

CAUCASIAN NUMISMATICS

PAPERS ON THE COINAGE OF KARTL-KAKHETI (EASTERN GEORGIA), 1744-1801



THE INDIAN SUMMER OF GEORGIAN STATEHOOD: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OUTLINES OF KARTL-KAKHETI HISTORY, 1744-1801

By Irakli Paghava

The beginnings of unified Kartli-Kakheti date back to 1735, when the Ottoman yoke in eastern Georgia was shattered by Nadir Shah's ongoing successes in restoring the Safavid heritage. While the major representatives of the Kartli branch of the royal Georgian dynasty of Bagrationi had left the political scene by fleeing to the Russian Empire from the Ottomans, the Kakheti branch remained in Georgia. Its leader at the time was Teimuraz II, a shrewd and a courageous diplomat and statesman, apt at manoeuvring between Turks, Persians and Russians. Fishing in turbid waters, he availed himself of the opportunities provided by siding with Nadir Shah and managed to extend his control over Kartli in addition to his ancestral Kakheti. The gains from submission to Nadir Shah (whose encroachments cost Georgia a

lot¹) culminated in 1744. The Afsharid monarch was tolerant in religious issues and was dependent on Teimuraz for securing the north-western flank of the revived Iran and cutting the Ottomans off from the Daghestanis and mutinous Shirvan. He permitted Teimuraz to be crowned according to Christian rite as King of Kartli in Tiflis, but Kakheti was retained as well, as Teimuraz was granted permission for his son and successor, Erekle, to be crowned as King of Kakheti. With this, the two large Georgian provinces, covering all of eastern Georgia, became unified *de facto*. However, the coexistence with the increasingly paranoid and oppressive Afsharid leader was by no means easy. The murder of the despot in 1747 (heralding a decades-long era of

¹ It would suffice to mention that, at his coronation at the qurultai in the plains of Mughan, Nadir Shah presented his nobles with 8,000 Georgian slaves.

internal strife in Iran) was a turning point in the revival of at least eastern Georgia.



Nadir Shah

In the ensuing period, two Georgian Kings achieved significant success at the cost of several bloody battles: they managed to repel the threats from Azad Khan Afshar and Muhammad Hasan Khan Qajar, and curbed the ambitions of the leaders of the Shaki and Qarabagh khanates. Georgian hegemony was asserted to the north of the Araxes River, some of the khanates even paying tribute to Tiflis. However, the gangs of marauding Daghestanis, pushed down to the valleys by the demographic explosion, remained a constant source of danger and instability. Moreover, when under a large-scale attack by the highlanders, Kartl-Kakheti could not always even afford to challenge the invaders in the field, as proved by the siege of Qvareli fortress in 1755.



Teimuraz II

In 1762, Teimuraz II died in Russia during one of his usual diplomatic overtures. Erekle ascended the throne of Kartli, and eastern Georgia was now unified *de jure* as well. The renewed Georgian state was a "one-man show", as W. Allen put it, Erekle II being that man. But then we have to state, that the protagonist failed, and the show ended in national tragedy. Renowned in Persia, Russia and Turkey, Erekle II was illustrious in the West as well². He left fond memories of himself among Georgians (no doubt, reinforced by the centuries-old Russian censorship imposed on the Georgian historical awareness), but the objective assessment of his reign and what it resulted in would leave no doubt. Erekle II inherited an established and influential state which he had been constructing beside his perhaps more cautious father, a state enjoying at least a limited hegemony throughout the Caucasus. Thirty-six years later, he left his successor a weak polity without an effective army or reliable allies, but with halved population, pillaged capital, destroyed industry and embittered enemies. Kartl-Kakheti, once so glorious, was easily absorbed by the Russian Empire, which Erekle II invited and let into south Caucasus himself, only 3 years after the demise of this ill-fated Georgian king.

Nevertheless, thus far, the prospects were encouraging. By 1763, Erekle II had reached an accord with Karim Khan Zand, who had eventually united most of Iran. In exchange for Erekle's very ostentatious submission, the *vakil*, a peaceful realist, acknowledged Kartl-Kakheti's dominance to the north of the Araxes, and never crossed this frontier up to his death in 1779. However, Erekle II had to crush the internal opposition from among the nobility of Kartli, a forerunner of the future internecine tensions. The king also meddled in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-1774 on the Russian side. Participation in the war drained much of the resources of the country, while the Russian expeditionary corps under Count Todtleben made an attempt to depose Erekle and to annex the country. Having contributed most to the campaign, Kartl-Kakheti received nothing in return; on the contrary, Erekle's balanced system of dependencies with the regional powers was undermined.

In the early 1780s the situation remained unstable. Kartl-Kakheti regained its standing among the khanates, but was suffering much from the incessant raids of Daghestanis instigated by Istanbul money as the tensions grew between the Ottoman and the Russian Empires at the outset of a new round of hostilities. Meanwhile, a renewed struggle for power in Iran was posing some potential threat as well. Erekle II, now already over sixty, also had to be concerned about the claims of the representatives of the Kartli branch of Bagrationi, favoured in Russia and elsewhere. A desire to ensure the throne for his own line along with a distrust, perhaps not unfounded by that time, of his own forces, were probably the underlying reasons which forced the king to take a fateful step. In 1783, he concluded the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire, acknowledging the suzerainty of the latter in exchange for the promise of military protection, on the assumption that Kartl-Kakheti would be independent in domestic affairs.

According to an admission made in 1801 by a Russian statesman: "the protectorate which Russia granted Georgia in 1783 had dragged this unfortunate land into an abyss of misfortune which led to its complete exhaustion" [Lang, p. 232]. The consequences were truly disastrous and it did not take them long to become apparent. Khans, whom Erekle used to manipulate using their mutual rivalries, were united by fear of the Russian conquest they already foresaw. The Ottomans incited Omar (Umma), Khan of the Avars to attack Kartl-Kakheti in 1785. He inflicted great loss and managed to retreat unchecked, imposing on Erekle II an annual tribute. France, so influential in the Near East, was also antagonised by the Russian advance. Even the Tatar (Muslim) nomads residing in Erekle's dominions emigrated to the neighbouring khanates, depriving the Georgian state of tax-payers and the light cavalry they used to provide. In 1787, in expectation

² Friedrich the Great was ascribed the saying: "Moi en Europe, et en Asie l'invincible Hercule" [Allen, p. 201].

of a new war with the Ottoman Empire, Russian detachments, stationed in eastern Georgia in accordance with the Treaty of Georgievsk, abandoned Erekle II during the campaign against Ganja, and left the country they had an obligation to protect for the north Caucasus. The betrayed king had to yield to Ottoman pressure and even send the Sublime Porte hostages – Kartl-Kakheti stayed out of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1787-1792.

In 1788-1790 Erekle II managed to subjugate the Ganja Khanate again, and resettled the refugee nomads back. When presented with a unique chance of incorporating western Georgia into his Kingdom, however, he failed to take advantage of it, thus losing the last opportunity to unify the major part of the nation. Generally, the aged king was not capable of controlling the large royal family anymore, and the ambitions of his numerous sons led to a pronounced decentralisation of the state.



Erekle II

Meanwhile, in 1791, Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, emerging as a victor from the war in Iran, started to subdue the south Caucasian principalities. Erekle II applied to the Russian Imperial court in 1792 for the military protection envisioned by the Treaty of Georgievsk, but was denied it. Agha Muhammad Khan then had to divert his attention from the Caucasus. However, he returned in 1795. Erekle II, who, strangely enough, still counted on the Russian Empire to adhere to its obligations, shortsightedly refused to yield to Agha Muhammad Khan's demands to repudiate the alliance with the Russians and acknowledge Persian suzerainty again. The king desperately begged the Russian administration to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty of Georgievsk and send troops to Kartl-Kakheti, but in vain. The Qajar leader advanced into Kartl-Kakheti, defeated the hastily mobilised and scanty Georgian army, occupied and plundered Tiflis, enslaving up to 20 thousand of the inhabitants of the country. Even then, the deserted king did not accede to Agha Muhammad Khan's demands to give up an "alliance" with the Russians in exchange for the safety and indemnification on condition that Kartl-Kakheti would become a vassal principality within the Qajar realm. In the winter of 1795-1796, Agha Muhammad Khan gave orders to detain Russian vessels and merchants. In the spring of 1796, Russian troops, under the pretext of taking vengeance for the demolition of Tiflis, started their conquest of the south Caucasus by taking the field against the khanates. The death of Catherine II, however, caused the Russians to retreat from the south Caucasus in that same year. Reassured, Agha Muhammad Khan advanced beyond the Araxes in 1797, threatening Kartl-Kakheti again, but was murdered by

two of his slaves, one of them a Georgian. Several months later, in January 1798, Erekle II died.

Giorgi XII, the last King of Kartl-Kakheti, was not an untalented person, but the inheritance left by his father would have dismayed even a more gifted ruler. Fath Ali Shah Qajar, Agha Muhammad Khan's nephew and heir, was advancing beyond the Araxes and requesting the submission of the country. The internal discordance instigated by Erekle II's Queen Dowager, Darejan, and her sons (half-brothers of Giorgi XII) constituted yet another factor debilitating the state. Giorgi XII thought about altering Kartl-Kakheti's foreign policy³, by perhaps seeking Ottoman or Qajar patronage⁴. He cancelled this plan, however, after his son, Prince Davit, the heir to the throne, returned from Russia; the latter had been in Russian military service in 1787-89 and 1797-98 and took a pro-Russian stance. Moreover, faced with the threat of civil war and overwhelming disintegration of the body politic, the king, virtually bedridden by dropsy, proposed to Paul I of Russia that Kartl-Kakheti be incorporated into the Russian Empire directly in exchange for respecting Giorgi's dynastic prerogatives and providing him with annual allowance and estates in Russia (*Petitionary Articles*). The Russian government naturally approved the conditions, and Georgian ambassadors set out from Saint Petersburg for Georgia to secure official ratification. There is not much doubt that Giorgi XII would have virtually sold his country by confirming the Act of Incorporation into the Russian Empire, but this ill-starred and poor-spirited king did not live long enough to do that, dying on 28 December 1800. As a result, from a legal point of view, the ensuing annexation of the kingdom by the Russians was certainly illegal, and raised a question of its voluntary character. Moreover, at some point Paul I changed his mind and decided to annex Kartl-Kakheti unilaterally and without delay. On 18 December, i.e. before any news of the death of the Giorgi XII could have reached Saint Petersburg (he was, after all, still alive), Paul I signed a manifesto declaring Kartl-Kakheti annexed to the Russian crown, and saying nothing about the retention of the Bagrationi dynasty as titular rulers of the country.



Paul I of Russia

The conflicting instructions gave rise to a certain confusion. Moreover, it was impossible to move more Russian troops into

³ By repeatedly failing to fulfil its obligations to provide military support, the Russian Empire undeniably forfeited any legal right to demand Kartl-Kakheti's continued adherence to the Treaty of Georgievsk.

⁴ It is noteworthy that, while in Egypt, Napoleon attempted to negotiate with Kartl-Kakheti – a French envoy had set out for Georgia, but was intercepted by the Pasha of Akhaltsikhe [Lang, p. 229, footnote 6].

Georgia over the Greater Caucasus mountain range in winter time. These circumstances restrained the Russian officials in Georgia in charge of the Russian detachments already deployed there – Prince Davit managed to achieve the effective status of prince-regent of Kartl-Kakheti by 15 January and enjoyed it till May 1801. Nevertheless, in September 1801, Alexander I, the new Russian emperor published the manifesto confirming the annexation of Kartl-Kakheti to the Russian crown⁵ - the Georgian state of Kartl-Kakheti ceased to exist.

A thorough analysis of the reasons behind the break-up of the Georgian statehood in Kartl-Kakheti is not an easy task. The general failure to modernise Georgian society rapidly enough as well as Georgians' touching but naïve faith in the goodwill of the co-religionist Russians were of utmost importance. However, the relative lack of vitality of the Kartl-Kakheti economy against the background of military feebleness were of no lesser significance. *Pecunia nervus belli* – it definitely came true in Kartl-Kakheti: the national economy was breaking down as no commercial enterprise was militarily protected, and hence could provide no money for building up the national military machine – a closed vicious circle.

Taking into consideration the incessant raids of Daghestanis and frequent, larger-scale military conflicts with various neighbours, Kartl-Kakheti was in desperate need of an effective army, but its military was still predominantly of a feudal nature, i.e. very obsolete. The representatives of the ruling dynasty like Teimuraz II, Erekle II and the latter's son, Prince Levan, were actively involved in military affairs. Already Teimuraz seemingly "formed a regiment of infantry after the European manner" [Allen, p. 194]. Later, in the reign of Erekle II the so called *ordinary army* (*jari morige*) was created. Generally speaking, mercenaries, mainly the Caucasian highlanders, played an important role in the contemporary Georgian military. However, no regular contract army was created – even the *ordinary army* consisted simply of a compulsory part-time service, which obliged all the able-bodied males of the kingdom of all estates to serve for one month a year. The conscripts received no remuneration, not even subsistence or arms, but had to provide all that themselves. In exchange, the king abolished the food (i.e. the natural) tax for the peasants. There do not appear to have been any funds for establishing a regular army by maintaining a reasonably large number of troops under arms permanently. The total income of Kartl-Kakheti in, say 1786, amounted to at least 2,200,000 abazis (400,000 roubles, assuming 1 rouble to be equal to 5.5 abazis), while the Daghestani mercenaries in Georgian service at the end of the century were paid 165 abazis (30 roubles) a month. By matching these data, we arrive at a somewhat arbitrary conclusion that all the annual income of Kartl-Kakheti would have probably have sufficed for maintaining an army of only about 1,100 men⁶. This number was definitely not adequate for defending the country. No wonder Erekle II was asking (fruitlessly) both France and Russia for subsidies for maintaining the detachments "on the European model".

The financial weakness of the state had its reasons. Nevertheless, there were some economic successes, particularly until the 1780s. Erekle II paid much attention to populating the more desolate territories within the kingdom and fighting the slave trade. It was forbidden to sell the serfs without their small plots of land; immigration was encouraged to the extent of forcible deportations. The king and the members of his family devoted some personal attention to agriculture. Trade with foreign countries increased; a new trade-route through the Greater Caucasus to the Russian Empire became available, giving rise to the towns of Ananuri and Dusheti; Tiflis trade turnover doubled by 1769 in comparison with 1760. The capital city had at least 30,000 residents by the 1780s, a not insignificant number for the

period – Shiraz, the Zand capital, had a population of 40-50,000, while Isfahan, the former Safavid capital, had 20-50,000; the influence of the third estate was correspondingly on the rise as well. Many enterprises sprang up or developed further, including pottery, a foundry producing cannons and cannonballs, a powder mill, dye works, a brickyard, glass works, a print shop, a tobacco processing plant, the vast majority of them being concentrated in the capital. The enterprises belonged to private citizens, or were farmed out by the king. Metal-mining and the metallurgical industry made particular progress. Erekle II invited specialists from the then Ottoman Empire and started mining gold, silver and copper from the deposits in the territory of the kingdom; the ore was mined and smelted at the newly established refineries; iron was mined in eastern Georgia for a short time as well.



Sulphur Bathhouse in Tiflis (sulphur springs gave the name to Tiflis-Tbilisi in the 6th century AD, tbili - means warm)

Eventually, however, the military weakness reduced these successes and even brought them to naught. Kartl-Kakheti suffered a lot from the Daghestanis, whose raids into Georgia (as well as other areas of the south Caucasus) became endemic after the death of Nadir Shah. Much of the state revenue had to be spent on buying off their chieftains and on paying ransoms for the enslaved countrymen. The highlanders made the most of the base they were provided by the Ottomans in the Akhaltsikhe Pashalik (in south-western Georgia): the Daghestanis used to take refuge there from Georgian troops chasing them, as well as to sell to the Turks the slaves captured in both eastern and western Georgia. While Georgian kings were sometimes able to beat the larger Daghestani forces in the field, no efficient and sustainable system was established for at least checking the incessant and numerous raids undertaken by the smaller bands of say ten to several hundred men in number. As no-one had a guarantee to be spared and all lived under an imminent threat, sedentary life in the country was intolerable, being mostly reduced to hasty travel between the fortified localities (in addition to the major fortresses, there were towers in every village for sheltering the country folk at night). But even there, the population was not safe: for instance, at Gori, the third largest city in Kartl-Kakheti, the citadel was filled at sunset with townfolk and peasants and strict rules were observed to guarantee the safety of the sheltered people. On one occasion, even the king himself was refused admittance when he arrived after sunset. No wonder the implications of all this were disastrous. Agriculture, based, as it was, on medieval serfdom, could not endure the military instability. Famines were not uncommon; the peasants were impoverished. Commerce was stagnant, at best. Internal custom barriers played a negative role, but it was the prevailing insecurity that was really paralysing. Merchants had to travel armed from head to foot under a constant threat of being deprived of their property and being enslaved or murdered. Understandably enough, the majority preferred to liquidate their businesses locally and transfer their capital as well as emigrate to the much safer cities of the Russian Empire. Generally speaking, the incapacity of the Georgian crown to

⁵ Russian soldiers with fixed bayonets surrounded the Sioni Cathedral in Tiflis where the manifesto was administered to the nobility and the prominent townsmen. Those who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Russian Emperor were taken into custody.

⁶ According to the source, Giorgi XII employed 1,200 Daghestanis for 30 roubles a month [Kakabadze, p. 47].

create a safer environment for commercial operations alienated the third estate, particularly the traders. One has to note that much of the contemporary Georgian bourgeoisie consisted of ethnic Armenians and, to a lesser degree, Jews. The wealthy and quite influential merchants used to support the Georgian statehood only in as far as it was able enough to provide them with stability favouring the commerce. As soon as the situation changed for the worse, the Armenian businessmen⁷ naturally became prepared to assist and did assist any foreign power (Qajars, Russian Empire) capable of providing law and order even at the expense of yielding to the submission and even annexation of Kartl-Kakheti. The military feebleness of the state is well illustrated by the fate of the mining enterprises initiated by Erekle II. He was compelled to cease the mining of the iron-ore deposit in Kvemo (Lower) Kartli because of Daghestani raids. As to the silver and copper mines, where some gold was produced as well, they were targeted by the enemy during the two major invasions, by Omar Khan in 1785 and Agha Muhammad Khan in 1795. In both cases, the Georgian army could not intervene, and many artisans were abducted while the smelteries were put out of business. The incursion of 1795 had a particularly negative impact on the industry - Qajar troops pillaged Tiflis, destroying all the enterprises concentrated there; not all were restored after Agha Muhammad Khan's retreat. Erekle II genuinely attempted to develop trade and industry, but his overt, pro-Russian policy, alienated the neighbouring Muslim states, and undermined the business environment for Kartl-Kakheti citizens both within the country and abroad. It would suffice to say that, in the wake of signing the Treaty of Georgievsk, Georgian and Armenian merchants were attacked and pillaged in the markets of Turkey and Persia. The customary annual interest rate for loans in cash ran up to 33-50%, reflecting both the lack of available capital and the risk of lending money in such an unstable country. All this resulted in the reduction of the population of Kartl-Kakheti from about 350,000 in the early 1780s to 200,000 by the end of the century.

The political and economical history of Kartl-Kakheti is well reflected in its coinage; the latter, in its turn, provides a valuable insight into contemporary affairs. Tiflis, the main city of Kartli province, was the only mint of the Kartl-Kakheti kingdom. Imitations of a certain type of Tiflis coins might have been minted in Ganja, Shaki, or elsewhere in the region. The mint practiced a policy of open minting. It was farmed out, but the king seemingly retained control over its produce, having initiated several monetary reforms. In the early years, the mint had a very close connection with Persia and followed the Persian monetary types, but this relationship died out completely by 1765/6. Silver was the primary currency metal, gold being of much lower importance. Copper coins were abundant and played a notable role in petty trade. Georgian kings did not dare to appropriate the right of *sikka* to express their sovereignty overtly, and therefore all the coins from precious metals were minted in the name of the foreign (Persian) rulers. After 1765/6, however, a distinctly "Georgian" type was established.

Gold was coined in Kartl-Kakheti only sporadically: in addition to the scarce coins in the name of Nadir Shah and Shahrukh, there are only literary data on minting gold currency in Tiflis. The electrum coins of Erekle II, constituting a hybrid type struck with the dies used for minting silver and copper coins, are most probably *novodels* of a later period.

Tiflis silver coins form several almost uninterrupted series duly struck according to Persian types, firstly in the name of the Afsharids (Nadir Shah, Ibrahim, Shahrukh) and, later, Karim Khan Zand. From 1765/6, silver coins of a type unique to Georgia were minted, with Karim Khan's invocation, but without any Islamic creed. The weight standard was changed as well. The rupi, first introduced by Nadir Shah, was dropped soon after his death and the principal denomination became the abazi (abbasi), with its fractions and, rarely, multiples.

Georgian copper coinage showed even more variation and became national in appearance quite early. Only copper coins had legends in Georgian. The sequence of the types testifies well to the political ambitions and status of the kings and rulers of Kartl-Kakheti. Types with the following designs were struck (in chronological order): *animal (lion?) left*, issued in the name of Teimuraz II; *bird tearing another bird (falcon tearing a pheasant?)⁸*, in the name of Teimuraz II and Erekle II; *coat of arms (of Bagrationi)*, *fish*, *double-headed eagle (Russian imperial coat of arms)*, *single-headed eagle*, all in the name of Erekle II; *fish* again, in the name of Giorgi XII; *peacock left*, in the "reign" of Davit the regent, but without mentioning his name. Initially only two denominations were minted: half- and quarter-bisti. In 1765 three more were added: the eighth of a bisti, bisti, and two and a half bisti (copper shauri/shahi); only the bisti was minted in large quantities, becoming the backbone denomination in later years. Countermarks were applied to both Georgian and foreign copper coins.

In summary, the unification of the eastern Georgian provinces of Kartli and Kakheti in the middle of the 18th century provided the Georgian nation with a unique chance of retaining and developing its statehood. However, this chance was not taken advantage of properly: the internal effort was definitely inadequate and this inadequacy caused at least as much harm as the external pressure. The fall of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, by far the strongest of the Georgian states, in 1801 had a domino effect, resulting in the step-by-step conquest and subjugation of the rest of the Georgian principalities and lands by the Russian Empire in the course of the 19th century. Georgian statehood, though for a very short time, was restored only in 1918.

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⁷ The stance of the merchants class would probably have been similar, though perhaps less subversive, even if comprised of ethnic Georgians.

⁸ The scene may have some connotation with the Tiflis foundation legend, and thus could serve as a city coat of arms. We would like to acknowledge Mr. G. Lobzhanidze, who expressed this idea in a private conversation.

A GROUP OF UNUSUAL SIRMA ABAZIS: DIE ANALYSIS

By Irakli Paghava and Gia Bebia

The aim of this paper is to publish and discuss 5 coins of Georgian sirma⁹ abazi¹⁰ type, which share, to a certain degree, some previously unpublished deviations from the standard in terms of design, date, digit shape and the spelling of the mint name. As far as we know, sirma coins like these have never been published in any work on Tiflis coinage of the 18th century.

Materials and Methods

While attempting to clarify the nature and the origins of these peculiar varieties we studied their normal counterparts, i.e. the sirma abazi coins preserved in various collections and published in the literature. In total, 394 sirma coins of all denominations, including 367 sirma abazis, were studied (for the list of works and collections of sirma abazi coins referred to please see Table 1): Similarities in terms of design and digit shape were sought and taken into account. Die analysis was performed. The relevant numismatic literature was studied as well.

Political background for minting sirma currency

The issuing of silver currency of sirma type was started in Tiflis, Georgia, by King Erekle (Irakli) II in AH 1179 (=1765/66)¹¹ [19, p. 237], shortly after his accession to the united throne of the two eastern Georgian provinces of Kartli and Kakheti in 1762. The latest specimens with confirmed dates bear the year AH 1213 (=1798/99)¹² [19, pp. 248-250], and may have actually been

issued by Erekle's son and successor, Giorgi XII (XIII¹³), the last King¹⁴ of Kartli-Kakheti (1798-1800).

Making good use of the turmoil Nadir Shah's death caused in Iran, Erekle's father, Teimuraz II (King of Kartli in 1744-1762), and Erekle II (1744-1762 King of Kakheti, 1762-1798 King of Kartli-Kakheti) managed to consolidate the power of the two Georgian kingdoms and initially achieved impressive success¹⁵ in securing eastern Georgia¹⁶ from Iran¹⁷, and even in expanding their sphere of influence over much of the territory to the north of the Araxes river (particularly Ganja, Iravan and Nakhjawan khanates, at times upon the Qarabagh khanate as well)¹⁸ [14, pp. 148-149, 153, 178, 207; 4, pp. 518, 614-615, 622].

But the power of the state created by Teimuraz II and his son in eastern Georgia was far behind that of, say, the United Georgian Kingdom of the 12th-13th centuries, when the Christian Georgian kings, Demetre I¹⁹, Davit V, Giorgi III, Giorgi IV, Davit VII Ulu²⁰, proudly dared to put the title "Sword of the Messiah" (حسام المسيح) on their coins in Arabic [19, pp. 77, 81-82, 96, 99-100, 135-137, nos. 46, 49-51, 63, 65, 65a, 80; 13, p. 21, #9; 7, pp. 60-62, 66-68, nos. 53, 55-56, 66-70; 8, pp. 71-73, 77-79, nos. 58, 60-62, 71-75; 6] (possibly as a reaction to contemporary Islamic titles like "Sword of Religion" or "Sword of Allah" [5, p. 246]). In the second half of the 18th century, the Georgian authorities had to content themselves with developing a design, which was "acceptable to Muslim and Christian alike, bearing an unexceptionable Qur'anic formula, but without mention of either Muhammad's name or those of the Georgian princes" [13, p. 109;

⁹ *Sirma* (or *sirma vertskhli*, i.e. *sirma silver* in Georgian) was an official term extensively used to designate this group of coins in the contemporary documents of the 18th century. [8, p. 158]. Interestingly enough, the term was sometimes used even in the official documentation pertaining to the 19th century, to 1851-1853, as well [12, p. 120], when the major part of Georgia, including eastern Georgia and Tiflis, had already lost its independence and was within the boundaries of the Russian Empire. The word *sirma* means "golden or silver yarn or embroidery, also figuratively: rays" in Georgian [20, pp. 1062-1063]. According to the explanatory dictionary that Sulxhan-Saba Orbeliani, a venerated Georgian scholar and public figure, compiled in 1685-1716, i.e. at least half a century before sirma abazis were first issued, *sirma* was a word of foreign (Persian) origin and meant "gold hair", i.e. gold thread/yarn [18, p. 94; 17, pp. 605-606].

¹⁰ *Abazi* is a Georgianised name of the originally Persian denomination, *abbasi* [13, pp. 95-96].

¹¹ There exists a sirma abazi with a date that looks like 1166 (AH 1166 =1752/3), which corresponds to the reign of Teimuraz II (Erekle II's father), and was even erroneously considered to be his issue [13, pp. 109-110], but it may be 1199 (1199 AH = AD 1784/5), with the tops of the 9's left open [2, p. 140]. The digit 6 on sirma coinage was always depicted lopsided to the right. The more or less continuous minting of sirma abazis started in 1179 AH (=1765/66) only, whereas, before that, silver coins in the name of Shah Rukh Afshari and Karim Khan Zand were minted in Tiflis in 1170 and in 1177-1179 AH (correspondingly 1756/7 and 1763/4-1765/6) [19, pp. 234-235, 237-238]. Pakhomov published a sirma coin (calling it a half-abazi but giving the weight of 0.75 g, which conforms to a shahi) dated 1177, from the State Hermitage (Russian Federation) collection, which in his opinion was probably a muling, produced by using an old obverse die with the date 1177 after AH 1179 [19, p. 238]. Unfortunately the scholar did not consider it necessary to provide the image of the coin. That could either have confirmed Pakhomov's statement once and for all, or refute it, as the obverse of a 1177AH coin should have a different design from the sirma issues.

¹² We agree with Pakhomov's argumentation and share his opinion that, so far, no 1214 and 1215 AH sirma coins have been found with undoubted dates and that, based on the available data, 1213 AH should be considered the final date for this series [19, pp. 248-250].

¹³ King Giorgi XI (also known as Gurgin Khan) had two reigns and hence was considered to be both Giorgi XI and XII - for more information on this person see [15]. Therefore, Giorgi XII was called both Giorgi XII and XIII.

¹⁴ In violation of the Treaty of Georgievsk of 1783, which placed the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti under the protection of the Russian Empire, the former was annexed by the latter in 1801 [14, pp. 245-253]. For the unfinished diplomatic negotiations of King Giorgi XII with the Russian Emperor (the so called *Petitionary Articles*) please refer to [14, pp. 235-240].

¹⁵ Lang gives a concise account of "international repercussions of the Georgians' feats of arms" [14, pp. 149-153]. France was "the first European power to make overtures to Erekle after his succession to the reunited throne of K'artlo-Kakhet'i" and made an "attempt to make Erekle into an anti-Russian catspaw of French foreign policy", this fact showing "the prestige" (or, as the authors consider, at least the *reputation*) "enjoyed by the Georgian king in Western Europe" [14, pp. 159-160]. In June, 1766, at the time when sirma abazis were first minted in Tiflis, the Duc de Choiseul, the French minister for foreign affairs, was even provided with false information that Erekle II had reportedly liberated Akhaltsikhe, a very important city in south-western Georgia, from the Ottoman yoke [14, p. 161].

¹⁶ Meanwhile, south-western Georgia, including Lazona, the territory inhabited by the Lazs, a Georgian ethnic group, was still subject to Ottoman rule. Western Georgia was divided into petty polities, the major ones being the Kingdom of Imereti and the princedoms of Samegrelo (Megrelia), Guria, and Abkhazia, all of which were under more or less effective and exacting Ottoman control.

¹⁷ However, "the Lezghis of Daghestan remained, by their mobility and inaccessibility, a constant source of danger" [14, p. 157]. The state and the population suffered greatly from their continuous raids and even invasions [14, pp. 154, 188-189, 193].

¹⁸ However, it is noteworthy that the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti did not manage to liberate the eastern Georgian lands which had been subdued by the Dagestanians in the course of the 17th-18th century. [4, pp. 426-428].

¹⁹ Pakhomov was not fully convinced that some of Demetre I's coins bore the title "Sword of the Messiah" [19, p. 79, no. 47].

²⁰ Japaridze expressed quite a noteworthy hypothesis that the issue of Davit VII Ulugh's coins with a proud expression "King of Kings" and "Sword of the Messiah" dates back to 1260-1261, when he rebelled against the Mongols, who had earlier subdued eastern Georgia [6, p. 89, Footnote 3].

11, p. 757]. However, the Shia creed with the names of Muhammad and Ali was omitted as we see, and a mostly independent, general design for the coinage was selected as well [7, p. 131; 8, p. 158]. On the other hand, there was evidently no attempt to assume the right of *sikka*, one of the traditional principal ways of proclaiming one's political independence in the Moslem world, by putting the Georgian king's name on his currency (interestingly enough, Erekle "allowed himself far more liberty" in his copper coinage [13, p. 112], but copper coins were traditionally considered local, autonomous coinage in Iran since at least Safavid times and well into the 18th century. [3, pp. XXIII-XXIV]). Moreover, the formula *یا کریم* (*O, Karim* or *O [God the] All-Bountiful*) appears on the obverse²¹: "use of this formula constitutes a complimentary play on the name of Karīm Khān Zand, regent of Persia (1759-79), on whose coins it commonly appears. This does not imply any political dependence of Erekle on Karīm Khān, but is rather a polite gesture of conciliation, calculated no doubt to make the Georgian currency acceptable throughout Persia" [13, p. 110] – in our opinion, the necessity to make "a polite gesture of conciliation" inherently implied a certain degree of "political dependence".

Standard sirma currency typology

The standard sirma abazis are of the following type²² (Figs. 4, 6-17):



Fig. 4



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Obverse:
Within a large cartouche (for the cartouche shape see the standard cartouche below)



The standard cartouche

²¹ And this is precisely why we consider this side of the sirma coins to be the obverse.

²² The design of the one shahi, 2 shahi and 6 shahi coins (the other 3 silver denominations) is somewhat different [19, pp. 238-239], but is not directly relevant to the subject of this work. However, looking for similarities in the shape of the digits and dating system we studied the sirma coins of those denominations as well.

Struck [in] Tiflis, arranged in the following way:

ب
تقلیس
ضرب

The date "is worked more or less haphazardly" [13, p. 110] somewhere into the field²³; there are also ornamental foliage motifs and clusters of dots.

The large cartouche is surrounded by a border of two linear circles, with a circle of large dots between them; the dots may be arranged like a chain of 3-dot clusters (in 1179-1193 AH, sometimes later as well, cf. Fig. 4) or a chain of dots (from 1193 AH, with some exceptions, cf. Figs. 6-17) [19, p. 239, footnotes 1-2].

A small cartouche (of various, more or less ellipsoidal shapes) with

یاکریم

O, Karim or O [God the] All-Bountiful

is intercalated into the double linear border at 12 o'clock. Sometimes it protrudes inwards from the double linear border, abutting onto the large cartouche.

Reverse:

الحمد لله
رب
العالمین

*Praise to God Lord of Both Universes*²⁴ (Qurān, I, i) [19, pp. 238-239; 13, p. 109]

Usually surrounded by a double linear border with a circle of large dots between them.

Unusual sirma coins

Although the currency type we are discussing was subject to virtually no significant changes over a period of about 35 years (AH 1179-1213, = 1765/66-1798/99)²⁵, thereby forming an extensive but uniform series [13, p. 110], there do exist some strikingly unusual specimens, of which we would like to publish the following 5 we have encountered, which share some common features.

Three main varieties may be distinguished among them. We have two specimens for each of the first two varieties and one specimen for the third variety at our disposal²⁶:

Variety 1

1.1



Fig. 1.1

Obverse:

Generally speaking, as the normal type; a double linear border with a chain of dots between the two linear circles. However, the following peculiarities are present and noteworthy:

- Certain fragments of the big cartouche are notably acuminate (see Cartouche 4, cf. Cartouche 1 - the standard type);

²³ Pakhomov distinguished and listed many sub-varieties of sirma coins according to the location and the arrangement of the digits of the date [19, pp. 239-249, table XIX, Figs. 1a-47a].

²⁴ D. Lang provided the following translation: "Praise to God, Lord of the Universe" [13, p. 109]. As far as we can judge, Pakhomov's translation [19, p. 238] is more precise.

²⁵ Even the *یاکریم* formula in the small cartouche "became stereotyped, and still appears on Georgian abazi twenty years after Kerim's death" [13, p. 110].

²⁶ All five coins are preserved in private collections in Georgia.



Cartouche 2

- There is no full date, which is untypical: normally all the digits were engraved on sirma coins, only zeros sometimes being omitted [19, pp. 239-249, plate XIX, 1a-47a]. Only two digits are present in this case: Arabic 2 and 1, both of a peculiar shape, not typical for the sirma coins (cf. to these very digits on Figs. 4, 6, 8, 10-17).

Reverse:

As the normal type.

(R, Weight 2.99 g; size 19-19.4 mm; die axis 1:30 o'clock).

1.2



Fig. 1.2

Obverse:

Die match with the obverse of 1.1, hence the same peculiarities.

- *یاکریم* (effaced and partially off-flan on variety 1.1) is engraved in a very strange way.

Reverse:

As the normal type.

(R, Weight 2.89 g; size 20-20.2 mm; die axis 8 o'clock).

Variety 2

2.1



Fig. 2.1

Obverse (a double linear border with a chain of dots between the two circles):

- A drastic and previously unpublished deviation from the norm: the ellipsoid small cartouche is at about 9:00 (9:15) o'clock and not at the usual 12:00. The cartouche is rotated 90 degrees to the left (see Cartouche 3 below, cf. the standard type, above);



Cartouche 3

- Top and bottom fragments of the large cartouche are notably acuminate, resembling the Variety 1 coins (cf. Cartouche 2);
- There is seemingly no full date. The Arabic digits 1 and 2 are present, followed by a dot, which in our opinion is more likely to be the *nuqta* of *ضرب*, or simply a coin field decoration, but not the Arabic digit 0. The element further to the right looks like a rather crude Arabic digit 7 or, quite possibly, is also a coin field decoration.

Reverse:

Die match with the reverse of 1.2: as the normal type.

(R, Weight 3.12 g; size 19.9-20.1 mm; die axis 3:30 o'clock).



Fig. 2

Obverse:

Die match with the obverse of 2.1, hence the same deviation and peculiarities. In contrast to 2.1, the ellipsoid small cartouche is almost completely on the flan and does contain **ياكریم**.

Reverse:

As the normal type.

(AR, Weight 3.03 g; size 18.6-20.2 mm; die axis 9 o'clock).

Variety 3**3.1**

Fig. 3

Obverse:

As the normal type (a double linear border with a chain of dots between the two linear circles) except for the following significant deviations:

- Certain fragments of the big cartouche are notably acuminate (as in Cartouche 2, cf. the standard variant, above);
- There is no full date. Only two digits are present: Arabic 1 and 2;
- The mint name Tiflis is spelled **تفلس**, i.e. without **ي**. Pakhomov knew about an AH 1183 sirma abazi seemingly from the then Moscow Rumyantsev Museum published as having the mint name spelt like this, but considered this spelling to be a publisher's mistake [19, p. 240, footnote 1]. This is the only coin out of 394 available to us with Tiflis spelled like this. We have never encountered any other sirma coin with this spelling. Judging by his footnote, Pakhomov had never seen another either [19, p. 240, footnote 1].

Reverse:

Like the normal type.

(AR, Weight: 3.04 g; diameter: 19.2 mm; die axis: 11:00 o'clock).

Prima facie these coins look more or less like normal, regular sirma abazis of Tiflis mint, because of their general appearance, normal weight, seemingly good silver standard, equal to that of standard coins of this type²⁷ (to our regret, no instrumental analysis method was available, but the coins did appear to be of high-standard silver), typical floral ornaments and clusters of dots. The size as well as the weight of these coins is normal too, and the latter fact, in conjunction with the seemingly high-standard silver content, seems to be of particular importance.

But a thorough examination reveals many uncommon features, even deviations from the norm, as already indicated

²⁷ The standard of sirma abazis is very high and was reported to be equal to 960 and 976 out of 1000 for two sirma coins studied by the cupellation method in 1943 [10] or to 937.5-979.2/1000, according to Pakhomov (no source for this information indicated) [19, p. 271], although there apparently also existed specimens with the silver content as low as 720/1000 [10]. Could that coin of low-standard silver be an imitation? Probably not, as that would most probably have been noticed and noted by the author of the paper. Further research of sirma currency metal standard is necessary.

above, which distinguish these coins from the regular undoubtedly Tiflis sirma abazis. Therefore, the origins of these coins need farther clarification - it is unclear, who minted them, where, and when. Getting answers to these questions would presumably help us in better realising the economical and political situation in the region.

Minting place

Taking into consideration the foregoing, one cannot be sure that these silver coins were minted at the Tiflis mint. They could well be imitations of the official Tiflis issues. Generally speaking, there do exist imitations of Georgian sirma abazis: they were mentioned by Kapanadze [8, p. 159, plate XIX, 235]. Unfortunately, probably due to the selected format and "genre" of the book (a student manual) the author did not provide a detailed description of these coins and confined himself to just stating that they were lighter, of lesser silver standard and inferior workmanship, while the image he provided is of mediocre quality [8, p. 159, plate XIX, 235]. Kapanadze expressed the opinion that these coins were issued in the Shaki Khanate [8, p. 159], but did not provide any reasoning for this view. In our opinion, based on the available information, one cannot exclude the possibility that those imitations were minted somewhere else, probably in some khanate(s) in south-eastern Caucasus, or maybe even by some Daghestanian ruler²⁸. Anyway, the description and the image of these "Shaki" imitations do not correspond to the full-weight and seemingly high-standard sirma abazis with the above-mentioned deviations that we are studying in this paper.

It is also noteworthy, that some coins bearing the mint name Ganja have the design elements typical of sirma coins²⁹ [1]; but there seems to be no connection with Ganja in the case of these coins. It can be pointed out, however, that some of the Ganja Khanate coins occasionally also have the invocation dislocated anti-clockwise from its standard position at 12 o'clock (Fig. 5³⁰).



Fig. 5

With no documentary evidence on these extraordinary sirma abazis, we had to limit ourselves to analysing the coins themselves, particularly the die impressions on the planchets. The die analysis method which we applied to sirma coins, for the first time ever to our knowledge, gave us quite valuable results, seemingly refuting the "imitations' version".

Firstly, some of the coins of Variety 1 and Variety 2 (Figs. 1.2, 2.1) share the same reverse die, which serves as solid proof that they were minted at the same mint, either stationary or mobile (the latter can not be excluded, but is highly improbable).

We had no access to the holdings of the Simon Janashia Georgian State Museum with its copious collection of sirma currency, which, already in 1955, comprised about 400 specimens [7, p. 30], a great many of which were probably sirma abazis, the commonest denomination. However, we have managed to study 367 sirma abazis either published in the numismatic literature or

²⁸ For the moment it is certainly impossible to say which polities could have been more inclined to imitate this common currency: those which were politically dependent on Kartl-Kakheti and, therefore, maybe better acquainted with Georgian coinage due to the more intensive political, military and economic links (Ganja, Iravan, Nakhjawan), or those which were independent from the Georgian kingdom and, therefore, maybe had more liberty to undertake the initiative of minting unofficial issues, basically, an illegal action.

²⁹ Dr Alexander Akopyan has authored yet another vast and very useful paper on this issue.

³⁰ We also know the specimens dated AH 1183 and 1188, kindly provided to us by Dr Alexander Akopyan.

available in private collections. Examining the sirma abazi reverses, we managed to find 5 die links: the Variety 1 and Variety 2 obverses are linked to 5 different obverses of what may be called regular Tiflis sirma abazis, via 2 shared reverses. Please see Chart 1: one Variety 1 and one Variety 2 coins share the same reverse with the AH 1203 sirma abazi (respectively, Figs. 1.2, 2.1, 9), while another Variety 2 coin (Fig. 2.2) shares the same reverse with an either AH 1201 or 1210 coin (Fig. 14) [19, p. 245, plate XIX, 30a] and three coins with different obverses but all dated AH 1211 (Figs. 15-17).

This proves that Variety 1 and Variety 2 coins were minted at Tiflis mint, despite the deviations from the norm that they bear. We did not manage to discover any die links for the Variety 3 coin, but in our opinion it would be safe to consider it to have been struck in Tiflis as well – its deviations are less pronounced than those of, say, the Variety 2 coins.

Time of minting

It is still unclear *when* these “unusual” sirma abazis were minted. The following observations may help us in specifying the time period when it could have happened:

- The coins of all 3 varieties have the double linear border with a chain of dots between the two linear circles (and not a chain of 3-dot clusters), which was typical for sirma abazis in AH 1193-1213, although with some exceptions [19, p. 239, footnote 1]; the coin diameter of the earlier issues is also usually bigger. So, we can probably assume that these coins were struck some time during the period AH 1193-1213 (1779/80-1798/9).
- The acuminate, large cartouche is characteristic of coins of all 3 varieties (on the coins of Variety 2 it is also rotated in addition to being acuminate). The acuminate large cartouche cannot be considered to be a decisive chronological marker as the more or less pronounced acumination of the large cartouche is present on many sirma coins of different years (can it be considered the style of the same craftsman? or an accidental result of copying the cartouches from the extant coins or dies created by different craftsmen?). However, it is noteworthy that the large cartouche is particularly acuminate on the coins dated AH 1201, 1203 and 1207 (respectively Figs. 7, 9, 11, cf. other abazis of the same years – Figs. 6, 8, 10; 12).
- The shape of the Arabic digits 1 and 2 on the Variety 1 coins are somewhat unusual, too bulky, in a sense. The closest matches we managed to find in terms of digit calligraphy were the sirma abazi coins dated AH 1201 and 1203, having the acuminate large cartouche as well (Figs. 7, 9, cf. Figs. 6, 8; 10).
- The coins of Varieties 1 and 2 are die-linked with sirma abazis dated 1203, 1211 and “121”, which may be either 1201, or 1210 with the zero omitted. The *terminus post quem non* for producing the reverse die used for minting some of both the Variety 1 and Variety 2 coins (the reverse of Figs. 1.2 and 2.1) is 1203; but of course it could have been produced earlier and then used again in AH 1203. The *terminus post quem non* for producing the reverse die used for minting some of the Variety 2 coins (the reverse of Figs. 2.2, 14-17) is either 1201 or 1210, depends on how we interpret the digits “121” on Fig. 14 [19, p. 245, plate XIX, 30a] (cf. Fig. 13); but of course this too could have been produced earlier.
- The coins bear some digits, evidently pertaining to the date, as well. On the coins of Varieties 1 and 3 these are the Arabic digits 1 and 2 (in an inverted order on the Variety 1 abazis?). On the coins of Variety 2 the date is also either “12”, or, less probably “1207” (or “127”). We have already expressed our opinion that the element resembling “7” on the Variety 2 coin (Fig. 2.1) looks much more like a field decoration. Pakhomov recorded the sirma abazi coins with the dates “12” and “120”, considering them to bear the date 1200 [AH] [19, p. 245, plate XIX, 28a-28c].

Taking all this into account, one may assume that the coins of all 3 varieties were minted in the 1200s AH (1785-1796), most probably in AH 1200. This dating seems to be quite solid for the Variety 1 and the Variety 3 coins; however, we are less sure about the Variety 2 coins. One of the latter has a reverse-link with the coins dated either AH 1201 or 1210, and dated AH 1211 (Figs. 14-17). If the Variety 2 coins were really minted in AH 1200, then it is unclear why the reverse die used for one of the specimens of this variety (Fig. 2.2) was not used for minting the sirma abazis dated AH 1202-1209 (there are none with this reverse in our sample of 364 abazis), for at least 8 years? Of course, sirma abazis like this might have been minted, but have missed our sample. Nevertheless, another idea seems to be more logical: that the decorative element resembling the Arabic 7 is indeed the digit 7, though a very defective one in terms of craftsmanship. We have two specimens minted utilising this obverse die (Variety 2, Figs. 2.1, 2.2) – one was minted with an old reverse die (once used for the AH 1203 abazi – Fig. 9), another one with a new (?) reverse die, which was later used for minting the abazis with the date 1211 (1210 as well?) on the obverse. However, in this case we would still have a 2-year (AH 1208-1209) gap, without the recorded usage of this reverse die. On the other hand, the 2-year gap is much shorter than the at least 8-year one, and this version is therefore more plausible.

Hence, for all these reasons we think that the abazi with the Arabic digits 121 will have been struck in AH 1210, and not in AH 1201, reducing the gap when its reverse die was not used from 9 years (AH 1202-1210) down to virtually nil, if the die continued to be utilised in the following year.

Conclusions:

The die analysis of 394 sirma coins that we performed allowed us to come to the following conclusions:

- The coins of all three varieties of these unusual sirma abazis were most probably issued in Tiflis, certainly so in case of the Varieties 1 and 2;
- The deviations from the norm of the abazis of all three varieties testify to the limits of what was seemingly considered to be tolerable, or could be at least sporadically produced at Tiflis mint, in terms of the design and the spelling of the mint name;
- The coins of Variety 1 and Variety 3 were in our opinion minted in AH 1200, while the coins of Variety 2 were minted either in AH 1200 or in 1207;
- The sirma abazi with the date “121” (Fig. 14) was probably minted in AH 1210 and not in 1201;
- A thorough research of the die links of the available sirma coins may yield very valuable results clarifying some enigmatic issues related to sirma currency;
- The sirma currency collection of the Simon Janashia Georgian State Museum may comprise many specimens that would enable the researcher to make significant advances in the sirma currency field of Georgian numismatics.

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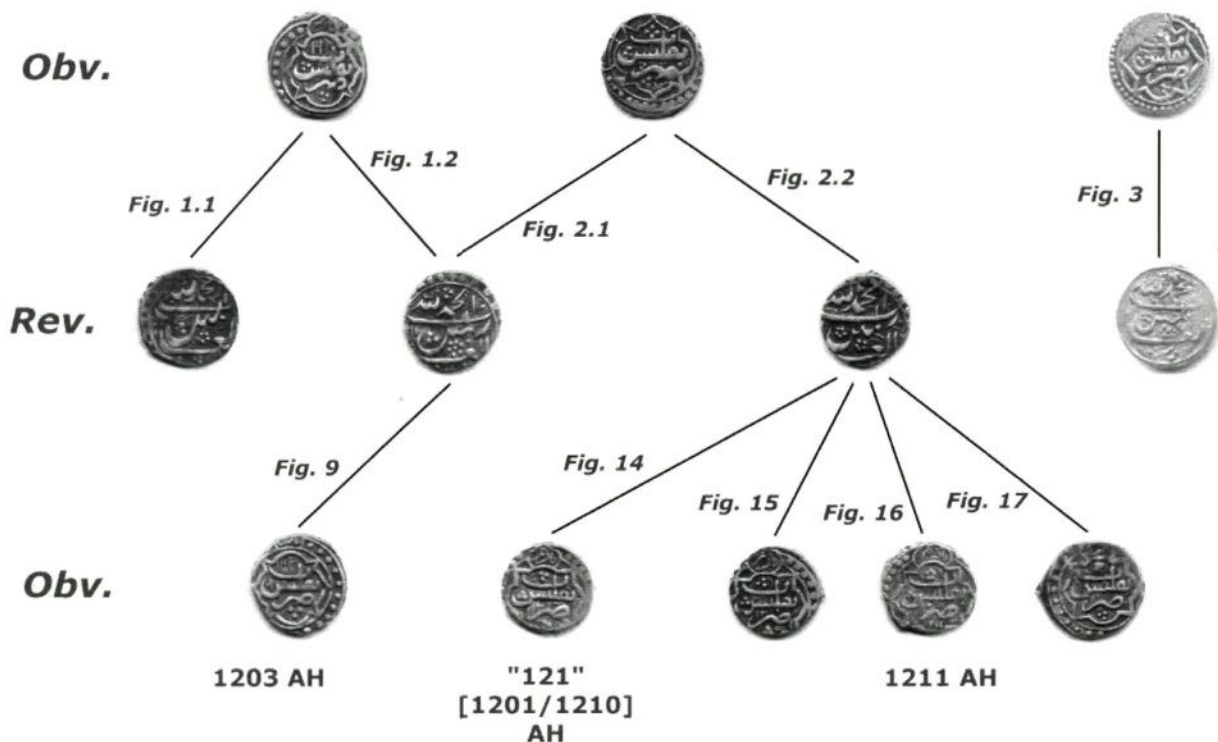


Chart 1

Table 1. Collections of sirma coins and numismatic literature publishing them

Collection / Publication	Number of Sirma Abazis Available	Number of Sirma Coins of Other Denominations Available	Total Number of Sirma Coins Available	Reference
R. Kebuladze. The Pkhoveli Hoard. 1975.	1		1	[12, plate I, #1].
D. Kapanadze ³¹ . Georgian Numismatics. 1955.	1	2	3	[7, plate XV, 188-190]
D. Kapanadze. Messengers of the Past. 1965.	1	1	2	[9, plates, 121-122]
D. Kapanadze. Georgian Numismatics. 1969.	1	1	2	[8, plate XIX, 232-233]
D. Lang. Studies in the Numismatic History of Georgia in Transcaucasia. 1955	4	1	5	[13, plate XIII, 2-6]
Ye. Pakhomov. Coins of Georgia. 1970.	11 ³²	4	15	[19, plate XVI, 146-160]
Sylloge of Coins of Caucasus and Eastern Europe. 2005.	26	4	30	[16, pp. 130-133, 1117-1146]
Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean Volume 9 Iran after the Mongol Invasion. 2001.	6	2	8	[3, plates 32-33, 652A-H]
Private collections.	213 ³³	5	218	
Zeno Oriental Coins Database ³⁴ .	103 ³⁵ (161 ³⁶)	7 ³⁷	110	[21]
Total:	367	27	394	

³¹ The sirma coins repeatedly published in the new editions of D. Kapanadze's work on Georgian numismatics were included only once.

³² Only one side is presented for 4 coins out of 11.

³³ Coins available for an immediate *de visu* study.

³⁴ One of the authors launched the Georgian Numismatics special project (<http://www.zeno.ru/showgallery.php?cat=1824>) within the framework of the Zeno Oriental Coins Database on January 28, 2005 and has been managing it ever since. The sirma coins posted to the database by 10 September 2008 were taken into account.

³⁵ Number of specimens from various collections not available for the immediate *de visu* study, but available via Zeno Oriental Coins Database.

³⁶ Total number of sirma abazi coins available at Zeno Oriental Coins Database. Some of them are available for immediate *de visu* study and are represented in the cell above.

³⁷ Some coins (10) in our opinion do not constitute official Tiflis issues and hence were disregarded.

VARIATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION AND ARRANGEMENT OF DATES ON SIRMA COINS: APPROACH TO DIE ANALYSIS

By Irakli Paghava

Thanks to the invaluable efforts of many generations of prominent scholars, the level of scientific awareness in the field of Georgian numismatics has now reached a remarkably high level. The milestone works of M. Barataev (Baratashvili), V. Langlois, Ye. Pakhomov, D. Lang, D. Kapanadze and many other researchers of recent times set new landmarks in the study of Georgian and related coinage and associated issues. The principal types of Georgian coins as well as their sequence have already been established and systematised, although it does not mean that the major breakthroughs like the discovery of new mints or hitherto unknown coins are not to be expected anymore. But we are now at a time when *extensive* research, i.e. the collection of new numismatic material, can be augmented by *intensive* research, in other words, a thorough study of the already available numismatic and paramismatic data.

As far as Georgian numismatics are concerned, die analysis is one of the research tools that may yield valuable results. In the past it was not used in any intensive manner in this area. We regard die analysis to be the comparative examination and assessment of even the minor particularities of the coins' design, including the establishing and analysis of die links between the maximum available specimens of coins of the same type. The results may be particularly informative when the method is applied not to rare coins, but to the coins available in quantity.

In our opinion, the so called sirma silver coinage minted in Tiflis, the capital of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti in eastern Georgia during the period AH 1179-1213 (1765/6-1798/9) constitutes an appropriate candidate for die analysis. These coins form a uniform series: the coin type became stereotyped and four denominations in silver were struck for decades normally without any change except for the date. Therefore, while there are hardly any major features to analyse, die analysis, i.e. the complex study of even the slightest peculiarities, may yield some worthwhile results. To do this, we need to identify some points of reference which would allow us to distinguish the varying specimens relatively easily. This is exactly the *objective* of this short paper – to review the arrangement and the composition of the dates on the sirma coins, as a point of reference for undertaking a die analysis of these coins. In doing so, we are going to revise the classification system proposed by Pakhomov. We also intend to publish some new date arrangement varieties of sirma abazi coins which were hitherto unknown.

Pakhomov, a prominent scholar, composed the first (and so far the only) comprehensive corpus of Georgian coins back in 1910 [3]. Unfortunately, due to the commencement of the First World War, the second part of his treatise, comprising the data on the series of sirma coins minted in Tiflis during 1179-1213 AH was published only posthumously in 1970 [4, pp. 236-250]. No matter when published, it has retained its importance until the present day. In this work, Pakhomov provided a hitherto unsurpassed analysis of this series of Georgian coins, throwing light on many previously uncertain issues and presenting a huge body of data [4, pp. 236-250]. Among other things, while listing the known coins for each AH year, Pakhomov labeled them with a combination of figures and Latin letters, distinguishing the coins of the same denomination and dated with the same year by digits/digit-like elements constituting the date, and by their location within the coin design, including the distance between different figures and their arrangement. The results were illustrated on a separate plate in his work [4, plate XIX] – we reproduce the section illustrating Pakhomov's designation system for sirma coins (*Plate 1*).

Tab. XIX

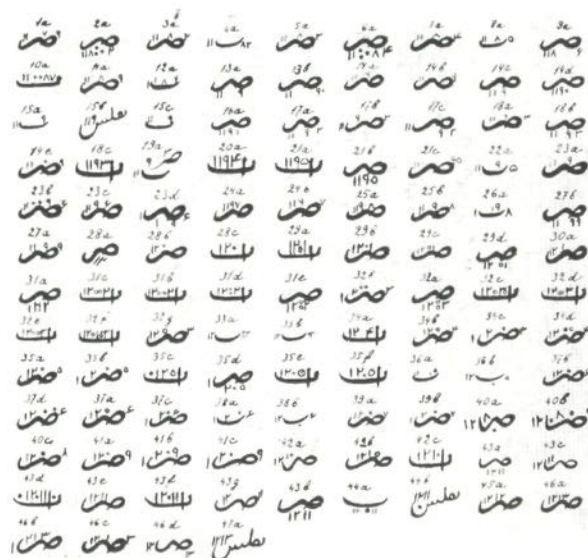


Plate 1 Pakhomov's designation system for sirma coins

These date peculiarities probably have no particular importance *per se*. Nevertheless, they may be quite useful for classifying the coins, and can form the basis for the initial categorisation of either obverses (in the case of 1½ abazi and abazi coins) or reverses (in the case of ½ and ¼ abazi coins)³⁸. Moreover, they may provide us with an easily recognisable set of traits which represent some pattern: either die-cutter's (or die-cutters') propensities or say the chronological trends in designing the coin.

Pakhomov's designation system, however advanced it was in its time, would now appear to be quite outdated. It is purely descriptive: starting with the year 1179, different coins of the same denomination bearing the same year are labeled with the same number, the date varieties being distinguished by Latin lowercase letters. For instance, for AH 1190 Pakhomov knew and listed two 1½ abazis: nos. 13a and 13b, five abazis: nos. 14a-e, and three ½ abazis: nos. 15a-c (*Plate 1*). The disadvantages of Pakhomov's system described above are evident: the variant designations are simple, but have no intrinsic relation to the date location/composition/arrangement; they can hardly be memorised and mean nothing without referring to *Plate XIX* of Pakhomov's work and hence are quite inconvenient for die analysis.

Moreover, sirma abazi coins are also well characterised by their borders, composed of dots between two linear circles. The dots may be arranged like a chain of dots or a chain of 3-dot clusters. This is an important marker which, we believe, should be taken into account as well. The borders on the 1½ abazi coins are to our knowledge always composed of a chain of cruciform 4-dot clusters, while on the ½ and ¼ abazi coins they comprise a simple chain of dots.

In view of the above as well as our ongoing research into the sirma currency, we considered it rational to elaborate a system in which each date arrangement and composition variety would have a designation that could be readily *read* off the coin and which would convey all the date-related information. In addition to that, we have attempted to include in our designations information on the coin borders as well. All the information should be presented not only in an easily perceivable format, but also in a format

³⁸ We consider the side with the invocation *Ya Karim* to be the obverse.

which would make it easy to indicate the variety both in writing and electronically, i.e. it should be reduced to a set of symbols easily typed in from the standard Latin keyboard.

According to the system we propose, the designation of the variety shall be composed of:

- Digits conveying the date, exactly as written on the coin, retaining the exact order, no matter whether fewer or more than 4 digits are present, including all circles or dots standing for zero or five if present; dots representing zeros to be indicated as “.”, circles representing “zero” (or possibly “five”) as a Latin letter “o”; the digit 5 shall be used only if there is a definite “five” (◦) on the coin, or the symbol is written right after the dot which serves as an unequivocal zero. It is a subject of dispute in some cases whether the circle represents a zero or a five. We, therefore, deliberately refrain from utilising the *digit* “0”. When the circles or dots are on top of each other, they are to be divided by a slash, for instance: “o/o”. When a digit is not seen but can be presumed to be, say, “1” (the standard first digit of all the dates on sirma coins), it is to be indicated in parenthesis.
- Coded identification of date location is to be placed after a hyphen (for the coding of the date location on the coin surface please refer to Chart 1);

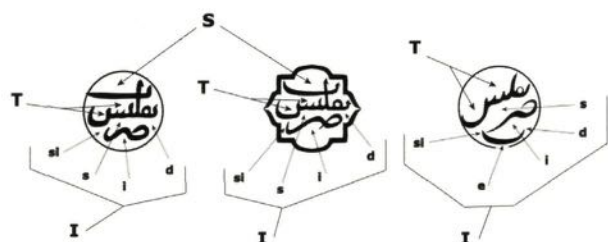


Chart 1

- Additional information on the margin in the case of the abazi coins: “(3)” to be added for the border made up by the chain of 3-dot clusters and “(1)” for the simple chain of dots. “(?)” can be used for the rare occasions when the marginal border is totally off-flan.
- Additional information on the layout: it is very important to remember that the codes we propose refer to the dies, and not to the coins themselves – it may, for example, be that abazi dies could have been used for striking the minor denominations of half- and quarter-abazi [4, p. 249], while the latter in their turn were evidently struck with the same dies [4, p. 239]. On the other hand, the dates may be arranged in a similar way on at least the 1½ and 1 abazi coins (cf. Chart 1). Therefore we propose to add a letter reflecting the die design typical to either denomination: *H* – for half-marchili (a synonym for 1½ abazi coin), *A* – for abazi coin (optional, as this is by far the most common denomination), and *M* – for minor denominations (uzaltuni and shauri, i.e. ½ and ¼ abazi coins).

Here is an example: instead of Pakhomov’s designation **29c** for an abazi bearing the date 1201 (cf. Plate 1, 29c; Fig. 1) and with dots arranged in the chain, we propose the designation **12o1-Is(1)A** or **12o1-Is(1)**. Although quite cumbersome, this designation is self-explanatory and hence much handier when working with a large quantity of sirma coins.



Fig. 1. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1201. Weight 2.93 g; size 18.2-19 mm; die axis 5:45 o’clock.

We also provide a full conversion table for Pakhomov’s designations (Table 1). This may serve as a whole set of examples.

AH date	Denomination	Old code	New code
1179	abazi	1a	1179-Isd(3)
1182	1½ abazi	2a	118./2-liH
	abazi	3a	1182-Isd(3)
	½ abazi	4a	1182-IsidM
1183	abazi	5a	1183-Isd(3)
1184	1½ abazi	6a	118./4-liH
	abazi	7a	1184-Car(3)
1185	¼ abazi	8a	118o-liidM
1186	1½ abazi	9a	1186-liH
1187	1½ abazi	10a	11..87-SH
1189	abazi	11a	1189-Isd(3)
	½ and ¼ abazi	12a	1189-IsiiM
1190	1½ abazi	13a	119-liH
	1½ abazi	13b	119.-liH
	abazi	14a	119-Is(3)
	abazi	14b	119-Isd(3)
	abazi	14c	119-li(3)
	abazi	14d	119.-li(3)
	abazi	14e	11.9-Isd(3)
	½ abazi	15a	119-IsidM
	½ abazi	15b	119-TM
	½ abazi	15c	119-liM
1191	abazi	16a	1191-li(3)
1192	abazi	17a	1192-li(3)
	abazi	17b	1192-Isid(3)
	abazi	17c	1192-Isii(3)
1193	abazi	18a	1193-Isd(3)
	abazi	18b	1193-li(3)
	abazi	18c	1193-S(1)
	½ and ¼ abazi	19a	1193-IsidM
1194	abazi	20a	1194-S(1)
1195	abazi	21a	1195-S(1)
	abazi	21b	1195-li(1)
	abazi	21c	1195-Isd(1)
	½ abazi	22a	1195-IsidM
1196	abazi	23a	1196-Isd(?)
	abazi	23b	11..96-Isd(?)
	abazi	23c	1196-Is(?)
	abazi	23d	1196-Isiid(?)
1197	abazi	24a	1197-Is(1)
	abazi	24b	1197-Isd(1)
1198	abazi	25a	1198-Is(1)
	abazi	25b	1198-Isd(1)
	¼ abazi	26a	1198-IsiidM
1199	abazi	27a	1199-Isd(1)
	abazi	27b	1199-li(1)
1200	abazi	28a	12-Ji(1?)
	abazi	28b	12.-Is(1)
	abazi	28c	12.-S(1)
1201	abazi	29a	12o1-S(1)
	abazi	29b	12.1-Is(1)
	abazi	29c	12o1-Is(1)
	abazi	29d	12o1-li(1)
1201/ 1210	abazi	30a	121-Is(1)
1202	abazi	31a	12./2-li(1)
	abazi	31b	12o o2-S(1)
	abazi	31c	12oo2-S(1)
	abazi	31d	12./2-S(1)
	abazi	31e	12o/o2-li(1)
1203	abazi	32a	12o/o3-li(1)

	abazi	32b	12..3-Isisd(1)
	abazi	32c	12o3o-S(1)
	abazi	32d	12oo3-S(1)
	abazi	32e	12° o3-S(1)
	abazi	32f	12o?o/o3-S(1)
	abazi	32g	12o3-Isd(1)
	½ and ¼ abazi	33a	12o/o3-IsidM
	¼ abazi	33b	12.3-IsidM
1204	abazi	34a	124-S(1)
	abazi	34b	12o4-Isd(1)
	abazi	34c	12.4-Isisd(1)
	abazi	34d	12.o4-Isd(1)
1205	abazi	35a	12.5-Isd(1)
	abazi	35b	12.5-Isisd(1)
	abazi	35c	.125-S(1)
	abazi	35d	12.5-Isii(1)
	abazi	35e	12.(.)-S(1)
	abazi	35f	12.5-S(1)
	½ and ¼ abazi	36a	12.5-IiM
	½ abazi	36b	12.5-IsiedM
1206	abazi	37a	12o6-Isd(1)
	abazi	37b	12.6-Isd(1)
	abazi	37c	12.6-Isis(1)
	abazi	37d	12..6-Isd(1)
	½ and ¼ abazi	38a	12.6-IsiidM
	½ abazi	38b	12.6-IsiedM
1207	abazi	39a	12.7-Isd(1)
	abazi	39b	12.7-Isisd(1)
1208	abazi	40a	128.-Isisi(1)
	abazi	40b	12.8.-Isisd(3)
	abazi	40c	12.8-Isd(1)
1209	abazi	41a	12.9-Isd(1)
	abazi	41b	12.9-Isis(1)
	abazi	41c	12.9-Isisd(1)
1210	abazi	42a	121.-Isis(3)
	abazi	42b	121o-Is(1)
	abazi	42c	121.-S(1)
1211	abazi	43a	1211-Ii(3)
	abazi	43b	1211-Ii(1)
	abazi	43c	1211-Isis(1)
	abazi	43d	.12.11.-S(1)
	abazi	43e	1211-Is(1)
	abazi	43f	12.11-S(1)
	abazi	43g	1211-Isd(1)
	½ abazi	44a	12.11-IeM
	½ abazi	44b	1211/-T
1212	abazi	45a	1212-Is(1)
1213	abazi	46a	1213-Is(1)
	abazi	46b	1213-Isis(1)
	abazi	46c	1213-Isd(1)
	abazi	46d	1213-Isii(1)
	½ and ¼ abazi	47a	1213-TM

Finally, we would like to publish some sirma abazis with date location/arrangement which were unknown for Pakhomov or at least were not published by him: **119.-Isd(3)**, **1191-Isd(3)**, **1192-S(3)**, **119...6-Isd(1)**, **12o/o3-S(1)**, **[1]2.4-Ii(1)**, **12o5-Isd(1)**, **12o6-Is(1)**, **12.8.-Isisd(1)** (Figs. 2-10; metrology information is provided in the captions).



Fig. 2. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1190. Weight 2.99 g; size 18.9-19.6 mm; die axis 1:30 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **119.-Isd(3)**



Fig. 3. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1191. Weight 3.02 g; size 19.0-19.8 mm; die axis 11:30 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **1191-Isd(3)**



Fig. 4. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1192. Weight 2.90 g; size 18.6 mm; die axis 2 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **1192-S(3)**



Fig. 5. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1196. Weight 2.91 g; size 19.2-19.5 mm; die axis 4 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **119...6-Isd(1)**



Fig. 6. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1203. Weight 2.97; size 18.8-19.3 mm; die axis 9:15 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **12o/o3-S(1)** (Cf. 2, p. 131, ##1131-1132).



Fig. 7. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1204. Weight 2.94 g; size 18.5-19.2 mm; die axis 12:15 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **[1]2.4-Ii(1)**



Fig. 8. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1205. Weight 3.05 g; size 18.2-18.8 mm; die axis 7 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **12o5-Isd(1)**



Fig. 9. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1206. Weight 2.77 g; size 19.5-19.7 mm; die axis 12 o'clock. Date location/arrangement: **12o6-Is(1)**



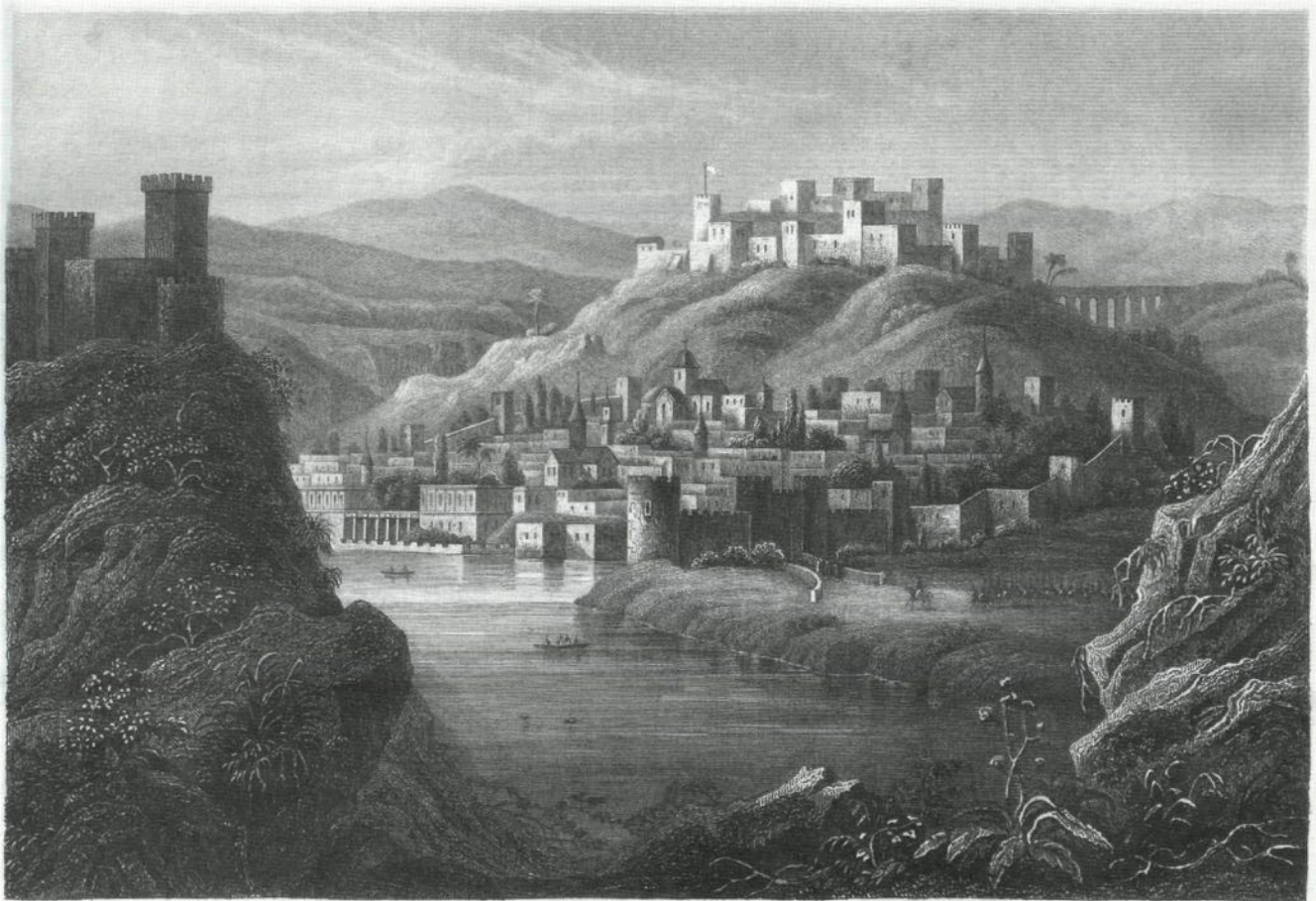
Fig. 10. Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1208. Weight 2.92 g; size 18.2-18.7 mm; die axis 6 o'clock.
Date location/arrangement: **12.8.-Isisd(1)**

The sirma abazi dated 1208 AH (Fig. 10) is remarkable as it has the date arrangement as on Pakhomov's 40b (Plate 1, 40b), but, in contrast to what was published by this scholar, has a border consisting of a chain of dots and not a chain of 3-dot clusters. Three more previously unknown varieties have been published in the numismatic literature: **1204-Isisd(1)A** and **1190-IsiM** [1,

plates 32-33, nos. 652D, 652G]; **12.7-T(1?)A** [2, pp. 131-132, nos. 1131-1132].

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Tiflis in the 18th century (Image courtesy B.Koblianidze)

THE CROSS MOTIVE ON TIFLIS, GANJA, NAKHJAWAN AND TABRIZ COINS MINTED IN AH 1181-1190

By Irakli Paghava and Severian Turkia

Our objective is to publish a group of coins bearing a cross-like motive. All these coins were minted in the southern Caucasus and a little further south, beyond the Araxes river, in Tabriz, in the 1180s AH (1766-1776). Some coins described below were struck with dies bearing no cross-like motive, but were countermarked with cross-nosed punches later, at some unspecified time.

The appearance of this symbol, which may be interpreted as Christian or related to Christianity, on the otherwise purely Islamic coins minted in this region with a mixed population might be very significant for providing us with an interesting insight into the religious and cultural, as well as ethnic situation there by the end of the 18th century. We have no contemporary data that would permit us to draw any definite conclusions; therefore we limit ourselves to stating the problem and providing an initial analysis.

The coins bearing cross-like elements may be divided into several groups (metrology is provided in the captions to the figures).

Group 1

Silver coins minted in Ganja (Ganja Khanate) (Fig. 1).

Obverse:

يَاكريم (in a separate cartouche at 12h, cf. Fig. 3)

Within central circle:

١١٨٨
کنجه
صرب

Reverse:

شد افتاب و ماه
زر و سيم در جعان از سکه امام
بحق صاحب الزمان

A countermark (رايح) in the field at 8h.

A cross-like element in a separate cross-shape cartouche at 6h.

Group 2

Silver coins bearing a similar obverse design and minted in Tiflis (Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti), Tabriz (Tabriz Khanate) and Nakhjawan (Nakhjawan Khanate), all constituting Type C in terms of design according to S. Album [1, p. 134]³⁹ (correspondingly, Figs. 5-10⁴⁰).

Common obverse:

يَاكريم (in a separate cartouche at 12h)

Within central circle:

صرب تفليس

or

صرب نخجوان

or

صرب دار السلطنة تبريز

And the date: ١١٨١ or ١١٨٢ or ١١٨٥

All surrounded by an ornament made by beaded crosses⁴¹ and an outer circular border. The crosses are of different shapes, the ones on Figs. 5, 6, 8 and 9 are quite similar, but differ from those in

Figs. 7 and 10. On Fig. 10 they are even sometimes so distorted that they do not resemble crosses at all anymore.

Reverse of the Tiflis coin (a standard reverse for Tiflis sirma abassis and 1½ abbasis [5, p. 238]):

الحمد لله
رب
العالمين

(Qur'ān, I, i)

The *reverse* of the Tabriz and Ganja coins bears legends identical to those on the Group 1 Ganja coin reverse.

Group 3

Copper fulus⁴² minted in Nakhjawan in AH 1188, with a crude peacock to the right on one side and the simple legend distributed over the field on the other (Figs. 11-12):

فلوس صرب نخجوان
١١٨٨

Both coins were struck with the same obverse and probably also with the same reverse dies⁴³.

Coin 1 (Fig. 11) bears two countermarks each forming an incuse square with two intersecting lines dividing it into four parts and making a cross-like pattern (type A countermark). The punch or at least its working end will have had a square cross-section with two intersecting lines cut out of it.

Coin 2 (Fig. 12) bears two countermarks each forming an incuse image of a quatrefoil, quite similar to that present in the marginal border of Group 2 coins, particularly on Figs. 5-6, 8-9 (type B countermark). The incuse space is filled in with some white substance; the latter in our opinion resulting from chemical transformations of the oxides that have been partly cleaned off the coin surface.

Another Nakhjawan copper coin (8.75 g, 26 mm; Georgian History Museum inventory 3273) bearing two type A countermarks, also on the peacock side, was published in T. Kutelia's pioneering work on civic coppers. According to this work and the drawing, it bears the date 1189 AH [4, pp. 93, plate XXXIII, 527]. Another copper coin with a peacock right, but lacking the countermarks is also published in the same work (7.39 g, 23 mm; Georgian History Museum inventory 7569) [4, p. 94, plate XXXIV, 540]. The coin drawings make us think that both coins were struck with the same pair of dies, identical to those employed for the coins we are publishing here. More Nakhjawan coppers with a peacock are preserved in the Georgian History Museum [4, pp. 93-94], but unfortunately no drawings are provided. Nakhjawan coins with the peacock right are not represented in Valentine's work [6, pp. 104-105].

As far as we know, the design similarities between the aforementioned coins of Groups 1 and 2 have had little, if any, attention paid to them. Coins minted in many of the petty principalities which emerged in the region after the death of Nadir Shah frequently share legends, but in the cases presented above the layout bears a remarkable resemblance as well. According to the data we have, the cross-like ornament on Group 2 coins is limited to the listed mints only, and has not been encountered on

³⁹ In contrast to the author, we consider the side with the couplet evoking Karim Khan Zand's name the obverse.

⁴⁰ More images of Tabriz coins of this type are available at Zeno Oriental Coins Database, <http://www.zeno.ru/>, nos.44554, 44547, 27192, 42451, 34712.

⁴¹ Pakhomov described it on Tiflis 1½ abbasid coins as "a chain of crosses" [5, p. 238].

⁴² The denomination system for the copper coins from this region and period is disputable, hence the denominations are not specified here.

⁴³ The reverse on one of the coins (Fig. 12) is almost completely effaced, so that the die impressions can hardly be compared.

any other mint⁴⁴. The simplest explanation would be that the mint administration in the Caucasus experienced a sort of reciprocal influence: there was a political environment which prevented all the rulers from placing their own name on their coins, but which caused them to evoke Karim Khan Zand's name in a disguised form instead, with the legends and even the design tending to be shared widely. However, it remains unclear why these cross-like design elements were limited to certain South Caucasian mints only. One factor could have been the need to enable one's own currency to penetrate the neighbouring polities by making it resemble whatever was circulating there.

It is unclear which mint was the first to set the pattern. The earliest coins with the beaded-crosses ornament that we know of are dated 1181 AH for Nakhjawan (Fig. 6) and Tabriz [2, plate 30, 587; Fig. 9]). The Tabriz coin of 1179 AH does not have that ornament [8, no. 44551]. All the Tiflis 1½ abbasi coins seem to have this ornament [5, p. 238], the earliest being dated 1182 AH [5, p. 239; Fig. 5]. So, according to the extant material, the Tiflis mint was not the first to start minting coins with the cross-element design. Unless a specimen with an earlier date is found, one can formulate a working hypothesis that, when starting to mint a new denomination, the Tiflis mint adopted the obverse design already successfully introduced at some of the neighbouring mints, but changed the reverse legends in favour of the already tried and tested ones from the abazi coins. As to the period in which coins were struck with the beaded-crosses ornament, the Nakhjawan specimen dated 1181 AH is the only one we know, while for Tabriz the following dates are known: 1181, 1182 and 1185 (Figs. 7-10). The dates for Tiflis are 1182, 1184, 1186, 1187 and 1190 AH [5, pp. 239-242]. Thus, as far as we know, the use of the cross elements on these coins was limited to 1181-1190 AH only (1767/8-1776/7).

The weight standard relationship between Kartl-Kakheti and Nakhjawan as well as Tabriz is of particular interest. According to the local east Georgian standard, introduced in 1179 AH, the 4.50 g Tiflis silver coins like the one we describe were considered to be 1½ abbasis⁴⁵ [5, p. 238]. But the Type C Zand coins, originally struck to a 1200-nokhod standard and considered to be abbasis, were revalued to 5 shahis in 1181 AH, and later to 6 shahis in 1190 AH [1, p. 134, no. 2800]. However, it is unclear how certain we may be in such interpretation of the denomination of the currency minted in Tabriz and particularly in Nakhjawan, at the periphery of and outside the Zand realm. The Nakhjawan khanate appears to have been politically dependent mostly on the Georgian kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, and not on Karim Khan [3, pp. 518, 614-615], while the degree of autonomy of the Tabriz khanate has yet to be ascertained⁴⁶. At this point we would prefer to limit ourselves to a simple listing of the weights of the available coins (in grams):

Tiflis - 4.58; Nakhjawan - 4.12;
 Tabriz - 4.53 (1 hole, Fig. 7), 4.60 (Fig. 8), 4.23 g (2 holes, Fig. 9), 4.14 (Fig. 10), 4.64 (Zeno 44554), 4.62 (Zeno 44547), 4.26 (traces of mount, Zeno 27192), 4.60 (1 hole, Zeno no. 42451), 4.6 (Zeno 34712); the average, disregarding the holed and mounted specimens, being 4.52 g, or 4.47 g including all the specimens.

Generally speaking, the cross-like elements in the case of the coins of the first two groups could have been engraved on the dies for purely decorative purposes; it may be quite accidental that the ornament they make or are part of bears some resemblance to Christian cross/crosses; cf. the decorations in lieu of "the cross" on Fig. 3 and particularly Fig. 2. As we see, the cross-like element is easily replaced with another decoration, either resembling the cross (Fig. 2) or differing a lot from it (Fig. 3). The placement of the decoration at 18:00 appears to have been caused by a desire to balance the cartouche with *یاکریم* at 12:00 with something else on the opposite side. As soon as *یاکریم* was moved to within the

central circle, thus eliminating the cartouche at the top, the cartouche at the bottom disappeared as well (cf. Fig. 4).

In addition to the possible randomness in using this motif, the latter could have been predisposed by the significance of the cross, by its symbolic load, which is not necessarily restricted to Christianity and could perhaps have been applied even subconsciously at the mint for design purposes. We would not like our data with regard to the coins of the first two groups to be wrongly considered as any sort of proof of their relationship to Christianity and Christians⁴⁷.

However, at least in the case of the third group coppers from Nakhjawan, the application of the cross-design punches might have had nothing to do with decoration nor the layout of the coins. It seems more possible that the very intention of countermarking was related to Christianity. Even if the countermarking was undertaken for economic reasons, the choice of the images to be superimposed on the coin is quite remarkable: normally, a *رایج* countermark was applied to the coins to confirm their legitimacy as a legal tender.

There may or may not be any connection between the cross-like countermarks and the engraving of the cross-like elements on the coins discussed above. The chronological and geographical coincidence, however, is striking: all four or five cities involved (Tabriz, Nakhjawan, Ganja, Tiflis, Iravan also?) are relatively close to each other, and the cross-like elements appear on the coins struck during a period of 9-10 years only.

In our opinion, there were two factors in the region at that time which could have served as the impetus for the appearance of a symbol or design element possibly related to Christianity on these coins:

- The cultural and political influence exerted by the Georgian kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, which will have been emanating particularly strongly from its capital, Tiflis (modern Tbilisi). This country with a predominantly Christian population and the Christian ideology of the ruling class (the kings of this Georgian state were crowned in 1744 with a formal ceremony employing Christian rites) indubitably served as one of the major seminaries of Christian symbols in the region.
- The presence of Christian strata of population (a certain percentage of merchants and craftsmen) in many major cities of the region, i.e. the presence of Christian Armenians⁴⁸ and, to a lesser degree, Georgians.

Although, for the moment we cannot offer any substantial historical arguments with regard to the selection of the cross-pattern for countermarking the Nakhjawan fulus, as well as to representation of possibly cross-like elements on some silver coins minted in Tiflis, Ganja and Tabriz, these numismatic features are, nevertheless, intriguing and we hope that this short paper would serve as a basis for future research into late Caucasian numismatics.

We would like to express our gratitude to Mr A. Akopyan for his assistance.



Fig. 1 Ganja Khanate, AR, abbasi, Ganja, AH 1188; weight 3.37g; size 25.8 mm; die axis 14:45.

⁴⁴ Mr A. Akopyan kindly additionally reported the no-date Iravan coin of the same type. Unfortunately neither image nor metrology was available.

⁴⁵ 4.50 or 4.61 g nominal weight? The issue requires further research, which we are going to undertake in the near future.

⁴⁶ In view of the aforesaid, we deliberately refrain from indicating the denomination of the Nakhjawan and Tabriz silver coins.

⁴⁷ For instance, sometimes the excellent paper of Mr. Yih [7] is misinterpreted in this way: the author described a group of Mongol coins bearing cross- or cross-like elements on them, and postulated that they could be related to Nestorian Christians and their role in the Mongol dominions; nevertheless, this hypothesis is sometimes perceived as an absolute truth and referred to accordingly, for instance by some eBay vendors. We would like to dissociate ourselves from the possible interpretation of all of our results in this way.

⁴⁸ The relative omnipresence of ethnic Armenians, mainly craftsmen and particularly merchants, among the urban population in various countries, sometimes even those quite distant from Armenia proper, e.g. Eastern Europe or Russia, is very well known.



Fig.2 Ganja Khanate, AR, abbasi, Ganja, AH 1188; weight NA; size NA; die axis NA.



Fig.3 Ganja Khanate, AR, abbasi, Ganja, AH 1187; weight 3.40g; size 26 mm; die axis NA.



Fig.4 Ganja Khanate, AR, abbasi, Ganja, AH 1188; weight 3.07g; size 24 mm; die axis NA.



Fig.5 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/2 abbasi / abazi, Tiflis, AH 1182; weight 4.58 g; size 23 mm; die axis 16:00.



Fig.6 Nakhjawan Khanate, AR, Nakhjawan, AH 1181; weight 4.12g; size 24-24.5 mm; die axis 12:00.



Fig.7 Tabriz Khanate, AR, Tabriz, AH 1182; weight 4.53 g (holed); size 26.8-27 mm; die axis 11:45.



Fig.8 Tabriz Khanate, AR, Tabriz, AH 1182; weight 4.60 g; size 26-26.8 mm; die axis 18:00.



Fig.9 Tabriz Khanate, AR, Tabriz, AH 1181; weight 4.23 g (two holes); size 24-26 mm; die axis NA. Zeno #42450.



Fig. 10 Tabriz Khanate, AR, Tabriz, AH 1185; weight 4.14 g; size 27 mm; die axis NA. Zeno #58648.



Fig. 11 Nakhjawan Khanate, AE, Nakhjawan, AH 1188; weight 7.63; size 22.2 mm (squarish flan); thickness 2.8 mm; die axis 17:30.



Fig. 12. Nakhjawan Khanate, AE, Nakhjawan, AH 1188; weight 5.96; size 22-24.5 mm (elongated flan); die axis 20:00.

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A SERIES OF PECULIAR MINOR DENOMINATION SIRMA⁴⁹ COINS: MODERN FAKES OR CONTEMPORARY IMITATIONS?

By Irakli Paghava

Our objective here is to publish and discuss a group of peculiar coins of types characteristic of the minor denominations (¼ and ½ abazi) of the 18th century East Georgian sirma silver currency. The coins bear the mint name Tiflis (usually corrupted) and the date (also corrupted in many cases) almost always fitting into the period when sirma coins were minted by Erekle II and Giorgi XII (XIII), the last kings of united eastern Georgia, i.e. 1179-1213 AH (1765/6-1798/9). These coins, however, have some peculiar traits and, in our opinion cannot be attributed to the official Tiflis mint. They may be pieces of contemporary jewellery or circulation imitations; alternatively, they may be modern fakes. We have 61 such specimens at our disposal from different private collections⁵⁰ (Figs. 1, 3, 5, 7-8, 10, 12-13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25-26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38-40, 42-43, 45, 47-51, 53-54, 56, 58-59), auctions and dealers operating online (Fig. 44⁵¹) as well as the images provided recently by Mr. G. Gabashvili⁵² (Figs. 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 41, 46, 52, 55, 57, 60-62⁵³) (the metrology of the coins⁵⁴ is provided in the captions to the figures). Their general layout follows the standard one for minor denominations of sirma coins:

Obverse⁵⁵:

O, [God the] All-Bountiful or O, Karim

يا كريم

In ornamental cartouche within a plain circle.

Reverse:

Struck [in] Tiflis

Arranged in the following way:

تفليس

ضرب

ب

The date somewhere in the field; floral motifs and clusters of dots are present.

Within a circle composed of two linear borders with dots between them.

(1, p. 140, nos. 2976-2977; 8, p. 239)

The style of engraving and the distorted legends on these coins is quite remarkable: these two factors unite these coins into a group,

and simultaneously mark them out from other specimens of minor denomination sirma coins, which we would call "official Tiflis issues". The legends on the latter (Figs. 63-73) bear no traces of distortion, the calligraphy is normal and corresponds to that on the major denominations, for example, the abazi (Fig. 37). It is also quite noteworthy that minor *Sirma* denominations published in the works of the previous generation of numismatists [8; 6; 4; 5] or in modern works produced outside Georgia [2; 7] also never bear traits like those present on the coins of this distinctive group, but are always in line with those of the aforesaid official issues.

We will try to substantiate this thesis about the difference between the two groups and hence their existence:

- On the official issues, the mint name Tiflis (تفليس or تفلس) is always inscribed linearly, all five graphemes (ت, ق, ل, ي, س) being oriented along one straight but oblique line, being "threaded" onto it; only the initial two graphemes (ت, ق) form an angle, slightly flexing downwards; all those grapheme elements that protrude upwards are parallel (cf. Figs. 63-73). However, on the coins of this group the mint name is quite frequently curved: Figs. 15-16 (the same reverse die) are very characteristic examples; on Figs. 32-33 the initial two graphemes flex upwards, instead of downwards.
- Even if not curved, the way Tiflis is inscribed is utterly incorrect (cf. Figs. 3-7, 12, 17-20, 23-24, 28-29, 30-3, 34-35, 36-38, 51-52, 54-55, 58, 60-62). The graphic representation of Arabic graphemes is frequently wrong: for instance, please note how ق is attached to ل (Figs. 12, 40-41). The "denticles" made by the upward pointing elements of the graphemes ي and س are also elevated excessively on the coins of this group: cf. Figs. 3-4, 8-9, 17-18, 25-29, 32-33, 36-38, 40-42, 47, 49-52, 54-58, 60 to Figs. 63-73. Sometimes the engraver seemingly did not take into account that the left-side arc was a part of the grapheme س comprising the preceding two "denticles" as well (cf. Figs. 3-4, 45, 51-52).
- In addition to Tiflis, the rest of the legend on the reverse (i.e. ضرب) is also corrupt. Basically, on all the coins of this group (Figs. 1-62) ضرب part of the legend is remarkably slipshod, not to say twisted, and quite different from the refined and elongated ضرب on the undoubtedly Tiflis coins (Figs. 63-73). Moreover, in some cases it loses its intelligibility and is starts to transform into a decorative element: all three graphemes (ب, ر, ض) may sprout a floral ornament; ض sprouts on Figs. 13-14, 39; ر on Figs. 30-31, ب on Figs. 5-6, 50). ضرب can be inverted, i.e. point to the right, with the tip of ر being anomalously folded in the opposite direction, to the left (Figs. 36-38) (on some normal coins one element of the floral ornament is adjacent to ر of ضرب in such a way that it may seem that the tip bends in the opposite direction, cf. Figs. 68-72; these coins may have served as a prototype).
- The numerals on these coins also do not resemble the uniform, if not always refined ones on the undoubtedly Tiflis coins (Figs. 63-73); they are always somewhat slipshod. In some cases it is particularly obvious: note, for instance "4" on Fig. 7 and "5" on Figs. 40-41; how "8" is made by separate strokes not joined at the top on Figs. 10-11 and how "2" is also made by a vertical line with a prong to the right not joined to the upright on Figs. 21-22, 30-31, 51-52. Sometimes it is not easy to distinguish the figures at all, for instance one can not be fully confident in whether there is "3" or "4" on Figs. 3-4, "9" or "6" on Figs. 15-16; sometimes the date is simply inverted (never encountered by the author on the official sirma coins), as on Figs. 5-6, or makes no sense, as on Figs. 56, 58, 60 (respectively 1100?, 1312 or 1314 and 1121). The existence of the date 1215 (as on Figs. 54-55) is also quite dubious [8, p. 248].

⁴⁹ *Sirma* (or *sirma vertskhli*, i.e. *sirma silver* in Georgian) was an official term extensively used to designate silver Tiflis coins of Kartl-Kakheti (East-Georgian Kingdom) 1179-1213 AH in contemporary documents of the 18th century. The word *sirma* in Georgian means "gold or silver yarn or embroidery", also, figuratively, "rays".

⁵⁰ We would like to express our gratitude to the owners, who allowed us to access their collections.

⁵¹ This coin was first sold by Dr. Busso Peus Nachfolger, Auction 388-389, lot 1446; and then offered by Jean ELSÉN & ses Fils s.a., Auction 92, lot 1401; it did not sell and is still available at Jean ELSÉN & ses Fils s.a., list 244, lot #1482.

⁵² We would like to express our gratitude to him for his generous assistance.

⁵³ Unfortunately the images provided to us are of a mediocre quality only; however, their overall number is quite significant (24 specimens); we had to research them as well and hence decided to publish their illustrations as well.

⁵⁴ ^ا of يا was considered a vertical reference line on the obverse and ب of ضرب was considered a horizontal reference line on the reverse to establish the die axis. Metrology was not available for all the coins.

⁵⁵ In contrast to other authors, we consider this side the obverse because it evokes Karim Khan Zand's, i.e. the overlord's name. Although this type of sirma coin became frozen and lasted long after the death of Karim Khan in 1193 AH (1779), initially the selection of the formula was without doubt inspired by the political influence exerted by this Persian ruler.

- In contrast to the undoubtedly Tiflis coins, there is an excess of clusters of dots and floral motifs filling in the space left by the legends and border. Some specimens are very remarkable from this point of view, as they bear dots even within the ض loop (Figs. 40-41, 43-44) which is also or alternatively frequently intersected by floral ornament (Figs. 1-2, 12, 25-27, 40-41, 43-46, 49, 53-59, 61), sometimes even twice (Fig. 25); this is never encountered on the “standard” Tiflis coinage.
- The ornaments and legends on the reverse are engraved with almost equal relief, which is different from the official issues, where the ornaments are always considerably lower in relief than the latter.
- In contrast to the reverse, the legend on the obverse is less distorted, but is characterised by an extreme fancifulness and multiformity. The former is typical for the cartouche on the obverse too.
- The coin metal and the patina in case of basically all the specimens look very specific; this should point to a different alloy used for striking and / or to chemical cleaning and artificial patination.
- The structure of some of the coins from this group is quite remarkable. The coin in Fig. 48 is particularly peculiar from this point of view: in contrast to the official issues, it is very thin and flexible.

In the majority of cases it is not difficult to demonstrate the true nature of the coin by applying the criteria quoted above. However, the difference is not that obvious in some cases (Figs. 47-48). In a few cases, coins are particularly hard to attribute as the difference is not that sharp, and hence the differentiation criteria are of less help. For instance, we hesitate with regard to the coins in Figs. 74-75; it is unclear to which group they pertain, “official” or “unofficial”.

It is not quite clear, where and when the coins brought together in this group were produced. In our opinion, they can be either modern fakes intended for collectors, or contemporary imitations, minted somewhere outside Tiflis. In the latter case, these coins or coin-like objects could have been produced for either circulation or jewellery purposes.

Generally speaking, the deviations in the case of these coins are so grave that it would be only natural in our opinion to suspect them straightaway of being modern fakes. However, the very extent of the deviations, the presence of such extreme variants as sprouting words in the legend and “nonsense” dates call in question their modern origins. If really fakes for collectors, even though die-struck, these coins must have been produced by a somewhat naive malefactor with fertile imagination and very limited care for even superficial accuracy (which is not impossible). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the yellowish patina on many specimens looks rather artificial and dubious (Figs. 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30, 34, 39, 43, 45, 50-51, 54, 56, 59), while on other coins it also seems to be dubious, though differently so⁵⁶. The coins struck with identical pairs of dies often have different patina. The provenance of these coins is quite suspicious as well: to our knowledge, the coins with similar traits have never surfaced before. We managed to trace the origin of most of these 61 coins. All of those that we managed to trace back were introduced into a numismatic market in Tbilisi, Georgia, by two dealers more or less simultaneously, in 2005. According to the statement made by one of them, these coins were brought “from the east Georgian highlands”. The presence of all kind of different dates seems to be quite important: there are 61 coins from at least 34 different reverse (date-bearing) dies; these 34 reverse dies bear 22 (23⁵⁷) different dates (sirma coins were minted in 1179-1213AH, i.e. over a period of 35 years). In our opinion, contemporary people imitating sirma coins for either

jewellery or as currency for circulation would probably not waste their efforts on meticulously indicating the current AH year on the die; or even less so, indicating all the past years. We certainly do not claim that, as imitations, these coins (or coin-like objects) should have borne one and the same date in all cases; however, there should have been less variety in the date range and more coins of the same date extant. On the other hand, for modern malefactors it would have been only natural to vary the dates, thereby producing a larger number of coins attractive to collectors (please also note, that this group comprises only minor denominations; minor denominations are relatively rare and hence quite popular among collectors of this series of Georgian coins). Moreover, the die analysis we performed failed to discover any die links between the coins whatsoever: this looks very suspicious.

However, we cannot fully exclude the possibility of these die-struck objects being contemporary imitations either. Imitations of Georgian sirma abazis are mentioned in the literature, although without detailed description and with the mere indication that they were lighter, of a lower silver standard and worse workmanship, and possibly issued by the Nukha Khanate (no precise references are provided) [3, p. 341, commentary to p. 237A; 5, p. 159; 4, p. 131].

Anyway, even if a contemporary product, the striking deviations and mistakes in Arabic graphemes and numerals on these coins make it improbable for them in our opinion to have originated from any south Caucasian khanate. The Arabic script was undoubtedly well known there, at least equally well if not better than in Georgian Tiflis, the capital city of the nation, using its own non-Arabic script for paperwork and legends on copper coins. If we concede that these coins are imitations with the dates indicated on them being true, at least when not unintelligible, then it would mean that the deviations like those described above were not isolated but were tolerated for years in the region with a century-long tradition of minting Islamic coins. This, in our opinion, is very unlikely. These coins seem to be too crude even for jewellery imitations produced in the southern Caucasus⁵⁸.

So, the only place they could in our opinion probably originate from, was the north Caucasus region or maybe even the adjacent “east Georgian highlands”, mentioned by the dealer. That corresponds best to the area where sirma coins circulated: Eastern Georgia and adjacent regions. The highlanders may have been less skillful in reproducing Arabic script (a contemporary imitation of a Tiflis abbasi 1131AH in the name of Sultan Husayn I, possibly minted in Kubachi, Daghestan, was published recently; it also bears corrupt Arabic legends [9]). However, the deviations from the norm to the extent shown in the current group are still less probable, in our opinion.

Generally, the jewellery nature of these objects is very disputable. Firstly, only a very limited number (3) of them have holes⁵⁹ (Figs. 17, 45, 54), and none have traces of mount; on the other hand, the undoubtedly official minor denominations produced at Tiflis are holed in more than 50% of cases in our experience. An almost total absence of holes or mounts does not tie in with their being jewellery items. Moreover, as already mentioned, there are too many different dates on the coins. And finally, the weight distribution of these objects (the weights of 37 coins are available) shows how they all cluster around 0.75 and 1.5 g⁶⁰, i.e. the normal weight for sirma ¼ abazi and ½ abazi. In our view, this is extremely improbable for jewellery imitations - there would have been no need to worry about preserving the weight of objects intended for decoration purposes only.

⁵⁸ The well-known “Iravan panjshahi” jewellery imitations [1, p. 129, note under no. 2645; 10, no. 51987] as well as Tabriz jewellery imitation in the name of Abbas II [10, no. 53313] were produced at some point.

⁵⁹ The coin in Fig. 45 was pierced by a tool with a square cross-section, while the coins in Figs. 17, 54 were holed by a tool with a round cross-section.

⁶⁰ No statistical analysis was performed at this stage; however, the data seem to be unequivocal.

⁵⁶ One cannot perceive the patina on the coins reproduced in black and white; however, the original colour images provide this possibility.

⁵⁷ 23 including the possibly misspelled date “1215”. “Nonsense” dates are excluded.

If not smaller jewellery decorations, but imitations intended for circulation, then it would mean that whoever produced them, decided to preserve the original normative weight and most probably make some profit by debasing the alloy. The surprising thing, however, is that, according to the material available to us, only the minor denominations were produced / imitated, and not a single abazi or 1½ abazi bearing the same distinctive features. This again brings us back to the idea that these are modern fakes, as minor denominations are much rarer and hence much more popular among collectors (however, 1½ abazi is much sought after as well).

All the above makes us incline to the idea that these items are probably modern forgeries. However, one cannot exclude the possibility that they date back to the 18th century. Unfortunately, we had no opportunity to analyse the metal alloy and structure of these coins by employing more refined laboratory techniques. The results would have yielded valuable information probably enabling us to draw final conclusions on these series of coins. The laboratory study should constitute the next stage of research in this matter.



Fig. 1 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1181; weight: 0.65 g, die axis: 10:45 o'clock, size: 13.7-8 mm



Fig. 2 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1181; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 3 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1183 (1184?); weight: 1.45 g, die axis: 12:45 o'clock, size: 17 mm



Fig. 4 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1183 (1184?); weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 5 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1183 (1184?) (the date is inverted); weight: 1.41 g, die axis: 8:45 o'clock, size: 16.6-17 mm



Fig. 6 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1183 (1184?) (the date is inverted); weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 7 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1184; weight: 0.75 g, die axis: 9:15 o'clock, size: 14.5-15 mm



Fig. 8 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1185; weight: 0.74 g, die axis: 11:15 o'clock, size: 14.5-15 mm



Fig. 9 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1185; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 10 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1187; weight: 1.41 g, die axis: 6:15 o'clock, size: 15.4-16.6 mm



Fig. 11 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1187; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 12 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1188; weight: 0.75 g, die axis: 9:00 o'clock, size: 13.5-14 mm



Fig. 13 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1188; weight: 1.44 g, die axis: 6:00 o'clock, size: 16-16.5 mm



Fig. 14 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1188; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 15 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1189 (1186?); weight: 1.40 g, die axis: 1:45 o'clock, size: 15.5-16.8 mm



Fig. 16 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1189 (1186?); weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 17 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1190; weight: 1.44 g (holed), die axis: 10:00 o'clock, size: 15.4-17.2 mm



Fig. 18 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1190; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 19 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1191; weight: 0.69 g, die axis: 11:30 o'clock, size: 13.6-14 mm



Fig. 20 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1191; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 21 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1192; weight: 0.67 g, die axis: 4:30 o'clock, size: 14-14.4 mm



Fig. 22 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1192; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 23 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1193; weight: 1.42 g, die axis: 2:45 o'clock, size: 15 mm



Fig. 24 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1193; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 25 Sirma type coin, dated 32913-AH 1195; weight: 0.75 g, die axis: 10:15 o'clock, size: 13-15 mm



Fig. 26 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1198; weight: 1.40 g, die axis: 11:45 o'clock, size: 16-17.2 mm



Fig. 27 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1198; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 35 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1201; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 28 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1199; weight: 0.71 g, die axis: 8:00 o'clock, size: 13.5-14.1 mm



Fig. 36 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1203; weight: 0.77 g, die axis: 6:45 o'clock, size: 14.2-14.8



Fig. 29 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1199; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 37 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, abazi, Tiflis, AH 1211; weight: 2.99 g, die axis: 9:00 o'clock, size: 18-19 mm



Fig. 30 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1200; weight: 1.37 g, die axis: 6:15 o'clock, size: 17.1 mm



Fig. 38 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1203; weight: 1.46 g, die axis: 3:00 o'clock, size: 15.4-17.1 mm



Fig. 31 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1200; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 39 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1204; weight: 0.69 g, die axis: 4:30 o'clock, size: 13.1-14.9 mm



Fig. 32 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1200; weight: 0.78 g, die axis: 7:00 o'clock, size: 13.5-14 mm



Fig. 40 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1205; weight: 0.72, die axis: 6:00 o'clock, size: 14-14.9 mm



Fig. 33 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1200; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 41 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1205; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 42 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1206; weight: 0.74 g, die axis: 3:15 o'clock, size: 13-14.5 mm



Fig. 49 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 0.69 g, die axis: 9:30 o'clock, size: 14.1-14.5 mm



Fig. 43 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 0.59 g, die axis: 6:30 o'clock, size: 14.1-14.8 mm



Fig. 50 Sirma type coin, dated 11211 (AH 1211?); weight: 0.67 g, die axis: 3:00 o'clock, size: 13.6-13.8 mm



Fig. 44 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 0.79 g, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 51 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1212; weight: 0.68 g, die axis: 11:15 o'clock, size: 13.2-13.9 mm



Fig. 45 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 1.46 (holed), die axis: 12:15 o'clock, size: 16.5-17 mm



Fig. 52 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1212; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 46 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 53 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1212; weight: 0.74 g, die axis: 7:00 o'clock, size: 13.5-14 mm



Fig. 47 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 1.30 g, die axis: 12:15 o'clock, size: 16.5-17 mm.



Fig. 54 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1215; weight: 1.44 (holed) g, die axis: 8:45 o'clock, size: 17-17.7 mm



Fig. 48 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1211; weight: 0.74 g, die axis: 5:00 o'clock, size: 15.8-16.2 mm



Fig. 55 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1215; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 56 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1100 (?); weight: 0.71 g, die axis: 11:00 o'clock, size: 14.3-15.1 mm



Fig. 63 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/4 abazi, Tiflis, AH 1182; weight: 0.71 g, die axis: 1:00 o'clock, size: 12.8-14.8 mm



Fig. 57 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1100 (?); weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 64 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/4 abazi, Tiflis, AH 119x; weight: 0.68 g (holed), die axis: 12:15 o'clock, size: 13.3-14 mm



Fig. 58 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1314/2 (?); weight: 0.73 g, die axis: 11:15 o'clock, size: 14 mm



Fig. 65 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/4 abazi, Tiflis, AH 1203; weight: 0.67 g, die axis: 3:00 o'clock, size: 16.1-17.4 mm



Fig. 59 Sirma type coin, date unclear (double struck); weight: 0.68 g, die axis: 2:00 o'clock, size: 14-14.5 mm.



Fig. 66 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, AH 1206; weight: NA (holed), die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 60 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1121 (?); weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 67 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/2 abazi, Tiflis, AH 1211; weight: 1.45 g, die axis: NA, size: 15.9 mm



Fig. 61 Sirma type coin, date unclear; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 68 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/2 abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213; weight: 1.48 g, die axis: 4:00 o'clock, size: 15.6-16.3 mm



Fig. 62 Sirma type coin, dated AH 12xx?; weight: NA, die axis: NA, size: NA



Fig. 69 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, 1/2 abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213; weight: 1.44 g (holed), die axis: 1:00 o'clock, size: 16 mm



Fig. 70 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, ¼ abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213; weight: 0.82 g, die axis: NA, size: 15.8 mm



Fig. 71 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, ½ abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213; weight: 1.39 g (holed), die axis: 11:00 o'clock, size: 16.1 mm



Fig. 72 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, ½ abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213; weight: 1.22 g (holed), die axis: 11:30 o'clock, size: 14.5-15.2? mm



Fig. 73 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, AR, ¼ abazi, Tiflis, date missing; weight: 0.66 g (holed), die axis: 11:00 o'clock, size: 13-13.2 mm



Fig. 74 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1182; weight: 0.61 g, die axis: 12 o'clock, size: 14.8-15.1 mm



Fig. 75 Sirma type coin, dated AH 1192; weight: 0.63 g, die axis: 11:45 o'clock, size: 13.2-15.1 mm

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Giorgi XII

THE START OF SIRMA COINAGE: THE SIRMA ABAZI OF AH "1166" AND ITS DATING

By Severian Turkia and Irakli Paghava

The aim of this study is to ascertain the chronology of the issue of the sirma silver currency (bearing the invocation *Ya Karim* and a relatively neutral formula instead of the *Shahadah*) by determining when it started, studying the sirma abazi coins with the date "1166" and attempting to establish when they could have been struck.

In doing this, 367 sirma abazis from various sources⁶¹ were studied during a comparative die analysis we undertook. Contemporary Georgian *copper* coins were taken into consideration as well. Historical and numismatic scholarly works devoted to Karim Khan Zand's rise to power and his relationship with the Georgian kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, including the numismatic aspects were studied.

Introduction

The influence of foreign Muslim powers (Safavid, then Afsharid Iran and the Ottoman Empire) in Georgia in the 16th-18th centuries left its mark on the contemporary Georgian coinage. The right of *sikka* was appropriated by an external overlord - no coins from precious metal could be minted in the name of the local Georgian king⁶² (even when the latter remained on the throne, which was not always the case); the coins bore the *Shahadah*, a declaration of faith alien to the majority of the population in Georgia. Safavid, Ottoman, Afsharid and Zand (in a restricted sense, up to AH 1179) issues minted in Tiflis all follow this pattern, not being "national" in terms of the language used for the legend despite being struck in Georgia and constituting the Georgian monetary series. Even the sirma type coins minted in Tiflis in the second half of the 18th century continued to bear the name of the foreign ruler - Karim Khan Zand, although they no longer bore the *Shahadah*, which was replaced by "an unexceptionable Qur'anic formula, but without mention of ... Muhammad's name" [8, p. 109]. However, the Muslim influence certainly had some positive aspects, which applied to sirma coins too: the precise dating of the Tiflis coins of Islamic type had already been a norm for many centuries [12, pp. 118-193, 214-236], and this useful feature extended through the time period when the sirma coins were minted in Tiflis.

The presence of the AH dates on all the sirma coins is very valuable for establishing the chronology of minting for this series and researching various related issues. In the majority of cases, the dates are quite clear; sometimes the date is somewhat ambiguous and may be interpreted in different ways - for instance the digits 121 may stand for both AH 1201 and 1210, or, one cannot be quite sure whether the circle-like figure represents zero or five. But particularly enigmatic has always been the existence of the abazi with the digits "1166" (Figs. 7-8), while the next year on the coins

published so far is 1179⁶³ (Fig. 1). That, therefore, raises two questions - when did the issue of sirma coinage commence and what is the reason for the apparent 13-year gap in issue?



Fig. 7 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH "1166". Weight 3.08 g; size 17.6-18.7 mm; die axis 11:30 o'clock.



Fig. 8 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH "1166". Weight 3.02 g; size 19 mm; die axis NA.



Fig. 1 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1179. Weight 3.06 g; size 21.9-22.1 mm; die axis 11:45 o'clock.

Langlois considered the "1166" coin to have been truly minted in AH 1166 (1752/3) and even referred to the contemporary Georgian chronicler, Papuna Orbeliani, who mentioned at about the same time the minting activity of Teimuraz II and Erekle II, the kings of, respectively, Kartli and Kakheti in 1744-1762⁶⁴ [10, pp. 117-118]. This opinion was shared by Lang, who also ascribed the coin to Teimuraz II, in whose reign in Kartli (1744-1762) the year AH 1166 (1752/3) falls. Lang pointed out that the sirma coinage was initiated by Teimuraz II: "In general, the silver coinage was modeled on the type evolved by Teimuraz II in 1752" [8, pp.

⁶¹ Album S. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean Volume 9 Iran after the Mongol Invasion*. Ashmolean Museum Oxford, 2001; [Kapanadze D. *Georgian Numismatics*, Moscow, 1955.] (in Russian: Капанадзе Д. Грузинская нумизматика. Москва, 1955.); [Kapanadze D. *Georgian Numismatics*. Tbilisi, 1969.] (in Georgian: კაპანაძე დ. ქართული ნუმისმატიკა. თბილისი, 1969.); [Kapanadze D. *Messengers of the Past*. Tbilisi, 1965.] (in Georgian: კაპანაძე დ. წარსულის მესენჯერები. თბილისი, 1965.); [Kebuladze R. 'The Pkhoveli Hoard', In: *The Bulletin of the Tbilisi State Museum*, XXXI-B. Tbilisi, 1975.] (in Georgian: ქებულაძე რ. ფხოველის განძი. საქართველოს სახელმწიფო მუზეუმის მოამბე, XXXI-B. თბილისი, 1975); Lang D. *Studies in the Numismatic History of Georgia in Transcaucasia*. New-York, 1955.; [Mayer T. (editor) *Sylloge of Coins of Caucasus and Eastern Europe*. Wiesbaden, 2005.] (In German: Mayer T. (bearbeitet von). *Sylloge der Münzen des Kaukasus und Osteuropas*. Wiesbaden, 2005.); [Pakhomov Ye. *Coins of Georgia*. Tbilisi, 1970.] (In Russian: Пахомов Е.А. Монеты Грузии. Тбилиси, 1970.); Zeno Oriental Coins Database (<http://www.zeno.ru/>) by 20 September 2008; private collections.

⁶² Whose initials at least (later the full name) could appear only on the *copper* coins minted in Tiflis.

⁶³ Pakhomov published a sirma coin (calling it a half abazi but giving the weight as 0.75 g, which conforms to a shahi) dated 1177 from the State Hermitage (Russian Federation) collection, which, in his opinion, should have been a muling, produced by using an old obverse die with the date 1177 after AH 1179 [12, p. 238]. Unfortunately he did not consider it necessary to provide an image of the coin. That could either, once and for all, have confirmed Pakhomov's statement, or refuted it, as the obverse of an 1177 coin should have a different design from the sirma type.

⁶⁴ "გამოიტანეს მეფეთა ჩვენთა თვისსა საღაროთი თქროსა და ვერცხლის იარაღი, მისცეს ზარაფხანაში, მოაჭრევენეს ფულური თეთრი და აღლევდნენ ჯარსა, ცლილობდნენ კიდევ მეერას ჯარისასა" ["Our kings took from their treasury the gold and silver utensils, gave them to the mint, made it strike gold and silver money and used this to pay the troops, and were trying to summon yet more troops"] [11, p. 196]; the exact date when it happened is not indicated in the chronicle. However, the events are narrated in a chronological order, and the context indicates that this minting activity should have occurred in 1752-1753 [3, p. 633].

109-110]. This opinion was shared by Kapanadze as well [5, p. 130; 6, p. 159].

In contrast to these authors, Pakhomov knew about the coins dated ۱۱۶۶, but doubted that the date was written correctly and called it "an exception"; evidently Pakhomov considered AH 1179 to be the initial year of minting the sirma coins, as this is the date with which he started his detailed review of the available varieties⁶⁵ [12, pp. 237-239]. Album expressed an opinion that the coin in question is dated "1199" (AH 1199 = 1784/5), with the tops of the 9's left open [1, p. 140; 2, p. 95].

Impossibility of their being struck in AH 1166

We considered various possibilities and came to the firm conclusion that any possibility of the "1166" sirma abazis being minted in 1166 AH should be ruled out once and for all. The reasons are as follows, and may be grouped as follows:

Historical context:

By AH 1166 (1752/3), Karim Khan Zand's authority certainly did not extend to the northern provinces of Iran lying to the south of the Araxes (Aras) river. The North was controlled by Karim Khan's rivals: Muhammad Hasan Khan Qajar, Azad Khan Afghan, and, later, Fath Ali Khan Afshar. The situation was constantly changing, and from a historical point of view, the sporadic minting of the coins basically in Karim Khan's name may be explicable, but barely possible – Karim Khan's positions were quite unstable and quite often he had to resort to defence rather than attack, sometimes even losing the southern cities of Isfahan and Shiraz [13; 15, p. 25; 16, p. 75]. In AH 1165, i.e. in 1751 or 1752⁶⁶ Karim Khan was defeated while besieging Muhammad Hasan Khan Qajar in Astarabad [15, p. 22, footnote 20; 13; 16, pp. 77-78]. The Zands also suffered much from the confrontation with Azad Khan Afshar in 1753-1755, and, though Karim Khan gained the upper hand eventually, the struggle was by no means easy. Azad Khan even managed to keep his power over the territories to the south of the Araxes, only to lose them to the Qajars by 1757⁶⁷ [13; 14, pp. 31-37; 16, pp. 72-75; 15, p. 25-29]. There is no doubt that, in the wake of the Astarabad defeat and while confronting and fighting against Azad Khan, the Zands could have had no effective control over the territories to the north of the Araxes. As to their rival Azad Khan, initially, back in 1751, he was attempting to extend his authority northward of the Araxes, but the Georgians raised his siege of Iravan and then inflicted a defeat on him at the battle of Qirxhbulakh. Later on there was some confrontation between the two sides as well, after the second Georgian defeat at the hands of the Khan of Shaki in 1752. Eventually, however, Azad Khan gave up his attempts to gain a foothold to the north of the Araxes and ceded this territory to Kartl-Kakheti. He preferred to enter into alliance with the Georgian kings – he married a niece of Teimuraz II at some time in the early 1750s⁶⁸ [15, pp. 20-21, 42; 3, pp. 621-622, 624-625; 9, pp. 149, 153; 11, pp. 208-209]. Moreover, according to Lang, who

provided no exact reference, Azad Khan might have received a "four thousand strong" contingent of the Georgian army, quite a significant amount for the period and the region, if the information is correct [9, p. 153]. No matter whether Kartl-Kakheti was allied with Azad Khan in 1752-1755 or not, in our opinion it is quite improbable that the Georgians would have jeopardised their geopolitical position by overtly siding with the remote Karim Khan and placing his invocation on the Tiflis coinage.

Karim Khan approached the Araxes only in 1760-1761, having defeated Muhammad Hasan Khan Qajar by 1759, and capturing Tabriz and Urmia from Fath Ali Khan Afshar⁶⁹. But even then Karim Khan's position did not become totally stable – for instance, he had to deal with an insurrection instigated by Zaki Khan Zand. Karim Khan's power became consolidated only by 1765 [13; 14, pp. 51-54; 16, pp. 90-93; 15, pp. 44-49]. But even then, Karim Khan made no attempt to recover Khurasan, a tributary state to the Durranis; "likewise, he realised that his power, and that of his vassals in the northwest, could not realistically challenge the hegemony that the Georgian king Erekle (Heraclius) had established over Armenia and Azerbaijan north of the Aras River" [13]. Karim Khan's attempt to get the hostages from Erekle II in 1162 failed [16, p. 119]. Nevertheless, both sides evidently managed to find a certain *modus vivendi* already by 1763: in exchange for a certain piety⁷⁰ that Erekle II was ever so ready to express, and realising the real balance of power, Karim Khan acknowledged the former's hegemony in south eastern Caucasus [3, pp. 630-632; 15, pp. 42-43; 9, p. 153; 13]

Numismatic context

The historical circumstances are well represented by the contemporary coinage, which, in its turn, may serve as a source of additional information on the political changes.

The Tiflis mint produced silver coinage (abbasis, muhammadis and shahis) in the name of the Afsharid Shahrukh in AH 1163-1164 (1749/50-1750/1), and then in AH 1170 (1756/7) [12, pp. 234-235]. As we see, despite Papuna Orbeliani's testimony (cf. footnote 64), there are no coins known from Tiflis mint for the period 1752-1755, when it would have been difficult (and maybe dangerous) to make a choice in favour of any of the leading contenders⁷¹. The coins were struck in the name of Shahrukh, who had no real power in the south eastern Caucasus nor even in the adjacent areas. Delegating a right of *sikka* to the lawful Afsharid ruler was a result of the inability to put the Georgian king's name on the coins. It was probably also a way of evading the requirement to cite the name of one of the major pretenders to the hegemony in Iran, some being too far to pose any immediate threat, like Karim Khan, or not being strong enough to have to submit to, like Azad Khan or Muhammad Hasan Khan. By 1763 the situation had already changed. Karim Khan Zand, as pointed out above, was already at the frontier of the Georgian sphere of interest, and a compromise he made with Erekle II apparently affected the Georgian coinage as well: the Tiflis mint started to produce abbasis and shahis with Karim's invocation *Ya Karim* and the Shia Shahadah, dated AH 1177-1179 (1763/4-1765/6) [12, pp. 235-236]. And in 1179 (1765/6) we already have what we believe to be the first sirma coin, still with the *Ya Karim* invocation but without the Shia Shahadah, and of a different design and weight standard.

As to the latter, the Tiflis coins in the name of Shahrukh were minted according to the 1 toman = 1200 nokhod weight standard first introduced in Iran by Nadir Shah, the norm for the abbasi

⁶⁵ It is quite astounding that Kapanadze, who knew Pakhomov in person and was acquainted with Lang's book, also listing the AH 1179 specimen from the collection of the American Numismatic Society, still wrote about the absence of sirma coins between 1166 and 1181 (!) AH [5, p. 130; 6, p. 159].

⁶⁶ Z. Sharashenidze's arguments in favour of the former date seem to be plausible [15, p. 22, footnote 20].

⁶⁷ Eventually, after spending some time with Kurdish tribes and then waging brigandage on the territories to the north of the Araxes, Azad Khan found himself in Georgia. There are different versions as to how it happened: he was either trying to get to Daghestan and was intercepted by Georgians on his way, or he voluntarily appeared before Erekle II, his former ally and relative by marriage. Anyway, it seems that Azad Khan was captured by the Georgians in 1760 and handed over to Karim Khan in 1763, who curiously enough, spared his old rival's life and let him live in honorable retirement in Shiraz. The Georgians gained Karim Khan's goodwill in exchange [15, pp. 42-43, footnotes 104, 107-110; 16, pp. 80-81, footnote 78; 13; 3, p. 631, footnote 4; 9, p. 153].

⁶⁸ The date provided by Z. Sharashenidze [15, p. 42, footnote 105] is in need of further verification, in our opinion.

⁶⁹ It is noteworthy, that initially Georgians were seemingly planning to support Fath Ali Khan by providing him with a military contingent, but the idea was dropped in view of Karim Khan's successes [15, pp. 40-41].

⁷⁰ Including sending a 60-soldier detachment to the Zand ruler [3, p. 677], or continuously placing the *Ya Karim* invocation on the Tiflis silver currency. For some information on the further relationship between Karim Khan Zand and Erekle II, refer to [9, pp. 171, 178-179; 3, pp. 677, 679-680, 684].

⁷¹ Except for the notorious "1166" AH abazi. The absence of any coinage whatsoever appears quite significant.

being 4.61 g [1, pp. 132-133, no. 2776]. The coins in the name of Karim Khan Zand with the Shia Shahadah minted in 1177-1179 are perhaps of a slightly lower weight, with abbasis weighing 4.50-4.55 g instead of 4.61, according to Pakhomov [12, p. 235]. However, that view may not be right, as the weight reduction is small and could be the result of wear from circulation, or be a random deviation. Anyway, all the sirma abasis/abbasis minted from 1179 to 1213 are of a very different weight standard, i.e. about 3.00 g⁷² [12, p. 238]. Moreover, the enigmatic "1166" abazi coin also weighs about 3.00 g (cf. Figs. 7-8, the weight of these specimens being correspondingly 3.08 and 3.02 g). This is in our opinion one of the strongest arguments for rejecting AH 1166 as the minting year for the "1166" coins.

In any case, why would the *Ya Karim* invocation appear on Tiflis coins in AH 1166, if elsewhere, at other mints outside Georgia directly subservient to Karim Khan it first appeared only in 1172 or in 1174⁷³ [2, p. xx; 1, p. 134; 17, pp. 780-782], i.e. not for another 6-8 years? Karim Khan's first coins were certainly minted in that very year AH 1166 [1, p. 234], but originated from provinces controlled by the Zand ruler but distant from Tiflis like Isfahan, Shiraz, Qazvin [17, pp. 780-782].

Finally, there is one more indirect argument in favour of the commencement of the sirma coinage in 1179 and not before. 1179 (1765/6) is the time when Erekle II started his major monetary reform: 3 new denominations in copper were added to the 2 which had been minted previously, and the design of the copper coinage was changed as well – the coat of arms of the royal dynasty of Bagrationi was introduced for the first time [7, pp. 26-27; 12, pp. 261-262; 4, p. 344]. It seems that this was the most probable time for reforming the silver coinage as well: changing the weight standard, changing the design (perhaps to make it easier for the population to recognise the new light-weight coins), and changing the legends – not appropriating the right of *sikka* by presenting Erekle's name, but at least eliminating the Shahadah.

Coinage traits

Already Pakhomov mentioned that, at that time, the 6s were always engraved tilted to the right, which is not the case on the "1166" abasis [12, pp. 239-240].

We may add that the early sirma abasis have a double linear border with a chain of 3-dot clusters between the two linear circles till AH 1193, after which the border normally consists of a simple chain of dots between the two linear circles [12, p. 239, footnotes 1-2]. In addition to that, from around 1194, the average flan diameters of the sirma abasis became much smaller than in the previous years of minting (particularly compared with the abasis of 1179 and the 1180s). But the "1166" abazi obverse die has a border comprising a chain of dots between the two linear circles, and was applied to a relatively small flan. If it had truly been minted in 1166, it would have set a pattern for the subsequent sirma abasis; but the early abasis are different, which also testifies against 1166 as the minting time for these abasis.

Possible minting time for the sirma abazi "1166"

The idea that no sirma coins were minted in 1166 (1752/3) has been voiced before, and the arguments of the opponents of the 1166 origin were definitely quite strong even without the additional evidence adduced by us. Were it not for the obviously wrong point of view expressed by such eminent exponents of Georgian numismatics like Kapanadze and Lang, the additional refutation would not have been necessary. However, refuting the 1166 date as the minting year is one thing; what is needed is an alternative proposition, and that is what we will attempt to do now.

⁷² This figure should not be considered provisional rather than definite; according to a contemporary traveler the weight standard of sirma abasis was 3.13 g [7, p. 26]. We intend to research this issue in the future.

⁷³ "A few scarce abbasis ... struck at Shiraz between 1173 an [and? – S.T., I.P.] 1175 bear the name *karim* inscribed in small characters" [1, p. 134, #2799].

As already mentioned, there is a discrepancy between the die design and the flan of the "1166" and the early abasis with undoubted dates. This fact indicates that the "1166" coins were most probably minted after 1193-1194.

We have already noted Album's suggestion that "1166" is "1199" with the tops of the 9's left open. Thus, there exists a reasonable alternative to 1166 with regard to the time when these abasis were struck – AH 1199 (1784/5). In turn, we can add that the "6s" do not look quite similar – could they be representing different figures, say 9 and 6, standing for AH 1196 (1781/2)? 1169 as the minting date is impossible because of those very arguments brought above against 1166.

Looking for an alternative interpretation of the digits on the coin we turned to die analysis. All the sirma abasis with the date "1166" available to us were struck with the same obverse die, and two different reverse dies (cf. Figs. 7-8). We managed to find die links via the both reverses. The "1166" abazi coin shares the reverses with the abasis bearing the following combinations of digits: 1201, 1210 (or 1215, as the circle may represent a five as well, though this is less probable⁷⁴), 1211, 1213 (Chart 1). One may utilise these reverses for attempting to establish the real minting time behind the digits "1166". Indeed, the reverses may be indirectly dated by the obverses (bearing the date) they are combined with: the reverse die could certainly have been produced earlier than any "accompanying" obverse die with a date, but when there is a set of obverse dies with different dates all combined with the same reverse die, one may surmise that the reverse die could not have been produced much prior to the earliest date on the obverse dies – the freshly produced reverse die *had* to have been used with some obverse die, and the latter should have been a current one, provided that the anachronistic usage of the obverse dies, undermining the whole idea of dating the coins had not occurred. Of course, this is not absolutely definite. Though not altogether impossible, it still seems to be quite improbable for the reverse die to have been produced and used, say in 1166, and then put aside for 35 years⁷⁵, till at least 1201, and then not being used at all, judging by the decent quality impressions it was capable of producing when applied to the flans struck in 1211 or 1213, according to the dates they bear (cf. Figs. 4-5).



Fig. 4 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1211. Weight 3.13 g; size 19 mm; die axis 12:30 o'clock. z28172



Fig. 5 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH 1213. Weight 3.07 g; size 18.2-19 mm; die axis 5:15 o'clock. ISHVIATI

⁷⁴ No AH 1214 and 1215 sirma coins with undoubted dates have been found so far, and 1213 seems to be the final date for this series [12, pp. 248-250].

⁷⁵ The situation with the sirma abazi obverse die could be different: bearing the date, it might become obsolete with the start of a new year, be stored at the mint, and then accidentally used at some point in the future. But the sirma abazi reverse dies, bearing no date, could not become obsolete and should have been used as long as they could stand the technical workload, to save the effort necessary for producing a new die. Eventually, their working surface will have deteriorated to an extent that prevented their continued usage. We also have to note that we do not recall any sirma abasis struck with obviously defective dies. The quality of the dies must have been under strict control.

A sample of 367 coins should be large enough to be relatively certain of the absence of the obverses with dates earlier than 1201 combined with the two reverses which, in their turn, were combined at some point with the "1166" obverse. This indicates that this obverse was produced at some time from AH 1201 (1199?). If produced earlier, it should have had been die-linked via reverses with the abazis bearing the earlier dates, which we failed to detect.

Moreover, we may be capable of narrowing the time span during which the reverses combined with the "1166 abazi" were utilised. The digits 1 and 2 on the "1201" coin are somewhat peculiar: being bigger/elongated vertically more than usual (in the same way as on the "1166" abazi) they resemble very much the digits on the contemporary copper Tiflis coins (cf. Fig. 9 and particularly Fig. 10).



Fig. 9 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AE, bisti, Tiflis, 1796/12010" (AH 1210). Weight 22.87 g; size 26.9-28 mm; die axis 7:30 o'clock.



Fig. 10 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AE, bisti, Tiflis, 1796/12011" (AH 1210). Weight 23.06 g; size 26.5-29.9 mm; die axis 7 o'clock.

The digits on the silver "1201" abazi (Fig. 2) and the copper "1201" coin (Fig. 10) resemble each other so much that they could even have been engraved by the same craftsman.



Fig. 2 Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, Erekle II, AR, sirma abazi, Tiflis, AH. 1201 (1210?) Weight 2.88 g; size 20.2-20.4 mm; die axis 3 o'clock.

But that copper coin was minted not in AH 1201 (1786/7), but in 1210 (1795/6), as proved by the Christian era date 1796 it bears additionally on the other side; it is very common for the date on these single-headed eagle type copper coins to be misarranged like ١٢٠١٠, ٠٢٠١, ٢٠١٠ (Fig. 9), ٢١٠ below *ضر* in addition to ١ at the *س* of *تقليس*, or like ١٢٠١ above the *س* of *تقليس* (Fig. 10). Nevertheless, all these combinations stand for AH 1210 [12, pp. 267-268]. We think that if it is reasonable to interpret the digits ١٢٠١ on the copper coins as representing the date AH 1210, they may be interpreted in the same way on the silver abazi coin, at least in case of this particular variety (Fig. 2), bearing identical digits, perhaps engraved by the same artisan.

Therefore, if we allow the "1201" abazi to have been minted in 1210, then it would turn out that the "1166" sirma abazi is die-linked with the abazis minted in (bearing the dates pertaining to)

the following years: AH 1210 (1215 as well?), 1211, 1213. This postpones the likely *terminus ante quem non* of minting from around 1201 till around 1210, and makes the 1199 date a less possible candidate for minting.

Could the "6s" be inverted (mirror) 2s? If so, we would have the date "1122". This latter, if we assume that, in addition to mirror imaging, the digits were shuffled as well while being engraved (as they usually were on the 1796/1210 copper coins) could stand for 1212. Taking into consideration the die-links with the coins minted in 1210-1213, this version seems to us to be the most plausible.

Moreover, to the left of these four digits there is a circle, which, strangely enough, was always ignored before. It may constitute a field decoration (one has to say that dot-like elements/field decorations are common on the sirma coins, but not the circles), typical of the sirma coinage, or, alternatively, be a 0 or a 5. If not a decoration, then the date becomes "01122" or "51122". If we make three more assumptions of the artisan duplicating the digits, omitting the zero, or not tilting the digit "6", the following dates become possible: AH 1200, 1201, 1202, 1205, 1206, 1210, 1212, 1215.

Conclusions

One could certainly argue that too many assumptions have been made. Nevertheless, one would not argue that the digits on these "1166" abazis are distorted anyway, and other deviations from the standard, like reshuffling or duplicating or omitting the digits of the date, cannot be unexpected. The following can be inferred:

1. The minting of the sirma currency definitely started in AH 1179 (1765/6), and not in AH 1166 (1752/3);
2. The digits which were traditionally interpreted as "6" on the sirma abazis with the date "1166" may in truth be either "9"s with the top left open, or "mirror-image 2"s. Correspondingly, these abazis were probably minted either in AH 1199 (or in 1196), or in 1200-1215 (the possible interpretations of the date on the coin in the latter case are: 1200, 1201, 1202, 1205, 1206, 1210, 1212, 1215); the AH 1212 (1797/8) version is the most probable in our opinion;
3. A certain variety of the sirma abazi coins dated 1201 (Fig. 2) was possibly minted in AH 1210 (1795/6).

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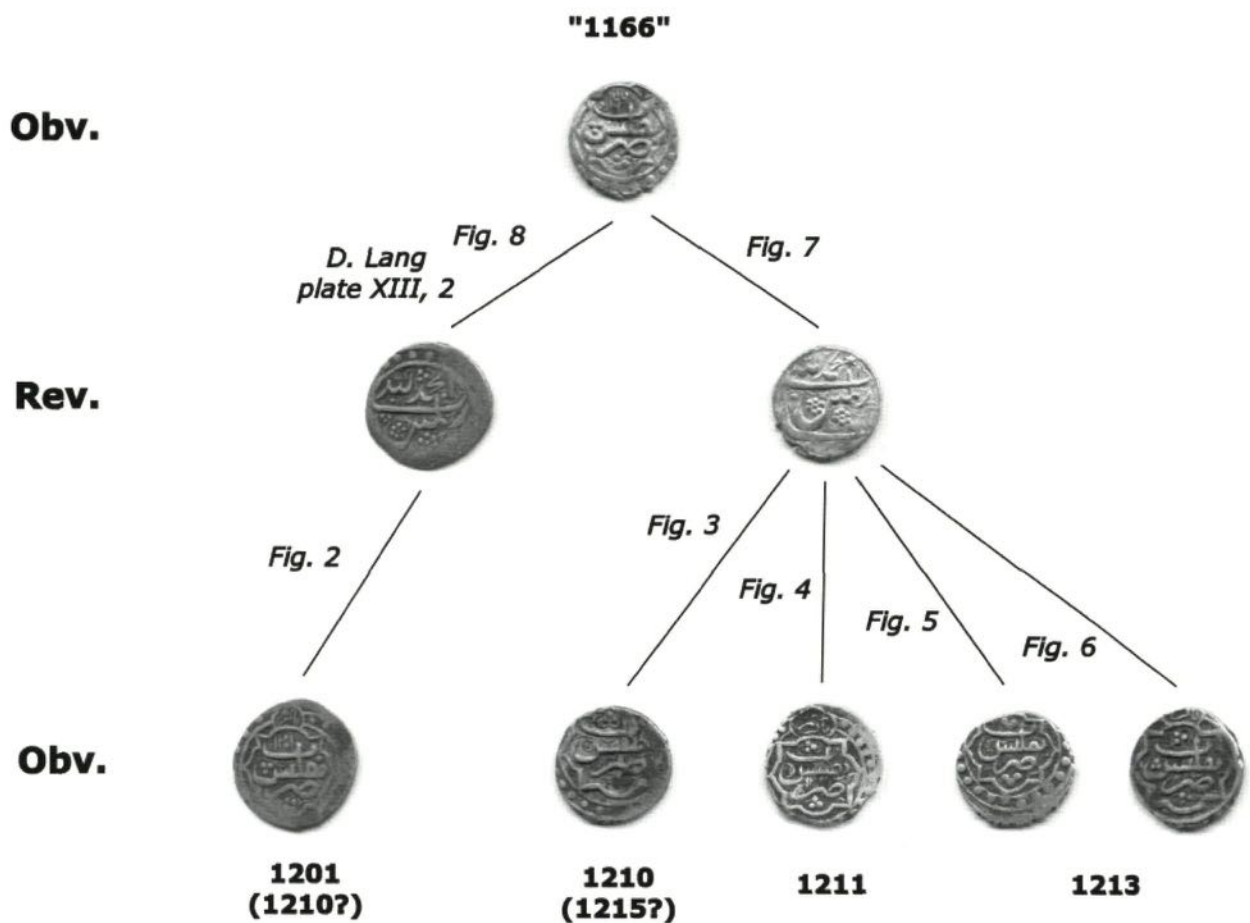


Chart showing die-links

THE YELLOW METAL COINS ASCRIBED TO EREKLE II AND THE FATE OF GEORGIAN DIES OF THE 17TH-18TH CENTURY

By Irakli Paghava

The aim of this paper is to review the peculiar coins of yellowish alloy, which are usually considered to be a late golden currency⁷⁶ of Erekle (Irakli) II, king of the united East Georgian kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti (1762-1798). We attempt to revise the established opinion on these pieces utilising available historical and, particularly, numismatic data. Another objective of this work is to attempt to discover the fate of the coin-dies produced and employed in Kartli and Kakheti from the end of the 17th century until the end of the 18th century.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The coins in question (Figs. 1-2) are quite rare, only 2 specimens being published so far. Currently the coins are preserved in the Russian Federation, in the State Hermitage. Specimen 1 (Fig. 1, State Hermitage inventory #3866) was obtained by the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of Saint Petersburg in 1831 [7, p. 420] and seemingly was passed on to the State Hermitage in 1865, along with the rest of the numismatic collections of the former [18⁷⁷]. Before being acquired by the Asiatic Museum, it had been in the European Coin Cabinet of the Academy of Sciences (evidently, Imperial Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg)⁷⁸ [7, p. 420]. Specimen 2 (Fig. 2, State Hermitage inventory 4171) was published by I. Dobrovolskiy [6, p. 64, plate 8; 5, p. 166, plate II, 15]; it found itself in the State Hermitage holdings [6, p. 64; 5, p. 166], and might have been in the collection of count I. Tolstoy previously [17, p. 31; 5, p. 166, endnote 31; 25, p. 260, footnote 4; 11, p. 344], although Langlois wrote about the specimen in the collection of Prince Gagarin in Saint Petersburg [22, p. 125]. It is worth noting that the image of specimen 2 was already published by Kapanadze in the 1969 edition of his book [14, plate XVIII, 229; 5, endnote 31], and possibly in the previous editions (1950, 1955, 1965) too (in all the latter editions the image was cropped quite badly making its

⁷⁶ The literary and documentary evidence as well as extant coins prove the minting of golden coins in eastern Georgia during the Ottoman occupation (1723-1735), then in AH 1160 (1747-8) and in the 1750s [14, pp. 140, 145-146; 25, pp. 229; 11, pp. 336, 339, 341, 343-344].

⁷⁷ We are very grateful to Mr Vladimir Gubanov for kindly indicating this source to us.

⁷⁸ Bernhardt Dorn stated in his report the following: "Bei dieser Gelegenheit habe ich der Konferenz noch die Anzeige zu machen, dass mir vom Hrn. Akademiker v. Graefe aus dem seiner Aufsicht anvertrauten Europäischen Münzkabinette der Akademie ein höchst seltenes Goldstück des Grusinischen Zar's Irakli II für das Asiatische Museum abgegeben worden ist." ["On this occasion I also have to notify the Conference that an extremely rare golden piece of Georgian king Irakli II was given to me for the Asiatic Museum by Mr. Academician v. Graefe from the European Coin Cabinet of the Academy that was entrusted to him."] [7, p. 420].

identification rather difficult) [13, plate XIV, 186; 12, plate XIV, 186; 16, plates, 119].

The description of these coins is as follows:

*Obverse*⁷⁹:

Crudely engraved single-headed eagle and the date 17 96 in European figures to the right and left of its claws. Surrounded by a border of large dots between two linear circles.

Reverse:

Within a big polyhedral cartouche:
12030 in Arabic figures⁸⁰ (i.e. AH 1203, = 1788/9)

ب
تقلیس
ضر

Surrounded by a border made by large dots between two linear circles;

A small ellipsoid cartouche with

یاکریم

(Ya, Karim or O [God the] All-Bountiful)

intercalated in the border at 12 o'clock.

The weight is 7.65 (or 7.64) g for Specimen 1 and 7.14 g for Specimen 2; Diameter, respectively, 25 and 24 mm; die axis is not available [5, p. 166; 6, p. 64].

The depressions on the reverse correspond to the elevated elements of design (the eagle) on the obverse, a defect which is common for Georgian-Sasanian [5, pp. 166-167], and, generally, Sasanian coins. This demonstrates that the flan of these coins is quite thin, which corresponds to the weight data, diameter and specific gravity (see below).

The alloy used for these coins is quite remarkable. All the scholars of the 19th century and later generations considered them to be gold (certainly implying a relatively high standard of this metal) [9, p. 213, no. 34b; 7, p. 420; 22, p. 125; 11, p. 57, footnote 96; 24, p. 272, fig. 43; 4, pp. 5-6; 21, p. 114; 19, pp. 4,10; 25, p. 260; 13, pp. 98-99; 12, p. 128; 16, p. 131; 14, p. 155]; when writing about the specimen in the collection of the Asiatic Museum back in 1839, Marie-Félicité Brosset described it as "gold" referring⁸¹ to his colleague M. Hess, "qui l'a essayée chimiquement" ["who assayed it chemically"] [4, p. 5]. But it turns out that they the alloy is not pure gold, but contains a significant amount of some other metal/s. According to I. Dobrovolskiy, the analysis was performed in the restoration workroom of the Hermitage; specific gravity of gold – 19.3, of silver – 10.4, of the coins' alloy – around 14; Dobrovolskiy called this alloy electrum [5, pp. 166, 168, endnote 34]. The laboratory data are confirmed by the results of the *de visu* inspection undertaken by Dobrovolskiy, who characterised the colour of both coins as "подозрительно белесый, особенно в наиболее выпуклых частях" ["suspiciously albescent, particularly in the most embossed areas"] [5, p. 166]. These data seem to be quite significant (please refer to the discussion below), although

⁷⁹ It is impossible to be certain which side was regarded as the obverse: one side shows the Russian eagle, a symbol of Russian suzerainty, while another one bears the invocation *Ya, Karim*, once a reference to a nominal Persian overlord; the latter became stereotyped still appearing on Georgian coins 20 years after Karim Khan's death, till 1799 [21, p. 110].

⁸⁰ It was common on sirma coins to write a 4-digit date with more than 4 figures by including additional dots for zeros.

⁸¹ Indicated in M. Brosset's "Monograph on Armenian Coins" (In French: "Monographie des Monnaies Arméniennes") [4]; the book contains an extensive section on Georgian coins as well.

apparently they were disregarded in the recent literature, still identifying these coins as "gold" [23, pp. 70, 72, 92, no. 254].

Both coins were struck from a pair of identical dies. The obverse of these two coins corresponds to the obverse of single-headed eagle copper coins of Erekle II (cf. Fig. 3), while the reverse corresponds to the obverse of the *sirma* abazi coins of Erekle II and Giorgi XII (cf. Fig. 4). Not only are the types similar: judging by the images of those yellowish coins published in the literature [5, plate II, 15-16; 6, plate, nos. 8-9; 23, p. 92, no. 254], one may surmise that the eagle side was possibly minted using the actual die which had been used for producing the copper *bisti* represented in Fig. 3 (die match with the obverse?), while the mint-name side was undoubtedly minted with the very die which had been used for producing the *sirma* abazi reproduced in Fig. 4 (die match with the obverse). The original product of those dies has not been identified before. This seems to indicate that the dies are genuine. But it poses a question: who, where and when exactly could genuine dies have been used for producing coins from the yellow metal? We will attempt to respond to these questions below.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

The dates on the opposite sides of the coin do not correspond, but the *terminus ante quem non* should be the latest one, i.e. 1796. However, it does not exclude the possibility that these coins were struck later than that, maybe not even in Erekle II's reign (died in 1798), but in the reign of his successor, Giorgi XII⁸² (1798-1800), or even after that, in a time period subsequent to the Russian annexation of Eastern Georgia (in 1801). Anyway, in our opinion, one cannot be definite in ascribing them exclusively to Erekle II. As at least specimen 1 entered the Asiatic Museum in 1831, and the European Coin Cabinet even before that, we may conclude that it was struck some time during the period 1796-1831; the other specimen would have been struck around the same time, probably, simultaneously.

The following should be noted with regard to these coins:

- Mismatch between the dates on the different sides of the same coin is noteworthy and was duly wondered at by various scholars [25, p. 260; 13, pp. 98-99; 12, p. 128; 15, p. 131; 14, p. 155], but it was less unusual for contemporary Georgian coins than one may think: the copper coins of Erekle II with double- and single-headed eagle sometimes bear mismatched dates, e.g. AH 1201 or 1202 (1786/7, 1787/8) and 1781⁸³, or AH 1201, with shuffled digits (1786/7)

⁸² "Dr H. Nützel, director of the Berlin Museum" reported to E. Pakhomov about having purchased "a gold coin, struck in the time of Giorgi XII" [25, p. 251, footnote 1]. Unfortunately no more information is available on the issue.

⁸³ Ye. Pakhomov considered 1781 to be a mistake for 1787; nevertheless, he had to allocate the 1781 – AH 1201/1202 coins to a distinct group, because 1781 was engraved so clearly [25, p. 264].

and 1796 (Fig. 3)⁸⁴ [25, pp. 264, 267-268]. However, in contrast to the copper coins listed above, the mismatching of the dates on the coins we are discussing here was caused by the use of different dies, leading to a typological discrepancy, and not by a jumbling of the figures, or by an engraver making a mistake (V. Komarov found the latter conceivable in the case of these "golden" coins as well [19, p. 4]).

- The last years of the East Georgian kingdom were marred by grave internal disorder and heavy military pressure from without, resulting in severe economic crisis. This might seem to be a somewhat unlikely time for a revival (not continuation!) of the minting of a gold or electrum currency. The minting of "electrum" (or "gold", as thought by scholars of the previous generation) coins in the year 1796 (if we concede that the coins were in deed minted then and not later), right after the invasion of Agha Muhammad Khan in 1795, which left Tiflis in ruins and ashes, and reduced the city population by two thirds at least, would be a very noteworthy vestige of Georgian economic history of the period [13, pp. 98-99, 12, p. 128, 15, p. 131, 14, p. 155]. On the other hand, the economic and political difficulties could, on the contrary, have stimulated the striking of a sort of *emergency money* at that time; that might have been in Komarov's mind: "чекань этотъ былъ случайный, вынужденный крайними обстоятельствами" ["that minting was incidental, forced by extreme circumstances"] [19, p. 10].
- A typological discrepancy, i.e. a combination of the silver and copper coins designs [13, pp. 98-99; 12, p. 128; 15, p. 131; 14, p. 155] would appear to be unprecedented in Georgian numismatics and seems to be quite enigmatic *per se*. The minting of coins in precious metals (i.e. gold and silver) in Kartli and Kakheti was traditionally (i.e. since the 16th century) a prerogative of the Persian suzerain, and the rulers of the polities subject to Persian rule had no right to usurp this right of *sikka*. Even Erekle II, who achieved a *de facto* independence from Iran, evidently did not dare to change this practice and never put his own name on his silver (or golden) coinage. The copper coinage of the 18th century, however, was autonomous, both in the south Caucasus and in the provinces of Iran proper. At the same time, the copper coins of Kartli and later Kartl-Kakheti in the 18th century were becoming increasingly national in type, starting to bear the initials of the Georgian King of Kartli already in the beginning of the 18th century. [20, p. 60]. The copper coins of Erekle II bore his name and sometimes the royal dynasty coat of arms, later replaced by an eagle, the Russian coat of arms [25, pp. 259-268]. However, the latter did not feature on the silver coinage, and this fact seems to us to be very significant. Anyway, the coins in precious metal and in copper traditionally constituted two separate lines in terms of design and legends; the combination of the two is truly extraordinary.
- The usage of low-grade gold (electrum?) for minting coins appears quite strange for 18th century Georgia. While the alloy of the post-Safavid Persian gold coins to our knowledge has not been studied *en masse*, it seems that "pure" metal was used insofar as it was allowed by the contemporary refining technique. It would be logical to think that Kartl-Kakheti would have followed the Persian habit in that aspect of its monetary policy as well. A substantial amount of the ore containing both gold and silver was mined in Kartl-Kakheti proper (at Akhtala), but the gold was separated from the silver [10, pp. 14-15, footnote 10], which makes the minting of electrum coins doubtful.
- The surviving sources do not point to the minting of gold or electrum coins in Georgia after 1796. The gold mined in Kartl-Kakheti apparently was not coined: Major General

⁸⁴ According to Pakhomov, the AH 1201 date was produced by replacing the zero in AH 1210 (1795/6) [25, pp. 267-268]. In Fig. 3 the date is represented as 2010.

Lazarev reported to Lieutenant General Knorring, another Russian appointee, in 1801 (with regard to the previous years) the following: “Царь же всегда, когда только заблагоразсудитъ, приказываетъ дѣ лать монеты; золотыхъ монетъ здѣ сь нѣ ть; а существуютъ серебряныя и мѣ дныя” [“The king always, whenever he thinks it fit, orders the striking of coins; there are no gold coins here; but silver and copper ones exist”] [19, p. 9]; prince Teimuraz, grandson of Erekle II and son of Giorgi XII, the last kings of Kartl-Kakheti, reported in his letter to M. Brosset: “რაც ოქრო საქართველოს მადნებიდან შემოდიოდა, იმას ჩვენი მეფეები არ აჭრევიებდნენ... უფრო წმინდა და კარგი ოქრო რომ იყო, ვაჭრები ძვირად ყიდულობდნენ, ზოგი ევროპიის მხარესა და ზოგს ამიის მხარეს ავაჭრებდნენ და თითონაც სარგებლობა ჰქონდათ და მეფეთა ჩვენთა და მათს ხაზინას უფრო სარგებლობა ჰქონდათ ამითი, ვინემ რომ მოეჭრათ და ისე გაეყიდნათ” [“Whatever gold arrived from Georgian mines, our kings did not have it minted... as it was pure and good gold, merchants purchased it at a high price, traded some to European and some to Asian lands, and had profit themselves and our kings and their treasury also had more profit this way than they would have had by minting it and selling as such”] [17, p. 30]. However, some “gold shauris” are mentioned in the 1783 document, while another 1789 document mentions their *minting*⁸⁵ [17, p. 31; 14, p. 142]. According to N. Koiava’s calculations, the weight of gold shauri was 0.739-0.777 g. [17, p. 33], i.e. quite different (roughly one tenth?) from the coins we study in this paper (weight 7.14 and 7.64/5 g).

- Generally, gold coins played a very limited role in the monetary circulation: 57 vast documents with 5-6 thousand items of expenditure dating back to 1742-1801 mention gold coins only a few times, and those always involve a foreign currency [17, p. 32]; apparently, there is no mention of gold coins in the documents written after 1783 [17, pp. 31-32].
- It seems to be significant that these coins are so rare, and that both extant specimens are located in Russia, and were apparently there already in the first third of the 19th century.

Different scholars have had varying opinions on these coins: Many scientists, including Brosset, Dorn, Langlois, de Morgan, Karst, Komarov, Pakhomov, Kapanadze (in his early works, up to 1965) considered them to be regular, albeit rare gold coins of Erekle II [4, p. 5; 9, p. 213, no. 34b; 7, p. 420; 22, p. 125, plate IX, no. 7; 24, p. 274, fig. 43; 16, p. 57, footnote 96; 19, pp. 4, 10; 25, p. 260; 13, pp. 98-99; 12, p. 128; 15, p. 131]. Recently, the same view was quoted in the Money of Georgia catalogue [23, pp. 70, 72, 92, no. 254].

Lang, apparently agreeing with the idea that those coins were minted by Erekle II, thought that “they were not in general circulation, but were for presentation to the Russian court” [21, p. 114]. Pakhomov, who considered these items to be regular coins, additionally suggested (ascribing this to another person) that these coins could be *patterns*, not put into circulation [25, p. 260].

Apparently it was I. Spassky, a prominent Russian scholar, who on the analogy of Russian medieval numismatics, conjectured that these two coins might be *donatives*, *donative gold coins* or some form of *gratuity medals*. Spassky’s opinion was voiced by I. Dobrovolskiy and V. Uzdennikov⁸⁶ [6, p. 65; 5, p. 167; 28, pp. 480-481].

Kapanadze, who initially apparently considered these “gold” coins to have been minted by Erekle II [13, pp. 98-99; 12, p. 128;

15, p. 131], later changed his mind, and proposed a revolutionary idea that the dies of the 1796 copper coin and AH 1203 silver coin were taken away to some “Saint Petersburg archive”, and were used by some high-ranking collector for replenishing his personal collection of coins [14, p. 155]; i.e. for striking *novodel*⁸⁷ coins.

We consider it necessary to scrutinise all the views mentioned above. Generally speaking, it looks as though there might truly have existed a custom in Eastern Georgia to produce pattern coins before starting the regular issue. Kutelia thought it conceivable that the thick Tiflis copper with a rhinoceros, dated AH 1112 (1700/1), was a pattern (24 mm, a diameter equal to that of the half bistis, and 13.85 g, while the average for half bistis coins was 8.69)⁸⁸ [20, p. 59]; Kapanadze considered a very refined, and also thick and heavy fulus of Bakar (28 mm, 10.02 g; average weight of Bakar’s half bistis is 8.35-8.42 g [20, p. 62]) to be a pattern coin too [25, p. 254, footnote 1, plate XVII, 170; 14, p. 151, plate XVI, 207]. Copper shauris⁸⁹ of Erekle II dated AH 1179 (1765/6) are also considered to be patterns. The initial plan would have been to start issuing a relatively major denomination for copper – the shauri, which had never been struck before. However, because of their rarity (only two specimens have been published so far) and good state of preservation, they should have been patterns⁹⁰ [25, p. 261; 11, p. 344]. Theoretically, one could concede that the yellow metal coins we are reviewing could be patterns, not put into circulation for some reason. But in contrast to the cases quoted above, the latter were not minted in the standard metal, intended for the final product, i.e. coins for circulation; and were hybrid in terms of typology.

If really patterns, they would probably have been intended for prior approval by the Georgian authorities, and not by the Russian imperial government. It is obvious that there was some relationship between Kartl-Kakheti and the Russian Empire regarding the striking of coins:

- The Russian eagle appeared on Erekle’s copper coins in 1781 or 1783 [25, pp. 263-264].
- There exist relatively light-weight but artistically more refined specimens with a double-headed eagle, dated 1781 and AH 1202 (1787/8), of a very high quality in terms of minting technique (milled, not hammer-struck?), but with distorted Georgian and Arabic legends, thought to be minted on the territory of the Russian Empire⁹¹ as pattern coins for Georgia [12, p. 126; 14, p. 153, plate XVIII, #226; 11, pp. 345-346, plate Γ, 53].

However, it is improbable in our opinion that the Georgian administration would submit to the Russian government for confirmation the patterns of, say, new electrum / gold coins bearing a single-headed eagle, i.e. an overt abuse of the Russian coat of arms⁹². Thus, Lang’s unsubstantiated assertion that these

⁸⁷ For general information on novodels, which do not constitute “former money”, but only its imaginary analogues, generated by the passion for collecting” [26, p. 106], and the definitions for the term *novodel*, refer to [26, 27; 28, pp. 483-487]

⁸⁸ An accidental deviation from the weight prescribed by the standard is another explanation [20, p. 59].

⁸⁹ Georgian term for “shahi”.

⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that both are in Russian museums, currently in the State Hermitage and the Moscow Historical Museum [25, p. 261; 11, p. 344].

⁹¹ Kapanadze ascribed them to Yekaterinburg mint, which exclusively specialised in striking Russian imperial *copper* coins [14, p. 153]. It is not clear why they could not have been minted at Saint Petersburg mint, the central one, with its immediate connection with the Russian imperial court, i.e. decision-making centre. If the chemical composition of the copper used at those two Russian mints was different, a technical analysis might help in tracing the origins of these refined coins.

⁹² Pakhomov provides the following logical reasons for the substitution of the *double-headed eagle* for a *single-headed one* on Tiflis coins 1796 [25, p. 266]:

- Enabling the population to distinguish the new coins struck in 1796 according to a new weight standard from the old ones;
- Camouflaging the Russian imperial coat of arm because of an unwillingness to continue manifesting Kartl-Kakheti’s association to the Russian Empire so explicitly in the wake of the ravaging of Tiflis by Agha Muhammad Khan when the Russians did not provide the

⁸⁵ Yet another document (dating back to the first quarter of the 18th century?) also mentions minting of gold shauris [17, p. 31; 14, p. 142].

⁸⁶ No exact reference to a published work was indicated in either case. We did not manage to find it either. The idea may have been conveyed in a personal communication.

electrum coins were not for circulation but "for presentation to the Russian court" [21, p. 114] seems to be improbable as well.

The minting of donative coins is not unknown in Islamic history, including the late-Iranian period [1, pp. 9-10]. Kartl-Kakheti, having undergone a pronounced cultural Persian influence, might have followed this pattern. There exist some indications that silver *bisti* coins were minted in Tiflis in the early 18th century, possibly for dispersing during the Nowruz celebration⁹³ [20, p. 45; 17, p. 33; 14, p. 142]; gold coins *could have been*⁹⁴ minted for donating to courtiers [17, p. 33-34]. However, to our knowledge, there are no sources whatsoever mentioning that, and one would expect a donative coin of Erekle II to bear his name.

Of course, we cannot be certain about the incorrectness of these views on the origin of the coins in question; similarly, a limited mintage of gold coins for circulation by Erekle II, possibly stimulated by the need of cash after the crushing defeat at the hands of Agha Muhammad Khan, cannot be excluded either. However, all the versions on the *Georgian* origin of these coins are shattered, if not demolished, by the arguments listed above: typological (and hence date) incompatibility, rare alloy, silence of the sources and even contradictory evidence they contain, an extremely limited role that gold seemingly had in the monetary circulation of Kartl-Kakheti.

In contrast to that, the *Russian* origin of the coins seems to be quite likely. What is very unlikely is that they could have been struck in the Russian Empire for any *official* purposes (unlike, for example, the artistically refined coppers with double-headed eagle described above): the Russian coat of arms, i.e. the double-headed eagle, would not have been abused by depriving the eagle of one of its head in that case.

We consider Kapanadze's idea on the novodel origin of these two coins to be very credible. In contrast to other versions discussed above, virtually all the data we have about them fit well into the novodel theory: for instance, obverse-reverse mismatch can be reasonably explained by "hybridisation" – deliberate randomisation of obverse and reverse dies from various coins [26, pp. 108-109; 28, p. 484; 27, p. 181]; the unconventional alloy could be a result of a particular preference in selecting the metal [26, p. 109] – novodels of any coin could be minted in any metal out of gold, silver and copper. There also exist novodels minted in an alloy of lead and tin [28, p. 485, footnote *; 27, p. 181]. The grave situation in 1796 as well as the preponderance of silver currencies on the local Georgian market certainly would not have prevented the production of novodel coins in Russia. This, having nothing in common with the real monetary situation in Kartl-Kakheti would not have been reflected in the contemporary sources. The rarity and Russian location (already by 1831) of these coins also fits this theory.

The existence of other novodel Georgian coins would be very important and supportive of the novodel theory. And indeed, coins like this do exist. To our knowledge, there were no obvious novodels of Georgian coins published in the literature till 2001, when quite an interesting and relevant coin was published in the *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean*, Volume 9, Iran after the Mongol Invasion [2, plate 33, #654]; we reproduce its description (in *italics*) here:

Obv: Horse walking left.

Rev: In field, ضرب فلوس تفلیس, ٠١٩٥ (note the incorrect order of date digits).

AE, 1h, 27.68 g – Novodel (official restrike for collectors) produced at one of the Russian mints in the 19th century [no provenance].
[2, #654].

military protection envisaged by the vassalage Treaty of Georgievsk (1783).

⁹³ Tiflis, the capital city of the Christian Georgian kingdom had a significant proportion of Muslim inhabitants.

⁹⁴ We personally do not share the assurance of the author.

It is not specified why the author considered this coin to be a novodel, but the regular flan (and possibly the rim, hardly visible on the reproduction), nice state of preservation and anomalously high weight prove that. Coins of this type were minted in Tiflis in AH 1090-1095 (1679/80-1683/4), and the highest denomination which truly was in circulation was the half *bisti* with the weight within the 6.48-10.08 g range, the average for the AH 1095 half *bisti* being 8.27 g (calculated from 12 specimens) [20, pp. 57-58]. Dobrovolskiy published a presumably unique *bisti* coin (size = 33 mm, weight = 20.43 g) of the same date and type from the collection of the State Hermitage (Russian Federation), formerly in the collection of the Archaeological Society [5, plate II, 14, p. 166]. Can this unique coin be a novodel as well? The coin is not quite so well-preserved, though much better than the majority of Tiflis coppers of the time. On the other hand, the flan is sufficiently regular, while the weight is also unprecedented; the location (pointing to the provenance?) is Russia again; and what is most important, the side with the mint name and date (but not the other – "horse" side) seems to be a die-match with the Ashmolean specimen. The regularity of the flan seemingly points to these coins having been struck either outside Georgia, or at the Tiflis imperial mint (1804-1834), equipped with some relatively advanced equipment [29].

Taking into account all the aforesaid, we have to conclude that Kapanadze was probably right and the novodel origin of these coins seems to be much more likely than any other version.

The existence of the two electrum coins that we have discussed above provides us with valuable information on the fate of the dies used for producing currency in 18th century and even 17th century Georgia.

The fact that it became possible to use the AH 1203 (1788/9) die in or after 1796 proves that at least some of the dies from the Tiflis mint survived Agha Muhammad Khan's 1795 invasion, when the victorious troops of the Qajar leader sacked the city burning down and destroying churches, palaces, book depositories⁹⁵ and typography, enslaving much of the population of Tiflis and eastern Georgia in general [8, p. 764]. The dies could either have been evacuated or concealed in that fateful autumn month of September.

It remains unclear what happened to them afterwards, after the city reverted to Georgian control, following the withdrawal of the Persian army. If we return to the idea that these coins were truly minted by Erekle II in 1796 employing the old AH 1203 *sirma abazi* die, that would mean that the dies (at least the one mentioned) were brought back to Tiflis. However, we incline to the idea that the coins under discussion constitute novodels, probably minted in the central provinces of the Russian Empire (and not in Georgia), employing Georgian dies of the years 1796 and 1203. It would be logical to think that following the annexation of Kartl-Kakheti by the Russian Empire,⁹⁶ the Russian imperial administration (perhaps, one of its high-ranking representatives) obtained both dies from the same source, most probably, the Tiflis mint. We incline to the view that the dies, maybe evacuated or concealed in 1795 were returned to Tiflis and were stored along with the newly produced 1796 copper-coin dies (the dies could also simply have been abandoned in Tiflis to survive the invasion). Eventually they fell into Russian hands and were probably taken to the central *guberniyas* to be used for striking novodels.

Out of the multitude of Russian imperial mints [28, pp. 447-452] only Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Warsaw and possibly also Suzun mints were involved in minting novodels till 1890 [27, p. 180; 28, p. 484]. Yekaterinburg, however, joined in only in 1840 [26, p. 120], and hence may safely be excluded. We are sure that the Warsaw and Suzun mints are not proper candidates for minting Georgian novodels either. It would be reasonable that Georgian dies had the maximum chance of being taken to the capital of the Russian Empire, i.e. to Saint Petersburg. However,

⁹⁵ That would have been the time when the bulk of the state archives of Kartl-Kakheti was lost forever, falling victim to the invaders' vandalism.

⁹⁶ Tiflis became a centre of Russian dominions in the South Caucasus.

the novodels could also have been minted outside the official Russian imperial mints [27, p. 180]. If Georgian dies went into the possession of a private person, say some high-ranking official, as Kapanadze used to think [14, p. 155], they might not show up at any mint at all. For the moment there seems to be no opportunity to ascertain where exactly those dies could have been employed.

Another issue is what happened to the rest of the dies. Were they also seized by Russians along with the sirma AH 1203 and 1796 copper coin ones? Or were they simply mislaid and lost by the outset of the new, 19th century at the time of the dramatic end of national statehood in eastern Georgia⁹⁷?

Does the existence of the novodel Georgian copper coin or coins of the 17th century [2, no. 654; 5, plate II, 14, p. 166] mean that the earlier dies were also stored at Tiflis mint until seized by the Russians? Or was the Ashmolean 27.68 g coin produced from the dies engraved anew in accordance with the layout of genuine coins? This seems much less probable, particularly taking into account the decent calligraphy of the legends in Arabic, which would have been an obstacle for Russian moneyers, who had not coped very well with the job of engraving legends in Georgian and Arabic on the double-headed eagle coins mentioned above. It looks as though there are grounds to conjecture that at least some 17th century dies were preserved in Georgia for more than a century (from 1683/4) to be eventually taken to Russia, maybe in 1801-1804, as the Russian imperial administration opened its own mint in Tiflis in 1804 [29]. Alternatively, the dies could have been used in Georgia, at this very Russian mint of Tiflis. The Russian location of the coins in question, however, is better explained by the former version.

If the dies were appropriated by Russian governmental officials, and brought to Saint Petersburg mint, then they should have fallen victim to the process of destroying old dies, which started in 1847; 600 dies were destroyed, including all the dies pertaining to the epoch before the reign of Paul I (1796-1801) [3].

Unfortunately, the archives of the Saint Petersburg mint were lost during the evacuation in 1917 [3]. Nevertheless, a thorough search in Russian archives might sooner or later yield some more information on the fate of the coins ascribed to Erekle II as well as of Georgian dies in general.

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⁹⁷ The Russians conquered the Western Georgian kingdom of Imereti by military force in 1811. The other petty principalities Georgia was divided into were gradually and more or less peacefully absorbed by the Russian Empire over the course of the 19th century. Some, but not all Georgian territories were additionally taken by the Russians from the Ottoman Empire.

COUNTERMARKING OF COPPER COINS IN LATE 18TH CENTURY GEORGIA

By Irakli Paghava, Giorgi Lobzhanidze, Severian Turkia

In this article we propose to discuss the possible reasons behind the countermarking practices in the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti in eastern Georgia. New coins bearing a "simple countermark" of Georgian king, Erekle (Irakli) II, including one on a coin of the 13th century ruler, Jalal ad-Din Mangubarni, are published. New data on the countermarks proper are also presented.

Georgian Countermarks (brief overview)

Countermarks were in common use in Georgia in the 12th-13th century. [22, pp. 112-117; 11, pp. 83-86; 1, pp. 104-109]: up to 10 different countermarks [11, p. 84, drawings 1-10/11; 1, plate I, 1-11, 18] were applied to both Georgian and contemporary foreign coins [11, pp. 84-86; 1, p. 110]. But later on, their usage was seemingly discontinued and revived only in the 18th century, when Teimuraz II and his son, Erekle II, kings of eastern Georgia, reintroduced the countermarking practices [22, pp. 269-270; 11, pp. 153-154; 1, pp. 109-111].

Three different countermarks of these Georgian rulers were known (Fig. 1a-c) [22, pp. 269-270, plate XIX, 86; 11, pp. 153-154; 1, pp. 109-111].

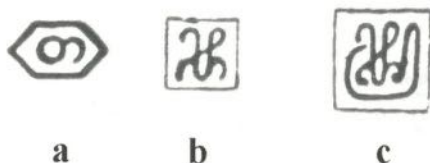


Fig. 1a-c Countermarks of Teimuraz II and Erekle II. Reproduced from Ye. Pakhomov's *Coins of Georgia, 1970* [Pakhomov, plate XIX, nos. 86-88].

The first one is the only known countermark of Teimuraz II (King of Kartli in 1744-1762) (Fig. 1a) and represents the letter თ (t) of the modern Georgian *Mkhedruli*⁹⁸ alphabet, i.e. the initial of the king's name, in a horizontally extended hexagon.

The other two countermarks belong to Erekle II (1744-1762, King of Kakheti, 1762-1798 King of Kartl-Kakheti) (Figs. 1b-c). The first one (Fig. 1b) constitutes a simple monogram made up of some of the letters of Erekle's name (ერეკლე in Georgian *Mkhedruli* script) [11, p. 154], seemingly by only two of them: ე (e) and რ (r), in line with how Erekle's name is shortened on the AH 1166-1168 (1752/3-1754/5) joint issues of Teimuraz II and Erekle II (*falcon tearing pheasant* type) – also ერ [22, p. 270; 20, p. 75]⁹⁹. We think it may be designated a *simple countermark* (of Erekle II).

Another countermark constitutes a more complicated monogram (Fig. 1c), made up of more than two letters of Erekle's name. Pakhomov considered it to be made up of just three letters of Erekle's name: ე, რ, ე, i.e. e, r, e [22, p. 270], while Kapanadze established that the countermark was very similar to the design of Erekle's personal seal (Fig. 2), and was certain that it

⁹⁸ Literally, *Riders'* or *military*, i.e. secular, as opposed to the older Georgian alphabets, lately mainly used for church writing only.

⁹⁹ J. Karst considered the monogram to comprise the letters რკლ (rkl), in line with his reading of the Georgian *Asomtavruli* letters on the copper coinage of Erekle II from AH 1179 (1765/66): RKL [12, pp. 56-57]. Later on, Karst's mistake with regard to how Erekle's name was presented on his copper coinage was repeated by Lang [19, pp. 112-114]. However, there is no doubt that both were wrong. Pakhomov was absolutely right in considering that there were 5 *Asomtavruli* letters in the name of Erekle II on his coins from AH 1179 and not just 3: ERKLE, the first and the last letters being combined with respectively the following and the preceding ones in two monograms. The left part of the c/m monogram also does look like ე (e).

comprised *all* the letters of Erekle's name [10, p. 98; 9, p. 127; 11, p. 154; 8, p. 346], as seemingly the seal does.



Fig. 2 Seal of Erekle II. Reproduced from D. Kapanadze's '*Georgian Numismatics*', 1969. [Kap. 69, p. 154].

Abramishvili considered this countermark to be Erekle's signature, very close to what is found on the contemporary Georgian documents (nos. 167, 170, 174, Hd holdings, Institute of Manuscripts) [1, p. 110]. It is unclear how these two mentions relate to each other: Abramishvili published the aforesaid in 1961, while Kapanadze's statements date back to 1950, 1955, 1969 and 1970, and, in the 1969 edition of his book, he quotes Abramishvili's paper as one of his references [11, p. 177]. Anyway, we personally are not quite sure whether or not this countermark does comprise all the letters of the name. Whatever the matter, it may be designated a *complex countermark* (of Erekle II).

There is one more countermark known, which Abramishvili interpreted as a *Mkhedruli* ა (a), in a circle [1, p. 111, plate I, 17]. However, judging by the image provided in the original paper (Fig. 4), we can not confirm the aforesaid interpretation.



Fig. 4 Unidentified countermark on Erekle II's coin. Reproduced from T. Abramishvili's '*Countermarks Applied to Georgian and Byzantine Coins*' [abramishvili, plate I, 17].

This countermark is known from only one coin, namely the 1796 *single-headed eagle* type coin of Erekle II (no. 3074j of the Georgian State Museum) [1, p. 111]. In our opinion one cannot even be quite sure that the countermark is truly Georgian or belongs to Erekle II.

Countermarking in 18th century Georgia (host coins and timeline)

The countermark of Teimuraz was applied to the AH 1162 (1748/9) coins of Teimuraz II proper (*lion left* type) and AH 1166-1168 (1752/3-1754/5) joint issues of Teimuraz II and Erekle II (*falcon tearing pheasant* type) [22, pp. 269-270; 1, p. 110]; in rare instances, the coins of Erekle II (AH 1179 *coat of arms* type according to Pakhomov and Abramishvili) bear it as well [22, p. 270; 1, p. 110; 11, p. 154; 8, p. 347]. Kapanadze seemingly explains this fact as the overstriking of "old coins" (probably of Teimuraz II or joint Teimuraz-Erekle issues) with new dies, leaving the deeply impressed countermark of Teimuraz intact [11, p. 154]. The same explanation is considered likely by Abramishvili, who wrote about an AH 1179 (1765/6, *coat of arms* type) coin of Erekle II bearing two countermarks on different sides (no. 3025j): that of Teimuraz and the simple countermark of Erekle II [1, pp. 110-11]. Teimuraz II died in 1762, several years prior to 1765/6, when the *coat of arms* coins were first issued, so this is a posthumous application of Teimuraz's countermark [22, p. 270; 1, p. 110]. The overstriking theory does not seem to be credible: the specimen referred to by Abramishvili did not bear

any traces of countermarking [1, p. 110]. Alternatively, the posthumous application of Teimuraz' countermark could be explained by storing the old punch at the mint and its accidental use later [1, p. 111; 8, p. 347], or the countermark could have been deliberately applied even after Teimuraz's death [1, p. 111]. The latter is less likely, in our opinion.

The simple countermark of Erekle II was applied to his own copper coins dated AH 1179 (1765/6, *coat of arms* type) - according to Pakhomov, the majority of the coins of the 1179 type bear it; and those dated AH 1201-1203 (1786/7-1788/9, *double-headed eagle* type) [22, p. 270]. Teimuraz II's coin with Erekle II's simple countermark is known as well [11, p. 154].

The complex countermark of Erekle II was commonly applied to his own copper coins dated AH 1201-1203 (1786/7-1788/9) and can be occasionally found also on the coppers dated AH 1210 (1796, *single-headed eagle* type) as well [22, p. 270].

It is quite noteworthy, that, according to Kapanadze, "the coins marked with the countermark of Teimuraz also bear the countermark of Erekle" [8, p. 347]. However, from this phrase it is not clear what the host coins were.

One has to add that, at some point, the countermarks of Erekle II were applied to various foreign copper coins as well, both contemporary and obsolete, sometimes even to centuries-old ones, as well as to old Georgian copper coins dating back to the pre-Teimuraz II epoch. We attempted to collect all the information available in various sources on these rare coins bearing the simple and the complex countermarks of Erekle II; the results are summarized in Table 1.

In terms of chronology it looks as though the countermark of Teimuraz II was not used systematically after his death anymore, and that was the time when the simple countermark of Erekle II was first introduced. Later it was replaced by the complex countermark of Erekle II (in the late 1780s both of them could have been used simultaneously).

The countermarked coins may be distributed among the following groups (this division is necessary for further analysis below):

- Current Georgian coins of Teimuraz II and Erekle II, valid at the time of countermarking;
- Georgian coins of previous types, i.e. coins of Teimuraz II in the reign of Erekle II, or the early types of, say, Erekle II by the time when they were already replaced by new types;
- Worn-out (current?) coins of Teimuraz II and later Erekle II;
- Georgian copper coins of the first half of the 18th century;
- Contemporary foreign coins (e.g. the copper fulus of the South Caucasian khanates) including the worn-out ones;
- Old coins (no matter, whether Georgian or foreign).

New data on the countermarks of Teimuraz II and Erekle II



Fig. 77 Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, Erekle II, simple c/m of Erekle II, AE, half-bisti, Coat of arms type, Tiflis, Date obliterated by the c/m [AH 1179]. Weight 7.60 g, size 23 mm, die axis 7h.



Fig. 8 Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, Erekle II, complex c/m of Erekle II, AE, bisti, Double-headed eagle type, Tiflis, AD date worn-out, AH date obliterated by the c/m. Weight 16.57 g, size 24.6-24.9 mm, die axis 12h.

While studying some of the coins bearing the countermarks of Erekle II (Figs. 7-8), we noticed that the design of the countermarks does not fully correspond to the descriptions and drawings provided by either Pakhomov or Kapanadze: namely, the monograms of Erekle's name are not put in the square. The mirror image of what had been sunk on the punches constitutes just the monogram within an incuse square, without any border separately engraved on the punch. Thus, one could claim, that, at least in some cases, Erekle's countermarks are as Figs. 3b-c, not Figs. 1b-c.



Fig. 3b-c Varieties of the countermarks of Erekle II.

In contrast to that, all the countermarks of his father, Teimuraz II are always truly framed by the hexagonal outer border (punch nose cross-section is hexagonal as well, whereas in the case of Erekle II's punches it is quadrangular, corresponding to the countermark layout).

Abramishvili wrote about the calligraphic variations among the countermarks of Teimuraz [1, p. 110]. Seemingly, there were many punches used for applying Teimuraz' countermark, differing in terms of size, calligraphy of the letter, etc. (cf. Figs. 5-6); this fact points to a systematic and maybe even mass character of the countermarking process.



Fig. 5 Kingdoms of Kartli and Kakheti, Teimuraz II and Erekle II, c/m of Teimuraz II, AE, half-bisti, Falcon tearing pheasant type, Tiflis, Date obliterated by the c/m. Weight 8.05 g, size 20.8-21.2 mm, die axis 3h.



Fig. 6 Kingdoms of Kartli and Kakheti, Teimuraz II and Erekle II, c/m of Teimuraz II, AE, half-bisti, Falcon tearing pheasant type, Tiflis, Date obliterated by the c/m. Weight 7.98 g, size 18.7-20.3 mm, die axis 3h.

Newly reported coins with 18th century Georgian countermarks

We can report three more new coins: a coin of Jalal ad-Din Mangubarni struck in the Kingdom of Georgia in the 13th century, and two more "Persian" civic fulus, all three bearing the simple countermark of Erekle II. These coins are also listed in Table 1.

At the time of Jalal al-Din Mangubarni's occupation of parts of the Kingdom of Georgia and of its capital, Tiflis, i.e. for the major part of the period AD 1226-1230, he overstruck (maybe also struck directly from metal) the plundered coins of Georgian kings transforming them into his own currency [21, p. 6]. The latter quite frequently bear some contemporary countermarks, including both those which had been applied to the host coins prior to overstriking, and the countermarks which were applied to the already overstruck planchets [22, pp. 114-115; 19, p. 29]. In addition to that, Victor Langlois, the 19th century French researcher of Georgian numismatics, also wrote already in 1860 that "on remarque sur beaucoup de surfrappes de Djéjal-eddin des contre-marques qui ont été imprimées après la restauration de Rousoudan et à différentes époques" ["one may notice on many overstruck coins of Jalal ad-Din countermarks which were imprinted after the restoration of Rusudan and in different epochs"]; by the countermark of the "different epoch" the researcher meant "le chiffre d'Éréclé, ၅၆ [er]", i.e. Erekle II's monogram [20, pp. 74-75]. Unfortunately, Langlois did not substantiate his assertion by providing some more data or an image, which made the existence of coins like this somewhat dubious, due to the general inaccuracy and carelessness of this scholar [22, pp. 260-261, 257-258, 263, footnote 1]. But at least in this case, Langlois' assertion is verified¹⁰⁰ by the coin, preserved in a private collection in Georgia, which we would like to publish by means of this paper; it is the Jalal al-Din Mangubarni's copper coin bearing the simple countermark of Erekle II (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9 Georgian kingdom occupied by Khwarazmians, Jalal ad-Din Mangubarni, simple c/m of Erekle II, AE, irregular copper, NM, DM [1226-1230]. Weight 4,7 g; size 19 mm; die axis 4h.

The other coin bearing the simple countermark of Erekle II is a civic fulus. The coin proper unfortunately is not available to us anymore, and we cannot provide its photo or scan, but one of the authors did have an opportunity to examine this coin in the early 2000s, to determine its metrological data and produce a rubbing, which we reproduce here (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Civic fulus, lion right and the sun effigy, Ganja, AH. 1180 (1185?) Weight 4.15 g, size 18-19 mm, die axis NA.

It is a Ganaja fulus dated AH 1180 (or 1185?), (1766/7 or 1771/2) with lion right and the sun effigy. This is an already published type [17, p. 92, no. 507-508, plate XXXI, 509].

The third coin is preserved in a private collection in Tbilisi, Georgia. It is an Iravan civic fulus with the effigy of a camel (dromedary). The fulus of these type were minted in AH 1133 (1720/1), possibly also before and after that [17, pp. 74-75, nos.

170-183, plate IX, 170, 178; 27, pp. 100-101, no. 8¹⁰¹]; the digits 113 are discernible on this specimen, the last one being seemingly effaced (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11 Civic fulus, dromedary right, Iravan, AH.113x (3?) Weight 7.87 g, size 23.2 mm, die axis 11h.

Reasons for countermarking in 18th century Georgia

In our opinion the reasons behind countermarking in 18th century Georgia have not been interpreted sufficiently well so far. Unfortunately, to our knowledge no contemporary sources consider this issue in any way. As to modern researchers, they mentioned the "revivification" of old coins and "domestication" of foreign ones [11, p. 154; 1, p. 112; 13, p. 103], but did not delve more deeply:

Abramishvili expressed the opinion that the countermarks would have served the purpose of increasing the nominal value of the coins [1, p. 110] – we refer to this idea below.

Pakhomov regarded the countermarking process writing the following about the simple countermark of Erekle II: "Очевидно, она накладывалась на всевозможные монеты, приносимые на монетный двор, даже из древних, находимых в кладах, лишь бы они соответствовали своим размером грузинским деньгам конца XVIII столетия" ["Evidently, it was applied to all kind of coins being brought to the mint, even to ancient ones, which had been unearthed as a hoard, provided only they complied in size with the Georgian money of the end of the 18th century"] [22, p. 270]. He did not, however, provide any explanation for this fact, though the words about the size of the coins are certainly worth noting; the importance of this coin parameter is underlined below.

In contrast to Pakhomov, in the earlier (1950 and then 1955) editions of his book on Georgian numismatics, Kapanadze pointed to the lack of currency as a reason for countermarking: "Нужда в денежных знаках повидимому ощущалась настолько сильно, что этой операции [перечеканке] подвергались монеты, давно уже вышедшие из употребления и представляющие собой так называемый мертвый... материал" ["The need for currency evidently made itself felt so bitterly that even coins that had been out of use for a long time and constituting so-called dead... material were subjected to this operation [countermarking]" [10, p. 98; 9, p. 127]. The same idea is conveyed in the Russian and English summaries of the late 1969 edition of Kapanadze's book [11, pp. 201, 225].

However, in the text proper of his 1969 book Kapanadze pointed out that an economic crisis was the underlying reason [11, p. 154]. Nevertheless, while expressing his opinion on this issue, he did not substantiate it, did not explain why the economic crisis would have caused the authorities to countermark their own as well as foreign and antiquated coins. It may be useful to note that the time from the late 1740s (Teimuraz II and Erekle II were crowned kings of respectively Kartli and Kakheti in 1744) till the 1780s is, on the contrary, considered to be a period of economical revival, marked by the development of industry, trade, and agriculture [3, pp. 518-569]. The situation started to deteriorate only in the 1780s, after the signing of the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire in 1783 [7, p. 16; 3, p. 694-777]. The population of the kingdom declined from about 350,000 in the early 1780s down to 200,000 by the end of the 18th century. [3, p. 774]. The invasion of Agha Muhammad Khan in 1795 had a particularly negative impact - troops of the Qajar leader pillaged

¹⁰⁰ Generally speaking, V. Langlois's observations may deserve more credit.

¹⁰¹ The distribution of the legends on this countermarked specimen corresponds to the drawing in Valentine's book, but not quite to that in Kutelia's book. The drawing in the latter may be misinterpreting the legends on the actual coins.

Tbilisi, destroying all the industry concentrated in the capital of the kingdom, and also considerably reducing the population¹⁰² [7, pp. 41-42; 3, pp. 764-765]).

Kapanadze, while claiming the lack of currency (small change?) in circulation in Kartl-Kakheti in the late 18th century [10, p. 98; 9, p. 127; 11, pp. 201, 225], did not explain why there was not a sufficient number of new coins minted directly from copper instead, if the need for currency was so urgent. Whatever were the reasons for countermarking various coins in Kartl-Kakheti, we are positive that it was not for a lack of metal: a sufficient amount of copper¹⁰³ was mined in eastern Georgia proper, firstly in Dambughli after 1763, later also in Alaverdi and Shambughli after 1770¹⁰⁴ [4, p. 10]. Initially, until the invasion of Omar Khan (Umma Khan) from Daghestan in 1785, who pillaged Georgian metal smelting factories, an average of 10-15 thousand poods (1 pood = 16.38 kg), i.e. 16.38-24.57 tons or 16,380,000-24,570,000 grams of copper were produced annually [4, p. 17]. After the 1785 invasion, copper production decreased, and seemingly dropped further after the invasion of Agha Muhammad Khan in 1795 [4, p. 20], though probably still yielding a significant amount of the metal to the market, judging by the king's profit from farming out the copper mines and smelteries [4, pp. 17, 20]. The copper produced would have been enough for minting on average say 1,820,000-2,730,000 copper half-bisti¹⁰⁵ coins annually (without taking into account the waste of metal and other losses) till 1785 and maybe half of that amount later on. In other words, correspondingly at least around 2 million and 1 million new copper coins could have been minted every year. This would seem to have been too much for the relatively small Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom with a population of 210,000 in 1770 (possibly somewhat more than that) and 350-400,000 in the 1780s, with the urban population (probably more actively involved in the monetary circulation) amounting to about 25,000-30,000 in 1770, at least 12-14% of total population in 1770-1794 [3, p. 519; 7, p. 42]. Of course, not all the copper was minted; for example, some was used for producing cannons [4, p. 18]. Moreover, the major consumers of the metal obtained were the local coppersmiths in Tbilisi, the capital of the kingdom, who were producing copper utensils, to be intensively sold in other areas of the state as well as to be exported abroad [3, pp. 540-541]. Raw copper was also extensively exported, e.g. to Lagich, the Caucasian artisanal centre famous for producing copper utensils [4, p. 18]; also reportedly to the Ottoman Empire, as well as to Iravan, Shamakhi, Tabriz and other cities [3, p. 544; 4, p. 16]. Georgian copper was an important import item in the Baku and Quba khanates as well [6, p. 388]. Exact figures are not known, but it is clear from the above that there was undoubtedly more than enough copper produced to be coined in case of need.

In our opinion, taking into account the amount of available metal as well as the long-established practice of minting coins, including copper coins of up to five different denominations in Tiflis (Tbilisi) [15, p. 27; 16, p. 89], one may conclude that copper coins were definitely not countermarked because there were no means for striking conventional coins; nor did the abundance of copper imply that it was not more advantageous to countermark¹⁰⁶

the already minted coins (wherever and whenever were they minted) instead of coining the metal, thus avoiding the waste of copper and economising not only on the metal, but on the manpower and various technical procedures involved in transforming the raw metal into coins or smelting the old coins in order to obtain more metal also for coining. The issue seems to be as follows: what were the reasons behind the necessity to utilise already extant coins (either by smelting them, or by countermarking them, the latter seemingly being at least a common, not to say a preferred habit) in the presence of easily available and even abundant copper?

In our opinion the possible grounds for countermarking the aforementioned coins were most probably complex and multifiform, but can be safely reduced to a general concept of *legalising* the coinage. Theoretically, foreign, antiquated and worn-out coins, coins of the previous rulers/types, and even the current coins, all might have been in need of *validation or revalidation of their value*.

We consider it very important that, in contrast to silver money, the contemporary copper coinage in the southern Caucasus (Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, khanates) was not a full value money, but constituted a token currency [15, p. 24]. The silver coins were valued according to their weight and silver standard when crossing the state borders¹⁰⁷ [28, p. 287; 14]; and their market value depended on the cost of the precious metal¹⁰⁸ in them (augmented by the costs of manufacture and the profit from exploitation of the monetary regalia). On the contrary, the market value of the copper coins was much higher than the cost of the copper used for them. The price of 1 pood of pure copper was

as an increased demand for regular dies, instead of countermarking punches with a relatively smaller working area, therefore easier to produce.

¹⁰⁷ The situation did not change even after the annexation of Kartl-Kakheti by the Russian Empire in 1801; all sorts of different silver currencies continued to circulate at different rates in the south-eastern Caucasus even in the first decades of the 19th century [5, pp. 44-52].

¹⁰⁸ According to the contemporary source, in 1770 the "old" Russian rouble (1731-1761 standard, 25.85 g, 77-zolotnik silver (77/96), content of silver 20.73 g) cost 6 abazis, while the "new" (1762-1796 standard, 24.00 g, 72-zolotnik silver (72/96), content of silver 18.00 g) cost 5.25 abazis in Tiflis; according to another source in 1772 they cost respectively 6.5 and 5.5 abazis [26, pp. 412, 415; 14, pp. 187-188; 15, pp. 71, 73]. The market value of these roubles in Georgia was related to the content of pure silver, and not the weight in general. This can be proved by performing the following calculations: reckon the price of one of the currency types utilising the price of another and either weight or silver content of both:

1770 - By weight -

Price of the new rouble (abazis) = Price of the old rouble (6 abazis) × weight of new rouble (24.00 g) / weight of old rouble (25.85 g) = 6 × 24.00 / 25.85 = 5.57 (abazis)

By silver content -

Price of the new rouble (abazis) = Price of the old rouble (6 abazis) × silver content of new rouble (18.00 g) / silver content of old rouble (20.73 g) = 6 × 18.00 / 20.73 = 5.21 (abazis)

1772 - By weight -

Price of the new rouble (abazis) = Price of the old rouble (6.5 abazis) × weight of new rouble (24.00 g) / weight of old rouble (25.85 g) = 6.5 × 24.00 / 25.85 = 6.03 (abazis)

By silver content -

Price of the new rouble (abazis) = Price of the old rouble (6.5 abazis) × silver content of new rouble (18.00 g) / silver content of old rouble (20.73 g) = 6.5 × 18.00 / 20.73 = 5.64 (abazis)

As we see, in both cases, the price of the new roubles in Georgian abazis indicated in the sources (5.25 in 1770 and 5.5 in 1772) is much closer to the results calculated using the silver standard of the old and new roubles, and not their weight. Obviously, the Georgian market was well acquainted with the intrinsic (precious metal) price of Russian coins and valued them accordingly. The insignificant discrepancies between the former and the data from the sources may be explained by market fluctuations. It is also clear that some agio was *de facto* imposed even on the foreign silver coins. The Tiflis abazi of the time was a 3 g high-standard silver coin, which means that, for instance in 1772, Georgian silver money weighing 6.5 × 3 = 19.5 and 5.5 × 3 = 16.5 g was equal in market price to Russian silver money weighing correspondingly 20.73 and 18.00 g.

¹⁰² The number of enslaved residents of Kartl-Kakheti (both urban dwellers and villagers) varies significantly, from 3,000 up to 30,000 - about 15,000 seem to be a realistic estimate [7, p. 41; 3, p. 765, footnote 2]. As a result of the invasion, the percentage of the urban population in Kartl-Kakheti decreased from 14.4% to at least 7.4% [7, p. 42].

¹⁰³ Silver and some amount of gold were mined as well [4, pp. 14-15].

¹⁰⁴ This ore-bearing territory was transferred to the sovietised Armenia (now the Democratic Republic of Armenia), in 1922-1923, following the annexation of independent Georgia by Soviet Russia in 1921. The copper-smelting plant is still operating in Alaverdi even nowadays, constituting a major source of pollution in the region.

¹⁰⁵ Half-bisti was one of the major denominations, weighing 8-11.5 g [22, pp. 274, 276], = 10 dinars, conventionally considered by us for calculations to be of 9 g.

¹⁰⁶ Theoretically, the coins could be overstruck as well, the procedure being almost as simple as countermarking, except for the increased pressure that needed to be applied to the coins to overstrike them as well

reportedly 8-10 roubles by 1785 [4, p. 17]. Count Musin-Pushkin, a Russian official in the newly annexed Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, considered 1 pood of pure copper to cost 15 or 16 roubles¹⁰⁹ [4, p. 24]. Anton Borzunov, however, another Russian official and Musin-Pushkin's subordinate, considered that 1 pood of pure copper could be sold for 7.5 roubles. In 1804, the Russian government was selling 1 pood for 11 roubles in Tiflis [4, p. 34; cf. 28, p. 291], but the disposal of this commodity was neither active nor easy [4, p. 37], which may indirectly point to it being overpriced, but could also be a result of the inflexibility of the state machine in the aforesaid commercial activity. We think it would be safe to assume that 1 pood of pure copper¹¹⁰ cost about 9 roubles by the time of countermarking in eastern Georgia in the late 18th century. Taking into account the time our sources are dating back to, we conclude that the "rouble" used in the sources was a silver rouble¹¹¹, namely the so called "new rouble", pertaining to the 1762-1796 and 1798-1885 standards, with the normal weight and content of silver respectively 24.00 g/18.00 g and 20.73 g/18.00 g [26, p. 415; 14, pp. 187; 15, p. 70;]. In our opinion the roubles of both standards may be considered to be of equal value as having an equal content of silver. The exchange rate of the new rouble with Georgian currency seemingly fluctuated: in 1770 1 new rouble cost 5.25 Tiflis abazis; according to another source in 1772 it cost 5.50 abazis [14, pp. 187-188; 15, pp. 71, 73]. If we assume 1 new rouble to be worth on average, say, 5.375 abazis, then 1 pood of pure copper cost $9 \times 5.375 = 48.375$ abazis. If we substitute grams for pood and dinars¹¹² for abazi (1 abazi = 200 dinars), it would turn out that 1 gram of pure copper cost 0.59 dinars. Therefore, the copper in a bisti coin, having an average weight of 18 grams, should have cost only 10.62 dinars, while 1 bisti coin was equal to 20 dinars (this ratio is naturally valid for the rest of the copper denominations minted in Tiflis at that time). As we see, the calculations show that the metal value was only 53% of the market value of the Georgian copper coins of the period. Of course, the actual cost of the copper coinage was higher than 53% due to the costs of manufacture, which included the wages of the personnel involved, expenditure on the required tools, etc. Unfortunately, while we have not been able to ascertain what percentage of the market value of the copper coin was attributable to the costs of manufacture, we do not think that the total actual cost of the mass produced copper coins exceeded 60% of their market value. Taking into account all the assumptions and approximations made while performing these calculations, we cannot exclude the possibility that the market value was deliberately made *twice* as high as the cost of the metal used¹¹³. For the second half of the 17th century we have yet another interesting piece of information regarding the correlation between the market value of copper and its value when coined into Persian civic coins: Adam Olearius reported that a certain

amount¹¹⁴ of copper cost 1 abbas (i.e. 40 5-dinar coins), but was used for minting 64 5-dinar coins [17, pp. 16, 37, 57], which makes the metal value 62.5% of the market value of the then 17th century Persian civic coppers. Anyway, there can be no doubt in our opinion that minting copper coins was very profitable in the late 18th century as well.

Thus, by allowing foreign copper coins to circulate freely in Kartl-Kakheti, the government would subsidise the economy/treasury of a foreign state and would undermine its own, as the number of copper, i.e. credit money that the country market could tolerate without the emergence of inflation and subsequent devaluation of the copper currency should certainly have been limited.

Of course, one could certainly argue whether the mint administration and/or fiscal administration of the Georgian state were aware of the aforesaid economical phenomena. But the century-long Persian tradition of civic coinage makes it probable. With rare exceptions, in the 16th-19th century, copper coins minted in any urban centre seemingly were not accepted for the same price anywhere outside the hinterland of that centre. Profit was made by regular replacement of the current copper coinage with the new one while proclaiming the old one invalid or, better say, devalued, by 50%, typically [17, pp. 8, 10-11, 28, 30-31, 46-47, 49; 2, pp. XXIII-XXIV]. We even have a direct indication that Persian money (presumably, copper coins) was not accepted in Tiflis as a full-value currency at least in the beginning of the 18th century [18, pp. 105-106].

In any case, the free circulation of foreign copper coins as legal tender in eastern Georgia is in our opinion highly improbable. We have only limited data - the written sources are silent on this issue, but their silence is meaningful: seemingly only foreign silver and gold coins were mentioned [15, pp. 56-76; 14]. There is only limited information on the hoards and solitary finds of foreign copper coins on the territory of eastern Georgia. However, one cannot neglect 17 finds of copper coins of the Russian Empire [13, pp. 95-100, finds 1-7, 10-13, 15-19, 21]¹¹⁵. Particularly interesting seems to be the only hoard (find 2) comprising silver abazis of Erekle II, his copper coins and Russian Empire 2 and 5 kopeck coins [13, pp. 96-97]; this contradicts the idea that all the aforesaid coins constituted accidental drops, having been imported by Russian soldiers or merchants trading with the Russian Empire. However, the hoard was seemingly unearthed near the town of Tskhinvali in Kartli [13, p. 96], on the trade route from Tiflis to the Russian Empire, and could be an accumulation of a merchant exploiting it. Sinitsina studied the circulation of Russian coins on the territory of Azerbaijan in the second half of the 18th century and claimed that they were directly involved in the monetary circulation of the khanates, particularly the Baku khanate [25, pp. 104-133]. Irrespective of her results obtained for the neighbouring region, we are not sure that the situation in Kartl-Kakheti was similar, that Russian copper currency was legal tender on the territory of this Georgian state. Kartl-Kakheti had preferential tariffs for goods traded with the Russian Empire before 1771 and by the end of the 18th century [15, p. 197], but in our opinion the system of preferences would probably not have extended far enough to allow the free circulation of Russian Empire copper currency. We think that the foreign copper coins could not have been legal tender in Kartl-Kakheti unless they bore the countermark of the Georgian king (theoretically, some agio having been imposed upon them).

In our opinion, countermarking the foreign coppers, provided some payment was made for it by the owner of the coins, could be *an easy and profitable way of legalising foreign currency* on the

¹⁰⁹ "12,000 poods of pure copper - a produce to the value of 180,000 roubles" [4, p. 24]; that means the price of 15 roubles for 1 pood; however, the price of "16 roubles" is indicated in the research we refer to [4, p. 24].

¹¹⁰ We assume that "the pure copper" was used for minting coins. The metal composition of Georgian copper coins of the period is still a subject for future research. So far we have just been able to ascertain that it was not balanced that well: we have observed that the copper coins of Teimuraz II and Erekle II tend to undergo chemical transformations much more easily than say the 12th-13th century coppers of medieval Georgia; the former seem to be much softer as well.

¹¹¹ Banknotes were already in use in the Russian Empire by that time, but they were depreciating rapidly (10 roubles in banknotes were equal to about 7 roubles in silver coins by 1795) [26, pp. 12-13, footnote *].

¹¹² By the late 18th century, a dinar was a petty counting monetary unit in Iran and south-eastern Caucasus.

¹¹³ It would be interesting to compare our data with the situation in the Russian Empire, where copper coins worth 16 roubles were minted from 1 pood of metal in 1763-1796 [26, p. 418]. The price of 1 pood of copper was about 8 roubles in the first quarter of the 18th century [26, p. 11]. In 1784 the copper was imported for the Russian mint in the Crimea from the Ottoman Empire for about 5.67 roubles per pood, and in 1786 the copper was purchased for 4.06 roubles per pood [29]. It looks as though the copper mined in Georgia was much more expensive than that available from the Ottoman Empire.

¹¹⁴ A pound, but it is not clear in the reference we use, what kind of pound was meant by this European traveller. That in our opinion jeopardises the credibility of the consequent calculations of the modern researcher [17, pp. 17, 37, 58].

¹¹⁵ Finds of Russian Empire coppers in other regions of Georgia were not taken into account.

territory of Kartl-Kakheti¹¹⁶. It is noteworthy that countermarking of autonomous copper coins was not unfamiliar to the minting authorities in Iran and south-eastern Caucasus [24, p. 86; 17, pp. 12, 33, 53]. For instance, "رايچ is frequently seen as a countermark on copper" [24, p. 86]. Kutelia published a copper coin dated AH 1147 (1734/5)¹¹⁷ also bearing the countermark رايچ [17, p. 87, plate XXV, 409] - the author conjectured that it was applied to revalidate the coin [17, pp. 12, 33, 53]. It would not be inappropriate to point out that this very countermark was commonly applied to *silver* coins of the south Caucasian Khanates (at least, we have personally encountered it on the silver abbasid of the Ganja Khanate and Shamakhi). As far as we know, no analysis has so far been performed to determine whether these countermarks were applied in the original khanates issuing them, or in the neighbouring ones. But it seems that countermarking was a common tool of economical policy employed in the region in the late 18th century, whereby profit could be made for undertaking the procedure.

As far as the antiquated coins with their unfamiliar legends and design are concerned, I think they would have automatically been considered foreign as well, and, therefore, certainly not legal tender. This would have led to their countermarking, in our view.

Another issue is whether the coins of the previous reigns and/or types were considered legal tender. For instance, were the joint issues of Teimuraz II and Erekle II or particularly the coppers of Teimuraz II considered a full-value currency in the sole reign of Erekle II, after the death of this father? Or were, say, the *coat of arms* coins of Erekle II considered a full-value coinage as soon as the following *fish type* coins were introduced, the more so, as the latter were struck according to a different weight standard [23, p. 101, 107]? (The sequence of the copper coinage types is presented in Table 2). The issue is whether the introduction of a new coin type, as well as the new weight standard in some cases implied the devaluation or prohibition of the coins of preceding types - were the coins of the preceding types becoming obsolete, in a sense, immediately after the death of the issuer or a change of type, i.e. not full-value legal tender anymore? Possibly yes, and it is possible that countermarks were applied exactly for confirming their status of legal tender (for instance, there exists a coin of Teimuraz with Erekle II's countermark [11, p. 154]). That seems to be very logical¹¹⁸, particularly when the weight standard was changed as well; that would certainly bring some immediate profit. On the other hand, in the long term, the practice of devaluing what basically constituted their own coins, could undermine the credibility of this credit currency, eventually yielding objectionable results. From this point of view, it is noticeable that in the beginning of the 18th century, in contrast to the situation in the 17th century, the Tiflis copper coins of the kings of Kartli were not withdrawn from circulation along with the introduction of the new types (of the new kings or rulers of the kingdom). That should have affected the stability of their value [18, p. 105]. It is very noteworthy that, according to Kutelia,

another reason for this decision was to maintain the authority of the coins with national characteristics (the abbreviated names of Georgian kings/rulers on them) after a very long break. This would have been very important for the contemporary rulers of Kartli "cherishing a lofty hope of liberating the country from the foreign yoke" [18, p. 105]. One has to agree that, in terms of prestige, it would have been in the interest of both Teimuraz II and Erekle II to keep the coins bearing their names valid, and hence in circulation. As we see, there were arguments for both devaluing the older coins along with issuing the new ones and for not doing this. We cannot come to any conclusion with regard to what was decided by the contemporary Georgian government concerning the coppers of Teimuraz II and Erekle II.

However, we think that the early 18th c. copper coins of Vakhtang VI, Simon and Bakar (bearing Georgian letters) were not considered legal tender anymore: they would already have been quite rare by the last decades of the 18th century, and too many consequential events¹¹⁹ had occurred since they had been minted for the last time (AH 1131, the last coins of Bakar). Besides, they were minted by the Kartli branch of the royal Georgian dynasty of Bagrationi, while both Teimuraz II and Erekle II belonged to the rival Kakheti branch.

In our opinion current coins could be countermarked in order to demonstrate their devaluation or revaluation declared by the political authority. By current coins we mean the current-type Georgian coins of Teimuraz II and Erekle II, valid at the time of countermarking. The term *devaluation* of the copper coins we apply to declaring them devalued, unless countermarked; *revaluation* - to declaring that the countermarked specimens have an increased value. We have to admit that we have never encountered any evidence of copper coins being revalued in this region, and deem it improbable that this method was employed in late 18th century Kartl-Kakheti, which, we think, remained within the sphere of the Persian minting tradition. Therefore, we cannot agree with Abramishvili, who considered that the countermarking possibly served the purpose of increasing the nominal value of the coins [1, p. 110]. On the other hand, as already mentioned above, *devaluation* was quite common in Iran and the areas subject to it, like south-eastern Caucasus. From time to time the local copper coinage was devalued, typically by 50%, and sometimes recalled at a certain discount; a new copper currency of a distinct design was issued instead¹²⁰ [17, pp. 8, 10-11, 28, 30-31, 46-47, 49; 2, pp. XXIII-XXIV] - "Normally the recalled coins were melted down for the production of new planchets, but not infrequently the old coins were simply overstruck with the new designs" [2, pp. XXIII-XXIV]. Application of countermarking instead of melting or even overstriking would save the mint authorities much effort, metal and eventually money (and that could be the reason for the appearance of the رايچ countermark on Persian autonomous copper coins [24, p. 86; 17, p. 87, plate XXV, 409]): if the authorities in Kartl-Kakheti were ready to undermine the credibility of their [credit] copper coinage and neglect the prestige of the kings' names the coins were bearing, they could recall or declare devalued not only the coins of the previous reigns or types, but those of the current type as well; the latter would have *retained* (and not *gained in*) value only if countermarked, in exchange for making a certain payment at the mint for this procedure.

It is remarkable that a lot of the coins of Teimuraz and Erekle which bear their countermarks are heavily worn; this is particularly true for the coins countermarked with the countermark of Teimuraz. In our opinion, the *worn-out coins* could easily be perceived as a defective currency (to be countermarked in order to be allowed to circulate freely or as a full-value currency). They

¹¹⁶ It seems to be noteworthy that, so far, there no foreign coins with the countermark of Teimuraz have been discovered. Does it mean that the influx of foreign coins into the monetary circulation of Kartl-Kakheti increased after his death, maybe due to the further economic development of the country? Or that the decision to validate foreign coins was made by the Georgian administration only after the death of this venerated Georgian king? Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that foreign coins with the countermark of Teimuraz do exist and are yet to be discovered.

¹¹⁷ The coin is published as minted in Shemakhi, but the drawing provided by the author [17, p. 87, plate XXV, #409] in our opinion does not verify that fully.

¹¹⁸ Kapanadze mentioned that the coins marked with the countermark of Teimuraz also bore the countermark of Erekle [8, p. 347]. The statement is quite vague; for instance, it is not clear what the host coins were in these cases. The consecutive history of such coins, however, can be explained as follows: firstly, the Teimuraz's c/m was applied to the host coins, revalidating them; then, after having becoming obsolete, they were countermarked again, this time with Erekle's countermarks, which revalidated them once again. Some payment would have been levied in both cases.

¹¹⁹ Including the Ottoman occupation (1723-1735) and the Afsharid yoke (1735-1747).

¹²⁰ For a very valuable analysis on the issue please refer to T. Kutelia's work *Catalogue of the Iranian Copper Money (in accordance with holdings of the State Museum of Georgia)*, a publication of 546 Persian autonomous copper coins [17], particularly to [17, pp. 8, 10-11, 28, 30-31, 46-47, 49].

may have been given the same status as foreign coins, even though they were Georgian, particularly if the effigy was worn away to the extent of the coin being barely recognisable. On the other hand, even the worn-out coins of the father and son could still be considered legal tender for the reasons of prestige mentioned above. So, we cannot say, whether the approach to national and foreign (incl. antiquated) worn-out coins was differentiated. In our opinion, perhaps not - the simplest solution is the best. On the other hand, the free countermarking cannot be excluded in the case of the worn-out coins of Teimuraz II and Erekle II, but not of the foreign coins; this would have spared the credibility of Georgian coins as opposed to that of the foreign coins.

It is not quite clear what the value of the revalidated coins was. The copper coinage in Georgia and the rest of the south Caucasus, as well as in Iran proper, practically never¹²¹ had any face-value indicated¹²² [17, 13-14, 34, 54; 2, p. XXIV]. The latter was an function of the size and basically the weight of the coin. One could conjecture that, after the countermarking, the coins were valued according to their weight and size, as they had used to be. From this point of view, Pakhomov's words about the coins being brought to the mint for countermarking when they complied in size with Georgian money of the end of the 18th century [22, p. 270] gain much in importance. On the other hand, it is unclear what the population would think about the coins differing a lot in appearance from the common contemporary coinage. For instance, one of the antiquated coins countermarked with the simple countermark of Erekle II was a Æ dirham (dated AD 1200) of Queen Tamar and her second husband, Davit Soslan [11, p. 154]. Georgian coins of this type are relatively thin but have a broad flan, thus differing significantly from the 18th century civic coppers, which were significantly thicker and had a much narrower flan. On the other hand, Æ dirhams of Queen Tamar and her second husband Davit Soslan normally weighed 6.0-7.5 g [22, p. 94], so they possibly could have passed for a half-bisti coin.

All the above comes within the ambit of the economic policy pursued by the authorities: countermarking could be a powerful tool for making profit and controlling the amount of the copper coinage in circulation in the Kingdom. But one should not forget the political aspect of the countermarking as well. Placing a countermark on a foreign coin (coin of a foreign ruler), or on a coin of the previous ruler was a way to reassert the king's power; the countermarked initial or name of the Georgian king was undoubtedly a clear proclamation of his supremacy and had a political significance.

It would be logical to think that all the countermarking operations were performed at the Tiflis mint. The mint had a policy of *open minting* – whoever had silver bullion and was willing to get it turned into currency, could apply to the mint and get his or her silver coined [15, p. 40]. However, it is not clear, whether the minting of copper coins was equally “open”. Even if so, due to the much higher potential of making profit from minting token copper currency, more money would have been levied for this. The copper coins to be countermarked could be accumulated for this purpose at the mint or be countermarked on a case by case basis, on request. The Tiflis mint was farmed, providing the king with an income equal to 30,000 “roubles” (per year?) [15, pp. 39-40]. But in spite of that, its operations could not have been absolutely independent. The state undoubtedly retained some control over the mint activities - the following strategic decisions could not be made without at least consultation with the king: selection of the king's name or initial for the countermark; change in coin type (design and legends), particularly the indication of the overlord; change in weight standards; countermarking in general.

¹²¹ There exist some rare exclusions, like the 18th c. coppers minted in Rasht [17, pp. 13-14, 18, 34, 38-39, 54, 59, 84-86, nos. 369-372, 391, plate XX, 369, plate XXI, 371-372, plate XXIII, 391].

¹²² “Very few of the coppers bear the actual denominational name, perhaps because contemporary officials feared that the presence of a denomination would jeopardise their frequent demonetisations” [2, p. XXIV].

Over the course of his reign, Erekle II became more and more autocratic, personally intervening in all areas of the life of the country¹²³ [7, p. 36]. There is no doubt that mint operations would have been under his direct control in some way or another.

In this paper we have attempted to express our vision of the countermarking process in the second half of the 18th century in the Georgian Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti: various categories of copper coins would have been allowed into the national monetary market as full-value legal tender only if revalidated (obsolete Georgian coins) or validated (foreign, as well as obsolete or worn-out coins) by countermarking. The countermark confirmed the value of the currency, but to get it applied to the coins at the mint, the owner probably had to bear some expense. We realise that there is only limited contemporary documentary evidence for drawing any firm conclusions, therefore the foregoing discussion is extensively based on logical reasoning, and thus is perhaps of limited value only. However, in our opinion the data set forth and analysed above would assist a researcher studying the economy of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, the major Georgian polity of the 18th century. There can be no doubt that the countermarking practices constituted a powerful and, at the same time, sufficiently refined monetary tool used by the contemporary Georgian government for conducting a certain economic policy.

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¹²³ Kartl-Kakheti was an absolute monarchy, but lacked the orderly bureaucratic system [7, p. 36].

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Table 2. The succession of copper coinage types in the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti

Coinage type (by effigy)	Issuer	Introduction date ¹	Change of the weight standard ²
Lion left	Teimuraz II	AH 1162 (1748/9)	
Falcon tearing pheasant	Teimuraz II & Erekle II	AH 1166 (1752/3)	
Coat of arms	Erekle II	AH 1179 (1765/6)	
Fish	Erekle II	AH 1190 (1776/7)	Changed
Double-headed eagle	Erekle II	AH 1201 (1786/7) or 1781 ³	Changed
Single-headed eagle	Erekle II	AH 1210 (1796)	Changed

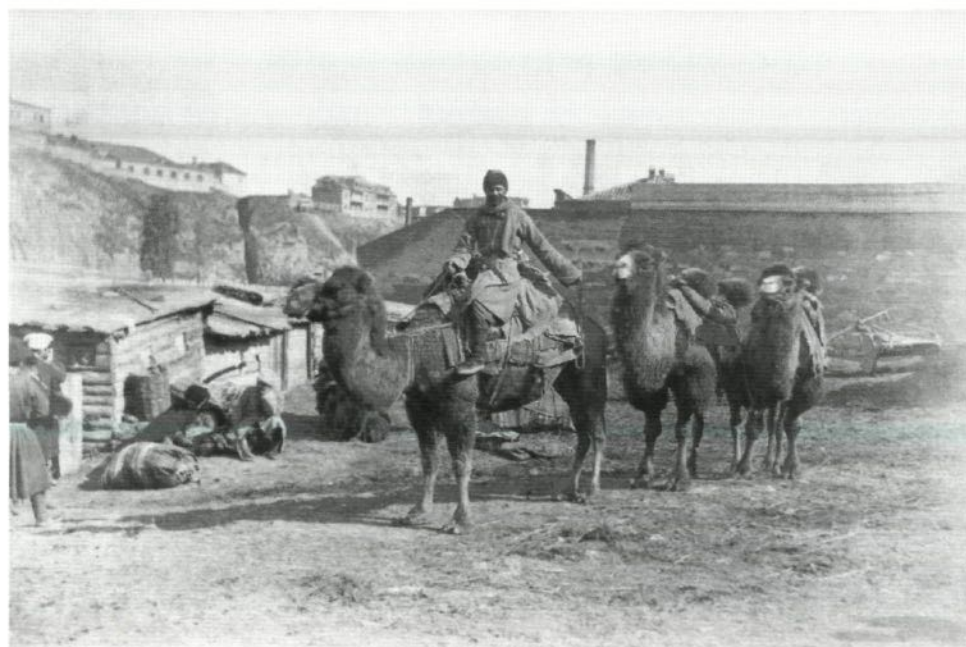
1. The date indicated on the coinage may be the year when the die type was affirmed, and not the actual minting year [Pakhomov, p. 251]. However, the earliest year of those appearing on the coins of the same type (if more than one) is the time when the type was first introduced.

2. Reference to [Pakhomov, ves y dostoinstvo, pp. 101, 104, 107].

3. It is unclear when the first coins of this type were minted [pakhomov, p. 264]: The earliest AH date on the single-headed eagle type coins is AH 1201 (1786/7); there is either no AD date, or it is accompanied by the AD date 1787, or, quite often, 1781. The latter is sometimes indicated along with AH 1202 (1787/8), but never with AH 1203 (1788/9). One could conjecture that the die-sinker confused the European digits 7 and 1. This is even more probable if we recall that the Treaty of Georgievsk, transforming Georgia into a vassal state of the Russian Empire, was signed only in 1783. However, the date 1781 is cut very clearly, and still has to be considered separately from 1787.

Table 1. Foreign or Georgian contemporary or obsolete copper coins bearing the 18th century countermarks of Erekle II (in chronological order)

C/m applied	Coin bearing the 18 th c. Georgian c/m	Commentary	Reference
Simple c/m	Constantine X's (1059-1067) coin	Anonymous follis? Listed as the 11 th c. Byzantine copper coin by D. Kapanadze? [K69, p. 154, table 18, no. 228]	[abramishv, p. 110]
	Shirvan fals of the 12-13 th centuries.	In State Hermitage, Russian Federation	[Pa, p. 270]
	The 12 th -13 th c. coin of Atabags of Azerbaijan	Ildegizid coin	[P, p. 270]
	Ildegizid coin of Abu Bakr	Seemingly a different specimen	[K69, p. 154, referring to N. Sayfaddini, Azerbaijani scholar; Kap-comment, on p. 270, p. 347]
	AE dirham of Queen Tamar and her second husband Davit Soslan, dated Koronikon 420 (1200)		[Ka69, p. 154]
	Irregular AE of Jalal ad-Din Mangubarni		Published for the first time
	Copper Tiflis coin of Bakar [AH 1130 or 1131]		[K69, p. 154]
	Iravan civic fulus AH 1131 or 1136	Probably the same specimen as the one listed by D. Kapanadze [Kapanadze69, p. 154]	[P, p. 270, referring to <i>Geitlin G. Om. K. Al. Un. Muh. Mynt. q. 282, №14.</i>]
	Iravan civic fulus [AH 1133 by type (dromedary)]		Published for the first time
	Copper Tiflis coin AH 1148		[abramishv, p. 110]
	Tabriz civic fulus (the date not indicated)		[K69, p. 154, table 18, no. 227a]
	Unattributed "Persian fals", with a worn-out date	(should be a civic fulus)	[P, p. 270]
	Ganja civic fulus (weight 14.35 g, size 25 mm)	Listed as 1206AH (1791/92AD), but no date is visible on the provided drawing	#3126 of Georgian State Museum [Ku, p. 91, no. 494, table XXXI, no. 494]
	Russian Empire denga copper 1749		[Ke69, p. 154, table 18, no. 227a]
	Ganja civic fulus AH 1180 or 1185		Published for the first time
Complex c/m	Ganja civic fulus, with a worn-out date		[Pa, p. 270]



Camels in Tiflis (Image courtesy B.Koblianidze)

GANJA COINS OF GEORGIAN TYPES, AH 1200–1205

By Alexander Akopyan

Historical Background

The coinage of the south Caucasian khānates in the second half of the 18th – beginning of the 19th centuries (12th – 13th centuries AH) has been poorly investigated by scholars till now. Unfortunately, the only activity conducted in the field has been a classification of coinage as well as an accumulation of new numismatic facts. No comprehensive study or an attempt to bring the entire numismatic data together has been done so far. The author of this note has been working on a corpus of coins of the Ganja Khānate which is still in progress¹²⁴, and this note is a preliminary communication on the Ganja coinage during the short period of AH 1200–1205.

The independent khānates of the southern Caucasus appeared in the region after the death of Nādir Shāh in AD 1747/1160 AH. The first khān of Ganja was Shāh Verdī Khān (AD 1747–1760/1160–1174 AH) who originated from the Ziyād-oġlı branch of the Qājār family¹²⁵. After the assassination of Shāh Verdī Khān by townspeople of Ganja, the Georgians enthroned his son, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān (AD 1760–1780/1174–1195 AH)¹²⁶.

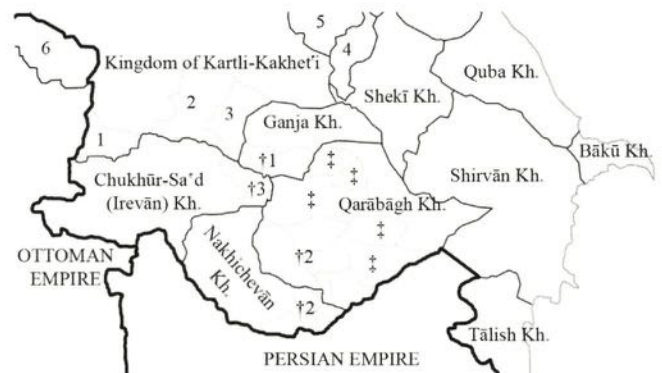
It should be noted that from the foundation of the khānate, Georgia always had prospects for Ganja as the town was rich and held an important strategic position¹²⁷. By that time the Ganja khānate was one of the most economically developed states in the southern Caucasus and a significant source of income for the Georgian treasury¹²⁸. Being located on the important strategic crossroads in the Caucasus, the Ganja khānate had to be politically careful vis-à-vis the two strong powers of the region. Ganja often allied itself with the Kingdom of Georgia (Kartli-Kakhet'i) and the Qarābāgh khānate on one side and with other small khānates on the other side¹²⁹.

For nearly three years¹³⁰ (AD 1780–1783/1194–1197 AH), the Ganja Khānate was under the condominium rule of the Georgian Kingdom (in the person of Giorgi (Kaykhosro) Andronikashvili) and the Qarābāgh khānate (in the person of the vizier, Ḥadrāt Qulī Beg of Martkopi, a Georgian by origin)¹³¹. At the end of AD 1783/1198 AH, Ganja rebelled against the Qarābāgh-Georgian rulers under the leadership of Ḥājī Beg (a relative of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān)¹³².

In the spring of AD 1785/1199 AH, after Muḥammad Ḥasan was assassinated in Qarabagh captivity¹³³, Raḥīm Khān (the son of

Shāh Verdī Khān) became ruler for a year following Georgian intervention. However, after the Georgians deposed him, his brother, Ja'far al-Jawwād Khān¹³⁴, was enthroned (AD 1786–1804/1200–1218 AH) instead of him.

At the end of AH 1201 (September 1787) a joint Georgian and Russian army led by Colonel Burnashev approached Ganja, but, because of the Russian-Turkish war, the troops had to return to the Caucasian line¹³⁵. Later, at the beginning of AD 1789/1203 AH, Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān of Quba and Erekli II, together with Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān of Shekī, attacked Ganja¹³⁶ and Ja'far al-Jawwād Khān had to surrender the town without fighting. However, their joint rule in Ganja lasted for only three months, till the death of Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān.



Southern Caucasus at the end of the 18th century (Kh – Khānates; Sultanates of: 1–Shuragel, 2–Kazakh, 3–Shamshadil, 4–Ilisu; 5–Free communities of Jar, 6–Paşalık of Akhaltsikh; Armenian Malikdoms: †1–Gardman-P'arisos, †2–malikdoms of Siwnik', †3–Sodk', †4–“Khamisa”, the five malikdoms of Artsakh)¹³⁷.

Because of his Qājār origin, Ja'far al-Jawwād Khān always had a pro-Persian orientation which required him to manoeuvre between Russia, Georgia, Persia, the Lezgis, Armenian malikdoms and south Caucasian khānates, particularly the most powerful of them – the Qarābāgh khānate. He remained strongly opposed to Erekli II, who always planned to incorporate both Ganja and Irevān within the Georgian realm. This policy remained unchanged after accepting Russian suzerainty under the Treaty of Georgievsk on the 24 July 1783 / 1197 AH¹³⁸. According to the second article of this treaty¹³⁹, Russia was obliged to accept the Georgian territory as it was at the time of the treaty but also confirmed all the “acquired and solidly affirmed” lands to Georgia. This note had particular implications for the Paşalık of Akhaltsikh and the Khānates of both Ganja and Irevān. Thus, Duke G. A. Potemkin-Tavrichesky “has found the Georgian claims on Ganja fair and wrote that the King [of Georgia] must have an advantage over Ibrāhīm Khān of Qarābāgh in any event”¹⁴⁰. Erekli II also hurried to ask the Russian general in

¹²⁴ I shall be very grateful to those collectors who express a readiness to share their coins of Ganja Khānate for preparing the forthcoming catalogue. Please, contact me via E-mail alexakopyan@gmail.com.

¹²⁵ Babayev E. *Iz istorii Gyandzhinskogo Khanstva*. Baku, 2003. P. 18 et al. [From the History of Ganja Khanate].

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, P. 30; David Bagrationi. *Istoriya Gruzii*. Tbilisi, 1971. P. 163. [History of Georgia].

¹²⁷ Leviatov V. N. *Ocherki iz istorii Azerbaydzhana v XVIII veke*. Baku, 1948. PP. 122–125. [Essays on the History of Azerbaijan in the 18th century].

¹²⁸ Dubrovin N. *Istoriya voyni i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*. Saint-Petersbourg, 1886. Vol. II. P. 51. [History of War and Dominion of the Russians in the Caucasus].

¹²⁹ Macharadze G. V. *Politicheskie otnosheniya Kartli-Kakhetinskogo tsarstva s azerbaydzhanskimi khanstvami vo второй polovine XVIII veka*. Abstract of PhD dissertation. Tbilisi, 1984. P. 11. [Political Relations Between the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakhet'i and the Khanates of Azerbaijan in the Second Half of the 18th Century].

¹³⁰ Wrongly dated as 6 years in: David Bagrationi, *op. cit.* P. 167; Butkov P. G. *Materialy dlya novoy istorii Kavkaza s 1722 po 1803 gg.* Saint-Petersbourg, 1869. Part II, P. 73. [The Materials on the New History of the Caucasus from 1722 till 1803].

¹³¹ *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*. Vol 4. Tbilisi, 1973. P. 681 [Essays on the History of Georgia]. Babayev, *op. cit.* P. 36. Macharadze, *op. cit.* P. 17.

¹³² Butkov, *op. cit.* P. 159. Macharadze, *op. cit.* P. 19.

¹³³ Butkov, *op. cit.* P. 160.

¹³⁴ David Bagrationi, *op. cit.* P. 166.

¹³⁵ Leviatov, *op. cit.* P. 148. Macharadze, *op. cit.* P. 21.

¹³⁶ Butkov, *op. cit.*, P. 194. Macharadze, *ibid.*

¹³⁷ According to: *Haykakan SSR atlas*. Yerevan-Moscow, 1961. P. 107. [Atlas of Armenian SSR]; Hewsen R. *Armenia. A Historical Atlas*. Chicago-London, 2001. P. 167; Tsutsiyev A. *Atlas etnopoliticheskoy istorii Kavkaza (1774–2004)*. Moscow, 2006. PP. 10, 15. [The Atlas of the Ethno-political History of the Caucasus (1774–2004)].

¹³⁸ Babayev, *op. cit.* P. 42. Macharadze, *op. cit.* P. 20.

¹³⁹ Treaty of Georgievsk. In: *Pod styagom Rossii*. Moscow, 1992. P. 240.

¹⁴⁰ Dubrovin, *op. cit.* P. 41.

Georgia, P. S. Potemkin, to consolidate his power in Ganja and Irevān¹⁴¹.

There were numerous attempts by the Georgians and others to capture Ganja. Thus, at the end of AD 1784/1198 AH, Irakli II, enjoying Russian military assistance, tried to capture Ganja, but was unsuccessful¹⁴². Later, Irakli II and Ibrāhīm Khān of Qarābāgh made a new attempt to seize the town with the purpose of ruling there jointly. However, their campaign was also unsuccessful¹⁴³. Then, in the beginning of AD 1785/1199 AH, the Georgian army again came to Ganja, but soon had to raise the siege and moved off to help Ibrāhīm Khān of Qarābāgh¹⁴⁴. In AD 1786/1200 AH, the Georgian army defeated the Qarābāgh army and tried to capture Ganja, but that attempt failed again¹⁴⁵. There is no information in the literature about the campaigns against Ganja undertaken after AD 1786/1200 AH.

Description of Coins

During the period of Qarābāgh-Georgian rule (AH 1195–1198), the type of coins issued was the same as before¹⁴⁶. They had the inscription *يا صاحب الزمان يا* *yā ṣāhib az-zamān* "oh, Master of Time".

Later, with the aim of substantiating Georgian claims on Ganja, special types of coins (very different from the usual coinage of Ganja) were struck in Georgia. These types of coins are marked below as T1, T2 and T3¹⁴⁷. All these coins had their prototypes in previous Georgian and Iranian coinages which are described below as well.

TYPE T1

Obverse: Inscription

الحمد لله رب العالمين

al-ḥamd āllah rabi al-'alaīn

'Praise to God, Lord of the Worlds'¹⁴⁸ within a triple border – linear, dotted and again linear.

Reverse: Mint ضرب گنجه *ya karīm* 'oh, Karīm (Merciful)' is in a plain circle. Beyond the circle is the date placed below and

الله *yā āllah* 'oh, Allah' (which is not seen clearly on the coins) in the cartouche on the top. All this is contained within a triple border – linear, dotted and linear.



Fig. 1 Type T1, abazi of AH 1202 (coin I).



Fig. 2 Type T1, abazi of AH 1203 (coin II).

The prototypes in terms of the design for T1 type were:

obverse – abazis and 1½ abazis of King Irakli II of Georgia struck in AH 1179–1213 (cf. Fig. 3¹⁴⁹) with a legend that was neutral for both Christians and Muslims used in those years on Georgian coins;

reverse – subsequent variants of type C coins of Karīm Khān struck in AH 1174–1193 (cf. Fig. 4 – abbasi of Khūy, AH 1152).

Pakhomov wrote on Tiflīs abazis of Teimuraz: "from 1179 AH ... a special design of die was established that existed only in Tiflīs, but the rare cases of their appearance in other towns, neighbouring Georgia, can be explained by their adoption of the example of the Tiflīs ones"¹⁵⁰. Kapanadze, aware of that information¹⁵¹, also provided data concerning an issue of imitations of Tiflīs abazis in Nukhwī and abazis of type T1 in Ganja during AH 1201–1205¹⁵².

Prototypes of type T1 coins



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Abazis of type T1 are known for the following years:

Date, AH	Weight	Diameter
1201 ¹⁵³		no data
1202 ¹⁵⁴		no data
– " – ¹⁵⁵	2.62 g	23 mm
1203 ¹⁵⁶		no data
1204 ¹⁵⁷		no data
1205 ¹⁵⁸		no data

For AH 1205 (or AH 1207, the dating is very doubtful as the symbols are distorted) the ½ abazi is known but seems to be an imitation (1.30 g, 17 mm; cf. Fig. 5¹⁵⁹).

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² Dubrovin, *op. cit.* P. 51.

¹⁴³ Babayev, *op. cit.* P. 43. David Bagrationi, *op. cit.* PP. 166–168.

¹⁴⁴ Dubrovin, *op. cit.* P. 76.

¹⁴⁵ Dubrovin, *op. cit.* P. 222.

¹⁴⁶ This "Georgian occupation" mentioned in: Album S. A *Checklist of Islamic Coins*. Santa Rosa, 1998. P. 139, was indeed the Qarābāgh-Georgian occupation (as it was firstly mentioned in: Markov A. *Inventarny katalog musul'manskikh monet Imperatorskogo Ermitazha*. Saint-Petersbourg, 1896. P. 777 [*Inventory catalogue of Muslim Coins of the Imperial Hermitage*]).

¹⁴⁷ Such typology will be also used in the forthcoming catalogue. One type called E1 for distinguishing from Iranian type E which was struck during those same years.

¹⁴⁸ Qur'ān 1:2.

¹⁴⁹ Pakhomov Ye. A. *Monety Gruzii*. Tbilisi, 1970. P. 238 [*Coins of Georgia*] (further PG).

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, P. 237.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, P. 341.

¹⁵² As on fig. 3, with footnote on Kapanadze, *op. cit.* P. 131.

¹⁵³ Kapanadze D. G. *Gruzinskaya Numizmatika*. Tbilisi, 1955. Plate XV, no. 191. [*Georgian Numismatics*]. In this book (P. 131) the coins of this type dated AH 1201–1205 are mentioned.

¹⁵⁴ Pakhomov Ye. A. *Monetye Klady Azerbayjana i drugikh respublik, kraev i oblastey Kavkaza*. Vols I–IX. Baku, 1926–1966. [*Monetary Hoards of Azerbaijan and other Republics, Lands and Districts of the Caucasus*] (further PA). Vol. V, no. 1496.

¹⁵⁵ Collection of Igor Delinsky (coin I).

¹⁵⁶ Kapanadze, *op. cit.* No. XV-191. Attributed to AD 1788/89 = AH 1203 (P. 174), but likely AH 1201 (coin II).

¹⁵⁷ PA vol. III, no. 917.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ In the author's collection (coin III).



Fig. 5 Type T2, imitation of 1/2 abazi of AH 1205? (coin III).

Type T2

Obverse: Shi'ite Kalima

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله
written as on all Ganja coins in common Persian style with *keshide* (calligraphic lengthening) of ح in محمد and ي in علي, within a triple border – linear, dotted and one linear.

Reverse: An inscription in an ornamental eight-petal cartouche: ضرب گنجه, with the date ١٢٠٥ beneath. There are three borders around the cartouche – linear, dotted and another linear one.

Abazis of T2 type are known only for AH 1205 (cf. Fig. 6).

Date, AH	Weight	Diameter
1205 ¹⁶⁰	2.96 g	18 mm
– “ – ¹⁶¹	3.09 g	18 mm



Fig. 6 Type T2, abazi of AH 1205 (coin IV).

The prototypes of the design for type T2 were:

obverse – Persian coins with standard inscription of the Shi'ite Kalima (Fig. 7);

reverse – Georgian abazis of King Teimuraz with dotted border (used in AH 1184–1213), but without the evocation 'يا كريم' in the top cartouche (cf. Fig. 8 – abazi of Tiflis, AH 1193).

The style of the inscription was changed as well. It conformed to the usual style of coins of Ganja with *nasta'liq* instead of the *naskh* script of Tiflis coins.

Prototypes for type T2 coins



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Type T3

Obverse: Shi'ite Kalima

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله
written in the same style as on T2 and within a triple border – linear, dotted and another linear one. On the coin of AH 1205 the Shi'ite Kalima is given with a very long *keshide* of the last ي in ولي.

Reverse: Inscription in a plain circle: ضرب گنجه يا كريم.

Beneath is the date. Around the circle and close to the edge there are linear, dotted and once again linear borders.

Abazis of T3 type are known for the following years:

Date, AH	Weight	Diameter
1200 ¹⁶²	2.62 g	15 mm
1201 ¹⁶³	2.54 g	23 mm
– “ – ¹⁶⁴	2.49 g	22 mm
1203 ¹⁶⁵	2.43 g	19 mm
1204 ¹⁶⁶	no data	
1205 ¹⁶⁷	2.54 g	19 mm



Fig. 9 Type T3, abazi of AH 1201 (coin V).



Fig. 10 Type T3, abazi of AH 1201 (coin VI).



Fig. 11 Type T3, abazi of AH 1203 (coin VII).



Fig. 12 Type T3, abazi of AH 1204 (coin VIII).



Fig. 13 Type T3, abazi of AH 1205 (coin IX).

¹⁶² Museum of History of Azerbaijan, inv. no. 19633.

¹⁶³ Mayer T., Heidemann S., Rispling G. *Sylloge der Münzen des Kaukasus und Osteuropas im Orientalischen Münzkabinett Jena*. Wiesbaden, 2005. No. 1380 (coin V).

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, no. 1381 (coin VI).

¹⁶⁵ Münzsammlung der Universität Tübingen: Orientalische Münzen, inv. no. HM6-B2 (coin VII).

¹⁶⁶ Tabātābā'i S. J. T. *Tā'rīkh-i Tabrizbeh ruāyet sikke ve zemā'im*. Tabriz, 1384. No. 380. P. 229. [Tabriz History According to Coins and Appendix] (coin VIII). This coin is wrongly described as AH 1203.

¹⁶⁷ Author's collection (coin IX, ex-jewellery), first published in: Akopyan A. V., Molchanov A. A. *Novye dannye o monetakh Gyandzhi, chekanennykh vo vtoroy polovine XVIII veka // XIV All-Russian Numismatic Conference, Saint-Petersburg, 2007*. P. 98-99 [New data on coins of Ganja struck in the second half of the 18th century].

¹⁶⁰ In the author's collection (coin IV).

¹⁶¹ State Hermitage, inv. no. 36642.

The prototypes for the design of T3 type are as follows:

obverse – Persian coins with a standard inscription of the Shi'ite Kalima (cf. fig. 7);

reverse – coins of type D of Karīm Khān used in Tiflīs in AH 1174–1178 (cf. Fig. 14 – abbasi of Tiflīs, AH 1179).

Prototypes for type T3 coins



Same as Fig. 7



Fig. 14

To get a complete picture of the monetary circulation of Ganja in AH 1200–1205 one should also have a look at coins of type E1, which were struck in AH 1199–1216.

Type E1

Obverse: Shi'ite Kalima

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله على ولي الله

written in the same style as on coins of T2, within a triple border – linear, dotted and linear again.

Reverse: Mint ضرب گنجه in a central plain circle.

Beyond the circle is the date beneath and يا محمد “yā Muḥammad” in the cartouche at the top. All this is within linear, dotted and again linear borders.

Abbasis of this type are known for the following years:

Date, AH	Weight	Diameter
1200 ¹⁶⁸	2.43	25 mm
– “ ₁₆₉	no data	24–25 mm
– “ ₁₇₀	no data	no data
1201 ¹⁷¹	no data	22 mm
– “ ₁₇₂	no data	25 mm
1203 ¹⁷³	2.62	25 mm
– “ ₁₇₄	2.60	no data
1205 ¹⁷⁵	2.23	25 mm
– “ ₁₇₆	no data	



Fig. 15 Type E1, abbasi of AH 1200 (coin x).



Fig. 16 Type E1, abbasi of AH 1203 (coin XI).



Fig. 17 Type E1, abbasi of AH 1205 (coin XII).

The prototypes for the design of T3 type were:

obverse – the standard inscription of the Shi'ite Kalima on Persian coins (cf. Fig. 7);

reverse – the coins of type C of Karīm Khān, AH 1174–1193 (cf. Fig. 18: abbasi of Khūy, AH 1152).

For these years the same type of coins are also known from Khūy (AH 1210–1212), Yazd (AH 1211) and Tabrīz (AH 1211).

Prototypes for the coins of type E1



Same as Fig. 7



Fig. 18

Weight Standards

A summary for the coinage of Ganja is provided below for comparison with that of Tiflīs during the period AH 1200–1205¹⁷⁷:

AH type	1200	1201	1202	1203	1204	1205
Tiflīs' abazi	Are known for all years, nominal weight = 3.00 g (diameter of dies = 21–23 mm) ¹⁷⁸					
T1 abazi	—	†	2.62 g (ø 23)	†	†	†
T2 abazi	—	—	—	—	—	2.96 g (ø 18) 3.09 g (ø 18)
T3 abazi	2.62 g (ø 15)	2.54 g (ø 23) 2.49 g (ø 22)	—	2.43 g (ø 19)	†	2.54 g (ø 19)
E1 abazi	2.43 g	(ø 22) (ø 25)	—	2.62 g (ø 25) 2.60 g	—	2.23 g (ø 25)

¹⁶⁸ In the author's collection (coin X).

¹⁶⁹ Museum of History of Azerbaijan, inv. no. 14051.

¹⁷⁰ PA vol. V, no. 1496.

¹⁷¹ Museum of History of Azerbaijan, inv. no. 14052.

¹⁷² Museum of History of Azerbaijan, inv. no. 14048.

¹⁷³ In the author's collection (coin XI).

¹⁷⁴ State Hermitage, inv. no. 36638.

¹⁷⁵ In the author's collection (coin XII).

¹⁷⁶ PA vol. V, no. 1496.

¹⁷⁷ The following abbreviations used: dash – the coins are unknown, dagger – the coin is described but has no additional data, ø – diameter in mm.

¹⁷⁸ PG, P. 238.

According to the weight statistics, two standards of coins used in AH 1200–1205 can be clearly distinguished. The first standard is light (2.49 – 2.62 g) and comprises types T1 and T3. The coins of this weight can be compared with those of the regular E1 type of Ganja (2.23–2.43 g) and called *abbasi* as well. The second standard, of type T2, is heavier (2.96–3.09 g). In this sense these coins are similar to Georgian ones (3.00 g), and may also be called *abazi*.

Discussion

Tiflis–Ganja relations, in addition to the striking of these coin types, can be considered in the following way. The coins of type T3 were first struck by Erekli II in Tiflis in AH 1200 and, in fact, before the AH 1201 Georgian-Russian campaign against Ganja. An issue of such coins had a propaganda character only, that of confirmation of Georgian claims on Ganja. In AH 1201, during the campaign on Ganja, the coins of type T1 were struck, which were much more similar to ordinary Tiflis coins.

It is also important that, in that very period of AH 1200–1205, coins of type E1 (issued intermittently during AH 1199–1216) were struck in Ganja proper. This fact can indirectly testify that the coins of types T1, T2, T3, which had different Georgian coins as prototypes, were struck for Ganja in Tiflis and were issued for propaganda purposes. As a matter of interest, in AH 1201–1203 copper coins with a Russian double-headed eagle were struck in Tiflis as a proclamation of the Russian protectorate¹⁷⁹. Unfortunately, the history of the Ganja khānate has not yet been fully clarified¹⁸⁰. Perhaps, after the seizure of Ganja in AH 1203, all three type of coins continued to be struck in Ganja.

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Ganja: entrance to mosque



Mosque in Tiflis

¹⁷⁹ PG, PP. 263-266; Pakhomov Ye. A. *Ves i dostoinstvo mednoy monety Tiflisa XVII–XVIII v.v.* Baku, 1928. PP. 101-103 [Weight and Denomination of Copper Coins of Tiflis in 17–18th. cc.].

¹⁸⁰ Unpublished manuscript of 19th c. *Tā'rikh-i Ganja* (in the holdings of the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs) by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Nasikh is still waiting its researcher.

¹⁸¹ Sinitsyna Ye. A. *Denezhnoe obraschenie Azerbaydzhana (Gyandzhinskogo, Karabakhskogo, Shemakhinskogo, Shekinskogo, Bakinskogo, Derbentskogo, Kubinskogo khanstv) vo vtoroy polovine XVIII – perv. chetv. XIX v.* PhD dissertation. Baku, 1992. (Russian State Library, no. 61:93-7/149-1). [Monetary circulation in Azerbaijan (Ganja, Karabakh, Shemakhi, Sheki, Baku, Derbend, Quba Khanates) in the second half of the 18th – the first quarter of the 19th century].



The "countless cathedrals of Tbilisi"

CONTENTS OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO JOURNAL 197

The Indian summer of Georgian statehood: political and economic outlines of Kartl-Kakheti history, 1744-1801	Irakli Paghava	1
A group of unusual sirma abazis: die analysis	Irakli Paghava Gia Bebia	6
Variations in the composition and arrangement of dates on Sirma coins: approach to die analysis	Irakli Paghava	13
The cross motif on Tiflis, Ganja, Nakhjawan and Tabriz coins minted in AH 1181-1190	Irakli Paghava Severian Turkia	17
A series of peculiar minor denomination Sirma coins: modern fakes or contemporary imitations?	Irakli Paghava	20
The start of sirma coinage: the sirma abazi of AH "1166" and its dating	Severian Turkia Irakli Paghava	28
The yellow metal coins ascribed to Erekle II and fate of Georgian dies of the 17 th -18 th centuries	Irakli Paghava	33
Ganja coins of Georgian types, AH 1200-1205	Alexander Akopyan	47