

A SELJUQ OVERSTRIKE OF KAIKA'US II AND A NEW KARDEZ TYPE FOR HETOUM I OF CILICIAN ARMENIA

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(Plate 6)

While many of the coins of the kings of Cilician Armenia can be attributed with certainty to the issuing ruler, some of the coins where the king's name is shared by more than one ruler are surrounded by ambiguity, since neither the specific ruler nor the year of issue is identified on Medieval Armenian coins. Such is the case of the coins displaying the names Levon (with six rulers sharing the name), Hetoum (with two rulers of that name), and Gosdantin (with three rulers having had that name). Through the last one-hundred-plus years, multiple studies have attempted to organize these coins, attributing them to the various individual rulers on the bases of hoard evidence, metrology, and silver content¹. However, a few of these attributions leave some concern as to ultimate correctness, awaiting further discoveries and study.

The fate of a particular copper coin, naming "King Hetoum", appears to fall in this category. The discovery of a new specimen, with a legible and clearly attributable Seljuq overstrike in Arabic, makes its earlier attribution impossible. While the undertype of this coin was previously known, it was attributed to Hetoum II (1289-93, 1295-96, and 1301-05 AD)². Even when a specimen had surfaced with an overstrike similar to the one on the subject coin, the incomplete nature of the overstrike had rendered its reading inconclusive, and resulted in an incorrect attribution³. Other specimens, posted on the website www.zeno.ru, similarly were not properly identified.⁴

A number of copper coins are known for Hetoum I of Cilician Armenia (1226-70 AD). These typically occur in two denominations, a large one called a "tank", and a smaller one known as a "kardez". The tanks are of a uniform basic type, displaying the king seated on a throne, surrounded by a circular legend. The reverse has a central cross, also surrounded by a circular legend. The kardezzes occur in two basic types: one "equestrian", with the king riding right, and the other with the king seated facing, either on a bench-throne with two legs showing at each side, or a throne with two lion arm-rests. All of these types have a legend surrounding

¹ P. Bedoukian, *Coinage of Cilician Armenia* (New York, 1962; revised edition, Danbury, CT, 1979), p. xxii-xxxie, 76-100.

² Ibid. p. xxic, 89-90, 321-4, No. 1620-1648.

³ Y. T. Nercessian, *Catalogue of Armenian Coins Collected by Y. T. Nercessian* (Los Angeles, 2008), p. 269, No. 1358; Y. T. Nercessian, "Cilician Armenian Coins Overstruck in Arabic", *Armenian Numismatic Journal*, Vol. XXVIII (2002), No. 1, p. 15, 18, No. 5; Y. T. Nercessian, *Armenian Coins and Their Values [ACV]* (Los Angeles, 1995), p. 145, No. 405.

⁴ www.zeno.ru, cf. coins no. 86103, 81664, 81410, and 27866. Note that coin no. 1 of this study is Zeno no. 61637.

the obverse design, and a cross on the reverse, also surrounded by a legend. On all of these, the reverse cross has various fieldmarks in the quadrants: dots, olives, drops, lines, or stars. In a few cases, the quadrants are empty⁵.

Hetoum II's copper coins are of two types, although both are of a similar denomination (kardezzes). The first displays the crowned king's bust facing, and the second, the king seated, either on a bench with two legs at each side, or cross-legged on the ground, sometimes between pillows. The reverse has either a patriarchal cross with a scroll base (for the first type), or a cross for the second type (pattée or potent), occasionally with field marks in the quadrants. Both the obverse and reverse have a circular legend, separated from the central design by a solid line⁶.

The subject specimen of this study is described as follows:

No. 1 AE Kardez, 4.17 g, 25x22 mm, 4:00 JC Coll. No. 1256

Obv: King seated on throne, crowned, holding long fleur-de-lis scepter in right hand over right shoulder, and cross in left hand(?). There appears to be a pillow at each side of him. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵ[ԹՈՒՄ ԹԱ]ԳԱԻՈՐ ՀԱ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HE[TOUM TA]KAVOR HA, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A small cross pattée in a solid circle, its arms touching the circle, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆ[ԵԼ Ի Զ]ԱԳԱԿ Ի Ս

(+ShIN[EL I K]AGhAK I S, or made in the city of Sis).

Reverse of overstrike (O of host)

الإمام
المستعصم بالله
أمير المؤمنين

The overstrikes are transliterated as:

Reverse of overstrike (O of host)

al-ima[m]
al-Musta`sim [billah]
[amir al-mu`minin]

Obverse of overstrike (R of host)

السلطان الأ
عظم عزّ الد
نيا والدين

Obverse of overstrike (R of host)

[al-sul]tan al-a
[`]dham `Izz al-du
[nya wal-din]

Note that, in this paper, the portions of the transliterated legends between square brackets represent those not visible on the coins, while underlines similarly represent the illegible parts in the original Arabic legends.

A second specimen in the author's collection, despite having a poorly preserved host coin and a less-well executed overstrike, appears to be of the same type, but with obverse and reverse legend variations. It is described as follows:

No. 2 AE Kardez, 2.78 g, 22 mm, 11:00 JC Coll. No. 622

Obv: Central device details obliterated, except for long fleur-de-lis scepter in king's right hand over right shoulder. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

⁵ Ibid. p. 85-6; Ibid. p. 276-89, No. 1295-1423.

⁶ See note 2.

+Հ[ԵԹՈՒՄ] ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ Հ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+H[ETOU]M] TAKAVOR H, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A small cross pattée in a solid circle, its arms touching the circle, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ԲԱԴԱՍԻՍ

(+ShINEL I KA[GhAK I SIS], or made in the city of Sis).

Obverse of overstrike (O of host)

السلطان الأ
عظم عزّ الد
نيا والدين

The overstrikes are transliterated as:

Obverse of overstrike (O of host)

[al-sulta]n al-a
[`dham] `Izz al-du
nya [wal-din]

Reverse of overstrike (R of host)

الإمام
المستعصم بالله
أمير المؤمنين

Reverse of overstrike (R of host)

al-im[am]
[al-Mus]ta`si[m billah]
amir al-m[u`minin]

Interestingly, the obverse of the overstrike on this coin is applied to the opposite side of the host coin, relative to coins No. 1 and 3.

A third specimen was previously published, although the poor execution of the overstrike apparently prevented it from being read and attributed correctly⁷. It is described as:

No. 3 AE Kardez, 2.77 g, 23 mm, O-R die relationship not reported YTN Coll. Inv. 0503

Obv: King seated on throne, crowned, holding long fleur-de-lis scepter in right hand over right shoulder, and cross in left hand. There appears to be a pillow at each side of him. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+Հ[ԵԹՈՒՄ] ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ Հ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HE[TOUM] TAKAVOR H, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: Central cross details obliterated, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆ[ԵԱ]Լ Ի ԲԱԴԱՍԻՍ

(+ShIN[EA]L I KAGhAK S, or made in the city of Sis).

Reverse of overstrike (O of host)

الإمام
المستعصم بالله
أمير المؤمنين

Obverse of overstrike (R of host)

السلطان الأ
عظم عزّ الد
نيا والدين

The overstrikes are transliterated as:

Reverse of overstrike (O of host)

[al-imam]
[al-Musta`sim billah]
[amir al-mu`minin]

Obverse of overstrike (R of host)

[al-s]ultan al-a
[`dham] `Izz al-du
[nya wal-din]

⁷ See note 3.

If the reverse legend of this host coin is read correctly as ՇԻՆԵԱԼ (ShiNEAL), it marks a change from the spelling found on the other three specimens reported in this article (ՇԻՆԵԼ, or ShINEL).

The style of lettering of the overstrikes, together with the combination of names and titles used, geographic proximity of Islamic rulers to the Cilician Armenian kingdom, and the approximate time period of 79 years marked from the start of the rule of Hetoum I to the end of the rule of Hetoum II, strictly limit the options for the overstriking authority. As will become apparent below, the name of `Izz al-Din provides the key, then, not only to the proper attribution of the overstriking authority, but also for the correct attribution of the host coin. Within the above-stated constraints, the `Izz al-Din in question would have to be either the Rum Seljuq rulers `Izz al-Din Kaika'us I (1210-19 AD/607-16 AH), or `Izz al-Din Kaika'us II (1245-61 AD/643-60 AH, with breaks). However, the second name on the overstrike is clearly that of the last Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, al-Musta`sim, who reigned from 1242-58 AD/640-656 AH. An interesting note in the numismatic literature confirms that the name of this caliph, al-Musta`sim, was commonly used on the copper coins of the Seljuqs of Rum⁸. Therefore, the years of rule of the caliph named on the Islamic overstrike assure us that the Kaika'us mentioned is Kaika'us II, since Kaika'us I had died before the enthronement of al-Musta`sim.

This irrefutable conclusion, however, brings about the obvious conflict with the host coins' previous attribution to Hetoum II, since Kaika'us II died before even the start of that monarch's enthronement. The host coin has to, therefore, definitively be attributed to Hetoum I.

In summary, the periods of known rule for the five rulers in question, the two Armenian kings by the name of Hetoum, the two Rum Seljuq sultans `Izz al-Din Kaika'us I and II, and the Abbasid caliph al-Musta`sim, provide the key to solving the attribution of this host coin, since they follow the arrangement below:

`Izz al-Din Kaika'us I (1210-19 AD)
Hetoum I (1226-70 AD)
al-Musta`sim (1242-58 AD)
`Izz al-Din Kaika'us II (1245-61 AD, with breaks)
Hetoum II (1289-93, 1295-96, 1301-05 AD)

This arrangement, and the presence of the name of al-Musta`sim, clearly prove that the only king named Hetoum whose coins could have been overstruck by a `Izz al-Din is Hetoum I, and additionally prove that the overstrike can only belong to `Izz al-Din Kaika'us II. The overstrike would essentially have intended to convert the coin into a fals of the issue catalogued as Album-1225⁹, and, given the years of overlapping rule of the two Islamic rulers mentioned, would have been applied during the period 1245-58 AD. A specimen of the coin type catalogued as Album-1225 is included in this study for comparison with the overstrikes:

No. 4 AE Fals, 2.27g, 21 mm

JC1276

⁸ S. Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins* (2nd Edition, Santa Rosa, CA, 1998), p. 30, No. A-278.

⁹ Album, p. 63.

Obv: Inside a square border made of closely-spaced dots, enclosed by a solid circle (with traces of date in diwani script below):

السلطان
الأعظم عزّ الد
نيا والدين

Rev: Inside a square border made of closely-spaced dots, enclosed by a solid circle:

الإمام
المستعصم بالله
أمير المؤمنين

This discovery allows us to rearrange some of the Armenian numismatic issues of this time. Additionally, it proves that the rulers of the Armenian Cilician kingdom reused even more of the designs of their predecessors than was previously known, potentially making the attribution of any single specimen even more ambiguous. While other factors such as metrology can help narrow the options, the fact that this particular coin's weight is at a boundary between the heavier (relatively, "earlier") and lighter (relatively, "later") issues, coupled with large deviations in weight for a single issue, make that factor inconclusive. Additionally, given that Hetoum II's only silver coins were of debased billon, it would follow that his coppers should be smaller, lighter, and, potentially, of poorer execution. If that is in fact the case, then perhaps all of the better-executed, larger and heavier coppers with the name of Hetoum need to be re-attributed to Hetoum I.

In this regard, it is important to note that most of the copper coins previously attributed to Hetoum II, of the king seated facing type, and of Levon III (all of which show the king seated facing, but with the exception of some artistic smaller coins, which may in fact need to be reattributed to Levon IV) lack the cross in the obverse legends. This is due to the fact that their small size and very rough, careless engraving apparently forced the engravers to make room, in the space normally reserved for the legend, for the king's head and crown. That said, some of the copper kardezzes that name Hetoum, of the same general design, do have a cross in their obverse legends. As the cross in the obverse legend is present in the obverse legends of all three specimens of the new variety of kardezzes being attributed to Hetoum I, perhaps this subtle design difference can help differentiate between the new kardezzes of Hetoum I and those of Hetoum II. Along with this criterion, it should be noted that the new Hetoum I kardezzes also appear to be struck on larger flans, although not necessarily of a heavier weight. Finally, these kardezzes also exhibit an unusual style of engraving of the Armenian letter Հ (H) in the obverse legend, resembling an open numeral 4, composed of three lines where the top one is barely inclined, almost vertical, followed by a horizontal one, and finally a vertical third arm, all three segments being connected end to end.

These three characteristics (cross in obverse legend, large flan, and Հ style) are also evident in two other coins in the author's collection. These coins, which appear to be of the same type as the host of the subject coins of this study, are in fact obverse die matches with coin No. 1, and, therefore, should be catalogued as non-overstruck kardezzes of the new type assigned to Hetoum I. These coins are described as:

No. 5 AE Kardez, 2.67 g, 22 mm, 2:00 JC Coll. No. 921

Obv: King seated on throne with a pillow surmounting two legs at each side(?), crowned, holding long fleur-de-lis scepter in right hand over right shoulder, and cross in left hand. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HETOUM TAKAVOR HA, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A cross pattée in a solid circle, 6:00 arm touching the circle, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ՔԱՂԱՔ ՍԻ

(+ShINEL I KAGhAK I SI, or made in the city of Sis).

No. 6 AE Kardez, 3.27 g, 26x23 mm, 3:00 JC Coll. No. 1333

Obv: King seated on throne with a pillow surmounting two legs at each side(?), crowned, holding long fleur-de-lis scepter in right hand over right shoulder, and cross in left hand. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HETOUM TAKAVOR HA, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A cross pattée in a solid circle, 6:00 arm touching the circle, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ՔԱՂԱՔ ՍԻ

(+ShINEL I KAGhAK I SII, or made in the city of Sis).

Three additional coins in the author's collection share these three characteristics with the subject coins of this study, although die matches cannot be established between them and either of the overstruck specimens. They are therefore given here, with some reservation, as being attributed to Hetoum I pursuant to the conclusions of this study.

No. 7 AE Kardez, 3.55 g, 24x20 mm, 4:00 JC Coll. No. 1392

Obv: King seated on throne with a pillow surmounting two legs at each side, crowned, holding long scepter in right hand over right shoulder, jutting out of the inner circle, and globe in left hand. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ Հ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HETOUM TAKAVOR H, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A cross pattée in a solid circle, a pellet in each quadrant, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ՔԱՂԱՔ [Ի ՍԻՍ?]

(+ShINEL I KAGhAK [I SIS?], or made in the city of Sis).

No. 8 AE Kardez, 4.84 g, 29 mm, 1:00 JC Coll. No. 1455

Obv: King seated on throne with a pillow surmounting one leg at each side, crowned, holding long scepter in right hand over right shoulder, jutting out of the inner circle, and cross in left hand. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ Հ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HETOUM TAKAVOR H, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A Latin cross in a solid circle, arms touching the circle, a pellet in each quadrant, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ՔԱՂԱՔ Ի Ս

(+ShINEL I KAGhAK I S, or made in the city of Sis).

No. 9 AE Kardez, 3.47 g, 23x21 mm, 10:00

JC Coll. No. 1421

Obv: King seated on throne with a pillow surmounting two legs at each side, crowned, holding long fleur-de-lis scepter in right hand over right shoulder (possibly jutting out of the inner circle), and cross in left hand. The legend, between two solid lines, surrounds the king's image:

+ՀԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱՒՈՐ ՀԱ (with ligatured ՈՐ)

(+HETOUM TAKAVOR HA, or Hetoum King of the Armenians).

Rev: A cross pattée in a solid circle, 6:00 and 9:00 arms touching the circle, surrounded by the legend:

+ՇԻՆԵԼ Ի ՔԱՂԱՔ [Ի Ս?]

(+ShINEL I KAGhAK [I S?], or made in the city of Sis).

The reattribution of these coins from Hetoum II to Hetoum I may yield interesting conclusions as to the economic and political factors affecting the Cilician Armenian kingdom at the time during which they were struck. Thus, the conditions during the reign of Hetoum II would have to be viewed as even harsher and more tumultuous than believed previously, if the coins which would have figured among the finest and most artistic of his reign are, as a result of this discovery, re-assigned to an earlier king. Additionally, it might perhaps appear odd that Hetoum I should have used yet another type of copper coin, considering his reign was marked by such a large number of known types already. But, considering he ruled for 44 years, longer than any of the other monarchs of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, that certainly should not be considered excessive.

However, this discovery also prompts us to take another look at the relationship between Hetoum I and the Seljuqs of Rum. This relationship has variously been described as one of vassalage of the Armenian kingdom to the Seljuqs of Rum, or as an alliance between them, although it is perhaps best summarized as a “nominal suzerainty”¹⁰, based on the historical and numismatic evidence. While this newly discovered coin, with its Seljuq overstrike, may not by itself resolve the controversy, it proves that localized trade existed between the two kingdoms, since copper coins in a two-metal currency system were usually used for that purpose. The kardezzes, having entered the Seljuq economy, were probably validated for use in the areas under the sultan's control by the application of the overstrike.

¹⁰ P. Bedoukian, “The Bilingual Coins of Hetoum I (1226-1270), King of Cilician Armenia”, *Selected Numismatic Studies* (Los Angeles, 1981), p. 230; also in ANS Museum Notes VII, 1957, p. 230.



A Seljuq Overstrike of Kaika'us II and a New Kardez Type for Hetoum I of Cilician Armenia