



THE FORMATION OF THE SELJUK EMPIRE: THE BATTLE OF DANDANAKHAN

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Abstract: *This scientific article analyzes the processes of state formation and the factors influencing it among the Seljuks, who are considered representatives of the Qiniq clan of the Turkic Oghuz tribe and exerted a certain influence on the fundamental turning points that occurred in the history of Eastern and Western countries in the 11th century. It also provides information from an analytical perspective on the Battle of Dandanakhan (which took place between the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks), which played a crucial role in the state formation of the Seljuks, who traveled a long historical path from nomadism to building a great empire.*

Was the Battle of Dandanakon an important step for the emergence of the Seljuk state? or was it specifically the Battle of Dandanakon that led to the emergence of a new state among the Seljuks? - these questions will be answered in this scientific article.

Keywords: *The Seljuks, Arslan Yabgu, Ghaznavids, Karakhanids, Mamunids, Togrul Bey, Chaghri Bey, Turkmens, Dandanakhan.*

INTRODUCTION. In the 60s of the 10th century, the Qiniq tribe of Turkmens, who initially lived within the Oghuz-Yabgu state, under the leadership of Seljuk ibn Dukak, were forced to leave this land due to internal conflicts on one hand, and a lack of pastures and steppes for their

livestock on the other, and migrated to the city of Jand in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. The city of Jand was located on the border territory of the Oghuz state with Transoxiana. The Qiniq tribe settled here began to adopt a sedentary lifestyle, and as a result of their involvement in the political processes of Transoxiana, the foundations of statehood were gradually formed among them.

By this time, the Ghaznavid and Karakhanid dynasties were playing an important role in the political processes taking place in Transoxiana. At the same time, these dynasties recruited Seljuk soldiers into their mercenary and punitive armies, utilizing their skills for their own military and political purposes. The Seljuks, having gained experience and actively participated in these political struggles, entered the political arena.

The eldest son of the Seljuks, Arslan Yabgu, entered into an alliance with Ali-Tegin of the Karakhanid dynasty and fought together against his enemies. As a result of these struggles, the militancy and courage of Arslan Yabgu and the Seljuk warriors, who did not fear death for the sake of conquest, began to be noticed among the political forces of Mawarannahr (the Karakhanids and the Ghaznavids).

The Karakhanid Khan Yusuf Kadyr Khan, alarmed by the growing power of the Seljuks, informed Mahmud Ghaznavi that they could pose a serious threat to the Ghaznavid state, stating that the most correct path was to completely expel them from Mawarannahr.

Mahmud of Ghazni, under the pretext of negotiations, summoned Arslan Yabgu to his palace. Arslan Yabgu and other Seljuk brothers were captured by Sultan Mahmud and sent to the Kalinjar fortress in India. Arslan Yabgu died in captivity seven years later. Following this, the

Turkmens, led by the Seljuk Arslan Yabgu, were left without a leader and scattered across various regions of Khorasan and Iraq. The looting of the peoples living in these lands by the Turkmens led to the execution and capture of 4,000 of their comrades. Thus, some of the Turkmens, under the leadership of Toghrul and Chaghri Bey (Mikail's sons), launched raids into Iraq, Azerbaijan, and eastern Anatolia; others returned to Khorasan, while others settled on the slopes of Dehistan and the Balkans.

During the reign of his son Sultan Masud, who ascended the throne after the death of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Turkmens, led by Tughrul and Chaghri Bey, gained significant strength and achieved several victories. As soon as Sultan Masud returned from India, accurate reports of the Seljuk power and their successes in building the state reached his court.

At that time, Khwarazmshah Harun, a descendant of the Ma'munid dynasty ruling in Khwarazm, was fighting in alliance with the Seljuks against both the Ghaznavids and the Karakhanids. After these struggles, Harun was assassinated, and the Seljuks lost their allies. As a result, the panicked Seljuks were forced to move to Khorasan, which was part of the Ghaznavid state, without the permission of Sultan Masud. If we approach the issue from another perspective, the Seljuks planned to establish their state specifically in the lands of Khorasan, and several factors influenced this. First, Khorasan was situated on the central branch of the Great Silk Road, allowing the Seljuks to establish control over trade between the East and the West. Secondly, the lands of Khorasan possessed vast pastures necessary for the livestock of the Turkmens. The third most important factor was the internal political contradictions in the Ghaznavid state, as a result of which the

governance of Khorasan and other regions was weak in practice. Taking advantage of this, the Seljuks established themselves firmly in the lands of Khorasan and began to establish an independent state.

Sultan Masud, fearing a threat from the Seljuks to his state, began to prepare for a campaign against them. Thus, several major clashes occurred between the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks.

The first major clash occurred in June 1035, in the desert between the cities of Nishapur and Nisa in Khorasan, and the Ghaznavid army led by Hajib Bektughdi was defeated by the Seljuks. As a result, Sultan Masud was forced to cede the provinces of Nisa, Farawa, and Dehestan in Khorasan to the Seljuks. As a result of the clash in May 1038, the Seljuks also captured the Ghaznavid cities of Merv, Nishapur, and Sarakhs. The capture of the central city of Khorasan, Nishapur, created an opportunity for the Seljuks to establish the foundations of statehood. The decisive battle between the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks took place at Dandanakon Square near Merv.

After the preparations for the decisive battle were completed, Sultan Masud set out in May 1039 with an army of 50,000, consisting of 300 combat elephants, infantry, and cavalry. The Seljuks had 20,000 cavalrymen. Initially, the Seljuks did not engage in major battles, but made small campaigns and periodically launched attacks to exhaust the Ghaznavids. Thus, the army of the Ghaznavids, having traveled a long way through the waterless desert, encountered the main army of the Seljuks at the Dandanakon field between the cities of Merv and Sarakhs. Knowing that the Ghaznavid army, being heavily armed, would move slowly, the Seljuks, in order to leave them without water, broke all the wells on the roads and filled them with soil and animal bones. This put

the Ghaznavids in a completely helpless position. Realizing that there was no turning back, the Ghaznavids had no choice but to fight.

1038-On May 23, 2022 (8th day of Ramadan), the advanced Seljuk forces launched an offensive. Tughrul Bey, Chaghri Bey, and Musa Yabgu commanded the army from the rear. After heavy fighting, the Ghaznavids managed to capture the fortress of Dandanakhan by noon. However, Sultan Masud's dispatch of soldiers to find water wells for the army led to a disruption in the army's composition. Under the pretext of fighting, the Turkish ghulams in the Ghaznavid army took the horses of the exhausted soldiers, separated from them, and defected to the Seljuk side. As a result, the Ghaznavid army scattered in all directions. Hajib Bektughdi and his servants fled on camels. The attacked Indian, Kurdish, and Arab warriors also fled in all directions. On the battlefield, only Sultan Masud, along with several commanders and servants, continued the struggle. Bayhaqi writes: "If 1,000 cavalrymen had served the Sultan loyally, the fate of the battle would have been decided in his favor." The commanders who fought alongside the Sultan told him that there was no choice but to stop the struggle and retreat. Defeated in a fierce three-day battle, the Sultan with several commanders and servants left the battlefield and saved his life.

The Seljuk biys, who won the decisive battle, proclaimed Tughrulbek as sultan at the kurultai and distributed the occupied territories among the representatives of the dynasty. Toghrulbek made Nishapur, the main city of Khorasan, his capital and ruled the state from there. The second important center, the city of Merv, was transferred to Chaghribek. Having assumed the title of "malik," Chaghribek took control of the territories from the cities of Merv, Balkh, and Sarakhs to Ghazni.

Inanchbek was granted the title of "yabgu" and appointed as the ruler of the lands occupied up to Herat, Bust, Isfizar, and Seistan.

Each Seljuk ruler, in the territories assigned to him, had a khutba read in the name of Sultan Tughrulbek and began to carry out administrative work on his behalf. Under the feudal system, each regional governor assumed the duties of minting money, sending taxes collected from the population to the sultan's treasury, and organizing reception ceremonies with the people. Thus, the Seljuk state, which embodied all the characteristics of statehood, was officially established. Sultan Tughrulbek pursued a policy of expanding the country's territory to the West.

Conclusion In short, the Seljuks, who separated from the state of Oghuz Yabgu and settled along the banks of the Syr Darya, actively participated in the political processes in Mawarannahr, expanding their political thinking, and at the same time taking bold steps toward state-building. The socio-political processes occurring during this period, in turn, required the emergence of a new state on the political stage.

Thus, representatives of the Qiniq clan of the Turkic Oghuz tribe established the Seljuk state in Khorasan, considered an important strategic center of the medieval Muslim East, on the site of the former Ghaznavid state.

Consequently, during the period leading up to the Battle of Dandanakon, the Seljuks fought against the Ghaznavids on one side and the Karakhanids on the other to build a state. From the above information, we can learn that there were even several major clashes with the Ghaznavids. The final decisive battle with the Ghaznavids on

Dandanakon Square served as the decisive, final stage in the formation of the Seljuk state.

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