



## TURKO-SOGDIAN COINAGE

**TURKO-SOGDIAN COINAGE**, issues of the khaqans (*kāqāns*) of the Western Turkic khanate in Central Asia between the 6th and 8th centuries CE, so called because the Turkic rulers issued them with Sogdian inscriptions (Smirnova, 1952). The existence of the coinage points to the khaqans' consolidation of political and economic power and control over local rulers.

During the last decades of the 20th century, excavations in the regions of medieval Čāč, Čaḡaniān, and Otrār in modern Uzbekistan and Semirechye (south of Lake Balkhash) in modern Kyrgyzstan significantly increased the number of known Turko-Sogdian coins. Among these finds, there are new types with inscriptions, not only in Sogdian, but also in Bactrian, the language of Farghana (see [FARGĀNĀ](#)), and Arabic. The relatively small number of these coins found in Sogd, Čāč, and Farghana reflects the impact of the Arab conquest of Transoxiana (*Māwarā'an-nahr*) and the subsequent introduction of new Islamic coins.

The coinage is not yet well studied, but it has been proposed to call them Old Turkic coins, because all seem to be related to Turkic rule despite the various languages of their legends and countermarks (Baratova, 1999).

Local monetary traditions determined the manufacture of these coins. In southern Central Asia (i.e., lower Transoxiana), Turkic rulers adopted the Sogdian and Bactrian practice of countermarking Sasanian silver coins (see [DIRHAM i. IN PRE-ISLAMIC PERSIA](#)). In mid-Central Asia (evidenced at sites in the valleys of the Kafirnagan and Vakhsh rivers in Tajikistan), coin design was



influenced by Chinese designs as well as local patterns. Turko-Sogdian coinages can be roughly divided into three large classes with several groups and types.

A. Various silver and copper coinages that circulated in Tokāristān (Transoxania): (1) Imitations of coins ascribed to Ƙosrow II (591-628) with the inscription “Vraḵa-tigin” (Göbl, emission 208). This name has been identified with Baraḵ-tigin or Baḵra-tigin, the founder of the Kabolšāhi dynasty (Humbach, pp. 59-62). (2) Coins issued by Turkic rulers in Arachosia, imitations of drachms of Ƙosrow II. These are new types not included in Göbl’s classification (Nikitin). (3) Issues with Sogdian countermarks, consisting of the Turkic titles *kān* (*kāqān*) and *tkyn* (*tigin*), on coins of Pērōz (459-84) and their imitations. (4) Coins ascribed to Sasanian rulers countermarked with *tamgas* (dynastic symbols) of the Turgesh (West Turkic) khaqan. (5) Coins with Bactrian legends containing the Turkic titles *kāqān*, *tigin*, *tudun*, and *tarkān*. These were issued between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century by the rulers of Zābolistan. It remains an open question whether they can be considered Turko-Sogdian (Göbl, II, p. 257; Davary, pp. 281-83; Klyashtorniĭ, p. 159).

B. Bronze coins which follow the principal design of the Chinese cash (i.e., with a square hole in the center) and have Sogdian inscriptions. (1) Turgesh coins from Semirechye, dated toward the end of the 7th century. (2) Coins of the “Turgesh circle” with Sogdian script on both sides, known as “Tukhus coins.” A Turgesh tamga and runic sign occur on the obverse, and the names of the local Sogdian ruler are on the reverse in Sogdian script. Seven types of such Turgesh coins were issued in Semirechye after 730. (3) Coins with Turkic names and titles, issued in the cities of Soghd, Čāč, Farghana, and Semirechye from the end of the 7th to the mid-8th century. (4) Coins of anonymous khaqans from Soghd, Čāč, and Farḡana around the middle of the 8th century. A possible answer to the important question of who were these anonymous *kāqāns* is suggested by the distribution of the coin finds, the Turkic traditions of political rule, and Central Asian history. The title of khaqan was used as an equivalent of the Sogdian title *xw’β* (*xwabu* “lord, ruler”), which often appeared on Central Asian coins of the 6th-8th centuries. Therefore it seems probable that these coins were issued by Turkic sovereigns who ruled for a short time over parts of Soghd and Čāč. (5) “Proto-Qaraqanid” (see [ILAK-KHANIDS](#)) coins from Semirechye in the 9th-10th centuries with Arabic inscriptions in Kufic script.



C. Copper coins with Turkic images and tamgas and Sogdian inscriptions, which do not always convey Turkic names and titles. At present, the Turkic titles *tudun* and *khatun* have been identified, but most of the titles are of eastern Iranian origin. Their use is not surprising, since the Turks of the Western and Eastern Turkic khanates accepted the Sogdian language, and especially employed the script, for official purposes.

See also [ILĀQ](#).

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