

Coin finds on the territory of Kyrgyzstan: from antiquities to the Middle Ages

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The Silk Road routes are known to traverse territories of the Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan in the ancient times. Coins from contiguous states came into the said region together with diplomatic missions and trade caravans, as well as during military campaigns. Reports on finds on a greater part of the Central Asia have been examined in the works of E.A.Davidovich, E.V.Zeymal, M.E.Masson, E.V.Rtveladze et al; on the territory of Eastern Turkestan – in the works of E.Van, F.Tierry et al. An area of modern Kyrgyzstan remains to be the least covered. The current interpretation of the finds of ancient coins on the Silk Road segments that crossed the area¹ is unlikely to be grounded enough.

When analyzing the point at issue, one should focus on single finds, including Roman (3 pcs);² Byzantine (1 solid and 2 bracteates);³ Parthian (1 pcs.);⁴ Greek- Bactrian (1 imitation of tetradrachma);⁵ Kushan (1 pcs)⁶ and Sasanide (3 pcs and 4 fragments)⁷ coins. The publications said that that all the coins were found by chance under uncertain stratigraphic conditions or in some cases taken from the population.⁸ Most finds are unrelated to a specific archaeological object. A small quantity of the coins and a difference of views on the dating of their emissions, as well as geographical remoteness of the places where the coins were discovered leave no doubts that the coins' penetration into the area came as no result of systematic, regular efforts but, rather, due to casual circumstances. Also, the coins could have come into the region much later from the date of their circulation or overstepped their circulation limits accidentally. Several ancient coins have also been found over the past few years⁹ to concur with our views on the subject. Hence, one cannot arrive at a preliminary conclusion about the use of these coins in the ancient period in the region under consideration.

Of chronologically simultaneous coins on the territory of present-day Kyrgyzstan, worthy of note are Chinese coins *Ushu*. Translations of the Chinese dynastic chronicles said that “the Davan court disposed of numerous Chinese artifacts”. In the period under consideration, “Davan could neither mint coins, nor manufacture crockery; when they received gold and silver from the Chinese, they manufactured crockery, not coins”.¹⁰ In the Chinese chronicle "Shi tsi" “A great quantity of silver and a golden horse” was sent to “the Davan ruler of argamaks” as a gift for.¹¹ The same envoy took “1000 lans of gold and a golden horse” to present it to "Tsyhan Khan shu".¹² Besides, the translations above regularly give weight to the fact that the Chinese resorted to silk and gold when making presents or awards to foreign rulers. However, no references are made to the presentation of Chinese bronze coins to foreign kingdoms, especially to the court of a sovereign. Reports on not numerous finds of the Chinese bronze coins with hieroglyphs 五銖 – (wuzhu, Ushu)¹³ give no grounds to insist that the Davan court had ever received them.

During the reign of the Khan dynasty, territories of the kingdoms of Eastern Turkestan to the west of Dunhuang(敦煌), from posts Yumen (玉門關, Yumen Pass) and Yangguan (陽關, Yangguan Pass), formed no part of the Chinese Empire officially”.¹⁴ At the same time, “frequent military posts... with several hundreds of soldiers... and police-officers subordinated to the governor- general” were established in the “Western land”.¹⁵ The governor-general had a staff of military officers,¹⁶ supervised an unimpeded traffic of trade caravans and Chinese envoys, controlled numerous kingdoms of the “Western land”, reported back to the court on their dislocation; quietened peaceful citizens and suppressed mutineers¹⁷ and, finally, informed the “Western land” about decrees of Khan”.¹⁸ Later on, China’s impact on the area either weakened or increased. It was this periodical and, yet, essential influence of China on the Western kingdoms that predetermined circulation of Chinese coins here. In all probability, the circulation remained just as it was in China, as evidenced by numerous finds in the sites of Eastern Turkestan both of isolated coins of Ushu and their treasures as well as moulds for manufacture of these coins.¹⁹ Testifying to the high intensity of utilization of these coins in the region are numerous documents of the reviewed period discovered in Eastern Turkestan and providing information about purchase/sale of goods, loans and other coin-related transactions.²⁰

It should be noted that the Chinese coins Ushu were primarily unearthed from sites along “the southern road” in the region of Loulan (樓蘭, Loulan) and Khotan (于闐, Yutian (Khotan)).²¹ The Khotan oasis revealed the largest Ushu coin treasures,²² while there is information about essential coin treasures to the northwest from Khotan (on the way to the Fergana valley”) in Yarkand (莎車, Shache (Yarkand)) and Kashgar (疏勒, Shule (Kashgar)). To our thinking, such a great quantity of Chinese copper coins Ushu in a local coin complex is, beyond any doubts, attributable to the long presence in



the region of the Chinese administration, large garrisons, as well as probably intensive trade ties with China. Account has to be taken of the fact that finds of Ushu coins of earlier emissions in Eastern Turkestan are infrequent.

Fig. 1. Sogdian coin with the inscription on the obverse To judge by coin finds and information from written sources about the Chinese administration in the “Western land”, the beginning of monetary circulation in Eastern Turkestan cannot be dated earlier than the end of the 1- beginning of the 2 centuries.

The analysis of the military-political situation in the Fergana valley is indicative that following wars with kingdoms of these territories “Khan’s penetration into their lands was temporary and took no

form of permanent and sustained occupation”.²³ Ushu coin finds are still single or unknown at all on the said territories when no permanent Chinese administration and military garrisons were dislocated there. An overwhelming majority of Ushu coins in the Fergana valley was discovered in burial grounds as a part of funeral stock, frequently “on breast or neck together with beads”,²⁴ but not on the sites.²⁵ Even despite an allegation about the Fergana origin of a part of these coins, these were used as an adornment only. To all appearances, finds of Chinese coins Ushu in the Fergana valley are illustrative of trade relations with China (Eastern Turkestan), however, their monetary circulation seems to be insufficiently grounded.

Worthy of special comments is published information about finds of Kushan coins in the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan.

In the first centuries A.D. when the northern border of the Kushan kingdom traversed the Gissar ridge (Tajikistan), “this point was, perhaps, not only political but cultural-economic border as well”.²⁶ As viewed by a researcher,²⁷ “no finds of Kushan coins in the Central Asia, outside valleys of the southern parts of Tajikistan, and in Uzbekistan, except for the region of Termez and a valley of Surkhan Darya, are practically available.”²⁸ As for the Eastern Turkestan, Kushan coins were found in the Khotan oasis only, as evidenced by historical references. Meanwhile, published information about finds of Kushan copper coins²⁹ and their imitations³⁰ on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan is not authentic.³¹



Fig. 2. Sogdian (or the so-called “turgesh”) coins of Semirechye with different diameters (type IV according to Smirnova)

Thus, one can conclude that today’s sporadic finds of ancient coins on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan are indicative of availability and direction of probable trade relations, diplomatic missions,

military campaigns and other irregular events that make it no possible to identify any sustainable trends and regularities in their utilization. In this connection, an opinion on the use of foreign coins in the ancient period of Kyrgyzstan history seems to be wrong, for there are no historical, archaeological, etc. grounds to think so. At the same time, important finds of Kushan, Sasanid, Byzantine coins, as well as imitations of them in the Eastern Turkestan, including burials with accurate dating, together with reports from economic documents of the reviewed period, enable researcher to draw a conclusion about multifunctional utilization of these coins, monetary circulation included.³²

The periodicity of economic relations with China since the 7 century, as is apparent from finds of various types of Chinese coins of the Tan dynasty in the Chuy valley, has thoroughly been dealt with by us earlier.³³ Their penetration and subsequent circulation within local monetary complex framework was, beyond any doubts, attributable to the Chinese presence in the region, some dates of which are referred to in the translations of Chinese written sources. The analysis of the quantity of the Chinese coins of Tan period on the sites of the Chuy valley gives weight to the fact that the largest quantity of the coins was revealed on the site Ak-Beshim identifiable with the medieval town Suyab. The Chinese garrison in Suyab is believed to exist, with some intervals, till 719. In all probability, this date was taken as the first stage of the Chinese coins, penetration the Chuy valley (Kai Yuan Tong Bao) 開元通寶. In the second half of the 8 century, due to the isolation by Tibetans of the Eastern Turkestan from the Central China, the Chinese coins of the Eastern Turkestan emissions only were available in the region 乾元重寶 (see Qian Yuan Zhong Bao) (except for coins with 35 mm in diameter, at face value 50 ven with a double ring on the reverse 大曆元寶 (Da Li Yuan Bao) (766-779); 建中通寶 (Jian Zhong Tong Bao) (780-783); coins with one hieroglyph only (元 Yuan or 中 Zhong) (both 756 (?) – 783). After 787 when the Chinese administration left the Eastern Turkestan, no taxes were levied, nor salaries paid in the Chinese coins, hence, the remaining part's purchasing power appreciably dropped, and shortly after the coins were no longer circulated for their intended use. It is hardly probably that the Tibetan authorities would allow the issue and long-term circulation of the Chinese coins, by virtue of hostile relations with China, after 787 on the controlled territory of the Eastern Turkestan. The said period was possibly characterized by the restricted role of the coins in the region's economy, so, soon after, they ceased to exist.

It would be appropriate to point out that all the available documents of this period referred to the middle of the 9 century as the date of these coins' circulation.³⁴ Perhaps, this date is believed to mark the end of the coins with a Chinese legend both in the Eastern Turkestan and the Chuy valley. The political situation in the region changed, the Chinese administration abandoned, economic ties with China broke off "due to frequent domestic uprisings in the Central Asian regions of China, especially within the 9-10 centuries".³⁵

New types of coins came no longer, owing to which an allegation that in the Karluk period the towns of Semirechye “kept on receiving merchants from... Tan China”³⁶ seems to be erroneous. To this day, none of researchers of the Eastern Turkestan has identified coins of the Tan dynasty dated the 9 century, nor other coins prior to the ruler of the Karakhanid dynasty are available so far.³⁷ We have information about two authentic finds of the coins of Kai Yuan Tong Bao emission dated 845 on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan: one find from the Issyk-Kul hollow (Barskoon gorge); another find from the Chatkal valley.³⁸

As distinct from the Chuy valley complex with its apparent Chinese influence, the coin complex of the Talas valley is noted for single Chinese coins’ finds. The site Sadyr-Kurgan, identifiable with the medieval town Sheldji, saw finds of two coins with a legend on the obverse of Kai Yuan Tong Bao; two imitations of Tan coins.³⁹ No finds of coins of Eastern Turkestan emissions of the second half of the 8 century are known so far. Translations of the Chinese written sources refer to some events due to the stay of Chinese troops in the Talas valley in 739-751; however, these events had no impact on the wide penetration of Chinese coins in the region.

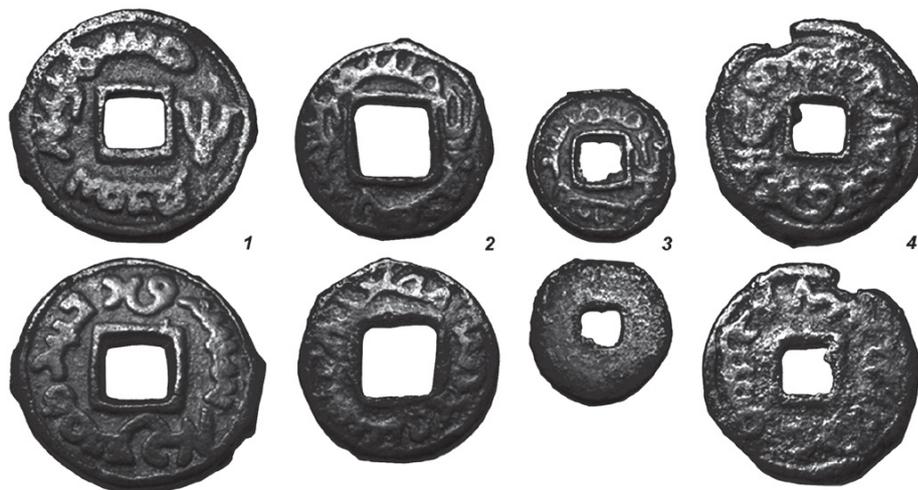


Fig. 3. The so-called “tuhus” coins.

From earlier 7 century to the 780s, the Issyk-Kul hollow had regularly formed an internal part of the “Western land”; however, for lack of large towns here finds of Chinese coins on this territory are insignificant.⁴⁰ Scattered along the south-western seacoast, towns acted as transit points, while excavations on a large site in the eastern part of the Issyk-Kul hollow, Koy-Sary terrain and adjacent areas from Tyup to Karakola gave not numerous finds of Chinese coins of the Tan dynasty.⁴¹ In 2010, several Chinese coins Kai Yuan Tong Bao of the Tan dynasty were unearthed in the Barskoon terrain.

Just two coins of the Tan dynasty of the second half of the 8 century’ emissiosn were accidentally found in the Fergana valley. No reports on the coins of this type in Inner Tien Shah are available so far. Note that the official establishment of the Chinese governance (duhu 都护) in the second half of

the 7 century led to no penetration of Chinese coins on the Central Asia territories.⁴² At the same time, the Chinese influence that resulted in the changes of Sogdian coins' design is beyond doubt.

It may be inferred that finds of Chinese coins are single on a greater part of the Central Asian territories acting as transit or frontier trade points with the Eastern Turkestan (China), not areas of long-term tenure of the Chinese administration and/or garrisons regardless of town dimension and proximity to the border with China. In other words, numerous finds of Chinese coins are attributable to the prolonged tenure of the Chinese administration and military garrisons in big towns which is clearly manifest in the Chuy valley as exemplified by the site Ak-Beshim. As a matter of fact, this opinion is none other than previous conclusions regarding the circulation of ancient Chinese coins Ushu outside the territory of China. A priori view in "currency" circulation of the Chinese copper coins along the Silk Road route has to be revised. It should be noted that no coins of local emission have so far been revealed among ancient coins on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan. The issue of local coins concurred with a new stage of China's influence on the "Western land" and active advancement of Sogdians eastwards, but not earlier than the 7 century for the Fergana valley and later 7-earlier 8 centuries for the Chuy and Talas valleys. In all probability, other regions of modern Kyrgyzstan – Issyk-Kul hollow and Inner Tien Shah had no local coin emission in the ancient and medieval periods. No debatable questions of internal chronology of early medieval coins of local emission are dealt with here, for the topic calls for more detailed consideration when adjusted for the clarity of common boundaries of early medieval monetary circulation.

First of all, a rare type of Sogdian coins should be mentioned (fig.1). Decoratively, the coins are reminiscent of anepigraphic coins of Samarkand (Eastern) Sogda dated to the 2 quarter of the 7 century, according to A.Neymark. An inscription on the obverse was read by P.B.Lurie as bgy (vaghi) "god" to the left and prn (farn) to the right from a portrait accordingly (ZENO, Internet: #6305-6308, 10738, 82181, 82182),⁴³ i.e. with Turkic titles. A character on the reverse has to be considered as



development of tamga on the reverse of Bukhara (𐰽) and Chacha (𐰽) coins supposedly originating in tamga of Samarkand Sogda (𐰽) or (𐰽).⁴⁴ Finds of these coins are known both in the Eastern Turkestan (region of Ili) and the eastern part of the Chuy valley (site of Ak-Beshim). These coins are

Fig. 4. Coins type IV with additional signs

believed to be the earliest type of local emission coins. When timing the emission, account has to be

taken of the fact that a collar on the edge of the coin apparently betrays Chinese influence in coins' decoration conformably to the Chuy valley, it may be dated to not earlier than mid- 7 century; if the point is about their eastern – Turkestan emission, it may be dated to the earlier period.⁴⁵

The most widely spread local coin stuff of pre-Moslem period in the Chuy and Talas valleys are Sogdian coins of Semirechye, or the so-called “Tyurgesh” coins of the IV type of different diameters, according to O.I.Smirnova's⁴⁶ classification (fig.2). Their emission goes back to the first quarter of the 8 century. An initially used term “turgesh” coin goes back to an undeniable reading of the inscription on the obverse of the coins of this type – turgest qaghan. Later on, the coins were postulated to belong to the Turkic tribe of turgesh, and the language of the inscription was identified as Turkic (Uyghur).⁴⁷ In doing so, researchers took into no account the historical situation that arose in the coin emission region. Following the 1950s explorations, O.I.Smirnova and A.N.Sherbak succeeded to establish that inscription on the coins were made by no Turks; the language of the inscriptions was Sogdian.⁴⁸ This conclusion had never been questioned, so the issue is considered to be resolved ultimately. A view that the Sogdian language was used to make inscriptions on the coins due to its international predestination stands up to no criticism. The question is that coins of local emissions were primarily circulated inside or between large towns of the Chuy valley (to a greater degree) and the Talas valley (to a lesser degree) only and had no essential spreading within nomadic environment.⁴⁹ Their circulation coincided with boundaries of issuer's possessions, beyond which the coins were ineffective. Thus, it was the large Sogdian colonies in the Chuy valley that essentially led to the appearance of Sogdian inscriptions on the coins of local emission.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative composition of the finds of the so-called “turgesh” coins showed that they had actually been circulated in the Sogdian colonies only. It was A.N.Bernstam who was successful in identifying boundaries of these colonies in the Chuy valley: the northern boundary - the site Kysmychi on the right bank of the river Chy; the eastern boundary – the site Ak-Beshim. According to Mahmud of Kashgar, Balasagun was the ultimate eastern boundary of Sogdian spreading in Semirechye.⁵⁰ A term pny on the legend of the coins of this type is construed differently by researchers, yet, its exact meaning is “a coin”, not its face value.⁵¹

Such a formulation accounts for the use of this term on stereotyped (according to legend) coins of different diameters together with simultaneous circulation of coins of different face value, fractional to the basic one.

Another large group of coins of local emission is the so-called “Tuhus” coins (fig.3). Some researchers ascribe their emission to 766⁵² when Karlyks came to power in Semirechye, according to translations of the Chinese written sources; and the circulation of small coins- to the 9 century. However, this dating runs counter to generally accepted date of foundation of a Buddhist temple on the site Ak-Beshim between 692 (693) and 705.⁵³ Archaeological excavations of 1953-1954 revealed

coins in places that make it possible to infer that during the construction and operation of temple the so-called “Tuhus” coins of different diameters (face value), from 13 to 20 mm.

The unsteady political situation in the region after the death of turgesh qaghan in 738 and subsequent breaking-up of the turgesh qaghanate contributed to the appearance of coins of local emission with additional characters on the reverse after letters of runic alphabet in the form of a Sogdian word (fig.4). To all appearances, the same period marked the appearance of coins with Sogdian legends on the obverse that differed from legends on the coins of the IV type (fig.5). Multiplicity of the types notwithstanding, total number of local emission finds is insignificant. From this it follows that the coins above were issued within a short time only. Account has to be taken of the fact that the finds of this type were closely related to certain territories or sites.

As has been noted above, it is difficult to agree with some researchers that Karlyks displayed insensibility to political and economic processes going on the territories they seized control of.⁵⁴ Also, Karlyks were unlikely to continue issuing coins with legends that brought fame to the qaghan-conqueror of turgeshes. To corroborate our doubts, single finds of coins with a title of Karlyk (fig.6)⁵⁵ were discovered on the site Shish-Tyube (a central part of the Chuy valley).

A find of the rarest coin on the site Krasnaya Rechka, identifiable to the medieval town Navekat (fig.7), with runic characters,⁵⁶ gives weight to its Turkic identity, not to the emission of Kyrgyz qaghate,⁵⁷ even if supposed to be.

It is accepted that the so-called “turgesh” coins were circulated till the end of the 10 century “when they gave way to the early Ilek dirham”,⁵⁸ and even in the 11 century.⁵⁹ This point of view arose from the assumption of continuous monetary circulation, as evidenced by finds in archaeological layers going back to the Karakhanid period.

Identification of coins of the 8 century emission in the layers dated to the 10-11 centuries is illustrative that the local population did use these coins but in the capacity of relics, amulets, trinkets, etc. (fig.8). Additional evidence is required to prove that these coins were used as payment instrument. Account has also to be taken of the fact that these coins got into the 10-11 centuries’ layers as a result of the construction work, when building materials (clay) from earlier layers were re-used. In other words, the building materials are not archaeologically “pure” and could include artifacts from earlier cultural layers. A possible argument in favor of the circulation of the 8 century coins are treasures with coins both of the Karakhanid period and Semirechye emissions of the 8 century. However, all Karakhanid coin treasures from the Chuy valley are compositionally homogeneous, since they included coins of this period only. No coin treasures of the Semirechye period (8 century) have so far been discovered in the 10-11 centuries’ layers. Serving as similar evidence could have been coin finds of the 8 century Semirechye together with Chinese coins of the Northern Song dynasty and local emissions of “proto-

Karakhanid” coins (fig.9) that circulated in the Chuy valley since the mid- 10 century. However, no cases of this sort have so far been registered.

The analysis of materials that came as a result of archaeological excavations in the Chuy valley in the 1950- 90s on the sites Ak-Beshim and Krasnaya Rechka, as well as 2004-2010 data from the site Novopokrovskoye-2 makes it possible to infer that military actions in the middle-third quarter of the 8 century led to the partial or full destruction of a greater part of towns and, as a consequence, to the considerable weakening or even cessation of commodity-money relations in the entire region.

It was V.V.Bartold who mentioned the decline of the Chuy valley towns and their “dependence on the town Talas”, as saying that the process started with the destruction of the town Suyab in 748 by the Chinese governorgeneral in the Eastern Turkestan Van Cheng-syan.⁶⁰ Note that “Du huang Zin Sin Zi” unequivocally referred to the decline of the Chuy valley settlements. To all appearances, monetary circulation on the territory of Semirechye goes back synchronously to the Eastern Turkestan and, perhaps, earlier periods. Suffice it to note that the finds of local emission coins in the Talas valley are quantitatively lesser than in the Chuy valley, with finds of some types of coins in the Chuy valley only. On the other hand, the quantity of finds in the Talas valley with additional characters on the reverse is commensurable with that in the Chuy valley, except for coins with a character on the reverse, unavailable in the Talas valley so far.

As has been mentioned above, coins of local emissions were not brought into international circulation. Finds of the coins of this sort outside the region are insignificant. Thus, the Fergan valley revealed the two so-called “turgesh” coins only; the Central Tien Shan (near Tash-Rabat) – one coin; no coins above have so far been unearthed in the Issyk-Kul hollow. Besides, single “turgesh” coins were irregularly unearthed in the Pri-Syr Darya region (Otrar oasis), Eastern Sogda, Bukhara, Eastern Turkestan, Iran (Suza), Altay and Mongolia. Note that a typological complex of the coins from Otrar oasis is identifiable with the Talas one, though the quantity of finds is much lesser.

Finds in other regions are primarily single (“turgesh” coins), type IV, diameter 24-25 mm. In turn, coins from Sogda, Chacha, Otrar and other regions of the Central Asia within the coin complex of



Fig. 5. Coins with Sogdian legends on the obverse, and with additional characterize on the reverse.

Semirechye framework are known in single copies only. Several types of the coins of local emission are typical for the Fergana valley⁶¹ only, and beyond the bounds of this valley they are single too. Thus, a coin of “nameless qaghan” in the Eastern Turkestan (river Ili area)⁶² is

available, and the same is true of another similar coin from Inner Mongolia, according to V.Belyaev (Moscow). In 2007, a coin was accidentally found in the eastern part of the Fergana valley to be ascribed to earlier unknown Fergana emissions (fig.10). The reports above are an evidence of the fact that coins of local emissions rarely forsook an area of their circulation, especially as it coincided with issuer's territory.



Fig. 6. A coin with a title of Karluk qaghan.

The chronology of the penetration of Moslem coins in the Chuy valley is directly attributable to the military-political developments in the region. Combat operations between Turks and Arabs in the 9 century were of permanent nature, as clearly evidenced by al-Istahri, al- Makdisi and Tabari. In

942, the Samanides “took khakan’s son as prisoner”⁶³; however, they declined from returning Balasagun. If this had taken place, the point would be about a short-term military action without establishment of Samanides’ power over these regions; or “Khakan’s son” capture took place on an area westwards. Confirmation of the reliability of information about the “return” of Balasagun and the discovery of a great number of copper (bronze) Abbasid and Samanide coins in the Chuy valley⁶⁴ would be good reason for research to insist on the extension of north-eastern borders of the Samanide state to the Chuy valley, as well as on the earlier and greater, than has been supposed before, political and economic Arab influence on the said territories. However, this supposition is obviously contrary to the reports of Arab written sources that called Talas of the earlier 10 century as “the bounds of Islam dissemination”⁶⁵ that “Moslems did not ordinarily overstep” farther even in the mid-10 century.⁶⁶ Our doubts are borne out by the report on finding of two Samanide fals of the second half of the 10 century of the site Sadyr-Kurgan.⁶⁷

“Arab geographers of the 10 century describe Turks as a nation absolutely adverse to Islam and hostile to Moslems, though the situation tended to change in the reviewed period”.⁶⁸ This information is referred to in the translations of al-Istahri, Ibn Haukal (second half of the 10 century). It should be noted that while written sources of the earlier 10 century deal with territories where the war against Turks was waged, in the mid-10 century the point was about those having recently been won back; about trade relations with them. It is known that in 924 only the first Moslem traders penetrated Mongolia via the Fergana valley and the Eastern Turkestan.⁶⁹

It has to be kept in mind that all the authors of Arab and Persian geographical descriptions of the 9-middle 10 centuries provide stereotyped, obviously of compilation nature, information about Semirechye, laying a special emphasis on the regions to the south from Talas only. In doing so, they relied on sources, going back to the middle 8-earlier 9 centuries.⁷⁰ It was in the end of the 10 century

only (Hudu al-Alam) that additional data on these Turkic territories appeared. In turn, this data goes back to sources with date of “compilation of the initial text between 766- earlier 767”⁷¹ that is indirectly indicative of complicated relations between Turks and Moslems in the end of the 8-middle 10 centuries that conduced to no development of commodity-money relations in the region.

It was the adoption of Islam by Turks on a mass scale since the middle 10 century and the normalization of relations with co-religionists – Moslem countries that led to the restoration of trade routes via Turkic territories. This is vividly echoed in coin finds: penetration of Sasanide coins in the Chuy valley intensified, to a certain degree, since the period shown above. Most fals discovered in the region are pertaining to the emissions of the second half of the 10 century. On their greater portion there is an aperture not only in the centre but on the edge as well. The apertures were intended to demonetize coins and use them for memorial or everyday purposes.

It would be appropriate to note that the trade crisis of the second half of the 8 century was accounted for by the struggle of the leading Asian Empires for domination in the Central Asia and control over the Silk Road routes. Since that period, the Chuy valley, owing to the then military – political situation in the region, remained outside main routes of trade caravans. One cannot say with certainty about the full rupture of economic ties of the Chuy valley towns with adjacent regions. Yet, our analysis is illustrative of changes in trade flow routes and essential lessening of commercial activity and, possibly, cessation of commodity-monetary relations, as well as coin emissions in the region, 9-middle 10 centuries. Thus, one can infer that owing to the then military-political situation in the region, the Chuy valley towns could not “accept merchants from... the Moslem West”⁷² from the end of the 8 to the middle of the 10 centuries.

Note that the Fergana valley came into the orbit of the Moslem influence much earlier than



Fig. 7. A coin with two runic characters.

Semirechye. It was no mere coincidence that emissions had already been mentioned under Abbasides in Ahsikat, since 144/761-762 and in Fergana, since 204/819-20. Under Samanides, the mint-places of Ahsikat and Fergana kept on minting coins. Besides, mint-places started to operate in Uzskand, since 312/924-25; Nasrabad, since 335/946-

47; Kuba, since 336/947-48. Also, coins were issued in Osh since 284/897. When examining finds of Sasanide fals in the Fergana valley, A.H.Atahodjajev showed that a share of local emissions made 73,5%.⁷³ Of nearly the same ratio were Samanide fals of the Fergana emission in the Chatkala valley – 76,2%.⁷⁴ When adjusted for endemic nature of their circulation, this gives weight to the reports of Arab written sources than in the reviewed period the Chatkal valley was territorially a part of Fergana.

Metrological and other data on the coins referred*

Fig.	Diameter (mm)	Notes
1.	24,7	On the obverse, in the left bgy; in the right prn. Collection of A.Gusev, Bishkek
2.1.	24,4	On the obverse, <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
2.2.	21,35	On the obverse, <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
2.3.	15,95	On the obverse, <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
2.4.	11,5	Anepigraphic
2.5.	26,85	On the obverse, <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i> Collection of D.A.Panasov, Bishkek
3-1-4.		On the obverse, <i>tywss γωβω</i> [ZENO, Internet, #471154] (or suggested <i>w'n'tm'x xωβω</i> [ZENO, Internet, #15831], on the reverse <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
3.1.	19,7	Tamga on the obverse of the coin, in the right
3.2.	16,45	Tamga on the obverse of the coin, in the right
3.3.	12	Tamga on the obverse of the coin, in the right
3.4.	18,8	Tamga on the obverse of the coin, in the left
4.1.	28,2	On the reverse runic character M and a Sogdian word [ZENO, Internet, #9955]. Collection of D.A.Panasov, Bishkek
4.2.	25,2	On the reverse runic character M and a Sogdian word [ZENO, #39562].
4.3.	24,15	On the reverse runic character
4.4.	20,25	On the reverse runic character M (character differently positioned)
5.1.	22,65	On the obverse <i>xwt'w w'xswt'wy pny</i> (or suggested new reading of <i>xwt'w w'rxwt'wy pny</i>); on the reverse runic character M and hieroglyph π (type I according to Šmirnova)
5.2.	25,9	On the obverse <i>'rsl'n yrk'yn xωβω pny</i> , on the reverse M and a Sogdian word
5.3.	24,9	On the obverse <i>'rsl'n kwyl yrkyn</i>
5.4.	21	On the obverse <i>βγγ 'rsl'n 'pylk' γ'γ'n pny</i> (reading clockwise)
5.5.	19,5x21	On the obverse <i>βγγ 'rsl'n 'pylk' γ'γ'n pny</i> (reading counter-clockwise)
6.	19,2	On the obverse <i>βγγ xr'hwγ x'γ'n pny</i> , on the reverse, <i>kwp-'k xwt'w</i> , according to ZENO, #70019.
7.	24,3	According to ZENO, #52829
8.1.	24,35	On the obverse <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
8.2.	24,8	On the obverse <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
8.3.	24,6	On the obverse <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
8.4.	21,6	On the obverse <i>βγγ twrkys γ'γ'n pny.</i>
9.	23,5	
10.	21,75	

* Unless otherwise indicated, coins from the collection of the article's author are meant.

Note that the dynasty of Karakhanides came to power in the end of the 10 century. Its rule is reputed to be one of the most interesting stages of coin circulation on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan. There is a lot of finds, single and numerous, treasures of Karakhanide coins with different size and



Fig. 8. Coins with a round central hole and the various notches.

dating. Earlier unknown types and variants are also found among these coins. Thus, B.D.Kochnev's "The Code of Inscriptions on Karakhanide Coins" was followed by discovery of above 60 new types of coins, a greater part of

which has already been published. Some coins of this type are reflective of major,

earlier unknown historical facts that make it possible to introduce essential amendments in the generally accepted chronology of the political history of Kara khanide qaghanate and resolve some disputable questions. Thus, it became possible to clarify the chronology of the Eastern Karakhanides in the second half of the 11 century⁷⁵ thanks to the discovery of a treasure from the site Sadyr-Kurgan with one type of coins of Taraza, 469/1076-77 and a title of Togryl-khan Yusuf b. Sulayman and vassal of Umar and four types of Taraza coins, 471-472/1078-1080 that mentioned Umar only but with a title Togryl-khan.⁷⁶ It was also the discovery of two dirhams minted by Sapijab (=Ispidjab), 450/1057- 58 among the coins from a treasure on the site Shish-Tube that enabled researchers to establish that Arslantegin became a new title of Husayn b. Mohammad. The middle of the 10 century marked the intensification of trade relations with China, as is evidenced by finds in the Issyk-Kul hollow and the Chuy valley.



Fig. 9. The so called "proto-Karakhanide" coin.

These included coins of the North Sung dynasty. Except for one treasure from the Chuy valley,⁷⁷ other finds are single.⁷⁸ The fact that Sung coins are not numerous goes to show that, contrary to the reports on their large-scale emission, these coins were not involved in the monetary circulation and indirectly pointed to the resumed trade relations with China.

Little-studied is a group of anonymous coins of the Kara-Chinese (Kidan) rule, discovered in the Chuy valley. They had first been identified in private collections and described by B.D.Kochnev.⁷⁹ Later on, M.N.Fedorov explored two treasures of the coins of this type from the sites Krasnaya Rechka and Burana.⁸⁰ In 2009, a similar treasure was unearthed to the south-west from the site Burana. At present,

the treasure is being examined. When analyzing the first coins, B.D.Kochnev succeeded in identifying variety of stamps, including inscriptions with errors and distortions. However, the reading of a word on the reverse of coins in the upper part of the margin is disputable. To judge by publications, one can conclude that the coins were minted in the end of the reign of caliph al-Mustarshid (512-529) and continued under caliph al-Muktafi (530-555).



Fig. 10. A coin with 2 tamgas from the Ferghana valley

Timuride copper coins were discovered on the sites of the Chuy valley (Krasnaya Rechka and Burana); in the Kochkor valley and the gorge Shamsi.⁸⁴ Of the Silk Road segments that traversed the Chuy valley, worthy of note is the gorge Shamsi, this permanent, though variably utilized, caravan route. An eloquent testimony to this are regular finds of single coins, from the ancient period to our days.

To sum up, one can infer that even a brief analysis of the coinage location, issuers' identification and the date of emission as the most reliable "official" source is utterly important for specifying the Silk Road history on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan.

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3. **Masson M.E.** Monetnie nakhodki, zaregistririvanie v Sredney Azii v 1930 i 1931 godu // Materiali Uzkomstarisa. Vip 5. Tashkent, 1933. S. 9-10; K voprosu o vzaimootnosheniyakh Vizantii i Sredney Azii po dannim numizmatiki // Tr. SrAzGU. Vip. XXIII. Tashkent, 1951. S. 100-101; **Bernshtam**

The subsequent period in the Chuy valley was marked by single finds of coins going back to the Great Seljukides, Anushteginides,⁸¹ Gurides;⁸² a silver coin of Juchides;⁸³ a Chinese coin of the dynasty Ming and numerous coins of the dynasty of Chagataides. Earlier unknown, single finds of

A.N. Istoriko-kulturnoe proshloe severnoy Kirgizii po materialam Bolshogo Chuyskogo kanala // Izbrannie trudi po arkhologii i istorii kirgizov i Kirgizstana. T.I. Bishkek, 1997. S. 149

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8. It may be true that the coins in question are local finds. Peasants moved to the Issyk-Kul hollow from the central and southern regions of Russia since the later 19 century where numerous ancient Roman, Greek and Byzantine coins were discovered. The said coins could have been brought by them [Zeymal, 1962: 143-143, note 21; Zeymal, 1983: 63, note 43].

9. Accidentally, a coin Ushu as a part of the treasure of Chinese coins of Tan period was found in the Issyk-Kul hollow in 2003 [Koshevar, 2005a: 52-53]. In 2004, not far from the town Uzgend (eastern part of the Fergana valley) a coin Ushu was accidentally found (outside a burial place). In place 2006, when excavating the site Koshoy-Korgon (Central Tien Shan), archaeologists unearthed 6 anepigraphic coins after the Ushu type dating back to the 5-earlier 7 centuries [Moskalev, Soltobayev et al. 2007: 59-60. Photo III. 1]. In 2007, a gold bar, probably, of Chinese origin, was found in the Issyk-Kul hollow. In 2009, the rarest copper (bronze) can of the Eastern Turkestan kingdom Goachan (499-640) was found in the Chuy valley (site Ak-Beshim) [ZENO, Internet: #73498] and in the gorge Shamsi – a copper initiation of Sasanid drachma [ZENO, Internet: #73388].

10. **Bichurin N.Ya.** (Iakinf). Sobranie svedeniy o narodakh, obitavshikh v Sredney Azii v drevnie vremena. T.2. Moskva- Leningrad, 1950. S. 162

11 . **Bichurin N.Ya** (Iakinf). Sobranie svedeniy o narodakh, obitavshikh v Sredney Azii v drevnie vremena. T.2. Moskva- Leningrad, 1950. S. 162

12. **Bichurin N.Ya.** (Iakinf). Sobranie svedeniy o narodakh, obitavshikh v Sredney Azii v drevnie vremena. T.2. Moskva- Leningrad, 1950. S. 187

13. When excavating 15 burial mounds in the Fergana valley, 31 coins *Ushu* were discovered in 25 interments [Gorbunova 1996: 82-83]. Later on, information about two *Ushu* coins from a *Varzik* interment was published in 1982 [Baratova 2007; 43].
14. **Borovkova L.A.** Tsarstva “Zapadnogo Kraya”. Moskva, 2001. S. 226
15. **Bichurin N.Ya.** (Iakinf). Sobranie svedeniy o narodakh, obitavshikh v Sredney Azii v drevnie vremena. T.2. Moskva- Leningrad, 1950. S. 171
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- 26 **Zeymal E.V.** Drevmie moneti Tadjikistana. Dushanbe, 1983. S. 64
- 27 **Zeymal E.V.** Drevmie moneti Tadjikistana. Dushanbe, 1983. S. 186

28. Several Kushan coins are kept at the collection of the Fergana regional local lore museum [Baratova 2007: 43-44]. However, according to L.Baratova, all of them were recorded in the registration book as a donation from a private person. No place of finding has been fixed.

29 **Kamishev A.M.** Numizmaticheskie istochniki // Istochnikovedenie Kirgizstana. Bishkek, 2004. S. 150

30 **Kamishev A.M.** Vvedenie v numizmatiku Kirgizstana. Uchebnoe posobie. Bishkek, 2008. S. 64

31. Kushan copper coins, currently kept at the numismatic museum of the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan, come from a large treasure discovered in Uzbekistan (not far from the border with Tadjikistan) in the middle of the 1990s. During the work of a purchase commission of the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan these coins were identified as “having relation to the monetary circulation of the Central Asia”, not Kyrgyzstan. Several Kushan coins in a bad state of preservation were brought in the end of the 1990s from the town Karakol; however, they were not found in this town. It was a certain serviceman who had served in the southern borders of the USSR and where he had discovered these coins jointly with chronologically later copper coins of Moslem dynasties, and later sold to the local antique-shop.

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