

CONFERENCE PAPER

Role of the *Waqf* Institution in the Establishment and Sustained Operation of *Dar al-Shifas* and *Dar al-Ajazar* in Anatolia: Evidence from *Waqf* Deeds during the Seljuk Period

Abstract

Public health and sanitation were critical indicators of civilizational advancement in Islamic societies, particularly during the Seljuk period in Anatolia (483–707 AH / 1077–1308 CE). This study examines the role of the *waqf* (*charitable endowment*) system in establishing and sustaining *Dar al-shifas* (*hospitals*) and *Dar al-ajazar* (*care homes for the elderly and disabled*) through an analysis of waqf deeds. The findings highlight how revenue from endowed properties supported the construction, operation, and management of these institutions, ensuring their functionality amidst the political, military, and cultural dynamics of the Seljuk Rome period.

Key words: Aged, Public Health, Sanitation, Hospitals, Financial Management, Humans

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Introduction

The *waqf* (*Islamic endowment*) system was a cornerstone of the socio-economic framework in Islamic civilization, particularly during the Seljuk Rome period (483–707 AH / 1077–1308 CE). This era was characterized by political consolidation, military expansion, and cultural flourishing following the Battle of Manzikert (463 AH / 1071 CE). As a branch of the Great Seljuk Empire (431–590 AH / 1040–1194 CE), the Seljuk Rome State (Figure 1) leveraged the *waqf* system to establish and sustain healthcare institutions such as *dar al-shifas* (*hospitals*) and *dar al-ajazas* (*care facilities for the elderly and disabled*). This study analyzes *waqf* deeds to explore their role in the creation, administration, and continuity of these institutions.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing primary sources, including *waqf* deeds from the Seljuk Rome period, to examine the establishment, management, and financial sustainability of healthcare institutions. The analysis was supplemented by historical records and scholarly works to contextualize the socio-political environment.

Findings

Establishment of Healthcare Institutions

Between 483–707 AH / 1077–1308 CE, at least 12 *dar al-shifas* and 5 *dar al-ajazas* were established across major Anatolian cities. While prominent examples were built in Kayseri, Sivas, and Konya, these institutions were widespread, with a *dar al-shifa* also endowed to each of the cities of Erzincan, Erzurum, Amasya, Aksaray, Mardin, Tokat, and Kastamonu. Many of these facilities, such as those in Amasya, Divriği, and Tokat, have remained standing to this day, while others have either fallen into ruin or are only mentioned in archival documents¹⁻⁵ (Cantay, 1992, pp. 32–35). These institutions were founded by sultans, noblewomen, and high-ranking officials to provide medical care, train physicians, and support vulnerable populations. For example, the *dar al-shifa* in Kayseri, established between 600 – 602 AH / 1204–1206 CE under the will of Gevher Nesibe, sister of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw I, was linked to mosques and agricultural lands for financial support (Ibn Bibi, 2011, p. 136). Similarly, the Sivas

dar al-shifa, founded in 614 AH / 1217 CE by Sultan Izz al-Din Keykavus I, spanned 3,400 square meters with 30 rooms and was staffed by a physician, surgeon, ophthalmologist,

- 1- Sivas Keykavus dar al-shifa: Şaman Doğan, N. (2016) Anadolu Selçuklu Sultani I. İzzeddin Keykavus Döneminde (1211-1220) Banılar ve İmar Faaliyetleri. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları (HÜTAD)(24), pp. 219-250.
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- 3- Konya dar al-shifa: Bayat, Ali Haydar. (2003) Tıp Tarihi. İstanbul: Merkezefendi Geleneksel Tıp Derneği, pp. 225-240.
- 4- Tokat dar al-shifa: Şeşen, Ramazan. (2002) Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk-İslam Medeniyeti. İstanbul.
- 5- Amasya dar al-shifa: Yıldırım, Nuran. (1999) Anadolu Selçuklu ve Beylikler Dönemi Darüşşifaları. İstanbul.



pharmacist, and attendants, funded by revenues from five villages, seven plots of land, and 108 shops (Günergon, and Atkar, 2015, p. 25).

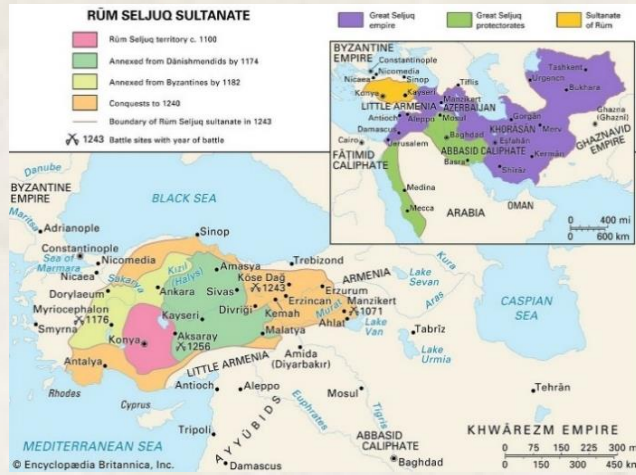


Figure 1. Territory of the Seljuk Rome State in Anatolia and Asia Minor, Aligned with the Great Seljuk Empire

Nature of Waqf Properties

Waqf deeds reveal that endowed properties included agricultural lands, caravanserais, shops, and public baths, ensuring sustainable revenue for *dar al-shifas* and *dar al-ajazas*. For instance, the *waqf* deed for the Konya *dar al-shifa* (1205 CE) allocated income from villages and markets for construction and maintenance (Meshkour, 1971, p. 108). These properties were inalienable, protecting them from sale or transfer, and were managed by palace treasurers who oversaw staff appointments and medical supply procurement (Cantay, 1992, p. 34). In cases of destruction, proceeds from repurposed properties were redistributed to the poor (Günergon, and Atkar, 2015, p. 26).

Management of Waqf Properties

Waqf deeds outlined precise conditions for managing healthcare institutions, including trustee appointments, staff salaries, and free services for the poor.⁶ The Sivas *dar al-shifa* deed (1217 CE) mandated skilled physicians and free care for indigent patients, reflecting a commitment to social equity (Günergon, and Atkar, 2015, p. 25).

Sustainability of Services through Waqf Revenues

Sustainable revenue streams from *waqf* properties, such as commercial and agricultural assets, ensured the longevity of *dar al-shifas* and *dar al-ajazas*. These assets were protected

6- It is stated that the founder of the building, Hacı Ferruh, was appointed as a trustee and overseer in the foundation deed of the Sivas Keykavus Hospital, and that she assumed duties such as Emir, Ustadüddar (Agha of the Hospital), and Privy Treasurer: Cevdet, M. (1938). *Sivas Darüşşifası Vakfiyesi ve Tercümesi*. *Vakıflar Dergisi*, I, pp. 37- 38.



from alienation, enabling institutions to operate during economic or political instability (Meshkour, 1971, p. 110; Cantay, 1992, p. 35; Günergon, and Atkar, 2015, p. 26).

Conclusion

The *waqf* system in Seljuk Rome facilitated the establishment and operation of *dar al-shifas* and *dar al-ajazas* within a dynamic historical context characterized by political consolidation and cultural exchange. By leveraging endowed properties, the Seljuk Rome State ensured sustainable healthcare services, influencing institutional development in subsequent Anatolian states. For instance, the Ottoman Empire adopted and expanded the Seljuk *waqf* model, as seen in the establishment of hospital complexes like the Süleymaniye Külliyesi, which included a *dar al-shifa* funded by *waqf* revenues, directly drawing on Seljuk precedents (Yildirim, 2015, p. 15). This continuity underscores the enduring impact of the Seljuk *waqf* system on regional healthcare infrastructure.

Authors' Contribution

Masoumeh Dehghan contributed significantly to the conceptualization and design of the article. He conducted an extensive literature review and drafted the initial manuscript. He also revised the manuscript for intellectual content. Mahboobeh Farkhondehzadeh played a role in data collection, organization, and analysis of the reviewed literature. Mohammad Hashemimehr contributed to the synthesis and interpretation of the data and provided valuable feedback to enhance the quality of the work. All authors read and approved the final version of the work.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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