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"MALIK MULŪK AL-UMARĀ' ملك ملوك الأمراء"
NEW LAQAB ON AI-ABĀ DĪNĀR

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 6th/12th century the Saljūq Empire slowly dissolved in several principalities, some of them still acknowledged the Saljūq sulṭān as overlord. Many of you know the Artuqids and Zangids in the Saljūq West. Other principalities emerged in the eastern part of the empire, where the Sulṭān Sanjar was nominally the supreme overlord.

Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Ai-Abā acted as the amīr of Nīshāpūr from 548/1154 until his death in Dhū'l-Qa'da 569/July 1174. Although nominally acknowledging the Saljūqs of Khurāsān, he acted as an autonomous ruler, due to his control of much of Khurāsān.

The topic of this study is: how does the title (*laqab*) of Ai-Abā *Malik Mulūk al-Umarā*' which was on his gold dīnārs in Nīshāpūr in 560 AH fits into his political position of this time.

1.2 THE EARLY CAREER OF MU'AYYAD AL-DĪN AI-ABĀ

Ai-Abā started his career as a military slave "*ghulām*" of the Saljūq, who ruled in Marw. In Jumādā I-548/July 1153, after a group of Ghuzz Turkmān captured sulṭān Sanjar, his empire was in turmoil, as Ghuzz tribes overran much of the regions with sedentary population. Sanjar's *amīrs* attempted to

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restore the order and recognized Sulaymān Shāh as new supreme sulṭān. Sulaymān Shāh demonstrated immediately that he was unable to deal with the Ghuzz tribes and fled; the *amīrs* acknowledged the Qarā Khānid Maḥmūd Khān in his place, but the situation did not change.

With the central government unable to restore order, Ai-Abā pursued an autonomous policy in Khurāsān. He first drove the Ghuzz out of Nīshāpūr in 548/1153, Ṭūs, Damghān, and several other cities [*Fig. 1*]. By lowering taxes and accommodating the landowners, he gained respect and extended his sway over much of Khurāsān. After the appointment of Maḥmūd Khān as Sulṭān, Ai-Abā resisted at first to acknowledge him; after prolonged negotiations, he finally became Maḥmūd's vassal, while retaining his autonomous rule in Khurāsān[1].

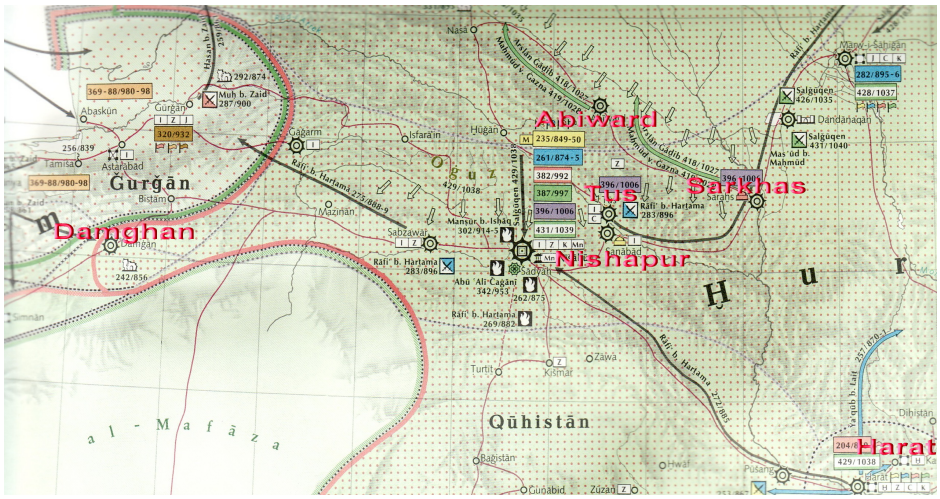

Fig. 1 – The realm of Amīrs of Nīshābūr

1.3 UNDER MAḤMUD KHAN

Meanwhile, in 551/1156, sulṭān Sanjar escaped from the captivity of the Ghuzz. He died, however, one year later and confirmed Maḥmūd Khān as his successor. Despite the inability of Maḥmūd Khān to establish any effective control over Ai-Abā, he was compelled to deal with an equal level. After

[1] Ibn al-'Athīr, IX: p. 91.

Sanjar's death, Ai-Abā attached Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ai-Tāq, who was another amīr from Sanjar's *ghulāms*. Although the Bavandids of Tabaristān assisted Ai-Tāq, Ai-Abā and Maḥmūd Khān defeated him, and in 552/1158, Ai-Tāq had to seek for peace[2].

After the war with Ai-Tāq, Ai-Abā and Maḥmūd Khān attempted to oust the group Ghuzz Turkmen who where in power in various parts of Khurāsān. The Ghuzz, however, managed to defeat them and continued to extend their sway. After occupying Marw, they moved against Ai-Abā's realm and raided Sarakhs and Ṭūs. Furthermore, in 553/1159, they offered their military service to Maḥmūd Khān, who considered them to be useful in order to balance check on Ai- Abā's power.

The Ghuzz attacked Ai-Abā in his realm, and in 554/1159, they could occupy Nīshāpūr for a brief time. Ai-Abā's fortunes soon revived. That same year, he was able to retake his capital. He then purged individuals who he considered to be responsible for the internal strife that had plagued the cities for several years, among them the head of the ‘Alids of Nīshāpūr. In 556/1161 Maḥmūd Khān broke his alliance with the Ghuzz and allied himself again with Ai-Abā. He in turn seized and blinded him and finally imprisoned him and his son. After this incident, for a period of two years he established the *khuṭba* for himself without acknowledging any overlord[3].

1.4 EXPANSION AND DEATH

Following the imprisonment of Maḥmūd Khān, Ai-Abā rigorously attempted to extent his realm. In 558/1163 he received gifts and an investiture patent from the western Saljūq sulṭān of Hamadān, Arslān Shāh, and Ai-Abā hereafter included his name in the *khuṭba*, although the Western Saljūq sulṭān had no effective authority over him. During this time, In 558/1163, he engaged of the border disputes with the Ghurids. He also seized Qūmis from the Bavandids, although in 559/1164 they were able to take the province back. In the same year, the amīr of Herāt passed on and local notables gave the city to Ai-Abā, hoping that he might be able to protect them from the Ghuzz menace. He undertook campaigns against the Ghuzz in Marw and Sarakhs[4].

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[2] Ibn al-'Athīr, IX: p. 125.

[3] Ibn Al-Athir, IX: p. 131- 133.

[4] Ibn Al-Athir, IX: p. 178, 195.

In the mid of 1160s, Khwārazmian armies raided Khurāsān. In 562/1167 fearing that they would eventually move against him, Ai-Abā asked his friend Ildeniz, Atabeg of Azerbayjān and the "protector" of the Hamadan Saljūqs, for assistance. Ildeniz responded by writing to the Khwārazm Shāh, warning him that Khurāsān constituted a part of the Saljūq empire[5].

In 568/1174, Ai-Abā led an expedition into Khwārazm following an appeal for assistance by the recently ousted Khwārezm Shāh, Sulṭān Shāh. He had lost his throne to his brother Tekish. Unfortunately, for Ai-Abā, Tekish's forces defeated his army, and he himself was captured and killed. In Nīshāpūr, his son Tughān-Shāh succeeded him[6].

2. THE COINS OF AI-ABĀ

2.1 WITH THE QARĀ KHĀN OVERLORD

During his tenure under the Western Saljūq sulṭān Sanjar, his name did not appear on the Coinage of Nīshābūr.

Coins with the name Ai-Abā are rare. The earliest coin of the reign of Ai-Abā we have, are some dinars struck in Nīshābūr in 554/1159 (FINT, ED1 A2) and 558/1162 (FINT, ED1 A3). They named only with the Qarā Khān Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad. They were struck before Ai-Abā acknowledged the western Saljūq sulṭān Arslān Shāh in the same year. I know only these 3 dinars preserved in the collection of the Tuebingen University (inv. nos. FB10 E3, 95-10-1, 2007-11-20). In addition, some coins of Ai-Abā in the same collection; have the date of 563 (inv. no. FB10 E4)[7], 564 AH (inv. no. 2001- 13-133) [8], 566 AH (inv. no. FB10 E5) [9] and name the Khwārizm Shāh Il Arslān b. Atsiz as overlord, and Ai-Abā himself only with the *laqab* of *al-Malik*.

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5 al-Husaynī: p. 91b.

6 Ibn Al-Athir, IX: p. 251; Bosworth 1968: p. 189.

7 *SNA* Tübingen 2012: no. 692.

8 *SNA* Tübingen 2012: no. 693.

9 *SNA* Tübingen 2012: no. 695.

2.2 AT THE PEAK OF HIS POWER

The title *Malik Mulūk al-'Umara* appears on a group of three dināŕs Struck in Nīshāpūr dated 560/1165, one of it was published in a Ph.D. dissertation, but it was wrongly read[10]. In this period we find a similar titles on the coins *Malik Al-'Umara* "King of the Amirs" denoting various Atabeks governors with the overlord of Saljūq Sulṭāns.

THE COINS [11]

1- Dīnār Nishābūr 560 Ah [Pl. 1 and 2]
   - al-Mustanjid bi-llāh
   - Arslān ibn Tughrul [*al-Sulṭān al-Aʿẓam/ Rukn al-Duniā wā al-Dīn/ Abū al-Muẓaffar*]
   - Ai-Abā [*Malik Muluk al-Umarā'*]

[10] Sa'īd Ata Āllāh 2003: p. 462.

[11] I want to thank Dr. Lutz Ilisch for providing me with photos of these coins.

		الظهر:			الوجه:
	مركز /			مركز /	
الله السلطان الأعظم ركن الدنيا والدين أبو المظفر أرسلان ملك ملوك الأمرا آيبه			*ornament* لا إلـــه إلا الله محمد رسول الله المستنجد بالله		
محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون		هامش/	بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينار بنيسابور سنة ستين وخمسماية		هامش /

These coins were minted in a crucial phase of Ai-Abā's reign[12].
For the year 560/1165 Ibn Al-Athīr reports

> when al-Mu'ayyid Ai-Abā was able to occupy Qumis, the [western Saljūq] sulṭān Arslān b. Tughrul gave him the permission to rule the territories which he occupied and some gifts, and in addition to keep the khuṭba for Arslān b. Tughrul, and this was with the assistance of Ildikiz who was the responsible of the Sultanate of Arslan, and he had a good relationship whith al-Mu'ayyid Ai-Abā as well, then Ai-Abā took the sulṭān gifts and held the khutba for himself after the name of Arslān b. Tughrul [13]

The coin of 560 with the unusual and very pretentious title *Malik Mulūk al-Umarā'*, "King of the kings of the amirs" – was struck at the peak of his power after 558/1162, when he acknowledged nominally the western Saljūq sulṭān and had a backing by the Idegizid from Azerbayjān.

2.3 WITH THE KHWĀRAZM SHĀH AS OVERLORD

Since 562/1165, the realm of Ai-Abā was under the constant menace of Khwārazm Shāh and target of many raids[14]. This is indirectly documented by a coin of the years 563/1167, (FINT,FB10 E4) [Pl. 3] 564/1168 struck in

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12 The coin collection of Tübingen University, nos. FB10 E3, 95- 10-1.

13 IBN AL-ATHĪR, 1982: *cit.*, IX, 474- 476; IQBAL, p. 292.

14 IQBAL 1989.

Nīshāpūr (FINT, nos. 2001-13-133, FB10 E5, Zeno no.50513) [Pl. 4]. He had to acknowledge the Khwārazm Shāh, his name was mentioned, as "al-Malik / al-Mu'ayad", sometimes we find it one word in each side, and on the other coins was written as "al-Malik" above and "al-Mu'a" "yad" distributed in both sides.

الوجه :			الظهر :		
	مركز /			مركز /	
		ornament لا إلـــه إلا الله محمد رسول الله المستنجد بالله		المو	... السلطان المعظم تاج الدنيا والد أبو الفتح أي أرسلان بن أتسز أيابه
هامش /	بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينار بنيسابور سنة أربعة وستين [وخمسماية]		هامش/	[محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون]	

3. CONCLUSION

The reign of Ai-Abā saw three important phases; the first under the overlord ship of the supreme eastern Saljūq Sulṭān Sanjar until 552/1157 Ai-Abā's name did not appear in this time on the coinage. This continued under the overlordship of the Qara Khān Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad and lasted until 558/1162. In this period we find only the name of the overlord but not the name or titles of Ai-Abā, there are tow dinars in Tuebingen collection dated with 552Ah (FINT, inv. no. 2001- 13-35), and 558Ah (FINT, inv. no. FB10 D2)

The second period was after the shift to the acknowledgement of the western Saljūq Sulṭān Arslān Shāh ibn Tughrul. This lasted until 562. In this period Ai-Abā was at the peak of his power and assumed the very pretentious title of " Malik Mulūk al-Umara' ". At this time, he ruled much of Khurāsān and Qumis.

The title of "Malik Mulūk al-'Umara'" was given to Ai-Abā by Sulṭān Arslān Shāh, Ai-Abā was the only governor who had the title of "Malik Mulūk al- 'Umara" to be the most distinguished Amir of his peers, as "king of the kings of the amīrs"

The third stage lasted until his death in 569 Ah, in this stage he was a vassal of the Khwārazm Shāh Īīl-Arslān, he was titled only with "al-Malik".

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PLATES

1. Tübingen collection: inv. no. FB10 E3: Dinār Nīshāpūr 560 Ah (2.75 g, 22 mm)

2. Tübingen collection: inv. no. 2007-11-20: Dinār Nīshāpūr, Date illegible (2.17 g, 21 mm)

3. Tübingen collection: inv. no. FB10 E4: Dinār Nīshāpūr 563 Ah (4.09 g, 22 mm)

4. Tübingen collection: Sylloge no. 694: Dinār Nīshābūr 564 Ah (3.98 g, 23 mm)