COINS MINTED AT THE SHAHRISABZ MINT 19TH-CENTURY COPPER COINS: DESCRIPTION OF FIVE NUMISMATIC SPECIMENS

Kamola Shukhratovna Qurbonaliyeva
National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek
Student of the Faculty of History
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Abstract

This article provides a numismatic description of five copper coins minted at the Shahrisabz mint and dated to 1810–1880 of the 19th century. During the study, the epigraphic inscriptions on the obverse and reverse sides of the coins, ornamental decorations, minting technique, and traces of corrosion on the metal surfaces were examined. The morphological features and inscription style of the coins indicate their affiliation with local monetary circulation during the Bukhara Emirate period. An attempt was also made to read and reconstruct certain portions of the Arabic-script inscriptions on the coins. As a result of the study, it was established that these coins represent an important numismatic source for illuminating the economic and political history of the Shahrisabz region.

Keywords: Shahrisabz, numismatics, copper coin, Bukhara Emirate, 19th century, obverse, reverse, epigraphy, mint, bronze, ornament, monetary circulation.

The numismatics of Central Asia, and in particular the 19th-century copper coins of the Shahrisabz mint, constitute an important source for historical and economic research. In the Shahrisabz Beklyk, which was part of the Bukhara Emirate, local minting traditions developed and a distinctive epigraphic and ornamental style was formed. This article describes five individual copper coin specimens and analyzes their numismatic, epigraphic, and artistic characteristics.

1. Bilad-i Kesh type (AH 1225 / AD 1810)

This coin was struck in a round shape and made of a bronze-copper alloy. Although the overall surface of the coin has undergone significant wear, the main compositional elements have been preserved. Since the coin was struck by hand, its edges are uneven and some areas appear deformed.

On the obverse, a central epigraphic composition is located, featuring elongated letter elements based on Arabic script. Small dot-like ornaments are arranged around the inscription[1]. These dots serve as a decorative frame, separating the central inscription. In the central composition, elements resembling the words "ضرب" ("zarb", meaning "strike/mint") or "شهر" ("shahr", meaning "city") can be discerned. The elongated form of the letters is reminiscent of the local epigraphic tradition between the Kufic and Nastaʿliq styles[2].

The reverse is dominated by a spiral-shaped ornament and circular composition. Curved lines radiating from the center outward give the coin a dynamic appearance[3]. In the upper part of the reverse, decorative elements consisting of three dots are placed, which ensure the

[1]Настич В.Н. Автономная монетная чеканка Шахрисабзского бекства (XVIII–XIX вв.) // Нумизматические чтения. – Москва, 2011. – С. 5.

[2] Настич В.Н. Автономная монетная чеканка Шахрисабзского бекства (XVIII–XIX вв.) // Нумизматические чтения. – Москва, 2011. – С. 7.

[3] Федоров-Давыдов Г.А. Монеты Средней Азии. – Москва: Наука, 1976. – Б. 72.

symmetry of the composition. The overall stylistic character of the coin reflects the local artistic traditions of the Shahrisabz mint.

The metal surface bears green and black oxide layers, indicating long-term storage in a damp soil environment. Although traces of corrosion have rendered some inscriptions indistinct, the overall epigraphic composition has been well preserved.



2. Kesh-i Dilkash type — cast copy (AH 1246 / AD 1830–31)

This coin is also struck in a round shape, and its inscriptions have been preserved considerably more clearly than those of the first specimen. The surface of the coin is covered with a reddish-brown patina, which is the result of natural oxidation characteristic of copper-alloy coins.

On the obverse, a large-scale epigraphic inscription composition is present. The letters are integrally connected to one another, forming a decorative appearance. Some elements of the inscription resemble the phrase "شهرسبز" ("Shahrisabz"). Due to the upper portions of the letters being rendered in an elongated and curved form, the coin has an aesthetically refined appearance[4].

Within the composition, small circular dots and flower-like ornaments are found. These ornaments serve not only a decorative function but also bring the inscription composition into visual balance. Along the outer edge of the coin runs a circular line that separates the inner inscription field from the outer portion[5].

On the reverse, the central inscription is rendered in a larger scale. The letter forms produced by means of curved and broad lines demonstrate the developed state of the local calligraphic style. In the lower portion, semicircular decorative elements are placed, resembling rays of the sun or stylized plant ornaments.

The degree of wear on the coin's surface indicates that it was in monetary circulation for a long time. The flattening of the relief in certain areas indicates active use of the coin in everyday trade. At the same time, the preservation of the central inscription elements attests to the relatively good quality of the striking depth. This coin is considered one of the important specimens reflecting the artistic-numismatic style of the Shahrisabz mint in the mid-19th century.blanadi.

[4] Настич В.Н. Новые сведения о монетной чеканке Кеша и Шахрисабза // Эпиграфика Востока. – Москва, 2013. – С. 191.

[5] Федоров-Давыдов Г.А. Монеты Средней Азии. – Москва: Наука, 1976. – Б. 88.



3. Kesh-i Dilkash type — struck copies (AH 1246–1250 / AD 1830–35)

The third coin was struck in an irregularly round shape, and its overall composition shows stylistic affinity with the previous specimens. Although the coin's surface has undergone significant mechanical wear and corrosion, the main epigraphic elements have been preserved. The deep green and brown patina on the metal surface attests to its prolonged exposure to a natural environment.

On the obverse, the central inscription composition is placed within a circular frame. In the upper portion there are small star-shaped and dot ornaments that give the coin a decorative appearance[6]. The upper elements of the central inscription are rendered in elongated vertical form, while curved and winding lines dominate the lower portion. Among these inscription elements, forms that may represent "امیر" ("Amir") or an abbreviated ruler's title can be discerned[7].

On the reverse of the coin, the central inscription is rendered more simply, with star-shaped ornaments arranged along the outer circle. These star-shaped symbols resemble decorative elements used in Central Asian numismatic traditions as symbols of protection or power. The large curved line in the central part of the reverse imparts movement and dynamism to the composition.

The unevenness of the relief on the coin's edges is related to the hand-striking technique. In some areas, cracks in the metal and partially crushed portions can be observed, indicating that the die was not pressed evenly at the time of striking. This coin is a vivid example of the local minting methods used at the Shahrisabz mint, and the harmonious combination of epigraphic and ornamental elements demonstrates the advanced level of regional numismatic art in the 19th century.

[6] Nastich V.N., Schuster W. Catalog of Pre-modern Central Asian Coins 1680–1923. – Moscow; Vienna, 2016. – P. 203.

[7] Nastich V.N., Schuster W. Catalog of Pre-modern Central Asian Coins 1680–1923. – Moscow; Vienna, 2016. – P. 214.



4. Shahrisabz type (AH 1254 / AD 1838–39)

The fourth coin differs markedly from the previous specimens in its shape. It was struck in a square form, belonging to a type that is rarely encountered among the copper coins of Shahrisabz and the Bukhara Emirate[8]. The four corners of the coin are slightly rounded, and its edges have worn down as a result of prolonged circulation.

On the obverse there is a central framed inscription composition. Although the inscription has been rendered in deep relief, some letter elements have become indistinct due to severe corrosion. In the central portion, a harmonious combination of vertical and semicircular forms can be observed. These elements resemble portions of "ضرب" ("zarb", meaning "strike/mint") or "شهرسبز" ("Shahrisabz")[9].

In the upper part of the coin, a horizontal linear ornament has been preserved, serving as a symbolic dividing element. In the lower part of the obverse there is an arc-shaped relief, which may have been used to emphasize the central portion of the composition.

On the reverse, the central inscription has been preserved in a considerably simpler and more eroded state. The letter forms have merged together, making it difficult to read them fully. However, the overall composition is reminiscent of the epigraphic style characteristic of Bukhara Emirate coins[10]. The surface of the coin bears thick oxide layers, and natural degradation of the metal can be observed in certain areas.

Square-shaped coins were typically struck at local mints as small-denomination monetary units. This specimen was also likely used in everyday trade. Despite the rough workmanship of the coin, its epigraphic composition has maintained aesthetic balance.

[8] Настич В.Н. Автономная монетная чеканка Шахрисабзского бекства (XVIII–XIX вв.) // Нумизматические чтения. – Москва, 2011. – С. 17.

[9] Настич В.Н. Автономная монетная чеканка Шахрисабзского бекства (XVIII–XIX вв.) // Нумизматические чтения. – Москва, 2011. – С. 21.

[10] Rtveladze E.V. Numismatics of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Fan, 2005. – P. 173.



5. Balda-yi Kesh-i Dilkash type — large denomination (AH 1268 / AD 1851–52)

The fifth coin was struck in a round shape and is considered one of the relatively well-preserved specimens among those examined in this article. The surface of the coin bears a reddish-brown patina and black corrosion layers[11]. At the same time, the inscription reliefs are considerably clearer than on the other coins.

On the obverse, the central epigraphic inscription is rendered with large and thick lines. The letters are integrally interconnected, forming a decorative composition. In certain portions of the inscription, forms resembling "شهرسبز" ("Shahrisabz") can be discerned. The upper portion of the letters is curved and elongated, demonstrating the influence of local calligraphic art[12].

Around the inscription there is a circular frame, with small dots and ornaments placed on its outer side. In the lower portion, semicircular decorative elements are positioned, balancing the overall composition. These elements are reminiscent of stylized flowers or rays of the sun.

On the reverse, the central inscription is rendered even larger and more simply. The curved-line relief composition imparts aesthetic depth to the coin. Along the outer ring of the coin, decorative lines are present, separating the main inscription field.

The good preservation of the relief on the metal surface indicates that the striking quality of this coin was relatively high. Consequently, it has become possible to partially read certain inscription elements. The overall style of the coin reflects the developed artistic-numismatic traditions of the 19th-century Shahrisabz mint[13]. This specimen, with its epigraphic ornamentation, deep relief, and compositional harmony, is considered to hold special scholarly significance among the copper coins minted in the Shahrisabz region.

[11] Nastich V.N., Schuster W. Catalog of Pre-modern Central Asian Coins 1680–1923. – Moscow; Vienna, 2016. – P. 214.

[12] Настич В.Н. Эпиграфика среднеазиатских монет // Polymnia Numismatica. – Trieste, 2015. – P. 219.

[13] Kochnev B.D. Coins and Monetary Circulation of Central Asia. – Tashkent, 1997. – P. 141.



Type Name	Hijri Date	Gregorian Date	Ruler
Bilad-i Kesh	AH 1225	1810	Daniyal mir-akhor otalik
Kesh-i Dilkash (cast)	AH 1246	1830–31	Daniyal mir-akhor otalik
Kesh-i Dilkash (struck)	AH 1246–1250	1830–35	Daniyal mir-akhor otalik
Shahrisabz (type 1)	AH 1254	1838–39	Bobo Biy dodkhah
Balda-yi Kesh-i Dilkash	AH 1268	1851–52	Iskandar

The five copper coin specimens examined hold significant importance for illuminating the 19th-century numismatic heritage of the Shahrisabz mint. Although the coins differ from one another in their shape, epigraphic content, and ornamental decoration, all of them reflect the common minting traditions that were formeded in Central Asia during the period of the Bukhara Emirate.

The presence of round, irregularly round, and square-shaped coins indicates that various dies were used at the mint. Epigraphic analysis shows that the inscriptions on the coins consist primarily of words such as "zarb" (strike/mint), "Shahrisabz", and "Amir", or their abbreviated forms.

The ornamental decorations on the coins — star-shaped forms, dotted frames, spiral and circular elements — embody the characteristic features of 19th-century Central Asian applied art. This research, while providing new data for the study of the historical numismatics of the Shahrisabz region, also creates a foundation for further, more in-depth scholarly investigations.

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6. Rtveladze E.V. Numismatics of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Fan, 2005. – P. 173.
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11. Parmanov Sh.E. (2019). The urban culture of Kesh oasis in Temurids period. ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science, 06 (74), 240-243. Soi: http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-06-74-28 **doi:**https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2019.06.74.28