

*Hilal Alkan*

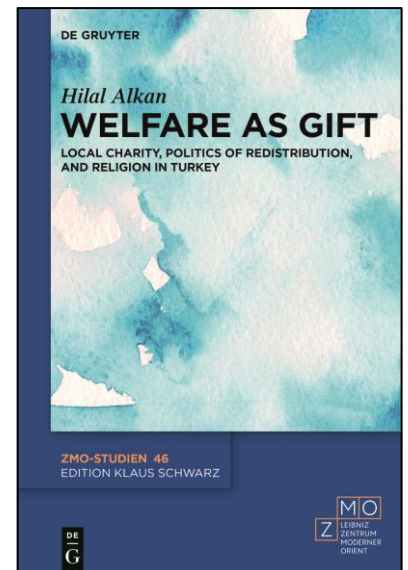
# WELFARE AS GIFT

## Local Charity, Politics of Redistribution, and Religion in Turkey

The welfare regime in Turkey has been undergoing a radical transformation since the early 2000s. Welfare provisions, especially poverty alleviation schemes, are increasingly framed as gifts, and select civil society organisations have assumed the state's welfare provision functions through non-transparent public funding. *Waqf*, the Islamic institution of endowment, has played an important role in this transformation. It provides both the institutional frame of operations and the religious imaginary signification that interpellates subjects to take part as givers and receivers of gifts. This material exchange of care and money through newly configured gift-relations between the providers and beneficiaries constitutes not only a realm of politics but also a site of ethical negotiations with embodied consequences.

This book is based on an extensive ethnographic study conducted between 2008-2009 among the charitable organizations of Kayseri, a central Anatolian city with booming industry and a majority conservative political orientation. A stronghold of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power in Turkey since 2002, the city has showcased the tenets of the welfare transformation that is to come, even in the early stages of AKP rule. With a focus on the daily practices within the field of beneficence, the book investigates the gift circuits that bring together central state institutions, municipalities, local notables and business people, religious groups, volunteers and employers of charitable organisations, and the urban poor. In these gift circuits, objects, money, services, prayers, recognition, and political and social influence flow in various directions through formal and informal routes. The book illustrates the growing significance of these particular forms of gift-giving in the field of poverty alleviation and welfare provision in Turkey and their role in the drastic political transformation of the country.

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Scientists in Arabic, Islamic and literary studies,  
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