

The Effect of Economic Conditions on Certain Coinage of Moulay Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdullah (1171-1204 AH/1757-1790 AD) in Light of Three Unpublished Pieces

ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on the conditions that surrounded striking special issues of the Moroccan Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah (1171-1204AH/ 1757-1790 AD), which used some parts of certain verses from the Holy Qur'an concerning hoarding gold and silver. It also examines the motives for his selection of these verses to be written on certain coins. Despite the importance of these coins, there has been a conspicuous lack of specialised research on this topic.

This paper seeks to reveal the circumstances that affected the Sultan's decision to add these specific Quranic verses by analysing contemporaneous historical sources and references from the relevant period. This study takes into account the complex interaction among political, economic, and religious concerns, including the devastating seven-year famine that affected Morocco. During this crisis, the Sultan endeavoured to motivate his people to fulfil their religious duty of *zakat* and implored the affluent to emulate his kind actions by generously contributing from their personal fortunes to assist the populace.

This study introduces three unpublished coin examples sourced from two private collections. which show how much these coins were connected to the political and economic conditions of this period. This research enhances our understanding of the socio-political and economic situation of Morocco during the reign of Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah by thoroughly examining historical sources and analysing numismatic data.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic coin studies bring to the surface the contemporary events around striking them, including political, religious, economic, and artistic aspects. The Moroccan coinage has garnered significant interest from researchers, probably due to its role as a faithful reflection of historical events. It can be considered as a highly captivating subject for study in the field of Islamic coins, owing to the historical abundance of its successive dynasties and their involvement in political and economic affairs. These events, replete with rich details, have greatly influenced the phrases and slogans inscribed on Moroccan coins, representing a fertile ground for specialized research. It can also help to solve some problematic issues about whether the historical sources denied the given data on the coins or mentioned nothing about them (Ramadan and Ameen 2022, 254).

The geographical discoveries, such as the discovery of the Americas in the late fifteenth century, significantly affected the status of Moroccan shores and made them a considerable battleground for various colonial powers. Spain and Portugal, for instance, resorted either to occupying Moroccan ports or establishing colonial centres in West Africa (Ḥarakāt 2002, 7). These activities prompted the honourable Moroccans to engage in *jihad* and strive to free their coasts from colonial rule. Both the Wattasid and the Sa'dian Sharifs dynasties struggled to achieve that supreme goal. The Alawite Sharifs' dynasty had an important role in perpetuating that struggle, both along the coast and inland. Prior to the establishment of their dynasty, the Alawites encountered their nation as a region fragmented among numerous indigenous tribes, such as the Samlalids in Sous and the western *Sahara*, the Chebanat in Marrakesh, and the al-Khaḍr Ghaylān in al-Hibṭ. Furthermore, Spain possessed colonies in Ceuta, Melilla, Larache, Arzila, and al-Ma'mūrah, while the Portuguese maintained a colony in al-Bariga. The period of *jihad* and struggle persisted throughout the reign of Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. Conversely, this circumstance resulted in a diverse range of coins being used, including those from Europe.

Sharif Sultan Sidi Mohamed reigned from 1171-1204 AH / 1757-1790 AD, a significant and eventful period in Moroccan history marked by intense instability. His father, Sultan Moulay Abdullah, had his reign divided into six periods by his brothers (al-Qādiri 1986, 129). From an economic standpoint, the monetary situation was unfavourable and required a comprehensive reform. The reform attempt undertaken by Sultan Abdullah, however, was not enough to bridge the economic gap. In his inaugural year as ruler, Sultan Mohamed bin Abdullah was keen to make a major reform that included the system of measuring and scaling “*Mikyāl*” (a measuring unit of capacity). Furthermore, he developed the coins in terms of their weights, calibre, and designs, which this study focuses on a specific group of them.

Various currencies, both local and European, were in circulation during the reign of Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. Nevertheless, the coins minted during the reign of this Sultan are among the least studied by researchers. Within these difficulties, there is a distinct group characterised by special design and wording. This group contains parts of two verses from the Holy Qur'an, specifically from *Surat al-Tawbah* verses 34 and 35 (IX: 34, 35). The two verses concern “Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of Allah” and promise them with a painful punishment. The two whole verses read;

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَخْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لِيَآكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَطْلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ
الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ
وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾﴾

The calligrapher shortened them as follows:

“*والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة ولا ينفقونها في سبيل الله ... فنوقوا ما كنتم تكنزون*”

“*Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of ALLAH ... taste what you have been hoarding*”

The part of these words inscribed on the silver *mithqal* was greater than the one inscribed on both gold and other smaller silver coins. This may have been done due to the *mithqal's* larger flan, which allows more engravings to be done on it.

The verse IX:34 was seen before on some Ḥamdānid coins from al-Massīsa in the year 350 AH/961 AD. It later appeared on coins from the mints of Aleppo and Emessa, both of which

were under the direct authority of Sayf al-Dawla. The Aleppo coin was dated 351/962 or 353 AH/964 AD, while the Emessa coins were dated 363 AH/974 AD. The purpose of including the verse on these coins was to demonstrate Sayf al-Dawla's willingness to use his personal wealth to free Muslim captives from the Byzantines. This was particularly important after his treasures and arsenal were plundered by the Byzantines in 351 AH/962 AD (Bikhazi 1983, 159-163). Regrettably, Bikhazi did not specify the exact endpoint of the selected phrases of verse 34. Additionally, he did not provide illustrations of the referenced coins. Verse 34 was inscribed on a limited pieces of Banjurid who were regional rulers in Balkh and Andaraba, located in Tukharistan, south of the middle Oxus. They were subordinate to the Samanids coins. Schwarz published two coins from the mint Andarabeh, bearing the name of Sahl bin Maktum and dated 374 AH / 984 AD, together with another coin that does not have a certain date (Schwarz 2002, 32). Anna Kmiotowicz published the writings of a single silver Samanid dirham, of Nuh bin Mansour, minted in al-Tayakan in 376 AH / 986 AD. The publication includes a small part of the first verse IX:34, ending at “في سبيل الله” without any accompanying photo. Kmiotowicz did not provide an explanation for the selection of this particular verse (Kmiotowicz 1974, 215). Historically, it has been noted that previous rulers utilised certain parts of verse 34. However, the Alawite Sultan Mohamed added some additional words from verse 9:35. These additional words highlight the severe repercussions of hoarding gold and silver without fulfilling the obligation of giving *zakat*.

Little was mentioned about these coins in both well-known Arabic and other language catalogues, that were authored by Lane Poole (S. M. Lane-Poole 1880), Henri Lavoix (Lavoix 1891), Henrich Nüzel (Nüzel 1902), and even J. Brethes (Brethes 2001). The relatively greatest attention was given when Daniel Eustache published *Corpus Des Monnaies Alawites* (Eustache 1984). The author included many of the coins of Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah and some information about them, however, few were of the chosen set of coins, in addition to some remained gaps which this work aims to address. The catalogue of Bank al-Maghrib (al-Maghrib 2006) also included nine pieces from the Sultan's issues. However, only one of these was relevant to this study.

The coins of this Sultan were not thoroughly covered in the recent books and articles published by Moroccan coin experts, such as Dr. Omar Afa, one of the most important researchers in the field of Morocco's magnificent heritage. However, Dr. Afa has diligently studied the overall state of coins during this period, the local definitions associated with them, and has successfully determined their values, thereby contributing to the enrichment of this study. This subject was selected to emphasise a certain aspect of the special issues of Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah, which contain parts of the two verses of the Holy Qur'an. This study aims to investigate the potential factors that affected his decision of choosing these two verses.

MOHAMED BIN ABDULLAH (1171-1204 AH / 1757-1790 AD)

His name is Mohamed bin Abdullah bin Isma'il. His honourable grandparents are attributed to the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) through the lineage of Imam Al-Hassan bin Imam 'ali bin Abi Talib, may Allah bless them all (al-Ziyāni 2008, 77-79). The demise of his father, Sultan Abdullah bin Isma'il, occurred in 1171 AH/1757 AD. Sidi Mohamed was serving as his father's deputy in Marrakesh at that time, starting from 1159 AH/1746 AD. Following his father's demise, he was pledged allegiance at Marrakesh. After receiving the well wishes of others, he proceeded to Meknes, where he entered the Sultan's residence and granted some funds, steeds,

and armaments to the enslaved individuals. In addition, he provided financial support to jurists, supervisors, scholars, and imams, without any exceptions (al-Selāwi 1997, 3-5).

Upon the request of the people of Fez to make their city his permanent residence, like his father, the Sultan denied and instead chose to embark on a tour of Moroccan cities, residing in each place for a specific duration. By doing so, he would be able to engage with his people and get insight into their issues, thereby actively working towards finding solutions for them (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 192).

The Sultan embarked on a tour of the port cities in the year 1173 AH/1759 AD, including Tetouan, Tangier, Larache, and ultimately Salé. Subsequently, he travelled to Rabat and resided there for several days. He ordered his superior officer to build a tower adjacent to the coastline. Following this, he journeyed back to Marrakesh. In addition, he assumed responsibility for overseeing the building of warships and commissioned the construction of two ships in the same year, one for Salé and the other for Rabat. The Sultan also procured the necessary components for constructing *jihadist* pirate ships from Christian merchants in Safi, including masts and sails (al-Selāwi 1997, 11-12). He commissioned the construction of the port of Essaouira and oversaw its establishment. This city is situated on the Atlantic coast of the Kingdom of Morocco, positioned between the cities of Safi and Agadir. Subsequently, he made his way back to Marrakesh. The Sultan's primary goal was to construct this port due to his fervent devotion to maritime *jihad*. Consequently, he commanded the construction of war ships specifically designed for piracy, which were stationed at Marsa Al-Adwateen and Marsa Larache. The navigation of these vessels at sea was restricted to a duration of two months during the winter season due to the presence of reduced water levels and increased sand accumulation in the marinas. These conditions effectively hindered the passage of pirate ships on non-winter days. The port of Essaouira facilitated year-round maritime transport (al-Selāwi 1997, 20).

One of the Sultan's primary preoccupations was the liberation of prisoners detained by European nations. An instance of this occurred in 1179 AH/1765 AD, when Sultan Mohamed corresponded with the King of Spain, requesting the liberation of Muslim captives. The detainees included scholars and those carrying the Qur'an, who had written letters to the Sultan expressing their grievances at their imprisonment and mistreatment. Sultan Mohamed corresponded with the Spanish king, requesting the liberation of his Spanish captives in exchange for the release of his own inmates. In addition to his main gift, the Sultan also sent several lions, which greatly pleased King Charles III (1172–1202 AH/1759–1788 AD) of Spain. As a result, King Charles III decided to reciprocate by sending a magnificent gift to the Sultan (al-Selāwi 1997, 24).

Sidi Mohamed acted as a mediator in facilitating the release of Algerian detainees who were being held hostage by the king of Spain in 1182 AH/1768 AD. He declared that the exchange of prisoners would occur under his supervision. After three unsuccessful attempts to persuade the ruler of Algeria to engage in negotiations, this action was taken (al-Selāwi 1997, 35-37).

Foreign currencies were utilised in the procedure of liberating the Muslim captives. Ibn Zaydan cited several instances in his book, one of them was when the Sultan dispatched a sum of 200,000 *reals* and 74,000 *real duro* to secure the freedom of Turkish soldiers held captive in Malta. Due to unspecified circumstances, the agreement was not finalised. Consequently, the Sultan sent the funds to the esteemed Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid I (1187–1203 AH/1774–1789 AD), with the intention of use the money for either the liberation of his own captives

from other countries or for the pursuit of *jihad*. In the year 1200 AH/1786 AD only, the Sultan released a total of 48,000 captives from Morocco and many other countries (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 265).

In 1182 AH/1768-9 AD, Sidi Mohamed's army successfully conquered al-Jadidah, which had been under Portuguese administration since 907 AH/1502 AD (Ḥarakāt 2002, 96-97). The citizens of the city implored the Portuguese king for assistance. Due to his lack of assistance, they were compelled to journey to Brazil without bringing any of their personal belongings. Subsequently, Sidi Mohamed relocated the inhabitants of Doukkala to the abandoned city within the same year (al-Selāwi 1997, 35-37).

Sultan Mohamed bin Abdullah extensively explored diverse branches of religious ideology and had a profound fascination with *al-Hadith*. In addition to preserving the primary writings of *al-Hadith*, such as *al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*, and acquiring authentic copies from abroad, the Sultan himself was a prominent author in this field of theology. During his period (al-'Imrāni 1996, 45-46), he authored several publications like "*al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyya*", "*Masānid al-'Imma al-'Arba'a*", "*al-Jāmi'u al-Ṣaḥīḥu al-'Asānid al-Mustakhrāj min Sittat Musānid*", and others (al-Bulḡīti 1996). Ahmed al-'Imrāni states that the field of *al-Hadith* in Morocco has experienced two periods of revival. The first occurred during the reign of the Almohads, while the second took place during the rule of the 'Alawites, particularly during the time of Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. The reason for his interest in that field may have been the ongoing condition of colonialism by Portugal and Spain in occupying the Moroccan shores (al-'Imrāni 1996, 43-44). The Sultan's deliberate selection of two verses from the Holy Qur'an to be inscribed on his coins had a significant influence on the subject of this study. These verses serve as a warning to individuals who accumulate wealth without fulfilling their religious obligation of paying *zakat*, reminding them of the consequences of God's retribution. The significance of the two verses aligns with a statement made by the prophet Mohamed (PBUH), which states: "Any amount of wealth, regardless of its vastness, that has its *zakat* paid, is not considered hoarding. Conversely, any amount of wealth that does not have its *zakat* paid is deemed as hoarding." Sultan Sidi Mohamed reiterated these words while offering counsel to the Islamic nation (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 265). Now, the inquiry arises as to why the Sultan chose to incorporate these specific parts of the two verses from the Holy Qur'an onto this particular set of coins.

The first date for the examined coins in this study was 1194 AH/1780 AD. The country of Morocco experienced a prolonged period of drought lasting for seven years, known as "The great famine," from 1190 AH/1776 AD to 1197 AH/1782 AD. Not only drought, but also infestations of locusts. However, it is important to note that the severity of the drought and its impact on the towns varied over the course of the seven years. The famine occurred in two distinct peaks. The initial wave occurred in the year 1190 AH/1776 AD, following a locust invasion in the Sous region and western Morocco lands in 1189 AH/1775 AD. This invasion led to crop failure and a subsequent increase in prices. The Sultan issued a decree to cease the exportation of wheat to other countries (al-Bazzāz 1992, 69-71) after a period of nearly ten years during which it was sent to Europe for the purpose of acquiring armaments, based on a *fatwa* from the *faqih*s regarding this issue (Ḥarakāt 2002, 102).

In the Summer of 1192 AH/1778 AD, a large group of locusts emerged and rapidly extended their presence, causing the sky to be enveloped in darkness. In the subsequent year of 1193 AH/1779 AD, they revisited Morocco. In the winter of 1192-3 AH/1778-9 AD, there was a scarcity of rainfall. The famine experienced its second peak towards the end of the year 1193

AH/1779 AD and the beginning of 1194 AH/1780 AD. Fez was severely affected, with food prices reaching unprecedented levels (al-Bazzāz 1992, 74). Furthermore, a pandemic outbreak occurred in Fez, Meknes, Salé, and Rabat, resulting in the demise of thousands.

A light *bunduqi* dinar from Marrakesh, dated 1194 AH/1780 AD (Fig. 1), represents this peak and reflects a change in the Sultan's policy of collecting money and taxes. This change was prompted by the economic situation and the significant event of that famine. The Sultan inscribed parts of two verses from the Holy Qur'an on the light *bunduqi* to encourage his people to pay their *zakat* to the government. Previously, the Sultan had forced certain Berber tribes, such as *Sādin* and *Ġiyāta*, to pay *zakat* and other taxes in 1176 AH/1762 AD (Ḥarakāt 2002, 89). The change in policy indicates the Sultan's sympathy towards his people in response to the difficult situation in the country (al-Bazzāz 1992, 79). According to Al-Selāwi, the scarcity of food during the famine led people to eat dead bodies and pigs. A very high mortality rate among the Moroccan population had been recorded (al-Selāwi 1997, 49). In 1194 AH/1780 AD, people repeated praying for *al-Istisqā'* - a supplication for rain- three times until the rain fell, heavily in Northern Morocco, however, it was very light in Southern Morocco, which resulted in continues death from people of Marrakesh and its neighbouring provinces. Consequently, it was a good reason for striking coins from this type in Marrakesh mint. In 1195 AH/1781 AD, the Sultan imported wheat from a Spanish company in order to provide sustenance for his people. Additionally, he lent money to the Bani Hassan tribe to repair their lands (al-Bazzāz 1992, 76). During that period, the Sultan provided provisions to the soldiers and mandated the distribution of bread to the vulnerable population across the land. Additionally, he generously provided substantial funds to the tribes until the drought subsided with the arrival of rain in 1197 AH/1782 AD. This rainfall allowed people to resume farming, resulting in a decrease in prices. The Sultan implemented a tax exemption for all cities for the duration of the drought. Additionally, he authorised the sale of imported food to the public at its original price, without any additional charges (al-Selāwi 1997, 49). It is also possible that the Sultan desired to express his generosity to encourage wealthy individuals to emulate his actions.



Fig.1 A light *bunduqi* for sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Marrakesh mint, 1194 AH, 2.95g, 22.5mm, Eustache No.168, Pl. V.

Another possibility for engraving these specific sections of the two verses from the Holy Qur'an is that the Sultan sought a *fatwa* (a religious decree) from his Islamic jurists concerning taking the army's expenditures from the budget of *zakat* funds. Consequently, he convened a scholarly council to deliberate on the issue with his jurists. Although Shaykh Mohamed Gasūs and Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Munaji opposed it, one of the '*ulamaa*' named al-Tāwdi bin Sawda supported and justified it with historical evidence from the Almoravid period. The Sultan accepted his opinion and implemented it accordingly (al-Bulḡīti 1996, 318-319).

SOME LOCAL AND FOREIGN COINS FROM HISTORICAL SOURCES

In historical sources, two main local names of coins are mentioned: the Dinar and the *mithqal* (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 265). The *mithqal* was commonly used to refer to the legitimate dinar in

general. However, during the reign of Sultan Mohamed bin Abdullah, the term *mithqal* specifically denoted a new silver weight that he introduced. This weight was equivalent to ten dirhams, as stated by contemporary sources like al-Girsyfi, a faqih who lived during the time of Sidi Mohamed. Al-Girsyfi focused on verifying the weights of the dinar and the dirham in Sous during his era. Omar Afa conducted an investigation on these weights in order to ascertain their respective values in grammes. He observed that the weight of the barley grain “*habba*” in Sous differs from the “medium grain” that was used to establish the legitimate weight of the dinar. He determined that the medium barley grain weighs 0.0577g, while the Sous barley grain weighs 0.0441g. In addition, Al-Girsyfi also mentioned the “small dirham”, which had a weight equivalent to 18 grains of barley, meaning 0.79g. He also mentioned the “large dirham”, known as the *riyala*, a term used by Al-Girsyfi in his book. Dr. Omar Afa explained this term as “a diminutive of the *real* and its feminine”. This name *riyala* was given to the dirham introduced by Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah during his monetary reform in 1180 AH/1766 AD. Al-Girsyfi gave it that name to differentiate it from the smaller dirham that was in circulation before the reform. The weight of the reformed dirham/ *riyala* was approximately 2.9 grammes, equivalent to 66 barely grains (al-Girsyfi 2006, 322).

Another source (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 267) mentioned the gold bullion. Furthermore, the historical sources opposed to foreign currencies that were in circulation in Morocco, such as the *real*. Omar Afa clarified that the term “*real*” refers to both the Spanish *real* and the French one (Afa 1985, 47). During that period, these two currencies were more popular than other foreign currencies in Morocco. The French *real*, is derived from the Latin word “*regalis*” meaning “royal, *reggio*” means “of the king”. The French *real/ Écu* of Louis XV (1715-1774 AD) and Louis XVI (1774-1793 AD) were in circulation before and during the reign of Sultan Mohamed, weighing 29.48g and containing 917‰ silver (Gadoury 1978, 456-591). The Moroccans named this French real “*riyāl bilā madāfi*’.” (Afa 1993, 63) On the other hand, the Spanish *real*, which was also known during this time, came in three categories: 2 *reals* weighing 6.77g, 4 *reals* weighing 13.54g, and 8 *reals* weighing 27.07g. (Krause 2016, 1348-1349).

Both the Spanish *doblón* and *real duro* were mentioned by Ibn Zaydan (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 263-267). They shared the same weight, specifically 27.06 g. The *doblón* was a gold currency, while the *duro* was a silver coin with a purity of 902‰ (Eustache 1984, 180-186).

THE CHOSEN COINS OF SIDI MOHAMED

The coins in this study can be classified into two distinct categories: gold coins and silver coins. Each category consists of two subcategories.

1- The Gold Issues

The gold coins chosen for this study are classified into two categories; The first one is named in three ways; The light *bunduqi* meaning light “Venetian”, *dinar* and *dinār Muhammedi*, named after Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. It is known that the word “dinar” was most common in the catalogues, perhaps because it was the initial name of the golden unit of currency in early Islam. (Hafez 2020, 635). was based on the weight of his grandfather Moulay Isma’il’s *dinar*, which was approximately 3.51 grammes. However, towards the end of the second and third decades of Sultan Mohamed’s reign, the weight of the *bunduqi* significantly decreased to be around 3.1 grammes (Eustache 1984). In fact, most of our pieces weigh less than 3 grammes. The second category of gold coins is represented by the *khumasi dinar*, a currency weigh of

less than 2 grammes (Eustache 1984, 175). The term “*bunduqi*” refers to the gold coins that were minted under the reigns of Moroccan sultans: Mohamed bin Abdullah, Suleiman, Abdul Rahman, and Mohamed bin Abdul Rahman (Afa 1993, 50).

The specialised catalogues mostly listed the coins using the names “dinar,” “*dirham*,” and their fractions without taking into consideration the names that were given to them during circulation. Morocco recognised local names of coins during their circulation, which are used here to clarify the category of each of them to easily determine their actual use. Eustache was an anomaly; in his catalogue, he used the regional names. Omar Afa examined the accuracy of these terminology and names by cross-referencing them with official national and local documents, which increased their value. These classifications may have been made because the coins from the 'Alawite period and even the Sa'dian ones, which came before them, lacked writing their appropriate denominations.

1.a. AV Light *bunduqi*

Certain catalogues, such as Michael Mitchiner's, classify it under the word “*dinar*,” while Lane Poole's classifies it under the metal “gold.”

Its design was based on the reverse of certain synchronous Ottoman coins. Inwards from the outer line of the light *bunduqi* exists a grained circle, followed by a linear one, which contains the central writings. The four lines that made up the central writings were divided by three parallel horizontal lines that forked at each end. The reverse of certain Ottoman coins bore the same design. However, their obverse was based on another design (Fig. 4).

Three variants of the same type with slight differences were found. They are as follows:

The first variant is characterised by the presence of the “*fleur de lis*”, a French expression means: “lily flower”, which is a stylised emblem or device much used in ornamentation (Britannica n.d.) This element can be seen before and after the name of Marrakesh mint.

The obverse reads: “والذين / يكنزون / الذهب / والفضة”.

The reverse reads: “فدوقوا / ما كنتم تكنزون / مراکش / 1194” (Fig. 1)

It is remarkable that the word فدوقوا is written in all examples using the Arabic dots of *Maghrebian* style, which uses one dot above the *qaf* ق and one dot beneath the *fa* ف (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 The word فدوقوا with the *Maghrebian* style of dots

(Obv.)	(rev.)
والذين	فدوقوا
يكنزون	ما كنتم تكنزون
الذهب	بحضرة ف[ا]س
والفضة	1199



Fig. 3 A light *bunduqi* dinar for Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah, Fez mint ,1199 AH, 2.84g, 23.5mm, Bank Al-Maghrib No. 474.



Fig. 4 A Zir-i mahbub of Sultan Mahmud I 19.4mm, 2.60 g, Islambol mint, 1143 AH, Classical Numismatic Group, Auction date: 5 July 2023, Keystone Auction 12, lot number: 532

The second variant has a decorative margin that is limited between the outer line of the dinar's obverse and the linear circle, which is decorated with a repeated element of vegetal tri-foil (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 A vegetal tri-foil element on the coin of Fig.3

The obverse of this variant reads the same as variant one, however, the reverse reads;


"فدوقوا / ما كنتم تكنزون / بحضرة فاس / 1199".

This variant of light *bunduqi* is distinguished by the fact that only the Fez mint is preceded by the word “*bi Ḥādrat,*” means “Royal Residence,” a legacy of the Sa’dians, which appeared for the workshops of Dar’a, Sijilmasa, Fez, al-Kettawa, al-Mahammadiya (Tarudant) and Marrakesh (Eustache 1984, 672). This expression distinguished some big cities where the Sultan was resident during striking the coins. One of the few remaining pieces is this one, which is kept at Bank Al-Maghrib (al-Maghrib 2006, 195) (Eustache 1984, 747). Two other pieces were published by Lane Poole (No 277, 277 bb, 3.05 g, 24.1 mm) (S. M. Lane-Poole 1967, 37), Cordry also published one piece (No. 107, 2.78g) (Cordry 1982, 16). One tri-foil decorative unit can be seen before the date (Fig. 3).

The third variant is unique in that it is the only one that includes the word “*doriba*” before the mint name, distinguishing it from both the first and second variants.

This is the sole extant *bunduqi*/Venetian dinar that represents the mint of Tetouan. No other pieces from this mint have been documented in well-known catalogues yet. Although this light *bunduqi* is preserved in Bank Al-Maghrib, only its reverse's photo was published by Brethes, specifically No. 1654 (Brethes 2001, 229). Moreover, he ascribed it to another type that lacks the two verses. Therefore, this research rectifies the classification of this light *bunduqi*, placing it inside the type that includes both sections of the Qur'an verses (Fig. 6).

The date of this variant of coin, as well as the previous one, is two years after the end of the Great famine. This suggests that the Sultan continued to collect *zakat* from his people in a unique manner by inscribing these verses of the Holy Qur'an on his coins, to provide support for his army, which was engaged in the ongoing battle to liberate his cities.

(Obv.) والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة	← No available photo	(Rev.) فنزوقوا ما كنتم تكنزون ضرب بتطوان 1199	→ 
Fig. 6 A light <i>bunduqi</i> for sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Tetouan mint, 1199AH, 2.9g, Brethes, No. 1654, Pl. XXXII			

1.b. Khumasi Dinar

Two types of *khumasi* dinar were recorded as follows:

The first type is as same as the second variant of the light *bunduqi* dinar in terms of its design and inscriptions.

(Obv.) والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة	(Rev.) فنزوقوا ما كنتم تكنزون بحضرة ف[ا]س 1199
---	--

This *khumasi* dinar is the sole specimen that incorporates a part of verse 34 within this particular category. Additionally, this *khumasi* dinar piece, struck in Fez, is the sole one among the three. The publication of this piece can be found in Mitchiner (Mitchiner 1977, 223). Although he documented the date as 1195, I observe the presence of an additional digit above the lower hole on the reverse, which partially masks a 9 (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 A *Khumasi* dinar for Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Fez mint, 1199 AH, 1.7g. Mitchiner, No. 1390.

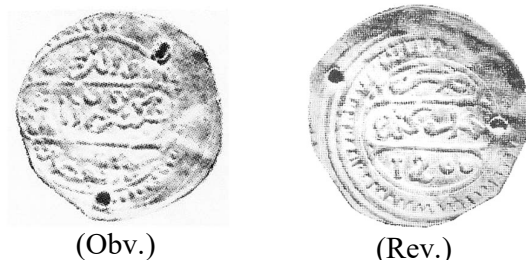


Fig. 8 A *Khumasi* dinar for Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Marrakesh mint, 1200 AH, 1.78g, 21mm, Eustache No 169.

The second type is characterised by its special design, including four concentric circles encircling the central inscriptions, with the third circle made up of denticles. The central inscriptions on both the obverse and reverse are composed of three lines each. The obverse contains the identical texts as type one, but condensed into three lines instead of four. These lines read: والذين / يكنزون الذهب / والفضة, while the reverse, reads only the words: ضرب / 1200 / مراکش. The mint name “Marrakesh” is preceded by the word “*darb*”.

(Obv) والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة	(Rev) ضرب مراکش 1200
---	-------------------------------

There are four pieces of this type in existence: two of them are kept in the British Museum, Nos. 278 and 279 (S. M. Lane-Poole 1880, 102-103), another piece is located in Berlin (Nüzel 1902, 240) and the fourth piece referenced by Eustache (Fig.8) (Eustache 1984, 748) was in a private collection. The pieces were created three years after the famine ended. They reinforce the ongoing efforts of the Sultan to liberate his country through *jihad*. The Sultan received more funds for his army as more people paid the *zakat*. These funds were used to free Muslim captives, as exemplified by the release of approximately 48,000 captives in that particular year (Ibn Zaydan 2008, 265), as mentioned earlier. The Sultan may have also sought to reinforce the memory of his benevolence during the prolonged crisis that his nation endured for seven years. This would encourage affluent individuals to emulate his practice of utilising their wealth to support the *jihad*, while the common person would recall the actions undertaken by their Sultan during those challenging times (Fig. 8).

2- The Silver Issues

Two distinct categories of silver coins were struck for this particular group, as outlined below:

2.a. The *mithqal*

Sultan Mohamed bin Abdullah abolished the *Mouzuona* of lesser weight and reinstated the official weight of the dirham, which is 2.9g as described earlier. However, its weight diminished to 2.72g in the year 1200 AH/1786 AD, and the situation remained constant until the end of the Sultan's reign. In addition, Sidi Mohamed commanded that the *mithqal* unit be minted with a worth of forty *Mouzuona* or ten dirhams (al-Girsyfi 2006, 377) (al-Maghrib 2006, 178). The silver *mithqal*, weighing 29.31g, was introduced in 1187 AH (Eustache 1984, 189). These *mithqals* are considered works of art, with various types of distinguished designs in both the squared *mithqals* from Rabat and the circular ones from Marrakesh, Tetouan, and Rabat.

The coins of our selected group consist of the *mithqal* struck exclusively at Tetouan in 1195 AH/ 1781 AD. Two distinct variants of this singular *mithqal* type were discovered, differing solely in their diameter. The first version's diameter was approximately 32 to 34 millimetres, however the other version varied from 39 to 41 millimetres. Their weights are very close, and their inscriptions are as follows:



Fig. 9 A silver *Mithqal* for Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Tetouan Mint 1195 AH, 28.2g, 39mm, Bank Al-Maghrib, No.467.

It is observed that silver *mithqal* shares identical parts of the two verses that were inscribed on the gold coin types, but with additional words from verse 34 on the obverse, which are “and they do not spend it for the sake of God”, *ولا ينفقونها / في سبيل الله*. In order to add this section of the verse into the fourth line of the obverse, the calligrapher had to divide the word “ولا ينفقونها” so that it would be positioned above the third section. Furthermore, the writings of the reverse

bear resemblance to the third variant of light *bunduqi* struck in Tetouan, however, the word “عام” i.e. year was added (Fig. 9).

Nüzel provided three instances of this *mithqal* (Nüzel 1902, 241-242), while Eustache documented two of them (Eustache 1984, 762-763), and Artuk included a single piece in his catalogue (Artuk 1970, 184). Furthermore, there are two pieces that have been conserved in the British Museum (S. M. Lane-Poole 1880, 107). Lavoix also mentioned the presence of a piece in the National Library (Lavoix 1891, 500), Brethes published five coins (Brethes 2001, 234), and one of the notable examples is a *mithqal* published on the Numista website (Numista n.d.). This study provides a notable illustration of a *mithqal* that is now held in the collection of Mr. Rashid el-Sbubaihy in the Kingdom of Morocco. It is worth noting that this *mithqal* is being published for the first time (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 A silver *Mithqal* for Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Tetouan Mint 1195 AH, Unpublished, 33mm, Mr. Rashid el-Subaihy collection

2.b. Dirhams

There exist three distinct types of dirhams, which can be enumerated as follows:

The First Type

The design of this type has an outer circle consisting of denticles, which is followed by a linear one that surrounds the central inscriptions. The inscriptions are arranged in four lines on both the obverse and reverse, with three horizontal lines separating them and ending in forked edges. The writings are as same as the first variant of the light *bunduqi*, they can be read as:

(Obv.)

والذين
يكنزون
الذهب
والفضة

(Rev.)

فذوقوا
ما كنتم تكنزون
مراكش
1195



Fig. 11 A Dirham of Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Marrakesh mint, 1195 AH, 2.79 g, 23 mm. Jesus Vico, Auction 165, 23 Feb 2023, Lot 2687.

Fig. 12 A Dirham of Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Marrakesh mint, 1195 AH. Unpublished, Mr. ‘Abd al-Salam Boutaleb, Morocco.

This type resembles the first variant of light *bunduqi* dinar type in terms of its appearance, wording, and even the mint name. The only notable differences are the mint year, which is

1195, and the presence of denticles instead of dots in the outer circle on the reverse. Multiple coins of this type are known to exist: one dirham is held at Bank Al-Maghrib (al-Maghrib 2006, 816), another one is exhibited on the Numista website (Numista n.d.), a third was illustrated in the Wilkes & Curtis Auction (NumisBids n.d.), and a fourth can be found on the Jesus Vico website (Fig. 11) (NumisBids n.d.). This study publishes a dirham that is kept in the collection of Mr. 'Abd al-Salam Boutaleb (Fig. 12).

The Second Type


This type is identical to the second type of the *khumasi* dinar, with the only difference being that a circle of dots substitutes the one of denticles. In addition, a new element has emerged to the right side of the mint name, which represents a star with two branches  extending from it. The documented instances of the date 1196AH/1782AD are referenced in the works of (Brethes 2001, 234), (Eustache 1984, 817), (NumisBids n.d.) (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13 A Dirham of Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Marrakesh mint, 1196 AH. Aureo & Calicó S.L., Subasta 285, lot 2138.

The Third Type

This variety closely resembles the single type of the *mithqal* on its reverse side, but lacks the word “عام” and has fewer words on the obverse. Additionally, it shares the same mint, which is Tetouan. There are five pieces of this type. One is currently held at Bank Al-Maghrib and was documented by Eustache (Eustache 1984, 763). Another piece was published by Brethes (Brethes 2001, 234). The British Museum also possesses a similar piece (S. M. Lane-Poole 1880, 107). Nüzel published a fourth specimen (Nüzel 1902, 242), and a fifth piece was offered at auction by Wilkes & Curtis (NumisBids n.d.) (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14 A Dirham of Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah, Tetouan, 1195 AH. St. James's Auctions Ltd., Auction 52, Lot 3122.

2.c. Half Dirham

Presented here is a scarce, unpublished silver piece from Mr. 'Abd al-Salam Boutaleb's collection, which can be classified as either a half dirham or a cut down dirham. Regrettably, I was unable to ascertain its weight, although its diameter measures 18mm. If the coin is a half dirham, it will be the sole piece of that specific value within this series. This piece follows the first type of the dirhams (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15 A Possible half dirham of Sidi Mohamed b. Abdullah Marrakesh mint 1195 AH, 18mm Unpublished, Mr. 'Abd al-Salam Boutaleb, Morocco.

DISCUSSION

The preceding numismatic catalogues, books, and articles, provided a general survey of the currency issued by Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. Nevertheless, the existing studies have primarily consisted of brief investigations or broad overviews that have not thoroughly examined their details, nor delved into the many circumstances and potential motivations behind the placement of their designs and wordings in their present positions.

This study specifically examined a collection of notable coins belonging to Sultan Sidi Mohamed. These coins feature fragments of two verses from the Holy Qur'an, specifically *Surat al-Tawbah*, verses 34 and 35 (IX: 34, 35). Words of these two verses were written on both rare gold pieces of light *bunduqi* and *khumasi* dinars, in addition to the large special silver *mithqal* and a few rare dirhams.

Upon examining the historical events related to these matters, it became evident that the Sultan deliberately selected these verses, drawing upon his religious expertise as a theologian (*faqih*), in order to motivate wealthy individuals to fulfil their *zakat* obligations due to the dire circumstances of the prolonged famine that afflicted Morocco for a span of nearly seven years, from 1190 AH/1776 AD to 1197 AH/1783 AD. The famine posed a significant challenge for the Moroccan population in meeting their tax obligations to support the military's requirements. The Sultan sought a *fatwa* from his religious council to allocate the *zakat* funds towards the army during a crucial period of *jihad*. As a means of promoting the payment of *zakat*, he had the two parts of the verses inscribed on certain coins. This marked a shift in his previous approach of coercing the populace to pay overdue taxes. These coins serve as archaeological evidence documenting the Sultan's altered behaviour in response to a significant disaster that posed a threat to the country and impacted its economy.

This study also suggests that the presence of foreign colonies along the coast of Morocco necessitated the state's ongoing engagement in *jihad*, particularly in naval warfare. The Sultan diligently managed his nation's harbours, founded Essaouira, procured the necessary components for constructing new pirate fleets, and fostered amicable ties with the Ottoman Sultan, who supplied him with the requisite armaments. These acts also impacted the circulation of foreign currencies in Morocco, including the Spanish *real* and the French one, as well as the Spanish *doblón*. These currencies were used to ransom Muslim captives from Morocco, Algeria, and other countries.

This study establishes a connection between the initial production of gold coins in Marrakesh and the second highest point of the Great famine, which occurred in the year 1194 AH/1780

AD. This peak of famine resulted in significant loss of life in the western and southern regions of the country, including Marrakesh and its neighbouring areas.

The study revealed that the word “*bi ḥaḍrat*” was exclusively used before the name of Fez in its special issues, and clarified that this word means the “Royal Residence,” a legacy presented by the Sa’dians, which appeared for the several mints and refers to the ruler’s attendance in the location where the action of coin struck is going on. The study also explained that Fez had some issues minted there of this special type because this city was greatly impacted by the severe famine that began in 1194AH / 1780 AD.

The study demonstrates the Sultan's religious devotion, as evidenced by his practice of seeking *fatwas* from prominent theologians in his country prior to making significant decisions. For instance, he sought their guidance on whether it was permissible to export surplus wheat in order to procure weapons for the *jihad*, as well as before allocating funds from the *zakat* to cover the army's expenses.

This study rectifies the misclassification of a light *bunduqi* composition, previously reported in Brethes No. 1654, as belonging to the kind that includes some parts of the verses.

Furthermore, this study highlights that the occurrences of these special issues took place during the years 1194-1200 AH/1786 AD, reflecting the significant events of the great famine.

The scarcity of gold coins is seen in the presence of only two types: the light *bunduqi* and the *khumasi* dinar, minted exclusively in the cities of Marrakesh, Fez, and Tetouan. Marrakesh and Fez were identified as two of the cities most impacted by the Great famine. Since the reign of Sultan Abdullah, the father of Sultan Mohamed, they have been the primary mints responsible for producing the *bunduqi*. The silver *mithqal* was exclusively minted at Tetouan in the year 1195 AH/1781 AD, during the second peak of the famine. It bears more words of the two verses of Qur’an because of its larger diameter. The three types of dirhams were minted at the Marrakesh mint in the years 1195 AH/1781 AD and 1196 AH/1782 AD, and at Tetouan in 1195 AH/1781 AD.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented compelling archaeological evidence by analysing a specific group of coins minted by Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah. These coins incorporated parts of two verses from *Surat al-Tawbah* (34 & 35) of the Holy Qur'an, demonstrating the Sultan's wisdom and compassion towards his people. These coins are evidence of the Sultan's change in policy, transitioning from forcefully collecting overdue taxes from his citizens to instead reminding them to satisfy their religious duty of *zakat*. This transformation occurred simultaneously with a prolonged period of severe famine that afflicted Morocco for a duration of seven years.

Moreover, these coins indicate that after the drought ended, the Sultan aimed to memorialise his benevolence during the crisis. His intention in engraving these Quranic verses was to motivate the wealthy individuals to pay their *zakat* towards aiding the military's endeavours in freeing the Moroccan coast from colonial rule.

The use of these coins as historical artefacts not only offers unique insights into the socio-political environment of the era but also showcases the Sultan's shrewd leadership and his skill

in managing the intricate relationship between religion, economy, and governance. This research enhances our comprehension of the Sultan's motivations and actions during a pivotal era in Moroccan history. This highlights the need of using numismatic evidence to get insight into the complex aspects of ruling and governing, as well as how economic and religious issues influenced the Sultan's policies.

Additional research and ongoing examination of numismatic pieces from this era will unquestionably enhance our comprehension of the Sultan's rule and its wider ramifications for Moroccan society.

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أثر الظروف الاقتصادية على بعض إصدارات سكة مولاي سيدي محمد بن عبد الله (1171-1204هـ / 1757-1790م) في ضوء ثلاث قطع غير منشورة

الملخص

تركز هذه الدراسة على الظروف التي أحاطت بضرب بعض الإصدارات النقدية للسلطان المغربي سيدي محمد بن عبد الله (1171-1204هـ / 1757-1790م)، والتي استخدمت أجزاء من آيتين محددتين من القرآن الكريم تتعلقان بكنز الذهب والفضة. كما تناقش دوافع اختيار تلك الأجزاء لتسجيلها على السكة. وعلى الرغم من أهمية هذه النقود، إلا أنها لم تحظ بدراسات متخصصة بشأنها.

وتهدف هذه الورقة إلى الكشف عن الظروف التي أثرت على قرار السلطان بإضافة هذه الآيات القرآنية المحددة من خلال تحليل المصادر والمراجع التاريخية المعاصرة للفترة المعنية. تأخذ هذه الدراسة بعين الاعتبار التفاعل المعقد بين الاهتمامات السياسية والاقتصادية والدينية، متضمنة المجاعة المدمرة التي استمرت لسبع سنوات، والتي أثرت على المغرب. خلال هذه الأزمة، سعى السلطان إلى تحفيز شعبه على الوفاء بواجبهم الديني المتمثل في الزكاة، وناشد الأثرياء أن يحذوا حذوه من خلال المساهمة بسخاء من ثرواتهم الشخصية لمساعدة الشعب.

تساهم ثلاث قطع جديدة تنشر هنا لأول مرة من مجموعتين خاصتين في توضيح مدى ارتباط تلك النقود بالأحوال السياسية والاقتصادية لتلك الفترة. كما يعزز هذا البحث فهمنا للوضع الاجتماعي والسياسي والاقتصادي للمغرب في عهد السلطان سيدي محمد بن عبد الله من خلال فحص المصادر التاريخية بدقة وتحليل بيانات السكة ذات الصلة.

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الكلمات الدالة

سيدي محمد بن عبد الله؛

نقود مغربية؛

بندقي؛

مقال؛

الآية 9:34 من القرآن الكريم.