



## Regarding the Start of the First Coin Mint in Sogd

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the first coin production in historical Sogd, which took place in the oasis communities of Zarafshan and Kashkadarya. The early Middle Ages' economic ties in Sogd, Central Asia's periods of developing monetary relations, the history of the first independent coinage, and the significance of regional coins in both domestic and international trade are also covered in the article. Additionally, the issue of Sogd's place in the local economy was investigated. Both written sources and numismatic resources were heavily cited in the paper. The item is covered according to generally acknowledged historical methodologies, such as historicity, generalization, terminological analysis, comparative–logical analysis, sequence, and objectivity principles.

**Keywords:** *Sogdian Inscription Coins; Coins of the Monarch of Avsar; E. Zeymal; Silver Sogdian Coins; Bowman Image*

### **Introduction**

The history of humanity demonstrates the significance of independent minting of currency and the issue of economic relations in all state structures. An analysis of the relevant historical data also supports this. By the early Middle Ages, coinage had been introduced in nearly all of the Sogdian confederation's dominions. The main driver of the region's economic growth was this circumstance. The first autonomous currency in Sogd certainly had something to do with the administration during the rule of the Greco–Bactrian rulers, according to the coin's historical roots (250–125 BC) [1; 259]. Later research demonstrates that coins were already being struck in Sogd and used for internal trade prior before.

Coins, which are regarded as the main form of exchange, are far more practical than other forms of the transaction including leather, grain, animals, and treasures. The earliest coins discovered in Central Asia date to the Achaemenid era (705–303 BC), and they were imported into the region from other nations [11; 107]. Researchers only recognize the Vakhshuvor coins as the first independent coins in Central Asia, which were produced by Alexander the Great (329–327 BC) on behalf of his brother–in–law Oxyart (a Bactrian aristocrat). This information is still a top priority right now.

The first coinage in Sogd, its chronology, and its geography were all the subject of debates in the middle of the last century [10; 46]. Based on substantial numismatic data, E. Zeymal has investigated the

earliest coinage in Sogd, its settlement, and the initial stages and characteristics [3; 73]. Money in the area, according to E.V. Rtveladze based on E. Zeymal the origin of circulation is Shi and independently of the coin minting took place based on the following model: initially, foreign coins are presented here as a treasure, and then one or another in imitation of these coins according to their pattern, which are the simplest for the region local coins were minted. These coins are not only the first type of currency, but they are also seen in nations with established monetary systems. It was also seen as the main way that countries and regions moved money around. The region's independent process, including the issuance of Sogd coins, ended at this point [12; 61].

### **Main Part**

A regular examination of a particular historical process or event yields valuable outcomes. At this moment, we decided to share details about the times when monetary relations in Central Asia were first developing. Experts claim that the following time periods can be conditionally separated into this process: The first phase, comprising the second half of the second millennium B.C. and the first half of the first millennium B.C., was characterized by barter and spontaneous exchange. The second phase began at the end of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., when the first Yambian and Achaemenid coins entered circulation. The third period, from the end of the fourth century B.C. to the middle of the second century B.C., is characterized by the establishment and development of real commodity–money relations in Sughd and neighboring regions; the intrusion of monetary relations into petty market trade; and the minting of coins in the name of the local ruler. The fall of the Greco–Bactrian kingdom, the emergence of the Yuechi confederate state in Bactria, the incorporation of Sughd, which consisted of several independent possessions, into the Kang state ruled by the Yuechi dynasty, and the appearance of coins with Sogdian inscriptions mark the fourth period. The fact that the stroke has been initiated explains it [12; 62].

Indeed, the second century BCE was filled with significant historical events. At this period, the Greco–Bactrian state, which had left a significant imprint on Central Asia, had deteriorated due to external invasions and internal leadership. According to archaeological evidence, paddy rice's entire demise may have occurred between 175 and 125 BC, according to French archaeologist K. Rapen [21; 91]. It goes without saying that this procedure made it possible for new autonomous authorities to be established.

By this period, successive districts under Greek–Bactrian dominance started to proclaim their independence. Remarkably, the significant kingdom province of Sogd proclaimed its independence. Coins bearing the names of the regional leaders who proclaimed independence were produced [19; 83]. The initial coins that the Sogd monarchs, who aspired to political independence, produced were more akin to those of Euthydemus (235–200 BC), Eucraditus (171–145 BC), and Girkod than to those of the Greco–Bactrian rulers. These Sogd coins still have Greek lettering on their inscriptions [4; 269]. Only at the start of the first century AD are Sogdian–written coins known to have been produced in Sogd [13; 9]. According to legend, Kesh, and Nakhlab, the two monarchs of Southern Sogd, were the primary owners of coins of this sort. Based on the aforementioned data, it can be deduced that it occurred at the start of AD, when independent coinage with the names of the Sogd rulers in the Sogdian script started to be produced.

We decided to focus on the topic of the first coinage of the Bukhara kings at this time. Most researchers attempt to view Central Sogd–Samarkand and Western Sogd–Bukhara as a single political organization in the early Middle Ages, despite the fact that the political and economic position of the oasis in Sogd is understood differently in different eras [16; 89]. Bukhara is identified geographically as being a part of Sogd even in the writings of medieval Arab historians [5; 49]. According to these sources, the only way to resolve the issue of Bukhara's political division from Sogd is to examine the coins that both territories' kings issued.

B. Goyibov's points of view are valid in our opinion. The monarchs of Sogd, who had their own independent coinage, also held power over Bukhara around the beginning of the AD. The issue of BC Bukhara's split from Central Sogd must also be resolved, and coin analysis is crucial in this regard. By the fourth century AD, *'ps'r γwβw – Avsar monarch's* coins with the Sogdian script were being produced by the rulers of Bukhara [8; 169]. The Central Sogd and Bukhara coins have distinct stamps. According to numismatic evidence, the question of Bukhara's independence from Central Sogd first came up in the fourth century AD [15; 48]. There is a strong chance that Bukhara, like Central Sughd, was partitioned on a confederal basis. Separate Bukharan principalities produced their own coinage. In particular, coins with Sogdian inscriptions indicate that Poykent (*Ptknδh*) had an independent administration [18; 236]. Small estate rulers in Bukhara struck coins bearing their names during the same time period as in central Sogd. The case of Poykent serves as a good illustration of this [9; 339].

Let's revisit the matter of Sughd's first currency minting. In the cultural levels of Panjikent, where archeological research has been conducted since 1947, more than 5,000 samples of coins and money have been discovered. Along with Sogd coins from the V to the VIII centuries, coins from the first century AD were also discovered among these. The total quantity of these spreader-themed coins, which are manufactured of silver, is 68 [6; 25]. A thorough examination of the coins reveals that the earliest currency was vigorously produced between the first and second centuries AD and the fourth century AD. Coins from the first century imitating Greco-Bactrian pod shos and discovered in significant ancient Sogd settlements like Talli Barzu and Afrosiyob near Samarkand demonstrate the validity of this periodization [4; 269].

E. Zeymal demonstrates that the name of the ruler *'št'm – Ashtam* was used to produce the first generation of silver Sogdian coins featuring a bowman. However, only coins bearing the name of the ruler Ashtam are known today, and it is unknown whether he ever ruled in Sogd [18; 167]. Greek writing can also be seen on the coin's reverse. The coin's back (reverse) features a hunter holding a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right shoulder while standing with one hand down. The coin's front (obverse), located to the left of the coin's center, features an image of a bearded male king with braided hair. The image on the coin differs from the original in terms of drawing and shape, which is highlighted by the fact that the identical coin was produced as an imitation [4; 269]. On the reverse side of another sort of Ashtam coin, we can observe the monarch's likeness and a horse's head [4; 270].

It stands out for resembling Antiochus I coins. During the reign of Antiochus I, commodity-money connections expanded in scope and advanced more quickly in North Bactria, particularly in Sogd. Six of his coins, weighing between 0.72 and 3.12 grams each, were discovered in Takht Sangin, along with four more in Old Termiz, two in Kampir Tepa, one in the Denov district of Northern Bactria, and two in Central Sogd-Samarkand [3; 68]. In particular, the fact that the drachma of Antiochus I from the third to second centuries B.C. depicts the head of a horned horse can bolster this opinion [12; 68]. Numerous coins from this era have also been discovered in the oasis of Kashkadarya and Zarafshan. In particular, a drachma of Eucratides, three coins of Antimachus at Shahrisabz, and a coin of Diodotus at Sangartepa were discovered here. Near a dozen coins, including the Euthydemus drachma, Demetrius and Antimachus, Heliocles tetradrachm, and Eucratides coins, were discovered in Afrosiab, the area around Samarkand, and Panjikent. On Takhmach Hill in the eastern section of Bukhara, a treasure of 53 tetradrachms of Diodotus, Euthydemus (about 50), and Agathocles was discovered. In addition, tetradrachms of Demetrius and Euthydemus were discovered in Bukhara (Khoja Obon) [12; 71].

The initial coins weighed 3.95 grams, but it soon became apparent that they only weighed 1.10 grams. Coins during this time ranged in weight from 0.2 to 0.3 grams. In examinations of these coins, terms like drachma and tetradrachm are utilized [13; 7]. Coin volume fell dramatically, and this was probably due to specific economic measures. The Sogd region was a component of the Kang' polity during this currency era (3rd–2nd century BC) (2nd century BC – the middle of the 5th century AD). The central authority permitted the far-flung areas to continue to enjoy their internal freedom during the Kang

state's existence. As a result, separate coins with the ruler on the front and the back and a cavalryman on the reverse were produced.

For this reason, improvements in coin minting and size alterations were made to establish domestic economic independence [20; 12]. One of the critical elements in bolstering the home-independent economy and political independence was determined to be independent coinage. However, T.Yu claims that whether there is a currency or not only occasionally affects how the government functions. He claims that the Kang state's lack of an independent mint, the fact that the state's administration was conducted on a confederal basis, and the fact that the state was typically run by collecting taxes and duties from its subordinate territories may be evidence that the state does not require a single mint [14; 41]. Coins are heavy, and their shrinkage is also a result of their composition. Small amounts of coins were minted as a result of this circumstance. Naturally, some images could not be placed on little coins. The shift in coin size significantly impacted the conventional design of the coin. Since some of the intricate designs and forms found on little coins inevitably create some hardship. Due to the small size of these Ashtam coins from the first to second centuries AD, some of them lack the depiction of a bowman [4; 41].

The Kang state's rule led to an increase in the production of different coin varieties in Sogd. By this period, it is well documented that coins imitating Kushan and Sasanid dynasties were produced in Southern Sogd and Central Sogd, respectively, under Chinese influence. The inscriptions, shapes, and images on the Sogdian coins from the same time period can be used to determine this.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the facts presented, the following judgments and conclusions can be made:

- Central Asia, which includes the earliest coinage and monetary exchange in the Sogd. After the Achaemenids and Alexander the Great, coinage was first produced in Central Asia during the third phase. These are Sogd coins that were made to look like those of the Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian rulers, and they serve as evidence of the urban and rural division of wealth that existed in Sogd at the time.
- from or in imitation of this series of coins, Sogdian coins were struck with a ruler on the right side and an archer on the reverse, imitating Seleucid rulers and Greco-Bactrian monarchs Ashtam and Antiochus I, whose names are only known from coins. They were used from the third century to the second and third centuries after Christ, indicating a circulation period of almost 500 years. This conclusion is reached after a thorough analysis of the instances of these coins that science currently has;
- due to the state's distinctive management structure and economic strategy throughout the Kang state period, many of the regions it controlled were given internal economic independence. Because of this, the Sogdi kings imitated the Greco-Bactrian kings of the Sogd type while they were minting their coins (IV–V centuries AD). However, some of these little coins lack the spreader picture due to their size. The only evidence for this is found on coins with Sogdian inscriptions;
- Greco-Bactrian coins were more frequently discovered in the territories of Sogd and Bactria than in other parts of Central Asia. This implies that these territories are the most developed, with authority to issue royal coins and money circulation established between the third and second century BCE. Given the early development of Sogd's monetary relations, it is possible that they began in populous places like Afrosiyab, Erkurgan, and Bukhara. The majority of the time, goods were traded with the communities. The majority of the coin finds were in sizable urban areas, which serves as an illustration for the previously stated concept;
- money commerce in Bactria, Khorezm, and Choch is recognized to be underdeveloped when compared to Sogd, according to analysis of numismatic sources. For instance, it might be claimed

that the entire population of Ferghana did not possess a coin because coins were not used in economic transactions there. As an alternative, Choch coinage emulated central Sogdian coins by using the Sogdian script. In short, this shows that Sughd was the leader in the coinage of oasis states in Central Asia in the III–II centuries BC.

Even if the first coins were minted in Sughd in the fourth century BCE and their appearance and composition have changed over time, they are still the same coinage. This indicates that Sughd is an economically significant and autonomous territory. During the Seleucids (IV–III BC) and Greco–Bactrian states (II century BC) (the first stage of the initial coinage in Sogd; the second stage was in Kangyuy (II BC–the middle of the fifth century AD; and the third stage was under the Ephtalians (509 BC) (the second stage of the initial coinage in Sughd); coins were minted in Sogd in imitation of Sasanian coins. This is due to the fact that in the early Middle Ages, Sogd evolved into an integral political union – a confederation.

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