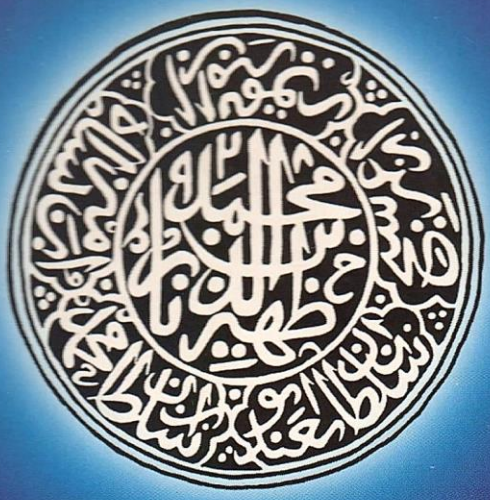
ظهیر الدین محمد بابر

Zahir-uddin Muhammad Babur

A numismatic study



امان الرحمان

Aman ur Rahman

A Corpus of BABUR'S Coins

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The proceeds from this work will go to the

Himalayan Wildlife Foundation

The Himalayan Wildlife Foundation [HWF] was instituted in 1993 in Islamabad, Pakistan, with the aim of protecting the country's natural and cultural resources.

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- Private Pakistani individuals

To

Babur Ahsin Mir

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Front & Back Cover - Babur's Official seal dated 928 A.H. from a Farman in the Authors Collection

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Introduction

This is a monograph on Babur, né Zahir-uddin Muhammad[1], the founder of the 'Mughul' Empire in India. It is an attempt to create a corpus based upon his coinage; to deduce historical evidence unobtainable from written works and clear misconceptions reported in existing records. The work is based on my personal collection of coins and connected materials gathered over the past several decades.

Much of the known historical facts have been culled from translations[2] of Babur's autobiography as supplemented by translations of works written during his lifetime or soon thereafter[3]. However, as most readers familiar with these works will know, several pages of Babur's autobiography, the Babur-nama, are missing. Events during these years have been filled in by scholars through exhaustive research into manuscripts of the period, notably those from India, Iran, Turkey, and the Central Asian States. Many questions remain unanswered due not only to the dearth of records or biased reporting, but also to the rarity of Babur's coinage. In the numismatic field, one important aspect is the difficulty to assign mint towns or dates to the majority of Babur's issues. Only part of the story is that they were poorly struck, with a portion of the legend off-flan or heavily worn. There is also the enigma of why Babur preferred to have his coins struck without dates ['dateless'] and or the name of the mints ['mintless'] in an age and culture where stamping the mint town and year was a useful propaganda tool.

For the uninitiated reader let us explain that an important aspect of muslim ruler ship was the right to *Sikka and Khutba*[4] In an age devoid of mass communication media, coinage was a powerful propaganda tool. By striking their name, title, place of minting, year of mintage and sometimes even the regnal year, the king announced to his subjects information about himself, his religious beliefs, the extent of his empire and the duration of his reign. The abuse of this exclusive right and its exercise were important enough to attract the death penalty. This data alone is of great value to the historian in supplementing knowledge of a given rulers scanty written records. The present work attempts to answer these questions.

In undertaking this work. I have supplemented the specimens in my collection by a study and record of Babur's coins in the principal museums of the world[5] and in important private Collections[6]. Most coins reproduced were personally examined and photographed, except for those that were culled from published literature or received as a photograph or scan; the latter were computer enhanced for clarity.

---

1. Babur's name at birth was Muhammad. This was his Alam, or proper name. Among Muslims, there are no family names as in the Western Societies and the Alam corresponds nearly with the Christian name, as is given soon after birth or at circumcision. Zahir-uddin [Defender of the faith] was his Laqab, or title of honor. See Codrington p. 56, and Hodiwala p. 290. In passing, it is interesting to note that all, save one, of the Mughul kings had the same name - Muhammad.
2. See Bibliography
3. See Bibliography
4. 'Sikka' was the right to have coins minted in one's name; 'Khutba' was the right of having one's name mentioned as the ruler in the Friday prayers.
5. Museum collections examined: British Museum; Ashmolean Museum; Fitzwilliam Museum; Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; Lahore Museum, Pakistan; National Museum, Karachi Pakistan and ANS. Others through published catalogues: Lucknow Museum & Supplement; Calcutta Museum and Supplement; Patna Museum; Smithsonian Institute; auction catalogues & price lists from different auction houses/dealers over several years; numismatic journals.
6. Several private collectors in Pakistan plus photos/scans supplied by collector and dealer friends around the world.

Since the basis for this work is numismatic, I have started with a brief summary of events in Babur's life that have a numismatic bearing, on a Hijri year-by-year basis. This is followed by a commentary covering topics such as evolution of legends, mint town history, die study, and economy etc. This is followed by the Catalogue proper, which groups his known coinage into 'Central Asian', and 'Indian' issues, listed alphabetically, including sections on countermarks, counterfeits etc. Following the catalogue are three appendices and a bibliography of works consulted.

Within the catalogue section, the obverse legend is reproduced with a transliteration and a translation. The reverse legends have not been reproduced, as they are standard for muslim coinage during this period. Historical accounts, legends, die-study and epigraphy of the legends have been used to find answers to his dateless and mintless coins etc. Babur's counter-stamped coins have been reproduced separately within the catalogue and a brief discussion is presented on dating them. The die-study covers both the obverse and reverse dies employed and these have been used to establish die-linkage as a clue to establishing the possible place of minting. Appendix II gives the provenance, die-numbering and rarity rating. As most collectors will know from their personal experience, all of Babur's coins are scarce. My rarity list is subjective, based on my personal collection or seen specimens. Amongst all types of Babur's coins, those with the mint and/or date legible are rare, and with both, are exceptionally rare. I have also attempted to re-attribute some of Babur's coins in published works and remedy some misinterpretations caused by insufficient written or numismatic data.

I have not attempted current international transliteration standards for oriental names. This is partly due to lack of knowledge but mainly because I believe that most of my readers will settle for straightforward pronounceable words, even though they may seem phonetically inaccurate. I have thus used the spellings of names and places as understood and pronounced by the contemporary speakers of Urdu, Persian, Turkic and Arabic. For reasons of space saving, I have not transliterated the reverse; this being commonly knowledge and almost similar for the majority of medieval muslim coinage.

My approach on classifying various specimens has been to assign distinctive numbering to each specimen through a numbering system indicated as a 'XX-YY' number where the XX is the type or variety number, and YY a number assigned to the specific specimen within the XX variety. As an example, in 01-02, the '01' denotes the type or variety [in this case all AH 915 issue from Badakhshan] and the '02' is an allocated number to the illustrated specimen. The type numbers run consecutively through the corpus, which itself is based on grouping Central Asian and Indian Mints listed in the English alphabetical order. In rare exceptions, gaps are left in the type numbers to accommodate new series that may be found in future. In the die study section, I have allocated a serial numbering system for the dies with a prefix of OD, for the obverse die and RD, for the reverse. For the Countermarks I have used the prefix Cmk.

All obverse legends have been summerised at the end of the sub-chapter on evolution of legends and each individually numbered. Subsequently, in the descriptive pages, facing the plates in the catalogue section, such numbers are given along with the weights, maximum diameters, against each specimen.

I faced difficulty in establishing what represents a 'type'. I noted that the criteria adopted by numismatic scholars such as Mitchiner in his three volumes on oriental coins, Gobl in his Kushana Atlas, Krause Mischler in their South Asian Catalogue, Stan Goron in his work on Indian sultanate coinage, Walker in his work on Arab-Sassanian Coinage and Osmund Bopearachchi in his Catalogue of the Bactro and Indo-Greeks, differed significantly. While in some works, die differences have been a yardstick for defining a variety, in others a very distinct legend layout or epigraphic variation has been used. In fact, in some cases a mix was also noted.

The criterion adopted for this work was to consider distinctly differing legend layouts or year of mintage as the principle yardstick. Unfortunately, the great abundance of layouts with minor differences in the mint less and mint less/date less varieties caused a problem. In order to restrict the total number of 'Types', minor legend variations were ignored in grouping such types.

Data on dimensions and sometimes-even weights for a few specimens is lacking. This was partly due to lack of information from the source providing the specimen as a scan or a photograph and partly due to the author's negligence in taking down the data from the large number of specimens examined. It is hoped that the authors personal collection, which represents more than 50% of the total specimens studied and reproduced, will partially compensate for this lapse.

Babur's memoirs can be frustrating for the uninitiated – too many unfamiliar names of people and places, some relevant, some irrelevant, are introduced in quick succession throughout the work. In order to make this monograph more comprehensible, I have reproduced his 'family-tree', highlighting the principal players in his life in Appendix I.

Finally, I must confess that, not having any knowledge in Turkic, Persian, and Arabic, I have not accessed original texts in the language they were written, only their English translations. Several historians, notably Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Hussein Qureshi,[7] point out the errors of omissions and commissions in these translations, which in many cases render them unreliable. For errors thus introduced in this work, I request the indulgence of the readers.

7. Ishtiaq. p. 20, 21, and Appendix A

Summary of Events of Numismatic Bearing

It may be helpful to summarize the lacunae in Babur's autobiography, which have resulted in difficulties in establishing what exactly transpired during those periods. Historians have partly bridged that gap from third party sources, but several differences between the sources beg their correctness. The missing periods are:

1. AH 908 to AH 909	16 months
2. Ramzan (?) AH 914 to Zul Hajj AH 924	10 years 4 months
3. Safar AH 926 to Safar AH 932	5 years and 10 months
4. Jummadi II AH 934 to Muharram AH 935	8 months
5. AH 935 – 11 short gaps, totaling	2 months 14 days
6. Muharram AH 936 to Jummadi I AH 737	16 months

AH 888 to AH 898 [14th. February AD 1483 – 11th. October AD 1493]

Babur was born on Friday the 6th of Muharram[8]. AH 888 [14th February AD 1483] in Andijan, the capital of the small kingdom of Farghana in what is now Uzbekistan. He was the second child and eldest son of Umar Shaikh Mirza's eight children. His father was the fifth linear descendent of Amir Timur Beg – the founder of the Timurid Empire in the Middle Ages. The Timurids were Turks of the Barlas tribe; however, after Amir Timur's conquest of the Chaghatai Mongols, with the passage of time, the Timurids came to be known as Chaghatai Turks[9].

Through his mother, Qutluq Nigar Khanim, he was also the 15th. linear descendent of Chingiz Khan. She was a true Chaghatai.

As was customary during the period, his name, Zahir-uddin Muhammad[10] was chosen by a spiritual guide, Khwaja Nasir-uddin Ubaid-ullah Ahrari, the most revered name in Transoxiana during that period. His cousin Mirza Haidar Dughlat however says that he was named by Maulana Munir Marghinain, one of the Ulemas of Aulugh Beg Mirza. Mirza Haidar[11] also informs us *" at that time the Chaghatai were very rude and uncultured and not refined as they are now; thus they found Zahir-uddin Muhammad difficult to pronounce and for this reason gave him the name of Babur"*[12].

---

8. Muharram, the first month of the Muslim calendar, which is lunar.
9. Mirza Haidar Dughlat tells us: *"..from the time of Amir Timur till that of Sultan Abu-Saeed Mirza, some one of the race of Chaghatai Khan, son of Chingiz Khan, had always been placed on the royal throne, and was honored with the title of King, in spite of the fact that he was (in reality) a prisoner, as one may gather from the royal mandate. When it came to the term of Sultan Abu-Saeed Mirza to reign, this king discarded the old custom." [TR page 172]*
10. Zahir-uddin 'The Protector or Defender of the Faith'. A Laqab.
11. TR p. 173
12. Tiger. See footnote 1, page 19, Rushbrook Williams, where he points out that 'Babur' is a Turkish word for Tiger, as opposed to the Arabic 'Babar', a lion, quoting Redhouse's *Turkish Lexicon* and Steingass's *Persian- English Dictionary.*

Another specimen from the trade sold as a half Shahrukhi of Babur, with the use of 'al-Kabul' as the mint name is in fact a half Shahrukhi of Humayun issued at his first re-conquest of Kabul.



As per dealer listing



Obverse re-constructed

Note (a) That there is insufficient space in the cartouche to accommodate the full name 'Zahir-uddin Muhammad Babur', (b) no coins of Babur are known with the mint written as 'al-Kabul'. The author has two coins of Humayun with the 'Al-Kabul' mint style and (c) there is a strong typographical similarity [almost an identical die] between the reverse of this coin and one of the two Humayun ones with the author.

2. M. Longworth Dames in his article in the Numismatic Chronicle iv series, Vol 2, 1902 published a countermarked coin under Babur [his No. 2], where he read the counter mark as *Zarb Hind*. The coin, now in the Ashmolean Museum, was examined by the author. Unfortunately the countermark, reproduced below, is Zarb Kabul and is thus not of Baburs.



As Photographed



Re-constructed

It may also be noted that 'Zarb Kabul' is a known countermark[134].

AH '935' Silver issues.

In India, the consolidation of the Empire during the brief 5 year period that Babur reigned, took up the greater part of his attention, as he tells us in his autobiography. Coinage from 5 Indian mints are known for the year AH 936 and only Lahore and Agra for AH 937. There are several emissions - from Agra, Jaunpur and Urdu - where a 'fish-hook' type of figure appears after a ٩٣. This has been read as a ٥ by some. I believe this figure should be read as a ٦٠ for the following reasons:

- Throughout Babur's accounts of his activities in India after the defeat of Ibrahim Lodhi, he informs us of the liberal grants of land and money he made to his chiefs and companions and the substantial funds he sent to his Central Asian friends. Thus, he says that sometime in Safar AH 935 he was advised that the treasures of the Lodhis at Agra and Delhi were at an end. He is stated to have ordered all stipendiaries to pay 30% of their grants into the Central treasuries[135]. There could thus have been little possibility of issuing coins in the Indian Territories in AH 935 due to this severe financial crises.
- The ٩٣? date appears on coinage of Jaunpur, Agra and Urdu and not on those of Lahore and Luknur. Note that Lahore was the second most important city, far more consistently a part of the Imperial Domain, than Jaunpur, and lack of Lahore issues dated 935 leaves doubts that the fish-hook emissions were for 935.

134. See Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tubingen, Ghazna/Kabul, Table 28 Number 847.
135. Annette Beveridge BN p. 617

- The Urdu mintage of ۹۳؟ could not have been minted at AH 935, during which period Babur was at Agra most of the time and there were no prolonged military expeditions necessitating a travelling camp mint issue. However during most of AH 936 he was away from Agra, thus the strong possibility of using a camp mintage.
- There are no AH 935 copper emissions known. [See below for mis-attributed '935' copper].



---------- Agra ----------



---------- Jaunpur ----------



---------- Urdu ----------

Copper.

My findings point to Babur having minted copper coins only from Agra. These were probably a replacement to the Sikandaris then in circulation. In total four types were minted; three during AH 936 and an additional one in AH 937. While there is no doubt about the AH 936 issues as they are clearly dated, those dated AH 937 pose a problem as that year over-lapses the reign of Humayun as well. For reasons explained below, I believe that all specimens carrying the epithet 'Dar-ul-Khalafata' were minted under Humayun.

936 A.H.



1. Zarb Agra ضرب اگره



2. Ba Dar-al Zarb Qila Agra بدار الضرب قلعه اگره



3. Dar-al Zarb Qila Agra دار الضرب قلع اگره

937 A.H.



1. Zarb Agra ضرب اگره



2. Ba Dar-al Zarb Qila Agra بدار الضرب قلعه اگره



3. Dar-ul Khalafata Zarb Agra دار الخلافة ضرب اگره

938 A.H. onwards



Dar-ul Khalafata Zarb Agra دار الخلافة ضرب اگره

It is to be noted that the *Dar-ul-Khalafata* epithet appears in AH 937 and continues for several years as the only epithet used for Agra. Also it signifies that Agra was the Capital. We know that Humayun ascended the throne at Agra[136]. Recall that the *Khutba* was first read for Babur in Delhi[137] which was also listed as his Capital in his revenue list. [138] It follows that the epithet Dar ul Khalafata was introduced by Humayun, while Babur called the city Agra or the fort of Agra.

On the basis of the above, the following specimens need to be re-attributed:

- H. Nelson Wright. Number 9 should be placed under Humayun and 45 under Babur. I have not seen his No. 12, but based on all specimens seen elsewhere, seems to be misattributed. No ' fulus' written coin is known for Babur, neither any where is the date rendered in words as purported to be on this specimen.

- R.B.Whitehead. The date on the much worn out specimen, number 34, has been mis-read as AH 936 [part of the top of the second ۹ ? looks 'open' due to the wear on the coin thus making it look like a ?.] This is an AH 939 specimen. Note also the epithet *'Dar ul Khalafata'*

136. Erskine p. 2
137. BN p. 476
138. BN p. 621

- C.J.Brown. His No. 9 has been read as an AH 935 issue. The date has been misread as ۹۳۵ for [the vertical stroke of the ۹ being illegible due to wear, thus making it looks like a ۵] Furthermore the epithet *'Dar-ul Khalafata'* goes against it being a 935 issue. The author has a die identical specimen of a Humayun's Copper coin where the short vertical stroke of the otherwise distinct 9 is legible.

- Ram Jamna Prasad in his article on Coins of Babur and Humayun in Patna Museum, published in Indian Numismatic Chronicle Vol V, part II, 1966 notes that Babur's coins known from various museums are either in the proximity of 9.26g or 8.42g, from which he concludes that Babur's copper coinage was in two denominations, unrelated to each other. Prasad is also confused in his last paragraphs where on the one hand he attributes a AH 935 [mis-reading a 5 for the 9 as CJ Brown] issue with *Dar-ul-Khalifata to* Babur and then goes on to say that the coins with the epithet *Dar ul Khalifata* were Humayun issues. He further argues that the copper *Dar ul Khalifata* issue of 935 should in effect be read as 945! In his catalogue, Serial No. 4 and 5 he misattributes the *Dar-ul-Khalifata* coins to 935 and hence to Babur. [My photocopy of the article was not of help in reading the legend on the two specimens].

Gold.

Two, mintless, fractional Ashrafis of Babur have been reported. The first at an auction in 1983 [0.58g] and another specimen in the collection of a museum, [0.75g.] The legend in both the specimens is partially off flan, as with most fractional Ashrafis. This has been complicated by the fact that the 'cut' of some words towards the right of the legend leads to reading the cut word as Babur. Both specimens are in fact those of Humayun as is established by specimens available in a private collection in Pakistan, another at the National Museum of Pakistan at Karachi and a third in the trade. These specimens are reproduced below:



Museum Specimen



Auction Specimen



Karachi Museum



Private Collection



Trade



ظهیر الدین محمد با بر ابنِ عمر شیخ ابنِ سلطان ابو سعید
ابنِ سلطان محمد ابنِ میران شاہ ابنِ امیر تیمور

Zahir-uddin Muhammad Babur Ibn Umer Sheikh
Ibn Sultan Abu Saeed Ibn Sultan Muhammad
Ibn Miran Shah Ibn Amir Taimur



Aman ur Rahman is a Chemical Engineer with a specialization in Oil. He has worked with several International Oil Companies across three continents and is now retired and spends his time between Dubai, where his children live and work, and Pakistan, where his extended family live.

He has been an avid coin collector since his early teens and has built up a large collection of around 30,000 coins. His collection interests are focused on the coins that circulated in North Western India, more specifically, Pakistan, covering from the earliest punch mark coins to modern day Pakistani ones.

Aman has written several articles both in professional Numismatic Journals and newspapers. He co-authored the book on the pre-Christian Coinage of the region, titled **PRE KUSHANA COINS IN PAKISTAN**, which was based on his personal collection. The authors were awarded the **ALLIER DE HAUTEROCHE** prize by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Institut de France, for this work.

His interests spill over into archeology and antiquities of which his collection of ancient gem and clay seals from the region is the largest in any private collection. In due course he plans to have these published with the help of Indologists and Art Historian friends. He has commenced working on publication of the balance of his collection in two volumes, one each for the two millenniums of the Christian Era.

Aman is a member of the RNS, ANS, ONS, INS and PNS. He is a Director on the Board of the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation, is an active supporter of the Peshewar University Museum of Archeology and NGOs supporting Rural Education Programs in Pakistan.

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