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Analysis of the Political Status of Balkh during the Shaybanid Period Based on Historical Evidence and Numismatic Data

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 10th century AH, the region of Great Khorasan and the city of Balkh, due to their strategic geographical location, became one of the most critical centers of conflict under Safavid rule and remained under constant attention from the Shaybanid government. Since coinage in historical texts is considered a symbol of legitimacy and the establishment of power, analyzing the coinage in Balkh can provide a clearer understanding of the state of power and political dynamics in this region. This is a historical study that employs a descriptive-analytical approach and is based on numismatic research and written library sources. The central issue is the examination of the consistency or contradiction between historiographical narratives and the material evidence derived from the analysis of coins minted by the Shaybanid dynasty in Balkh. Essentially, this study aims to analyze the political reasons and contexts of coin production in Balkh and, through it, to provide a clearer picture of the historical events and political dynamics of the era. The findings of this research indicate that Balkh played a key role in consolidating the political and economic identity of the Shaybanid government. Beyond its economic importance, the city served as an instrument for demonstrating power and extending political influence in opposition to the Safavid state.

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1. Introduction

The emergence of the Shaybanid state in the early tenth century AH marked a significant transformation in the political landscape of Transoxiana and parts of Greater Khorasan. As Timurid power gradually declined in the region, the Shaybanid dynasty expanded its influence and established a new political order in Transoxiana, becoming a major force in Central Asian and Khorasani politics. Situated at the crossroads between East and West and along communication networks associated with the Silk Road, Transoxiana remained an important center of economic and cultural exchange in Central Asia. Greater Khorasan, meanwhile, held a distinctive position in the political relations between the Shaybanid and Safavid states because of its geographical location between Central Asia and the Iranian Plateau. The loss of parts of Khorasan following the Battle of Merv made the recovery and expansion of Shaybanid influence in the region a major political objective. Consequently, the rivalry between the Shaybanids and Safavids over control of Khorasan placed major cities in the region, including Balkh, at the center of the political and military relations between the two states.

The rivalry over Khorasan led some cities to change hands between the Safavids and the Shaybanids, leaving the region's political conditions subject to a changing balance of power. Uzbek incursions into areas under Safavid influence, owing to the rapid mobility of their forces and their distinctive military tactics, caused insecurity and social and economic disruption in some areas (Sanson, 1967: 200). Nevertheless, these campaigns cannot be explained solely in terms of military incursions, since gaining political control and expanding influence in key areas of Khorasan were also among the Shaybanids' fundamental objectives (Ghafurov, 2003: 2/ 817). On the other hand, the Safavids also prioritized maintaining control over Khorasan as one of the important regions of their territory. These rivalries resulted in some cities in Khorasan, including Balkh, changing hands between the two states at different times, a situation that is reflected in both the historical sources and the numismatic evidence of the period.

Balkh was one of the major centers of Khorasan during this period, and its location at the intersection of Central Asia and Khorasan gave the city a distinctive strategic position. Following the Battle of Merv, Shah Ismail I was able to wrest parts of Khorasan from Shaybanid control and expand Safavid influence in the region, bringing the city of Balkh under Safavid rule for a period (Fig. 1). This situation, however, did not last, and in subsequent periods, Balkh fell outside the sphere of Safavid influence and once again came under Shaybanid rule (Fig. 2) (Malek Shahmirzadi *et al.,* 1999: 114-116). These political shifts highlight the importance of Balkh in the rivalry between the Safavids and the Shaybanids over control of Khorasan. Evidence relating to the activity of the Balkh mint provides another perspective from which to examine the city's position, as coins minted there offer information on the presence of Shaybanid rulers, the dates of minting, and the position of this center within the region's power relations. Therefore, examining the position of Balkh during this period requires the simultaneous study of historical sources and numismatic data, because coins can shed light on aspects of the political and administrative structures of states and the role of cities within them.

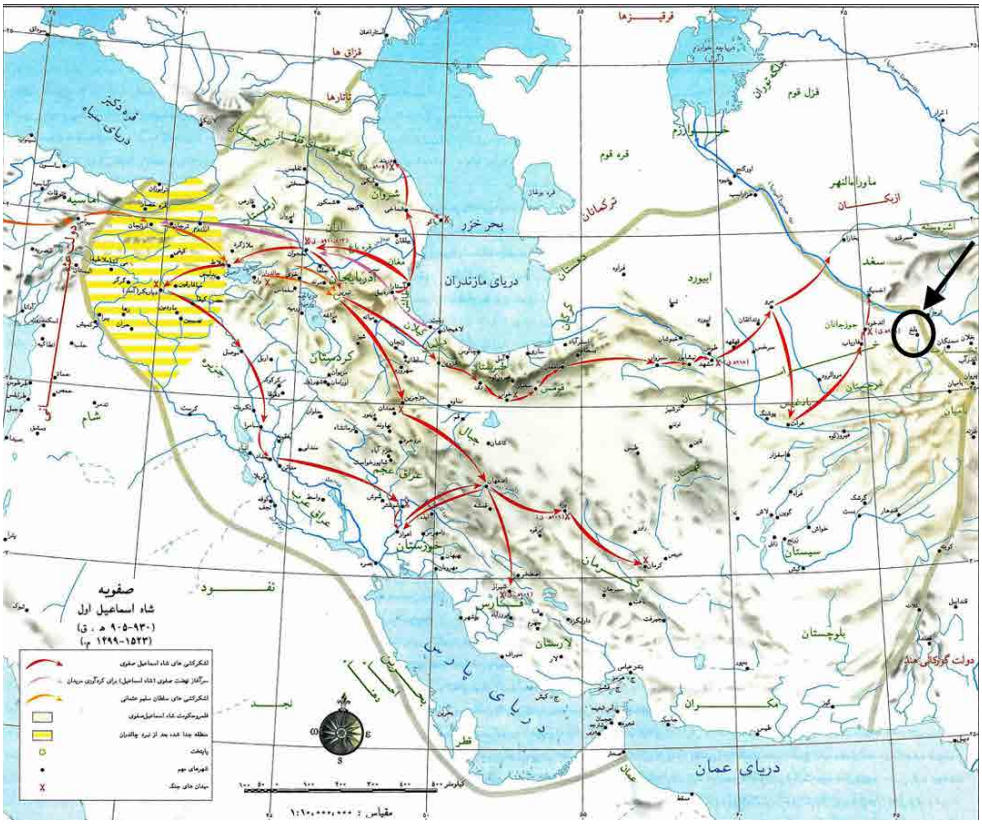


Fig. 1: The territory of Shah Ismail I's rule and the extent of the Balkh region (Malek Shahmirzadi *et al.*, 1999: 114).

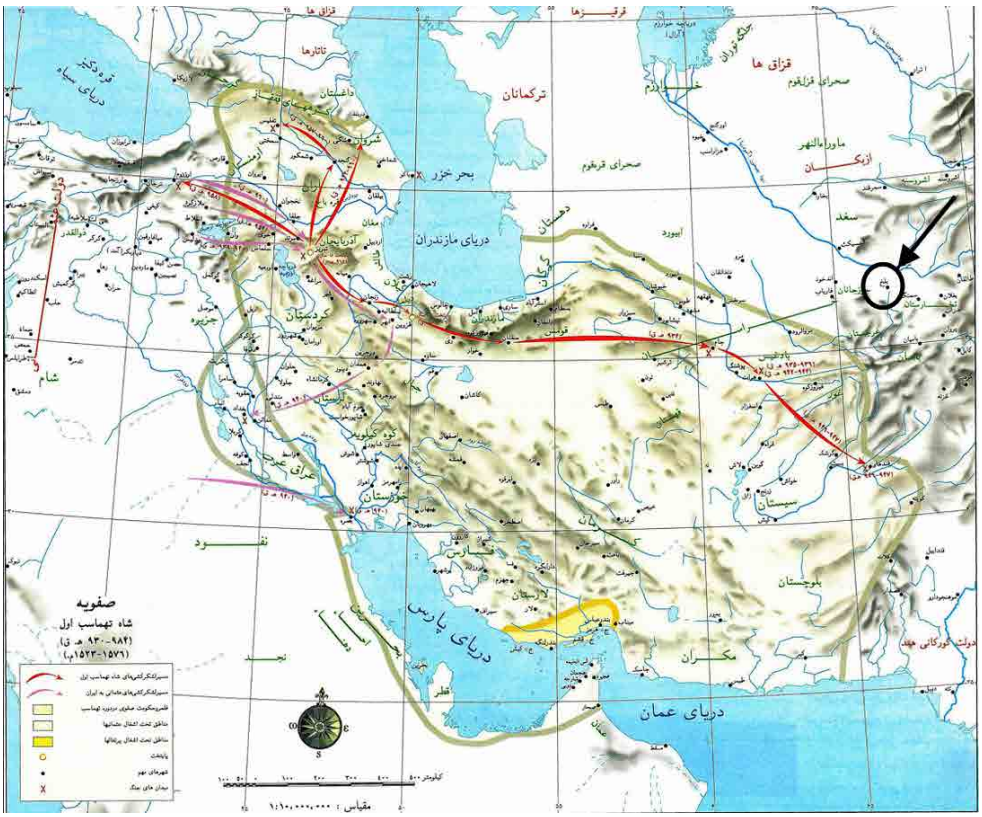


Fig. 2: The territory of Shah Tahmasp I's rule and the extent of the Balkh region (Malek Shahmirzadi *et al.*, 1999: 116).

In this study, coins minted in Balkh are used as material evidence, alongside historical sources, to examine the position of the city within the Shaybanid power structure. Information contained in the coins, including the ruler's name, date, and mint, makes it possible to examine the activity of the Balkh mint and its relationship to the political developments of the Shaybanid period. Accordingly, the main research question is how the political position of Balkh within the Shaybanid power structure can be explained and what the numismatic data from coins minted in the city reveal about the political developments and power structure of this period. The main objective of this study is to explain the political position of Balkh during the Shaybanid period through a comparative analysis of historical evidence and numismatic data.

2. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a historical, descriptive-analytical approach. Its data were collected and analyzed through the examination of numismatic evidence and its comparison with historical sources relevant to the Shaybanid period. The study focuses on coins minted in Balkh under Shaybanid rulers, as well as under certain local rulers affiliated with the dynasty, as the primary material data. The purpose of examining these specimens was not merely to identify and document the coins; rather, by analyzing the ruler's name, minting date, mint, epigraphic features, and coin weight in conjunction, the study seeks to investigate the continuity, interruption, resumption, and changes in activity at the Balkh mint and its relationship to political developments and shifts in power during the Shaybanid period.

A total of 25 coins minted in Balkh were collected and examined. Numismatic information on the specimens was obtained from specialized databases and digital archives, including Zeno, Classical Numismatic Group (CNG), CoinArchives, and Numista. The specimens were selected based on the availability of usable information, including the ruler's name or attribution, minting date, mint, and a legible image of the coin. In cases where the minting date was unknown, the ruler's name, mint, and the epigraphic and technical features of the coin were used as the primary data. The numismatic characteristics of each specimen were then compared with information available in historical sources in order to elucidate the role of the Balkh mint and the position of the city within the political structure of the dynasty.

2-1. Literature Review

Within the broader body of scholarship on the Shaybanid state, the position of Balkh and the coinage of the period can be examined across three main areas of research: historical sources, historical geography, and numismatic studies. Although the available historical and geographical sources were compiled from different perspectives, they provide valuable information on the political structure of the Shaybanid state, the location and significance of major cities in Khorasan, and changes in the territorial extent of the Shaybanid state.

Among the primary historical sources on the *Shaybanids, Ghafurov, in Tajiks: pre-ancient, ancient, and medieval history* (2003), examines the political and social history of Central Asia, devoting part of his discussion to the developments of the Shaybanid period. Another important

work is *Musakhkhar al-Bilād: The History of the Shaybanids* (10th century A.H.) by Muḥammad-Yār (2006), which is regarded as one of the major sources for studying the political history of the dynasty. By providing accounts of Shaybanid rulers, political and military events, and changes in the territorial extent of the state, this work offers valuable information for examining power relations in Transoxiana and Khorasan. In addition to these works, historiographical sources from the Safavid period are important for reconstructing relations between the two states. *Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār afrād al-bashar* by Khwandamir (2001), *Aḥsan al-Tavārīkh* by Hasan Beg Rumlu (1978), *ʿĀlam-ārā-ye Shāh Ṭahmāsb* (1991), and *Alam-ara-yi Abbasi* by Eskandar Beg Munshi (1998) provide information on wars, political relations, and territorial shifts between the Safavids and the Shaybanids, particularly in the border regions of Khorasan. Although these sources primarily approach these events from a political-historical perspective, the present study uses them to reconstruct the historical context of developments in Balkh and to assess these developments against the numismatic data.

In the field of historical geography, several classical works and more recent studies provide important information on the regional position of Balkh. Ibn Hawqal, in Surat al-Ard (1987), Al-Moqaddasi, in *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Maʿrifat al-Aqalim* (1982), and the author of *Hudud al-Alam* (1993) have demonstrated Balkh's position within the geographical networks of Khorasan and Central Asia by describing the geographical structure, communication routes, and economic characteristics of different regions.

Al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī, in *Fadā'il-i Balkh or The Merits of Balkh* (1971), and Mohammad ibn Shaykh ʿAważ Bāqī Balkhī Muʾmin, in *Jarīde-ye Balkh* (1978), also provide information on the historical background and cultural significance of the city. In more recent studies, Muxtorov, in *Tārīḫ-e ʿomūmī-ye šahr-e Balḫ dar qorūn-e vosṭā* (2002), and Zowārī, in *Joğrāfiyā-ye tārīkhi-ye Balkh* (2009), have examined the city's role in political and regional developments, with a particular focus on its history.

Numismatic studies of the Shaybanids have focused primarily on the identification, classification, and documentation of the coinage of this dynasty. Davidovich (1992), in Corpus[1] of Sixteenth-Century Shaybanid Gold and Silver Coins, presented one of the most comprehensive studies of Shaybanid coinage. Drawing on numerous specimens, she provided information on different coin types, rulers, minting dates, and mints of the dynasty. Burton (1995), in the article[2] "Shaybanid Coins: A Reassessment," reassessed the numismatic evidence of the dynasty and examined several issues concerning the identification and analysis of Shaybanid coinage. Album (2011), in Checklist of Islamic Coins, also documented[3] and classified various Islamic coin types, making the work useful for the identification and comparison of Shaybanid coins. Aqīlī, in Dār al-zarb-hā-ye Īrān dar dowre-ye Eslāmī (1998), examined mints of the Islamic period and their position within the monetary structures of different states. Habibi, in the article Ubayd Allah Khan Shaybani and the Introduction of a Coin Attributed to Him (publication date and venue unspecified), examined the epigraphic and numismatic characteristics of a coin attributed to Ubayd Allah Khan Shaybani.

Despite these studies, the political position of Balkh during the Shaybanid period, particularly in terms of the temporal relationship and interaction among political changes, the presence of rulers, and the activity of the city's mint, still requires closer examination. Existing research on the political history of the Shaybanids, the historical geography of Balkh, and the classification of the dynasty's coinage has primarily focused either on the description and classification of coins or on broader aspects of the political structure of the Shaybanid state. The relationship among numismatic evidence from the Balkh mint, the dates of coin minting, the presence of Shaybanid rulers, and changes in the city's political position during the period under study has received comparatively little independent attention. Accordingly, by focusing on coins minted in Balkh between 906 and 1008 AH and correlating numismatic data with historical sources, the present study seeks to examine the continuity of activity at the Balkh mint, the presence of different branches and rulers of the Shaybanid dynasty, and the relationship between coin minting and the shifts and consolidation of political power in the city.

3. The Shaybanid State

The Shaybanids were a branch of the Chinggisid dynasty that emerged as one of the major political powers in Transoxiana in the early tenth century AH, following the weakening and collapse of Timurid authority in the region. The political rise of the dynasty began under Abu'l-Khayr Khan. His successor, Muhammad Shaybani, taking advantage of the prevailing conditions and capturing major Timurid centers, including Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh, and Herat, expanded Shaybanid territory across Transoxiana and parts of Khorasan (Grousset, 1986: 784-789). From this perspective, the expansion of Shaybanid territory involved more than a change in political sovereignty; it was also accompanied by the establishment of their administrative and governmental mechanisms in major cities across the region. The genealogical chart of Shaybanid rulers presented in this study (Fig. 3) was also used to establish the succession of rulers and to correlate the names recorded on coins minted in Balkh with the political circumstances of each period.

After consolidating his power in Transoxiana, Muhammad Shaybani sought to extend Shaybanid influence toward Khorasan. This policy, however, met with resistance from the Safavids, and in 916 AH, he was defeated and killed by Shah Ismail I at the Battle of Merv (Kenzheakhmet, 2019: 79). Following this event, although Shaybanid influence in some parts of Khorasan temporarily declined, the Shaybanid dynasty was able, by 918 AH, to regain control of significant parts of Transoxiana and the eastern regions and re-establish its rule (Kilic-Schubel, 2016: 2). The political structure of the Shaybanids was also characterized at many points by the simultaneous presence of different branches of the ruling dynasty, with several major cities, including Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Khiva, administered by different princes of the Shaybanid dynasty (Hosseinzadeh Shanechi, 1973: 265). Such a structure is particularly significant for the study of Shaybanid coinage, as the presence of multiple rulers' and governors' names on coins may reflect the power relations and modes of political administration within Shaybanid territory.

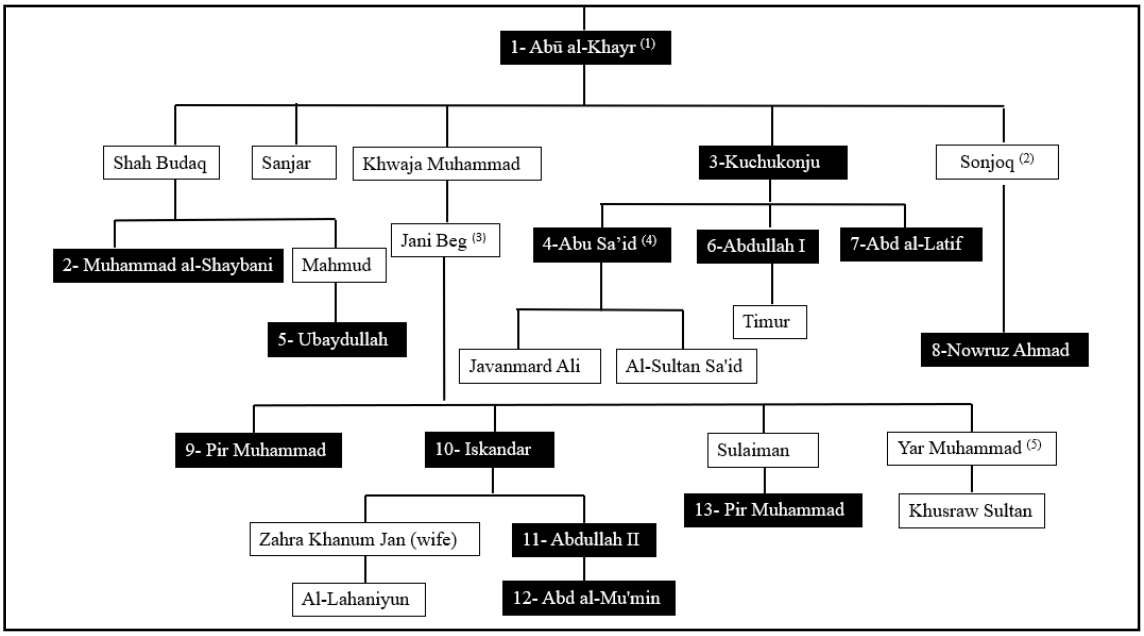


Fig. 3: Genealogical chart of the Shaybanid dynasty (Zambaur, 2536: 405; Lane-Poole, 1984: 244).

Among the cities within Shaybanid territory, Balkh held particular political and economic importance because of its geographical position linking Khorasan and Transoxiana. At different times, the city fell within the Shaybanid sphere of territorial and political contestation, and during certain periods it became one of their important centers of power (Fig. 4). From the perspective of the present study, the significance of Balkh extends beyond its political and regional position to the activity of its mint. The continuity of minting activity in Balkh during different periods of Shaybanid rule reflects the importance of the city within their administrative and economic structure. Accordingly, the study of coins minted in Balkh, alongside historical sources, can provide independent material evidence for reconstructing power relations and the position of the city within the political structure of the Shaybanids.

4. The Historical and Political Position of Balkh in Geographical Sources

Geographical accounts from the Islamic period describe Balkh as one of the major cities of Khorasan and one of the principal centers of the region. In Kitab al-Buldan, al-Yaʿqubi regarded Balkh as one of the major cities of Khorasan and referred to its position among the various regions of the land (al-Yaʿqubi, 1977: 63). Ibn Hawqal, in Surat al-Ard, likewise described the geographical position of Balkh, identifying it as one of the major centers of Khorasan and referring to the extensive territories associated with it (Ibn Hawqal, 1987: 181). Al-Moqaddasi likewise regarded Balkh as one of the prosperous and important cities of Khorasan and highlighted its distinctive position in the region (al-Moqaddasi, 1982: 430, 438).

In later geographical sources, in addition to the urban and administrative importance of Balkh, emphasis was also placed on its economic potential and role in regional communications. Hudud al-Alam refers to the city's fortifications and flourishing trade and describes Balkh as one of the

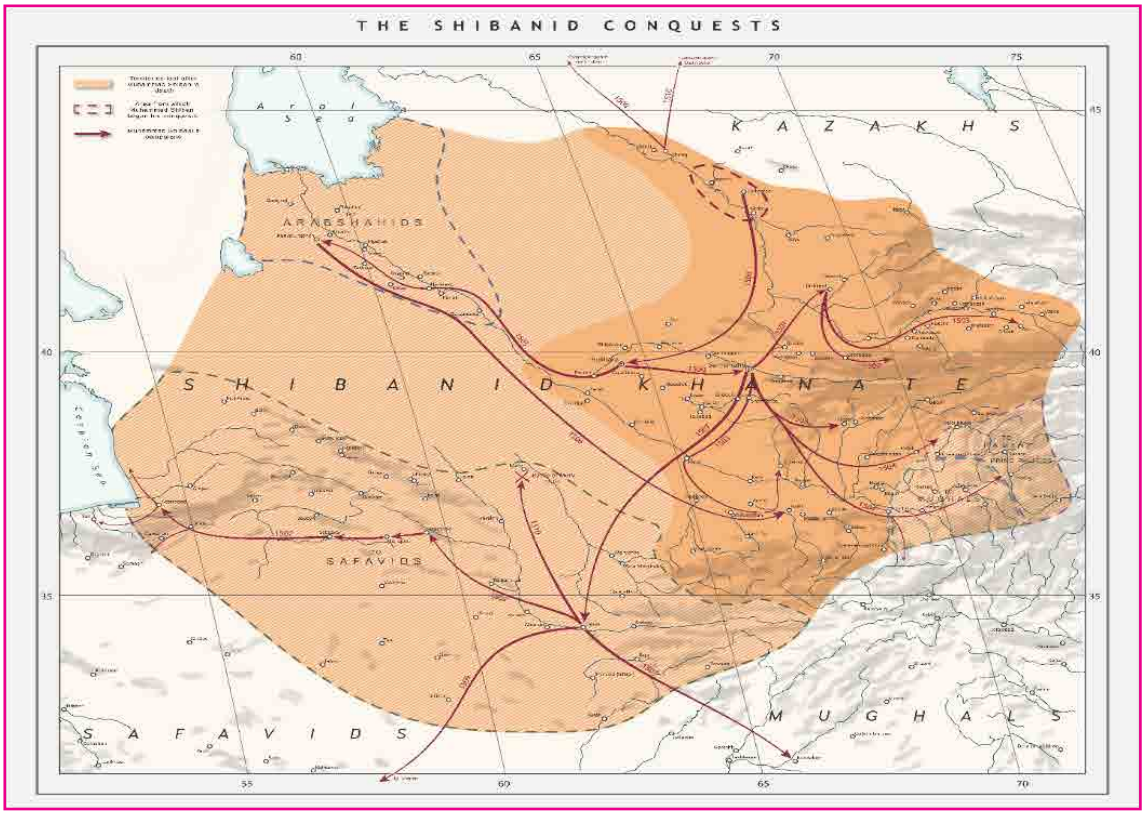


Fig. 4: The territory of the Shaybanid state in Greater Khorasan and the geographical location of Balkh (https://www.deviantart.com).

major centers of the region (Hudud al-Alam, 1993: 311). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Baghdādī also drew attention to the economic importance of Balkh by referring to its abundant agricultural production and the transportation of its products to other regions (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Baghdādī, 1988: 568). These accounts indicate that, alongside its administrative and regional role, Balkh possessed considerable economic potential and played an important role in regional connectivity.

More recent studies, drawing on geographical and historical sources, have likewise emphasized the position of Balkh within the communication and economic networks of the eastern Islamic world. Barthold relates the importance of Balkh to its geographical location and its role in regional communications in Khorasan (Barthold, 1987: 1/193), and Le Strange has pointed to the city's position along the communication routes of Khorasan and its connections with the eastern regions (Le Strange, 2007: 446-458). Taken together, these accounts indicate that, owing to its geographical location, the extent of its dependent territories, its economic potential, and its position along major communication routes, Balkh occupied a position that extended beyond that of a local urban center. This position provided the historical context for the subsequent importance of Balkh as an administrative and monetary center, including during the Shaybanid period.

5. The Importance of Balkh in the Islamic Period Based on Historical Sources

Balkh, known as Bactra or Bactria in the pre-Islamic period, was one of the ancient cities of eastern Iran and Greater Khorasan, whose importance continued beyond the advent of Islam. The

earliest references to the city are found in Zoroastrian sources; Balkh is referred to as "Bākhdi" or "Bakhdi" and is mentioned as one of the sacred lands of Ahura Mazda (Razi, 2000: 194). Some historians of the Islamic period likewise associated Balkh with an ancient historical background and described it as one of the major historical centers of the region (Al-Masʿūdī, 2003: 1/222; Balʿamī, 1987: 1/461).

Following the advent of Islam, the importance of Balkh not only remained undiminished but also increased, as the city became one of the major centers of Khorasan in the political, intellectual, and religious spheres. Ibn Khurdādhbih described Balkh as one of the important cities of Tokharistan, and his account indicates the city's position within the administrative structure of Khorasan in the third century AH (Ibn Khurdādhbih, 1992: 54). Ibn Hawqal likewise, in the fourth century AH, described Balkh as the center of an extensive region encompassing areas such as Banjhir, Badakhshan, Tokharistan, and Bamiyan (Ibn Hawqal, 1987: 181). Al-Moqaddasi also emphasized Balkh's prosperity and importance, highlighting its position among the cities of Khorasan (al-Moqaddasi, 1982: 439). The importance of Balkh during the Islamic period was not limited to its political position; the city also became one of the major cultural and religious centers of the Islamic world. The presence of prominent jurists, mystics, scholars, and poets led Balkh to be referred to in historical sources by such epithets as "Umm al-Bilad," "Balkh al-Husna," and "Qubbat al-Islam" (Al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī, 1971: 29; Muʾmin, 1978: 8; Zowārī, 2009: 4). The continuation of this status in subsequent periods allowed Balkh to remain one of the major centers of Khorasan.

In later periods, particularly during the Timurid era, Balkh continued to hold political and regional importance. Timur's capture of the city in 771 AH, followed by the attention paid by his successors to its reconstruction and expansion, demonstrates the continued significance of Balkh within the political structure of Khorasan. Historical texts indicate that during the reigns of Shah Rukh and Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara, some of the damage caused by earlier wars was repaired, and structures such as the Shahrukhiyya Madrasa were established in the city (Samarqandi, 2004: 1/ 419-420; Muʾmin, 1978: 98). Moreover, during the Timurid period and on the eve of the Shaybanid takeover, the territorial extent of the province of Balkh encompassed a considerable number of the surrounding areas (Jahāngushā-yi Khāqān, 1985: 402; Khvāndamīr, 1991: 139; Eskandar Beg Munshi, 1998: 2/968). Accordingly, at the beginning of the tenth century AH, Balkh remained one of the major political and regional centers of Khorasan, and this historical background enhanced its significance in the political rivalry between the Shaybanids and the Safavids, as well as within the administrative and monetary structure of the Shaybanid state.

6. Balkh during the Shaybanid Period

At the beginning of the tenth century AH, with the weakening and eventual collapse of Timurid rule, Muhammad Shaybani Khan succeeded in bringing Transoxiana under his control and gradually extended his territory into Khorasan. According to Rumlu, in 906 AH he captured major cities of Transoxiana, including Samarkand and Bukhara, and, after consolidating his power,

turned his attention toward Khorasan (Rumlu, 1978: 69). In the course of this expansion, Balkh also came under Shaybanid control and became one of the important political centers of their newly established state (Jahāngushā-yi Khāqān, 1985: 330-347). The significance of Balkh during this period cannot be explained solely by its geographical position; its location at the intersection of Transoxiana, Khorasan, and the eastern regions made control of the city particularly important to rival political and military powers.

The conquest of Khorasan and the consolidation of Shaybanid power were accompanied by the manifestation of this authority in the formal institutions of government. Ghafurov's account of coinage issued in the name of Muhammad Shaybani in several major cities of Khorasan and Transoxiana, including Balkh, indicates that minting coins in territories under Shaybanid control served as one of the means of asserting political sovereignty (Ghafurov, 2003: 2/808). From this perspective, active mints in major cities were not merely centers for the production of coinage; they could also be used to represent political authority and record the presence of a ruler. The political structure of the Shaybanids, however, also played a role in the significance of Balkh's coinage. At many points, the dynasty's government rested on the division of territory among members of the ruling family and establishing princes and local governors in major centers. Within such a structure, although the authority of the supreme khan remained central, the practical administration of some regions was entrusted to princes and affiliated governors (Burton, 1988: 20). McChesney likewise regarded Balkh as one of the principal appanages of the Shaybanid dynasty and associated its administration with the Janibegid branch (McChesney, 1997: 428-429). Varahram also identifies Balkh, alongside Bukhara, as one of the most important centers of princely residence and economic hubs of the Shaybanid state (Varahram, 1992: 298). This position made Balkh one of the major administrative and monetary centers of the Shaybanid state throughout the tenth century AH and enabled the city to play a significant role in the numismatic developments of the period. Consequently, the presence of the names of different rulers on coins minted in Balkh should be examined within the context of this decentralized power structure, since the appearance of a ruler's name on a coin did not necessarily indicate his complete political independence from the Shaybanid khan. Rather, it could reflect a form of local authority, delegated governance, or a political claim arising from succession struggles.

During the first half of the tenth century AH, coinciding with the emergence of the Safavid state in Iran, Balkh became one of the important points of intersection between the interests of the two powers. The rivalry between the Safavids and the Shaybanids over Khorasan made control of the cities of the region, including Balkh, particularly significant at various points in both military and political terms. Historical sources report numerous military campaigns in Greater Khorasan, including Balkh and its surrounding areas (Jahāngushā-yi Khāqān, 1985: 402; Khvāndamīr, 1991: 139). The continuation of these conflicts had far-reaching economic and social consequences for Khorasan and its cities, including Balkh, and, according to Ghubār, led to a decline in economic prosperity and the migration of some of the region's scholarly and cultural elites (Ghubār, 1989: 1/478). Despite these conditions, some construction and restoration activities were also undertaken in Balkh. One such example was the reconstruction of the Hinduvan Fortress in 945 AH, carried

out on the orders of Qarā Sultan and later completed during the reign of Abd al-Muʾmin Khan (Al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī, 1971: 420; Muʾmin, 1978: 135). This fortification is considered one of the last major architectural works of the Shaybanid period in Balkh, and its remains survived into subsequent periods (Zowārī, 2009: 73).

Overall, an examination of the historical sources indicates that throughout the Shaybanid period, Balkh was not merely a frontier city or a subordinate center. Rather, owing to its geographical position, economic significance, and role within the administrative and political structure of the state, it was one of the major centers of Shaybanid power. Accordingly, an examination of the Balkh mint and the coins attributed to different rulers makes it possible to simultaneously examine the continued importance of the city and changes in the power structure during the Shaybanid period.

7. Characteristics of Shaybanid Coinage

Coins are among the most important forms of material evidence for studying the political and economic structures of past societies, as, in addition to their economic function, they formally record information such as the name and title of a ruler, mint location, and date (Farahbakhsh, 2006: 3). During the Shaybanid period, coins likewise constitute an important source for identifying rulers, active mints, and the geographical extent of their authority.

Following the establishment of Shaybanid rule in the early tenth century AH, major mints were active in the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Herat, and Balkh. In the early years of Shaybanid rule, Herat was one of the most important centers of coin production; however, over time, the cities of Balkh, Bukhara, and Samarkand also came to occupy important positions within the Shaybanid monetary system (Album, 2011: 300).

One of Muhammad Shaybani Khan's most important measures was the monetary reform of 913 AH/1507 CE. According to Ghafurov, these reforms included establishing a standard weight and specification for silver and copper coins and regulating the exchange relationship between them. This measure contributed to a relative stabilization of monetary transactions throughout the Shaybanid realm and played an important role in consolidating the authority of the newly established government (Ghafurov, 2003: 2/810). In subsequent periods, economic and monetary changes also affected the weight and quality of some coinage. In particular, during the reign of Ubaydullah Khan, the debasement of certain coins and economic difficulties led copper coins to temporarily replace silver coinage in some transactions, although this development did not last long (ibid.: 815).

Shaybanid coinage included gold, silver, and copper coins. Silver coins constituted the principal monetary denomination of the period. The earliest Shaybanid silver tengas weighed approximately one mithqal (about 4.78 g), although variations in their weight can be observed during the first decades of Shaybanid rule. Copper coins were used mainly for local transactions and were often struck without the ruler's name. Gold coins, by contrast, were relatively limited in number, and their known examples have been reported primarily from the mints of Herat and Mashhad (Album, 2011: 300). In terms of both form and content, Shaybanid coins largely

followed the pattern established by late Timurid coinage. The coins generally bear the ruler's name, royal titles, prayers for the continuity of his rule, the mint name, and the date. Some specimens also feature terms such as "Adl" and "Shirmard". Based on the available evidence, the term "Shirmard" was one of the honorific titles used on the coinage of this period. The use of the titles "Sultan" and "Khaqan" on Shaybanid coins also continued until the reign of Abdullah I (Burton, 1995: 320).

One of the important features of the Shaybanid political system was the multiplicity of claimants to power and succession struggles among members of the ruling dynasty. Ghafurov notes that at certain points, the Shaybanid sultans failed to reach agreement over the designation of a successor and the recognition of the khan's authority, a situation that at times led to a form of multiple rulership within their territories. In such circumstances, some princes not only asserted political authority but also had the Friday sermon delivered in their own names and struck coins bearing their own names and titles (Ghafurov, 2003: 2/818). In this regard, Burton has also shown that although political legitimacy within the Shaybanid realm was vested in the khan, local rulers and holders of appanages also struck coins at mints under their control, resulting in a considerable number of coins from this period being issued in the names of different Shaybanid sultans (Burton, 1995: 317). Accordingly, Shaybanid coinage should not be regarded solely as a means of economic exchange; rather, it can be used as archaeological evidence for examining the structure of power, the territorial extent of rulers' authority, and the political developments of the period. On this basis, the present study examines coins struck at Balkh in the names of different Shaybanid rulers and compares the resulting numismatic data with historical information in order to clarify the political position of the city during the Shaybanid period. Accordingly, in the following sections, coins attributed to each of the Shaybanid rulers associated with Balkh will be examined separately with regard to their date, weight, denomination, and quality of striking, and will be compared with the historical evidence.

7-1. Coins Struck under Muhammad Shaybani at Balkh (Reign: 905-916 AH)

Historical sources report the conquest of Balkh by Muhammad Shaybani and the incorporation of the city into the Shaybanid realm. Raqim Samarqandi also refers to Muhammad Shaybani's campaign against Balkh following the consolidation of his power in Transoxiana (Raqim Samarqandi, 2001: 83). However, examining the position of Balkh during the reign of Muhammad Shaybani cannot rely solely on historical texts; numismatic evidence can also provide independent evidence in this regard.

Album describes the coins of Muhammad Shaybani as relatively rare during the early years of his reign and states that they were struck primarily at the mints of Bukhara and Samarkand, with a limited number issued at Astarabad, bearing the title "Nasir al-Din, Shirmard". According to him, coins struck between 913 and 916 AH are more numerous and were issued at a larger number of mints. More than twenty mints are also known for the reign of Muhammad Shaybani, the most important of which was Herat; other mints mentioned include Bukhara, Khwarazm, Nishapur, Sabzevar, and Torbat (Album, 2011: 300-301). However, Balkh is not mentioned in this list.

Among the specimens collected for this study, two silver coins struck at Balkh in the name of Muhammad Shaybani have been identified. The first is a silver coin dated 916 AH, weighing 4.32 g, while the second is an overstruck coin from the same year, weighing 4.72 g. The presence of these two dated specimens from 916 AH indicates that, during the final year of Muhammad Shaybani's reign, Balkh had an active mint and coins were struck there in his name. From this perspective, the present numismatic evidence supplements the available information on the distribution of mints during the reign of Muhammad Shaybani and provides evidence for the activity of the Balkh mint in 916 AH.

The year 916 AH is also of particular historical significance, as it coincided with the Battle of Marv and the death of Muhammad Shaybani at the hands of Shah Ismail Safavid (Rumlu, 1978: 147-148). Therefore, these coins indicate that monetary activity in the city continued during the final stage of his reign despite the extensive military upheavals in Khorasan.

The difference in weight between the two specimens is also noteworthy in relation to the weight standards reported for tengas of this period. Album reports the initial weight of Shaybanid silver tengas as approximately one mithqal, equivalent to 4.78 g, and their weight during the period from 913 to 919 AH as approximately 5.15 g. According to him, this increase was also noted in contemporary sources and was regarded as one of the important measures of Muhammad Shaybani (Album, 2011: 300). The two Balkh specimens (Tab.1), weighing 4.32 and 4.72 g, respectively, fall below the reported standard of 5.15 g for this period. This difference in weight, together with the presence of an overstruck specimen, may reflect the particular political and monetary conditions of 916 AH. Although determining the precise cause of this variation requires examination of a larger number of specimens, its coincidence with the final year of Muhammad Shaybani's reign and the military developments in Khorasan is noteworthy. Overall, the coins struck at Balkh in 916 AH not only confirm the presence and authority of Muhammad Shaybani in the city, but also indicate that Balkh continued to hold an administrative and financial position until the end of his reign and that its mint remained active, highlighting the importance of Balkh as one of the centers under the control and attention of the Shaybanid government.

Tab. 1: Tab.1: An example of coins minted by Muhammad Shaybani in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Muhammad Shaybani	916 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.32	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=204118
Overstruck Muhammad Shaybani	916 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.72	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=302791

7-2. Coins Struck under Ubayd Allah at Balkh (Reign: 940-946 AH)

Historical sources indicate that Balkh was among the areas contested between the Safavids and the Shaybanids during the first half of the tenth century AH. Ubayd Allah Khan, the nephew of Muhammad Shaybani, sought to expand Shaybanid influence into Khorasan after consolidating his position in Transoxiana. Historical accounts report the presence of forces affiliated with him in Balkh and the conquest of the city at various points (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 124-125, 174; Raqim Samarqandi, 2001: 95-97, 112; Qazvīnī, 2007: 293). These accounts indicate that Balkh was subject to repeated political changes during this period and that control of the city formed part of the rivalry between the Safavid and Shaybanid powers. However, numismatic data make it possible to examine the political status of Balkh in greater detail.

Among the identified specimens (Tab. 2), one silver coin struck at Balkh in the name of Abu al-Ghazi Ubayd Allah Khan, dated 941 AH and weighing 4.63 g, has been identified. The existence of this dated coin indicates that the Balkh mint was active under Shaybanid rule in that year and that coins were struck there in the name of Ubayd Allah Khan. Accordingly, regardless of the political fluctuations reflected in the historical sources, this coin constitutes direct evidence of the presence and exercise of Shaybanid authority in Balkh in 941 AH.

Album also identifies Ubayd Allah Khan's silver tengas as among the most common coinages of his reign and refers to the quality of striking of specimens from Balkh and Bukhara (Album, 2011: 301). The inclusion of Balkh alongside Bukhara, which was regarded as one of the most important political and economic centers of the Shaybanids, indicates that the city was not merely a frontier or military region, but also held a significant position within the administrative and monetary structure of the state. Therefore, the coin struck at Balkh in 941 AH, in addition to confirming the political presence of the Shaybanids in the city, indicates the continuity of mint activity and the role of Balkh in the monetary system of Ubayd Allah Khan's government.

Tab. 2: An example of a coin minted by Ubayd Allah in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Abu al-Ghazi Ubayd Allah	941 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.63	 https://www.cngcoins.com

7-3. Coins Struck under Burhan Sayyid at Balkh (Reign: 958-964 AH)

Following the death of Abd al-Aziz Khan, competition among the different branches of the Shaybanid dynasty for succession intensified, and Bukhara and other major centers of Transoxiana became involved in political struggles among rival claimants to power. In this context, Burhan Sultan also emerged as one of the claimants to power in the political developments of this period, and according to historical accounts, his reign dates from 958 to 964 AH (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 142-155; Raqim Samarqandi, 2001: 130). Under such circumstances, numismatic evidence,

alongside historical sources, can provide information on the presence and claims to power of political contenders.

The only identified specimen (Tab. 3) from this period at Balkh is an overstruck silver coin bearing the name Burhan Khan over a coin of Abd al-Latif, struck in 956 AH and weighing 4.65 g. The significance of this specimen lies in the fact that its date of striking precedes the beginning of Burhan Sultan's official reign by two years. Therefore, the presence of Burhan's name on this coin cannot be interpreted solely within the framework of the monetary system; rather, it should be examined in connection with the political circumstances and succession rivalries of the period.

Tab. 3: An example of a coin minted by Burhan Sayyid in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Burhan Khan Overstruck on a Coin of Abd al-Latif	956 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.65	 https://www.coinarchives.com

Album identifies "Adl Burhan" as one of the rare coin types of this period (Album, 2011: 301). The rarity of these specimens makes each example particularly significant for reconstructing the political developments of the period. The choice of overstriking as a method is also noteworthy. In this method, rather than striking an entirely new coin, the name or title of a new ruler is added over a coin from an earlier period. The use of such a method may indicate the need to proclaim political authority rapidly under circumstances in which the possibility or opportunity for the large-scale production of new coins was limited. Accordingly, the overstriking of Abd al-Latif's coin with the name of Burhan Khan may be regarded as an indication of an attempt to consolidate his political position before formally attaining the position of khan. However, without additional evidence, each overstruck specimen cannot be directly regarded as an indication of an immediate transfer of power or an attempt to establish legitimacy; rather, the significance of such coins becomes clearer when numismatic data are compared with historical texts.

Musakhkhar al-Bilād states that Abd al-Aziz Khan remained in power until his death and that the succession crisis entered a new phase following his death (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 141). However, the existence of an overstruck coin dated 956 AH at Balkh indicates that Burhan's name had entered the monetary system before the formal beginning of his reign and that efforts to establish political legitimacy had probably begun before he attained the sultanate. This issue becomes more significant when it is considered that, unlike some other claimants to power, Burhan did not belong to the principal male line of Ubayd Allah Khan's descendants. Accordingly, his name on the coins of Balkh may be regarded as a means of representing authority and establishing political legitimacy before his definitive establishment as khan. This suggests that Balkh, during the political developments and succession rivalries of the second half of the tenth century AH,

was not merely a local center but also served as an important center for political legitimation and the representation of power within the Shaybanid state.

7-4. Coins Struck under Nawruz Ahmad at Balkh (Reign: 957-963 AH)

Nawruz Ahmad, known as Buraq Khan, came to power in Tashkent, and following the accession of Abd al-Latif Khan in Samarkand in 957 AH, the khutba was delivered, and coins were struck in his name. His establishment of power in Transoxiana was accompanied by rivalry among competing claimants to power. Musakhkhar al-Bilād reports Nawruz Ahmad's involvement in the political struggles of this period (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 159), while Raqim Samarqandi records his death in 963 AH (Raqim Samarqandi, 2001: 130). The Mirʾāt al-mamālik also states that following Buraq Khan's rise to power, Pir Muhammad Khan in the province of Balkh and Sayyid Burhan Khan in the province of Bukhara refused to recognize his authority, and these disagreements led to confrontation among the competing claimants to power (Kātibī, 2535: 131).

Among the numismatic data for this period (Tab. 4), five silver coin specimens in the name of Nawruz Ahmad, struck at Balkh and dated 959 AH, have been identified. Four specimens weigh 4.11, 4.57, 4.65, and 4.70 g, respectively, while the weight of one specimen is unknown. Album generally assesses the quality of striking of Nawruz Ahmad's coins as satisfactory and notes that the inscriptions are clearly visible on most specimens and that the strikes are generally well centered, although the specimens are not always complete and flawless (Album, 2011: 301). This feature is not entirely consistent in the coins examined in the present study. The difference in weight among specimens of the same date from the same mint is also noteworthy; however, given the limited number of specimens, this difference cannot, by itself, be attributed to fluctuations in the monetary conditions of the period. Nevertheless, the presence of several coin specimens with the same date and mint indicates that coins were still being struck in the name of Nawruz Ahmad at Balkh in 959 AH. Therefore, despite the variation in the weights of the examined specimens, minting activity at this mint had not ceased.

The significance of this evidence becomes apparent when it is analyzed alongside the historical texts. Chronologically, the coins dated 959 AH were struck two years after Nawruz Ahmad came to power, whereas this source reports that Pir Muhammad Khan in the province of Balkh refused to obey Buraq Khan (Kātibī, 2535: 131). Thus, on the one hand, the historical account indicates political fragmentation and rivalry in Balkh, while on the other hand, the coins struck in the same city bear the name of Nawruz Ahmad as the ruler. The coincidence of these two sets of evidence indicates that, at this point, there was a certain discrepancy between the political situation in Balkh and the name of the ruler recorded on its coins. Nevertheless, the continued striking of coins in the name of Nawruz Ahmad under such circumstances indicates that Balkh held an important position in the political struggles of the Shaybanids.

7-5. Coins Struck under Darwish Ahmad at Balkh (Reign: 981-987 AH)

Darwish Ahmad, the eldest son of Nawruz Ahmad (Buraq Khan), entered the power struggle among the Shaybanid dynasty following his father's death in Samarkand. After Baba Sultan

Tab. 4: An example of coins minted by Nawruz Ahmad in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Nawruz Ahmad	959 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	?	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=252144
Nawruz Ahmad	959 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.11	 https://www.cngcoins.com
Nawruz Ahmad	959 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.57	 https://www.coinarchives.com
Nawruz Ahmad	959 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.65	 https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=337481
Nawruz Ahmad	959 A.H.	Balkh	Silver	4.70	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=203994

claimed rule in Samarkand and sought Darwish Ahmad's assistance in confronting Abdullah Khan, Darwish Ahmad marched toward Samarkand with an army from Tashkent, Turkistan, Akhsi, and Andijan, prompting Abdullah Khan to retreat. Following this event, the descendants of Buraq Khan abandoned their claim to the sultanate of Samarkand and gathered in Tashkent. Darwish Ahmad, as the eldest brother, assumed power and entrusted each of the provinces under his authority to one of his brothers and amirs (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 160-161).

Among the numismatic data for this period (Tab. 5), one silver coin specimen in the name of Darwish Ahmad, with Balkh as its mint, has been identified. The date on which this specimen was struck is unknown, and it weighs 4.47 g. Album identifies Darwish Ahmad as one of the local rulers whose known coins were struck only at Balkh, and describes these coins as very rare (Album, 2011: 302). Therefore, despite the limited numismatic evidence, this specimen is

significant for examining the position of Balkh within the political structure under the influence of Darwish Ahmad. This numismatic evidence becomes more significant when considered alongside the account in Musakhkhar al-Bilād. According to this source, after establishing himself in Tashkent, Darwish Ahmad divided his territory among his brothers and amirs (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 160-161).

The absence of a date prevents the precise dating of the specimen and therefore makes it impossible to assign the coin to a specific period of Darwish Ahmad's rule. Nevertheless, the existence of a coin bearing his name at Balkh, under circumstances in which power was divided among different branches of the Buraq Khan lineage, indicates that Balkh was situated within the network of local authority of this branch of the Shaybanid dynasty. The significance of this specimen lies less in its precise dating than in demonstrating the presence of the name of a local ruler at the Balkh mint and the diversity of political authorities who had coins struck at this city, thereby highlighting the political position of Balkh within the Shaybanid power structure.

Tab. 5: An example of a coin minted by Darwish Ahmad in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Darwish Ahmad	?	Balkh	Silver	4.47	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=312317

7-6. Coins Struck under Pir Muhammad I at Balkh (Reign: 963-968 AH)

Pir Muhammad Khan ibn Janibeg Sultan played an active role in the political developments of Balkh and Transoxiana before formally attaining power. Musakhkhar al-Bilād reports that he seized the territories of Balkh in 953 AH and subsequently participated in Humayun's campaign in the Balkh region in 956 AH and the Battle of Darzab in Shibergan in 957 AH (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 186). In 957 AH, following the death of Abd al-Aziz Khan and amid the political developments in Bukhara, he marched on the city with his army and captured it. After residing there for one year, he transferred the rule of Bukhara to Muhammad Yar Sultan and returned to Balkh. Following the death of Buraq Khan in 963 AH, Pir Muhammad Khan, together with the other Shaybanid sultans, formally came to power, and the khutba was delivered, and coins were struck in his name and with his titles in Transoxiana, Turkistan, and Balkh (ibid.: 187). Aḥsan al-Tavārīkh also records the transfer of the rule of Turkistan to Pir Muhammad Khan during this period (Rumlu, 1978: 510).

Among the identified coins (Tab. 6), three silver specimens in the name of Pir Muhammad Khan, with Balkh as their mint, have been identified. The dates of striking for none of these specimens are known, and their weights are 4.37, 4.50, and 4.66 g, respectively. Given the limited number of specimens, the difference in weight cannot, by itself, serve as a basis for assessing the

economic conditions of the period; nevertheless, it demonstrates variation in the weights of coins struck at Balkh during this period. Moreover, since the dates of striking are unknown, it is not possible to date them precisely. However, based on the report in Musakhkhar al-Bilād concerning Pir Muhammad Khan's formal accession in 963 AH and the delivery of the khutba and striking of coins in his name at Balkh, 963 AH may be considered one of the most likely periods for the beginning of the minting of these coins.

This political position is also evident in the account of ʿĀlam-ārā-ye Shāh Ṭahmāsb in its account of subsequent developments. This source reports Pir Muhammad Khan's campaign into Khorasan, the conquest of Herat, and the striking of coins in his name following the conquest of the city; it then records his defeat by the forces of Prince Ismail Mirza and his retreat toward Turkistan (ʿĀlam-ārā-ye Shāh Ṭahmāsb, 1991: 338, 340-343). The position of Balkh alongside these centers within the network of Pir Muhammad Khan's political and military developments, together with the continued activity of its mint, highlights Balkh's position as one of the major centers of Shaybanid power during this period.

Tab. 6: An example of coins minted by Pir Muhammad I in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Pir Muhammad I	?	Balkh	Silver	4.37	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=341975
Pir Muhammad I	?	Balkh	Silver	4.50	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=157945
Pir Muhammad I	?	Balkh	Silver	4.66	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=255057

7-7. Coins Struck under Iskandar at Balkh (Reign: 968-991 AH)

Iskandar Khan ibn Janibeg Sultan resided in Samarkand following his father's death in 935 AH. In 968 AH, with the agreement of the tribal leaders and the support of his sons, nobles, and notables, he went to Bukhara and assumed power. According to Muskhir al-Bilad, following his accession, the khutba was delivered, and coins were struck in his name and with his titles throughout Transoxiana, Turkistan, Akhsi, Andijan, Balkh, and Badakhshan (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 203-204). Raqim Samarqandi likewise reports that his rule continued until 991 AH (Raqim

Samarqandi, 2001: 159). During this period, Balkh was also an important center of political and military developments in the region, and events concerning the city are reported in Musakhkhar al-Bilād (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 224-227).

In the collection examined (Tab. 7), one gold coin weighing 4.52 g and one silver coin weighing 4.69 g, both struck at Balkh in the name of Iskandar, have been identified. The dates of striking for both specimens are unknown. Album notes that some Shaybanid coins from this period were also overstruck in Mughal territories, with the name of Akbar and, in some cases, only the names of cities such as Kabul or Qandahar appearing on them. He also emphasizes the decline in supervision and quality control at the mints during the reign of Iskandar (Album, 2011: 301).

Given that both specimens are undated, their precise minting dates cannot be determined. Moreover, the relatively good quality of the gold specimen examined indicates that the general description concerning a decline in quality should not be extended to the entire production of the Balkh mint without examining all available specimens. Nevertheless, the presence of a gold coin alongside a silver coin indicates the diversity of coin types used at this mint. Since gold coins were rarer than silver coins during this period and their striking may have been associated with important political occasions, including accession or military victories, its precise minting date cannot be determined. Nevertheless, placing it in the early period of Iskandar's reign, particularly around 968 AH, is one possible hypothesis for its dating.

Regarding the silver coin, based on the historical account of Iskandar's rule and the subsequent reference to the reign of Abdullah Khan in his father Iskandar's name, it may be suggested that this specimen was struck during the period between Iskandar's reign and the rule of Abdullah II in his father's name. From this perspective, the existence of both gold and silver coin types struck at Balkh, together with the historical account of the expansion of coin striking in Iskandar's name at Balkh, indicates the continuity of activity at this mint and its importance within the monetary and political structure of the Shaybanids during this period.

Tab. 7: An example of coins minted by Iskandar in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Iskandar Bahadur Khan	?	Balkh	Gold	4.52	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=200110
Iskandar Bahadur Khan	?	Balkh	Silver	4.69	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=286575

7-8. Coins Struck under Abd al-Latif Khan at Balkh (A Local Ruler Contemporary with Iskandar Khan; Reign: 947-959 AH)

Abd al-Latif Khan was one of Iskandar Khan's sons. After Iskandar Khan regained control of the provinces of Balkh and Shibergan from Din Muhammad Sultan, he entrusted Shibergan to Abd al-Latif Sultan. When Iskandar Khan himself departed for Tashkent and Turkistan, he sent Abd al-Latif to govern the province of Balkh. During this period, Shahrokh Mirza, accompanied by a number of sultans and amirs, came to the Balkh region under the pretext of visiting the shrine of Hazrat Shah-e Awliya and raided some of its dependencies. Upon learning of this event, Abd al-Latif Khan confronted the amirs and, in 987 AH, marched against them (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 219-220).

Among the identified coins (Tab. 8), three silver specimens in the name of Abd al-Latif Khan, with Balkh as their mint, have been identified. None of the specimens has a known minting date, and their weights are 1.113, 1.14, and 4.50 g, respectively. The first two specimens differ substantially in weight from the third; however, because the coins are undated and the number of specimens is limited, this difference cannot be directly attributed to a change in the monetary standard or economic conditions. Nevertheless, it demonstrates variation in the weights of coins struck at Balkh during this period.

The significance of these coins becomes apparent when the numismatic evidence is considered in conjunction with the historical accounts. Given the establishment of Abd al-Latif Khan in Balkh by order of Iskandar Khan and his military presence against forces seeking to seize the province, the striking of coins in his name at Balkh may be interpreted in connection with the political developments of the city. Since the dates of striking are unknown, it is not possible to determine the precise occasion associated with these coins. Nevertheless, under conditions of political instability, these coins may have served, on the one hand, to signal the presence and maintain the authority of Abd al-Latif Khan in Balkh and, on the other hand, if his position had become consolidated, to represent and reinforce his political standing. The possibility that his presence in Balkh may have involved an attempt to establish a more independent position in the province cannot be entirely ruled out. In any case, the concurrence of Abd al-Latif Khan's military presence in Balkh and the striking of coins in his name at the city indicates a connection between the minting of these coins and the political developments in Balkh during this period.

Tab. 8: An example of coins minted by Abd al-Latif Khan in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Abd al-Latif	?	Balkh	Silver	1.113	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=292044

Abd al-Latif	?	Balkh	Silver	1.14	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=329938
Abd al-Latif	?	Balkh	Silver	4.50	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=286777

7-9. Coins Struck under Abdullah (Abadullah) II at Balkh (Reign: 986-993 AH)

Abdullah Khan II was one of the most important rulers of the Shaybanid dynasty. In the course of expanding his territory, he brought a large part of the lands belonging to the dynasty once again under his control. He first took control of Bukhara and Samarkand and subsequently extended his authority to Tashkent and other regions. In this process, Balkh was also among the cities that came under his influence. After achieving political independence, Abdullah Khan reorganized the governmental administration and also undertook reforms in the monetary system, gradually extending his control over Balkh, Samarkand, Tashkent, Ferghana, Badakhshan, and other regions. From 988 AH, he made Balkh the residence of Abd al-Mu'min, his son, who served as his deputy, an action that indicates the position of the city within his political structure. Following Abdullah Khan's death, Abd al-Mu'min came to power, but was killed six months later. As there was no other male successor from the Shaybanid dynasty, the rule of Bukhara passed to Baqi Muhammad, the maternal grandson of Iskandar Khan (Grousset, 1986: 795-797). Historical accounts also confirm the expansion of Abdullah Khan's territory and the position of Balkh in this process. In his account of the developments following the death of Buraq Khan, Raqim Samarqandi describes Abdullah Khan's advance and the conquest of Bukhara, Miankal, Kish, and Nasaf, followed by the conquest of Balkh and its fortress. He also reports the continuation of his conquests in Samarkand, Tashkent, Badakhshan, and Khorasan (Raqim Samarqandi, 2001: 131-132). Musakhkhar al-Bilād likewise records Abdullah Khan's presence in Samarkand in 986 AH and his death in the same city in 993 AH (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 206-207).

Two coins from the reign of Abdullah Khan II have been identified (Tab. 9): one gold coin weighing 4.61 g and one silver coin weighing 4.64 g, both dated 991 AH. The identical date of striking of these two specimens and the appearance of the same ruler's name on both gold and silver coins indicate the continued activity of the Balkh mint during this period. Given the use of gold coins in formal contexts, the striking of the gold coin in 991 AH may have been associated with the proclamation or consolidation of Abdullah Khan's rule following the death of Iskandar Khan. At the same time, the striking of the silver coin in the same year may reflect the appearance of the new ruler's name in the more routine production and circulation of coinage. Moreover,

the coincidence of these coins with the year of Iskandar Khan's death, together with Raqim Samarqandi's account of Abdullah Khan's conquest of Balkh and its fortress, strengthens the possibility of a connection between the activity of the Balkh mint and the political developments resulting from the transfer of power. Therefore, the coins of this period can be regarded as material evidence of Balkh's position within the Shaybanid dynasty's political structure.

Tab. 9: An example of coins minted by Abdullah II in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Abdullah Bahadur Khan II	991	Balkh	Silver	1 Tanka 4.64	 https://en.numista.com/catalogue/pieces312026.html
Abdullah Bahadur Khan II	991	Balkh	Gold	4.61	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=197487

7-10. Coins Struck under Abd al-Amin at Balkh (Reign: 993-1008 AH)

Following the killing of Abd al-Mu'min Khan, Jahan Sultan Khanim, the daughter of Kapak Sultan and a member of the Shaybanid family, presented a young man of approximately seventeen or eighteen years of age, whom she had concealed in her camp, as the son of Abdullah Sultan. After this claim was confirmed by some members of the camp staff, a group of the amirs of Balkh and officials of Abd al-Mu'min placed him on the throne at Qubbat al-Islam in Balkh, and he took the name Abd al-Amin Khan (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 209). However, his rule was accompanied from the outset by opposition in Balkh and the surrounding areas, and revolts and political disputes continued. Under these circumstances, after Shah Abbas became aware of the situation in Transoxiana, Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, with his approval, moved toward Balkh. During these developments, some of the people of Balkh joined Muhammad Ibrahim Khan's camp, while others continued to support Abd al-Amin. Ultimately, as these divisions intensified and support for Abd al-Amin declined, he was forced to surrender in 1008 AH (ibid.: 210–213).

Among the available data (Tab. 10), two silver coins struck in the name of Abd al-Amin at Balkh have been identified. Both specimens are dated 1006 AH and weigh 4.03 and 4.47 g, respectively. The significance of these specimens lies in the fact that they were struck in 1006 AH, two years before Abd al-Amin's surrender in 1008 AH. Thus, while the historical sources report the weakening of his political position in Balkh, the city's mint was still striking coins in his name in 1006 AH. The existence of these coins therefore indicates that, despite the political opposition and declining support for Abd al-Amin, his name continued to be recorded at the Balkh mint as

that of the ruler. It also demonstrates that Balkh remained an important political and monetary center during the developments of this period.

Tab. 10: An example of coins minted by Abd al-Amin in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Abd al-Amin	1006	Balkh	Silver	4.03	 https://en.numista.com/catalogue/pieces166596.html
Abd al-Amin	1006	Balkh	Silver	4.47	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=334524

7-11. Coins Struck under Muhammad Ibrahim at Balkh (Reign: 1008-1009 AH)

Muhammad Ibrahim Sultan was a Shaybanid prince during the reign of Abdullah Khan II. Following the political developments in Khorasan and Transoxiana, he was sent toward Transoxiana with the support of Shah Abbas. At this time, the political situation in Balkh was unstable due to the dispute over Abd al-Amin's legitimacy and the opposition of a number of the province's amirs and forces to his rule. During these developments, Muhammad Ibrahim Sultan agreed to the proposal to attack Balkh, as some of the city's amirs did not support Abd al-Amin and might join him (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 175-176). In 1008 AH, Muhammad Ibrahim marched toward Balkh with his army and entered the city after the city's amirs joined him. Abd al-Amin was prevented from entering the city, and according to Mollā Jalāl-al-Dīn Monnajem Yazdī, following Muhammad Ibrahim's establishment there, the khuṭba was recited and coins were struck in his name in Balkh (Mollā Jalāl-al-Dīn Monnajem Yazdī, 1987: 177). Muhammad Ibrahim ruled in Tukharistan for more than a year before falling ill and dying while confronting the army of Baqi Muhammad Khan near Balkh (Muḥammad-Yār, 2006: 177).

Among the identified coins (Tab. 11), three silver specimens struck in the name of Muhammad Ibrahim at Balkh, all dated 1008 AH, were identified. Their weights are 4.54, 4.57, and 4.64 g, respectively. The significance of these coins lies in the precise chronological correspondence between the numismatic evidence and the historical account. Their shared date coincides with the year of Muhammad Ibrahim's arrival in Balkh, while the historical account explicitly reports that coins were struck in his name following his entry into the city in the same year. This correspondence indicates that the change in the ruler's name on the coinage of Balkh in 1008 AH accompanied the transfer of political power in the city. From this perspective, the coins of Muhammad Ibrahim not only demonstrate the continued activity of the Balkh mint during the final years of Shaybanid rule, but also provide a clear example of the temporal relationship between the transfer of political

power, the establishment of a new ruler, and the change in the ruler's name recorded on the coinage.

Tab. 11: An example of coins minted by Muhammad Ibrahim in Balkh (Author, 2026).

Reign	Year of Striking	Mint	Metal	Weight (g)	Coin Image
Muhammad Ibrahim Bahadur Khan	1008	Balkh	Silver	4.54	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=302784
Muhammad Ibrahim Bahadur Khan	1008	Balkh	Silver	4.57	 https://www.zeno.ru/showphoto.php?photo=302784
Muhammad Ibrahim Bahadur Khan	1008	Balkh	Silver	4.64	 https://www.cngcoins.com

8. Conclusion

The examination of coins struck at Balkh during the Shaybanid period, together with a comparison of their numismatic characteristics with historical accounts, demonstrates that the city's mint remained active at different points throughout the period and that the names of numerous rulers were recorded on its coinage. This study examines eleven rulers and claimants to power for whom coins bearing the mint name of Balkh have been identified. Variations in the names and titles of the rulers, minting dates, weight characteristics, and the presence of overstruck specimens, considered alongside the historical evidence, provide a basis for examining the role of Balkh within the political and monetary structure of the Shaybanid state.

A comparison of these eleven numismatic groups shows that the Balkh mint was active under rulers from multiple periods and branches of the Shaybanid dynasty. The available specimens represent rulers from different branches and generations of the dynasty and, in this respect, demonstrate the continuity of minting activity at Balkh across different phases of Shaybanid rule. This continuity assumes particular significance in light of the multi-branch structure of the Shaybanid dynasty and the intra-dynastic competition for power. In other words, despite changes in rulers and shifts in power among the dynasty's branches, Balkh remained one of the centers where rulers expressed their presence, names, and claims to authority through coinage. Accordingly, the significance of the coins of Balkh during this period lies less in their number or technical characteristics than in their potential to connect material evidence with political developments. This evidence, particularly where the

date of minting coincides with historical accounts concerning the presence of a ruler or a change in political authority, makes it possible to reconstruct certain phases of Balkh's political history with greater precision. At the same time, the limited number of specimens and the absence of dates on some of the coins require caution against generalizing the findings or directly associating individual coins with specific political events. From this perspective, the Balkh mint may be regarded as one of the arenas in which changes in the Shaybanid power structure were materially expressed and can be studied through numismatic evidence.

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Authors' Contribution

The materials were collected by the second author and written under the supervision of the first author, and all of the authors approved the content of the manuscript and agreed on all aspects of the work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Endnote

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تحلیل جایگاه سیاسی بلخ در دورهٔ شیبانیان براساس شواهد تاریخی و داده‌های سکه‌شناختی

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چکیده

در آغاز قرن ۱۰ هـ.ق. خراسان بزرگ به‌دلیل موقعیت راهبردی خود به عرصهٔ رقابت و منازعهٔ صفویان و شیبانیان بدل شد و شهر بلخ در این‌میان از مراکز مهم سیاسی منطقه به‌شمار می‌رفت. پژوهش حاضر با هدف تبیین جایگاه سیاسی بلخ در دورهٔ شیبانیان و بررسی بازتاب تحولات قدرت در فعالیت ضرابخانهٔ این شهر انجام شده است. در این راستا، سکه‌ها به‌عنوان شاهد مادی، در کنار منابع تاریخی، امکان بررسی برخی ابهامات تاریخی و بازشناسی ساختارهای قدرت سیاسی را ایفا می‌کنند. از آنجاکه ضرب سکه در متون تاریخی، نماد مشروعیت و استقرار حکومت تلقی می‌شود، تحلیل ضرب سکه در بلخ می‌تواند درک روشن‌تری از تغییرات سیاسی در این منطقه ارائه دهد. پرسش اصلی پژوهش این است که، جایگاه سیاسی شهر بلخ در دورهٔ شیبانیان در سدهٔ ۱۰ هـ.ق. چگونه قابل تبیین است و داده‌های سکه‌شناختی حاصل از ضرب سکه در این شهر چه تصویری از ساختار قدرت شیبانیان ارائه می‌دهد؟ پژوهش حاضر با رویکرد تاریخی و روش توصیفی-تحلیلی انجام شده است. داده‌های پژوهش بر پایهٔ منابع تاریخی و بررسی سکه‌های ضرب بلخ منسوب به حکام شیبانی گردآوری شده و با تطبیق نام حاکم، محل ضرب و تاریخ سکه‌ها با گزارش‌های تاریخی، ارتباط میان فعالیت ضرابخانهٔ بلخ و تحولات سیاسی این شهر بررسی شده است. نتایج نشان می‌دهد که بلخ، با وجود تغییرات مکرر در وضعیت سیاسی و جابه‌جایی صاحبان قدرت، جایگاهی پایدار و مهم در ساختار سیاسی شیبانیان داشته است. شناسایی سکه‌های ضرب بلخ از هر شش شاخهٔ قدرت خاندان شیبانی، استمرار فعالیت ضرابخانهٔ این شهر را در دوره‌های مختلف نشان می‌دهد و ضرب سکه در این شهر، نه‌تنها کارکرد اقتصادی داشت، بلکه به‌عنوان ابزاری برای نمایش اقتدار سیاسی و تثبیت مشروعیت حکام شیبانی عمل می‌کرد. از این‌رو، سکه‌های ضرب بلخ در کنار منابع تاریخی، نه‌تنها برای شناسایی حاکمان و فعالیت ضرابخانهٔ این شهر، بلکه به‌عنوان شواهدی برای بازسازی جایگاه سیاسی بلخ در ساختار قدرت شیبانیان قابل استفاده‌اند.

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