

***Tedo Dundua***

Professor,  
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

***Emil Avdaliani***

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

## **Western Heraldry in Modern Georgia and Western Mints for Georgian Money<sup>1</sup>**

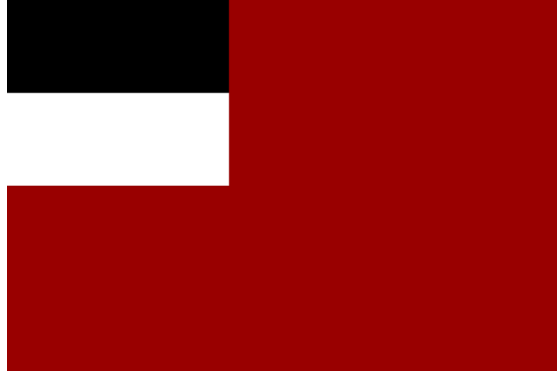
For millennia flags have served as national symbols. They also serve as a form of communication. But most of all they serve as a form of identification as the colors and symbols of each flag convey a certain idea or ambitions. It also says a lot about values of a country.

Georgia has had several flags throughout its history and it is interesting how each flag reflected the country's geopolitical ambitions (preferences in alliances etc.).

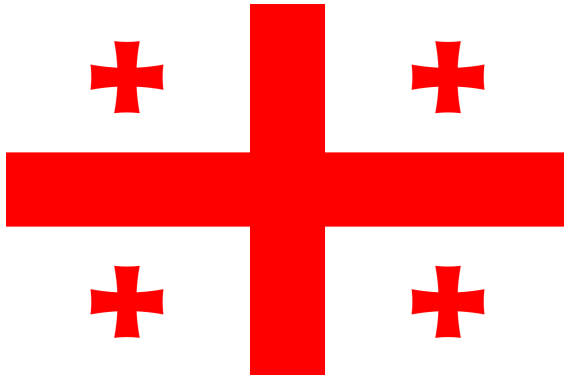
For instance, the national flag of the first republic of Georgia in 1918-1921 was a tricolor resembling the colors of the German Empire. The resemblance was not accidental – Georgia was pro-German at the time and hoped for Berlin's victory in the World War I.

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was presented at international scientific conference “Thirty Years After Restoration of Independence”, November 23, 2021, organized by Institute of Georgian History, Faculty of Humanities, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia.



Georgia's current flag also reflects the national values and geopolitical aspirations. It features Crusading states' "Cross of Jerusalem", derived from "Cross Potent", which was an important heraldic feature of the Byzantine Empire.



"Cross Potent" is often shown in the Byzantine numismatics since Emperor Tiberius II (578-582) (David R. Sear. Byzantine Coins and Their Values. London. 1996, p. 14). "Cross Potent" was widespread in the entire Christian world, even being used by various seigniors in the Western Europe. "Cross Potent" also features on the silver money of the Georgian seignior David III Kuropalates (+1001)

<http://geonumismatics.tsu.ge/en/catalogue/types/?type=40>

Quite often in the quarters of the cross the Byzantines put the following religious legend: IC-XP NI-KA.



Later on, occasionally, instead of legends stars were put in quarters of “Cross Potent”. A star was one of the attributes of Constantinople’s heraldry.

In the age of Crusades the Western Europe gave a different interpretation to the “Cross Potent” by adding four crosses in quarters. This is already “Cross of Jerusalem. The identical combination is seen even on the 18<sup>th</sup> c. coat of arms of the Kingdom of Sardinia (X. Фенглер, Г. Гироу, В. Унгер. Словарь нумизмата. Берлин-Москва. 1982. Article «Иерусалимский крест», p. 98.).



“Cross of Jerusalem” was the symbol of integration of the Western Europe, created in the era of Crusades.

As in most cases, Georgia’s flags, whether historical or modern one, reflect the country’s foreign policy preferences and its national aspirations. The five-cross flag thus shows how Georgia sees herself – increasingly as a part of Europe.

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Georgia’s fruitful relations with the West have also “financial” history. On April 9, 1991 the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia declared an independence of the country. National Bank of Georgia was established on August 2, 1991. Since October 2, 1995 lari, national currency of Georgia, has been in circulation. This was a revival of national minting tradition, having the 6<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. as a starting point.

Alas, with no technologies left by the Soviets, Georgians had to order to Western companies both, banknotes and commemorative coins. For example, banknotes dated by 1995 and commemorative gold coin dedicated to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the World War II were produced by French company “François Charles Oberthure”, according to the Georgian design. In 2000 National Bank of Georgia ordered to the Royal Mint, UK, silver, copper-nickel alloy and bimetallic coins dedicated to 2000 A.D. and 3000 years of Georgian statehood.



[https://www.academia.edu/31559754/Money\\_in\\_Georgia\\_Tbilisi\\_2003](https://www.academia.edu/31559754/Money_in_Georgia_Tbilisi_2003)

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Collaboration of the same type existed in the past. Not because they lacked mint technologies, but for higher level of Greek art, some of Georgian (Colchian and Iberian) rulers ordered their coins to be struck in bilingual (Graeco-Colchian) cities of Phasis (Modern Poti, Western Georgia) or Trapezus (Modern Trabzon, Turkey).

Coin evidence and narrative clearly demonstrate that throughout the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. B.C. Bagrat Pharnavaziani, duke of Klarjeti (Southwest Georgia), issued the coins with the proud Aramaic legend. Saurmag, the second king of Iberia (East, South and Southwest Georgia), had to deal with a revolt of the dukes. Was ambitious Bagrat among them, did he secure southern principality for himself? Perhaps, we need more records for the full picture. But still, his coins are present, ordered, maybe, to the nearest Greek community. And that could be either Phasis, or Trapezus.



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Aka stater is exact copy of the gold coins struck with the name of Lysimachus (after his death), Alexander's general. Aka stater was issued in the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. B.C. Two specimens are known. Stylistically, technically and artistically the coin is no less than its prototype.

Topography of the coin findings proves their local, Colchian origin – they were found in Trabzon/Trapezus and in Western Georgia. Name of the king on reverse of the coin is in possessive case and can be translated (from the Greek) as “of king Akes/Aka or Akos”.



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Thus, Georgia's Western affiliation can be traced every time in every sphere of life.