
History

On the Origin of Coin Type Spread in the Near East (Coin of the Georgian King Giorgi III (1174))

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The subject of present paper is the study of iconographic peculiarities of a numismatic monument of medieval Georgia - copper coin minted in 1174 by Giorgi III (1157-1184). Style of representation of Giorgi III, his attire and royal paraphernalia, occupies a distinct place in a set of portrayals of medieval secular authorities. Lately obtained specimens have substantiated an assumption suggested by Mikheil Barataeff (Baratashvili) in 1844 that king appears on coin clad in military armor. Motif of coin depicts an image of powerful king familiar to the Islamic world, therefore defining this world as its addressee. Eclecticism and ambitious message of the central design is connected to specific historical event, namely the takeover of Ani and striking coins at the local mint. Carried out research of roots of Orientalizing style of representation lead to conjecture that coin issued by Giorgi III stands out not only for introduction of extravagant features like the image of the king-hunter and military attire. It became evident that a portrait of a king sitting with his legs crossed did not occur on Islamic coins prior to 1174, i.e. before minting these coins. The motif introduced by Georgian king as a coin type, antedates coin types spread in the Near East later on which testifies to the political prowess of Georgian kingdom in the milieu of Muslim countries. © 2022 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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The analysis of iconography is one of the primary tasks in the process of study of numismatic monuments due to importance of representations for understanding foreign policy, confessional priorities and political-economic conditions.

Regularly struck copper coin dated to 1174 stands out for interesting portrayal of Giorgi III (1157-1184) among medieval Georgian coins. Scrutiny of this specific coin type and identification of hitherto unnoticed peculiarities enabled the author to suggest alternative interpretation. Copper

coin of Giorgi III offers an authentic source for the analysis of his ideological and political program.

Traditional description of coin type, accepted in scholarly literature, goes as follows: on the obverse, the king is presented en face, sitting with his legs crossed [1: 7-8; 2: 89; 3: 287-8; 4: 47-48; 5: 21; 6: 104; 7: 22-23; 8: 81; 9: 91; 10: 3], wearing crown with cross and pendoulia [1: 7-8; 2: 89; 3: 287-8; 4: 47-48; 5: 21; 6: 104; 7: 22-23; 8: 81; 9: 92;] and stemma [10: 3-4]; he is clad in chain-mail or armor [1: 12]; shorter divetesion and loros [7: 23, 8: 22];

caftan [2: 89; 10: 4]; a dress with flounced sleeves [6: 104; 1: 8]; tunic [5: 21; 9: 92], wearing decorative collar [8: 81]; his right (occasionally left) hand with a perched falcon tied with a leather strip is stretched [2: 89], his loose trousers tucked into boots [8: 142]; on the right (occasionally left) side of the king titlo gi = Giorgi, majuscule letters scattered around the image, indicated date – 1174. Three lines in Arabic – “King [Grab your reader’s attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.] of kings, Giorgi, son of Dimitri, sword of Messiah” are placed in the center of reverse.

Style of representation of Giorgi III, his attire and royal paraphernalia, occupies a distinct place among portrayals of medieval secular authorities. Royal attire calls for special interest. Variety of suggestions about king’s clothing might be caused by scarcity of specimens, not enabling scholars to ascertain length of royal dress. Nevertheless, an assumption about Giorgi dressed in armour suggested almost two centuries ago by M. Barataef, was substantiated by a few coins preserved at National Museum and Museum of Yerevan. A thin line discernible on one coin can be identified as a belt adorned with pearls for adjusting clothing to body.

Warriors used to fasten a belt to the lower edge of lamellar cuirass [11: 383]. Belts with gemstones indicated nobility of a warrior. Giorgi is dressed in armour, sleeveless lamellar cuirass, with clothing

under cuirass for better protection [11: 340]. Sleeves of this clothing are well observable on coin. Important component of attire is pauldrons attached separately from cuirasse. On a stretched hand one can see a leather glove with a perched falcon [12: 164] (Fig. 1).

Falcon is depicted tied with a strip and elaborated in details – image is pretty much realistic. Chest and shoulders of the king are adorned with decorative collar, which, along with pendoulia and stemma are imperial regalia. Stemma differs both from the ones decorating Georgian kings [7: 37] and Byzantine emperors as clearly seen on the Yerevan coin [13: pl. 112].

Crown comprises three elements: two plates with a cross in between. The coin discovered in Ani features a distinct type of cross – its arms have smaller crosses as finials (Fig. 2).

Similar crowns adorn Armenian kings of Cilicia. Stemma on Giorgi III’s coin resembles the crown of Leo I (1198-1219) depicted on his coins [14: pl. 21]. It can be assumed that a crown of Georgian king was more acceptable for Cilician kings as a model due to the fact that Giorgi struck his coins 24 years earlier than Armenian kings.

Realistic representation of a falcon with accompanying attributes is of special interest, indicating desire to introduce elements of hunting to central motif of coin. Along with Oriental impulses, Giorgi positions himself as a Christian Georgian king – wearing stemma with cross and



Fig. 1. Copper. Giorgi III (1157-1184) 1174. W.5.56 gr., D.22/23mm.



Fig. 2. Copper.Giorgi III (1157-1184) 1174.

eliminating name of sultan from legend (placing sultan's name had been attested since the reign of David Aghmashenebeli (1089-1125) [2: 92], completing the picture with the monogram "gi" in minuscule letters and the title "sword of messiah".

As a rule, coin types deliver political messages. Who are the addressees of Giorgi III? It is obvious that the king tries to demonstrate his prowess to the Muslim world in general and not locally to the Muslim population of Tbilisi, as it has been conjectured before [9: 92; 10: 4]. The motif reflects a few patterns clearly established in Muslim art aimed at establishment of an image of powerful king in peoples' minds [15: 82]. According to famous Persian poet Farrukhi Sistani (1000-1040), activities of highest sovereigns included feasting, playing polo, hunting and waging war [16: 355]. Giorgi's portrayal reflects the traditional image of powerful king of Orient. Eclecticism and ambitious message of the central design is connected to specific historical event. What were the developments that made Giorgi in the 18th year of reign to alter coin type – to drop irregular striking, eliminate name of sultan thus abandoning existing tradition [2: 92] and to introduce novel motif impressive for both East and West?

It can be assumed that minting these coins was connected to takeover of Ani. Its conquest presupposed supremacy over Caucasia [17: 103; 18: 52]. Giorgi III took Ani for the first time in 1160, four years later, the Georgians had to accept restoration of Shaddadid rule in the city [17: 109]. In October

1174 Giorgi took the city for the second time [17: 113]. Bringing entire region under the Georgian sway was undoubtedly a great success and it was commemorated with striking coins in Ani mint. Following steps would be imposing monopoly over the trading routes and pushing political influence farther to the Near East backed up ideologically by proper image of the king on coins. Central design of coins would have been familiar to the local Armenian population and reflect influences on both Christian and Muslim worlds.

The Georgian kingdom lost Ani in 1176/1177. Nevertheless, according to established tradition, following emissions in Georgia carried the initial date – 1174. Variety of dies is indicative of large number of emissions.

The study of Oriental, better to say Persian stylistic elements of iconography yielded noteworthy results. It became clear that the Georgian king had no iconographic prototype at his disposal, which makes the above coin type completely innovative not only for its extravagant details (including image of king-hunter, military attire). There is no attested representation of a king sitting with his legs crossed prior to 1174 in Islamic coinage [cf. 19-21]. After Giorgi, this motif (king sitting crossed-legged clad in military costume) was replicated by an Artuqid ruler of Mardin Husam al-Din Yuluq Arslan in 1196 [22: 32; 23: 111] who ascended the throne in 1184, the year when Giorgi died [17: 71]. A copper coin depicting a king with crossed legs was struck by Saladin (1174-1193) relatively earlier, in 1190

[24: 103]. No earlier coins of similar motif have been attested so far. Numismatic evidence indicate that Giorgi III was one of the first to introduce this Oriental iconography. It should be stressed, however that the above conjecture is based on current data and new archaeological discoveries may alter hypothesis.

So far, it seems that coin struck by Georgian king Giorgi III in 1174 represents a memorial

coinage, connected to the takeover of Ani and manufactured in Ani. Iconography of these coin antedates coin types spread in the Near East later on which testifies to the political prowess of Georgian kingdom in the milieu of Muslim countries.

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ისტორია

ახლო აღმოსავლეთში გავრცელებული სამონეტო ტიპის გენეზისისთვის (გიორგი III-ის მონეტა (1174 წ.))

მ. პატარიძე

იღიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, მეცნიერებათა და ხელოვნების ფაკულტეტი, თბილისი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ჯ. სამუშას მიერ)

წინამდებარე ნაშრომის კვლევის მიზანს წარმოადგენს შუასაუკუნოვანი ქართული წუმიზმატიკის ძეგლის, გიორგი III-ის (1157-1184) 1174 წლის სპილენძის საფასის იკონოგრაფიული თავისებურების გამოვლენა. გიორგი III-ის სამონეტო პორტრეტი, როგორც ჩაცმულობის ელემენტებით, ისე იკონოგრაფიული სიუჟეტით, ამოვარდნილია შუასაუკუნოვან საერო პირთა პორტრეტებიდან. 1844 წელს მიხეილ ბარათავევის (ბარათაშვილის) მიერ გამოთქმული ერთ-ერთი ვარაუდი მონეტაზე მეფის სამხედრო ჩაცმულობით გამოსახვასთან დაკავშირებით, ახალმა ეგზემპლარებმა დაადასტურა. მონეტაზე წარმოდგენილ სცენაში გათვალისწინებულია ისლამურ ხელოვნებაში მკაფიოდ ჩამოყალიბებული, ძლევამოსილი ხელმწიფის სახე. ქართველი მეფის ადრესატი მუსლიმური სამყაროა. მონეტის გამოსახულების ეკლექტურობა და ამბიციური შინაარსი კონკრეტულ ისტორიულ მოვლენას, კერძოდ, ანისის დაუფლებას უკავშირდება და მონეტაც ანისისავე ზარაფხანაშია მოჭრილი. მონეტაზე მეფის გამოსახვის აღმოსავლური სტილის საფუძვლების კვლევამ აჩვენა, რომ გიორგი III-ის საფასის იკონოგრაფია არ არის გამორჩეული მხოლოდ სხვადასხვა ექსტრავაგანტული (ნადირობის ელე-

მენტი, ტანზე აბჯარი) დეტალების გამო. გაირკვა, რომ ფეხმორთხმით მჯდომი მეფის იკონო-გრაფიული პორტრეტი ისლამურ ნუმიზმატიკაში ამ მონეტის ემისიამდე, 1174 წლამდე, არ დასტურდება. ქართველი მეფე ფულზე ათავსებს სიუჟეტს, რომელიც ქრონოლოგიურად წინ უსწრებს შემდგომში ფულის ემისიების ამგვარ ტიპს ახლო აღმოსავლეთში, რაც მუსლიმურ გარემოცვაში ქართული სახელმწიფოს პოლიტიკური წონის უტყუარ დასტურად შეიძლება ჩაითვალოს.

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