

## Numismatic Reflections on Shahjahan’s Balkh Campaign– 1646-47

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### Prologue:

The Mughals ethnically claimed a Central Asian lineage – Babur, the first Mughal emperor was a Barlas Turk claiming descent from such Central Asian stalwarts as Timur from his father’s side and Chingiz (Genghis) Khan from his mother’s.<sup>1</sup> His descendants regarded the wider Transoxiana region as ‘*Mulk-i-Mauruthī*’ ملک موروثی (“hereditary / patrimonial country”) and ‘*Gorkhānā-i-Ajdād-i-izzām*’ گورخانه اجداد اعظام (“cemetery of the great ancestors”).<sup>2</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that the Mughals, from time to time, made attempts to reclaim the territory for their empire, particularly when their fortunes grew in India. By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century they had become firmly established as a powerful dynasty in the Indian subcontinent, with legendary wealth and military prowess.

The most ambitious and, perhaps, the last ever attempt aimed at this recovery of the ancestral lands was undertaken by Shahjahan. Its timing could not have been better – by the end of the 1630’s the Mughals had defeated the Ahmednagar Sultanate in the Deccan after nearly forty years of persistent campaigning marked by lows and highs of successes and defeats. The empire had now reached a new zenith – the building of the Taj Mahal and the city which would eventually replace Agra as the imperial capital had begun.

The campaign, widely known as the ‘Balkh’ or ‘Central Asian’ campaign, has received considerable attention from historians both from the Mughal era itself, as well as pre-modern and modern. By far the best and most detailed account of the campaign from a contemporary Mughal source is Abdul Hamid Lahori’s *Padshahnama* where he devotes a number of pages to its factual details<sup>3</sup>, and so does Inayat Khan’s *Shahjahan-nama*.<sup>4</sup> Closer to our times, John

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<sup>1</sup> Sharma, S. R., *Mughal Empire in India*, vol.1, New Delhi, 1999, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to these terms is found in the correspondence of Hasan Khan Shamlu, the Safavid governor of Herat. See *The Shamlu Letters*, ed. Riazul Islam, Karachi, 1971, f. 77b

<sup>3</sup> *Lahori’s Padshahnama (1638-1648)*, vol. II, translated by Hamid Afaq Siddiqui, IAD Oriental Series no. 46, Delhi, 2011 [Hereinafter LPN], pp. 164-175, 187-193, 203-288.

<sup>4</sup> Inayat Khan, *Shah Jahan Nama*, translated by A. R. Fuller, eds. W. Begley and Z. A. Desai, Delhi, 1990, 335-400.

F Richards in his treatise on the Mughal Empire presents a broad survey of the campaign and its fallout<sup>5</sup>. A very detailed account of the campaign, drawing from Mughal and particularly non-Mughal sources including those published in the erstwhile Soviet Union, is presented by Richard Foltz<sup>6</sup>. The Mughal involvement in Central Asia is discussed in contextual details in topical essays by R G Mukminova, M Athar Ali and S Moosvi in volume V of the UNESCO-sponsored series on 'History of Civilisations of Central Asia'<sup>7</sup>. A more approachable account is also found in the popular historical biography of Shahjahan by Fergus Nicoll<sup>8</sup>.

### **The campaign – a short history:**

It will be worthwhile revisiting the campaign here. The details given here are gleaned from sources quoted above. As stated at the beginning of the paper, the main drive for the Mughals to gain control of Central Asia was their ethnicity and cultural background, but there were other more realistic reasons too. The region of Transoxiana had been lost by the Mughals to the Uzbeks, following the politicking between Babur's successors and the setback the Mughals received at the hands of resurgent Afghans in India. In the former part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a powerful khanate in the form of the Janid dynasty (named after its founder Jani Muhammad Khan) had been established at Bukhara. In 1603, Baqi Muhammad Khan, the son of Jani Muhammad, captured Balkh from the Safavids. Wali Muhammad, the successor of Baqi Muhammad, placed Balkh as an appanage under his nephew, Imam Quli Khan, but the latter rebelled and killed Wali Muhammad, to succeed as the Janid supreme Khan at Bukhara.

The Janid Khanate worked on the system of political appanages – important relations of the supreme Khan were given parts of the kingdom to rule virtually as independent rulers and create their own spheres of influence. Imam Quli gave over Balkh and Badakhshan as appanages to his brother, Nazr Muhammad. This ambitious Uzbek prince tried to challenge the Mughal might by invading their territories and briefly besieging Kabul in 1629, taking advantage of the political turmoil in the Mughal court after the death of Jahangir. (Kabul was a strategic Mughal stronghold; the Mughals had created a 'hunting ground' here where the Emperor periodically retreated and staged a military exercise under the pretence of 'hunting' to keep the Uzbeks warned). But in 1641, Imam Quli Khan died and Nazr Muhammad moved to Bukhara to succeed him as the supreme Khan. He soon became unpopular with most of the

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<sup>5</sup> Richards, John F., *The Mughal Empire*, CUP 1995 (reprint 2001), pp.132-133

<sup>6</sup> Foltz, R., *The Mughal Occupation of Balkh 1646-1647*, Journal of Islamic Studies, vol. 7, pt.1, 1996, pp. 49-61.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Civilizations of Central Asia Vol. V: Development in Contrast, from the Sixteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, eds. Chahryar Adle, Irfan Habib and Karl M. Baipakov, UNESCO, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Nicoll, F., *Shah Jahan: The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Emperor*, London, 2009, pp. 223-224.

other Khans and in 1645, his own son, Abdul Aziz Khan, rebelled and proclaimed himself at Bukhara. Nazr Muhammad fled and appealed to Shahjahan for help.

This was the opportunity Shahjahan was waiting for. He dispatched an army 60,000 strong under the command of Prince Murad Bakhsh and the Persian general, Ali Mardan Khan, elevated to the title of 'Amir ul-Umara'. The invasion was launched from Kabul and the Emperor stationed himself at Kabul to keep a close watch on it. On the face of it, Shahjahan had assured Nazr Muhammad that the Mughal army would only 'restore order' in the provinces of Balkh and Badakhshan. However, Nazr Muhammad well understood the traditional enmity between the Mughals and the Uzbeks and, therefore, decided to flee Balkh as the Mughal army closed in. Murad Bakhsh's march had begun in June 1646, and he arrived at Balkh on 2 July. The city came under Mughal control without much resistance and the Mughal army marched in with a great show of pageantry. Nazr Muhammad was pursued and driven into Khurasan. His treasury at Balkh, worth 12 million rupees, fell into Mughal hands.

However, soon afterwards Murad Bakhsh, wary of the foreign land and its climate, asked the Emperor's permission to return from Balkh. His vacillations resulted in a general lack of order in Mughal ranks and the army began to plunder the territories it had taken over. This also gave a chance to bands of Uzbek partisans to launch marauding attacks on the Mughals. Enraged by the feebleness of his son, Shahjahan recalled him, stripped him of his rank and appointed his Wazir, Sa'adullah Khan, to Balkh. He took charge and restored some order by making important changes in the administration during the autumn of 1646 but the situation still remained precarious. He subsequently returned to Kabul leaving Bahadur Khan, Asalat Khan and Rustam Khan in charge. With winter looming, Shahjahan staged his return from Kabul to Lahore. But before that he ensured that a *Fatehnāmā* ("victory broadcast") was sent to the Shah of Persia, announcing the Mughal conquest of Balkh and Badakhshan.

The winter passed with the Mughal hold over Balkh still quite fragile and the garrison under constant attacks from bands of Uzbek tribes. In February 1647, the Mughal commandants learnt that Abdul Aziz Khan, the son of Nazr Muhammad and ruler of Bukhara, was planning to invade Balkh to get rid of them. Shahjahan responded by appointing his son, Aurangzeb, to safeguard Balkh and ordered him to leave for Central Asia. He himself marched to Kabul from Lahore on 13 March. Over the spring of 1647, Nazr Muhammad, having caught wind of Abdul Aziz's intentions, moved from his hideout in Iran and hovered on the borders of

Transoxiana. Aurangzeb arrived at Balkh on 25 May. Small bands of Uzbeks had been harassing the Mughals over much of spring 1647 and Aurangzeb launched an expedition against them from Balkh as soon as he got there. The Uzbeks retaliated but were not successful against the mighty Mughal army. In the first week of June, a series of skirmishes followed. In most, the Mughals emerged victorious. During a battle on 9-11 June, the Mughal army inflicted a defeat on a band of Uzbek partisans of Abdul Aziz Khan, led by his general, Beg Oghli. By mid-June the Mughal expeditionary force was able to return to Balkh with a good deal of success.

However, reality soon began to set in and the Mughals realised it was not easy to keep a hold on Balkh, draining their resources in a foreign land surrounded by marauding bands of Uzbeks who outnumbered the Mughal army and could launch attacks on the Mughals from all sides. The Rajput and other mainly Indian Corps of the Mughal army found the terrain inhospitable and cold. Soon afterwards, notwithstanding his resounding victory against the Uzbeks, led by Beg Oghli, Aurangzeb was forced to open negotiations with Nazr Muhammad, who had now got together with his estranged son, Abdul Aziz Khan, thus forging a common Uzbek alliance against the Mughals. The Mughal-Uzbek negotiations moved painfully slowly and, by the end of September 1647, a truce was reached. On 1 October, Balkh was handed over to the grandsons of Nazr Muhammad and two days later the Mughal army began its withdrawal from Central Asia. It took a long while for them to get to Kabul and they suffered constant plunder and pillage at the hands of tribal guerrilla bands. Aurangzeb reached Kabul on 27 October but the campaign finally ended with the last of the Mughal troops arriving by 10 November.

The adventure in Central Asia cost the Mughals over 5000 men and was a strategic failure. It extended the northern limits of the Mughal Empire by less than 50 miles but Shahjahan's dream of reclaiming the 'patrimonial lands' remained unfulfilled, in spite of Aurangzeb's military prowess. Instead, he had to hide behind the semantics of his earlier correspondence with Nazr Muhammad, wherein he had only offered to be of 'help' in restoring the Uzbek Khan to his kingdom and to safeguard the interest of its Muslim inhabitants against the bands of tribes and pagans.

### **The coinage:**

Mughal issues of Balkh mint were first described in a short note by Bernd Becker in Oriental Numismatic Society's Newsletter no. 136, Spring 1993 wherein he described two coins

bearing the name of Shahajahan - a gold Mohur of the so-called 'square areas' type, with the mint-name *Zarb Balkh* and a 'mint-less and dateless' silver issue, which he described as a 'Shahrukhi' or 'Tanka'. The latter was presumably attributed to Balkh on the basis of its similarity with the Janid coins, in terms of fabric and weight (4.44 gm) and Becker remarks that "[It] seems possible that this coin was struck by order of Nazr Muhammad Khan of Balkh, professing submission to the emperor". A further note on these coins appeared in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of Steve Album's "Checklist of Islamic Coins", wherein he lists (no. A3017, p.303) these coins under the chapter of the Janids and mentions in a note: "...Although clearly engraved 'zarb-i balkh', it seems likely that they were struck elsewhere, probably at Kabul, to judge by the style and layout". Under A-B3107 he reports a similar rupee in a private collection in Germany.

This is where the notices of these coins in the numismatic literature end. But since the first was noticed in 1993, a number of other Mohurs of Balkh mint have appeared in various auctions; an even greater number of the light-weight silver coins, variously described as Mithqals, Shahrukhis or Tankas, have also been noted. It would, therefore, be worthwhile to compile a list here and offer some numismatic remarks on some of these coins.

#### The Mohurs:

All mohurs have the standard inscriptional format of the so-called 'square areas'-type of Shahjahan – on the obverse, they have the Kalima in a rectangular border, with the names and titles of the four *rashidoon* (Caliphs) around; on the reverse, we see the name of the Emperor, *Shāhjahān Bādshāh Ghāzi*, arranged in two lines with the 'lazy' or *majhool* form of 'Ye' in the word 'Ghazi' as the divider, and other parts of his name *Shihāb al-Din Muhammad Sahib-i-Qirān Thani* in quadrants around.

1. Baldwin's Auctions Ltd, Auction 47, "The Stiller Collection of Indian Coins", 25 September 2006, Lot 719 (ex- Bill Holberton, August 1974), 10.92 gm



2. Baldwin's Auctions Ltd, Auction 53, 25 September 2007, Lot 1773, 10.88 gm



3. Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XVII, Sessions 3 & 4, 8 January 2014, Lot 1046, 10.9 gm



4. Archives of Dr Suresh Kawale, London; weight not recorded



If we add the Mohur published by Becker to this list, a number of aspects with regard to their engraving become apparent. Becker's mohur has AH 1056 on the obverse, in the right hand margin of the Kalima and AH 1057 on the reverse, in the quadrant where the mint-name is inscribed. So it evidently combines two dies from two different issue years and is, as such, a 'mule'. It does not have a regnal year. Coin 1 above has RY 20 in the corner of the central panel on the reverse and the AH date (10)56 is partly visible in the right quadrant on the obverse. Coin 3 is die-identical with Coin 1. Coin 2 differs from coins 1 and 3 inasmuch as it has the RY 20 engraved near the mint-name. But a careful look at the reverse of coins 1 and 3 reveals the fact that the portion near the mint-name has a 'rosette' engraved over traces of '20', so it seems that the die with the RY near the mint-name was later re-engraved, with the RY moved within the rectangle and a rosette replacing it. Coin 4 has the same reverse legend layout as the Mohur published by Becker – it has AH1057 near the mint-name and not the RY.

So between four gold coins, we have two basic types: one dated AH 1056/RY 20 and the other dated AH 1057 without RY. In the first type, there is a variety created by the re-engraving of the reverse die, whereby the RY is moved from being near the mint-name to being placed in the bottom right corner of the rectangle. Becker's Mohur bridges the two types by combining obverse from the type dated AH1056 and reverse from the type dated AH1057. Such a close relationship between the dies of the known specimens indicates that the issue of these Mohurs must have been a very limited one.

An interesting numismatic novelty in the story of Balkh appeared in the Indian 'Kohinoor Auctions', no. 3, 9 Aug 2014, lot 169. This is a ¼ rupee 'Nisar' of Shahjahan, struck at Balkh, weighing 2.79 gm. The obverse has the legend *Nisār Shahjahān Bādshāh Ghāzi* and

the reverse reads *Zarb Balkh Sanah Julus 20*. The same coin was earlier documented on [www.zeno.ru](http://www.zeno.ru), the on-line Oriental numismatic database as #138830.



The number of light-weight silver coins known to date is quite large and, therefore, only a selection of representative types is listed here. Basically, there are two types – coins which do not have a date and coins which are dated AH 1056 or AH 1057. They both have the Kalima on the obverse and the usual legend, *Shahjahan Badshah Ghazi*, arranged in two lines with the ‘lazy’ or *majhool* form of ‘Ye’ in the word ‘Ghazi’ as the divider. Both obverse and reverse inscriptions are within dotted rectangular borders. Also evident from the coins is the presence of marginal inscriptions, like the names of the four *rashidoons* with their respective titles, and the emperor’s own names, on obverse and reverse respectively; but none of the coins show them to a readable degree owing to the peculiar method of manufacture of these coins.

1. Undated type (Stephen Album Rare Coins, Auction 19, 15 May 2014, lot 1027)



2. Dated types:

A. Dated AH1056 (Zeno #57776) – the date here is on the obverse, in the top left corner, just above the word ‘Allah’ in the top line of the Kalima.



B. Dated AH1057 (Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auction 262, 17 August 2011, Lot 436) – here the date is placed above the words ‘Shahjahan’ on the reverse.



It is worth illustrating images of two Janid silver coins here to supplement the coins shown above, so that the similarities in appearance are made evident.

1. Silver Tanka of Imam Quli Khan, Balkh mint (undated, image courtesy Stan Goron, UK)



2. Silver Tanka of Nazr Muhammad Khan, AH 1056 (issued just before the Mughal occupation, image courtesy Jan Lingen, the Netherlands)



A word regarding the strange shape and poor striking of these coins might be pertinent here. The flans of these coins appear to have been flattened from globules, which were in turn made from cut pieces of a silver wire. The angular projections they have on their edges indicate that this was their method of fabrication. The reason these coins show only partial impressions could be the fact that the dies used to strike them may have acted as devices to flatten the flans as well. In other words, the globules were initially flattened to a certain degree of flatness and then transferred on to the working station where they were further struck with the dies, thereby flattening them further at the same time while the designs were impressed on them.

### **The Context of the Coinage:**

It is evident from the issues listed above that the Mughal coinage of Balkh appears to straddle two currency regimes – the Mughal on the one hand, and the Central Asian or Janid on the other. The Mughal is manifested by the Mohurs (and the solitary Rupee that Steve Album mentions), and the hitherto unique  $\frac{1}{4}$  Rupee ‘Nisar’, whereas the other light weight silver coins are struck on a local weight standard and betray an appearance very similar to the predecessor Janid coins. The Mughal-style coins are struck to the usual high standards of engraving and blank-making, whereas the Janid-style coins are badly struck, with none of the coins showing marginal inscriptions. The difference in their appearance and production aspects is so distinct that it prompted Steve Album to speculate whether they were produced

in different mints – the Janid-style silver coins at Balkh and the Mughal style coins at another place like Kabul<sup>9</sup>.

Two passages from Lahori's *Padshahnama* prove crucial in dispelling this suggestion. The first concerns the triumphant entry of the Mughal army into Balkh on 3 Jumada-II, AH 1056 (7 July 1646). Lahori furnishes a long list of all the *Ashraf* (grandees) of the city of Balkh who assembled in the mosque built by Nazr Muhammad, where "the [Mughal] standard moved in at an auspicious hour..." and "...adorned its pulpit with the name of the religion-cultivating Emperor". At the same time, "...all the *Darāhīm* and *Danāīr* were also adorned with the name of this justice-dispensing Emperor and some of it (sic) were sent to him".<sup>10</sup> *Darāhīm* and *Danāīr* here are of course plurals of the words 'Dirham' and 'Dinar' and as such refer to silver and gold coins.

This reference makes it absolutely certain that coins in the name of Shahjahan were struck at Balkh. But it still does not make it clear what sort of coins were produced – Mughal style or Central Asian. Ostensibly, *Darāhīm* and *Danāīr* would normally mean Rupees and Mohurs in a Mughal context but this is inferred by implication and not evidence. However, a second passage in the *Padshahnama* settles this even better<sup>11</sup>. While describing the measures which Sa'adullah Khan, the Wazir, took to bring order to the country of Balkh following the departure of Murad Bakhsh, Lahori says –

"...And due to the currency of the Rupees in that country and the falling of the *Khani*, as the basis of the buying and selling of that region was based upon, the inhabitants of Balkh and Badakhshan would face difficulties in their business dealings with the people of *Mawara-ul-Nahr*; and since in this court nothing except justice and equity is practised, it is settled that the *Khāni*, which the *Khwānīn* of Turan had coined mixed with copper should be coined in the mint of Balkh and to the extent of their previous mixing, silver should be added to it and its weight should be fixed equivalent to ¼ rupee and the Padshahi Sicca with the name of the Emperor should be coined and made current as Shahi."

This is by far the clearest reference to the issue of local-style coins in the name of the Emperor (i.e. Shahjahan) at Balkh and since it makes a mention of 'the currency of rupees in that country', it settles Album's doubts about where the earlier Mughal-style coins were

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<sup>9</sup> Album, S., *A Checklist of Islamic Coins (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, Santa Rosa CA, p. 303

<sup>10</sup> LPN, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> LPN, p. 219

struck, particularly taken together with the earlier mention of coins being struck at Balkh. Conceivably, the Mughals when they first occupied Balkh, issued a currency based not on the Central Asian system, but the Indian one. This led to a question of acceptance and, as a result, the population of the realm (*Mawara-ul-Nahr* = “Beyond the Stream”, a reference to lands trans-Oxus) faced problems in their trade. Sa’adullah Khan tried to alleviate this by offering a currency reform. The general tone of the mention is typical of the purported ‘benevolence’ of the Mughal king, who had maintained the pretext of bringing order and a ‘civilising effect’ to the provinces of Transoxiana, ridding it of tribal rebels. The description also gives us the name of the silver coins minted in the Central Asian tradition – they were called ‘Shahis’ or ‘*Khanis*’ the latter in reference to the fact that they had been originally coined by the ‘Khans of Turan’. At another place, while giving details of the revenue of Balkh, Lahori refers to the local coins as ‘Shahis’, but says that they were also called “Khani and Tankah by the inhabitants”<sup>12</sup>.

Sa’adullah Khan’s currency reform was two-pronged – not only did he introduce the *Khanis* in the name of Shahjahan to facilitate trade; he also fixed its exchange value at a quarter of a Mughal Rupee. The description at this point refers to the *Khanis* coined by the Khans of Turan being ‘mixed with copper’ so it is evident that the currency had been debased under the previous regime. The study of Janid coinage offered by Russian numismatist E. A. Davidovich (“Monetary policy and currency circulation under the Janids (Astrakhanids) in the seventeenth century”)<sup>13</sup> helps to provide invaluable context to these remarks in the *Padshahnama*.

Davidovich bases her study on *wāsiqā* and *waqf-nāmā* documents of the Janid period which indicate the purity of the Janid coins by fractions of ‘tenths’, for example ‘eight-tenths’ or ‘nine-tenths’, with pure silver being described as ‘ten-tenths’. In the documents dated just prior to and in the aftermath of the Mughal occupation (AH 1052/ AD 1642 and AH 1067/ AD 1657), these purity descriptions are followed by the words ‘decreased by 10 *nukhuds*’, where the term ‘*nukhud*’ signifies a weight equivalent of a barley grain, about 0.2 gm. This decrease in weight, Davidovich suggests, is not the decrease in the weight of the coin, because the same documents refer to the weight of the ‘Tanga’ being equal to a one *Misqal* (4.8 gm). Considering the reduction to be in the weight of pure contents, Davidovich rightly

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<sup>12</sup> LPN, p. 210.

<sup>13</sup> *History of Civilizations of Central Asia Vol. V: Development in Contrast, from the Sixteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, eds. Chahryar Adle, Irfan Habib and Karl M. Baipakov, UNESCO, 2003, p. 438-441

infers that the coins referred to in the documents must have had “2 gm reduced in a 4.8 gm coin”, and thus referring to a ‘six-tenths’ purity if expressed in the ‘fractions-of-tenths’ system. This fraction meant the Janid coins had approximately 2.8 gm of pure silver in them, which corresponded neatly to the weight of the Mughal ¼ Rupee. Sa’adullah Khan’s attempt of striking *Khanis* thus bridged the two disparate currency systems very well.

However, it is evident from the Mohurs dated AH 1057 that the Mughal-style coinage was not abandoned entirely and continued to be produced even after Sa’adullah Khan returned to Kabul. The relative rarity of the rupees of Balkh as compared to the Mohurs is also indicative of the fact that the rupee failed as a circulatory issue in Balkh and was substituted by *Khanis* corresponding to ¼ Rupee. Conceivably, Mohurs were a store of wealth rather than circulatory coinage and, therefore, continued to be struck as such.

The hitherto unique Nisar of Balkh in all likelihood must have been produced soon after the triumphant entry of the Mughal army in Balkh. The coin bears RY 20, which by the testimony of the *Padshahnama* had begun only a couple of days earlier, on 5 July<sup>14</sup>. The text also makes detailed references to the course of events once the Mughal standard had moved in Balkh, i.e. a court had been held there by Murad Bakhsh, on 7 July 1646. They included receiving submission from the garrison commander (*Qila’ā-dār*) of Tirmiz. On the day after, the Prince and Ali Mardan Khan, the Amir ul-Umara, both received robes of honour. A few days later, on 12 July, a reward of 2000 rupees was sent for the “consolation of some of the people at large and inhabitants” of Balkh. The Nisar could have been struck as part of the court rituals at any of these events. Of particular interest is the last mention of largesse at this time.

### **Two dubious coins of Balkh:**

It is worth describing two gold coins here, one of which is evidently a forgery. It is a Mohur that appeared in a European auction house ‘Numismatica Genevensis SA’ (Auction 7, 27 November 2012, Lot 1910) amongst a group of other coins, ostensibly engraved by the same ‘hand’.

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<sup>14</sup> LPN, p. 211.



The coin weighs 10.84 gm and its calligraphy, style and placement of legends is radically different from all the Mohurs of Balkh mint listed above. It is a dangerous and extremely well-made forgery and would not be recognized as such unless it is seen in context with the products of the same ‘atelier’ which had been consigned to same auction. All were withdrawn from the sale after complaints from reputed dealers and collectors.

The second was posted on [www.zeno.ru](http://www.zeno.ru) (#143291) from a Pakistani source.



It is a gold coin in the name of Shahjahan, and, although it matches with the other mohurs listed above in terms of legends and their alignments, there are two aspects about it that are suspicious – the contributor purports its date to be AH 1053/ RY 17 and gives its weight as 7.9 gm. However, there are no traces of an RY anywhere on the coin and the date appears to be more like 1052 than 1053. In either of these years, there was no Mughal involvement at Balkh. It could plausibly be 1056, wrongly engraved as 1052 which is a commonly encountered mistake on Mughal coins. But even though the date can be justified in this manner, the weight of the coin stands out as being odd. A nearest match can be found in Safavid coinage, where a ‘heavy Ashrafi’ of about 3.8 gm is known<sup>15</sup> so this coin could plausibly be a ‘heavy Double Ashrafi’ struck to a Safavid standard. However, no such coins struck to a Safavid standard are known from Central Asia. At worst the coin can be a freak light-weight Mohur but such a strike, particularly in gold, cannot be easily justified as well.

<sup>15</sup> Personal Communication with Stan Goron, Croydon, UK, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Added to these two aspects, there is also the fact that the engraving is crude as compared to the other Balkh Mohurs illustrated above which is a cause for suspicion with regard to its status. The coin therefore remains enigmatic.