

*Tedo Dundua, Emil Avdaliani*

## **Coins of Muslim Rulers Struck at Tbilisi Mint (General Overview)<sup>1</sup>**

The following coins of the Muslim rulers were struck at Tbilisi mint:

“**Arabic dirhems struck at Tbilisi and their imitations**” is the name of a coin group of which the earliest are the Umayyad dirhems. The 7<sup>th</sup> c. important political changes in the Middle East had their impact on economy and money circulation. The Arabian Caliphate subjugated Iran and the Eastern provinces of Byzantine Empire and from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Arabs became dominant in Georgia.

The first Arabic coin of Tbilisi mint was struck in A.H. 85 (=704), during the rule of ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) and, as all other dirhems of Caliphate, it was also anonymous. Four samples of Umayyad dirhems of Tbilisi mint are known. One is kept in the Berlin Museum, next – in the National Museum of Qatar, third one – in the Ashmolean Museum, and fourth one – in the private collection. Hence in 704 Tbilisi was under Arabian control.

All agree that money issue at Tbilisi in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. was a political gesture rather than an economic measure. The coins were not proposed for intensive circulation.

After that Tbilisi mint was not active for almost 125 years. According to data, Tbilisi mint became active again in A.H. 210 (=825/26). The first ‘Abbāsīd dirhem of Tbilisi mint is dated by this year.

After that, during A.H. 211-247, more than 30 years passed and the coins of Tbilisi mint are still unknown. Further discoveries will reveal whether or not

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these circumstances are accidental. Six specimens of 'Abbāsīd dirhems of Tbilisi mint struck in A.H. 248 (=862/63) are known: three of them are kept in the Hermitage, Saint-Petersburg, two – in the Moscow State Historical Museum and one is kept in Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia. They are prolonged by 'Abbāsīd issues of A.H. 249-335. 'Abbāsīd dirhems of Tbilisi mint bear the name of Caliph. Date of issue is changed every time and the Islamic formulas are mainly repeated.

Emir of Tbilisi was the governor who issued the coins in the name of 'Abbāsīd Caliphs. The office of emir was established in East Georgia from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century. Three dynasties of Tbilisi emirs are known: Shu'aybids, Shaybānids and Ja'farids. The first two issued the coins only in the name of the Caliphs, that meant their complete loyalty to the central government.

The members of Ja'farid dynasty struck the coins in their own name. Their dirhems show the date, when the struggle for the independence of Tbilisi emirate was finished; also – the genealogical tree of Ja'farid dynasty (ex. names of Maṣṣūr ibn Ja'far and Ja'far ibn Maṣṣūr are known only from the coins).

Arabian dynasty of the Ja'farids (Banū Ja'far) was established approx. in the 80s of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and ruled Tbilisi for two centuries.

**Mongol occupation coins.** In 1222-1245 queen Tamar's daughter Rusudan ruled in Georgia. It turned out to be an unfortunate reign. First, Georgia was invaded by Jalāl al-Din and then – by the Mongols.

In November 1225 Jalāl al-Din, successor to the Khwarazm shah, defeated the Georgian army due to disagreement among the Georgian nobles. Next year he captured Tbilisi.

This conqueror left his trace also in the Georgian numismatics. In the abandoned Tbilisi (Rusudan fled to Kutaisi) Jalāl al-Din, probably, took hold of the state coffers, which he used for the issue of his money. Jalāl al-Din overstruck all the Georgian coins, and with the placing of a new die reissued them as his own money.

Soon, following Jalāl al-Din's invasions, the Mongol hegemony was established over Georgia.

The changed political situation left an indelible trace on Georgian numismatics. Both, the face of money and the legends drastically changed. The Georgian coins of the time reflect a difficult political situation of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> cc.

The coins struck after Rusudan's reign are divided into two groups: 1. Coins of the Georgian kings in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> cc.; 2. Mongol occupation coins. For the moment, we will discuss only the Mongol occupation coins.

Anonymous dirhems were already struck in the reign of Rusudan (Anonymous dirhems with the depiction of bow).

**Obverse:** Arabic legend in a circle of the dots: Qāʾān the just. Apart from this, there is a date, A.H. 637 (=1239/40) and the place of issue – Tbilisi. The depiction of a bow below the legend.

**Reverse:** Arabic legend in the centre: There is no god but Allāh alone, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

After five years, in A.H. 642 (=1244/45) other dirhems were struck at Tbilisi mint (Dirhems of Ulus(h) Bek with the depiction of a hunting horseman).

**Obverse:** A riding horseman to the left, turns to the right with a bow in his hands; behind, the depiction of stork; below the horse, the depiction of a gun-dog. In some cases, the depiction of stork is replaced with a star or Solomon's seal, whereas the depiction of a dog – with an unknown depiction, which can be regarded as either a reptile or a leaf ornament. On other samples, struck at unknown mint, a riding horseman is to the right. Above: in Turkish – (Ulugh) Mangil Ulus(h) Beg. There are two interpretation of this legend: 1. Ulus(h) Beg in the name of Great Khan; 2. Great Mongol Ulus(h) Beg.

**Reverse:** Arabic legend: There is no god but Allāh alone, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh. Struck at Tbilisi in the year 642 (=1244/45).<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that, apart from Tbilisi, identical coins were also struck at Ganja, Baku, Nakhchivan etc.

A unique anonymous coin (Anonymous dirhems with the depiction of six-pointed star), dated by A.H. 643, is preserved at Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia.

**Obverse:** A six-pointed star made of parallel lines. Arabic legend in the centre of the star: Qāʾān the just.

**Reverse:** Arabic religious formula in three lines: There is no god but Allāh alone, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh. The legend is placed within a rectangle frame with a linear circle around. Arabic legend in the segments between the linear circle and the frame: Struck at Tbilisi in the year 643 (=1245/46).

Silver coins of A.H. 652-659 (=1254-1261) and identical copper coins of A.H. 652-654 (=1254-1257) were struck at Tbilisi mint in the name of Mangu Qāʾān (Coins of Mangu Qāʾān):

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<sup>2</sup> For the plates v. “Online English-Georgian Catalogue of Georgian Numismatics (<http://geonumismatics.tsu.ge>)

**Obverse:** Arabic legend in three lines in square within the circle: Mangu Qā'ān, the mightiest, the just. In segments between the square and the circle the place of issue in Arabic – Tbilisi.

**Reverse:** Arabic religious formula in three lines in a similar square within the circle: There is no god but Allāh alone, he has no associate. In segments between the square and the circle the date of issue in Arabic, which contains not only the year, but month and in some cases – even a day.

The copper coins of Mangu Qā'ān are identical to the silver coins described above. The average weight of the silver coins struck by Mangu Qā'ān at Tbilisi mint is 2,62 gr.

The coins struck by Mangu Qā'ān are followed by the so-called “Qā'ānic”. The term “Qā'ānic” derives from the legend on the obverse – “Qā'ān the just”. There are two “types” of these coins. First “type” silver “Qā'ānic” was struck in A.H. 660, 661 and 662 (=1261-1264). Their description is as follows:

**Obverse:** Six-pointed star, in the centre of which the Arabic legend in two lines: Qā'ān the just.

**Reverse:** Arabic legend in three lines in quadrangular frame within the circle: There is no god but Allāh alone, he has no associate. In the segments between the quadrangular frame and the circle in Arabic – the place (Tbilisi) and date (year, month) of issue.

The average weight of the coins is 2,66 gr. The second “type” “Qā'ānic” differ from the above described ones only by the details on the reverse: ornament is placed in segments, whereas the date – between first and second lines of the religious formula. The date is given by small Arabic signs which include one of the years of A.H. 663-678 period (=1264-1280). Their average weight is 2,61 gr.

Apart from the silver “Qā'ānic”, copper “Qā'ānic” were struck too, but as the material suggests, their amount was not large. The earliest specimen is dated by A.H. 675 (=1276/77).

In A.H. 680 (=1281/82) the face of the coins in Georgia again changes. By that time begins issue of very peculiar dirhems, which in the scholarly literature are known as the Georgian-Hulaguid coins. They were the first coins in the numismatics with the names of the Il-khans, but, with the Christian prayer and the depiction of cross. It should be emphasized that Georgia was the only Hulaguid vassal-state where the Christian prayer was placed on the coins. This, in itself, was a big concession from the Il-khans which directly attests to the importance of Georgia. The issue of the Georgian-Hulaguid coins took place in A.H. 680-694 (=1281/82-1294/95).

**Obverse:** Uighur legend in five lines which contains the names of the following Il-khans: Abaqa (1265-1282), Ahmad (1282-1284), Arghun (1284-1291), Gaikhatu (1291-1295) and Baidu (1295) (the legend is approximately as follows: Struck by Ahmad in the name of Khaqan).

**Reverse:** Christian prayer in Arabic in four lines in square within the circle: In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Also, Christian emblem – cross. The date is placed in the segments between the square and the circle.

As a rule, there was no place of issue indicated on the Georgian-Hulaguid coins. But, according to D. Kapanadze, in Baku, at National Museum of History of Azerbaijan there is one dirhem with the following legend: struck at Tbilisi.

It is noteworthy that on the dirhems struck in the name of Ahmad the cross is replaced with a star. This can be explained. Ahmad was the first from the Hulaguids who converted to Islam and was intent on removing the Christian symbol, cross, from the coins. After this, the names of the Il-khans are repeated in Arabic after the Uighur legend. The cross is again depicted on the Georgian-Hulaguid coins struck in the name of Ahmad's successors.

The average weight of the Georgian-Hulaguid coins is 2,2-2,3 gr. As we see, this weight is much lower than that of the "Qā'ānics". Also, their fineness is comparatively low.

Simultaneously with the Georgian-Hulaguid coins, also similar copper coins were struck. The dates on these coins are almost always distorted, or erased, and their chronology is established only through the names of the Il-khans.

Wide variety, low weight and fineness of the coins in the countries under the Il-khanid overlordship hindered money circulation and both, foreign and internal trade over the entire Middle East. That is why Ghazan Khan (1295-1304) implemented a money reform – money standardization. Through the reform of Ghazan Khan (1296), the weight of a silver dirhem was defined by 2,13 gr. From that time on the coins struck in Georgia in the name of the Hulaguids differed from the coins struck in Iran only by a mint name.

The earliest standardized coin (Post-reform issues of the Hulaguids) of Ghazan Khan struck at Tbilisi is dated by A.H. 698 (=1298/99).

**Obverse:** Uighur legend in four lines within the linear circle and the circle of the dots: With the power of heaven, struck by Ghazan. Ornament above the legend. Between third and fourth lines in Arabic – Ghazan Mahmud. To the left, vertical legend in Tibetan – Ghazan Mahmud.

**Reverse:** Arabic legend in four lines within the ornamented pentagon: There is no god, but Allāh alone, struck at Tbilisi, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh. Vertical legends to both sides – May god bless him. Date in segments between the pentagon and the linear circle – A.H. 698 (=1298/99). Ornament in one of the segments.

The coins from Tbilisi mint struck in Ghazan Khan's time are represented solely by the dirhems. The coins struck at Tbilisi mint in the name of Ghazan Khan are dated by A.H. 698, 699, 700, 701.

One of the coins struck in the name of Ghazan differs from the above-described only by the place of issue. In the third line of the legend it is read: Struck at Akhaltsikhe. It seems, in the time of Ghazan Khan there was the second mint operating in Georgia, namely in Akhatsikhe, Samtskhe (Southern Georgia).

Following the death of Ghazan Khan, he was succeeded by his brother Ūljāitū (1304-1316). Ūljāitū, after he converted to Islam, took a new name – Muhammad Khudābandeh. The names of the four Orthodox Caliphs were placed for the first time on the coins of new Il-khan. When Ūljāitū embraced Shia Islam, a religious Shia formula and the names of the Twelve Imams appeared on the coins struck from A.H. 709 (=1309/1310).

There were only dirhems and double-dirhems struck at Tbilisi mint. After Ūljāitū, in 1316 Abu-Sa'id became the Il-khan (1316-1335). In the last years of Ūljāitū's reign and during Abu-Sa'id's rule, the reform of Ghazan Khan slowly lost its impact. The weight of dirhems decreased several times in Abu-Sa'id's reign. Thus, in the last years of his rule the weight decreased till 1,4 gr.

After Abu-Sa'id's death (1335), the Il-khans' state disintegrated. The real hegemony over Georgia should have been the Chobanids – rulers of Azerbaijan. Their rivals were the Jala'irids.

From that period on new pretenders from the Hulaguid dynasty were placed on the throne of the Il-khans by various groups. Still, in Eastern Georgia money was struck by these puppets.

The following coins were struck at Tbilisi mint: in the name of Arpa Khan (A.H. 736=1335/36), Muhammad Khan (A.H. 738=1337/38), Sati Beg Khatun (A.H. 739=1338/39), Suleyman Khan (A.H. 740=1339/40; A.H. 741=1340/41; A.H. 743=1342/43), and Anushirwan (A.H. 745=1344/45; A.H. 748=1347/48; A.H. 750-756=1349-1354).

It is noteworthy that the part of the coins of Suleyman and Anushirwan was struck at Karaghaji (city in Kakheti, Eastern province of Georgia) mint.

There are also copper coins struck at Tbilisi in the name of Ūljāitū, Abu-Sa'id, and Anushirwan. Overall, the copper coins struck in Georgia by the Ilkhans are represented in a much smaller quantity than the silver coins.

In A.H. 757 (=1356) coins at Tbilisi mint were struck in the name of the ruler of the Golden Horde Jani Beg Juchid, next – in the name of Berdi Beg Juchid (date on the coin is unreadable) (Money of the Juchids).

Finally, for a short period of time money issue in Georgia became the prerogative of the Jala'irids. This is well testified by the coins struck at Tbilisi in the name of sheikh Uvais. Silver coins (Money of the Jala'irids) were already struck in his name at Tbilisi in A.H. 759 (1357/58).

Following the treaty of Amasia (1555), Georgia was subjugated to the hegemony of the Safavids and the Ottomans. The Western Georgia was controlled by the Ottomans, whereas the Eastern Georgia – by the Safavids.

As far back as in the reign of Tahmasp I (1524-1576) Iranian silver coins were struck at Zagemi mint. From the 17<sup>th</sup> c. **Iranian occupation coins** were struck at Tbilisi.

The names of the following Iranian shahs are placed on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cc. silver coins struck at Tbilisi: Abbas I (1587-1629), Safi I (1629-1642), Abbas II (1642-1667), Suleyman (1667-1694), Husain (1694-1722), Abbas III (1731-1736) from the Safavid dynasty; Nadir Shah (1736-1747), Ibrahim Shah (1748) and Shahrukh (1748-1796) from the Afsharid dynasty; Karim Khan Zand (1750-1779). The most widespread coin in Georgia was silver abbasi, then come its fractions – 2 shauris/mahmudi, or as it is sometimes called, uzaltuni, relatively rare is shauri, which was  $\frac{1}{4}$  of abbasi. Rarer are larger nominals: marchili, which is known to us from the the British catalogue, half marchili (6 shauris or 1,5 abbasis) and panjshahi (5 shauris).

The smallest silver nominal was bisti (2,5 bistic equaled shauri), which was struck very rarely on special occasions, as exceptions.

Silver coins struck in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cc. at Tbilisi mint were issued according to the Iranian monetary system. The main unit was the nominal introduced by shah Abbas I – abbasi, with standard weight 7,76 gr. The theoretical weight of abbasi remained unchanged till 1717, when under the order of shah Husain, the weight of abbasi decreased till 5,40 gr. In 1721 the weight of abbasi decreased once again and constituted 4,63 gr.

The general description of the silver coins is almost identical.

In the reign of Nadir Shah, along with the functioning monetary system (the basis for which was abbasi), a new system, taken from India, was

established. The basis of the new system was rupee or nadiri (appr. 11,5 gr.). Smaller nominals too were struck. In Tbilisi silver was partially struck according to the old system – six shauris (1,5 abbasis), abbasi (at that time it was 4,6 gr.), mahmudi and shauri (shahi); and partially according to the new system – 1 rupee or nadiri (2,5 abbasis, weight appr. 11,5 gr.).

The first silver coin in the name of Iranian shah was struck at Tbilisi in A.H. 1013 (=1604/1605). The coin was kept at Dresden Museum. Iranian silver coins were struck at Tbilisi including A.H. 1179 (=1765/1766). From this period begins the emission of Erekle II's silver coins (sirma vertskhli).

Simultaneously with Tbilisi mint, in the 17<sup>th</sup> c. the silver coins were struck at Zagemi in the name of shah Abbas I (1587-1629) and shah Safi I (1629-1642).

Apart from silver coins, Tbilisi mint also struck copper coins according to the Iranian pattern. In the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> cc. copper coins of one pattern were issued in Iran. A certain depiction is placed on the obverse, whereas on the reverse – Persian inscription which includes the name of a mint and date of issue. There are up to 50 effigies on the obverse of Iranian copper coins – peacock, goose, hen, cock, parrot, eagle and partridge, camel, goat, sheep, antelope, elephant, rhinoceros, lion and sun, lion with a sword and the sun behind, horseman with a sword etc. The Persian inscription on the reverse of the Iranian copper coin is read as follows: “pulus was struck”, then, the name of a mint and date. In this case “pulus” does not mean nominal. It only refers to the coin metal – copper.

Interesting question is when the emission of copper coins started at Tbilisi mint. The date, placed on one of the anonymous copper coins (with the depiction of lion on both sides) struck at Tbilisi, was read as A.H. 1014 (=May 1605-May 1606). Therefore, Evg. Pakhomov thinks that this was the first anonymous copper coin struck at Tbilisi mint.

Iranian copper coins were struck at Tbilisi mint till the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. From 1708 till 1719/1720 copper coins were struck by the rulers of Kartli: Vakhtang, Simon and Bakar. Then, in 1723-1735, **Ottoman occupation coins** were struck. The last copper coin of Safavid dynasty struck at Tbilisi was issued in A.H. 1148 (=1735/1736). Afterwards, the copper coins were struck only by the Georgian kings.

In 1723-1735 Tbilisi and the entire Eastern Georgia was occupied by the Ottomans. Tbilisi mint struck coins in the name of the sultans. They issued Ottoman gold, silver and copper coins.