

Short Communication

Ahmed Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi the patron of medical students

Siddiq I Khalil, FRCP, FESC, FACC*, Tarik A Elhadd, FRCP, FACE**

Professor of Medicine and Cardiology, Sudan Heart Institute, Khartoum, Sudan*, Professor of
Medicine and Endocrinology, Dept of Medicine, Monklands Hospital, North Larnakshire, Scotland**

احمد هاشم البغدادي الاب الروحي لطلاب الطب

بروفيسر صديق ابراهيم خليل. معهد السودان للقلب
بروفيسر طارق الهد. جامعة العلوم الطبية و التكنولوجيا

نبذة مختصرة

تظل ذكرى هاشم بك البغدادي حية في ذاكرة كل اللذين تخرجوا من كلية الطب جامعة الخرطوم أو عملوا فيها. وقد ساهمت الثروة التي خلفها كوقف لكلية الطب مساهمة فعالة منذ نشأت الكلية وحتى الآن.
وهاشم بك البغدادي إيراني المولد وقد هاجر الى السودان في 1900 واصبح من أنجح التجار في الخرطوم في ذلك الزمان وفي سنواته الأخيرة أصبحت كلية الطب إحدى اهتماماته كما أظهر اهتماما كثيرا بطلاب الطب فكان أبا باراً بهم يغدق عليهم من كرمه. وخلال العام الثالث للكلية 1926 ساهم بمبلغ 300 جنيه تدفع سنوياً لمساعدة الطلاب في سكنهم ومآكلهم ثم اذداد هذا المبلغ الى 500 جنيه سنوياً وهو مبلغ كبير بحسابات ذلك الزمان.
توفي هاشم بك البغدادي عام 1933 تاركاً كل ثروته لكلية الطب جامعة الخرطوم.

Abstract

Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi is a name to be remembered by all of those who studied or worked at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum. His ongoing generous financial support to the school from its infancy to the present day has provided immense resource that kept the school surviving until now. Baghdadi was of Iranian decent and immigrated to Sudan in 1900. He was known as a successful merchant in Khartoum during the early years of the twentieth century. In his last years, he was one of the donors to the appeal to establish the Kitchener School of Medicine. The School and its student remained one of his main interests and many of the early students were recipients of his generosity. Baghdadi died in 1933 and in his will he left the major part of his wealth to the medical school. This was later transferred into an endowment (Wagf) for the medical school. Such generous donation became the legacy of Al Baghdadi who is survived by the charity

that he left behind.

Keywords: Al Baghdadi, Kitchener School of Medicine, Khartoum, Baghdadi Trust

Ahmed Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi

Walking down the southern side of Farouk Cemetery in Khartoum, a small building inside the far end of the cemetery is visible. Looking intently, one could differentiate a miniature building of the old Kitchener School of Medicine with its characteristic tomb. There lies the grave of Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi erected by the graduates of the school of medicine (Fig 1).

Fig 1: Baghdadi grave at Farouk Cemetery, Khartoum, designed as miniature of the school of medicine (Kitchener School of Medicine)



Corresponding author

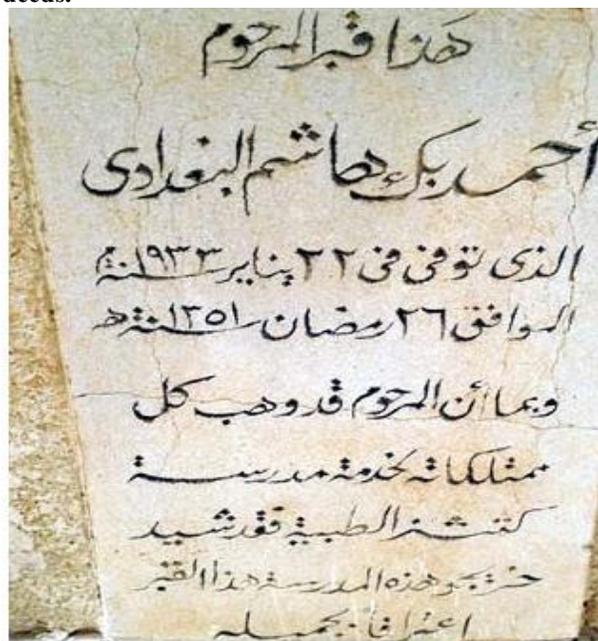
Siddiq Ibrahim Khalil

Email: psiddiq@gmail.com

Tel: +249 09123 85045

The inscription on the grave stone denotes the recognition of Al-Baghdadi's generous donations to the school of medicine (Fig 2).

Fig 2: The grave stone with inscription "Grave of Ahmed Bey Hashim Al Baghdadi who died on 22/1/1933 had left all of his fortune to the Kitchener School of Medicine. This grave was erected by the graduates of the school in recognition of his good deeds."



Baghdadi died on 22nd of January 1933. During the celebration of the first graduates meeting in 1966, graduates and students of the medical school marched in a parade all the way from the school building to Baghdadi's grave where they paid tribute to the worthy and compassionate man, the spiritual father of medical students. As the years went by, young medical students remember Al-Baghdadi as a lecture theatre that bears his name and as a place where they spend long hours with eyes half-opened and half-closed listening to endless medical lectures.

So who is Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi?

The name suggests an Iraqi origin, but Hassan Najeela, the Sudanese writer described him as a benevolent man from 'Al Ashraf' of Iraq known as Ahmed Hashim Al Baghdadi⁽¹⁾. Dr HC Squire, the first lecturer of medicine at

Kitchener School of Medicine (KSM) who came to the Sudan in 1908, reported that Baghdadi was of Persian decent and that he migrated to Sudan in 1900⁽²⁾. Dr Squire had closer ties with Al Baghdadi and it would, therefore, be more likely that Al Baghdadi was of Persian extraction. Al Baghdadi was born in Baghdad in 1875. Little is known about his earlier beginnings in Iraq prior to his migration to the Sudan following the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest led by Lord Kitchener in 1898. He was amongst the first wave of traders and merchants who thought to try their fortunes in the newly conquered territory of the British Empire. Al Baghdadi quickly established himself as a trader in the antiquities and in few years he amassed a decent wealth which enabled him to buy and own many properties and assets in the sprawling new capital, Khartoum and also across the Nile in Omdurman. He also had some trade partnership with several Coptic merchants like Abdel Masseih Tadros and Bolous Girgis Suliman. According to Alsafi, Al Baghdadi was known to have a pleasant character and was very much loved by his contemporaries, but very little filtered out of his private life. He was known to have lived in a modern house in Khartoum helped by several servants from Cairo and Baghdad. He also spoke fluent Arabic with a Persian accent, but did not speak English. Amongst his special interests was 'Persian Poetry', with which he was famous for entertaining his guests. According to Dr Ali Badri, a graduate of the first batch in 1928 and Dr Al Hadi Alnagar who graduated in 1933, Al Baghdadi was an amiable and pleasant person who held some liberal views. He was married to a woman from one of notable families in Omdurman, a marriage that did not last long as by the time of his death he had no wife by his death bed.

Following the death of Lord Kitchener in 1916, while on warship destined for Russia, an appeal was launched to establish a medical

school in Khartoum in his memory. The School was inaugurated in 1924. During the third year of the medical school and in 1926, Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi began to take interest in the school of medicine. From that date he subscribed an annual sum of £300 a year towards the upkeep of the students and this subscription was later merged in the general account of the school. By the time of his death in 1933 and according to his will all his property had been formed into a Trust and

the income from the Trust was to be devoted to the maintenance of the school. This brought £500 pounds a year, but later a good deal more. In his last years, the Kitchener School was his main interest and many of the early students became recipients of his generosity⁽²⁾. The first batch of graduates, honoring his support to the school, invited Baghdadi to take part in their graduation photograph in 1928 (Fig 3).

Fig 3: The first batch of students graduating from the Kitchener School of Medicine in 1928. Standing from left to right: Dr Tahir Yousif, Dr Ahmed Akasha, Dr Fadil Al Bushra, Dr Daoud Iskander, Dr Al Nour Shams Al Din. Sitting from left to right Dr Ali Badri, Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi, Dr Amin Al Sayed.



This remained a tradition until the time of his death in 1933. It was an irony that the name of Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi became very much

associated with the medical school from that time onwards. The first few batches of the KSM students and graduates established close relations with Hashim Bey.

Dr Ali Badri, one of the first seven graduates of the KSM, who went on to be the first Sudanese Minister of Health in 1947, remembered Al Baghdadi as a generous and benevolent man, but lived a secluded life and held some personal liberal views. However, his relationship with the students was more of a fatherly relation; he provided them with fatherly and financial support in addition to his donations to the school. During his final illness, graduates and final year students attended at his bedside, round the clock, helping nurse and looked after him. It had been said that on his last day Al Baghdadi came out of coma for a brief time, he looked around and saw the graduates and students surrounding his bed, he then gave a wide smile of acquiescence then handed his soul to the creator⁽³⁾. His house, until recently, remained along the street named after him, Hashim Bey Street, neighboring the Faculty of Medicine.

Al Baghdadi left all his fortunes to the medical school as 'Wagf' (Endowment). This comprised vast number of properties,

including houses, shops and other assets. According to Ahmed Al Safi these were up to 33 rented shops in the market of Khartoum alone, in addition to about 14 rented properties in Omdurman⁽⁴⁾.

Early in the 1970's an ambitious plan to develop and upgrade the assets left by Al Baghdadi was proposed. Prof Ali Khogali, then Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Khartoum, recalled that the plans were prepared in the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Engineering and passed by the University Council. However, the Ministry of Finance and Sudan Bank declined to provide the necessary funds for the project after it has been sanctioned at all levels. In later years, the Waqf was diverted to the University of Khartoum itself rather than to the Faculty of Medicine, however a recent effort brought the funds back under the control and utilization of the Faculty of Medicine⁽⁵⁾.

Baghdadi had no family and was only survived by the generosity, benevolence and charity that he left behind.

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