

The Conflict over the Sovereignty between Abbasid Caliphate and Seljuk Sultanate (447 - 590 A.H.)

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Abstract

This analytical and inductive study follows the phenomenon of the conflict over the sovereignty between Abbasid Caliphate and Seljuk Sultanate in the era between 447 and 590 A.H. I conceived the roots of this conflict, its causes and the development of this rivalry, which extended over one hundred forty years. The Seljuk Sultans done their best to deprive Abbasid Caliphs from the sovereignty, as Buyid kings had done with Abbasid Caliphs from 334 till 447 A.H. According to Seljuk's rule, the Abbasid Caliphate must be only religious authority. Therefore, the caliph has no right to designate governors, military commanders, even his own bodyguards. If the Caliph al-Muqtadi (422-467 A.H.), shown his weak, while he deals with the first Seljuk Sultan Tughril (447 - 455 A.H.). While, this situation, would not continue during the caliphates of Al-Mustarshid (512 - 529 A.H.), al-Muqtafi (530 - 555 A.H.), and al-Nasir (575 - 622 A.H.). During al-Nasir's caliphate, the Seljuk's tyranny over the Abbasid Caliphate had terminated by the killing of the last Seljuk Sultan called Tughril Ibn Alp-Arslan in 590 A.H. When the Abbasid Caliphs would resume their authority in 590 AH.. They actually spread their authority only over Iraq and parts of Persia, while the rest of Islamic world would rule by different independent powers.

Keywords: Conflict, Sovereignty, Abbasid Caliphate, Seljuk Sultanate.

Introduction

Before the year 247 AH, the Abbasid Caliphate was centrally governed by the Abbasid Caliphs. The caliph had absolute authority, appointing governors, judges, military commanders, and heads of 'Kuttab' for the government departments, and all general provinces. The caliphate's power was centralized, emanating from its capital in Baghdad. During this period, obedience and adherence to the Caliphs' orders were predominant among the provinces and subjects.

After 247 AH, the caliphate suffered severe weakness. This decline started in the year when the Turkish military leaders in the caliphate assassinated the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil. Since that incident, the actual power became in the hands of these tyrannical leaders who appointed and dismissed Caliphs as they wished, reducing the caliphs to mere puppets. This despotism continued until 334 AH, when the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustakfi summoned the Buyid ruler, Mu'izz al-Dawla, to liberate them from the Turkish commanders' tyranny. Indeed, Mu'izz al-Dawla arrived in Baghdad with his forces and freed the Abbasid Caliphate and the Caliph from their tyranny. However, the caliphate then entered into a period of the despotism of the Buyid kings that lasted over 113 years. The Zaidi Buyid kings continued the despotic rule, having the authority to appoint and dismiss as they wished, reducing the Caliph to a mere puppet who carried out their orders humiliatingly.

Later, in 447 AH, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im summoned a young Muslim force. They were the Seljuk Turks, led by Sultan Tughril Beg, to liberate the caliphate from the Zaydi Buyid tyranny. Indeed, the Sultan arrived in Baghdad with his forces and freed the caliphate from the despotism of the last Buyid king, al-Malik al-Rahim. However, the Abbasid Caliphate then fell under the control of the Seljuk sultans for more than 140 years, from 447 AH until 590 AH.

This analytical study investigates the phenomenon of competition for legitimacy between the Abbasid caliphs and Seljuk sultans. It discusses the nature, features, and causes of this competition, as well as the stages of this prolonged rivalry, concluding with the results of this conflict between both powers. It appears that the study of this subject, the competition between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuk Sultanate, and linking it to legal and legitimate aspects, has not been previously explored with this methodology. I hope this research marks the beginning of this approach in the field of historical inquiry.

The research is divided into five sections, starting first with the conditions of the Abbasid Caliphate during the period of weakness from 247 AH until the end of Buyid dominance in 447 AH. Second, the first phase of Seljuk tyranny over the Abbasid Caliphate from 447 AH until 485 AH. Third, the second phase of Seljuk tyranny from 485 AH until 530 AH. Fourth, the third phase of Seljuk tyranny from 530 AH until 590 AH. And finally, a conclusion summarizing the findings of the research.

Firstly - The Conditions of the Abbasid Caliphate During the Period of Weakness from 247 AH until the end of the Buyid Domination in 447 AH:

The early Abbasid caliphs established a centralized rule, holding all the powers of governance. The caliph had the right to appoint governors, military commanders, and heads of the government departments "Divans". There was no authority that contested the power and legitimacy of the Abbasid caliph until the year 247 AH, which was the year the Turkish military commanders killed the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (1). The powers of authority and sovereignty were then in the hands of the Abbasid caliphs, and sometimes they appointed delegate ministers whom they granted significant powers. Caliph Harun al-Rashied, for example, appointed the Barmakids as delegate ministers, and then turned against them and executed them in 187 AH, when he felt they were competing for governmental powers (2).

Since the Caliphate of al-Mu'tasim, the Turks began to dominate the Abbasid army, increasing their recruitment and assuming leadership positions. These Turkish leaders became influential and also controlled civilian positions since the Caliphate of al-Mutawakkil, who was killed by their hands in 247 AH (3). The period extending from the year 247 AH until the Buyids seized control of the reins of power in the Abbasid Caliphate in the year 334 AH, is considered a period of despotism by the Turkish military commanders over the Abbasid Caliphate. These commanders appointed and dismissed caliphs and even killed whichever caliphs they wished, turning the caliphs into puppets in the hands of these Turkish commanders who were the actual rulers of the Abbasid Caliphate. They deposed the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir Billah Ja'far ibn al-Mu'tadid twice, first in the first year of his succession in 295 AH and the second time in 317 AH (4).

With the tyranny of the Turkish leaders over power, there was also the phenomenon of the emergence of states that were practically independent of the Abbasid Caliphate. In the east, the Samanids became independent in Transoxiana since the year 260 AH, the Zaydi Daylamites became independent in Tabaristan since the year 250 AH, and the Hamdanids became independent in Mesopotamia. Control shifted between many powers over the regions of Wasit, Basra, and Ahvaz before the Buyid dynasty's domination over the Abbasid Caliphate in the year 334 AH. Egypt and the Levant became independent under the rule of the Tulunids, then the Ikhshidids before the fall of the Ikhshidid state to the Fatimids in the year 358 AH. The Qarmatians subdued the lands of Bahrain, Yamama, and even Oman since the year 278 AH, and they looted and killed pilgrims in the year 317 AH. The Fatimids seized control of North Africa in the year 296 AH, and they announced the establishment of a Shiite Caliphate that contested the Abbasid Caliphate for leadership of the Muslim world. The Buyids took over the region of al-Karaj "southeast of Hamadan" in 320 AH from the king of the Ziyarid dynasty, Mardavij ibn Ziyar (5).

The scholar Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti describes the state of the Islamic world in the year 325 AH, saying: “In the year twenty-five, the situation became very chaotic, and the lands were either controlled by rebels or by officials who did not send tax revenues. They became like the kings of factions, and nothing remained under the control of Caliph al-Radi except Baghdad and Sawad, let alone “Ibn Ra'iq's” influence over him. When the Abbasid Caliphate weakened during these times and the foundations of the Abbasid state eroded, with the Qarmatians and heretics overpowering the provinces, the ambition of the Andalusian ruler Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Umayyad al-Marwani (Abd al-Rahman III) strengthened. He said, “We are the most entitled to the Caliphate,” and called himself Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful) al-Nasir li-Din Allah (the Defender of God's Faith). Thus, there were three bearing the title of “Amir al-Mu'minin” in the world: the Abbasid in Baghdad, him in al-Andalus, and the Fatimid Mahdi in Qairawan (6).” Here, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti emphasizes that the Abbasid Caliphate was suffering from severe weakness, with the caliph practically ruling only the capital of the caliphate, Baghdad, while the rest of the states and regions were practically independent, acknowledging only the nominal authority of the powerless caliph. The actual control of the Caliphate was in the hands of the Turkish military leaders. At that time, for the first time, a Sunni caliphate emerged to compete with the Abbasid Caliphate, which was the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus in 316 AH, preceded by a Shia caliphate in North Africa in 296 AH, which sought to wrest leadership of the Islamic world from the Abbasid Caliphate (7).

In the midst of the dire circumstances faced by the Abbasid Caliphate, the Abbasid Caliph al-Radi in the year 324 AH created the position of “Amir al-Umara” (Commander of Commanders), granting the holder of this position administrative, political, and military powers. The “Amir al-Umara” became the actual ruler of the Caliphate, recognizing only the nominal authority and legitimacy of the Caliph, who

became merely a religious symbol. The establishment of the “Amir al-Umara” position opened the door to competition for it among the Abbasid army leaders from the Turks and the Daylamites. In the year 326 AH, three commanders contested for the position of “Amir al-Umara”, namely Muhammad ibn Ra’iq “Emir of Wasit,” Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Baridi “Emir of Ahvaz,” and Bajkam the Turk. Al-Baridi sought the support of the Buyids, marking the beginning of Buyid intervention in the power struggle within the Abbasid Caliphate. During the years 330 and 331 AH, four commanders competed for the position of Amir al-Umara, including Bajkam the Turk, Kourtakin the Daylamites, Ibn Ra’iq the Turk, and Sayf al-Dawla Abdullah ibn Hamdan the Arab (8).

However, the creation of the “Amir al-Umara” position did not succeed in extending the authority of the Abbasid Caliphate over its provinces; instead, the independence of these regions and states from the Caliphate continued. The competition for the Amir al-Umara position opened the door to conflict among military commanders seeking to seize this position, which granted its holder all the powers of governance from the caliphate's authority. Moreover, chaos, rebellious movements, looting, and plundering spread across the Caliphate's provinces. Some Arab tribes resorted back to looting and plundering, as they did before Islam, due to their exclusion from joining the Caliphate's army. Among the most famous of these tribes was the Banu Shayban. The capital of the Caliphate also suffered from looting, plundering, and famine (9).

While the Abbasid Caliphate was suffering from chaos and weakened authority, new power was growing in the region of Daylam lands south of the Caspian Sea. This power was the Buyid dynasty, which was granted the region of Karaj by the Emir Mardavij ibn Ziyar in the year 320 AH, to govern it under his state, known as the Ziyarid state in Gorgan and Tabaristan. Ali ibn Buya, known as Imad al-Dawla, collaborated with his brothers Hasan and Ahmad, and they captured Isfahan in the

year 322 AH. Then, the cities of Ancient Persia (Fars) fell easily into their hands. Ali ibn Buya wrote to the Abbasid Caliph al-Radi bi-Allah, affirming his obedience to the Caliphate and pledging to pay an annual amount of eight million dirhams. The Caliph accepted his offer, and granted him recognition and authority. Then, the Buyids seized the Jabal region after the murder of Mardavij ibn Ziyar in the following year and took over Kerman and Ahvaz in the year 334 AH. This happened when the commanders Ibn Ra'iq and al-Baridi were competing for the position of Amir al-Umara during the caliphate of al-Mustakfi, who was forced to seek help from the Buyids to rid himself of the chaos and rivalry among the leaders for the position of Amir al-Umara. The Buyid (Daylamites) army, led by Ahmad ibn Buya, entered Baghdad in the year 334 AH and the Caliph celebrated him. He gave him the title of Mu'izz al-Dawla and appointed him as Amir al-Umara. The Caliph ordered that prayers be offered for King Mu'izz al-Dawla in sermons after prayers for the Caliph. In this way, the Sunni Abbasid Caliphate fell under the rule of the Shi'a Buyid dynasty of the Zaidi sect. The Buyid kings became the actual tyrannical rulers of the Abbasid Caliphate, leaving the Abbasid Caliph with only the title of caliph as a religious position from which the governors and Buyid kings derived their legitimacy. Furthermore, the Buyid kings went as far as to dethrone the Caliphs and mistreat them. They deposed Caliph al-Mustakfi and blinded him months after he recognized their legitimacy, accusing him of conspiring to kill their king, Imad al-Dawla. Then, they appointed al-Muti' li-Allah Abu al-Qasim al-Fadl ibn al-Muqtadir as the caliph. The position of the caliph's vizier became nominal, devoid of any real authority, unlike in the early Abbasid caliphate where viziers were delegated with the governance of the Abbasid state. The vizier under Buyid despotism became more like a secretary for the caliph, merely managing his estates and revenues. On the other hand, the Buyid kings appointed viziers, who gradually gained significant influence within the Buyid Kingdom (10).

The Buyids made Ancient Persia (Fars) the center of their kingdom's rule under the leadership of Ali ibn Buya "Imad al-Dawla," while Hasan independently governed Jibal, Kerman, and Khuzestan. This was at the expense of the capital of the Caliphate, Baghdad, and Iraq in general, as the capital and Iraq were neglected under the Buyid Kingdom (11).

The historian Ibn al-Athir describes the state of the Abbasid Caliphate before and at the beginning of the Buyid despotism, saying: "The state of the Caliphate deteriorated further, and they had nothing left of their authority at all. They used to be consulted and their commands (the caliphs) were taken into account to some extent, maintaining some respect for the Caliphate. However, during the days of Mu'izz al-Dawla's despotism, all of that disappeared to the extent that the Caliph was left without a minister, only having a secretary (khatib) to manage his estates and expenditures, and nothing more. The position of minister became that of Mu'izz al-Dawla, who appointed his own ministers as he wished." Ibn al-Athir further describes the Buyids in another place, saying: "The Daylamites (i.e., the Buyids) were Shia, and they exaggerated in their Shiism. They believed that the Abbasids had usurped the Caliphate from its rightful owners. Thus, they had no religious incentive to obey the Caliphate. I have even heard that Mu'izz al-Dawla consulted a group of his close associates about taking the Caliphate from the Abbasids and pledging allegiance to Mu'izz al-Din Allah al-Alawi (the Fatimid), or to another of the Alawis. All of them advised him to do so, except for some of his close associates, who said: 'This is not a good idea, as today you are with a Caliph whom you and your companions believe is not rightfully the Caliph, and had you ordered them to kill him, they would have done so, and shed his blood. If you were to appoint one of the Alawis as Caliph, who you and your associates believe is the rightful Caliph. Then, if he (the Alawi Caliph) ordered them to kill you, his associates would do so. So, disregard this idea (12).'"

When Imad al-Dawla Ali ibn Buya felt his end was near and had no son to inherit his rule, he recommended that his brother Rukn al-Dawla Hasan succeed him in ruling the Buyid Kingdom. He instructed that Rukn al-Dawla's son "Fanna Khusraw ibn Rukn al-Dawla" should be the heir apparent to Rukn al-Dawla (his father) and take over the rule of the province of Fars. He appointed him as Amir al-Umara instead of his brother Mu'izz al-Dawla Ahmad, ruler of Iraq. The Abbasid Caliph al-Muti' li-Allah agreed to Imad al-Dawla's recommendation for Rukn al-Dawla to assume the position of Amir al-Umara and ruler of the Buyid Kingdom (13).

When Imad al-Dawla Ali ibn Buya died in the year 338 AH, the rule of Fars was taken over by Fanna Khusraw ibn Rukn al-Dawla, whom the Abbasid Caliph al-Muti' titled 'Adud al-Dawla when he unified the Buyid Kingdom in the year 351 AH. 'Adud al-Dawla could not unify the kingdom until he managed to subdue his opponents with the help of his father Rukn al-Dawla and his uncle Mu'izz al-Dawla Ahmad ibn Buya (14).

When Mu'izz al-Dawla Ahmad ibn Buya passed away in 356 AH, he was succeeded in ruling Iraq by his son, Bakhtiyar. However, Bakhtiyar misgoverned Iraq, leading his brother, Habashi, to rebel against him. This marked the beginning of internal divisions within the Buyid family. King 'Adud al-Dawla decided to seize control of Iraq from his cousin Bakhtiyar ibn Mu'izz al-Dawla. In 364 AH, 'Adud al-Dawla incorporated Iraq into his kingdom in Fars and imprisoned his cousin Bakhtiyar. This strained 'Adud al-Dawla's relationship with his father Rukn al-Dawla, forcing 'Adud al-Dawla to release the prisoners, including Bakhtiyar, and leaving the rule of Iraq to Bakhtiyar. This action earned 'Adud al-Dawla the sympathy of his father, Rukn al-Dawla Hasan ibn Buya, who decided that his son would be his successor after him in 365 AH. However, Rukn al-Dawla did not survive the following year, prompting 'Adud al-Dawla to once again seize control of Iraq from his cousin Bakhtiyar. Bakhtiyar submitted to his cousin 'Adud al-Dawla, making 'Adud al-Dawla the actual ruler of

the kingdom and the authoritarian over the Abbasid Caliphate. Ibn al-Qalanisi mentions that the Fatimid Caliphate feared 'Adud al-Dawla the Buyid, and did not dare to send forces to the Levant when 'Adud al-Dawla seized control of the Abbasid Caliphate. The Fatimids even rejoiced at his death in 370 AH (15).

After solidifying his rule, 'Adud al-Dawla married the daughter of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ta'i li'llah Abu Bakr bin al-Muti' in the year 369 AH. 'Adud al-Dawla also married one of his daughters to Caliph al-Ta'i. In fact, 'Adud al-Dawla aspired for the caliphate to pass to one of his descendants, thereby uniting the rule of the Buyid Kingdom and the Abbasid Caliphate under his lineage. However, this ambition seemed unattainable for the Buyids and even for the Seljuks in the future when they would dominate the Abbasid Caliphate in the year 447 AH (16).

Upon the death of King 'Adud al-Dawla ibn Rukn al-Dawla in the year 371 AH, a conflict erupted between his sons Samsam al-Dawla and Sharaf al-Dawla. Samsam al-Dawla received legitimacy to rule the Buyid Kingdom from the Abbasid Caliph al-Ta'i, while his uncle Mu'ayyad al-Dawla ibn Rukn al-Dawla retained control of the regions of Jibal and Gorgan. The conflict ended with Sharaf al-Dawla recognizing the leadership of his brother Samsam al-Dawla over the Buyid Kingdom. The conflict reignited in the year 376 AH, with Sharaf al-Dawla defeating Samsam al-Dawla, seizing Iraq from him, and imprisoning him. Sharaf al-Dawla died in 379 AH, and his brother Baha' al-Dawla took over the rule of Iraq and leadership of the Buyid Kingdom with the approval of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ta'i. Samsam al-Dawla escaped from prison after the death of his brother Sharaf al-Dawla and began a conflict with his brother Baha' al-Dawla, which was eventually resolved by agreeing to divide the Buyid Kingdom. Baha' al-Dawla decided to depose Caliph al-Ta'i when he refused to give him money from the Caliphate's treasury. He forced Caliph al-Ta'i to abdicate himself, and al-Qadir Billah Ahmad ibn Ishaq ibn al-Muqtadir ibn al-Mu'tadid became the Caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate in the year 381 AH. Samsam

al-Dawla's troops betrayed and killed him, incited by the son of Bakhtiyar in 388 AH (17). After the death of Samsam al-Dawla ibn 'Adud al-Dawla, his brother Baha' al-Dawla took over the leadership of the Buyid Kingdom. Thus, the Buyid Kingdom was reunited under the leadership of Baha' al-Dawla, who made Fars the headquarters of his kingdom instead of Baghdad, which was suffering from strife between the Shia and the Sunni, as well as conflicts between the Daylamites and the Turks, and Baghdad also suffered from raids and looting by the Ayyarun and thieves (18).

In the year 389 AH, the Samanid state in Transoxiana came to an end. This state was a supporter of the Abbasid Caliphate, and the caliphate relied on it to weaken the Shia Buyid Kingdom. The Sunni Ghaznavid state divided the Samanid state, where they seized control of Khorasan, while a Turkish commander named Arslan took control of the region of Transoxiana. During the internal conflict among the Buyid princes, the power of other forces, such as Banu Uqayl in Mosul, grew at the expense of the Buyids. Their leader Qardash al-Uqayli pledged allegiance to the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah in 401 AH, then retracted and pledged allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph when threatened by the Buyids (19). In 402 AH, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir wrote a document questioning the lineage of the Fatimids, rulers of North Africa, Egypt, and the Levant, which was signed by judges and Ashraf from the Alawites. This was one of the strongest tools used to undermine the legitimacy of the Shia Fatimid Caliphate, which sought to eliminate the Sunni Abbasid Caliphate (20).

King Baha al-Dawla ibn 'Adud al-Dawla died in 402 AH after a 24-year reign and was succeeded by his son Sultan al-Dawla, who became the king of the Buyid Kingdom. He established his capital in Iraq despite the chaos and sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shias and the conflicts between the Daylamites and Turks. Sultan al-Dawla's soldiers rebelled against him, forcing him to relinquish control of

Iraq to his brother Sharaf al-Dawla, who was recognized by the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir as the king of the Buyid Kingdom instead of his brother Sultan al-Dawla, thus increasing the internal strife in the Buyid Kingdom (21).

After the death of Sultan al-Dawla ibn Baha al-Dawla, the Buyid Kingdom's Turkish soldiers sided with his brother Qawam al-Dawla relinquishing their allegiance to his son Abu Kalijar, the ruler of Ahvaz. After a conflict between them, they reached a settlement whereby Fars and Kerman were given to Qawam al-Dawla and Khuzestan to Abu Kalijar ibn Sultan al-Dawla. The conflict between them was renewed between 415 and 417 AH, with the death of Sharaf al-Dawla, the ruler of Iraq, in 416 AH. Jalal al-Dawla, the ruler of Basra, took over the rule of Iraq. The conflict ended with Fars and Khuzestan going to Abu Kalijar and Kerman to Qawam al-Dawla. At that time, the conflict intensified between Abu Kalijar and his maternal uncles from the Kakuyid family. The Buyids were also occupied in conflict with neighboring Islamic powers such as the Ghaznavids in Transoxiana and Khorasan. Jalal al-Dawla of the Buyids became a puppet in the hands of his army commanders, and the Abbasid Caliphate reached its weakest state. The Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir did not exploit the weakening of the Buyid authority over Iraq during the rule of Jalal al-Dawla to declare Iraq's independence from the Buyid Kingdom, as the caliph himself was also in a very weak state (22).

The conditions in Iraq worsened, leading to a rebellion by the Turkish soldiers, who looted the properties of the minister of King Jalal al-Dawla of the Buyids. The disputes between King Jalal al-Dawla, ruler of Iraq, and King Abu Kalijar, ruler of Kerman, did not cease after the death of Qawam al-Dawla. Abu Kalijar came to rule over Fars, Kerman, and Khuzestan, and sought to seize control of Iraq from Jalal al-Dawla. Upon the death of King Jalal al-Dawla in the year 435 AH, the Buyid Kingdom was unified under the rule of King Abu Kalijar in the year 436 AH. During those years of conflict, the Ghaznavids seized most of the Jibal region from the

Buyids, and the Seljuk Sultan Tughril Beg captured Nishapur, Sarakhs, and most of Khorasan from the Ghaznavids. The Seljuks declared the establishment of their state under the leadership of Sultan Tughril Beg in 431 AH. The Seljuks then expanded at the expense of the Daylamites in general and the Buyids in particular. In the year 433 AH, Sultan Tughril Beg seized Gorgan, Tabaristan, Khwarezm, and Ray, and the Daylam and Taram King submitted to him. The Seljuks captured Jibal region in 437 AH, forcing the Buyid King Abu Kalijar to make a truce with the Seljuk Sultan in 439 AH. The Buyid King Abu Kalijar attempted to ally with the Fatimids by embracing the Ismaili (Fatimid) doctrine, which angered the Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im, leading Abu Kalijar to abandon the Ismaili doctrine (23).

Upon the death of the Buyid King Abu Kalijar in 440 AH, his sons, al-Malik al-Rahim and Abu Mansur Fulad Sutun, engaged in a struggle. Al-Malik al-Rahim tried to seize the province of Fars from his brother Fulad Sutun. In 444 AH, Fulad Sutun sought the aid of the Seljuks to take the region of Ahvaz from his brother al-Malik al-Rahim. At that time, the Seljuk Sultan was not aspiring to conquer Fars but was keen on extracting Iraq from the Buyids to expel them from Iraq and their dominance over the Abbasid Caliphate. One of the Buyid princes, Abu Ali ibn Abu Kalijar, then allied with the Seljuks, seizing Ahvaz from al-Malik al-Rahim in 447 AH. While Iraq was in chaos with soldier rebellions and raids by Ayyarun that year, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah forced the Buyid King al-Rahim to dispense with one of his most renowned Turkish commanders, known as al-Basasiri. The Caliph accused al-Basasiri of allying with the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir to overthrow the Abbasid Caliphate. Seeing an opportunity, Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah requested the intervention of the Seljuk Sultan Tughril Beg to liberate Iraq from the Buyid Kingdom that had dominated the caliphate for more than 113 years. The Seljuk Sultan promptly responded to the Caliph's call, entered Baghdad peacefully, arrested al-Malik al-Rahim, and was appointed as Sultan. The Abbasid Caliph then bestowed

upon Sultan Tughril Beg the cloak of investiture and ordered that prayers be made in the Sultan's name after the Caliph (24).

In the next chapter, titled “The First Phase of Seljuk Domination over the Abbasid Caliphate from 447 AH to 485 AH,” I will provide an introduction to the emergence of the Seljuk Sultanate. This introduction may include information previously mentioned in my discussion of the final days of Buyid despotism over the Abbasid Caliphate.

Secondly - The First Phase of Seljuk Domination over the Abbasid Caliphate from 447 AH to 485 AH:

At the beginning of the fifth century, a new Sunni power emerged, namely the Seljuk Turks who had recently converted to Islam - under the Samanids. This power began to grow at the expense of the Ghaznavid state in Transoxiana, especially during the reign of King Masud ibn Mahmud ibn Sabuktigin. After the Seljuks, led by Tughril Beg, seized the city of Nishapur from the Ghaznavids in 429 AH, they declared the establishment of their state, which would become significant in the Islamic world for several centuries. Following their decisive victory over the Ghaznavids in 431 AH at the Battle of Dandanaqan and their subsequent conquest of the southern part of the Ghaznavid state, Tughril Beg sent a letter to the Abbasid Caliph justifying his expansion at the expense of the Ghaznavids. He accused them of failing to establish justice and of oppressing the Seljuks by treacherously capturing one of his relatives, Arslan Isra'il, and his son Qutalmish. The Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah sent Tughril Beg a robe of honor, recognizing his fledgling state, which had subdued Khorasan and made the city of Ray its capital. The Seljuk state expanded until 447 AH, the year Tughril Beg entered Baghdad, incorporating Khorasan, Fars, and Persian Iraq (25).

After several appeals from the Caliph al-Qa'im to summon Tughril Beg to Baghdad to take control and liberate the Caliphate from Buyid despotism, Tughril Beg marched to Baghdad and entered it in 447 AH, taking actual power and being titled Sultan. He arrested the Buyid King "al-Malik al-Rahim," who had no power to confront the Seljuks. Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah warmly received the Seljuk Sultan, honored and acknowledged his effort, and appointed him over all the lands under the Abbasid Caliphate, including those that had not declared independence from the caliphate, as previously mentioned. The Caliph ordered to mention of the name of Sultan Tughril Beg in "Jumah" prayers after his own. It is noteworthy that this invocation held great importance in affirming the sovereignty of the Abbasid Caliph and the Seljuk Sultan over this vast state (26).

Sultan Tughril Beg showed his submission and humility to the Caliph. As Ibn al-Jawzi narrates, he said, "I am the servant and slave of the Commander of the Faithful, acting on his command and prohibition, honored by what he has enabled me to do and employed me in, and from Allah, I seek aid and success (27)." Sultan Tughril Beg was keen to strengthen ties with the Abbasid Caliph through marriage. He proposed to the Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah to marry his niece, Khadija, the daughter of Sultan Dawud. This was one year after Tughril Beg gained legitimacy in the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate in 448 AH. The Sultan hoped that the Caliph would have a son from this Seljuk princess and that this son would become the heir apparent to the Abbasid Caliphate. The plan was for this son to eventually become a Caliph ruling the Abbasid Caliphate under the guardianship of his Seljuk uncles. Indeed, the Caliph agreed to this marriage out of necessity, but Tughril Beg's dream, and that of all the Seljuk Sultans, to control the Abbasid Caliphate through marriage, was not achieved even during the weakest periods of the Caliphate (28).

As previously mentioned, Iraq was suffering from the spread of the Ismaili doctrine, especially among the Caliphate's soldiers of Persian and Turkish origin. One of these

Turkish commanders, Abu al-Harith al-Basasiri, embraced this doctrine and began calling for the abolition of the Abbasid Caliphate and the proclamation of the Ubaidi caliphate, the Fatimids. At that time, the Fatimids controlled Egypt, the Levant, and even North Africa. Taking advantage of Sultan Tughril Beg's preoccupation with subduing a rebel against him, his maternal brother Ibrahim Inal, al-Basasiri occupied Baghdad in 450 AH. He declared the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate and proclaimed allegiance to the Ubaidi Caliph "al-Mustansir." Fortunately, the Caliph managed to escape and took refuge with one of the commanders loyal to al-Basasiri, al-Muqallad ibn al-Musayyab al-Uqayli. Sultan Tughril Beg then marched towards Baghdad; al-Basasiri and his followers fled. Tughril Beg pursued and defeated them, killing al-Basasiri. The Caliph returned to Baghdad, honored, and thus the Abbasid Caliphate and the Abbasid Caliph were restored in 451 AH, a year after their rapid fall due to al-Basasiri's revolution in favor of the Fatimids (29).

After initially showing signs of submission to the Caliph since his entry into Baghdad in 447 AH and his victory over al-Basasiri in 451 AH, Sultan Tughril Beg turned the tables and stripped the Caliph of all governing authority. The Caliph no longer had the right to appoint governors, military commanders, judges, or heads of departments. In fact, the entire region of Iraq directly came under the Sultan through his deputy, who was titled the 'Amid'. Even Baghdad itself was governed and managed by a chief administrator of the Sultan, known as the "Shahna." The budget of Iraq and even that of the Caliph was determined by the Sultan, and the Caliph's guards were from the Sultan's forces. The Seljuk deputies effectively held real power in Iraq, leaving the Caliph without authority or influence, devoid of administrative or military powers, with nothing of the Caliphate but the name (30).

At the end of 452 AH, the wife of Sultan Tughril Beg died. The following year, the Sultan proposed marriage to the daughter of the Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah. The Caliph strongly objected to this proposal, as it was unprecedented for a woman of

the Abbasid family to marry a Turk. The Sultan was very keen on completing this marriage to bridge the gap between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuks, showing people that harmony between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuk Sultanate was intact. The Sultan waited over a year until he obtained reluctant approval from the Caliph for this marriage. The Sultan was overjoyed, spending generously on the Caliph's daughter and the Caliph himself. Thus, this political marriage took place in 454 AH, and the general public was pleased as it seemed to show “the harmony between the caliphate and the Sultanate,” as the historian al-Bundari mentions. However, Sultan Tughril Beg did not find peace with this political marriage, as he was shocked by the Caliph's daughter's disinterest in him. He fell ill from the shock and died a few months later in 455 AH. He was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan ibn Dawud ibn Mikail, as he had no son to succeed him. Thus ended the eight-year reign of Tughril Beg, who managed as the first Seljuk Sultan to strip the Abbasid Caliphate, represented by Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah, of its legitimacy and governance powers, leaving the Caliph with only the title of “Amir al-Mu'minin” (Commander of the Faithful), having no command or prohibition over his subjects (31).

Sultan Alp Arslan achieved a great victory over the Byzantine Empire in 463 AH at the Battle of Malazgirt. The Muslim forces, numbering no more than fifteen thousand horsemen, achieved a decisive victory over the Byzantine army led by Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, estimated by the Christian historian Bar Hebraeus at two hundred thousand. The emperor was captured and subjected to humiliating terms and a large ransom for his release. This opened up Asia Minor to the Seljuks over the next ten years. This victory is significant as it bolstered the authority and legitimacy of the Seljuk Sultan as a defender of the Islamic state against its main enemy, the Byzantine Empire, which had allied with the Ubaidi “Fatimid” Caliphate against the Seljuk Sultanate and the Abbasid Caliphate. The legitimacy of the Seljuk Sultanate

and the Abbasid Caliphate was further reinforced by the shift of allegiance of the Emir of Mecca from the Fatimid to the Sunni Abbasid and the Sunni Seljuk Sultanate. The allegiance of Mecca, the Qibla of Muslims, to a political authority following the Sunni doctrine supports the legitimacy of this authority against its Ismaili Fatimid rival (32).

Despite these positive achievements, we see Sultan Alp Arslan continue to monopolize power and legitimacy and restrict the Abbasid Caliph to the extent that he appointed a minister for the powerless Caliph without consulting him. This minister was titled the “Prime Minister.” It was as if the Caliph, who had no power or authority, needed a minister with a grand title (33).

When Sultan Malik Shah succeeded his father, Sultan Alp Arslan, to the Seljuk Sultanate in 465 AH, he continued the policy of authoritarianism with the Caliph al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah, who succeeded his grandfather al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah in 467 AH. Sultan Malik Shah's transgressions against the Caliph's nominal religious authority reached the point where the Shahna of Baghdad - appointed by the Sultan in 471 AH - defiantly beat the drum in front of his house at the times of the five daily prayers, a right reserved for the Caliph (34).

When the relationship between Sultan Malik Shah and Caliph al-Muqtadi worsened, the Sultan's vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, attempted to reconcile them through a political marriage. He proposed to the Sultan that the Caliph marry the Sultan's daughter, hoping she would bear a son. The plan was for the Sultan, as the grandfather, to appoint this child as the heir to the Caliphate, thus bringing the Abbasid Caliphate directly under Seljuk control. Surprisingly, Caliph al-Muqtadi agreed to this marriage but remained silent and did not promise that the expected son would be his heir. Instead, he shocked Sultan Malik Shah by appointing his eldest son, al-Mustazhir billah, as heir in 485 AH, not his younger son Ja'far, who was the Sultan's grandson. When the Sultan learned of this, he was enraged and decided to immediately expel

Caliph al-Muqtadi from the capital Baghdad to the city of Basra. It was unprecedented for anyone to daringly and harshly expel a Caliph from his capital. The Sultan gave the Caliph a ten-day ultimatum to leave Baghdad, the symbol of his ancestors' glory. The wronged Caliph found no supporter among people and turned to God for relief. The answer came with God taking the soul of Sultan Malik Shah before the end of the ten-day period. Thus ended a chapter of fierce and unfair competition for legitimacy between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuk Sultanate. Sultan Malik Shah achieved military and political victories, liberating cities and regions from the Byzantines like Antioch and Edessa, and most of the Levant, including Jerusalem, fell under his rule. He governed a vast state that stretched from Transoxiana in the east to the borders of the Byzantine capital Constantinople in the west. However, he failed to gain the allegiance of the Abbasid Caliphate, instead opening a door to hostility with it, after his predecessors, Sultans Tughril Beg and Alp Arslan, had achieved some understanding and cooperation between the Seljuk Sultanate and the Abbasid Caliphate (35).

Thirdly - The Second Phase of Seljuk Domination from 485 AH to 530 AH:

When Sultan Malik Shah died in 485 AH, his sons Berkyaruq, aged twelve, and Mahmoud, aged five, competed for the throne, instigated by their mothers. Initially, Caliph al-Muqtadi recognized Mahmoud as Sultan, then recognized Berkyaruq. Eventually, Mahmoud and his mother died after a few months. Tutosh, the uncle of Berkyaruq and Mahmoud and brother of Alp Arslan, entered the competition against Berkyaruq but was defeated and killed in 488 AH. Subsequently, the sultanate was secured for Berkyaruq, endorsed by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustazhir billah, who succeeded his father al-Muqtadi in 488 AH (36).

Sultan Berkyaruq then became embroiled in a five-year conflict with his brother Muhammad over the sultanate between 492 and 497 AH, with Caliph al-Mustazhir billah sometimes forced to recognize both as Sultans simultaneously. This conflict

over the Seljuk sultanate, which drained the Islamic State in an internal war, coincided with the start of the aggressive Western European wars on the Levant and Mesopotamia in 490 AH, known as the Crusades or the Wars of the Franks. The Seljuk leaders' conflict was a significant factor in the ease with which the Crusaders rapidly achieved victories against the Muslims, capturing Antioch, Jerusalem, and coastal cities within just five years. Two years after the peace treaty between Sultan Berkyaruq and his brother King Muhammad in 499 AH, Berkyaruq died. His commanders recognized the sultanate of his brother Muhammad, neglecting Berkyaruq's will to appoint his five-year-old son Malik Shah as his successor. Despite the intense competition for the sultanate since the death of Sultan Malik Shah in 485 AH until Sultan Muhammad bin Malik Shah solely assumed the sultanate in 499 AH, the Seljuk sultans remained resolute in effectively ruling the Abbasid Caliphate and depriving the Abbasid Caliph of any powers, even in the capital Baghdad. The thirteen-year sultanate of Sultan Muhammad bin Malik Shah did not involve any armed conflict with Caliph al-Mustazhir billah. Instead, the Caliph married the Sultan's sister in 501 AH, and none of the Seljuk princes challenged the Sultan's control or claimed the sultanate (37).

When Sultan Muhammad died in 511 AH, his son Mahmud claimed the sultanate and was contested by his uncle Sanjar, the ruler of Khorasan. After a battle between the competitors, Sanjar achieved victory. He pardoned Mahmud, and married him to his daughter, and appointed him as his heir. Thus, the sons of Sultan Muhammad, including his eldest son Mahmud, acknowledged the sultanate of their uncle Sanjar. It seems that Sultan Sanjar agreed for Mahmud to become Sultan but under his supervision and guardianship, even though Mahmud was not a minor. For six years, no Seljuk princes rebelled against Sultan Mahmud's rule until 517 AH. That year, his brother Tughril, incited by the governor of Hillah, Dubays ibn Sadaqa, rebelled against him. The allies marched to occupy Baghdad and force the Abbasid Caliph al-

Mustarshid billah, who succeeded his father al-Mustazhir billah in 512 AH, to recognize Tughril as Sultan and depose Sultan Mahmoud. However, al-Mustarshid did not submit to them. He fortified Baghdad and gathered an army estimated at twelve thousand, thwarting their attempt and causing them to retreat. Notably, Sultan Mahmoud was not in Baghdad at the time, but he thanked Caliph al-Mustarshid for his stance and showed obedience to the Caliph. Ibn al-Jawzi narrates that Sultan Mahmoud sent him a letter stating, "I have learned what you did for me, and I am your servant and at your command." Here, Caliph al-Mustarshid found an opportunity to become a significant party in the struggle for the sultanate, aiming to gain benefits and actual authority. The Caliph formed an alliance with Sultan Mahmoud against his rival Sultan Sanjar and King Tughril. Sultan Sanjar wrote to his nephew Sultan Mahmoud warning him of the Caliph. Sultan Sanjar accused al-Mustarshid of seeking to incite strife and discord among the Seljuk princes to eliminate them all and rule the Abbasid Caliphate effectively, as his ancestors did during the reign of the great Caliphs before the Caliphate weakened with the killing of Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 247 AH, as previously mentioned (38).

Following Sultan Sanjar's instigation, Sultan Mahmoud renounced his alliance with the Caliph and decided to march, along with his ally Imad ad-Din Zengi, the governor of Basra, towards Baghdad in 521 AH to occupy it and subjugate the Caliph to his authority. The Caliph resisted the siege by Sultan Mahmoud's forces, recruiting an army estimated at thirty thousand from the people of Baghdad and Sawad (i.e. southern Iraq). This was unprecedented for any Abbasid Caliph since the Seljuks dominated the Caliphate in 447 AH. Sultan Mahmoud could only enter Baghdad with the Caliph's consent, who stipulated that he be given authority in governing Baghdad and Iraq in general. Overall, this was a victory for the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustarshid, who challenged the Seljuks with force and arms, a method understood by the Seljuks whose rule was based on military power. Then, Sultan Mahmoud fell severely ill and

almost died. He sought forgiveness from Caliph al-Mustarshid for his misdeeds, and the Caliph pardoned him. By the grace of God, he recovered and left for the capital of his sultanate in Hamadan (39).

Sultan Mahmud died in 526 AH, reigniting the conflict over the sultanate among the Seljuk princes and leaders. The struggle involved Sultan Dawud, the son of Sultan Mahmud ibn Sultan Muhammad, who competed with his uncles Masud, Tughril II, and Seljuk Shah, the sons of Sultan Muhammad ibn Malik Shah. Caliph al-Mustarshid took advantage of this period of conflict among them and seized most of the Seljuks' properties in Iraq, making most of the region submissive to the Caliphate. After battles among the contenders for the sultanate, Tughril II's side prevailed. He requested Caliph al-Mustarshid to recognize his sultanate. However, the Caliph set conditions, the most important of which was to grant him actual governance in Iraq. Tughril II did not agree to al-Mustarshid's condition, leading the Caliph to refuse recognition of Tughril's sultanate. When the Caliph noticed Sultan Sanjar supporting his nephew Tughril II, who was more like a puppet in his uncle Sanjar's hands, the Caliph made an agreement with the brothers, Masud and Seljuk Shah. He agreed to appoint Masud as Sultan and Seljuk Shah as his heir, with al-Mustarshid ruling Iraq and having actual authority. Here, we see the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustarshid practically intervening in creating disputes among the Seljuk princes and weakening the Seljuk Sultanate. In 526 AH, Sultan Sanjar managed to defeat Masud and Seljuk Shah, and forced the Caliph to recognize Tughril's sultanate. Tughril was like a ward under his uncle Sultan Sanjar, the ruler of Khorasan. However, Sultan Masud ibn Sultan Mahmud defeated Sultan Tughril II the following year, and the Caliph recognized Masud as Sultan and deposed Tughril II. Caliph al-Mustarshid took advantage of his recognition of Masud's sultanate to remind him of his beneficence, telling him, "Rise, take what I have given you and be among the grateful (40)."

According to the agreement between al-Mustarshid and Masud, al-Mustarshid marched with twelve thousand cavalry to besiege Mosul, controlled by Imad ad-Din Zengi, the ally of Sultan Sanjar. Zengi was forced to agree to the Caliph's terms to lift the siege, which included handing over his son "Ghazi" as a hostage to the Caliph and providing a thousand cavalry to serve in the Caliph's army. Thus, Caliph al-Mustarshid subjugated Mosul, the last Seljuk stronghold in Iraq (41).

The alliance between Caliph al-Mustarshid and Sultan Masud did not last more than two years. The traditional conflict between the Abbasid Caliphs and Seljuk Sultans reignited in 529 AH. Sultan Masud's advisors played a significant role in inciting him against the Caliph, warning him of the Caliph's sole rule over Iraq. Al-Mustarshid mustered troops from various regions, a scale of recruitment unprecedented since the mid-third century. Ibn al-Qalanisi describes al-Mustarshid's impressive army, stating, "He approached with a splendor that defies description and exceeds any portrayal. He was joined by a multitude of soldiers and a vast crowd from various regions, bolstering his confidence." However, just before the two armies clashed, al-Mustarshid's commanders betrayed him and joined Sultan Masud's camp, leading to the Caliph's easy defeat and capture near Isfahan. Sultan Sanjar sent a message to his nephew Masud, rebuking him for fighting and capturing the Caliph and ordering him to apologize to al-Mustarshid for the harm and humiliation inflicted. Sultan Masud indeed apologized to the Caliph and made an agreement that allowed al-Mustarshid to return to Baghdad with honor and dignity, but with the condition that he would not be permitted to recruit troops or form his own army. However, this agreement was never fully realized as Caliph al-Mustarshid was killed by the Ismailis while in Sultan Masud's camp. Some historians accuse Sultan Sanjar of orchestrating the assassination in 529 AH (42).

The people of Baghdad pledged allegiance to Mansur, son of al-Mustarshid, who had been designated as his successor by his father before he died in the battle. Sultan

Masud, however, preferred to appoint Muhammad, son of Caliph al-Mustazhir, as he was an ally and likely to submit to the Sultan's authority. Consequently, Sultan Masud was compelled to accept the pledge to Mansur, who took the title al-Rashid and continued his father's policy of challenging the Seljuk Sultans to gain independence in ruling Iraq. Sultan Masud provoked Caliph al-Rashid by demanding funds that al-Mustarshid had promised him before his death. Al-Rashid refused to pay, asserting that his father's promise was made before Masud breached their agreement. Al-Rashid withdrew his recognition of Masud's sultanate and acknowledged Dawud, son of Sultan Mahmoud, as Sultan, who was under the guardianship of Imad ad-Din Zengi, his Atabeg and mentor. The Caliph mustered armies and won over Masud's allies, including Imad ad-Din Zengi of Mosul and Aleppo, as well as the governors of Qazvin, Isfahan, and Hillah. However, these alliances with al-Rashid weakened due to internal conflicts and Sultan Masud's efforts to corrupt these allies and turn them against the Caliph. In Dhu al-Hijja 530 AH, Masud convinced some jurists who issued a fatwa declaring Caliph al-Rashid unfit for the Caliphate, accusing him of baseless charges. Thus, al-Rashid was deposed, and al-Muqtafi li-Amr Allah was acknowledged as the new Caliph. Forced to leave Baghdad, the capital of the Caliphate, al-Rashid was killed in Isfahan in Dhu al-Hijjah 532 AH (43).

Fourth - The Third Phase of Seljuk Domination from 530 AH to 590 AH:

The relationship between Sultan Masud and Caliph al-Muqtafi began with amicability and political marriage alliances. In 534 AH, al-Muqtafi married Masud's daughter, and Sultan Masud was betrothed to al-Muqtafi's underage daughter, with the wedding postponed for five years until she reached maturity. However, Sultan Masud soon mistreated the Caliph, seizing all the horses, furniture, and wealth in the Caliph's palace, leaving the Caliph with only four horses and eight mules. He also imposed a condition on the Caliph not to buy Turkish Mamluks, allowing him to purchase only Armenian and Byzantine Mamluks. Caliph al-Muqtafi adopted a wise

policy in dealing with Sultan Masud. He feigned obedience to the Sultan's orders for nine years, waiting for the opportunity when conflict among the Seljuk princes over the sultanate would arise again. This is actually what happened in 543 AH and continued until 547 AH, the year of Sultan Masud's death in Hamadan. Masud can be considered the last of the powerful Seljuk Sultans after the first three - Tughril Beg, Alp Arslan, and Malik Shah. Ibn al-Athir describes Masud's death, saying, "With his death, the fortune of the Seljuk house perished; after him (Masud), their banner no longer held significant esteem (44)."

After the death of Sultan Masud, the Seljuk princes and kings disputed the throne. Muhammad Shah and Malik Shah, the sons of Sultan Mahmoud ibn Sultan Masud ibn Sultan Malik Shah, vied for power. Caliph al-Muqtafi seized this opportunity to expel the Seljuk forces led by Masud al-Bilali, the representative (Shahna) of the Seljuks in Baghdad. When King Muhammad Shah asked al-Muqtafi to recognize him as Sultan, the Caliph did not respond. Al-Bilali urged Muhammad Shah to occupy Baghdad to force the Caliph into recognition. However, Muhammad Shah hesitated about occupying Baghdad. Al-Bilali left Muhammad Shah's camp and headed to Tikrit, proclaiming Arslan Shah, the minor son of Sultan Tughril son of Sultan Muhammad, as Sultan. In 550 AH, al-Bilali besieged Baghdad to force the Caliph to recognize Arslan Shah's rule, but the Caliph thwarted his attempt and captured Arslan Shah, sending him to King Muhammad Shah. Relations between Muhammad Shah and the Caliph worsened. In 552 AH, Muhammad Shah besieged Baghdad and sent a message to the Caliph claiming that "he is obedient, and his only purpose in coming to Baghdad is to leave it. He knows that the rulers are satisfied with the Commander of the Faithful, and he hopes for the Commander of the Faithful's acknowledgment. He hopes that his name will be mentioned in the pulpits in prayers after the name of the Commander of the Faithful, and he will leave Baghdad and will not aspire for the position of governor or ruler over it." Al-Muqtafi

did not respond to Muhammad Shah's offer to rule Iraq independently in return for recognizing Muhammad Shah as the acknowledged Sultan. Muhammad Shah's commanders did not support him, leading him to lift the siege and head to Hamadan. Then, al-Muqtafi appointed his ally, Sultan Suleiman Shah son of Sultan Muhammad, as Sultan. Muhammad Shah defeated Suleiman Shah in Wadi Aras but did not move to capture Baghdad or force the Caliph to recognize his rule. Muhammad Shah died in Hamadan in 554 AH. Al-Muqtafi praised his adversary, Sultan Muhammad Shah, saying, “He was a wise enemy (45).”

During this time, events unfolded that were favorable to Caliph al-Muqtafi. In 548 AH, the Ghuzz Turks rebelled against Sultan Sanjar, the ruler of Khorasan. They defeated and captured him. However, they kept him as a nominal ruler without actual power for three years, similar to how the Seljuk sultans had treated the Abbasid caliphs. The role of Sultan Sanjar in uniting the Seljuk kings against the Abbasid Caliphs had been previously explained . In 549 AH, Nur ad-Din Mahmud the second son of Imad ad-Din Zengi achieved a significant victory by capturing Damascus which was under the rule of the Toghtekin dynasty. This victory made Nur ad-Din Mahmud the unifier of the Levant against the Crusader states. Nur ad-Din Mahmud (541-569 AH) was loyal to the Abbasid caliphs, and Caliph al-Muqtafi bestowed upon him the honor and mandate over Egypt, which was under the rule of the Ubaydids “Fatimids”. He was also titled “al-Malik al-Adil” (The Just King) by the Caliph. It's noteworthy that the Crusader kingdoms and principalities in the Levant were threatened by the growing power of Nur ad-Din's “Zengid State,” especially after he took over Aleppo following the death of his father Imad ad-Din Zengi in 540 AH, who had liberated the first Crusader principality, the County of Edessa in the Euphrates Valley in 539 AH. Zengi had shown contradictory positions in the struggle between the Abbasid caliphs and the Seljuk sultans, as mentioned earlier (46).

When Sultan Muhammad Shah, son of Sultan Mahmud, passed away in 554 AH after a severe illness that lasted two years, there was a dispute among the Seljuk princes regarding who should succeed him as the sultan. Notably, Sultan Suleiman, son of Sultan Muhammad, who had been recognized by Caliph al-Muqtafi, had his army defeated and was captured by a prince named Ali Kuchuk in Mosul. Upon hearing of Sultan Muhammad Shah's death, this prince released Sultan Suleiman Shah and, along with the army commanders, appointed him as the new Sultan. The army commanders then appointed Arslan, son of Tughril, as the heir apparent to Sultan Suleiman Shah. This situation reveals that the appointment of the Sultan had fallen into the hands of their military commanders, effectively reducing the Sultan to a figurehead under these commanders' control. These commanders deliberately chose a Sultan with a weak personality, possibly even morally corrupt, to easily manipulate and control as they wished (47).

Caliph al-Muqtafi passed away in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in 555 AH, succeeded by his son al-Mustanjid bi-Allah Abu al-Muzaffar Yusuf. Al-Mustanjid began his reign by eliminating and killing his father's Mamluks, who were military commanders, and appointed his own Mamluks instead. One of his Mamluks, "Qaymaz," became the key figure controlling both the caliphate and the Caliph. Al-Mustanjid sent an envoy, Sonj al-Nizami, to Sultan Sulaiman Shah, requesting his submission to the Abbasid Caliphate and reminding him of his father's, al-Muqtafi's, favor in appointing him as Sultan before his arrest. Sultan Sulaiman Shah, misinterpreting al-Mustanjid's intentions and believing that the Caliph welcomed him to govern Baghdad, sent two envoys back with Sonj to the Caliph. However, al-Mustanjid's commanders were not pleased with the Caliph's acceptance of Sultan Sulaiman's rule and welcome of his intervention in Baghdad, suggesting that the Caliph would once again become a protectorate of the Seljuk Sultan. Strangely, on the first night of the negotiations, the Caliph's envoy Sonj al-Nizami suddenly died, followed by one of the Sultan's envoys

a week later. The remaining envoy of the Sultan fled back to the Sultan, informing him of the Caliph's alleged conspiracy. Imad ad-Din Muhammad al-Isfahani comments on the later Seljuk Sultans' relations with the Abbasid Caliphate, saying, "Being frightened by such an incident, they never returned to it. They developed a sense of awe towards Baghdad (the Caliphate) and a disappointment in obtaining it. Thus, no king or sultan approached it ever since (48)."

In Rabi' al-Awwal of the year 656 AH, a conspiracy was hatched against Sultan Sulaiman Shah by his commanders. He was arrested and subsequently poisoned to death in the fortress of Hamadan. In his place, they appointed Sultan Arslan, son of Tughril, as the new Sultan. Arslan had previously been designated as the heir to the throne by these very commanders. Thus, Sultan Arslan ibn Tughril II became almost like a puppet ruler under the control of his Atabeg, Shams al-Din Eldiguz. Eldiguz was also the husband of the Sultan's mother, which means he was Arslan's stepfather. Until his own death in 571 AH, Eldiguz exercised control over Sultan Arslan. He was succeeded by his son, Muhammad, nicknamed Pahlavan (the champion of the world), who took over as the Atabeg for his half-brother, Sultan Arslan. However, Sultan Arslan died suddenly, and Pahlavan then appointed the Sultan's son, Tughril, as the new Sultan. Tughril was still a minor at that time. Pahlavan himself died in the year 582 AH, and his brother, Qizil Arslan, took over the Atabeg responsibilities for Sultan Tughril (49).

In 583 AH, Sultan Tughril renounced the guardianship of Atabeg Qizil Arslan, which led to a conflict between them. The Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah sided with Qizil Arslan. When Tughril was defeated and captured by Qizil Arslan, the Caliph seized the opportunity to depose Sultan Tughril and transferred the sultanate to Qizil Arslan, who was not of Seljuk origin. This move marked the beginning of the end of the Seljuk sultanate's domination over the Abbasid Caliphate. However, a conspiracy in 587 AH led to the death of Qizil Arslan, and Tughril, having escaped from prison,

reinstated himself as the Sultan with the support of commanders who were still sympathetic to him and the Seljuks. At this juncture, the Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah made an even bolder move, seeking the support of a powerful state and king in northern ruling over Khwarezm in northern Khorasan, namely Muhammad II of Khwarazm. Responding to the Caliph's call, Muhammad II of Khwarazm advanced with his forces and defeated the last Seljuk Sultan in Persia and Iraq, Tughril, killing him in a battle near the city of Ray in 590 AH. This event marked the end of the era of Seljuk Sultans' dominance over the Abbasid Caliphate, a period that spanned more than 140 years. The Abbasid Caliphs became truly independent in ruling Iraq and most of Persia without interference from other powers from that year until 656 AH when the Caliphate fell to the Mongols. Caliph al-Nasir regained the right to appoint judges and governors, a privilege that the Caliphs had been deprived of during the era of Seljuk domination. Thus, the bitter struggle between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuk Sultanate ended, weakening both competing parties in leadership and influence (50).

Conclusion

When the Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah summoned the Seljuk Sultan Tughril Beg in 447 AH from the lands of Transoxiana and Persia to assume control of the Caliphate, which was then under the rule of the Buyid kings, he thought that the Seljuks would be less autocratic than the Buyids and would perhaps grant the Caliph some authority and legitimacy in ruling Iraq at the very least. However, the Abbasid Caliphate found itself in conflict with these Seljuks, witnessing rulers who showed obedience to the Caliph and the Abbasid Caliphate, but in reality, reduced the Caliphs to mere religious leaders lacking real political authority and legitimacy, even in appointing their own viziers or managing the private assets of the Caliphate.

This competition between the two conflicting parties for legitimacy went through three phases, each with its distinct characteristics. The first phase, extending from

447 AH to 485 AH, was marked by a relatively calm competition, with the balance tipping in favor of the first three Seljuk Sultans: Tughril Beg (447-455 AH), Alp Arslan (455-465 AH), and lastly Malik Shah (465-485 AH). This phase coincided with the rule of the two Caliphs, al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah and al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah. The second phase, extending from 485 AH to 530 AH, was characterized by the emergence of weakness in the Seljuk Sultanate due to the conflict among the Seljuk kings for the sultanate after the death of Sultan Malik Shah in 485 AH. This internal conflict within the Seljuk Sultanate encouraged the Abbasid Caliphs to fuel and intensify the discord among the Seljuk kings and sultans, tilting the power towards the Caliphate, especially evident during the reigns of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustarshid (512-529 AH) and his son al-Rashid (529-530 AH).

The third and final phase, from 530 AH to 590 AH, began with good relations between Caliph al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah (530-555 AH) and Sultan Masud ibn Sultan Muhammad ibn Sultan Malik Shah (527-547 AH). However, these cordial relations soon turned into intense conflict, with the Abbasid Caliphs gaining the upper hand during the reigns of al-Muqtafi bi-Amr Allah, al-Mustanjid bi-Allah (555-566 AH), and finally Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah (575-622 AH). This phase concluded in 590 AH with the end of the Seljuk Sultanate's authority, marked by the killing of Tughril ibn Alp Arslan ibn Tughril ibn Sultan Muhammad ibn Sultan Malik Shah, the last of the Seljuk Sultans ruling over Transoxiana, Persia, Iraq, and parts of the Levant. This intense struggle for legitimacy between the Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuk Sultans ended in favor of the Caliphate. However, this victory came at the cost of weakening the Islamic world, which was then threatened by the Mongol Empire. The Mongols would eventually overrun the Islamic world and bring down the Abbasid Caliphate in 656 AH, sixty-six years after the fall of the Seljuk Sultanate.

Footnotes (translated)

- (1) Imad al-Din Abi al-Fida Ismail ibn Ali ibn Ayub, “Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar” (The Concise Account of Human Events), first edition, Volume 1, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-’Ilmiyya, 1997, pp. 290-291; Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr (d. 911 AH): “Tarikh al-Khulafa” (History of the Caliphs), edited by Muhammad Muhyi al-Din Abdul Hamid, first edition, Cairo, al-Sa’adah Press, 1371 AH / 1952 CE, pp. 350.
- (2) “Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar” (The Concise Account of Human Events), Volume 1, pp. 319-320; “Tarikh al-Khulafa” (History of the Caliphs), pp. 294.
- (3) “Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar” (The Concise Account of Human Events), Volume 1, pp. 344-345, pp. 355; “Tarikh al-Khulafa” (History of the Caliphs), pp. 335.
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