

## NEW DATA FOR RESEARCHING THE CIRCULATION OF THE SIRMA COINS OF THE KINGDOM OF KARTL-KAKHETI

Key words: *Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, sirma, Georgian numismatics, monetary circulation, monetary complex,*

Our goal is to research the numismatic history of the east-Georgian Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti (1744-1801), its impact on local monetary circulation. We focused on the so called sirma coinage issued by this Georgian state in AH 1179-1213 time period (1765/6-1798/9). Hereby, we publish and analyze six monetary complexes / hoards, comprising sirma coins; three of them have already been published, albeit without relevant analysis; the other three are being published herein for the first time.

**Monetary Complex I.** Approximately 20 silver coins were found in the Republic of Armenia in 2008. 17 coins out of 20 (85%) were the Tiflis sirma abazis (we know the date for just one specimen – AH 1202 / 1787/8); 2 (10%) the Ganja Khanate ‘abbasis; 1 (5%) more coin, of a 2-abazi denomination dated 1819 was also minted in Tiflis, but after the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti by the Russian Empire in 1801. All coins bore the traces of soldering.

This complex was probably formed on the territory of the Irawan Khanate. We would designate it the *Irawan Hoard I*. 1819 is the *terminus ante quem non* for depositing this hoard. Subsequently, it pertains to Group II of the hoards comprising the sirma coins, reflecting the monetary circulation in the neighbouring Khanates, according to the classification elaborated by the author in 2021.

**Monetary Complex II.** 4 coins were shown to us in Yerevan in 2010s: 3 Sirma abazis, dated AH [120?]7 (1792/3) (2.76 g, 18.2-19 mm), [12]11 (1796/7) (2.89 g, 18 mm), and with date missing (2.89 g, 19-20 mm); and 1 Ganja abazi of Georgian type, dated AH 1205 (1790/1) (holed, 2.73 g, 18 mm). All coins bore the traces of soldering. Metrologically all coins were identical, and visually of similar type. Sirma abazis constituted 75% of the complex.

Evidently, as in the previous case, these coins formed the same piece of jewelry, constituting a certain monetary complex; the latter most probably was formed on the territory of the Irawan Khanate. We would designate it the *Irawan Hoard II*. AH [12]11 (1796/7) is the *terminus ante quem non* for depositing this hoard. Assuming that this hoard was homogenous and comprised no later coins, we classify it to Group II of the hoards comprising the sirma coins.

**Monetary Complex III.** A hoard comprising 102 coins was discovered in the Republic of Azerbaijan, on the territory of “Qarabagh” back in 2008. 3 could not be identified (we do not know whether they were silver or copper); 1 copper coin bore the effigy of St. George (Russian Empire coin?), whereas 98 (almost 99% of total number) silver coins pertained to the following groups (many had traces of soldering or soldered ears):

- Safavid: 11 coins of Howayza (2 with legible dates: AH x108; 1088 / 1677/8); 5 of Sultan Husayn I: including rectangular muhammadi from Tiflis, AH 1130s’ abbasis and muhammadi; 2 of Tahmasb II (both dated AH 1142 / 1729/30). 18 coins in total (18.4% of identified silver coins);
- Afsharid: 2 ‘abbasis of Nadir shah (including one minted in Tiflis, with date missing); 1 ‘abbasi of ‘Adil shah (date and mint place missing) (3.1%);
- Ottoman: Mehmet I’s muhammadi / beshliq from Ganja mint (1.0%);
- 18<sup>th</sup> century Khanates and Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti (70 coins in total, 71.4%):
  - Tabriz Khanate: 2 ‘abbasis (AH 1181 / 1767/8; 1182 / 1768/9) (2.0%);
  - Shamakhi Khanate: 9 ‘abbasis (AH 1181 / 1767/8; 1183 / 1769/70; 12xx; the rest with date missing) (9.2%);
  - Qarabagh Khanate: 46 coins of various types (many with date missing, the earliest dated AH 1209 / 1794/5; the latest AH 1223 / 1808/9) (46.9%);
  - Ganja Khante: 10 ‘abbasis of various types (date missing on some of the coins; the earliest dated AH 1184 / 1770/1; the latest AH 1209 / 1794/5; also AH “1188” coin, perhaps standing for AH 1178 (1764/5) (10.2%);
  - Shaki Khanate: 2 ‘abbasis (AH “3121” standing from 1213 / 1798/9, 1219 / 1804/5) (2.0%);
  - Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti: 1 sirma abazi (AH 1192 / 1778) (1.0%);
- Russian Empire: 1 half-poltinnik (1756) of Elizabeth; 3 20-copeck coins (1767, 178x, and with date missing) and 1 rouble (1775) of Catherine II; 1 rouble (1801) of Paul I; 6 coins in total (6.1%)

The earliest is the Howayza dated AH 1088 (1677/8) muhammadi; the latest – silver coin of the Qarabagh Khanate dated AH 1223 (1808/9), marking the *terminus post quem* of depositing this hoard.

Evidently, this monetary complex reflects the local monetary circulation. We would designate it the *Qarabagh hoard II* (*Hoard I* was already published earlier). It also pertains to Group II of the hoards comprising the sirma coins.

The hoard is remarkable for 1) the abundance of the Safavid coins, evidently remaining in circulation even by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (18 coins out of 98, 18.4% of hoard's identified silver coins); 2) reflecting the role of Caucasian states (the Khanates and the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti) in supplying the Qarabagh Khanate with monies (70/98, 71.4%); 3) indicating the limited role of the sirma Georgian currency in local circulation (just 1.0%; however, 85 and 75% in the *Irawan hoards I* and *II*; 5.6-25.0% in the hoards published earlier) (However, we would conjecture, that the number of the sirma abazis in the hoards discovered beyond the boundaries of the Kingdom does not reflect the significance of Georgian silver for local economies of the neighbouring Khanates: the imported high standard sirma abazis were probably melted and served as the primary source of monetary silver); 4) demonstrating, that even by 1810, despite the expansion of the Russian Empire in the region, its currency played only limited role in the local monetary circulation (just 6/98 coins, 6.1%; however, taking into account the weight of the rouble coins, the true share was higher).

**Monetary Complex IV.** Just 5 coins were discovered together at an unspecified location in Dusheti municipality, Georgia, in 2005. All five coins of this *Dusheti hoard* constituted sirma silvers: 4 abazis, dated AH 118x (i.e. 1182, 1183, or 1184 / 1768-1771), 1201 (1786/7), 1205 (1790/1), and 1207 (1792/3); and 1 uzaltuni, dated AH 1211 (1796/7).

The latter coin is the latest, pointing to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the *terminus ante quem non* of this monetary complex. Therefore, this hoard pertains to Group I of the hoards comprising the sirma coins, reflecting the monetary circulation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti.

Presence of the minor denomination (uzaltuni, = ½ abazi), along with the limited number of coins indicate that this “hoard” was rather a *purse* with cash intended for day-to-day spending, rather than the monetary (long-term) deposit.

**Monetary Complex V.** 4 (or, 5?) coins were discovered together at an unspecified location in the Upper or Inner Kartli region of Georgia, in 2009. All the coins of this *Kartli hoard* constituted sirma abazis, dated AH 1184 (1770/1), 1192 (1778/9), and 1201 (1786/7) (two specimens).

The latter two coin are the latest, pointing to the end of the 1780s or 1790s as the *terminus ante quem non* for this monetary complex. Therefore, this hoard also pertains to Group I of the hoards comprising the sirma coins.

Evidently, like the previous one, this monetary complex was a *purse* with cash intended for day-to-day spending, rather than the monetary (long-term) deposit.

**Monetary Complex VI.** Mixed hoard of silver coins and Hacksilber was discovered in Mtianeti region of Georgia. This *Mtianeti hoard* comprised 23 silver coins (total weight of 42.87 g, 71.3%) (many of them holed) and silver artifacts (17.24 g, 28.7%), with total weight of 60.11 g.

The hoard coins pertained to several groups:

- Late-feudal Georgia: 1 silver coin (1.30 g), with the effigy of the animal on one side and some (Asomtavruli?) legend on another (4.3% of total coin number, 3.0% of total coin weight);
- Ottoman: Mustafa III's billon para, dated AH 1171 (frozen date) and “81” of Islambul mint; Selim III's billon para, dated 1203 (frozen date); 2 coins in total (8.7% / 1.6%);
- Russian Empire: 1 5-copeck coin of Elizabeth II (1756), 4 grivenniks of Catherine II (1774, 1783, 1794, 1796); 5 coins in total (21.7% / 23.4%);
- Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, early period (before the monetary reform of Irakli II): 1 shauri in the name of Shakhrukh, dated “116” (4.3% / 2.8%);
- Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, late period (after the monetary reform of Irakli II): 8 sirma abazis (AH 1182 / 1768/9; 1196 / 1781/2 - 3 specimens, 1205 / 1790/1; 1211 / 1796/7 - 2 specimens; 12xx; 3 sirma uzaltunis (AH 11xx; 1213 / 1796/7; a mule struck with the uzaltuni obverse die and abazi reverse date, both w/o date); 3 sirma shauris (with no date?; [121]3? / 1798/9; a mule struck with the shauri obverse die and abazi reverse date, both w/o date); 14 coins in total (60.9% / 69.2%).

The latest coin bears the date AH 1213 (1798/9), indicating the *terminus ante quem non* for this monetary complex. Therefore, this hoard also pertains to Group I of the hoards comprising the sirma coins.

However, this monetary complex is distinct from the other hoards of this group, in terms of the following:

- Chronological noncompactness: the earliest coins of late-feudal Georgia dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, Russian coin of 1756 and Tiflis shauri minted in 1740s or early 1750s;
- Typological inhomogeneity: share of sirma coins is just 60.9% by number and 69.2% by weight, in contrast to 100% typical for the Group I hoards;
- High share of minor sirma denominations: 6 coins out of 14, i.e. 42.9% (naturally, only 21.5% by weight) in contrast to <3.4-5.7% in other hoards in Group I. Remarkably, the hoard comprised many other minor silver coins, like Ottoman paras, reduced Georgian coin of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, Tiflis shauri of Shakhrukh, Russian 5-copeck and grivennik coins;
- High percentage of defective coins: 11 out of 23, i.e. 47.8% (including 4 sirma abazis out of 8, which is very unusual for this denomination), moreover, 1 coin has a soldered ear (additional 4.3%). That means than more than half of the coins (52.2%) are defective, which is also very unusual for the hoards of Group I.

Considering these peculiarities, we would conjecture, that in contrast to other hoards of Group I, this monetary complex is of a different nature; i.e. this is a religious-ethnographic complex composed from the coins donated to some shrine. Simultaneously, this is the long-term accumulation hoard. These features make the Monetary complex VI quite unique.