WAKFS IN KAVALA, GREECE: A Legal, Political and Architectural Heritage Issue

Konstantinos Lalenis
University of Thessaly, Greece
klalenis@uth.gr

Elena Samourkasidou
University of Thessaly, Greece
elsamourka@yahoo.gr

Abstract
The present paper examines wakfs in Greece, and focuses on a case study in the city of Kavala. The case of the wakfs in Kavala is analyzed as an issue of planning legislation, as a matter of architectural heritage, and as an implementation of urban renewal. Wakfs in Kavala consist of historic buildings of unique architectural value that legally differ from the rest in Greece, being officially property of the State of Egypt. For a number of years their status seemed to be an impediment for their integration to the development of the city. Consequently, they were going through a process of physical decay. The present article analyses recent initiatives for a viable legal solution to the previous deadlock, and describes a subsequent process of restoration. Kavala wakfs right now are among the most impressive samples of the architectural heritage of the city, being also integrated in the urban processes with uses combining tourism, cultural activities, and recreation. Finally, an overall assessment is attempted regarding their role as a landmark in Kavala.

Keywords: wakf; Kavala; planning legislation; architectural heritage; Imaret.

INTRODUCTION – HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK
A Wakf is the granting or dedication of property in trust for a pious purpose, that is, to some object that tends to the good of mankind, as to support a mosque or caravansary, to provide for support of one's family, kin, or neighbors, to benefit some particular person or persons and afterward the poor, etc.; also, the trust so created, or the property in trust. The official document defining its function ("vakfiye") is drafted in the presence of a "cadi" (Turkish judge), and it prescribes the objectives of the wakf, its financial sources, and the ways of utilization, preservation and increase of its revenue (Inalcik, 1978). Until the beginning of the 20th century, wakfs were also established in favour of Christian monasteries and churches, and they were named "ecclesiastic wakfs". These wakfs consisted of real estate owned by the Greek Orthodox Church and managed by parishes and church organizations according to Law 2508/1920 of the Greek State.

Wakfs can be distinguished in two categories: a. the ones which by nature fulfill the noble and charitable scope for which they were established, such as buildings used for schools, mosques, hospitals etc. and b. the profitable endowments, whose income was used to support the equivalent charitable foundations. This latter category, in turn, can be distinguished in three other sub categories: 1. Real estate, which was, seized for a certain period to the charitable organizations for which wakfs were established, to be given on lease, 2. Land parcels on which specific land uses were vested for an annual amount of money, given to the charitable organization, and 3. Wakf land property, conveyed by lease to users.

Historically, in Ottoman Empire wakfs could be established either by the Sultan or by private individuals. According to the Koran prescripts, they were established as a means of the upper social classes to support the poor. In parallel, though, noblemen also secured their interests, their properties and the unimpeded transfer of their properties to their descendants.
through wakfs. This was achieved because wakfs, in order to ensure their viability and cover their operation expenses, were endowed with property in public land and/or revenues from public land, in addition to parts of private property of the individual who established them. The State, on the other hand, was encouraging this system, since through this, big part of the expenses for public works was covered, and at the same time, high incomes accruing to the state administrators could be checked (Stefanidou, 1987:203-265). Wakfs were administered by a special ministry in Istanbul, named Evkaf Nazareti.

Wakfs contributed significantly in the economic prosperity of a city, since, by means of their official function, they participated in the construction of vital urban infrastructure, created new jobs, provided low interest loans and affordable settlements to business of various types, assisted in improving conditions of public health and safety, and absorbed part of the local production, assisting, thus, in the redistribution of wealth in local societies. For many cities, wakfs also constituted an important factor for urban renewal and development. In short, they were a crucial factor for the quality of life in a city and for the improvement of its competitiveness (Lycourinos, 2005), depending on their scale and activities.

**Structural and Functional Elements: Külliyes, İmaret**

The most important way, in which wakfs supported urban life through urban renewal, was the planned construction of külliyes carried out within the framework of the wakf system. The külliyə was a complex of institutions consisting of kitchens distributing food to the poor (imaret), a mosque, schools of learning (medrese), a hospital, a library and a traveler's hostel, mostly situated at the center of the city (Acun, 2002). The core area of the center was also the commercial zone consisting of bedesten, caravanserais and shops where all kinds of trade and transactions were carried out. These buildings belonged to wakfs and provided the larger part of the urban commercial facilities. Thus, the wakf system was directly related to urban economic activity (Acun, 2002, reference to “The role of wakfs in the development of cities” in Hayashi, “Turkey”, 211-213). The construction of külliye represented the measures taken by the Ottoman state to protect and promote the development of cities, since the buildings described above, were frequently established with the desire to renovate the urban environment. Indeed, the economic and commercial growth of such cities as Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa and Konya was planned around the külliyes (Celik, 1986). Urban expansion was also carried out in a centralized fashion through the building of külliyes, which were also considered as landmarks of Ottoman architecture. Following the conquest of the Balkans, mosques and other buildings in the külliye complex were built in each city to give them an Ottoman character.

Ottoman imarets or public kitchens were established as property of wakfs. They are usually described as one of a complex of buildings centered on a mosque and including other institutions like schools, the founder's tomb, a caravanserai, or a bath. They were built throughout the empire, mostly in towns, in higher numbers in Anatolia and the Balkans than in the Arab provinces. The majority was built before 1600, and some continued to function for decades and even centuries (Singer, 2010). All imarets prepared meals to distribute at no charge to a mixed clientele of mosque employees, medrese teachers and students, sufis, government officials on the move, travelers of other types, and local indigents. In some places, non-Muslims received food as well, a fact mentioned in both Muslim Ottoman sources and in the accounts of non-Muslims. Although food was distributed to different types of people, there were regulations which defined who ate, what they ate, how many portions they ate, and in what order.

Imarets were not invented by the Ottomans but developed under them as highly structured groups of buildings. Nonetheless, imarets indicate an appreciation of Muslim religious teachings about charity found in the Koran. They were icons of charitable donations as well as imperial power. Each institution was named after the founder; these places could not maintain the connection between those who provided charity and those who received it, as established in private homes. The imarets and the imperial household created connections to the Ottoman
dynasty as a whole and the legitimacy of the empire. The public kitchen illustrated how the Ottoman Empire was able to provide benefits for different sectors of people within the empire.

Whether appreciated for their practical benefits or as reflections of the value placed by Muslims on charitable endeavors, the endowments may also have played a role in attracting people to convert to Islam (Singer, 2009). Lowry counted 149 imarets altogether in the Ottoman Balkans, mostly dating from the first 200 years of Ottoman rule. According to contemporary national boundaries, they were distributed in: Greece 65, Bulgaria 42, Albania 9, countries of the former Yugoslavia 29, Romania 2, and Hungary 2. Alongside the imarets, there were over 250 zaviyes in northern and central Greece, such that institutions offering food and shelter, even if modest, must have been ubiquitous in the early Ottoman period (Lowry, 2008: 16–64, 70–74, 79, 93).

By the late nineteenth century, however, the administrative reform initiatives of Tanzimat, begun under Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) and continued by his successors, had altered the nature and institutions of Ottoman administration, including those providing social and welfare services. Modern government offices were created to undertake the functions once provided through the private endowments. Moreover, notions of entitlement and cultural practices were changing. All these changes affected the public kitchens as well (Singer, 2009).

WAKFS IN GREECE – INSTITUTIONS, LAWS, POLICIES

After the independence of Greece, wakfs in areas of Greek administration were devolved to the Greek government according to London Protocol of 4/16 June 1830. The ones in territories in a transition stage from Ottoman to Greek administration, and being in reversion by Ottoman citizens, could be sold by them with no restrictions. According to article 12 of the Greek – Turkish Treaty of Athens 1913, all wakfs in “new territories” which were annexed to Greece after the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, would continue being managed by the Turkish communities of Northern Greece. This status quo is still standing, it mainly concerns wakfs of Turkish minority in Western Thrace, and the equivalent wakfs are called “Muslim wakfs” in distinction to the “exchangeable wakfs”, which were characterized as such by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations) and included all the rest of wakfs in Greece.

“Muslim” Wakfs

This category consists of wakfs in Western Thrace and in particular in the prefectures of Xanthi and Komotini. Any kind of control of these foundations was granted to the Western Thracian Minority first by the 1913 Athens Treaty (Eleftheriadis, 1913), and later by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. It enabled their administration by the Muslim population living in Thrace, which would be overseen by the Muftis (Bahcheli, 1987). Before the Greek junta came to power in 1967, the directors of the wakfs were elected by the community. The junta, however, altered this practice by taking over the power to nominate the directors. More recently, according to legislation passed in 1980 (Law 1091) and in 1991 (Presidential Decree 1) (Chousein, 2005: 91-93), the administration of the wakf is carried out by a board of five administrators, members of the Minority but having to be appointed by the Governor of the Region. The Governor of the Region is also empowered to approve the wakf budget. So, the ongoing dispute between the administration of the Region and the Minority is whether the wakf administrators should be appointed or elected. The new legislation also provides that the schools of the Muslim community will receive funding not from the wakf as was hitherto the case, but from the Greek Ministry of Education. This is also a matter of dispute between the administration and the Minority, with the Minority claiming that in this way the wakfs are stripped from their traditional role of social, cultural, and educational character, while the administration argues that it is a constitutional provision that all public schools in the country should be financed by the Ministry of Education, which is also responsible for their curricula.
Exchangeable” Wakfs

Wakfs in the rest of Greece –with the exception of Muslim wakfs in Western Thrace described above- were characterized as “exchangeable”, which were to be managed by the National Bank of Greece. With Law 1909/39, which assigned the Greek State as the “exclusive heir” of National Bank in all its rights and obligations, exchangeable wakfs were transferred to the state, becoming, thus, public property. Property of this type, consisting of real estate of all kinds, is ruled by special legislation and is under the pertinence of the Directorate of Exchangeable Muslim Estates in the Ministry of Finance, which was later renamed as Directorate of Exchangeable Properties (Doris, 1980).

Official registration of exchangeable wakfs started at 1916 by the Directorate of Urban Regeneration and under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport. Nevertheless, since then and until early ‘80s, a remarkable number of wakf establishments (külliyes etc.) were either destroyed, or given various uses different than the original ones (and often inappropriate to their religious, cultural, and educational character -a notable example being the Hamzar Bei TZami or Alkazar in Salonika which until the beginning of the 80s was operating as a porno movie theatre), or abandoned in decay, or even converted to Christian churches (Myrilla, 2010). As Stefanidou (1987) states, this was not accidental, since the new Greek State, in its quest for national identity, turned against its Ottoman inheritance seeking to eliminate all symbols of Ottoman occupation. Thus, religious and educational establishments, such as wakfs, were the most prominent targets, many of them being of remarkable architectural and cultural value. This was further worsened during the military junta which ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974, but ceased after its collapse. Since early ‘80s, wakf establishments such as külliyes (more than 400 all over Greece) are protected as part of cultural heritage, restored, and given uses of mainly cultural nature (museums, art galleries etc.).

WAKFS IN KAVALA, GREECE

Kavala is the second largest city in northern Greece, and the principal seaport of Eastern Macedonia. It is situated on the bay of Kavala, across from the island of Thasos. Its population size (80,000 people) classifies it as a middle sized city. Kavala is the major tourist center in North Eastern Greece, a transportation node where seaways, air transport, the Egnatia international motorway, and rail transport meet.

Kavala was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1387 to 1912 and it was known by its current name from the end of the 15th century, being an important station on the Via Egnatia. Kavala was the birthplace, in 1769, of the founder of the last Egyptian dynasty, Muhammad Ali. He lived in the city for many years and his home is now a museum, standing at the top of a hill in the quarter of Panagia, close to the church of the same name. In 1799 Muhammad Ali was sent to Egypt by the Ottoman Sultan to drive out Napoleon's forces. He would go on to be known as the "founder of modern Egypt," establishing a dynasty that would rule Egypt and Sudan from 1805 to 1952. Muhammad Ali was a great benefactor to the city, founding the Kavala wakf and endowing it with the “Imaret” building complex. Imaret was constructed from 1817 to 1821, and it was a remarkable example of Islamic architecture which functioned as a shelter for poor people, as a religious school and as a boarding school. At the same time the city was enjoying great economic prosperity as a major centre for tobacco cultivation, elaboration, and exportation, throughout the whole of south-eastern Europe.

Historical Reference

The Kavala wakf was established on 26th of June 1813 and according to the establishing document, it was devoted to the city of Kavala. With the same document it was prescribed that the management of the wakf would remain to Muhammad Ali and to his descendants. In fact, the authority of protecting the wakfs stems from the status of the wakf manager, since managers are responsible for the preservation, technical interventions, leasing of the wakf real estate as well as the legal representation of it, whenever and wherever needed. During the first period of its
operation, the Kavala wakf was managed by relatives and friends of Muhammad Ali, represented by some employees. Within the framework of their pertinence, the managers of the wakf also bought some land parcels in Kavala and in the island of Thasos, in the name of the wakf and with funds coming from the wakf property. The purchased lands became also wakfs (part of the original) of a special category ("tahsistat") for which only the rights of use and trusteeship ("hakk-i tasarruf") belonged to the wakf and not the property of the land parcels, which remained public property. As Tsegelidou (1988:134-151) states, this was based on article 4 of the Ottoman Code of Land Property, according to which, this type of wakfs constitute the category of “undue” wakfs, which in turn are divided to three further subcategories, mainly according to the division of rights between the wakfs and the State.

The first expression of interest for the wakf from the part of the Egyptian administration was recorded around the middle of 19th century, after the establishment of the Central Directorate of Wakfs in Egypt (1851). In 1854, a special envoy (mudir) was sent from Egypt to serve as Commander of the island of Thasos, and manager of the Kavala wakf (Stefanidou, 1987:203-265). From then on, commanders were appointed, guided, and controlled by the Central Directorate of Wakfs. The directorate was issuing its decisions and/or guidelines with special firmans, and whenever there was need, they would also send a special envoy to provide solutions to more complex situations. Officially, managers of the wakf were the successive kings of Egypt, until 1952, when the latest one, king Farouk, was deposed by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The new regime appropriated the property of the Kavala wakf by appointing the Egyptian Minister of Wakfs as manager.

The Legal Issue
The legal status of wakfs—which, in their majority, were either Ottoman or belonging to Christian monasteries and churches (as described above)—was determined by the Athens Treaty of 1913, and the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. The Kavala wakf had a more complex legal status, mainly due to the transition of its “ownership” from Ottoman to Egyptian administration, as it will be described below.

The Kavala wakf, as mentioned above, acquired by purchase certain real estate in the city of Kavala and in the island of Thasos, which was characterized as public land. The ownership ("rekabe") of the purchased property remained public, while the beneficial interest (reversion, "tasarruf") was part of the wakf property (Tsegelidou, 1988:134-151). Since public land, at that period belonged to the Ottoman State, with the establishment of the Greek State in these territories at 1913, the property of public land was transferred to the Greek Administration. Nevertheless, the property rights of the Greek Administration had no valid status in cases of already acquired property rights on land, officially registered in a land cadastre (tapu), and this is where Egyptian claims for property rights on land property of the Kavala wakf were based.

Egypt, which was a province of the Ottoman Empire, declared its independence at 1866, retaining, though, a typical rather than essential subjection to the Ottoman rule. Due to this, it had neither legal status on the international level, nor a diplomatic representation of its own, being accommodated by the Ottoman Embassies and Consulates, when needed. Thus, when the Treaty of Athens was signed in 1913, Egypt was considered as subordinate to the Ottoman Empire, and as such, subject to the provisions of the treaty (Tsegelidou, 1988:134-151). Nevertheless, on March 15th, 1922 the Commander of Egypt Fouad I declared the full independence of Egypt and proclaimed himself as the first king of Egypt. Consequently, the Kavala wakf became Egyptian property, and as such, it was exempted from the lists and regulations concerning properties and property rights mentioned in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

Disagreement for the legitimacy of the above process was expressed by certain legal experts. According to them, the Kavala wakf belonged to the “undue” oblations whose property consisted of public land, of which, in turn, the property rights belonged to the State, and the beneficial interests, to the wakf (Tsegelidou, 1988:134-151). The “State” mentioned above was initially the Ottoman State which was succeeded by the Greek State, and thus, the real estate of
the specific wakf should have been included in the exchangeable immobile property (Tsouderos, 1927). The beneficial interests of the Egyptians, on the other hand, were integral to the operation of the wakf, and they would vanish if the wakf ceased existing as a legal entity. Furthermore, according to a document with protocol no 363/71, of January 30th, 1957, related to the Egyptian wakfs, the Muslim community of Kavala at the 1923 exchange of populations had declared the Kavala wakf as exchangeable, because the revenues of the wakf were devoted to the Muslim community there.

Despite the above, the consideration of the Kavala wakf as Egyptian property was greatly due to political pressure to the Greek government, from the -flourishing then- Greek community in Egypt, which considered it as an opportunity for exchange for privileges that they could gain from the Egyptian administration. From then on, the Egyptian State considering the wakf as property of the king of Egypt, seized the wakf property after the deposition of king Faruk I (1952), and assigned its management to the Egyptian Ministry of Wakfs (see par. 2.1). This legal status is kept until today.

**Record of the Kavala Wakf Property**

According to the Record of Wakf Properties in Kavala and in Thasos, which was co-signed by Greece and Egypt in Athens (August 1st, 1984), the record of properties is as shown below:

1. Mohamed Ali’s house, in Panagia quarter in Kavala: area 2079 sq. m., property of Egypt.
2. The centre of social services Imaret, also in Panagia quarter, Theodorou Poulidou Street: area 4167 sq. m., property of Egypt.
3. A land parcel with an old house in it, in Panagia square, Ioustinianou Street: area 400 sq. m., property of Egypt.
4. Part of the garden in Mohamed Ali’s house (see 1): area 655 sq. m., property of Greece.
5. The Mausoleum of Mohamed Ali’s father in Kavala, Venizelou Street: area 920 sq. m., property of Greece.

**MONUMENT IN FOCUS: IMARET OF KAVALA**

**History of Imaret**

The Imaret of Muhammad Ali has been studied by a number of scholars (Toledano, 2003:423-431; Stefanidou, 1987:203-265; Bruni, 2003; Kiel, 1996:145-158; Haluk, 1976:65-69) since it appeared to be the latest new imaret established in the empire. It was built between 1817 and 1821, as part of an impressive mosque — “medrese” complex. It is one of the last built in this particular period and the only one which survived almost intact (Fig. 1). It is located in Panagia peninsula of Kavala, in a location with view of the whole Kavala bay. Its location in a comparatively small –for that period- town, as part of a complex that contained a “medrese”, suggests that it may have resembled earlier endowments, planned to serve a varied clientele, including a community of scholars. Muhammad Ali’s imaret may also have been intended to fill a void created by the lapsed functioning of the nearby imaret founded by Grand Vizier “Makbul” İbrahim Pasha (died 1536) as part of his complex, some 300 meters north of the new one (Singer, 2010).

Egyptians showed a vivid interest in Kavala which lasted for almost a century. It is characteristic that with their initiative, city plans and hydro network were planned for Panagia quarter at the beginning of the 20th century which was not, though, implemented (Lykourinos, 2005). The Kavala wakf officially stopped operating in June 1924. The Egyptian presence in Kavala, though, did not cease. Egyptians went on buying real estate in the area, with money coming from the wakf property, many of which, were later sold again by the Ministry of Wakfs of Egypt to private buyers. It is characteristic that 18 related transactions of houses and stores were recorded during the period 1965-1976. Since 1922, the Imaret spaces were used to house refugees. In 1931, in order for the adjacent street to be widened, a part of Imaret was
demolished. In 1967, when the military junta seized power in Greece, the residents (mostly refugees) of Imaret were ordered to leave and the monument was sealed.

For almost thirty years Imaret remained completely deserted. Then, after an unofficial settlement of property issues, a part of it operated as bar and restaurant while other parts were used as warehouses. In most parts, though, the decay was severe. Part of its roof fell down, some patios were destroyed, and many walls were ruined. The process of complete disaster seemed irreversible. At the same time, several efforts of the Municipality of Kavala to reach to an agreement with the Egyptian government for the restoration of Imaret were fruitless, due to legal and mostly financial problems. There was speculation that the main reason for the failure of the negotiations was that the proposals of the municipality always aimed at the transfer of property rights of Imaret from the Egyptian government to the Greek State or to the Municipality of Kavala, something that the Egyptians were unwilling to accept. In 2001, though, there was a full reverse of the decay process. After significant efforts, a local entrepreneur managed to arrange for a 50 years lease of Imaret. Consequently, the complex was restored and converted into a luxurious and elegant hotel, which maintains something of the ambience of its era (Municipality of Kavala, 2009).

Structural and Functional Elements
The Imaret complex included a public kitchen, two Islamic schools ("medrese"), an elementary school ("megteb") a private mosque and administrative offices (Stefanidou, 1987). In its area of 4167 sq. m. it contained tens of dormitories, a "meskit" (mosque without a minaret) where teaching was taking place, kitchens, storage facilities, Turkish baths and secret patios. The cost of Imaret reached 15000 English pounds, a mythical amount for that period. It was a great and
strong intervention in the urban fabric of Kavala, probably the most significant in the 19th century (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Imaret at mid 1950s
(Source: Municipal Museum of Kavala).

Muhammad Ali’s kulliye was constructed during the transition period, when the traditional religious system of education started being questioned, and Muslim society was divided between the East, representing traditions, and the West, representing modernity. Thus, the construction of such a great institution of religious nature vivified the religious feelings of the local society and strengthened its conservative reflexes. Despite the generally beneficial presence of the Egyptians in Kavala, the activities of the students (“softa”) of the religious schools, very often had controversial effects on the local society. The number of these people was occasionally higher than 600, which made them a social group remarkable in size and very influential for the local politics. Their diverse origins from all over the Ottoman Empire, the long period of their studies (often reaching the decade), their devotion to religious tradition, and their antithesis to every modernization in social developments consolidated their conservatism. Thus, in periods of tensions between ethnic and religious groups in Kavala (often due to tensions between Greece and Turkey), softas were at the forefront of the conflicts (Lykourinos, 2005).

The operation of the two mendreses lasted until July 1902, and it was interrupted due to administrative changes in Kavala and in Thasos. Provision of food went on until 1923.

**Architectural Elements**

The Imaret complex was better perceived at its totality integrated in the structure of the old city, when seen from a distance. It followed the traditional introvert internal spatial arrangement and was adapted to the physical environment. Since different parts of it were constructed in different periods, there were variations in the architectural and structural style between these parts. Nevertheless, the geometric and axial arrangement of “kulliye” was clearly distinguishable from the irregular structure of the rest of the city. The monumental pattern once more emphasized the prominent element of the Ottoman city, its introversion (Stefanidou, 1991; Celik, 1986:27). The
dominant elements in its architectural style were the successive curves, the arched gates, numerous chimneys, and more than 100 lead domes, visible from most parts of the city (Fig. 3).

Kulliye consisted of four parts positioned in a row, and each part was organized around four patios. Starting from the north side, the first structure was Imaret with the mekteb in its northeast corner. Then, there was the one of mendreses with the main dershane in its southeast corner, and next was the second mendrese with the second dershane in its northeast corner and the “wet” spaces in its south side. At the south end, there were the offices of the administration of the wakf. Each one of the four parts had a relative autonomy in its organization and all spaces were focusing on the patios, which were the characteristic element of all constructions hosting collective ways of living. To the contrary, the structural and operational characteristics of all four parts were in a parallel deployment, without any of them standing out of the rest. A comparatively higher emphasis was given in highlighting the units of dershane and mekteb, which, in any case, were internal elements, integrated in the separate parts. Special attention was given to the domes above the main entrances and the points where corners were formed, at the top of which, alems were crested, made of marble or bronze. According to Unsal (1959) “alem” means flag but also signifies the symbols at the top of big domes of mosques or minarets, such as crescents, stars etc., made of bronze or gold. All domes were covered by sheets of lead, overlapping at their sides for better insulation, and forming groins very characteristic for Ottoman architecture. The variety of structural elements, the different types and sizes of domes and chimneys constituted a rather unruly whole, quite provocative in attracting the attention of the viewer.

The walls of Imaret were of 0.90 – 1.00 m. width, made of roughly carved stones and scattered bricks, with no specific order. This manner of construction was kept until the points where arcs and domes started being formed. From then on, construction was made exclusively by bricks, in a way quite typical for ottoman architecture, that is, without wooden frames. The distinguishing element between the initial, main construction and the later built additions (such as the second dershane) is interesting, since the first one was characterized by a very solid and
compact construction, while the second was much lighter, with a strong resemblance to the houses of traditional architectural style of this area and era.

In general, the Imaret complex was distinguished for its simplicity in its structural geometric elements, and in the decoration of external and internal facets. The most exciting architectural elements were the internal patios and the continuous succession of closed, semi-hypaethral, and open air spaces, with the equivalent gradual shadings. Despite the above, the autonomy of each one of the internal spaces with the few windows usually fenced by iron bars is not distracted, serving, thus, its original objective, the religious internal concentration.

Figure 4: Imaret in Panagia
(Source: Photographic archive of Th. Papadopoulos).

Imaret Today - Restoration and Current Operation

As mentioned in par. 3.2 above, Imaret was abandoned from 1967 to early 1990s. The decay process was reversed due to the efforts of Anna Misirian, a local entrepreneur who managed to arrange for a 50 years lease of Imaret from the Egyptian government. The negotiations with the Egyptians lasted some seven years and the lease was signed in 2001.

In 2004, after a 22-month restoration, Imaret reemerged as the first boutique hotel in Greece to be housed in a historic building (Fig. 4). The cost of restoration reached to 7 million Euros and the restoration managed to revive the initial image of the monument, from the colors in
the walls to the fabric of the armchairs. The 30 luxuriously appointed rooms resemble Byzantine chapels, with Egyptian chandeliers, and antique kilims on the stone floors. The main dershane was converted to a library and the old cistern of the primary school, to an internal pool (Fig. 5, 6, 7). The hotel is further equipped by an external pool decorated with mosaic design, a Turkish bath, fireplaces, and a restaurant with view to the golf of Kavala.

Besides its operation as a hotel, Imaret has also significant contribution to the cultural life of the city, being the host of an N.G.O. named I.M.A.R.E.T. (Institute of Mohamed Ali for the Research of the Eastern Tradition). Among the general objectives of I.M.A.R.E.T. are the cultural cooperation between Greece and Egypt, and more specifically, between Kavala and Alexandria. Its objectives also include the research on manuscripts of the library of Alexandria, related to the Egyptian presence in Kavala and the operation of Imaret, and the organization of conferences, exhibitions, concerts, etc., initiated by the Cairo Opera Symphony Orchestra at 2006.

CONCLUSIONS

Wakfs were a significant means for the implementation of social policy in the Ottoman Empire and they were very important for their hosting urban communities. The undisputed positive role of wakfs in the development of Ottoman cities is supported by historical documentation, and has been continued in contemporary cities, either of the Muslim world, or in non Muslim cities of an Ottoman past.

The significant contribution of wakfs in the economic prosperity of the hosting cities was shown in various studies (Nefissa, 2001; Yahya, 2008; Karababa, 2012). By means of their official function, they participate in the construction of vital urban infrastructure, create new jobs, provide low interest loans and affordable settlements to business of various types, assist in improving conditions of public health and safety, and provide social services. For many cities, wakfs also constituted an important factor for urban renewal and development. Their main elements, külliyes, and the commercial buildings which supported them, contributed to the revival of city centres as well as to dynamic expansions of cities. Furthermore, wakfs granted to hosting cities and communities a specific urban physiognomy, desired by their founders. This was notable in most Balkan cities, where, after their conquest, wakfs were established and külliye complexes were built to give them an Ottoman character. In general, wakfs constituted an important positive factor for both the architecture and the social and economic life of their hosting cities, and they became their most prominent branding element.

In contemporary Greece, the various ways in which wakfs were handled, were greatly influenced by their dynamic social and economic characteristics, but even more, by the image which they transpired on a symbolic level, in interaction with the predominant political climate of
the equivalent historic periods. The Greek State after the Ottoman occupation was in quest for national identity. Thus, it turned against its Ottoman inheritance and mainly against its most prominent symbols, these being usually wakf monuments. This went on for most of the 20th century, in a political reaction influenced by the polemic climate of this period (wars, and later the Cyprus issue and the military junta), and taking various forms, related to the different category of wakfs (“exchangeable”, Muslim, or Egyptian –as is the unique case of the Kavala wakf).

The last part of the 20th century was characterized by Internationalization and Europeanization of policies in Greece, and the improvement in the relationships between Greece and Turkey. This was also reflected on the way that wakfs were managed. New approaches included their recognition as part of cultural inheritance and subsequent restoration and protection, or a process of rationalization and consultation in the case of management of Muslim wakfs of Western Thrace. The Egyptian wakf in Kavala was also affected positively, through the flexibility of the concurrent to the new conditions private initiatives which managed to achieve the restoration of Imaret and its current use as a boutique hotel.

The Kavala wakfs are focused upon, since they are related to the complex system of land property, supported by legal and administrative structures -the historic evolution of which is very interesting- and being subject to external affairs and the relations between Greece and Egypt.

It is worth noting that since mid ‘80s the efforts of the Municipality of Kavala to reach to an agreement with the Egyptian government for the restoration of Imaret were fruitless. On the other hand, it was only the private sector who managed to arrange for some uses in the Imaret, either at early 90’s, or in 2001 –the latter being much more organized and ambitious. A quick conclusion could be that this constituted another proof that in Greece, the private sector was more efficient in negotiating than the public sector. Nevertheless, one should look deeper in the way that the Imaret issue was handled by the Greek and Egyptian administrations during all these years. In periods of nationalism, such as the years of military junta in Greece, Imaret was intentionally left in decay –since, due to its “foreign/non Greek” property status, it could not be demolished. At that time, efforts for having it restored were not supported by the Greek Ministry of External Affairs while at the same time, the Egyptian government was unwilling to spend money for any restoration work in a monument for which Egyptian property rights were not guaranteed by the local hosts. The deadlock was tided over with the initiative of the Greek entrepreneur who started negotiations with the Egyptians at 2001, and seven years later she managed to sign a 50 years’ lease of Imaret.
The restoration of Imaret is considered as one of the finest examples of its kind (Fig. 8). It has been awarded twice with European awards, and most significantly, it became part of the contemporary movement concerning the recognition of the significance of cultural heritage. There is a norm of ideas and principles, based on the above movement, which introduces the global dimension of the cultural heritage and underlines the obligation of humanity to preserve it (Stefanou et al, 1995). At the same time, codes of ethics are developed which affect the attitude of social and scientific organizations, as well as the attitude of the public towards historic places and monuments as Imaret (Konsola, 1995). This spirit has been fully adopted in Imaret, which also presents a rich cultural activity with international dimensions, extending cultural cooperation between Greece and Egypt.

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\textbf{Authors:}

\textbf{Konstantinos Lalenis}
Assistant Professor, DPRD,
University of Thessaly, Greece
klalenis@uth.gr

\textbf{Elena Samourkasidou}
Urban/Regional Planner, PhD candidate, DPRD,
University of Thessaly, Greece
elsamourka@yahoo.gr