

# Evolution Of the Health System in Iraq During the Ottoman Period (Ottoman Hospitals in Iraq Example)

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## **Introduction**

The development of nations is often measured by the evolution of health status in them, the Ottoman state is often said to be an underdeveloped state that has not respected the rights of its citizens especially in health matters. So, we decided to look for the health situation in the Ottoman Empire, and we chose Iraq as a model, because Iraq was a province follow of the Ottoman Empire. Let us show whether the Ottoman state actually neglected the health status in its provinces or not ?

Despite the difficulty of searching for this subject, due to the scarcity of sources, but we were able to find many information, from the primary sources, especially the Ottoman newspapers which were published in Iraq, especially the newspaper (AL-Zwraa) and the newspaper (Sada Babl). I was lucky, especially after finding a handbook of statistics written by a Turkish doctor working in a (Algrabaa) hospital in Baghdad.

In 1871, the Ottoman Empire Issued (Public Health Management System), It is the first public health system. Article 1, obliges the municipalities of the Ottoman states to appoint a doctor and his assistant. Article 5, specifies the duties of this medical staff to inspect the patients of the town free of charge.

The Ottoman State was interested in building quarantine houses to accommodate infectious diseases. The interest in building a large hospital in Baghdad, start during the reign of the governor Medhat Pasha in 1872, this educational hospital was built along the lines of the Educational Hospital in Istanbul. The hospital built by Medhat Pasha is still in Baghdad and in the same place on the bank of the Tigris River (in Karkh). Another hospital was built in Mosul in 1844, and in Basra in 1890. Then the construction of hospitals in Iraq continued, with the establishment of a second hospital in Baghdad next to (Rusafa) in 1901.

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In this research, we try to explain the civilization aspect of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq. By highlighting the health reality in Iraq in the Ottoman era. And here we will ask many questions and most important: Were these hospitals primitive or developed? Were there departments and specializations? Was the treatment free? How did these hospitals affect the health situation in Iraq? What is the format of these hospitals ?

Iraq has been exposed in recent history to many epidemics and deadly diseases, known as the plague, and the spread of malaria and typhoid, which was accompanied by numerous floods. There have been no health measures taken to prevent these diseases and epidemics. Following the establishment of the quarantine system in Istanbul in 1838, health systems began to spread in the Ottomans states. Where in that year the quarantine system began to be implemented in Iraq in 1840<sup>1</sup>. And continued to issue many sub-systems of this system until 1871 and on July 21 of the same year published the first public health system and its management in the capital and in the states. Through this system, the Ottoman state began Interest Towards the overall health conditions and not only quarantine<sup>2</sup>.

This system imposed on each municipality of the cities of each of the states of the state to appoint a doctor and his assistant in the big cities to do: “Patients are inspected free of charge twice a week at a specific location and announced by the municipal administration”<sup>3</sup>. Provided that the designated doctor is responsible for the health of the city, and the municipality of the city is obliged to pay his salary. However, it remains linked to the “Department of Medical Matters” established in Istanbul in the year of the promulgation of this system, and receives instructions from them. The system also ordered the city’s municipality to also open a public pharmacy to provide the poor with medicines free of charge<sup>4</sup>.

The first small health department was established in Baghdad in 1852<sup>5</sup>, the Quarantine circles continued to operate in Baghdad until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. During his tenure, the governor, Medhat Pasha(1862-1872), took care to

1 Abbas al-Azzawi, *Encyclopedia of the History of Iraq Between Two Occupations*, Vol. 7, Baghdad 1957, p. 41.

2 Jamil Musa Najjar, *The Ottoman Administration in Baghdad, from the Reign of the Governor Medhat Pasha to the end of Ottoman Rule 1869-1917*, Cairo 1991, p.433.

3 *Ibid*, p. 434.

4 Hashim al-Witri and Muammar al-Shabandar, *History of Medicine in Iraq*, Baghdad 1939, p. 48.

5 Abdul Azim Abbas Nassar, *Municipalities of Iraq in the Ottoman Era 1543-1918*, Tehran, 1999, p. 29.

organize them thoroughly and developed its work<sup>6</sup>. Expanded the work of the health departments in Iraq at the beginning of the nineteenth century has been appointed inspectors on health, and became each Directorate has an inspector to manage it and an accountant and clerks and a number of other staff, and these departments consist of<sup>7</sup>:

- 1) Health Department of Khanaqin district. It includes a doctor, a (Bashkatib), two clerks and a specialist in examining the funerals entering the state.
- 2) Health Department of Sanjak Karbala, as well as in the districts of Najaf, Kadhimiya, Samarra, Mandali and Maysib.

Quarantine departments were in the state, especially the cities of Khanaqin and Mandali on the Iranian border, taken several measures Including reservation the pilgrims to come to the state from Iran for ten days before allowing them to enter Iraq, especially when the emergence of signs of any epidemic in Iranian cities<sup>8</sup>. It is clear from the above that the Ottoman state has taken care of public health in the Iraq province.

### **Establishment of Hospitals in Iraq (Mostshfa Al-grabaa)**

The first attempt to open an official hospital in Baghdad was in 1766, the Ottoman administration opened a hospital known as isolation house (Dar al-azel)<sup>9</sup> The hospital did not continue to operate and was closed. The exact reasons for its closure are not known, but it seems to have been closed because of lack of funds to sustain it.

The first public hospital in Iraq was established in Baghdad by the governor of Medhat Pasha (1869-1872), who realized from the first moment the deterioration of the health conditions in Baghdad, he launched a campaign against backwardness and sorcery. People were used to send their children and daughters to be treated by witches and charlatans. then sought to build a modern hospital in Baghdad, (Baghdad's population at the time was only 150,000. Arabs and foreigners living

6 Great Britain Naval Intelligence Division, *Iraq and the Persian Gulf*, Oxford University Press, 1944, p. 161.

7 Najjar, Op. Cit, p. 445.

8 *Ibid.*

9 India Office Records (IOR), L/P & S/10/212/6 *Summary of Events in Turkish Iraq During May, 1914*, p. 8.

there)<sup>10</sup>. As the state treasury was not enough to build the project, Medhat Pasha appealed to the people to donate to build the hospital, and the donations of rich and dignitaries. The governor asked the central government in Istanbul to send a doctor, a pharmacist and a number of staff with experience in health matters, and took the bricks in the old ruins and built the hospital<sup>11</sup>.

The hospital, which was opened in 1872 named the Mostshfa Al-grabaa (Hospital of Strangers)<sup>12</sup> was built. In the western side of Baghdad on the banks of the Tigris River. The hospital consisted of 50 beds and included a number of departments including the Department of Internal Medicine, the Department of Surgery and the Department of Venereal Diseases as well as a special ward for prisoners, beggars and prostitutes. The hospital also housed an immediate ambulance division, and the important thing that all services provided by the hospital to patients were completely free<sup>13</sup>.

From the beginning of its establishment until the end of the Ottoman era, the hospital faced many difficulties, perhaps foremost of which was its lack of sufficient resources to ensure its continuity, faced with this problem, the hospital administration appealed to the people to provide material assistance<sup>14</sup>.

The second problem that faced the work of the hospital was the lack of medical and administrative staff, which was one of the reasons for the closure of the hospital for more than once, Until the governor of Baghdad Qadri Pasha, worked on restoration of the hospital and the provision of supplies of medicines and medical equipment in 1878, however, the attention did not last long, as soon the hospital was neglected, after the transfer of the governor Qadri Pasha. The hospital was finally closed in 1890, The contents of the hospital (surgical instruments, beds, pharmacy, etC ) were transferred to the new hospital, which was built by the new governor Namik Pasha<sup>15</sup>.

Namik Pasha (1899-1902) is credited with establishing the second hospital in Baghdad on the Rusafa side, where it was opened on 5 April 1901 and included

10 *Al-Zawra Newspaper*, Baghdad, May 12, 1869

11 *Ibid.*

12 The reason for naming the hospital as "strangers" is because it was initially allocated to strangers who are homeless, al-Azzawi, Op.cit. p. 45.

13 Al-Witri and al-Shabandar, Op.Cit, p. 54.

14 Abdul Hamid Al-alouji, *History of Medicine in Iraq*, Baghdad, 1967, p. 446.

15 al-Azzawi, Op.cit, Op.cit, p. 141.

several sections (Esoteric diseases, surgical, eyes, women’s diseases). Special lounges for operations, a special section for the insane, as well as a pharmacy attached to it, a mosque, a kitchen and a garden. The hospital received great attention from the governor Namik Pasha, who aspired to make it better than others, so he brought him medicine, disinfectants and surgical instruments from Europe. As for the administrative body of the hospital consisted of a manager and his agent and other workers for various administrative affairs as well as a group of doctors for various specialties in the hospital, such as Dr. Nizamuddin for internal diseases, (Zheni Bek) for skin diseases, and eye doctor Sami Sulaiman<sup>16</sup>. In order to ensure the continuity of work in this hospital, a central committee was set up to oversee the administration of the hospital, including a doctor (municipal department), a deputy governor and a number of other members<sup>17</sup>.

As for the expenses of the hospital, two-thirds of them were paid from the municipality’s imports, while the other third was met by imports from the (Ker)<sup>18</sup> bridge, the conditions for patients to enter this hospital were to obtain a certificate from the municipality confirming that he was poor before he entered the hospital<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 1:** Auditor chart for the first month of hospital<sup>20</sup>

Entrants	Treated	Decedent	Under treatment
84	43	4	37

During the reign of Najm aldeen al-Mulla (1908-1909), the hospital of Algrabaa was restored and the contents of the hospital established by Namik Pasha were transferred to the hospital of Algrabaa. The governor expanded the hospital’s halls and took care of its cleanliness and development of its health services<sup>21</sup>. It is noted from the above that every new governor comes to Baghdad works on to transfer the contents of the hospital to another building, the reason for this seems

16 *Sada Babil Journal*, No. 64, October 28, 1910.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Ker Bridge: It is an iron bridge, built in Baghdad during the reign of Najib Pasha and was built from the land fund of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The bridge is located in Baghdad (Karkh side). Look, Mohammed Hassan Al-Jabri, Bridges of Old Baghdad, *Al Sabah Newspaper*, 18/11/2014. <http://www.alsabaah.iq>

19 Raed Jafar Matar, “Al-Majidiya Hospital”, *Al-Rasheed Encyclopedia*, <https://raidmoter.blogspot.com>

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Sada Babel Newspaper*, No. 229, March 17, 1914.

to be the new governor's desire to develop health in Baghdad.

The hospital developed significantly, especially after the great care of the Ottoman governors, the number of surgeries performed by the doctors at the hospital increased, Dr. Mohamed Kani<sup>22</sup> alone conducted at least 60 surgical operations in September 1913, and for the first time in the history of modern Iraq, nursing jobs were assigned to some French nuns, this was one of the reasons why women were more likely to visit the hospital. This hospital continued to provide treatment services until the British occupation of Baghdad in 1917<sup>23</sup>.

A number of doctors also excelled in discovering medicines for infectious diseases. The Turkish doctor Muzaffar Beek invented a special drug to treat Syphilis diseases in 1914, after the agreement with the hospital strangers, the hospital prepared large quantities of this drug and distributed to the hospital and pharmacies in Baghdad to treat patients and distributed free<sup>24</sup>.

#### **Statistics of the Algrabaa Hospital in Baghdad in 1911<sup>25</sup>:**

The health situation in the Algrabaa hospital has developed to a very high degree. Through the search we found a printed booklet (in Baghdad) in Turkish, and this booklet is a medical statistic written by the head of the hospital doctors, Dr. Mohamed Kani. This statistic represents the development of the hospital, so we will talk about them in some detail to clarify the reality of health in Iraq accurately.

This is the precise annual scientific statistic of patients and the methods that have been treated by complex surgical procedures under anesthesia in a hospital in the late 19th century, is a guide to keeping pace with the authorities in the Ottoman state, of health global scientific development and non-backwardness. Second: to attract the hospital strangers, for patients from different countries and states mentioned in the statistical is another evidence of what it has the hospital is of a high scientific level.

22 Mohamed Kani is a Turkish doctor specializing in women's surgery; *Ibid*, No. 203, September 17, 1913.

23 *Ibid*.

24 *Ibid*.

25 A booklet is a statistical printed, located in the library of Endowments in Mosul No. 6/610-2843, It is in Turkish. Trans by Iraqi Pediatrician Mahmoud Haj Qassem.

**Table 2:** The author listed the details of the operations performed in the hospital in 1911, these are some examples<sup>26</sup>

Operation type	the number
Inflammation of the lymph nodes in the neck	5
Testicular inflammation	8
Hemorrhoid	18
Bladder stones	11
Types of hernias	122

**Table 3:** Results of treatment of patients with various diseases in 1911<sup>27</sup>

Different diseases	Transferred from the previous year	Entrants Year 1911	Total	Healing	Amelioration	Death	Transferred to 1912
Gastroenterology	7	271	278	165	80	22	11
Circulatory System	4	64	68	4	44	17	3
Apparatus Respiratorius	6	66	72	15	31	23	3
Urology Ward	3	99	102	70	28	4	0
Infectious Diseases	2	46	48	42	2	4	0
Skin and Floral Diseases	12	194	206	128	48	1	29
External Diseases	11	320	331	228	26	18	19
Women Diseases	0	10	10	7	2	1	0
Ophthalmology	0	21	21	11	10	0	0
Mental and Neurological Diseases	43	113	156	65	45	16	30
Patients in the Case of Recent Deterioration	0	20	0	0	0	20	0
Total	88	1224	1312	775	316	126	95

26 Dr. Mohamed Kani, "Statistics of the Algrabaa Hospital in 1911", Trans. Dr. Mahmoud Haj Qassem, *Iraqi Medical Journal*, Vol 58, No. 2, 2012, p.19.

27 Dr. Mohamed Kani, *Op. Cit*, p. 20.

**Table 4:** Number of reviewers of the hospital from other countries<sup>28</sup>

<b>Coming from</b>	<b>Number</b>
Turkey	5
Makkah	1
Medina	2
Aleppo	3
Kurdistan	10
Samarkand	12
Afghanistan	16
Morocco (Fez)	16
Tajikistan	1
Egypt	1
Beirut	1
Daïar Bakr	1

From the above, it can be said that the hospital of (Al grabaa) has become at that time one of the best hospitals in the Middle East, through patient schedules and hospital operations, we find several things:

- 1) The hospital has evolved so dramatically that it has been able to perform several operations.
- 2) The types of surgeries performed by the hospital indicate the presence of excellent medical staff and specialist.
- 3) Of course, these types of operations need advanced tools and medicines, and these were provided by the hospital.
- 4) All these operations were conducted free.

As part of the Ottoman government's concern for public health and the great vulnerability of the city of Baghdad to epidemics and transitional diseases, Sultan Abdul Hamid II instructed the formation of a medical body headed by the Turkish doctor Abdel Hamid Hikmat (One of the professors of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Istanbul) and was tasked to conduct a study on how to avoid the dangers of epidemics and the Commission continued its work for three years 1887-1890<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Mohamed Kani, *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> The committee visited four Ottoman states: Tripoli, Hejaz, Yemen and Baghdad, Look, Abdul Hameed Hekmat, "Medical Survey of Baghdad City, 1889", *Al-Tamimi Foundation for Scientific Research and Information*, Tunisia 1997, p. 128

The report dealt with three important issues: First: widespread diseases. Second: Factors and habits that help spread diseases. Third: Methods of treatment and local medicines. The report gave a clear picture of the aspects of social life in the Arab region, and its impact on human health. The report also contains satisfactory cases and methods of treatment, the report described some of the stories that the committee saw closely and references to some of the narratives of the patients, all of which came in a clear and easy way and scientific speech indicates the expertise of the medical body and its moderate opinion. It seems that the report gave special importance to the mandate of Baghdad, where the number of pages about one third of the manuscript pages and about half of what was written about Baghdad was an extensive study of the epidemiology of cholera in Baghdad in 1889. "This study is very accurate scientific, tables and statistics, which proved to match the study of (SNOW) tables on the wave of cholera in London in 1854, which is currently taught to students of medical college"<sup>30</sup>

### **Al Majidia Hospital<sup>31</sup>**

In 1895, the order was issued by the Interior Ministry to establish another hospital in the state of Baghdad, which was opened in 1897 called (Al Majidia Hospital). The hospital was allocated to Ottoman military personnel in Iraq and was run by military doctors who joined the Ottoman military divisions in Iraq. Several attempts have been made to improve and expand the hospital, including the attempt by the commander of the Sixth Corps (Sedqi Pasha) in 1907. The hospital continued to provide treatment services until the British occupation of Baghdad<sup>32</sup>.

Not only the health aspect of the city of Baghdad, it was issued order in 1908 to build a hospital in Najaf and another in Karbala and was named Hamidi hospital. Another hospital was opened in Karbala in 1914, especially after the need for this hospital, as hundreds of visitors arrived in the city, especially on religious occasions<sup>33</sup>.

In Basra, the municipality was established in 1869 to provide some health services, it was followed by a dispensary consisting of a few sections of health and preventive

30 Dr. Mahmoud Haj Qassim Mohammed, Presentation of a book of medical explorations, Written by Dr. Abdel Hakim Hekmat, <http://www.baytalmosul.com>.

31 Majidia, referring to Sultan Abdul Majeed.

32 Saeed Fatal, "How Iraqis knew hospitals", *Al-Mada Newspaper*, Baghdad, 15 July 2012, <http://www.almadasupplements.com>.

33 Ali Al-Wardi, *Social Glimpses from the History of Modern Iraq*, Vol. 4, Baghdad 1970, p. 193.

services and veterinary. It was run by one doctor, and it was his other duty to run the hospital, inspecting various civilian facilities, their markets, and alerting to irregularities health<sup>34</sup>. It appears that based on instructions received from Istanbul, met the elders of Basra and senior military personnel, and decided to raise funds for the establishment of a hospital consisting of twenty beds and home of the disabled includes twenty disabled people, during more than three months, the hospital was opened on 28 August 1908<sup>35</sup>.

**Table 5:** Its services were in the first month of his opening as follows<sup>36</sup>

Entrants		Treated	Decedent	Under treatment
Men	34	24	2	7
Women	2	2	0	0

In Mosul, it is credited to the governor of Mosul, Muhammed Enja Birkdar (1835-1843), in the establishment of the first official hospital in Iraq, the military “Qashla” hospital. The main purpose of the establishment was to provide health services to the 12th Brigade of the Ottoman army in Mosul. The hospital was run by a number of doctors, including Lt. Col. Demetraki, Major Issa and Jarrah Ismail Effendi, assisted by two pharmacists. Doctors (Lt. Col. Hassan Badri and Mohamed Amin)<sup>37</sup>

The health issues in Mosul were managed by the Municipal Council, which was established in 1869, in which a doctor, assistant, pharmacist, medical assistant in vaccinations (especially smallpox) and a specialized birth nurse (in Iraq known as Grandmother). The duties of the municipal council were to monitor restaurants and cafes and to monitor people’s health, there was one pharmacy in Mosul distributing drugs free of charge and the municipal council in Mosul continued to manage medical matters until 1891, when the Health Department was established which developed greatly after 1908. A health director in Mosul, Dr. Fadi Bek, was appointed and the parents began sending their children to Istanbul to study medicine. The health situation has developed in the city of Mosul has become in Mosul General Hospital a good number of doctors and pharmacists. Another hospital in Mosul was the military hospital, which included a group of doctors. In

34 Jafar Abdel-Dayem Banyan Al-Mansour, *Health History of the City of Basra*, Beirut 2017, p. 111.

35 *Ibid.* p. 112.

36 Al-Mansour, *Op. Cit.* p. 11.

37 Ahmed al-Sufi, *History of the City of Mosul*, Mosul 1970, p. 13.

1912 a large and modern hospital was built in Mosul called the Gharbaa Hospital. And the development of health in Mosul until the number of hospitals is five hospitals containing 3000 beds<sup>38</sup>.

The Ottoman press, which was published in Iraq, was concerned with the health situation. The Arabic-language newspaper *Sada Babil* followed the public health trend in Iraq. *Al-Zawra* newspaper, which was published in both Arabic and Turkish languages, was concerned with the health situation and devoted a number of its pages to the health issues and the dissemination of special methods to preserve human health, for example, in its issue of March 16, 1871, the newspaper attacked the officials responsible for cleaning up the city of Baghdad and accused them of not taking care of public health, the newspaper also constantly publishing news honoring some doctors and pharmacists who perform their duties well and give them medals and medals. The newspaper published a long article showing the dangers of people resorting to fortune-tellers and impostors and herbal medicine, and advised people to go to doctors to treat them from diseases<sup>39</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

through what has been presented in this modest research, it is clear to us that the Ottoman state has taken great care of the health situation in its states. Iraq has a large share of this interest, through the enactment of laws on public health, and sending medical missions to study the health situation, and the construction of hospitals in all Iraqi cities, perhaps the most prominent hospital built by the Ottomans is the Algrabaa hospital in Baghdad.

Algrabaa hospital was a real model for modern and sophisticated hospitals. It was initially built to accommodate 50 beds but gradually developed to be into one of the most important hospitals in the Middle East. in this hospital, take place the most difficult surgical operations at the time, and was supervised by the most skilled doctors of Turkey, especially Dr. Mohamed Kani. We have observed how he performed operations of lymph nodes and bladder stones, which are one of the most difficult operations to date, not to mention operations of this kind are held at the beginning of the twentieth century and specifically in 1911? This indicates the extent of scientific and medical progress in the Ottoman Empire and its parallel to the medical sciences in the world, despite its material weakness and

38 Ibrahim Khalil Al-Alaf, "The Story of the First Emergence of the Health Department in Nineveh", *The Journal of Urban Dialogue*, <http://www.m.ahewar.org>.

39 *Al-Zawra Newspaper*, March 26, 1874.

the deterioration of the military reality of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, Despite its concern to defend its vast borders in Libya, the Balkans and elsewhere, it has given free treatment to its citizens, which we rarely see now in countries that consider themselves independent states in the Middle East.

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