

MAIN TYPES OF CURRENCY NAMES

The naming of the currencies of different countries show a diverse picture. The oldest currency types formerly referred to a unit of weight, and these turned into the most famous names. Similarly, popular was the use of the 'gold' meaning lexeme for naming coins, but the different materials, especially the squirrel pelt, also had a significant "career". From numerals, the pillars of the decimal system, the ten and (in the case of subunits) the hundred plays an important role. A typical naming method is the use of the symbols on the coin (crown, spear, lion, shield, flower). In South America, coins with proper noun names are popular, from Columbus to Simon Bolívar. One of the most well-known currencies, the *dollar* was named after a toponymy, and this is typical in the case of many African currencies.

Hereinafter, I provide a short, not exhaustive etymological overview of the most common currencies, including some exotic naming. (See the literary sources in the entries of the dictionary.)

1) UNIT OF WEIGHT

drachma (Greek) 'a handful of (metal pieces)' > *dirham* (Arabic), *dram* (Armenian)

iraimbilanja (Malagasy) 'one iron weight'

lira (Italian, Turkish), *livre* (French) < Latin *libra* 'scale; pound weight' (0.32 kg)

mace (Chinese, Far Eastern) < Malay *mās* < Sanskrit *māsha* 'Indian unit of weight' (0.97 gram)

mark (German, Finnish) < Middle Latin *marca* 'weight and monetary unit' (half a pound silver)

metical (Mozambican) < Arabic *mithqāl* unit of weight (4.25 grams)

ouguiya (Mauritanian) < Arabic *ūgīya* 'ounce'; *uncia* (Latin), *oncia* (Italian) < Lat. *uncia* < Gr. *onkos* 'weight, load, mass'

peso (Spanish) < Lat. *pensum* 'weight of wool to be handed over daily' (> 'task, duty')

pound (United Kingdom) < Lat. *pondus* 'weight, weight of pound' (English pound: 0.453 kg)

shekel (Hebrew) (> Persian *siglos*) < *šákal* ‘to weigh’
tael (Chinese, Far Eastern) < Malay *tahil* ‘weight’; *tola* (Nepalese) < Sanskrit *tulā* ‘weight’
talanton (Greek), *talentum* (Roman) < Gr. *talanton* ‘scale (pan); weight’ (the Attican was 26.2 kg)
tangka (Tibetan), *tanga* (Indian, Tajik), *taka* (Bangladeshi) < Sanskrit *tan(g)ka* ‘weight, silver coin’.

2a) MATERIAL: GOLD

altyn (Old Turkish, Russian) < Turk. *altın* ‘gold’
auksinas (Lithuanian) < Lith. *auksas* ‘gold’
aureus (Roman) < Lat. *aureus* ‘gold, made of gold’
daric (Persian) < Old Persian **dari-* ‘golden-’
gulden (Dutch) < Du. *goud*, *gouden* ‘gold’
øre, øre (Scandinavian) << Lat. *aureus* ‘gold’
złoty (Polish) < Pl. *złoto* ‘gold’;

2b) MATERIAL: SILVER

argenteus (Roman) < Lat. *argenteus* ‘silver, made of silver’
mōngō (Mongolian) < Mongolian ‘silver; money’
rupee (Indian etc.) < Sanskrit *rupyah* ‘wrought silver, silver coin’;
 colour of the silver coin:
albus (German) < Lat. *alba* ‘white’
birr (Ethiopian) < Amharic ‘white’
blanc (French) < Fr. *blanc* ‘white’
hvid (Scandinavian) < Danish *hvid* ‘white’
witten (German) < Middle Low German *witte* (today’s German *weiß*) ‘white’;

2c) MATERIAL: COPPER

as (Roman) < Lat. *aes* ‘ore, copper, copper casting, bronze’
đông (Vietnamese) < Viet. *đồng tiền* ‘copper coin’
khalkos (Greek) < Gr. *khalkos* ‘ore, copper, metal’
kobo (Nigerian) < Eng. *copper* ‘copper’.

3) NUMERALS

denarius (Roman) < Lat. *dēnārius* ‘containing or consisting of ten things’ < *deni* ‘ten by ten’ < *decem* ‘ten’ – see also *denier* (French), *dinar* (Serbian, Arabic), *deni* (Macedonian)
decime (French), *decimo* (South American) < Lat. *decimus* ‘ten(th)’

hào (Vietnamese), *ho* (Macanese) < Chinese *háo* ‘one-tenth’;
cent (subunit of the dollar and euro), *centas* (Lithuanian euro), *centavo*
 (peso, real, escudo), *centésimo* (lira, balboa), *centecimo* (boliviano),
centime (franc), *centimo* (bolívar, colón, dobra, guarani, kwanza,
 sol), *santim* (birr, Moroccan dirham), *santīms* (Latvian euro), *sene*
 (tālā), *seniti* (pa’anga), *sent* (Estonian kroon), *sente* (loti), *sentimo*
 (Philippine peso) < Lat. *centum* ‘hundred’
stotin (subunit of the Slovene tolar), *stotinka* (Bulgarian lev) < *sto* ‘hun-
 dred’
qindarka (subunit of lek) < Alb. *qind* ‘hundred’;
miliarense (Roman), *miliarésion* (Byzantine); *mil*, *mill*, *mille* (Maltese,
 Cypriot); *millime* (Tunisian, Egyptian) < Lat. *miliarensis* ‘ertaining
 to a thousand’, *mīllēsīmus* ‘thousandth’, *mille* ‘thousand’;
dreigrösch (Polish), *dreiling* (German) < Germ. *drei* ‘three’
tremissis (Roman) < Lat. *trē(s)* ‘three’ + *sēmīssis* (< *sēmis* ‘half’)
 (= one-third)
sestertius (Roman) < Lat. *semis-tertius* ‘third half’ (= two and a half);
baht (Thai) < Sanskrit *pāda* ‘quartered’
farthing (English) < OEng. *feorthing* < *feortha* ‘four(th)’
kwartnik (Polish) < Pl. *czwarty* ‘fourth’
paisa, *baisa* (subunit of rupee) < Hindi *paisā* < Sanskrit *padāmsa* ‘one-
 quarter part’ < *pāda* ‘quarter’ + *amśa* ‘part’
pie (subunit of *rupee*), *pya* (Burmese) < Hindi *pā’ī* < Sanskrit *pāda*
 ‘quarter’
quadrans (Roman) < Lat. *quadrans* ‘quarter (part)’
quattrino (Italian) < It. *quattro* ‘four’
vierchen, *vierer*, *vierling* (German), *fillér* (Hungarian) < Germ. *vier*
 ‘four’;
beşlik (Turkish) < Turk. *beş* ‘five’
khoums (Mauritanian) < Arabic *ḥamīs* ‘fifth; one-fifth’
quinarius (Roman) < Lat. *quinque* ‘five’
sengi (Zaire) < Fr. *cing* ‘five’;
sechsling, *sechstel* (German) < Germ. *sechs* ‘six’
sestino (Italian) < It. *sesto* ‘sixth’
szostak (Polish) < Pl. *szósty* ‘sixth’, *szóstka* ‘six’;
połtorak (Polish), *poltura* (Hungarian) < Pl. *połtora* ‘one and a half’
att (Laotian) < Laotian *att* ‘eight’
vintem (Portuguese) < Port. *vinte* ‘twenty’
toman (Iranian) < Persian *toman* ‘ten thousand’.

4) EPONYMOUS PATTERNS ON COINS (IMAGES, INSCRIPTIONS)

agnel (French) – lamb*angel* (English) – angel*cruzado*, *cruzeiro* (Brazilian) – cross*escudo* (Portuguese), *scudo* (Italian), *écu* (French) – shield*fiorino d'oro* (Italian), *florin* (Dutch), *forint* (Hungarian) – flower*griffon* (Dutch) – griffin*kopek* (Russian) – lance, spear*crown* (English), *krone*, *krona* (Scandinavian), *koruna* (Czech), *korona* (Hungarian), *kroon* (Estonian) – crown*kreuzer* (German, Austrian, Swiss), *krajcár* (Hungarian) – cross*leeuwendaalder* (Dutch) – lion*leu* (Romanian, Moldovan), *lev* (Bulgarian) – lion*libertás* (Hungarian) – Pro Libertate inscription*lipa* (Croat) – linden*Mariengroschen* (German), *máriás* (Hungarian) – Virgin Mary*phoenix* (Greek) – phoenix bird*quetzal* (Guatemalan) – quetzal bird*rappen* (Swiss) – raven*roda* (Portuguese) – wheel*stäbler* (Swiss) – pilgrim's staff*stelo* (Esperanto) – star*testone* (Italian), *testoon* (English) – head*thebe* (Botswanan) – shield*xeraphim* (Portuguese) – angel

5) FIGURE, SHAPE, SIZE

angster (Swiss) < Lat. *angustus* ‘narrow, tight’*anna* (Indian) < Hindi *ānā* < Sanskrit *aṇu(s)*- ‘small, tiny’*butut* (Gambian) – ‘something small’*denaro grosso* (Italian), *gros tournois* (French) < Lat. *denarius grossus* ‘thick denarius’ > *groat* (English), *groschen* (German), *grosz* (Polish), *garas* (Hungarian), *kuruş*, *qirsh* (Turkish), *ersh* (Egyptian), *ghersh* (Ethiopian) etc.*jiǎo* (Chinese) – ‘corner, angled’*keping* (Malaysian) – ‘small piece’*kyat* (Burmese) – ‘circular; flat’*lepton* (Greek) – ‘small, thin’*piastre* (Arabic, Indochinese), *pistole* (Spanish) – ‘thin metal plate’*plaque* (Luxemburgish) < Fr. *plaque* ‘thin metal plate’