many people were in charge of reciting prayers, more were needed. The psychological needs<sup>9</sup> of the elite have likely driven them to seek more prayers, leading to the emergence of a new social class. This issue undoubtedly remains to be clarified.

One of the first examples of social state practices seen in today's states since the nineteenth century, is the movement to eliminate income inequality within society. In this context, it is aimed to provide social privileges to the poor, destitute, sick, elderly, disabled, widows, orphans, and retirees. The first examples of these approaches are clearly seen in the sixteenth century in the two states in question. For example, during the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603), four individuals appointed by village councils were responsible for collecting the tax designated to help the poor. Those who did not pay this tax were punished<sup>10</sup>. In 1541, a compulsory tax collected for charitable purposes was introduced, and in 1553, a charity home was established<sup>11</sup>. In the Ottoman State, thousands of people in need benefited from the income of waqfs established by members of the dynasty, administrators, and individuals with sound financial means. The surplus-receivers (*zevâid-horan*) group<sup>12</sup>, who are paid a salary from the excess income of the waqf, can be considered an example of this practice. This article does not focus on the clergy obligated to pray in places of worship such as churches, monasteries and mosques; instead, it discusses the *duâgûy* and almsmen/almswomen that arose as a natural consequence of the assistance provided to individuals protected by the state due to various challenges, such as illness and need.

As is known, political relations between England and the Ottoman State began to clarify in the mid-sixteenth century<sup>13</sup>. England, which was allied with the Turks during the reign of Murad the Third, opened its first embassy in Turkey in 1582,

9 Bahaeddin Yediylidiz, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Türkiye'de Vakıf Müessesesi Bir Sosyal Tarih İncelemesi*, TTK Yay., Ankara 2003, p. 39.

10 Sabahat Yalçın, "İngiltere'deki Sosyal Emniyet Sisteminin Nüvesi", *Journal of Social Policy Conferences*, No. 9, 10, 11, pp. 217-225, at p. 218.

11 Yalçın, "İngiltere'deki Sosyal Emniyet", p. 221.

12 For detailed information about surplus-receivers, see, Özge Aslanmirza, *Surplus-Recipients (Zevâid-Horan) From Imperial Waqfs: Between Philanthropy and Political Economy*, Unpublished master's dissertation, Middle East Technical University, Ankara 2017.

13 For the privilege granted to a British merchant during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, see Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Vol. V, New York 1906, p. 109.

and after that year, relations between the two countries remained friendly until the Treaty of Karlowitz<sup>14</sup>. Could the institution of pay-to-pray, which became more widespread in both countries since the sixteenth century, have been shaped by cultural interaction between the two states? Although it is not possible to find an answer to this question at this stage, a connection can still be drawn between them. Was there a connection between the individuals employed to pray by alms-houses established as extensions of churches in England and the Ottoman duâgûys? The tradition of praying for the souls of statesmen, waqf founders and philanthropists in both countries reflects fundamentally similar human and spiritual sentiments. The article aims to explore the role of these prayers, which have not yet been examined cross-culturally. It will discuss how the same practice was implemented in two cultures by comparing the prayers employed in waqfs in the Ottoman State and almshouses in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This comparison was conducted using detailed studies, including archival records of the institutions in the two countries. The similarities were first identified in comparing the prayers of two contemporary states that fulfilled their duty of duâgûys and almsmen/women in various institutions. Subsequently, the assignment of duâgûys and almsmen/women to their duties, their income, the methods of fulfilling their responsibilities, and their differences by gender were examined.

### **1. Who are Duâgûyân, Beadsmen/Beadswomen and Almsmen/Almswomen**

To better understand the subject, it is essential to begin with the definition of duâgûy. In some records, the term duâgûy, which means “prayer, a person who prays” is mentioned as duâhân<sup>15</sup>. In general, those who pray during religious ceremonies are called duâhân, while those who pray in official ceremonies are referred to as duâgûy<sup>16</sup>. Duâgûy also referred to as “professional prayer”<sup>17</sup> are

14 For detailed information about Ottoman-England relationship, see, Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türk-İngiliz Münasebetlerinin Başlangıcı ve Gelişmesi (1553-1610)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1953, Taha Niyazi Karaca, “Dostluktan Çatışmaya: Osmanlı Dönemi Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri”, *Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations (JATR)*, Vol. 1/No. 1, 2020, pp. 11-32 and Susan Skilitter, “William Harborne: İlk İngiliz Elçisi 1583-1588”, *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri 1583-1984*, Ankara 1985.

15 M. İpşirli, “Duâgû”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, pp. 541-542, at p. 541.

16 Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, p. 479. The officials mentioned did not fully represent the members of the “duâgûy institution”. These officials were Quran readers with specific job descriptions. However, duâgûyân hold a different position compared to these officials.

17 Yediyıldız, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Türkiye’de Vakıf Müessesesi*, p. 85.

individuals who frequently served in the palace, tradesmen's organizations (esnaf teşkilâtı) and sect hierarchies (tarikât hiyerarşisi) of the Ottoman State<sup>18</sup>. The plural form of the word is *duâgûyân*<sup>19</sup>, which means prayer readers. In the tradition of Ottoman state administration, a key condition for the survival of the state is for the Sultan to endear himself to the warriors (sipahiyân), citizens (reaya), scholars (ulema) and righteous individuals (suleha), while also seeking the blessing of those whose prayers are accepted<sup>20</sup>. This tradition serves the purpose of enabling dynasty members and high-ranking statesmen to help a large number of people through the charitable institutions they have established, thereby receiving blessings. In the Ottoman State, the institution of pay-to-pray was widely utilized within waqfs, and the individuals who offered prayers on behalf of the waqf's founders were specified in the foundation charters (waqfiye).<sup>21</sup> In addition, individuals in need of financial support also received assistance from waqfs due to prayers. This situation fully aligns with the definition of "a poor man who is responsible for praying in response to a specific duty assigned by the waqf"<sup>22</sup>. Various officials employed to recite the Quran in mosques, referred to as prayers are as follows: Quran reciter (Devirhân), Juz reciter (Cüzhân), Surah Yasin reciter (Yasinhân), surah Enam reciter (Enâmhân), surah Tebareke reciter (Tebârekehân), surah Amme reciter (Ammehân), ten verses reciter (Aşîrhân), the person who prays with veneration for Hz. Muhammed (Salâvathân), the individual who prays five times a day (Musallî), announcer of charitable people's names (Muarriif), ode reciter (Meddah) and the reciter of the oneness of God (Tevhidân)<sup>23</sup>. In addition to these officials, waqfs

18 İpşirli, "Duâgû", p. 541.

19 *Duaguis* is the English equivalent.

20 Hasan Bey-zâde Ahmed Paşa, *Hasan Bey-zâde Tarihi, Metin ve İndeks (1003-1045/1595-1635)*, Vol. II, Prep. Şevki Nezihî Aykut, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2004, p. 356.

21 For detailed information about waqf, see Wiliam Hefening, "Waqf", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 8, 1987, pp. 1096-1103, Murat Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World from the Seventh Century to The Present*, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, İstanbul 2000.

22 Sami, *Kâmûs*, p. 610.

23 For the detailed information see, Murat Akgündüz, "Osmanlı Döneminde Camilerde Kur'ân Okunmasıyla İlgili Görevliler", *Diyânet İlmî Dergi*, No. 56, 2020, p. 443-458, at p. 446, Ahmet Koç, Ömer Özdemir, "Kanûnî Vakfiyesi'ne Göre Süleymaniye Camii ve Görevlileri", *Diyânet İlmî Dergi*, Vol. 53/No. 2, 2017, pp. 133-137, Kasım Kocaman, "Kuruluş Vakfiyesine Göre İstanbul Fatih Camii Görevlileri ve Görevleri", *AKEV Akademi Dergisi, ICOAEF Özel Sayısı*, 2019, pp. 141-146, Asım Yediylıdız, "Bayramzâde Zekeriyya Efendi'nin (1514-93) Vakfı", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 12 /Nr. 1, 2003, pp. 153-166, at p. 163, Ünal Taşkın, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Eğitimi Kurumları", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 1/Nr. 3, 2008, pp. 342-366, at p. 349.

also employed individuals specifically assigned to perform prayers. The duâgûys (duâgûyân) class, which is the focus of this article, differs from the aforementioned prayer readers and consists of salaried individuals without specific duties. Referred to as “duâgûy”, these individuals formed a group without a designated occupation yet received a salary<sup>24</sup>. Their sole responsibility in exchange for the salary they received, was to offer prayers for the benefactor. These officials were not always explicitly mentioned in foundation deeds (waqfiye), and could include soldiers, teachers, noblemen, civil servants, sheikhs, scholars, impoverished individuals, patients, students, and retirees. Their income varied based on their social status and the motivation for assuming this responsibility. For example, while the daily income of a duâgûy from the clergy (ulema) was sixty<sup>25</sup> akçes<sup>26</sup>, the daily income of a poor duâgûy could be three akçes<sup>27</sup>.

During its early modern period, England struggled with poverty throughout the sixteenth century, and charitable institutions began to disappear during the Reformation process. Before the Reformation, people in need were assisted through hospitals and monasteries, prevalent in many parts of England. Although these religious charities suffered relatively significant damage during the Reformation period<sup>28</sup>, their aid practices have remained continuous. Praying rituals disappeared under the influence of reform movements and were replaced by thanksgiving to the founders of charities<sup>29</sup>. Derived from the word “alms”<sup>30</sup>,

24 For the information on the subject, see İpşirli, “Duâgû”, pp. 541-542, Turan Açık, “Kerim Devletin Duacıları ve/veya Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Yardım Uygulaması Olarak Duâgûyân Maaşı”, *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Special Issue for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey, 2023, pp. 291-308 and Songül Şenlik, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Duâgûyluk Müessesesi (XV-XVII. Yüzyıllar)*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar University, İstanbul 2024.

25 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi [hereafter: BOA], Ruus Kalemi Defterleri (A.RSK.d.), 1526, p. 206, H-11.10.1063/04.09.1653. İstanbul Sultan Murad Khan Foundaditon Abdullah’s son duâgûy Yusuf’s daily income is 60 akçe.

26 Akçe was a coin used during the Ottoman State period. In this article will use the term akçe instead of coin.

27 BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1509, p. 126, H-08.02.1048/21.06.1638. The Thessaloniki Yakub Pasha Foundation, Ali’s son duâgûy Huseyin’s daily income is 3 akçe.

28 Thomas K. Walsh, *Succoring The Needy: Almshouses and The Impotent Poor In Reformation England c. 1534-1640*, Unpublished master’s dissertation, Nova Scotia Dalhousie University, Halifax 2015, p. 23.

29 Walsh, *Succoring The Needy*..., p. 142.

30 <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/alms?q=alms>, (accessed: 02.03.2024).



which refers to food, clothing and money given to the poor, almsman/almswoman (alms-folk) are people who are often expected to pray to the souls of their founders and work in alms-houses, established for this purpose<sup>31</sup>. People primarily retired or in need of assistance, also referred to as beadsman/beadswoman, are assigned the duty of prayer by the state. These people pray for the well-being of the state and the king in the sacred places where they worked, such as cathedrals and churches<sup>32</sup>. However, some buildings, established as hospitals in the twelfth century, transformed into charitable houses for the poor, praying women, and impoverished scholars over time<sup>33</sup>. Various needy individuals received alms in the monasteries, which were established to benefit the poor, with the belief that this would enhance their spiritual well-being as well as their physical health and afterlife, effectively turning them into “prayer machines”<sup>34</sup>.

## 2. Similarities of Almsmen/Women and Duâgûys

There are some similarities between duâgûys and almsman/women employed by the two contemporary states. The primary reason for the employment of almmen/women in almshouses in England<sup>35</sup> and in waqfs in the Ottoman State is that these institutions were fundamentally charitable in nature. The most essential duty expected of those employed as prayers is to pray for the founders of the institution that allocates income to them. The poor individuals residing in alms-houses in England are people who are employed to pray for the souls of the founder<sup>36</sup> and earn income from the funds of the church to which they belong. Similarly, Ottoman prayers are individuals who pray to God to fulfil some of the waqf’s wishes and receive salaries from the waqf’s income<sup>37</sup>.

31 Christine Merie Fox, *The Royal Almshouse at Westminster c. 1500-c.1600*, Royal Holloway, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, London 2012, p. 23.

32 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beadsman>.

33 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 26.

34 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, pp. 243-244.

35 rown, *Almshouses of London and Westminster...*, p. 25. The author noted that, in addition to classical alms-houses, there were also alms-houses established to assist those in need. For the founding document of the alms-house established by a local landowner in Ilchester, Somerset, in 1426, see Lennard-Brown, same page, footnote nr. 69. The foundation charter indicated that 5 to 7 poor individual would benefit from here.

36 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 24.

37 Yediyıldız, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, p. 79.

Another common feature of the prayers is that they are chosen from among the poor, those needing financial assistance, and those requiring social support. In England, these people would stay in rooms allocated to them in monasteries, and where all their needs were met<sup>38</sup>. In the Ottoman State, being poor and in need of help and support was a basis for positive discrimination in becoming a prayer. Thus, Sultan Mehmed III, approved the appointment of two women as duâgûy, even though they were not fully qualified, solely because they were poor<sup>39</sup>. It can be said that those selected to pray for a fee were in a more disadvantaged situation than other people in society, and thus they were subject to positive discrimination.

Another similarity lies in the appointment procedures. The reasons for appointing a duâgûyân or almsmen<sup>40</sup> to a monastery or waqf include personal request, reinstatement<sup>41</sup> and death<sup>42</sup>. In both countries, duâgûyân and almsmen are appointed upon the individual's own request or the recommendation of an official. In England, the employment of prayers can occur through a letter submitted by the king, a member of the royal family, or another official, or by the request of the alms-house if the current prayer leaves their position for any reason<sup>43</sup>. The same situation applies to the Ottoman State, where duâgûy appointments were primarily made by the sheikh al-Islam<sup>44</sup>, waqfs trustee<sup>45</sup> and kadi<sup>46</sup>.

Female prayers were employed in British alms-houses. While the existence of almwomen among those employed in the fifteenth century was unclear, they

38 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 280.

39 Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı Tarihine Âid Belgeler, Telhisler (1597-1607)*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, İstanbul 1970, p. 26.

40 For the referral and admittance of almsmen between 1558-1600 according to Acts of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster 1543-1609, see Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 225.

41 For an example of appointment due to reinstatement, see BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1519, p. 14, H-13.01.1060/16.01.1650. "*Bursa'da vaki' Sultan Murad Hân-ı sâni evkâfından yevmi on akçe vazîfe ile duâgûy olan Ahmed bin Mehmed'e gadr olmağla vazîfe-i mezbûr ... ibkâ ve mukarrer olmak buyuruldu*".

42 For an example of appointment due to death see, BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1509, p. 27, H-05.02.1048/18.06.1638, "... yevmi bir akçe ile duâgûy olan Fatma Hatun fevt olub ... evlâd-ı vakıftan râfi' Hanife Hatuna ..."

43 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 211.

44 The most authoritative person in religious matters in the Ottoman State. For detailed information see, M. İpşirli, "Şeyhülislam", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 39, 2010, pp. 91-96.

45 Manager of the foundation.

46 Senior legal officer with extensive authority. For detailed information, see İlber Ortaylı, "Kadı", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 24, 2001, pp. 69-73.

became more visible starting in the sixteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, women held various positions within the Ottoman waqf institution. Among the duties that women, often referred to by titles such as teacher, hodja, and mullah, actively participated in was prayer.<sup>48</sup> However, the appointment of female duâgûys became more pronounced in the seventeenth century. Although the number of employed female duâgûys was fewer than that of their male counterparts, efforts were made to appoint as many female duâgûys as possible. In fact, in some instances, a female duâgûy was appointed to fill the position left vacant by another female duâgûy:

“The duty of prayer for the late Sultan Murad Khan Waqf,

The mütevellî of the waqf of the late and reverend Sultan Murad Khan in Edirne, Mustafa, sent a petition saying that Aishe who had a daily allowance of three coins (akçe) from the income of the mentioned waqfs, died and her position remained vacant, so he requested that the task be given to Rabia the daughter of Sheikh Ahmed Abu Levi, it was ordered to be give”<sup>49</sup>.

Duâgûys and almsmen/women were subject to specific control mechanisms in both countries. In England and the Ottoman State, the supervision of duâgûys or almsmen/women was carried out by the employees of these institutions, with a higher authority intervening when necessary. In England, a steward chosen from among the almsmen oversaw these individuals<sup>50</sup>, while in the Ottoman State, the waqf trustee and kadi (judge) fulfilled this duty<sup>51</sup>. Prayers, who were typically well-known figures in social life, faced penalties for failing to comply with the necessary conditions. English almsmen/women serving under specific rules were initially warned if they violated these regulations. If their misconduct continued,

47 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 278, Walsh, *Succoring The Needy...*, p. 71.

48 Nilgün Çevrimli, “Terms Of Defining Women In Foundations From The Founder, Social Status, And Family Relation”, *Ululararasi Medeniyet Calismalari Dergisi*, Vol. 3/Nr. 1, 2018, pp. 263-281, at p. 264.

49 “Vazife-i duâgûyân-ı der-Evkaf-ı merhûm Sultan Murad Hân. Mahmiyye-i Edirne’de vâki merhûm ve mağfürunleç Sultan Murad Hân Evkafı mütevellisi Mustafa mektub gönderüb evkaf-ı mezbûr mahsûlünden yevmi üç akçe vazifeye mutasarrıf olan Aişe Hatun fevt olub beratı mahlûl olmağın Rabia binti Şeyh Ahmed ebu Levi’ye verilmek ricasını arz itmeğın verilmek buyuruldu”. BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1502, p. 20, H-23.07.1043/23.10.1634.

50 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 279. In the Ottoman State, the oversight of the institution involved assessing whether the qualifications of the duâgûys were appropriate for their positions. Since there was no active role in prayer, the control mechanism focused on ensuring the effective functioning of the system.

51 BOA, (A.DVNSMHM.d.), 43/2, H-18.03.988/03.05.1580.

their weekly and monthly salaries would be reduced, and if no improvement was seen, they would be dismissed from their positions<sup>52</sup>. Similarly, in the Ottoman State, legal action was taken against prayers who could not uphold the respectable status required of them, resulting in their dismissal. This section aims to identify the similarities between the duâgûys and almsmen/women employed in two contemporary states. The table below attempts to illustrate similarities of duâgûys and almsmen/women.

**Table 1:** Similarities Between English Almsmen/Women and Ottoman Duâgûys

	<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>OTTOMAN STATES</b>
Income source	Foundation income	Waqf's income
Social status	In need	In need
Appointment procedures	By the King, member of the dynasty or another official, personal letter	By the Sultan, sheikh al-Islam, waqf trustee, kadi or personal letter
Women employment	Less than men	Less than men
Monitoring	A steward chosen from among the prayers	Waqf trustee and kadi

When viewed broadly, it becomes clear that their income sources, social positions, appointment processes, and oversight mechanisms are similar. Additionally, both countries employed almswomen and female duâgûys.

### **3. Differences of Almsmen/Women and Duâgûys**

When comparing the task of praying in terms of place, differences emerge. In English monasteries, those assigned the duty of “reciting paid-prayers for soul of the dead” had specific working hours. They performed their duties in an organized manner between 6:00 in the morning and 7:00 in the evening<sup>53</sup>. Their working hours, mealtimes, various rituals were strictly scheduled. While the almsmen/women in England performed their duties in a designated place and under certain conditions, Ottoman duâgûys<sup>54</sup> did not have such spatial or temporal restrictions.

52 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 284.

53 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 76.

54 Apart from the duâgûys, other prayer officials were individuals who specialized in the prayers

For instance, the city in which a duâgûy received from a waqf could differ from the city in which he resided<sup>55</sup>.

While duâgûys in the Ottoman State were not required to participate in any ceremonies or prayer rituals, in England, they were expected to attend praying rituals. English alms-folk were generally required to be able to sing the psalm *De profundis clamavi*. However, this requirement was not always consistent and could vary depending on the institution<sup>56</sup>. In England, it was not permissible for almsmen/women to depart from their assigned duties without permission. If an almsmen/women wished to leave the monastery, they had to seek permission from the head priest, and such leave was granted only in case of illness. If the ailing individual was male, he would be tended to by female individuals in the monastery<sup>57</sup>, and they would seek forgiveness from the head priest so they could pray for the king and their own souls<sup>58</sup>.

The requirements for being an almsmen/women in the alms-houses of England varied according to gender. Among these, for men, the criteria typically being at least fifty years old, widowed, having served the king in some capacities<sup>59</sup> and residing in the vicinity of the alms-house<sup>60</sup> can be counted. When looking at the Ottoman duâgûyân, none of these conditions were required, and in fact, opposite qualifications were sought. These qualifications could include being a *suleha* (pious person), *fukara* (needy person), or an *ulema* (scholar),<sup>61</sup> or being a student

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they performed. For example, according to the Waqfiyye of Sulaymaniyah in İstanbul, the duties of the prayer officials varied. While the *cüzhân* were required to read a section of the Quran in the Sulaymaniyah Mosque at specific times, the *muhellil* was responsible for reciting the *Kalima-i Tevhid* in the mosque after the morning prayer. Similarly, the *Salavathan* was tasked with saying *salavat* after the noon prayer every day, and the *muarrif* was responsible for reading prayers on Eid and Cuma. See Koç-Özdemir, “Kanûnî Vakfiyesi’ne Göre Süleymaniye Camii ve Görevlileri”, pp. 133-137.

55 BOA, (A.RSK), 1506, p. 1, H-02.12.1043/30.05.1634. Duâgûy Şeyh Mehmed, who lives in Edirne (Adrianople), requested a change because he had difficulty receiving his salary from the city of Enez (Ainos).

56 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, pp. 278-279. *De profundis clamavi* is an expression used in religious texts in the Christian tradition and means that a person conveys her/his troubles to God.

57 Walsh, *Succoring The Needy...*, p. 35.

58 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 190.

59 Walsh, *Succoring The Needy...*, p. 31.

60 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 278.

61 BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1522, p. 84, H-04.06.1061/25.04.1651. “... for Dervish Ali, who is pious (*sulehâdan*) ...”

of knowledge<sup>62</sup>. In England, the female prayer had to be at least fifty years old, sorrowful, honest, of good reputation, eloquent, widowed, and well-known<sup>63</sup>. The qualifications sought for Ottoman duâgûyân were those required by the general societal norms that did not vary based on gender. In England, the role of female prayers was considered to be less spiritual and more simplistic compared to that of men. Female prayers working in alms-houses were also employed in physical tasks. They were responsible for tasks such as cleaning the building where they resided, caring for the sick, and preparing meals. The most senior female prayer would organize the schedule for tasks such as meal service, soup-making, kitchen work, cleaning, and laundry, determining the order and timing of when these tasks would be carried out<sup>64</sup>. These tasks often did not align with the literacy skills that were often required during the recruitment process<sup>65</sup>. In the Ottoman context, there is no difference in terms of duty between being a male or female prayer. Both men and women performed the duty, which was entirely focused on spiritual purposes and did not entail any physical obligations, on equal terms.

The prayers residing in the monasteries where they were employed were provided with firewood or coal, kindling, clothing worth eight pounds annually, and food worth twenty-five pounds annually<sup>66</sup>. They also had designated houses in the monastery vicinity, which would remain the property of the institution if they were to leave their duties for any reason. These houses consisted of two rooms, a fireplace, and a private cellar.<sup>67</sup> Since there was no requirement for Ottoman prayers to be present in any specific location for prayer, such support was not applicable.

The female prayer received an annual salary of £1 per person, while the male prayer received a yearly salary of £3. Their total annual incomes per capita were recorded as £6 between 1540-48<sup>68</sup>, and similarly as £6 per capita between 1560-

62 BOA, Kamil Kepeci Tasnifi Defterleri, (KK.d.), 261, p. 6, H-14.01.1067/02.11.1656. “ ... Ali, the student of knowledge (talebe-i ilm) ...”.

63 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 278.

64 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 284, Walsh, *Succoring The Needy...*, p. 79.

65 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 190.

66 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 280, Walsh, *Succoring The Needy...*, p. 41.

67 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 280.

68 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, pp. 206-210.

1600<sup>69</sup>. When we look at the salary policy, a fixed amount was paid to the prayers<sup>70</sup>. In contrast, the Ottoman duâgûyân received salaries based on an opposite policy. Firstly, the duties of a duâgûy could vary greatly, such as receiving 2 akçe per day<sup>71</sup> or 25 akçe per day<sup>72</sup>. Although duâgûys' salaries vary in different amounts<sup>73</sup>, it can be said that they are mostly between 1-10 akçe per day<sup>74</sup>. This situation was likely shaped by variables such as the income of the waqfs from which the duâgûy received his salary, the amount of the surplus income (ziyâde-i evkaf), and the daily rate of the duty remaining from the previous duâgûy. Additionally, when comparing the salaries of functionaries serving within the waqf, it has been observed that the daily wages of duâgûy sometimes exceeded those of other functionaries such as imams, secretaries (kâtip), or Quran reciters<sup>75</sup>. Between 1450-1900, the period when the consumer price index rates were closest between Istanbul and London is from 1500 to 1649<sup>76</sup>. However, it does not seem plausible to attribute the stability of wages in one country and the variability in another solely to economic factors. In our opinion, the main reason for the stability of wages for English almsmen/women is that these individuals maintained their lives within the alms-house. As for the Ottoman duâgûys, such a situation did not exist, and the functionaries continued their daily lives in their own cities and residences. On the other hand, while Ottoman duâgûyân could be from all

69 Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 220.

70 The salary amounts are written in pounds currency to facilitate understanding of the currency of the period, and they are approximate amounts. The exact salary amounts for 1502 are as follows: Almswomen: Weekly 5d, annual £1 2s 11d. Almsmen: Weekly 14d, annual £3 0s 8d. Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 280. £=Pound, s= Shilling, d= Penny. £1=20 shillings, £1=340 penny.

71 BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1526, p. 46, H-21.09.1062/26.08.1652. "Two akçe for the duâgûy ...".

72 BOA, (A.RSK.d.), 1522, p. 221, H-01.02.1062/13.01.1652. "... İbrahim, who earns a daily salary of 25 akçe ...".

73 According to Mustafa Nuri Pasha, a daily salary of 1000 akçes was given to duâgûy Sheikh Salim from various revenues of the state, Köprülü cut off Sheikh Salim's income, and as a result, he was executed for opposing the grand vizier. Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netâyicü'l-Vukuât, Kurumları ve Örgütleriyle Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. I-II, Simp. Neşet Çağatay, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1979, p. 304 and Nâimâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Nâimâ*, Haz. Mehmet İpşirli, Vol. 4, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2007, p. 1729.

74 For detailed information about duâgûyân salaries, see Songül Şenlik, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Duâgûyluk Mütessesesi...*, p. 131 and p.170.

75 Özcan Oğur, *Karaman Eyaleti Konya Merkez Kazası Hurufat Desterlerine Göre Konya ve Civarının İdari ve Sosyal Durumu (1690-1839)*, Kırıkkale University, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kırıkkale 2018, p. 610.

76 Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisi ve Kurumları*, İletişim, İstanbul 2020, p. 174.

segments of society, the alms-folk in England consisted solely of those in need. In the Ottoman Empire, duâgûys could come from the groups such as scholars, the needy, government officials, converts to Islâm, or the Sayyid lineage, as well as from individuals with no particular qualifications<sup>77</sup>. In England, alms-folks were chosen among the needy and widowed poor folks<sup>78</sup>.

In this section, the differences among the pay-to-pray prayer group employed in two contemporary states have been tried to be determined. The table below shows the differences in prayers employed in the two countries. It can be seen that the differences between the prayers of the two countries are working hours, working places, in-kind aid, and salary policies. In addition, there is a difference in terms of job descriptions among female prayers. The main reason for the differences we have identified is the variance in social and cultural life between two regions. For instance, the marital status requirement serves as a significant indicator. While in Ottoman society, the duâgûyân were married and continued their family lives, the alms-folk in England were widowed and resided in almshouses. These distinctions arise from the social and cultural disparities between the two societies.

**Table 2:** Differences Between English Almsmen/women and Ottoman Duâgûyân

	<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>OTTOMAN STATE</b>
Working time	06.00-19.00	No time limit
Workplace	Alms-house	No workplace
Age requirement	At least fifty years old	No age requirement
Marital status	Widowed	No marital status
Other occupations for male prayers	Attend to praying rituals	No other occupations for male prayers
Other occupations for female prayers	Meal service, kitchen work, laundry, cleaning	No other occupations for female prayers
Aid in-kind	Firewood, coal, kindling, clothing, food	No aid in-kind
Salary Policy	Fixed amount	Different amount

77 For details on the societal roles of the employed duâgûyân class in the Ottoman Empire, see Şenlik, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Duâgûyluk Müessesesi...*, pp. 179-205.

78 For details on the qualifications of alms-folks, almsmen and almswomen, see Fox, *The Royal Almshouse...*, p. 278.



**Conclusion**

This article examined the assigned individuals who were paid for prayers in sixteenth and seventeenth century England and the Ottoman State. The pay-to-pray institutions in the two countries are evaluated in terms of their similarities and differences, leading to the following conclusions:

-In both countries, despite having different religious beliefs, social peace has been aimed for, and assistance has been provided to those in need, and they are helped by the state. These aids was given with reference to the continuity of the state and the necessity of the ruler for the existence of the state. It is also understood that those appointed to this position have various responsibilities and that there is administrative control over them.

- In both countries, the selection of individuals appointed to this position from among those who adhere to social moral standards and are in need, the employment of women, and the requirement for a request to be made by a higher authority or the king/sultan when starting the position are significant in terms of similarities.

-The fact that almsmen/women in England performed specific duties in a designated place within a collective consciousness, along with their social status, residency, and the ability to receive material and cash assistance, is significant in terms of the differences with the Ottoman *duâgûys*.

- The most significant result from comparing the two institutions is that similar institutions in different cultures are directed toward similar goals. These goals reflect the implementation of a welfare state concept within the conditions of the period, where aid organizations allocate budgets to distribute to those in need, taking social values into account to ensure social justice.

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