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THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE MONETARY REFORM IMPLEMENTED BY ABDULLAH KHAN II

ABSTRACT

This article examines the specific features, motivations, and historical significance of the monetary reform implemented by Abdullah Khan II in the Bukhara Khanate during the sixteenth century. Drawing on primary sources and numismatic evidence, the study analyzes the impact of Shaybanid political centralization on coinage standards, silver purity, weight measures, and mint operations. The author argues that this reform was not merely an economic adjustment, but a core pillar of state consolidation. The reform successfully standardized monetary circulation, revitalized domestic and international commerce, and strengthened state financial stability throughout Mawara'annahr.

Keywords: Abdullah Khan II, monetary reform, Bukhara Khanate, Shaybanid dynasty, coinage, numismatics, monetary circulation, economic history.

INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth century marked a transformative era in the political and socio-economic landscape of Central Asia. Under the Shaybanid dynasty, the region transitioned from decentralized appanage governance toward a consolidated political entity centered in the Bukhara Khanate [3, 4]. When Abdullah Khan II (r. 1557–1598) assumed supreme leadership as Khan-i Kalan in 991 AH / 1583 AD, he successfully unified the principalities of Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Tashkent, Khwarazm, and Khurasan. However, this study argues that military and territorial unification would have remained fragile without the comprehensive institutional mechanisms required to stabilize state revenues and streamline taxation across Mawara'annahr [3]. Consequently, it is my contention that monetary policy was not merely an administrative afterthought, but the very central pillar of Abdullah Khan II's state-building program [1].

Prior to his centralizing initiatives, the monetary economy of the Shaybanid state suffered from severe structural instability. While Muhammad Shaybani Khan had attempted initial monetary standardization in 1507–1509 AD-elevating the silver tanga to approximately 5.1–5.2 grams [4]-this early progress was eroded by subsequent appanage divisions [2]. Regional sultans minted coins according to arbitrary local weight metrics, while local copper coinages (fulus) faced repeated, predatory counterstamping to extract fiscal premiums. This heterogeneity generated exchange friction and deep merchant distrust across Silk Road arteries.

The research problem investigated in this manuscript concerns the institutional mechanics, underlying causes, and lasting historical impacts of Abdullah Khan II's

monetary reform. By integrating primary narrative chronicles with rigorous numismatic data [1], this article provides an evidence-based assessment of the reform. Ultimately, this paper posits that Abdullah Khan II's monetary standardization was the decisive factor that transformed a fractured regional economy into a robust, centralized financial system capable of supporting a unified empire.

MAIN RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The Catalyst for Reform: Economic Fragmentation as Political Vulnerability
The monetary system inherited by Abdullah Khan II was rooted in the complex, failing fiscal legacies of the early Shaybanid appanage framework [2]. Following the death of Muhammad Shaybani Khan, political authority was distributed among regional sultans governing semi-autonomous domains. In my assessment, this decentralization was disastrous for the regional economy. Numismatic evidence shows a steady degradation of the silver coinage weight under subsequent rulers—from 5.1 grams down to 4.55–4.65 grams [4].

Simultaneously, copper currency experienced severe disruption. Local mints struck localized issues that were frequently demonetized or subjected to multiple layers of regional counterstamping (adliya, dang, khub). From a critical perspective, these counterstamps were not genuine economic measures but predatory fiscal tools used by local elites to force artificial devaluations onto population centers [2]. It is evident that as Abdullah Khan II systematically eliminated appanage separatism, this fragmented monetary system became an existential impediment to his unified governance [3]. He recognized that political authority without monetary sovereignty was an illusion.

The practical implementation of the reform showcases a remarkable degree of economic sophistication. Upon declaring himself Khan-i Kalan in 991 AH / 1583 AD, Abdullah Khan II did not simply revert to his predecessors' standards; he established a sustainable, state-guaranteed monetary benchmark. He standardized the silver tanga at a highly regulated weight of approximately 4.50 grams with a remarkable purity of approximately 960 fine (96% pure silver) [4].

To ensure market liquidity, the state officially recalibrated the exchange ratio, pegging 1 standardized silver tanga to 30 copper dinars. Furthermore, the introduction of gold coinage (ashrafi) at major mints—with documented issues dated 995 AH and 1005 AH—demonstrates a strategic push to facilitate high-value, long-distance trade [1].

Numismatically, I argue that Abdullah Khan II utilized coinage as a powerful tool for ideological propaganda. His coinages exhibited highly formalized inscriptions, projecting his supreme authority throughout Central Asia. The obverse central cartouche boldly featured his name alongside standard Shaybanid royal titles, while the reverse maintained strict Sunni orthodoxy by displaying the names of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. This was a clear message of legitimate, centralized, and religiously sanctioned rule.

The monetary unification progressed in tandem with military conquests, but full systemic standardization was achieved around 1583 AD [7]. Crucially, modern

scholarship has had to correct nineteenth-century misinterpretations regarding this timeline. Earlier historians viewed “double-name” silver coins (featuring both Abdullah Khan II and his father, Iskandar Khan) as evidence of a joint co-regency.

However, aligning with the definitive findings of E. A. Davidovich, this paper maintains that these coins were minted exclusively under the authority of Abdullah II during his father's nominal reign. The explicit presence of the Arabic word bin (“son of”) and mint dates struck after Iskandar Khan's death definitively prove that Abdullah II was the sole architect of this financial system [6].

Comparative Analysis of Central Asian Monetary Reforms

To truly appreciate the scope of Abdullah Khan II’s achievement, it must be contextualized against previous reform attempts. While past rulers attempted piecemeal fixes, Abdullah II engineered a holistic system.

Reform Era	Architect	Primary Focus	Structural Approach	Historical Outcome
1428 AD	Ulugh Beg (Timurid)	Copper (fulus)	Regional standardization of base metal	Temporarily successful; ultimately fragmented by later Timurid succession crises [2].
1507–1509 AD	Muhammad Shaybani Khan	Silver standardization	Drastic weight increase (5.2g)	Quickly disrupted by military conflict and subsequent appanage decentralization [4].
1583 AD	Abdullah Khan II	Trimetallic Integration	Permanent state oversight of Gold, Silver, and Copper	Highly successful; created an enduring financial legacy lasting into the Janid period [1, 4].

Unlike his predecessors who relied on emergency counterstamping during fiscal stress, Abdullah II established a permanent institutional framework. In my view, this transition from reactive fiscal extraction to proactive economic management is the defining hallmark of his reign.

The consequences of this reform were profound. By suppressing unauthorized appanage minting, the reform effectively integrated the regional economies of Mawara'annahr and Khurasan [5]. Domestically, it stabilized commodity prices and restored merchant confidence, eliminating arbitrary inter-city exchange losses. On an international scale, the high purity and reliable weight of the Bukhara tanga made it a highly desirable currency across trade routes connecting with Safavid

Iran, Mughal India, and the Tsardom of Russia [3]. Narrative sources, such as Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari's Abdullanama, confirm that this new financial stability directly funded monumental public works, including caravanserais, bridges, madrasas, and the Abdullah Khan Bandi reservoir.

CONCLUSION

Abdullah Khan II's monetary reform was much more than a routine administrative adjustment; it was a vital structural engine for sixteenth-century Shaybanid state consolidation. This study concludes that by transforming a chaotic, appanage-dominated monetary landscape into a centralized trimetallic system, Abdullah Khan II secured the economic foundation necessary for empire-building. By standardizing the silver tanga, fixing clear exchange ratios against copper, and issuing gold ashrafi for high-value commerce, the state successfully suppressed inflationary practices and incentivized transcontinental trade. Ultimately, this reform not only projected Abdullah Khan II's sovereign legitimacy but established an enduring economic framework that would define the Bukhara Khanate for generations to come.

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СПЕЦИФИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ДЕНЕЖНОЙ РЕФОРМЫ АБДУЛЛА-ХАНА II

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье анализируются специфические особенности, причины и историческое значение денежной реформы, проведенной Абдулла-ханом II в Бухарском ханстве в XVI веке. На основе нумизматических источников и хроник освещается влияние политической централизации Шайбанидов на денежное обращение, весовые стандарты, пробу серебра и деятельность монетных дворов. Автор аргументирует, что реформа была не просто экономическим шагом, но важнейшим инструментом государственной централизации. Показано, что в результате реформы денежная система была стандартизирована, что способствовало развитию торговли и укреплению финансовой стабильности государства. Исследование представляет значительный интерес для истории Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: Абдулла-хан II, денежная реформа, Бухарское ханство, династия Шайбанидов, танга, нумизматика, денежное обращение, экономическая история.

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ABDULLAXON II TOMONIDAN O‘TKAZILGAN PUL ISLOHOTINING O‘ZIGA XOS XUSUSIYATLARI

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada XVI asrda Buxoro xonligida Abdullaxon II tomonidan amalga oshirilgan pul islohotining o'ziga xos xususiyatlari, sabablari va tarixiy ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Shayboniylar davlatidagi siyosiy markazlashuv jarayonining pul muomalasi, tangalar vazni, kumush sofligi hamda zarbxonalar faoliyatiga ta'siri manbalar asosida yoritilgan. Muallifning fikricha, islohot nafaqat iqtisodiy, balki muhim siyosiy qadam bo'lib, davlatning markazlashuvida hal qiluvchi ahamiyat kasb etgan. Islohot natijasida pul tizimi standartlashtirilib, ichki va tashqi savdo rivojlangani hamda davlat moliyaviy barqarorligi mustahkamlangani ko'rsatib berilgan. Maqola numizmatik manbalar va tarixiy yilnomalar tahliliga asoslanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Abdullaxon II, pul islohoti, Buxoro xonligi, Shayboniylar sulolasi, tanga, numizmatika, pul muomalasi, iqtisodiy tarix.