AnIsl 38 (2004), p. 305-309

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A Rare Saljuki Dinar Struck in Nisabur in 431 A.H. in Name of Ṭuğril Beg.

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There is no doubt that the appearance of the Saljuks is considered a turning point in the Islamic rule, for they played an important role in giving it a new life after it became weak, as they were able to establish one of the strongest Islamic governments in the East.

The Saljuks settled in the fertile area between Buhara and Samarqand after they found it necessary to emigrate from their homeland for economic reasons. Their grandfather, Salğūq, and his followers embraced the Muslim religion and became Sunnites.² The Saljuks, by virtue of their Turkish nature which was distinguished by strength, courage and tribalism, in addition to their fidelity to their leader, their care for unity and solidarity, were able to form a military power prepared with war material and weapons in a few years capitalizing on the conflicts that led to wars between the Islamic forces in the East, the consequence of which was the division of the Samanid property between Ghaznavids, Qorakhanids after the decline of the Samanid rule in 389 A.H./998 A.D.³

The alliance of the Saljuks under the leadership of Isrā’îl b. Salğūq b. Taqæq and ‘Ali Takkîn, the ruler of Buhara, and their victory over Elkikhan, king of the Khans in 418 A.H./1026 A.D.⁴ are considered the real beginning of the rise of the Saljuks in the eventful arena of history, the fact that led to their conflict with Gazna under the leadership of sultan Mahmūd al-Ďaznawi who sent for their leader, Isrā’îl, to gain favour with him and tempt him with a meeting.⁵ With the arrival of Isrā’îl and some of his confidants at the habitation of Sultan al-Ďaznawi the Sultan’s men arrested them and exiled Isrā’îl in the castle of Kalingâr in India and he was kept there to the time of his death.⁶

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1 The Saljuks were a section of the Turkish tribes called “Qinîq”. They lived in the farthest plains of Turkestan then dispersed in successive tidal waves of migration since the second century of the Hiηra calendar. They settled in Transoxania in the dawn of the fourth century of the Hiηra calendar. The Saljuks are named after Salϻq b. Taqæq, the leader of the Turkish Al Ghozz and the General of the army in the time of Bayqû, king of the Turks. Cf. Husayni, Ḩabīr al-Dawla al-salϻqiyya, Muḥammad Ḵbâl, ēd. Ṭaur, univ. of Benjâb, 1933, p. 3; Ḥb-Ṯ-hdâ, Al-Muhaṭâr fi Ḩb̄ Al-Basîr I, Cairo, 1325 A.H., p. 171-172; E. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, London, 1909, p. 209-210.

2 The neighborhood of the Saljuks. The Samanids and Ghaznavids led to their embracing the Muslim religion and becoming Sunnites, which was the religion of the rulers of the two states. The Muslim religion was embraced by the Turks, who found in it the simplicity that suited their simple nature and nomadic life in addition to the spiritual loftiness of Islam. Cf. Ibn Ṭaḥâqa, Al-Fârî fî al-Adâb al-Sultânîyya, Cairo, 1962, p. 213; Bartold, A History of the Islamic Civilization, Trans. Harmza Taher. Cairo, 1943, p. 120; Album, Samanid Oversize Dirhams. Numismatic Chronicle XVI, 1976, p. 251.

3 Al-Rawīndî, Ṭabâbat al-Sâdir wa Ḥṣīl al-Sâdir fi Ḩabīr al-dawla al-Salϻqiyya, Cairo, 1960, p. 145.


5 Al-Rawīndî, op. cit., p. 148, 149.

6 Al-Bindârî, Ṭarih dawlat al-Salϻq, Cairo, The Encyclopedia Publishing House, 1900, p. 5.
After the death of Isrā‘îl, his brother, Mihā‘îl b. Salḵuq, became the leader of the Saljuks and they settled in Khurāsān, between Nasa and Baward after crossing Gayhūn. That was the beginning of the second stage of the struggle of the Saljuks to extend the domain of their Power, particularly after the death of Sultan Mahmūd al-Gaznawi in 421 A.H./1030 A.D.⁷ They became such a power in the different parts of Ḥūrāsān that Sultan Mas‘ūd Al-Gaznawi was forced to authorize their rule in the regions they captured in 426 A.H./1034 A.D.⁸

Afterwards, the Saljuks and the Ghaznavids signed a peace treaty and each of their leaders was given rule over a province (a vilayet), an official ordinance (commission), a brigade and a robe of honour so that Bayġū reigned over Nāsā, Tuğrīl over Frāwah, Dā‘ūd over Dāhistān, and Sultan Mas‘ūd returned back to Ḥāznā.⁹ The Saljuks found in Mas‘ūd’s return to Ḥāznā an opportunity to extend the domain of their power so the Sultan’s officials and office holders (Rulers or Valis) wrote to him seeking his support, complaining, and warning him against leaving the Seljuks causing havoc and ravaging the whole country with no one stopping them. In their letters they said: “The indifference to the importance and safety of Ḥūrāsān is welcomed by the Saljuks as it allows them to get the whole country under their power, then Ḥāznā will be their next target”.¹⁰

When Sultan Mas‘ūd Al-Gaznawi realized the danger of the increase of the power of the Saljuks and of the extending of their dominions, he wrote to the Prince of Ḥūrāsān commanding him to raise war against them to force them out of the lands under their power. The sultan also sent him aid and when the warriors of the two forces met at the gate of Sarḵas, towards the end of the month of ša‘bān in 429 A.H./June 1038 A.D., the Saljuks won victory over the forces of the Ghaznavids, which resulted in the supremacy of the Saljuks, who, consequently, aspired to reign over Persia and Ḥūrāsān. Commenting on the event, Ibn-al-Atīr said: “That event led to the rule of the Saljuks over Ḥūrāsān and their incursion into the metropolis”.¹¹ In the month of Du‘-l-Qī‘da of the same Ḥiǧrī Year, Tuğrīl b. Mihā‘îl, the leader of the Saljuks, left to Nisabur, entered it and ascended the throne of Sultan Mas‘ūd Al-Gaznawi. He commanded the Muslim preachers to pronounce his name in their ḥūṭba (Friday Muslim Sermon) on the minbar (The pulpit), which led to the increase of the power of the Saljuks who became strong, showed signs of seizing power and of the pride of reign.¹²

Sultan Mas‘ūd Al-Gaznawi did not stand helpless before the loss of Nisabur but prepared a great army consisting of about 50,000 cavaliers (horsemen) and men of the infantry, as well as 300 elephants in the forefront. They all went from Ḥāznā to Ḥūrāsān with the aim of punishing the Saljuks and teaching them a lesson. There were many battles between the two parties, which ended with the decisive battle of Dāndānqān in which the Saljuks won overwhelming victory over the Ghaznavids who, helpless and empty-handed, fled, where the Saljuks had seized their war material, weapons and riding animals, in addition to numberless captives. That was in the month of Ramadān 431 A.H./July 1040 A.D.¹³

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¹⁰ Al-Bayhaqī, op. cit., p. 660.
¹¹ Al-Ḥusaynī, op. cit., p. 11.
¹² Ibn Al-Atīr, op. cit., part. 8, p. 35.
¹³ Al-Bayhaqī, op. cit., p. 663.
The victory of the Saljuks was attributed to their being well-prepared for their battle with the Ghaznavids, for the Saljuks settled in the desert between Sarhass and Merv, in the place which gave the battle its name.

As for the Ghaznavids, they exhibited weakness despite their massive war material. According to al-Bayhaqi, “Sultan Mas‘ud rode to Merv and was followed by the warriors, who were so weak that they seemed to hesitate. It was a very hot day and their provisions were scarce. There was no forage and their riding animals were skinny. After the battle, there was confusion, there was disorder, and the Ghaznavid fled, each of them caring only for his own safety. Defeated, Sultan Mas‘ud and his men went to Gazna … furious and upset, as though it were doomsday”. It was the battle of Dandânqân that put an end to the power of the Ghaznavids in Hurasân and caused the decline of the Ghaznavids and the rise of the Saljuks who started to establish their government and build their estate. Their leaders held a meeting under the leadership of Ṭuğril Beg and swore to uphold their unity, solidarity and fidelity to their leader, Ṭuğril Beg, who commanded the preachers to pronounce his name in their ḥutta on the minbar and ordered that the coins should be minted with the words (Ṭuğril Beg venerable Prince) inscribed on them.

**Rare Saljuki Dinar**

**Obverse**

**Centre**

Victory

There is no God but Allah hath no associate

**First circle**

In the name of Allah.

This Dinar struck in Nisabur in 431 A.H.

**Second Circle**

Allah’s authority is supreme be it earlier or later.

Then, do the faithful rejoice in Allah’s victory.

(Coran XXX, 4,5)

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14 Al-Bayhaqi, op. cit., p. 680, 688, 689.
16 Islamic Art Museum in Cairo, 1848.
**Reverse**

*Centre*
For Allâh
Muhammad is the
Messenger of Allâh,
Al-Qâ‘îm bi-Amr Allâh
The venerable prince
Tûgîrl Beg

*Margin*
He who hath sent His Apostle with Guidance
and the religion of truth to proclaim it over all religion
even though the pagans may detest (it).
(Coran IX, 30)

It is worth noting that the numismatic scholars referred in their writing to the fact that the oldest coins of the Saljuks, as Miles put it, were minted in 433 A.H. in the city of Rayy in Tûgîrl Beg name.\(^{17}\) Lane-Poole, too, had the same view as regards the year of coinage but he referred to Nisabur as the city where the dinar was minted.\(^{18}\) However, the Islamic Art Museum in Cairo had a specie, a (rare dinar) struck in Nisabur on the victory of the saljuks over the Ghaznavids in the battle of Dândânqân in 431 A.H./1040 A.D. The importance of this dinar lies in the fact that it provides an emendation of the data given in the catalogues and published reference books on the coins of the Islamic East, for the date of coinage inscribed on the dinar precedes the dates of coinage referred to in these reference books.

In addition, the dinar is considered a specie of the kind minted on memorable occasions and important historical events. The dinar referred to in this article was, for instance, struck by the Saljuks to record their victory over the Ğaznavid in Dândânqân in 431 A.H./1040 A.D. For the word *Naṣr* (Victory) is inscribed in the centre of its first side and hence the coin was a kind of document and a testimony to the actuality of the events referred to in the historical sources. The victory of the Saljuks as well as the date of coinage correspond with what Ibn al-Atîr mentioned: “Tûgîrl Beg, after winning victory in the battle of Dândânqân, went to Nisabur towards the end of 431 A.H.”\(^{19}\)

Moreover, the inscription on this dinar provided on emendation of the view adopted by some researchers concerning the title of Tûgîrl Beg that many researchers referred to Tûgîrl Beg as the Sultan, or the great Sultan,\(^{20}\) after his victory in the battle of Dândânqân, Tûgîrl Beg merely called himself


\(^{19}\) Ibn Al-Aṭîr, *op. cit.*, part. 8, p. 22.

the venerable prince (al-amir al-ağall), a fact that is testified when one reads the fourth line below the title of the Abassid caliph on reverse of the coin, for Ṭuğrīl Beg wanted to win the favour and get the support of the Abassids to authorize the rule of the state he was establishing and wanted to give the rule of the Saljuks a legal aspect and capacity, two aims which he achieved in 435 A.H./1044 A.D. when the Abassid Caliph sent Abū-l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Al-Mawārdī to Ṭuğrīl Beg with a robe of honour from the Sultan, and a commission to rule the lands under their power.

As for the title, the Sultan, it was used by the Saljuks only after the Abassid Caliph al-Qāʾīm gave Ṭuğrīl Beg a permission to enter Bağdād towards the beginning of 447 A.H./1055 A.D. At that time, he commanded the preachers to pronounce Ṭuğrīl’s name in their ḥutba on the minbar (pulpit) of Bağdād and to call him “Abū-Ṭālib Ṭuğrīl Beg Muḥammad b. Miḥā‘īl, al-Sultan al-Muʿazzam, (The great Sultan), Rukn al-Dīn, (The Saviour of Religion), Yamin Amir al-Mūminīn (The Right Hand of the Commander of the Faithful), whose name is to be inscribed\(^{21}\) on the coins”, thereby, Ṭuğrīl Beg, the leader of the Saljuks was given that honourable title quoted above.\(^{22}\)

In the light of the preceding study, we conclude the following facts:

1. The importance of that rare dinar belongs to the kind of memorable occasions coins.
2. Ṭuğrīl Beg had titled himself al-Amir al-Ağall (venerable prince) on early coins after the Seljuk’s victory in Dândānqæn against Ghaznavids, 421 A.H./1040 A.D.
3. Later Ṭuğrīl Beg title changed to al-Sultān al muʿazzam, Rukn al-Dīn, Yamin amīr al-Mūminīn, which appeared on the reverse inscription.

