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Excavations at Jam, Afghanistan

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Introduction

The Minaret of Jam (Lat. 34°23'47.6 N, Long. 64°30'57.8 E; Fig. 1) is one of the few surviving monuments of the little known Ghurid sultanate (c. A.D. 1100-1215; cf. Maricq & Wiet 1959: 31-54; Ball 1982: 133-34). At 63 m tall, it is the second tallest baked-brick minaret in the world, and was probably erected c. A.D. 1194, possibly to commemorate a victorious campaign (Maricq & Wiet 1959: 65; Pinder-Wilson 2002: 169-71). Its elegant, glazed Kufic inscription is dedicated to the Ghurid ruler Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad b. Sam (A.D. 1163-1203), during whose reign construction of the taller Qutb Minar of Quwwat al-Islam Mosque in Delhi was also started (Page 1926; Pinder-Wilson 2002: 171-72).

The site of Jam is located at the confluence of the Hari Rud and Jam Rud, at an elevation of 1900 m, about 215 km to the east of Herat, in the Ghur province of western Afghanistan. The minaret has been the focus of conservation and restoration plans for over 40 years (Bruno 1962, 1979; Samizay 1981; UNESCO 1980; Zander 1972) ⁽¹⁾, since the initial French mission in 1957 (Maricq & Wiet 1959), but little archaeological work was conducted on the surrounding site. Few other scholars have since been able to visit the site (see Hammond & Allchin 1978:

* The Minaret of Jam Archaeological Project is conducted by the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO), Rome and the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, on behalf of UNESCO, which has provided generous funding. The project is directed by Prof. Giovanni Verardi. The 2003 field team consisted of Giannino Pastori, (Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'), team leader and senior archaeologist; David Thomas (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge), archaeological field director; Ivan Cucco (Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'), trench supervisor and photographer; and Ghulam Naqshband Rajabi, archaeologist and Afghan representative of IsIAO. Mr Najib Abdul Sidiqi was the representative of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology. Elio Papparatti drew the ceramics and small finds during the subsequent season of excavations at Ghazni, carried out by the Italian Archaeological Mission. David Thomas wrote most of this report, based on the team's work and discussions; Giannino Pastori made particular contributions regarding RH2, RH4 and the ceramics, while Ivan Cucco made similar contributions for RH1 and the ceramics. He also took all the published photographs, with the exception of Fig. 20, which was taken by Eugenio Monti.

⁽¹⁾ More recent contributions have been published online.

APPENDIX III
 COIN SF 15 (Fig. 21)
 by Roberta Giunta



Fig. 21 - Photograph of coin SF 15 (scale 2:1).

Obverse (enclosed by linear border)

Centre:

محمد

لا اله الا

الله وحده

لا شريك له

Reverse

Centre, within two linear borders:

[الامام ؟]

محمد

رسول الله

[الملك المعظم ؟]

ابو شجاع محمد

The *dāl* of the word *Muḥammad* has a floral termination

Margin: بسم الله ضرب [...] سبع تسع و تسعين و اربع مائة

Margin: off flan

Coin SF 15 is made from an alloy of bronze and gold, and was pierced on the left hand side possibly after it ceased to be used as currency. Its relatively poor state of preservation and the effacement of the mint name prevent precise identification. All the inscriptions are in Kufic characters without any diacritic points. The central legends contain the Islamic *kalima*. The mint-date formula is in the marginal legend of the obverse. The name of the ruler follows the final part of the *kalima* in the reverse area; that of the Abbasid Caliph, al-Mustazhir (487-512 A.H./A.D. 1094-1118), is probably omitted.

The date of issue is unclear: the hundreds certainly correspond to the year 400 for the style of the coin and the epigraphy is definitely of that period. The decade and the digit are badly written and they could correspond to either 97 A.H., or 99 A.H. (497 A.H./A.D. 1103-1104, or 499 A.H./A.D. 1105-1106). The proper name (*ism*), Muḥammad, preceded by the *kunya*, Abū Šuġā, suggests the possibility that this person may be the Seljuq ruler Giyāth al-dīn Abū Šuġā' Muḥammad I (492-511 A.H./A.D. 1099-1118). The official title of the ruler in the fourth line of the reverse area is obscure. A possible

reading of the first word is 'al-malik', the King, but the final 'kāf' has a very strange form and seems an isolated hā'/tā marbūta. The second could be 'al-mu'azzam', the very great. The alternative of 'al-Sulṭān al-mu'azzam' seems less plausible.

There is no comprehensive catalogue of the coinage of the Great Seljuqs, which is basically made out of gold, plus some normally very debased billon *dirhams* and occasional copper *fals*. The coins of Abū Šuġā' Muḥammad are mainly in fine gold and some copper *fals* of various types, usually struck at Tirmidh. However, none of his copper issues is similar to this specimen and the typical Seljuq coins generally bear two marginal legends on the obverse side.