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The New Unique Georgian-Byzantine Coin Types of King David IV the Builder

Introduction

The pre-reform coins of David IV the builder (1089-1125), with the name of the king and with the facing bust of Virgin, in scholarly literature are known as Georgian-Byzantine coins. These coins are the most important historical, political, economic, heraldic, iconographic and cultural sources for researching the medieval Georgia (XI-XII centuries) and the whole region in general. The coins of that period are very rare, some types are known in just a few pieces and some are generally unique.

From 1844, many scholars published their works and dedicated a special study to the coins of David the Builder (1089-1125). Especially great scientific interest dates back to the XX century. During that period a number of new species of the “Georgian-Byzantine” coins of David the Builder were discovered and described. In the beginning of twentieth century E. Pakhomov in his fundamental work – *Монеты Грузии*¹, published and described all the “Georgian-Byzantine” coins of David IV the Builder, which were known at that time. His work was republished in 1970.

Important works belong to scholar D. Kapanadze², where the scientist describes only those coins that are typologically different from each other. Which helps us to distinguish between different types of coins. Regarding the cataloging of Georgian-Byzantine coins, in which the coins of David IV the Builder are also united, we should mention Catalogue of Georgian Numismatics Part Three³ by T. Dundua, G. Dundua. The name of the scholars also associated

¹ Е. А. Пахомов. Монеты Грузии. Тб. 1970, pp. 71-74.

² დ. კაპანაძე. ქართული ნუმიზმატიკა. თბ. 1969, pp. 61-68.

³ T. Dundua, G. Dundua. Catalogue of Georgian Numismatics. Part Three. Tbilisi. 2015, pp. 186-189.

with the book published in 2006 – Georgian Numismatics Part One,⁴ which also systematically describes those coins.

From the works of recent years we would like to mention I. Paghava's dissertation⁵ – Analysis of numismatic evolution in medieval Georgia (VIII – XIII Centuries), where the researcher systematized previously known coin types, published additional information and new species. I. Paghava also published several articles on the titles and new assumptions of the Georgian – Byzantine style coins of David IV the Builder. Finally, we would like to mention M. Pataridze dissertation⁶ – Numismatic Treasure of Svaneti, Political-economic and ethnological-confessional aspects (5th century BC – 18th century AD). Where the scholar has described the coins of David the Builder preserved in Svaneti Museum. Also, she has published articles about the titles on the mentioned coins⁷.

As we mentioned at the beginning, Georgian-Byzantine coins are an important source for the study of the history, politics, economy, heraldry, iconography and culture of the kingdom of Georgia. According to the Byzantine titles engraved on them, we can reconstruct the history of diplomatic relations of the country. The symbols on the coins significantly complement the history of Georgian heraldry, while directly the silver quality content and weight characteristics of the coins allow us to make specific assumptions about the economic situation. Based on all that, the new coin type that introduced in this article will make a significant contribution to the study of history of Georgia during the period of David IV the Builder.

The New coin species of David IV the Builder

Our goal is to publish completely new, unique coins of the Georgian-Byzantine style of David IV the Builder and note their importance for the study of Georgian history.

Before describing the new type, we would like to bring in a description of so-called Georgian-Byzantine style coin with cross⁸, which in our opinion can

⁴ გ. ღუნდუა, თ. ღუნდუა, ქართული ნუმიზმატიკა, I ნაწილი, თბ. 2006, p. 193-200.

⁵ ი. ფაღავა. შუასაუკუნოვან საქართველოში ნუმიზმატიკური ევოლუციის ანალიზი (VIII-XIII სს.). თბ. 2015, pp. 123-149.

⁶ M. Pataridze. Numismatic Treasure of Svaneti. Political-economic and ethnological-confessional aspects (5th century BC - 18th century AD), Tbilisi 2020, pp. 49-53.

⁷ M. Pataridze. Apropos of the Correction Between a Rare Georgian Kingly Title and an Emittent of the unique coin. Historial Collections. 7. Tbilisi 2019, pp. 212-225.

⁸ T. Dundua, G. Dundua. Catalogue of Georgian Numismatics. Part Three, p. 188.

be connected to certain features of the new unique coins. Dates of issue: 1089-1099.



pic.1

Obverse: Facing bust of Virgin orans, nimbate, wearing pallium and maphorium. Greek legend MP – ΘY, to l. and r. from nimbus.

Reverse: Cross in the center and marginal Georgian legend **ⴕⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓⴓ** – “Christ, exalt David, the king and Sebastos (?)”.

As we mentioned in the introduction, Mtavruli legends on Georgian-Byzantine coins are very often non readable, that is why scholars restore them based on scholarly logic. The new coins that we are going to publish are also quite damaged. So, we can only assume on the content of the legends.

Coin number one (pic.2) is the most damaged of the three coins we are going to describe⁹, it is broken in two parts.

⁹ Those coins were found in Svaneti and are now preserved in a private collection.



pic.2

Description: Ar. Weight: 0.51 gr. Date of issue: 1089-1099.

Obverse: Facing bust of Virgin orans, nimbate, wearing pallium and maphrionium. Greek legend is unreadable.

Reverse: Cross in the center and fragments of marginal Mtavruli legend – [ⴏⴐⴑⴓ] ⴓⴓⴑⴓⴐ [ⴓⴑ] readable only the name – David (ⴓⴓ) and the title – King (ⴑⴐⴑ) the rest of the legends is unreadable.

That coin is identical to the one that we have described above. Separately it does not provide any new information, except that it was discovered along with two previously unknown new coins of David the Builder.

The coin number two (pic. 3) is a completely new type in Georgian-Byzantine coins. It allows us to look at the numismatic materials of this time not only from an economic and political point of view but also from a propaganda, heraldic, art history and other points of view.



pic.3

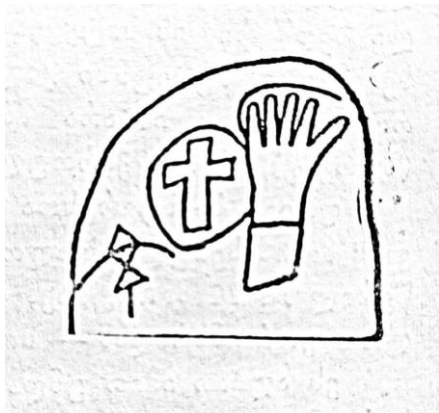
Description: Ar. weight: 0.77 gr.

Obverse: Facing bust of Virgin orans, wearing pallium and maphrion. The Greek legends are missing.

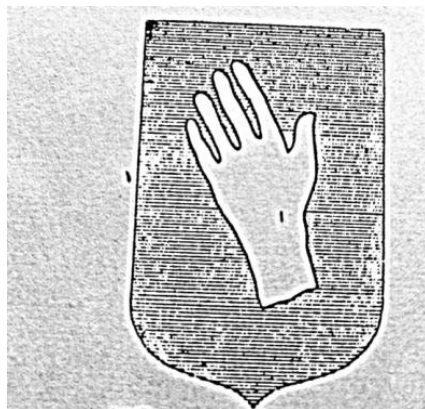
Reverse: Center: Star of David (Magen David) with a star in the center, dotted circle around; Around: Fragments of marginal mtavruli legend which is in a very bad condition and we can read only some parts of the letters. In our opinion it may be the name of the King – David (ԾԴ) and the title the King of Abkhazians (ԾՓԷԾԴ) (?).

Unfortunately we can not say exactly the content of the legends and so we can only make an assumption. On the obverse of the coin the figure of Virgin is identical to the figures which are on the coins with a cross in the center, therefore that issue must have taken place during the same period: 1089-1099 years. The star of David (Magen David) is a very old and popular symbol in Georgian Kingdom. During all the period of Georgian history we can see that symbol (with differences) on many Georgian coins and of course it did not always carry the same symbolic load. At first that symbol can be linked to the propaganda of the Bagrationi legend, according to which they are the descendants of the prophet David. But we follow D. Kldiashvili works and also think that the star of David in Georgian reality should reflect the symbol of the infant Jesus and the star in the center is the symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, which to some extent can be considered as an analogy of a cross on the coins

That symbol has not been fixed on any other Georgian coins before. However, that heraldic symbol was not rare in the Kingdom of Georgia, it is a symbol of power¹⁰. This hand we can see on a medieval stela¹¹ (pic. 5) dated approximately 1195-1207. Also the symbol is on a Coat Arms of Zakatala region (pic. 6).



pic. 5



pic. 6

Power even means success. Success in wars against Seljuks, success in diplomacy and in interior. That is why we think, that coin is one of the last issues of Georgian-Byzantine coins.

Conclusion

In our work we have published two completely new different coin issues. Also we would like to mention that during the last decades all the works related to David the Builder's Georgian-Byzantine coins did not contain directly new coin types, the novelty was in the new reading of legends and their new identification of the already known main coin types.

According the new discoveries, we can add two new main types to other already known coin types. Therefore, we have already identified four main types, which is given in the table below:

¹⁰ მ. ვაძბოლსკი. საქართველოს ჰერალდიკური სიმბოლიკა. თბ. 1980, p. 99.

¹¹ Found in Tetrtskaro district, near the village of Chkhikvta.

General coin types	In the center of Reverse	Picture
I type	Byzantine title in Mtavruli scripts – “And Sebastos”	–
II type	Cross	Pic. 1; Pic. 2
III type	“Star of David”	Pic. 3
IV type	“Outstretched hand”	Pic. 4

As we mentioned above, those new coins contain important information about the historical period. It contains important information on the history of Georgian heraldry and culture. Those symbols on the coins somehow reflect the interior and foreign political situation of that time.

Unfortunately, the Mtavruli inscriptions are quite damaged, so we can not have more additional information. We hope that our work will contribute to the future research of medieval Georgian numismatics and the history of Georgia in general.