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# **Arabic Mamluki Monetary Inscription: Historical Linear Linguistic Analytical Study**

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## **Abstract**

The subject of the study is an inscription of a golden Mamluki inscription written in the Thuluth script, dating back to the reign of Abi-Nasr in Presbai, the Circassian Sultan and the King of Egypt (766-841 H = 1365-1438 A.D). His name was inscripted on the second face of the coin piece. The dinar was decorated with Helal and a palm tree as Islamic symbols, yet the process of inscription was not perfect; as there was no harmony between the sizes of words and the letters. The punctuation of the letters was neglected, the dropping of the truncheons and some words, so as not to exceed the permissible weight of the dinar. It weighed between three grams and three grams and a half grams during the reign of Abi-Nasr Presbai.

## **Inscripción monetaria mameluca árabe: estudio analítico lingüístico lineal histórico**

### Resumen

El tema del estudio es una inscripción de una inscripción mameluca dorada escrita en la escritura de Thuluth, que se remonta al reinado de Abi-Nasr en Presbai, el sultán circasiano y el rey de Egipto (766-841 H = 1365-1438 AD) Su nombre estaba inscrito en la segunda cara de la moneda. El dinar estaba decorado con Helal y una palmera como símbolos islámicos, pero el proceso de inscripción no fue perfecto; ya que no había armonía entre el tamaño de las palabras y las letras. Se descuidó la puntuación de las letras, la caída de las porras y algunas palabras, para no exceder el peso permisible del dinar. Pesaba entre tres gramos y tres gramos y medio gramos durante el reinado de Abi-Nasr Presbai.

### First: Introduction

The researchers obtained a high-resolution color photograph with the needed details for this engraving monetary from Mr. Mahmoud Abdullah Al-Shunaq. It seems from the picture that the coin piece is a golden one, and it was called as Al-dinar Al-Ashrafi to be the basis of commercial deal when the Mamluki Sultan King Al-Ashraf stopped dealing with the of Florentian and the Venician coins, and motivated people to use his currency that he scripted, and raised the value to have a purchasing power to stimulate people to use it among themselves(1). The Mamluki state's production of gold dinars was balanced with its needs as a financial cover for its economy(2). Therefore, the state was continuously calculating the numbers of its currency accurately. Mentioning that the Mamluks also used both silver dirhams and copper coins in their business transactions.

It should be noted that the golden Mamluki dinars were different in their weights - and the commitment to the permissible weight of the dinar has an impact on the process of scripting- as it will be discussed later. Before the reign of Sultan Al-Thaher Baybars, the weight of the dinar ranged between four grams and a half gram (3). While the weight of the dinar in the reign of the Sultan himself became exactly four grams. After the reign of the Al-Naser Mohammad until the end of the Mamluki era, the weight of the Mamluki golden dinar has shifted from three grams to four grams(4)

. While his weight developed into a weight of (Methgal (مقشتم)) in the era of Sultan Al-Nasser Faraj and it became competitive to the Italian gold coin at that time, and it was issued by the weight of one and a half pounds, two pounds, and three pounds(5). In the era of Al-ThaherBarqouq , the weight of the golden Mamluk dinar was between three grams and four grams(6).

In the era of the following Sultans: Al-Mouyaad Sheikh, Al-Ashraf Brisbay and Al-Ashraf Qaitbay, the average weight of the dinar was between three grams and three grams and a half grams(7). Among these dinars, this dinar which is the subject of this study, returned back to the reign of Sultan Al-Ashraf Brisbai as it has been mentioned.

**Second: Reading the Inscription**

**The First Face:**



The first line: Send it [by guidance],  
The second line: No God butAlla [e]  
The third line: Mah [m] d Messenger of the [L]

**The Second Face:**



The first line: King Al-Ashraf.

The second line: [Abu] Al-Nasr Al-Brisbai Ezz Nasr (H).

Third: The Date of the Engraving

The date of the engraving dated back to the reign of King (766-841 H = 1365-1438 CE), whose name appeared engraved on the second side of the coin as shown. These are more details about it:

“Brisbay Al-Daqmaq Al-Dhahry, Abu Al-Nasr, the Circassian Al-Ashraf Sultan and the King of Egypt was one of prince Daqmaq Al-Mohammadi's Mamulks, and he gave him to Al-Dhaher Barqouq, so he released him and then he used him in the army. Then he came to the Crown Prince of Tripoli Sham in the days of Al-Mouyaad (Sheikh Bin Abdullah) where he was arrested in Al-Muraqqab Castle for a long time. Then he was released, but he was rearrested at Damascus Castle. After that he was taken out by Al-Dhaher Tatar and made him a great adviser in Egypt. King Al-Dhaher died and his son Al-Saleh Mohammad was appointed the new king. Prsbai managed the affairs of the state for weeks when he rebelled against Al-Saleh and appointed himself as the new Sultan of the state. He was called the king (Al-Ashraf) in 824 and the princes obeyed him and the country became quite and calm in his days. He invaded and conquered the city of Cyprus and took its king as a prisoner. He established schools in Egypt and useful buildings.”(8)

Fourth: Description of the Engraving's Letters

By comparing the letters of this monetary engraving with the letters of the ancient Arabic fonts, it appeared clearly that it was written with Al-Thluthy Arabic script. The Thuluthy line dated back to the late Umayyad Caliphate(9). The inventor of this type of Arabic fonts was (Qutbah Al-Moharer). It was widely spread in Al-Sham countries.

The reason behind naming it as Thluthy is due to his size. It was known in ancient times that the most dignified Arabic fonts in writing was the pen of Al-Toumar. It has a wide area of twenty-four hairs from the hair of the urdans. Al-Thulth which was used in this inscription is equivalent to one third of the Al-Toumar pen, i.e., eight hairs of the urdans. Thou Al-Ryas-teen Al-Fadal Bin Haroun was impressed by this type of Arabic calligraphy, and he ordered that the Sultan writings should be written using it(10). This line has often been used in writing the Holy Qur'anic verses on niches, domes and facades. Before that, this line was used to write the seven holy copies of the Quran which were written by Zeid bin Thabit in the era of Sayedana Othman bin Affan - may Allah bless him.

This line was called at that time (Al-Toumar) font, which is a complete flat

pen(11) Al-Thulth fontis considered as one of the most original beautiful Arabic fonts(12).

This is a description of some engraving lines. In the following phrase: “There is no god but Allah”, there are two vertical letters (A-أ-), the (L-ل-), and the horizontal letter the (h-ه-). Comparing these letters with their corresponding similar words which were written on Mamluki coins of the same era. It showed that the letter (L-ل- in the monetary piece-under discussion- is exactly the same as the one (L) in the Mamluki coin number 27 in the appendix below(13) , according to its sliding in a diagonal shape, which suits the shape of linked (L – (ل- with (A- (ا- in the Al-Thulth font.

As for the linked (A-أ-) with (L-ل-), it has not a rule, unlike the independent (A-أ-) in the word (God), it is here independent and characterized by the presence of a sharpness in its beginning starts from the bottom to the top and the independent (A-أ-) descended straight.

As for the horizontal letter (H-ه-), it is extended smoothly without rotation, which is quite similar to the engraved (H-ه-) letter that is carved on the Mamluki coins with numbers: 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32 (14).

In the sentence of (Mohammad the Messenger of Allah), the letter (S-س-) is characterized by its circular shape teeth, which corresponds exactly with the letter of (S-س-) that is carved on the Mamluki coins bearing numbers: 21, 22, 23, 26, 27 (15).

The Sad (S-ص-) letter in the word (Nasr) is characterized by its oval shape, which is quite similar to the letter Sad in the Mamluki coins bearing numbers: 29, 30, 64 (16).

The letter Mim (M-م-) in the word (Mohammad) is characterized in its close circular shape, to match exactly with the letter Mim (M-م-) mentioned in the Mamluki coins bearing the numbers: 19, 40, 95 (17).

#### Fifth: Commenting on the Process

The First Face

The First Line

The assertion Hamza in the verb (أ-أ- sent) was not minted, the verb (أ-أ- sent) is a transitive verb, and the semi-sentence (أ-أ- Bil-Hoda) was not minted.

The Second Line

The assertion Hamza of the pieces was not minted in the words of God or except, and the letter (H-هـ) in the word of Allah.

The third line: The first letter of Mim(M-م)

in Mohammad's word was not clear despite the remains of it, and the second Mim(M-م) was not minded from the same word. As well as (L-ل and H-هـ) in the word of Allah.

What draws attention is the verb (sent-سُرأ) in the first line which is a transitive verb to the object the relative pronoun (H-هـ). As for the semi-sentence (By Guidance -يُدلأب), it is not found, despite it is one of the requirements of the act sent because it is a transitive verb, and it is minted in other coins. It returned to the same period, and it could have been minted at that time, but it was neglected because the plumber cared more about the presence of the two crescent and the palm tree above the (S-س) letter to the verb (was sent-سُرأ) which came in a line taking a third of the space, and this is a distortion in the design of the minted template.

The reason behind why not minting the assertion Hamzas in the first two lines in the words: (sent it - سُرأ, God-هـ, and except-ال), returned to the spelling error, while the reason behind not minting (H-هـ) in the word of "Allah" in the second line returned to a fault in the mold of the design, or may be was to keep the circular shape of the coin so they did not care about this letter especially if we know that the letter (H-هـ) came alone at the end of the line and it came at the circumference, so it was dropped. If the two letters (M-م, and H-هـ) were minted, this could affect the circular of the coin. Moreover, the two letters (Mim-م, and Ha-هـ) in the word of Mohammed in the third line were not minted for the same reason. Thus, it is possible to say that the casting mold was narrow in order to preserve the weight of the bullion. The shape of the piece was taken into consideration more than the correctness of the writing the word. The proof for that is the size of (Al-Dal-ل) in the word for of Mohammad. In addition, it is bigger than the rest of the letters at the time when the letter (Al-Mim-م) was dropped from the word. The same is for the word (Messenger-لوسر) as it occupied two-thirds of the third line distance at the time when the craftsman did not mint the two letters (Al-Lam-ل, and Ha-هـ) in the word of Allah.

It should be noted that the dirham was decorated with the palm tree and the two crescents. One of the developments that took place in minting



the coins is what was engraved on them from writings and images to give them linguistic, historical, religious and economical implications (18).

### The Second Face

#### The First Line

Al-KafHamza in the word of the king, as well as the assertion Hmaza in the word of “Al-Ashraf” were not minted, while neglecting the points of the letters (Al-Shein-، نيشلا and Al-Fa-ا) in the word Al-Ashraf, and this is due to a spelling error.

#### The Second Line

The word “Prispay” came in a fragment way. The two letters (Pr-رب) were minted over the word of victory, and the letters of the (Spa-ابس) came under the two letters of (Pr-رب). Then the letter (Y-ي) came over the two letters Al-Seine-، نيسلا and Ba-اب), in front of the two letters (Pr-رب) because of the tightening of the minting mold and this is a fault in designing the mold. The dotting of the letter was neglected and this is a spelling mistake. The founder did not write the word (Abu-وبا), he only wrote the name of the son (Al-Nasr) was not written by the plumber, he only wrote the name of the son (Al-Nasr), mentioning that Al-Ashraf king was called Abi-Al-Nasr, and the punctuation was left in the following words: victory, glory, and victory. The (Ha-ه) letter was dropped from the word (his victory-هرصن) to keep the circular and weight of the bullion.

### Sixth: The Linguistic Analysis

#### The First Face

First line: Senthim with Guidance.

“Sent him by guidance”: is a past simple tense that is based on the dative case, and the actor/doer is hidden that is estimated to be (He-هو) which comes in the position of relative addressee.

The (Ha-هال): is a relative pronoun that is based in the dative of the object.

The second line: There is no god but Allah.

No: is an article that is used as denying to the sex, it is a character that is based on silence which has no place to be expressed.

God: The subject of (La-ال) that is built on the dative case, and the predicate of (La-ال) is missing. It could be estimated to be as (A true Idol).

(Ela' /Except-لا): It is an exceptional canceled tool because the style is minus and negative.

Allah: The word of the majesty that is raised, because it is an opposition by a place (La/لا with its name).

The third line: Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Mohammed: It is a nominative subject.

Messenger: It is the predicate of nominative subject and which is added.

Allah: The word of the majesty is added.

## The Second Face

First Line: Al-Ashraf King

The second line: The Victory of Prespai may glorify his victory.

King: A nominative subject.

Al Ashraf: A nominative adjective .

Abu: A nominative predicate, which is genitive.

Victory: It is in the case of genitive.

Prespai: It is in the position of apposition

Ezz: Past simple tense.

His victory: Victory is a subject and it is genitive, and the letter (Ha-) is a relative pronoun in the form of genitive by addition.

## Seventh: Conclusion

1 - The date of the golden engraved monetary dated back to the reign of the Mamluk king Al-Ashraf Abu al-Nasr Prespai (766-841 AH = 1365-1438 AD).

2 - The inscription is written in the font of Al-Thuluth.

3 - The industry of the inscription mold was not perfect, as some of the letters were dropped from the mold, in accordance with the permissible weight of the Al-Ashrafi dinar.

4 - The punctuation of the letters was neglected, and the dropping of the cutoffs Hamzas from the mold, and this is due to a spelling error.

5 - The speech came meaningless because of dropping the rest of the verb sent him, and the origin of this act is to be transitive to the semi-sentence "By Guidance". However, the semi-sentence was not minted adhering to the allowed weight for the bullion. The same is applicable to the dropping of the word "Abu" from the name of the king of Al-Ashraf from the mold of the minting, as he is Abu Al-Nasr Prespai.

6. The process of minting was not perfect, as there was no harmony be-

tween the size of words and the letters.

7 - The bullion was decorated with Hilal and the palm tree as Islamic symbols.

Footnotes:

(1) See Saif Al-Dein Bresbai on the website of the electronic encyclopedia <http://ar.wikipedia.org>. Returned to the site on 30/10/2017 at 8:30 pm on Monday.

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(13) Al-Nabarawi, Ra'fat. 1996 AD: The Islamic Money in Egypt, The Age of the Circassia's Mamluki State, E 2, Cairo, Appendix of the Book.

(14) Ibid: Appendix of the book.

(15) Ibid: Appendix of the book.

(16)Ibid: Appendix to the book.

(17)Ibid: Appendix to the book.

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