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# Caravanserais as Symbols of Power in Seljuk Anatolia

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## ABSTRACT

After the establishment of the Anatolian Seljuk state in Anatolia in the 12th century, Seljuk sultans placed special importance on the development of trade. In this context, the Seljuks conquered important ports, signed agreements with foreign trade agencies, introduced an insurance system for merchandise and founded caravanserais on different trade routes. The foundation of caravanserais, which were mostly donated by the members of Seljuk dynasty and affluent commanders, was probably the most significant improvement in this area. Medieval manuscript sources about these buildings contain some evidence of their donors' financial and political status. Drawing on both medieval manuscript sources and the modern historiography of Anatolian Seljuk architecture, this study examines power relationships between the Seljuk ruling class and their thoughts on various features of caravanserai buildings.

*11. ve 12. yüzyıllarda Anadolu'yu fetheden Selçuklular, burada Anadolu Selçuklu Devleti'ni kurmuşlar ve yeni kazanılmış bu topraklarda, hakimiyetlerini ve ekonomilerini sağlamlaştırmak için ticari faaliyetleri geliştirmeye çalışmışlardır. Bu bağlamda, Sinop, Antalya ve Alanya gibi önemli limanların fethedilmesi, çeşitli ticari anlaşmalar yapılması ve ticari sigorta uygulamalarının yürürlüğe konması önemli çabalardır. Bu alandaki belki de en önemli gelişme, kervan yolları üzerinde belirli aralıklarla ve çeşitli büyüklüklerde, çoğunlukla Selçuklu hanedanının üyeleri, önemli devlet adamları ve zengin komutanlar tarafından yaptırılan kervansaray yapılarının ortaya çıkışıdır. Kaynaklardan edinilen bilgilere göre, bu yapıların ticaret haricinde başka işlevleri olduğu da anlaşılmaktadır. Çok büyük ve görkemli örnekleri günümüze ulaşabilmiş olan kervansaraylar, Selçuklu toplumunda yaptırılanların konumunu temsil etmesi bakımından tartışılmaya değer birtakım ipuçları içermektedirler.*

*Hazırlanan bu çalışma, Selçuklu yönetici sınıfı ile Selçuklu'nun ticarete olan ilgisinin bir uzantısı olarak ortaya çıkıp gelişen Anadolu Selçuklu kervansarayları arasındaki ilişkiyi, güç bağlamında sorgulamaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışma üç bölümde ele alınmıştır: İlk bölümde kervan ve kervansaray ile ilgili tanımlar verilmiş, kısaca köken sorununa değinilmiş, kervansaray yapılarının işletme sistemi ve temel plan öğeleri gibi kavramlar da bu ilk kısımda kısaca açıklanmıştır. İkinci bölüm kervansaray ve güç ilişkisini sorgulamayı*

*amaçlamaktadır. Bu bölümde yaptırının ekonomik ve politik gücünün yapı ile olan ilişkisi esas olarak irdelenmektedir. Bunu yaparken yapı büyüklüğü ve maliyeti arasındaki paralellğe dikkat çekilerek ekonomik ve politik güce, siyasi konuma vurgu yapılmış, iki farklı yapı ve yaptırınları üzerinde durularak konu örneklerle ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu bölümde özellikle dikkati çeken durum, Selçukluların en önemli hükümdarı olarak kabul edilen Alaeddin Keykubad'ın ve devletin son yıllarında birliği ve bütünlüğü sağlayan büyük devlet adamı Celaleddin Karatay gibi şahsiyetlerin, kervansaray yaptırma politikasına yapı büyüklüğü bazında katkıları ile öne çıktıklarının ortaya konmasıdır. Bu durum, bahsi geçen kişilerin Selçuklu toplumundaki önemli konumları ile paralellik göstermektedir. Güç sembolü olma bağlamında kısaca değinilen iki yapı, Anadolu Selçuklu Devleti tarihinde sultanlarınkine benzer bir yönetim gücüne kısa süreli de olsa sahip olmayı başarmış iki devlet adamı olan Sadeddin Köpek ve Celaleddin Karatay tarafından yaptırılmış iki yapıdır. Bu yapılar, içindeki mekanların nitelikleri ve konumları itibarıyla yaptırınların gücü ile örtüşen dikkate değer özelliklere sahiptir. Üçüncü bölüm ise, kervansaray yapıları dahilinde bulunan, daha önceki araştırmacılar tarafından güç sembolü olarak kabul edilen ve sıkça rastlanılan bazı süsleme ve mimari öğelerinin tartışıldığı bölümdür. Bu bölümde, mimari eleman olarak, yapı kitabesi, süsleme unsuru olarak da aslan ve avcı kuş motifi üzerinde durulmuştur. Sonuç kısmında, son iki bölümle ilgili kısa değerlendirmelere yer verilmiş, incelenen örnekler ve yapılan karşılaştırmalar ışığında Anadolu Selçuklu kervansaraylarının bilinen ticari işlevi dışında, Selçuklu topraklarında yaptırının toplum içindeki konumunu belirten ve adını duyuran güç sembolleri olarak kabul edilebileceği ortaya konmuştur. Araştırmanın hazırlanmasında, Selçuklu dönemi hakkında bilgi veren kaynakların çevirileri ve günümüz araştırmacılarının eserlerinden faydalanılmıştır.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Anatolian Seljuk caravanserai is one of the most significant types of building in Anatolian Seljuk architectural heritage, appearing in Anatolian lands from the 12th century onwards. These buildings were donated by the ruling class in order to increase security on the commercial routes passing through Seljuk lands. They played an important role in the development of trade and the Seljuk economy in medieval Anatolia. This was a successful policy with a positive impact on the Seljuk economy until the arrival of the Mongols. However, Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais were still in use after the fall of the Anatolian Seljuk state and lasted until the 18th century, when the trade routes passing through Anatolia began to lose their commercial importance.

This study discusses Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais as symbols of power beyond their well-known functions and considers the different features of these important structures. These features provide some insights into the social and political status of the donor, as well as his or her financial power. The first two sections of this chapter comprise preliminary information about land travel during the period, including the definitions of caravan, caravanserai, development of trade and the caravanserais of the Anatolian Seljuk period. This is followed by a discussion of how Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais acted as power symbols of their donors.

## CARAVANS, CARAVAN ROUTES AND CARAVANSERAI

As Hillenbrand stated, “travelling in medieval times was difficult, dangerous and slow”, but it was necessary for trade, communication and pilgrimage<sup>1</sup>. Irrespective of the purpose of travel, all travellers risked being robbed, murdered or enslaved. However, merchants arguably took the biggest gamble, risking not only their lives, but also their belongings and trade goods. To reduce the risks, both merchants and others journeying overland travelled in groups<sup>2</sup>. In Islamic lands, these groups were called *seyyare*, *kafil* or *kervan* [convoy, caravan]<sup>3</sup>. The term *kervan* evolved from the words of *kâr* and *ban*, meaning “the protection of trade”<sup>4</sup>. A caravan, consisting of travellers, animals and carts, was headed by a leader and assistants and was escorted by guards or soldiers<sup>5</sup>. In this context, a caravan can simply be defined as an organized form of group travel for reasons of safety.

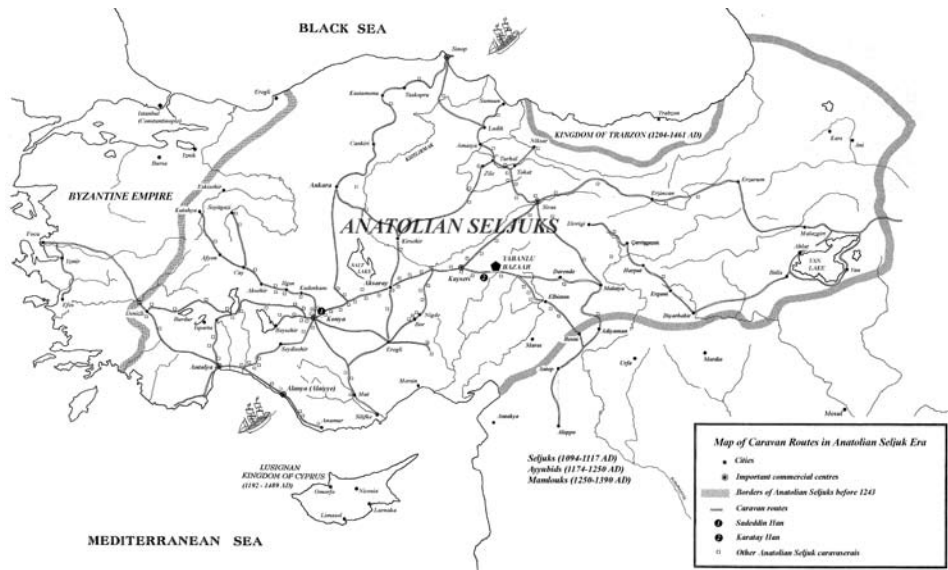
As caravans could only travel a limited distance each day, the route had to be divided into stages. At the end of each stage, a resting place where people could spend the night (and store their belongings) was a vital necessity<sup>6</sup>. In Islamic lands, each stage of travel was called a *marbala* and a stopping place, *manzil*<sup>7</sup>. In terms of safety, resting in areas where military or civilian settlements existed might not be a problem. However, any caravan stopping at a location in the middle of unprotected open country was vulnerable to raids and robberies. These were the areas where caravanserais were needed.

Basically, “a caravanserai is a building to house a caravan”<sup>8</sup>. It has space to load, unload, or tether animals and accommodate travellers. A caravanserai also had wells or cisterns as water sources, high fortified walls, and a single protected entrance. The etymological origin of the term also refers to such an architectural programme. *Caravanserai* is a combination of the words of *caravan* and *serai*, *serai* meaning palace. Therefore, the meaning of the term *caravanserai* can be described as a *serai*-like large and well-organized building to house a caravan. Other terms were also used to describe the caravanserai and its multifunctional structure. One of these terms is *ribat*. This word has an Arabic origin, from the root of *rabata*, meaning “to tether a horse”. It was primarily used to define the Islamic frontier castles of the 9th and 10th century<sup>9</sup>. According to Hillenbrand, the active military function of *ribats* was lost after the stabilisation of the borders of Islamic lands. It is likely that these buildings were transformed into caravanserais<sup>10</sup>. Another common term used for caravanserais is *khan* or *han*, meaning “house” in Arabic. After considering the meanings of *caravanserai* and *han*, one might think that the scales of these buildings would be quite different. However, there are many examples which contradict this<sup>11</sup>.

## ANATOLIAN SELJUK CARAVANSERAI

Many historians agree that the battle of Malazgirt in 1071 marked the beginning of the Seljuk presence in Anatolia. From the end of the 11th century, the Seljuks had rapidly advanced on these lands and became neighbours of the Byzantine Empire in the West.

However, this expansion was interrupted by the crusades and Byzantine attacks in the early 12th century, and the Seljuks were forced to retreat to more central parts of Anatolia<sup>12</sup>. By the end of the 12th century, the Seljuks had achieved political stability and placed special importance on economic improvement. From the reign of Kılıçarslan II, the policies and military activities of the Seljuk sultans focused on the development of commerce in their lands. This was why they constructed caravanserais on caravan routes and formed organisations of guardsman, called *derbent*, in order to provide security and to encourage merchants<sup>13</sup>.



Map 1  
Map of Seljuk Anatolia showing the important trade routes and commercial centers.  
Source: Redrawn after: Özgerin, 1965.

There are three sultans whose contributions to this process are worth considering. The first is Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev, the sixth ruler of the Anatolian Seljuks. Keyhüsrev conquered Antalya, an important Mediterranean port at the time. According to the sources, he intended to organise a Turkish commercial colony in Antalya<sup>14</sup>. Keyhüsrev also encouraged merchants through certain tax exemptions and announced that any losses occurred in cases of robbery would be indemnified<sup>15</sup>. Another Seljuk sultan, İzzeddin Keykavus, maintained similar policies and conquered Sinop, an important Black Sea port. During his reign, the Seljuk state signed important agreements with the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus and the Venetians about the immigration rights of merchants, freedom of movement, and tax reductions. This was in order to attract European merchants who were preferring the ports of Cyprus<sup>16</sup>.

The economic and political power of the Seljuks during the reign of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad has led many scholars to view him as the greatest of all the Seljuk sultans. Alaeddin's conquest of Kalonoros, a castle on the Mediterranean coast, was an important event. After the conquest, the surrounding settlement was developed and renamed *Alaiyye* by order of the Sultan. Alaiyye, a reference to Sultan Alaeddin's name, became another important port for the Anatolian Seljuks. The Seljuk sultans used it as their winter residence<sup>17</sup>. Sultan Alaeddin advanced Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev's indemnification policy and introduced a kind of commercial insurance for merchants. The standards of the caravan roads were greatly enhanced through his efforts, and the largest surviving caravanserais were built in this period.

Following the conquest of significant Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, the cities of central Anatolia gained importance as commercial centres. Increasing commercial traffic on the connecting trade routes resulted in the construction of new caravanserais<sup>18</sup>. The commercial development policy of the Seljuks continued even after the battle of Kösedag in 1242, when they were forced to accept Mongol rule. In the years that followed, despite warfare and political instability, caravanserai constructions were maintained until the late 13th century when the Anatolian Seljuk era came to an end<sup>19</sup>.

An estimated 300 caravanserais were built during the Anatolian Seljuk period<sup>20</sup>. These buildings were donated by the sultans, members of the Seljuk dynasty, or important statesmen, and were financed by their foundations, called *vaqf*. According to the surviving charters of these foundations, caravanserais were mostly non-profit making institutions and had different sources of income depending on their sizes and programmes<sup>21</sup>. Besides the caravanserais' own sources, their incomes came from other parts of the *vaqf* system, including tax generated from the villages and rental revenues from the shops or houses. In addition to these, some non-monetary sources were used to meet the daily needs of travellers<sup>22</sup>. Apparently, the *vaqf* system allowed for the functional continuity of the caravanserais and enabled them to continue after the death of their donors.

The largest remaining Seljuk caravanserais are mostly located on the trade route extending from the Mediterranean ports to the east, via Antalya, Konya, and Kayseri<sup>23</sup>. According to the sources, this was the busiest commercial route in Seljuk Anatolia, which was also used for administrative and diplomatic purposes. From the reign of Alaeddin Keykubad, Anatolian Seljuks had mobile governments, changing their locations according to political conditions or seasons. This route and its *manzils* were used by the sultans while travelling between the administrative centres of Konya, Kayseri, Alaiyye and Kubad-Abad<sup>24</sup>. The route was also used by diplomatic visitors<sup>25</sup>.

## CARAVANSERAI AS SYMBOLS OF POWER

From the 12th century, the caravanserais of the Seljuk ruling class became symbols of their administrative and economic power in Anatolian Seljuk lands. The caravanserai is one of the most significant types of building in Seljuk architecture. The ways in which these buildings represent power relationships is worthy of examination. Unfortunately,

many caravanserais erected in the Anatolian Seljuk era have not survived. However, architectural readings of those that remain provide an insight to the administrative and financial roles of Seljuk statesmen and members of the dynasty in caravanserai construction policies.

Comparing the sizes of the existing caravanserais can act as a starting point for analysis. In order to provide a scale for this comparison, present day methods of estimating building costs give some idea<sup>26</sup>. Considering the same types of building, with similar building programmes and construction materials, one might generally assume that the larger the building, the more it costs. Using a similar approach, the scale of the caravanserais give a rough idea of their building costs which can be linked to their donors' financial powers. In this context, the base areas of some Seljuk caravanserais are displayed in two charts with similar scale lines<sup>27</sup>. The first comprises 36 caravanserais listed in chronological order, while the second comprises 21 caravanserais from the same period, the construction dates of which are unknown<sup>28</sup>. For both charts, dark gray indicates the caravanserais donated by sultans, so-called "Sultan Hans", while black shows those donated by important viziers who possessed ruling powers like those of the sultans<sup>29</sup>.

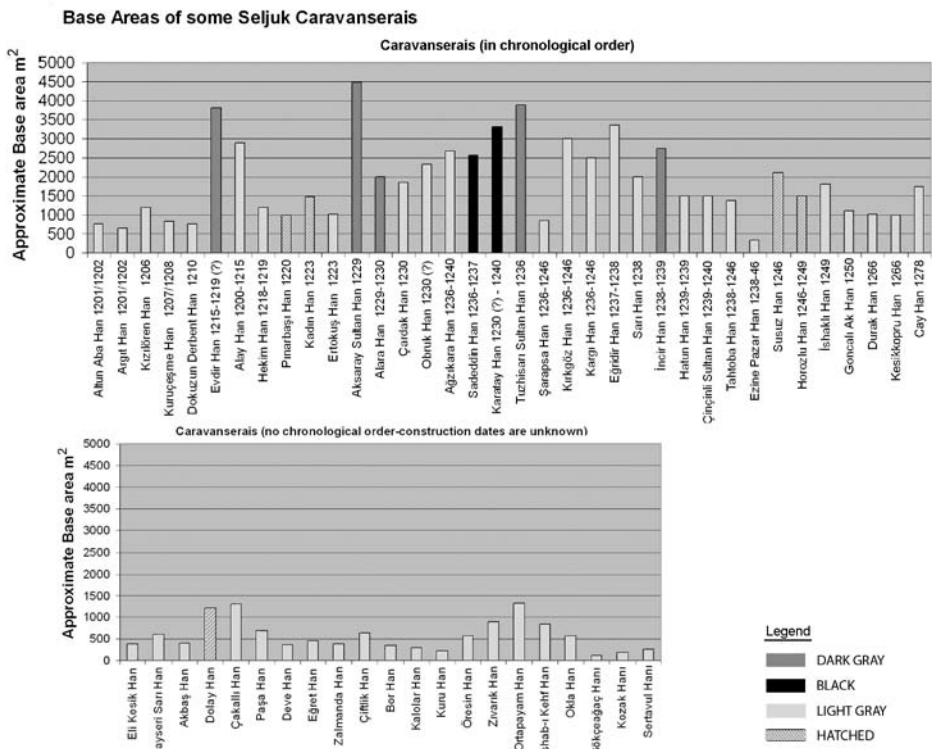


Fig. 1 Base area comparison charts for comparing the sizes of some significant Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais.

This chart shows that the largest base areas of these caravanserais are those of Aksaray Sultan Han, Tuzhisarı Sultan Han and Evdir Han. Aksaray Sultan Han is the largest of all the Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais. The chart shows five surviving Sultan Hans; however, there may be more in Seljuk Anatolia of which we are unaware<sup>30</sup>. Another noteworthy point is the significant number of grand scale caravanserais that were constructed between 1219 and 1236, during the rule of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad<sup>31</sup>. This is not surprising as many sources mention his interest and financial participation in the development and construction of public facilities<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, one of the caravanserais (donated by a vizier) in this chart seems to have a reasonably large base area similar to the Sultan Hans. This vizier was Celaleddin Karatay, who achieved power exceeding some of the sultans of his day. His caravanserai is also larger than that of Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev II, one of the sultans whom he served. Among the buildings listed in the chart, Kadın Han and Hatun Han are particularly significant as they were caravanserais donated by powerful women of the Seljuk dynasty<sup>33</sup>. Although their caravanserais are smaller than those of many statesmen, they are important examples testifying to the existence of such women in Seljuk society.

We should also examine the administrative and financial roles of Seljuk statesmen in terms of building-donor relationships. Two prominent viziers of the Seljuks and the caravanserais that they donated are particularly worthy of mention. One of these was Sadeddin Köpek. Besides being a versatile statesman, he was also an architect who carried out important construction work for Sultan Alaeddin<sup>34</sup>. According to the sources, Sadeddin gradually gained power after the death of Alaeddin in 1236, and quite possibly remained the most powerful man until his death at the hands of Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev II<sup>35</sup>. The other prominent vizier was Celaleddin Karatay, who gained power after the death of Sadeddin Köpek, during the reign of Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II. After the death of the sultan, he also played an active administrative role in preserving the unity of the state<sup>36</sup>. These two viziers are important to this study because their significant administrative powers exceeded the power of the sultan, who was described by several sources as an inadequate ruler<sup>37</sup>.

In comparison with other buildings of the same era, both Karatay Han and Sadeddin Han (named after their donors) are significant caravanserais in terms of their locations and architectural programmes. Sadeddin Han is located in the north-east of Konya (the capital of the Anatolian Seljuks), probably on the first *manzil* of the route extending to Kayseri via Aksaray from Konya. Karatay Han is located in the east of Kayseri, another *manzil* on the east end of the route which extends to the south through Damascus. The locations of both caravanserais are important as they were close to important centres of administration and possessed commercial potential. However there is an additional factor which increased the commercial importance of this route: the existence of a great international bazaar called *Yabanlu Pazari*, near Kayseri, in which a great variety of goods brought from the different countries around Anatolia were on sale<sup>38</sup>. The advantageous locations of Sadeddin Han and Karatay Han must have provided prestige and a considerable amount of financial income to their donors. The sources state that



these buildings were the preferred stop-over locations of the sultans when leading their armies during the campaigns. They were also used for welcoming or farewell ceremonies<sup>39</sup>. The architectural programmes of the caravanserais are also evidence of such features. This includes the base areas of Sadeddin Han and Karatay Han mentioned earlier. The other feature requires more detail and concerns certain spaces in these buildings which not only support the commercial stop-over function of the building, but also provided comfort to important visitors.

In general, the layout of Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais was comprised of two sections: 'shelter' and 'services'. The shelter was a closed space used for accommodating seasonal travellers and animals in the caravan. The 'services' section consists of semi-open or small closed spaces with different functions, such as private rooms, storage rooms, *masjid*, a kitchen and lavatories, around a courtyard<sup>40</sup>. The presence and size of the shelter and service sections also depended on the scale and programme of the caravanserais. Unusual spaces arranged in a particular way, combined with certain architectural elements, provide evidence of use by important visitors. In the services sections of both Sadeddin Han and Karatay Han, particular spatial arrangements, consisting of three cells, are noteworthy<sup>41</sup>. Although many of the spaces in these caravanserais were accessed directly through the courtyard, only one cell in each space group had a door that opened on to the courtyard. In order to access the other two cells, one had first to en-

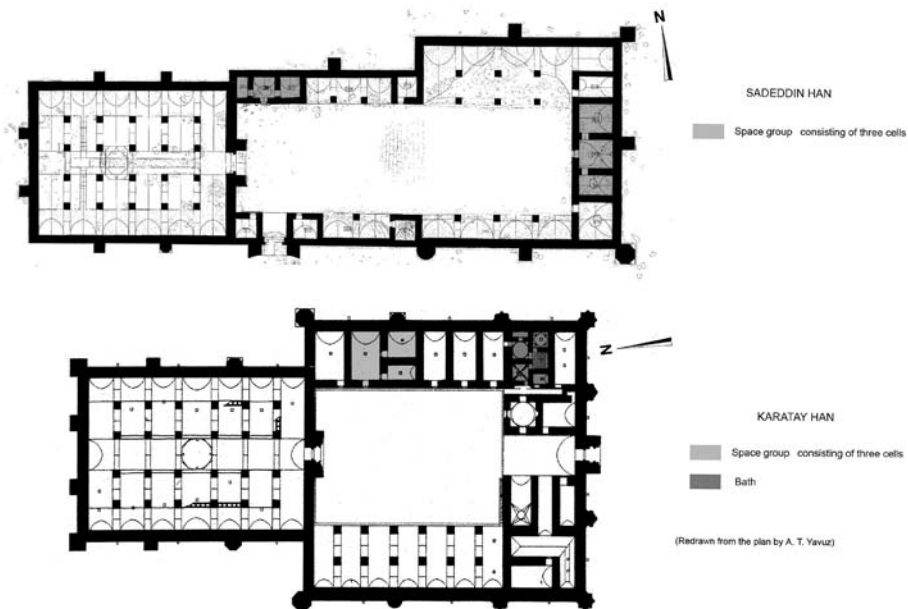


Fig. 2  
Plans of Sadeddin Han and Karatay Han.  
Source for the plan of Karatay Han: Yavuz, 1995.

ter the cell linked to the courtyard. Such spatial organization provided indirect access, controlled by the cell that opened onto the courtyard. Yavuz discusses this spatial organization, considering the existence of additional architectural elements that exist in similar spaces in different caravanserais. She states that the triple space groups probably had a function similar to present day hotel suite rooms, built for the accommodation of important visitors along with their guards or servants<sup>42</sup>. Another significant example in this respect is the bath of Karatay Han. Baths were not common even amongst the grand-scale caravanserais of the Anatolian Seljuks and only a few caravanserai are known to have contained baths<sup>43</sup>. However, what makes the bath in Karatay Han special is not its rarity. The bath is not mentioned in the charter of the Karatay foundation, although the entire expenditure of the caravanserai was given in detail. In addition to this, another bath outside the caravanserai was allocated for the use of travellers<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, the bath of Karatay Han seems to be too small in relation to the scale and potential of the caravanserai. This raises the question of for whom the bath was intended. This potentially indicates that the bath was reserved for important visitors.

Aside from the importance of particular spaces, another area of investigation concerns medieval sources which discuss caravanserais, thus underlining their functions as symbols of power. A significant record in *Müsameret'ül Abbar* refers to the power relationship between Karatay and his caravanserai. According to Aksarayî, Celaleddin Karatay left Kayseri to visit his recently-completed caravanserai. When he approached his destination, he suddenly decided to turn back. He thought that seeing the great building would fill his heart with arrogance and keep him away from charitable works. When his attendants brought him the financial records of the construction, he saw that there was a large amount of money left after all the expenditure. He ordered his attendants to burn all documents, because he did not want the workers to be accepted by the others as owing debts<sup>45</sup>. The second part of this record is one of numerous examples of the character of Celaleddin Karatay, who might have wanted to avoid the speculations of other statesmen about the payments. However, the first part of the record is a significant reference to caravanserais as symbols of power. Karatay Han, completed in 1240, was the fifth greatest caravanserai of the Anatolian Seljuks in terms of base area. Moreover, it was bigger than İncir Han, which was donated by the sultan he served. By donating such a grand-scale caravanserai, he must have exceeded the sultan in terms of grandeur, financial and ruling power. He is not mentioned as the donor on the inscription panels of his caravanserai, perhaps because he was ashamed of the excessive display of wealth or as a result of his modest character.

## SYMBOLS OF POWER IN THE ANATOLIAN SELJUK CARAVANSERAI

We have considered the size and building programmes of caravanserais in terms of their power relationships, but the caravanserais also contain various architectural features. Art historians have drawn various symbolic meanings from these features. The interpretation of these elements as representations of power in Anatolian Seljuk architecture is worthy of discussion.

Inscription panels are arguably the most important architectural feature that can be interpreted as power symbols. They are located at the top of the entrance portals, the most decorated part of the façade. This location means that the inscription can be seen by any visitor entering or leaving the caravanserai. Panels generally contain a short inscription introducing the donor, listing the construction date and the name of the present sultan. Therefore the inscription panel told visitors when the caravanserai was built, the reigning sultan of the time, and to whom visitors should show gratitude for their stay in a well-prepared resting place. The inscription panel is a power symbol located on the caravanserai but also marks the building, with its luxury and comfort, as a power symbol in itself.



Fig. 3  
Inscription panel of Çardak Han.  
*Source:* M. Önge photo archive.

The evaluation of architectural elements as power symbols is limited if input from related disciplines such as architecture and engineering is ignored. According to Ögel, the abutments of the caravanserais are elements expressing rank and power. She discusses the function of the abutments, stating that they were not used for defence or observation, but were continuations of an old Central Asian tradition. Ögel adds that the number of abutments varied, and this was probably related to the power of the donor<sup>46</sup>. Although her argument drew on actual examples, it raises many unanswered questions. From an engineering point of view, the abutment is a structural necessity against lateral

forces. Without structural system analyses it is very difficult to answer questions about the location and number of these important structural elements. Ögel also accepts the *kiosk masjid* in some of the caravanserais as one of the components supporting the image of the ruler<sup>47</sup>. Like her previous assertion, this leads to an open ended discussion of symbols that also concern other architectural issues such as space articulation and building programmes.



Fig. 4  
Sadeddin Han, South and west facades.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.

Aside from the architectural elements, other figures employed in the decoration of Anatolian Seljuk Caravanserai architecture can also be discussed in the context of power symbols. Two figures in particular, the lion and the bird of prey, are worthy of note. The lion was one of the most widely used symbols in Seljuk culture. Throughout history, many civilizations have associated the lion with power, grandeur and dominance<sup>48</sup>. The Seljuks frequently used the word *aslan* [lion] in the names of their sultans and statesmen, such as *Alparslan* [brave lion], *Aslandoğmuş* [born lion] and *Aslanşah* [lion king]<sup>49</sup>. Four of the Seljuk sultans were named as *Kılıçarslan*, a word that combined *kılıç* [sword] and *arslan*, respectively. This interest is clearly reflected in the art and architecture of the Anatolian Seljuk period. In Seljuk caravanserais, lion figures exist in the forms of statues, water spouts, consoles and mouldings, which were generally placed in highly visible locations, with smooth undecorated backgrounds, high up<sup>50</sup>. The lion statues on Seljuk caravanserais seem to have been re-used from Roman or

Phrygian monuments, while certain mouldings seem to have been newly made. In addition to those shaped in the form of a lion head, some of the water spouts used in Seljuk caravanserais are very characteristic in appearance. For instance, the water spouts on Karatay Han, having a dragon-like appearance with a snake in their mouths, are reminiscent of the gargoyles in Gothic cathedrals. According to Öney, these figures, which had roots in Anatolian culture, symbolize the combat between the powerful ruler and his enemy<sup>51</sup>.



Fig. 5  
Water spout from Karatay Han near Kayseri.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.

Perhaps the most interesting example amongst the lion figures used in Seljuk caravanserais is the *sui generis* candle holders of Alara Han, near Alanya, where abstract lion head figures are used on the interior.

A significant example of the use in statue form is the two lion figures located on the portal of Çardak Han, near Denizli. These statues were placed on both sides of the inscription panel on consoles with *muqarnas* and appear to have been recycled from earlier works. The two lion-head shaped springers at the *iwān* of Ak Han near Denizli are also worth mentioning. These are abstract figures of lion heads carved on white marble.



Fig. 6  
Candle holder from Alara Han near Alanya.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.



Fig. 7  
Springers at the *iwan* of Ak Han near Denizli.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.

In this example, the artist seems to have emphasized the lion heads using white marble, differentiating them from the other stones of the ashlar wall. On the portal of İncir Han at Bucak, there is another significant moulding which depicts the side view of a lion with rising sun behind it<sup>52</sup>.



Fig. 8  
Lion and sun figure on the portal of İncir Han, and the coins of Sultan Gıyaseddin II period.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.

This is a well known motif, called *şir-i hurşid*, which was also used on the coins of Sultan Gıyaseddin II. Bearing in mind that İncir han was a Sultan Han donated by Sultan Gıyaseddin II, this version of *şir-i hurşid* can be interpreted as a royal symbol derived from an existing symbol of power<sup>53</sup>.

The figure of the bird of prey was also used frequently in old Seljuk culture, and was associated with respect and power<sup>54</sup>.

As a holy animal, the double-headed eagle was accepted in Turkish culture as the guard of the door of the sky's fifth level<sup>55</sup>. Like the names that included "*aslan*", the names of many Turkish commanders and statesmen included *Togan*, *Tugrul*, *Çagri* and *Sungur*, each of which refer to a different type of bird of prey. Sources and remains show that the bird figures were also used on royal buildings or objects as the power symbol of the sultan<sup>56</sup>. The Seljuks seemingly preferred to use the double headed version of the eagle figure, examples of which can be seen in works of art from the Seljuk period. Many



Fig. 9  
Bird figure on the portal of Karatay Han.  
Source: M. Önge photo archive.

scholars have accepted the eagle as a heraldic symbol on the basis of its extensive use on the royal symbols and royal buildings of the Anatolian Seljuks. According to Peker, the people or even the sultan himself could have interpreted the double headed eagle as the symbol of God's power on earth, and subsequently, as the embodiment of the sultan's power. According to Peker, the eagle may not be an emblem of any particular ruler, but rather a symbol of earthly power granted by God<sup>57</sup>. However, unlike the widespread use of lion figures, bird figures used in caravanserais were smaller and generally limited to architectural decorations on portals. In relation to travelling conditions and the functions of caravanserais, Öney argues that aside from decorative reasons, eagle figures may also have been interpreted as amulets for good luck or good weather<sup>58</sup>. For example, in Karatay Han and Ak Han, there are two bird figures on the portal of each building, carved on the capitals of the corner columns. The donor of Ak Han was a statesman called Karasungur, and so the bird figure might be a reference to his name, which means "black falcon"<sup>59</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

It can be argued that the primary function of the Anatolian Seljuk caravanserai was commercial. On the other hand, it also had features which made the building itself a symbol of power. Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais existed as the results of sultans' inter-



est in commercial activities, which were directly related to the state's economic status. The state also needed efficient sources of income to cope with the difficulties of development and military superiority in a new settlement. However, the caravan routes were also used by the sultan, his court and his army. Therefore, the conditions of stop-over locations must have been developed in consideration of both royal and commercial requirements. The existence of some special spaces and the increasing base areas of the caravanserais, due to the growing architectural programme requirements, can be seen as evidence of such developments.

The different scales of the caravanserais appear to depend on the grandeur of the donors in terms of the financial and ruling power. The large scale of the caravanserais donated by prominent figures of the Seljuk era support this idea. The animal motifs placed on different parts of the caravanserais are also significant to our topic. The presence of similar figures in Turkish-Islamic cosmology and mythology, Turkish epithets, and in other realms of Seljuk art, including metal work on royal representation, can be seen as evidence for their use as expressions of power.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Edinburgh 1999, p. 366.
- <sup>2</sup> Ş. Akalın, *Kervan* [Caravan], *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [Encyclopaedia of Islam], vol. 25, Ankara 2002, p. 298.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.
- <sup>4</sup> C. Huart, *Kervan* [Caravan], in A. Adivar, B. Darkot, R. Arat, A. Ateş, C. Baysun (eds.), *İslam Ansiklopedisi* [Encyclopaedia of Islam], vol. 6, İstanbul 1967, p. 597.
- <sup>5</sup> In the sources, these were defined as strong people, each of whom could take care of ten or twelve animals. Amongst these people were observers who carried drums and flags to communicate with the guards or other observers. Huart, *Kervan* cit. p. 597; Akalın, *Kervan*, cit. p. 298.
- <sup>6</sup> This distance varies between 6-8 *fersakhs*, equivalent to about 35 to 48 km, depending on the geography of the land. However this distance can reach up to 60 km through the desert, with a long travel *marhala* of about 11 hours. N. Elisséeff, *Manzil*, in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs - C.H Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VI, Leiden 1991, p. 454.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454.
- <sup>8</sup> R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*, New York 1994, p. 331.
- <sup>9</sup> "Ribat was a building of militaristic function, in which Muslim warriors of faith congregated for short campaigns against the infidel". Hillenbrand, *Islamic* cit., p. 331.
- <sup>10</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic* cit., p. 331.
- <sup>11</sup> "Many Syrian khans are as big as Iranian caravanserais". Hillenbrand, *Islamic* cit., p. 332.
- <sup>12</sup> O. Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye* [Turkey in the Seljuk Era], İstanbul 1971, p. 101.
- <sup>13</sup> For detailed information on *derbent* organizations see A.T. Yavuz, *Anadolu Selçuklu Dönemi Hanları ve Posta Menzil Derbent Teşkilatları* [Anatolian Seljuk Period Khans and the Organization of Postage, *Manzil* and *Derbent*] in "Prof. Dr. Doğan Kuban'a Armağan", İstanbul 1996, pp. 25-39.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.
- <sup>17</sup> Sultan Alaeddin placed special importance on the development of Alaiyye. The remains of royal gardens and kiosks scattered around the city still exist. For detailed information on this subject, see S. Redford, *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia*, Oxford 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> Sumer provides valuable information about these commercial activities including the routes and the products on sale. F. Sümer, *Yabanlu Pazarı, An Important International Fair During the Seljuk Period*, Istanbul 1985.
- <sup>19</sup> Çay Han is known as the latest Anatolian Seljuk caravanserai and is dated to 1278.
- <sup>20</sup> This number is based on the number of known buildings and references in sources. A.Yavuz, *Anadolu Selçuklu Kervansarayları Üzerine Çalışmalar, Bilgiler, Bulgular 1997* [Studies, Information and Findings on Anatolian Seljuk Caravanserais, 1997], in "Uluslararası Dördüncü Türk Kültürü Kongresi Bildirileri, 4-7 Kasım 1997, Ankara" [Proceedings of the 4th Congress of Turkish Culture, 4-7 November 1997, Ankara], vol. II, Ankara 2000, pp. 239-259, p. 249.
- <sup>21</sup> Suggestions of non profit-making operations cannot be generalized because of the limited number of surviving foundation charters and translations to date. O.Turan, *Celaleddin Karatay, Vakıfları ve Vakıfyeleri* [Celaleddin Karatay Foundations and Foundation Charters] in "Belleten", 1948, 45, 12, pp. 17-170; Id., *Şemseddin Altun-aba Vakfiyesi ve Hayatı* [The Foundation Charter and Life of Şemseddin Altun-Aba], in "Belleten", 1947, 42, 11, pp. 197-235; Id., *Mübarizeddin Ertokuş ve Vakfiyesi* [Mubarizeddin Ertokuş and His Foundation Charter] in "Belleten", 1947, 43, 11, pp. 415-429. It is likely that some of the large-scale caravanserais served as charitable institutions for the poor, evidence of which was recorded in some foundation charters and secondary sources. See Ahmed Eflaki, *Ariflerin Menakibeleri (Menakib ül Arifin)* [Legends from the Wise Men], vol. 1, Istanbul 1964, p. 27.
- <sup>22</sup> For example, flocks of sheep around Aksaray Sultan Han provided fresh meat to the travellers. İ. H. Konyalı, *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Niğde Aksaray Tarihi* [The History of Aksaray including its Monuments and Inscriptions], I, Istanbul 1974, p. 1135. Similar evidence is recorded about Tuzhisarı Sultan Han near Kayseri. Konyalı, *Abideleri* cit., p. 1136.
- <sup>23</sup> Four of the five Sultan Hans (Aksaray Sultan Han, Alara Han, İncir Han and Evdir Han) are on this route and the remaining one (Tuzhisarı Sultan Han) is located on the extension of this route, near Kayseri. Some other grand scale caravanserais are also on this route (Alaî Han, Obruk Han, Sadeddin Han, Ağzıkara Han, Sarı Han, Kırkgöz Han, Kargı Han).
- <sup>24</sup> Sultans preferred to spend their winters in Alaiyye and summers in Kayseri or Konya. The lakeside royal settlement in Kubad-Abad, near Beşehir, was another popular residence of the Sultans located in an isolated environment. The Kubad-Abad residence was constructed during the reign of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad and was also used by the succeeding Seljuk sultans in cases of political crisis. For example, during the Babaî rebellion in 1240, Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev II moved to this residence for security reasons. See Turan, *Selçuklular* cit., p. 423.
- <sup>25</sup> According to İbn-i Bibî, the ambassador of Caliph Nasır Lidinillah used this route to visit Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad in Konya. On his way home, the ambassador was accompanied by Sultan Alaeddin and his court, until the manzil named Zincirlihan. İbn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l Ala'iyye Fî'l Umurî'l Ala'iyye (Selçuk-name)* [The History of the Anatolian Seljuks], trans. M. Öztürk, vol. II, Ankara 1996, p. 124.
- <sup>26</sup> The most common method among these is the "unit cost method". This consists of a simple calculation based on the multiplication of the constant value (determined by the average cost of one square metre of the desired building type), by the base area of the proposed building in square metres.
- <sup>27</sup> These charts were created by the author using information derived from K. Erdmann, *Das Anatolische Karavansaray Des 13. Jabrhunderts*, teil I, Katalog-Text, Berlin 1961; M. K. Özergin, *Anadolu'da Selçuklu Kervansarayları* [Seljuk Caravanserais in Anatolia], in "İ. Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi" [Istanbul University Faculty of Letters Journal of History], II/20, İstanbul 1965, pp. 141-167; M. Koman, *Karatay Kervansarayı* [Karatay Caravanserai], in "Konya", 1941, 35, 5, pp. 3026-3033.

- <sup>28</sup> The earliest example is Altun Aba Han, dating to 1202, while the latest example, Çay Han, dates to 1278. According to the information about construction dates usually given in the inscriptions on the caravanserais, some of these buildings seem to have been constructed intermittently, extending the duration of total construction time. On the other hand, the chronological order of the chart is simply a guide due to problems in gathering information about the construction date of the buildings. In some cases, the construction dates are absent from inscription panels, or are damaged, or lost. The chronology is based on the date of the start of construction or the earliest date mentioned in the inscription.
- <sup>29</sup> Besides the Sultan Hans and important viziers' hans in dark gray and black, other caravanserais are shown in light gray. Hatched colours in this chart point to the partially demolished caravanserais, the base areas of which are estimated.
- <sup>30</sup> For example Aksarayî mentions a caravanserai named "Kılıçarslan Hanı" which was probably one of these. Kerimüddin Mahmûd-i Aksarayî, *Müsameret'ül Ahbar* (trans. Mürsel Öztürk), Ankara 2000, p. 33.
- <sup>31</sup> Alara Han, Aksaray Sultan Han and Tuzhisarı Sultan Han are the three Sultan Hans he donated shown in this chart. Ağzıkara Han, Çardak Han and possibly Obruk Han are also important caravanserais constructed during his reign.
- <sup>32</sup> Sultan Alaeddin ordered the construction of the city walls around Sivas, Konya and Kayseri, realizing that these cities were a defensive concern. These were large projects with big budgets which were completed not only as a result of the orders and donations of the sultan, but also due to the financial support of statesmen.
- <sup>33</sup> Kadın Han was donated by Rukiye Hatun bin Mahmud, and Hatun Han was donated by Mahperi Hatun. Mahperi Hatun, also known as Huand Hatun, was Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad's wife and Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev's mother. She donated four more caravanserais on the trade route between Sivas and Amasya. Turan, *Seçuklular* cit., p. 403; İ. İlter (ed.), *Tarihi Türk Hanları* [Historical Turkish Caravanserais], Ankara 1969, p. 40.
- <sup>34</sup> The original term for the vizier is *Emir Şi'kâr*, meaning minister of the hunt, the vizier who took care of the Sultan's hunting animals. He was probably the vizier responsible for the entertainment activities. İbn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l Ala'iyye Fi'l Umuril Ala'iyye* [The History of Anatolian Seljuks], trans. M. Öztürk, II, 1996, pp. 361, 363, 438.
- <sup>35</sup> Taking advantage of Sultan Gıyaseddin's bibulous character (as described in the sources), through a series of intrigues, Sadeddin convinced the sultan to kill many important statesmen and members of the Seljuk dynasty. He was even accused of killing Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad by poisoning him, along with Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev, who was the son of Sultan Alaeddin, and called tyrant by some sources. This seemingly caused the Seljuks to lose power following the defeat of Köseadağ during the period of the state's decline, despite the efforts of limited numbers of surviving experienced statesmen. Turan, *Seçuklular* cit., p. 456.
- <sup>36</sup> İbn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l* cit., p. 36.
- <sup>37</sup> According to Abu'l Farac, Sultan Gıyaseddin childishly amused himself with animals and drank continuously. Gregory Abû'l Farac, *Abû'l Farac Tarihi*, [A Chronological and Political History of the World by Gregory Abu'l Farac], vol. II, Ankara 1999, p. 537.
- <sup>38</sup> Sümer, *Yabanlu* cit.
- <sup>39</sup> İbn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l* cit., vol. II, p. 124.
- <sup>40</sup> In some caravanserais, the masjid is located in the middle of the courtyard and raised from ground level, which is defined by the term "kiosk masjid".
- <sup>41</sup> Such spaces can also be found in important caravanserais including Aksaray Sultan Han.
- <sup>42</sup> These triple space groups also exist in Aksaray Sultan Han, Tuzhisarı Sultan Han, Karatay Han and Ağzıkara Han. They all consist of two spaces linked to one that provides controlled access. Yavuz sup-

- ports this thesis, reminiscent of the itinerant court of Anatolian Seljuks that moved, according to the season, between Alaiyye, Kayseri and Konya, using common trade routes. A. T. Yavuz, *Anatolian Seljuk Caravanserais and their Use as State Houses*, in "10th International Congress of Turkish Art, September 17-23, Geneva", 1995, pp. 757-765, pp. 759, 760.
- <sup>43</sup> Another caravanserai that includes a bath is Tuzhisarı Sultan Hanı, donated by Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad. M. Önge, *Restoration* cit., p. 126.
- <sup>44</sup> Turan, *Celeleddin Karatay, Vakıfları ve Vakıfyeleri* cit., p. 58.
- <sup>45</sup> Kerimüddin Mahmûd-i Aksarayî, *Müsameret'ül* cit., p. 28.
- <sup>46</sup> S. Ögel, *Anadolu'nun Selçuklu Çehresi* [The Seljuk Face of Anatolia], Istanbul 1994, p. 74.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- <sup>48</sup> J. Chevalier, A. Gheerbrant, *Lion*, "Dictionary of Symbols", London 1996, p. 611.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l* cit., p. 248.
- <sup>50</sup> G. Öney, *Anadolu Selçuk Mimarisinde Aslan Figürü* [Lion Figures in Anatolian Seljuk Architecture], in "Anatolia", 1971, 13, pp. 1-64, p. 1.
- <sup>51</sup> In several spas there are fountains with nozzles in the shape of lion heads. They have the power to heal many illnesses. People who drink this water are believed to be powerful like lions. M. Aksel, *Religious Pictures in Turkish Art*, Istanbul 1967, p. 83, G. Öney, *Anadolu Selçuk* cit., p. 40.
- <sup>52</sup> Although a discussion of cosmology is not central to this study, it is important to note that in astrology, the sign of Leo is the lion and its planet is the sun.
- <sup>53</sup> This is an old motif which had also been used by Ilkhanids and Artukids in Anatolia. According to Turan, the lion symbolizes Sultan Gıyaseddin and the sun symbolizes his wife, the daughter of queen of Georgia Rosudan. Turan, *Selçuklular* cit., p. 415; H. Erkiiletlioğlu, *Türkiye Selçuklu Sultanları ve Sikkeleri* [Anatolian Seljuk Sultans and Anatolian Seljuk Coins], Kayseri 1996, p. 122.
- <sup>54</sup> The eagle is the emblem of Zeus and Christ, the imperial emblem of the Caesars and Napoleon, while in the North American prairie, as well as in Siberia, Japan, China and Africa, shamans, priests and seers along with kings and great commanders have borrowed the attributes of the eagle in order to share its powers, J. Chevalier, A. Gheerbrant, *Eagle*, "Dictionary of Symbols", London 1996, p. 323.
- <sup>55</sup> In ancient Turkish mythology the sky is believed to consist of seven levels. B. Ögel, *Türk Mitolojisi* [Turkish Mythology], vol. 1, Ankara 1971, pp. 109, 110.
- <sup>56</sup> The eagle figure was probably a common symbol for Seljuk sultans, used on royal symbols such as the royal umbrella called *çetr*, royal buildings or buildings donated by the sultan. Ibn-i Bibî, *El Evamirü'l* cit., p. 165, p. 230; Öney, *Anadolu Selçuk Mimarisinde Avcı* cit., p. 167.
- <sup>57</sup> A.U. Peker, *The Origins of the Seljukid Double-Headed Eagle as a Cosmological Symbol*, "10th International Congress of Turkish Art", Geneva 1999, pp. 559-566, p. 562.
- <sup>58</sup> Öney, *Anadolu Selçuk Mimarisinde Avcı* cit., p. 171.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 143.

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Id., *Anadolu Selçuklu Dönemi Hanları ve Posta Menzil Derbent Teşkilatları* [The Anatolian Seljuk Period Khans and the Organization of Postage, *Manzil* and *Derbent*], in “Prof. Dr. Doğan Kuban’a Armağan”, İstanbul 1996, pp. 25-39.

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