

KHOREZM COINS WITH HORSE IMAGE IN THE 8TH-13TH CENTURIES

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Abstract. The early Muslim Turkic dynasties featured a variety of symbols, animals, celestial bodies, and military weapons on their coins. These designs were influenced by the traditions of their ancient ancestors, as well as verses from the Holy Quran, in accordance with Muslim customs. One of the most common images found on the coins of the Turkic peoples is that of a horse. This article analyzes the depiction of the horse on Khorezm coins during the Islamic era and explores its origins. It also discusses the significance of the horse in the lives of the Turks, who formed the majority of the population in the Anushteginid state, and examines the reasons for its portrayal on coins as a symbol.

Key words: Anushteginids, Gurids, Afrighids, horse, Turks, stirrups, king, image, Afanasevo culture, Ephthalites, Kidarites

Introduction

In the early Middle Ages, the migration and settlement of the Khionites, Kidarii, Hephthalites, and Turkic tribes around the Seven Seas led to the Turkification of the majority of the population in the Central Asian region. Subsequently, the Turkic tribes that converted to Islam played a significant role in the socio-political landscape of this area. As a result, an important period in the history of the Turkic peoples in the region is referred to as the "era of Turkic-Muslim states" or "the first Turkic Muslim dynasties" in world historiography [1:26-32]. This period spans the 10th to 13th centuries AD and is distinct from both the ancient Turkic statehood that preceded it and the medieval Turkic statehood that followed. However, it does share some similarities with both earlier and later periods. During this time, the region was primarily governed by Turkic-based dynasties that established their authority not only in Central Asia but also across a significant portion of the Islamic world. Prominent kingdoms from this era include the Karakhanids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and the Khorezmshah-Anushteginids.

The early Muslim Turkic dynasties featured a variety of symbols, animals, celestial bodies, and military weapons on their coins, drawing on traditions passed down from their ancient ancestors. They also included verses from the Holy Quran, in line with Muslim customs. One of the most frequently depicted images on Turkic coins is that of a horse.

Khorezm coins have featured the image of a horseman on horseback since ancient times. This depiction of a horse continued in later periods, ranging from African cultures to the Anushteginid dynasty. The Khorezmshah-Anushteginid dynasty, which arose as a distinct successor to the Seljuk Empire, despite its brief reign, played a significant role in the political and cultural lives of the peoples in the region, as well as in Muslim Asia. The Khorezmshahs incorporated Arab, Persian, and Turkic traditions into their state administration, similar to those of the Seljuks, and minted their coins in over 40 cities in addition to Khorezm [2:135-141].

The Anushteginids upheld the coin minting traditions established by the Seljuks. Notably, some coins issued by the Khorezmshahs featured images of animals or symbolic signs, similar to those of the Seljuks. Other coins were more straightforward, displaying only the name and title of the ruler who minted them, along with Islamic phrases on the reverse side.

The Khorezm rulers, known as the Khorezmshahs, used the title "shah" on their coins. This title, "Khorezmshah," continued to be used during the Anushteginid dynasty as well as in the pre-Islamic Afrighid dynasty and the Muslim Mamunids. The Anushteginid dynasty maintained this title both when it was under Seljuk control and when it became an independent state[3:134].

The role of the horse in the life of the Turks

Among the ancient Turkic tribes, certain animals, including wolves, horses, and eagles, were considered sacred and worshipped. This reverence can be attributed to the significant role nomadism played in their daily lives. The horse, in particular, was highly revered among the Turkic tribes and held great importance in both social and political realms. Some scholars even link the emergence and rise of the pre-Islamic Turkic Khaganate to the unparalleled cavalry of the Turks during that time, as well as to various horse-related inventions. For instance, the Turks invented the iron stirrup, which allowed riders to sit securely on their horses, turn sideways, and shoot arrows from a bow. This innovation enabled the Turkish cavalry to control vast territories. The Arab historian Ibn al-Jahiz (d. 869) notes the following: "The Turks shoot arrows with great force while on horseback, targeting in all directions—forward, backward, upward, and downward. In contrast, Arab horsemen can only manage to shoot ten arrows before they can successfully draw one. The Turks move more swiftly on horseback in mountainous and hilly terrain compared to Arab horsemen in flatlands. They are said to possess four eyes: two on their faces and two on the backs of their heads" [10]. It is also believed that this innovation spread to Europe through the Khazar Khaganate, which emerged later.

We can learn about the significance of the horse in the lives of Turkic tribes through various historical works, examples of oral folk art such as epics, and archaeological findings. For instance, historian M. Aksoy noted that the Turks domesticated horses between 4000 and 3500 years ago. He provided evidence by citing horse bones from the Afanasyev culture, which date back to 2500 BC [4:41]. Additionally, many Turkic tribes have documented the practice of sacrificing horses to Gok Tanri, the Sky God. For example, the Huns sacrificed horses to Gok Tanri and wild boars to the Earth God [5:92]. The Greek historian Herodotus mentioned that the Central Asian Sakas and the Scythians along the Black Sea coast also sacrificed horses and boars to their deities [4:43].

In Turkish ideology, there is a belief that the horse is a celestial creature, sent from heaven specifically for its master. For instance, in Abu'l-Ghozi Bakhadir Khan's work "Shajarayi Turk," he discusses the horse that was sent to Genghis Khan when he ascended to the throne. According to the text, "A gray horse descended from heaven for me, and I rode it, ascended to heaven, and spoke with God" [6:84].

The process of selecting Alpamish's horse, Baychibar, in the epic poem "Alpamish", along with the nicknames of over 200 horses mentioned in the epic "Manas" [7:202] and the terms related to more than 40 horses in "Divani Lughat al-Turk," illustrates the significance of horses in the social life of the Turks.

Horse image on coins

The traditions of the Turkic-Muslim states that ruled during the Middle Ages significantly influenced their culture, particularly evident in the imagery found on their coins. Notably, the Anushteginids, such as Ala al-din Muhammad and Jalal al-din Manguberdi, featured a horseman on their coins, resembling the rider depicted on Seljuk coins. For instance, the obverse of Ala al-din Muhammad's coin, minted in Herat between 1200 and 1221, shows a horseman facing left. The reverse side bears the Arabic inscription: السلطان الاعظم محمد السلطان (As-sultan al-azim Muhammad as-Sultan).

We can see the image of a horse on many coins of Ala al-din Muhammad. However, we can observe that many elements are added or removed in the depiction of the horse. For example, we can find images of a rider along with the image of a horse, a rider with a spear or a bow, a rider holding a plant or a bird in his hand. We can also see such images on the coins of the later ruler Jalal al-din Manguberdi.

At this point, it is natural to ask questions such as when did the image of a horse begin to appear on Anushtegini coins, where did the model for the image of a horse come from, whether the Seljuks influenced the emergence of this tradition, and whether the depiction of a horse on coins is related to Turkic traditions.

It is known that the coins of the first dynasty, the Afrygids, who received the title of Khorezmshah, also had a horse on them, with the horse's face turned to the right. On top of the horse was depicted a crowned ruler holding a bird in his hand. The minting of coins of this type was stopped with the arrival of the Arabs in Central Asia. The first coin with the image of a horse with Arabic inscription was minted in Khorezm in 842 (228 AH) by Amir Mikail, the representative of the Tahirids in Khorezm.

This coin also depicts a horse facing right, under the tradition of the ancient Khorezmshahs, with a swastika symbol placed above it [8:20]. Among the local Khorezmshahs, a coin of this type was minted by Khorezmshah Iraq ibn Mansur in 892-93 (280 AH). The obverse of this coin also features a horse facing right with a swastika symbol above it. On the reverse, we can see the title عراق بن منصور مولى امير المومنين (Iraq bin Mansur Mawla amir al-Mu'minin), meaning "Iraq ibn Mansur, the assistant to the Commander of the Faithful".

As we have noted above, the first coins minted by the Anushteginids were indeed copies of the Seljuk coins, but later, especially during the reign of Ala al-din Muhammad, they were copies of coins minted based on the culture of the new territories conquered. In 1206, the Ghurid state was defeated by Ala al-din Muhammad, and coins in the Ghurid style began to be minted in the name of Ala al-din Muhammad in the conquered territories.

In our opinion, the image of a horse on the coins of the Anushteginids also began in this period. We can explain this idea with two things. First, coins with a horse image were minted in the territories of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which were the former territories of the Ghurid state, and secondly, it was during this period that, in addition to the horse, images of an ox, elephant, and warrior appeared on coins (such images were also very common on Ghurid coins). In addition, the similarity between the coin with the image of a rider in a false denomination minted in Talikan by Jalal al-din Manguberdi and the coins with the image of a rider holding a spear minted in Talikan by one of the Ghurid rulers, Ghiyas al-din Mahmud ibn Muhammad (1206-1212), can also serve as evidence for our opinion [9:484].



CONCLUSION

It is natural that the great victories of the Anushteginid state, which played an important role in the political life of the medieval Muslim East, were based on a solid economic foundation. As the territory of the state expanded, its own monetary systems and types of coins began to appear. Coins, as symbols of the state and the ruler, reflected the signs and symbols belonging to it. Of course, the design of coins minted by previous rulers in the past also played an important role in the formation of coins. In most cases, the changes made to coins are characterized only by changing the name of the ruler. For example, the coins of the Anushteginid state were also minted based on the coins of the Seljuks in the early periods, but later they were minted on the model of the coins of the conquered territories. That is, while the coins of the Anushteginid rulers from Ala ad-din Atsiz to Ala ad-din Takash were minted on the model of the coins of the Seljuks, during the reigns of Ala ad-din Muhammad and Jalaluddin Manguberdi, the models were taken from the coins minted in the conquered territories. In particular, coins with the image of a horse also came through the coins of the Ghurid state, not the Seljuks. Because such coins began to be minted only after 1206 by Ala ad-din Muhammad, such images are not found on the coins of other Anushtegini rulers. From this we can conclude that the coins of the Anushtegini state were not always used in the formation of coins of the Seljuks. They were mainly shaped according to the traditions of each conquered territory, and there were no significant changes to the old coins. However, it should be noted that the characteristics of the coins of this period have not been extensively analyzed, and these conclusions are not conclusive. This, in turn, places a great responsibility on the shoulders of future researchers.

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