

The Numismatic Chronicle 175 Offprint

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Two Unique Coins of Gagik, King of Kakhet'i
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LONDON
THE ROYAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY
2015

A Contribution to Kiurikid Numismatics: Two Unique Coins of Gagik, King of Kakhet'i and of David II of Loři (Eleventh Century)

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THE ELEVENTH century was a crucial point in the history of the Caucasian states as the catastrophic Byzantine defeat near Manzikert (1071) facilitated Turkish penetration into Asia Minor.¹ A few decades before, the aggressive policy of the Byzantine empire that culminated in the Eastern campaign undertaken by Basil II (976–1025) in 1001, had threatened the existence of the Georgian and Armenian states which had emerged from the fragmentation of the Armenian Bagratid Kingdom by the mid-960s. A Byzantine advance on one side, and the permanent menace of war with their Muslim neighbours on the other, promoted temporary alliances between the neighbouring Bagratid principalities. As a result numerous marriages among the members of the Christian ruling families were concluded. It is therefore not surprising that some kings of Kakhet'i-Heret'i, Tao-Klarjet'i and Tašir-Dzoraget had children bearing both Georgian and Armenian names. A similar phenomenon can also be observed in the genealogy of the Shaddādid rulers of Ganja, Dvin and Ani as many Shaddādid rulers were connected by blood ties with both Armenian and Georgian royal families.²

A new coin of Gagik 1037/9–1058

The Kakhet'i-Heret'i kingdom included the eastern parts of the modern Republic of Georgia and the north-eastern provinces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main city of the kingdom may have been T'elavi, though no definite information on this matter is available in the sources. The state prospered in the reign of Kwirike III the Great (1010–c.1037/9) whose prudent diplomacy enabled him to extend the borders of the kingdom. Sometime in the 1030s Kwirike III died leaving no male successor. Before his death Kwirike III had chosen as his heir his nephew Gagik (c.1037/9–1058), who was a son of David the Landless of the Kiurikid family of Tašir-Dzoraget and Kwirike III's sister Zorakerc'el.³ There is some fragmentary evidence in the Georgian and Armenian records to show that Gagik waged wars against the Ja'farid

¹ All dates are AD unless otherwise specified.

² To date there is no comprehensive study of the subject in a western language. The following can be consulted: R.G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington, 1994), p. 352; A. Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia* (London, 2015), pp. 393, 425; C. Toumanoff, 'The Bagratids of Iberia from the eighth to the eleventh century', *Le Muséon* 74 (1961), pp. 5–42; L. Movsesian, 'Les rois Kurikian de Lori', *Revue des Études Arméniennes* VII/2 (1927), pp. 211–65; V. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, 1958).

³ C. Toumanoff, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic chrétienne (Arménie, Géorgie, Albanie)* (Rome, 1976), pp. 109, 112.

ruler of Tiflīs, Jaʿfar III ibn ʿAlī (1032–46), the Georgian king Bagrat IV (1027–72) and contemporary Shaddādīd rulers. To prevent Shaddādīd advancement, Gagik made an alliance with Bagrat IV which, however, did not bring much success.⁴ The Kingdom of Kakhetʿi and Heretʿi survived into the twelfth century when it was gradually absorbed by the kingdom of Georgia.

The first known coin of the Kakhetʿian kings came to light in 2013 when a billon dirham of Kwirike III was found in the Syunikʿ region of Armenia.⁵ On this coin the name of the king was inscribed as ʿAbū al-Faḍl Quriqī ibn Dāʿūd, while the reverse depicted the image of St George defeating the emperor Diocletian. A year later, two other specimens of this type but with additional Georgian letters surrounding the head of St George, were discovered at the ancient settlement of Çuxur Qabala in the northern Azerbaijan.⁶ Finally, another type of Kwirike III coin, but this time lacking the image of St George, was recorded in a mixed hoard of Shirwānshāh and Shaddādīd coins found in Azerbaijan in 2013.⁷ Thus at least four coins of Kwirike III of three types can be attested so far, but no coins of his successor Gagik, have been known until now. Recently the authors of the present paper had the chance to examine a rare billon dirham, with the name of Gagik, found in north-western Azerbaijan. This brief note aims to discuss this unpublished coin.



Billon dirham. Mint/date illegible. Gagik, the son of David, the Kwirikid.
2.60 g, 18 mm (1.5x).

Obv. [الملك العادل] \ [ابو] الفضل جاجيق \ [بن] داود قرقي ملك \ ...

– *the King the Just / Abū al-Faḍl Jājīq / ibn Dāʿūd Quriqī King / ...*

Outer marginal legend: illegible.

Rev. Two standing figures. The left figure with a royal crown, while the right one with a nimbus.

The word ʿQuriqīʿ (قرقي) appearing after Dāʿūdʿs name on this coin should be regarded here as the *nisba* which served to justify Gagikʿs claim to the Kakhetʿian throne. He undoubtedly, aspired to highlight his connection with the Kwirikid clan and so the use of that *nisba* on his coins bore an important propaganda message. It seems that

⁴ Matiane Kartlisa, trans. M. Lordkipanidze (Tbilisi, 1976), p. 48; *Letopisʿ Kartli*, trans. G. Tsulaya (Tbilisi, 1982), p. 67.

⁵ A. Akopyan and A. Vardanyan, ‘Monety Kvirike III, tsarya Kakheti i Ėreti’, in: *Semnadtsataya vserossiyskaya numizmaticheskaya konferentsiya*, Moscow – Puschino, 22–26 April 2013 (Moscow, 2013), pp. 43–4; A. Vardanyan, ‘Christian-Islamic symbiosis emerged in money: coins as a tool for political and economic propaganda’, *Shedet*, vol. 2 (2015), pp. 23–39.

⁶ Still unpublished.

⁷ A. Vardanyan, A. Zlobin, ‘A mixed hoard of eleventh century coins found in Azerbaijan (A contribution to the study of Shaddādīd and Shirwānshāh coins)’, *NC* 174 (2014), pp. 352–61.

Gagik's efforts were not in vain and the local nobility accepted him as the rightful king since the Catholicos, Melchizedec I of Georgia (1010–30), refers to Gagik as 'king Kwirike' in a letter.⁸ It was vital to legitimize his kingship because of the strong opposition of Ašot Marileli, the husband of another of Kwirike III's sisters,⁹ to Gagik's regal ambitions. Gagik also emphasized his descent from Kwirike III, by using the same calligraphic style on his coins as his predecessor. Finally Gagik was cited on his coin as *al-malik al-'ādil / Abū al-Faḍl*, the same protocol as that used by Kwirike III on his coins.¹⁰

On the present coin the name of Gagik is written as جاجيق. The use of this form for writing the Armenian version of Gagik is also confirmed by both contemporary and later historical accounts.¹¹ At the same time, the rather crude style of the inscriptions could be the result of the local die engravers' unfamiliarity with the Arabic spelling of the Armenian name Gagik and the word *Quriqī*. Another reason for such an unusual style of inscription (for instance, two different *dāls* in the word *Dā'ūd*) could be a lack of space on the die.

From the iconographical point of view, the scene on the reverse is closely connected with contemporary Byzantine imagery. The nearest prototype could be the image introduced on the reverse of the gold histamenon nomisma of Romanos III Argyros (1028–34). This depicted the standing figures of Romanos, wearing a loros and holding a globus cruciger in his left hand, crowned by the Virgin Mary.¹² It is worth noting, that this image reflects Caucasian influences. The style of the crown on the head of the figure on the left strongly resembles the crowns of Georgian kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example the image of Bagrat IV in the church of Ateni Sioni.¹³

The poor condition of our coin does not enable us to read the mint and date. Coins of Gagik's predecessor Kwirike III normally have the *laqab* of the caliph al-Qā'im bi-amr Allāh (422–67 H / 1031–75 AD) in the marginal inscription on the obverse. Unfortunately, the marginal legend is illegible on our coin. Some calligraphic peculiarities of the inscriptions are worth noting, especially, the way the letters *alif*, *lām* and *ṭā* are written on the coins of both rulers. These similarities are so strong it is possible that both are the work of the same die engraver. At the same time, the absence of a Seljuq overlord on the coin may help refine the dating. Although the first Seljuq campaign in Georgia took place as early as 1048, their invasion of Heret'i is only recorded for 1068.¹⁴ We would suggest therefore that the coin was struck either before the Seljuq invasion or during the first decades after it, when Seljuq power in the region was not yet established following the battle of Manzikert in 1071.

⁸ *Gruzinskie dokumenty IX–XV vv. v sobranii Leningradskogo otdeleniya Instituta vostokovedeniya AN SSSR*, trans. S. Kakabadze (Moscow, 1982), pp. 16–31.

⁹ *Matiane Kartlisa*, p. 48.

¹⁰ Akopyan and Vardanyan, 'Monety Kvirike III', p. 43.

¹¹ Ibn Miskawayh, *The Experiences of the Nations* (Tajārib al-umam), vol. II, trans. D. Margoliouth (London, 1921), pp. 33, 150; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. VII, (ed.) M. Yu. al-Riqāfi (Beirut, 1987), p. 165; J. Markwart, *Südarmenien und die Tigrisquellen* (Vienna, 1930), p. 452.

¹² P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), pl. 51, no. 907; *DOC* vol. 3, part 2, p. 715, no. 1.

¹³ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bagrat_IV_%28Ateni_fresco%29.jpg

¹⁴ *Matiane Kartlisa*, p. 89, n. 259.

A new coin of David II c.1089–c.1145

The Kingdom of Tašir-Dzoraget was founded by Gurgen I (c.980–9), the youngest son of Ašot III (953–77), the Bagratid king of Armenia. The capital of the kingdom was Lori, a well-fortified fortress built on the mountain plateau surrounded by canyons. Tašir-Dzoraget prospered during the reign of Gurgen's son David the Landless (989–1048) who was moderately successful in his struggles with both Georgian and Shaddādid rulers. Under David's successor Kiurike II (1048–89), the brother of the aforementioned Gagik of Kakhet'i, the kingdom fell under Seljuq influence. The history of Tašir-Dzoraget in the twelfth century is rather obscure. We know that the sons of Kiurike II, David II and Abas (both c.1089–c.1145) could not defend their lands against either their neighbours or the Seljuqs who, after the death of Malik Shāh (465–85H/1072–92), changed their attitude toward the Kiurikid kings. In the early twelfth century they absorbed the lands of David II leaving him only control of the fortress of Macnaberd.¹⁵ It is likely that some members of the Kiurikid line managed to retain control over some fortresses and settlements in the region even after the kingdom was abolished.

The history of the Kiurikid dynasty at Lori was discussed by scholars many decades ago,¹⁶ but the coinage of the family still belongs to the dark pages of eleventh century Caucasian numismatics. We now know of a number of copper coins with Armenian inscriptions on one side and the bust of Christ on the other, though one must admit that both their attribution to Kiurike II (1048–89) and their dating has still to be confirmed.¹⁷ Until now no numismatic evidence for David the Landless or David II, the son of Kiurike II existed. This paper was still in preparation when an enigmatic silver coin naming certain Dā'ūd Qurqī was discovered in Azerbaijan.



Billon dirham. Dā'ūd Qu[rīqī], Mint/date off flan? 1.00 g, 16 mm (1.5x).

Obv. ؟... و \ ... ؟ [ش]ا[ه] \ ملك [ش]ا[ه] ؟ [ق]ي \ داود قر [ق]ي \ ... – ... / Dā'ūd Qurīqī / Malik Shāh ? ... / ...

Outer marginal legend: illegible.

Rev. Decorative lattice and pellet design.

¹⁵ Kirakos Gandzakec'i, *Patmut' iwn hayoc* (History of Armenia), ed. O. Melik-Ohanjanyan (Yerevan, 1961), pp. 151–2.

¹⁶ Movsesian, 'Les rois Kurikian de Lori' (see n. 2).

¹⁷ On this coinage see: Ye. Pakhomov, 'O monetakh Koriké kuropalata', *Izvestiya Kavkazskogo istoriko-arkheologicheskogo instituta* 3 (1925), pp. 37–45; P. Bedoukian, 'A rare Armenian coin', *ANSMN* 5 (1952), pp. 181–4; D. Lang, 'Supplementary notes on Kiurike II, king of Lori in Armenia and his coins', *ANSMN* 6 (1954), pp. 183–91; M.-L. Garabedian, 'Coins of the king Kiurike', *Armenian Numismatic Journal* 1(31)/4 (2005), pp. 81–99. On dating see: V. Stepanenko, 'Iz istorii armyano-vizantiyskikh otnosheniy vtoroy polovini X–XI v. (k atributsii monet Kyurike kuropalata)', *Antichnaya drevnost' i srednie veka* 15 (1978), pp. 43–51.

On the face of it the state of the coin does not permit us to determine which David (David the Landless or David II, the son of Kiurike II) this coin should be ascribed to. If, however, this coin does indeed bear the name of the Great Seljuq sultan, Malik Shāh I, on the third line, then it is more likely to be David II (1089–1113?) as the literary sources confirm that in 1088 Kiurike II visited Malik Shāh in Khurāsān to express his loyalty to the Seljuqs.¹⁸

Apparently, after David II became king in Tašir-Dzoraget in 1089 he continued the policy of his father and accepted the Great Seljuqs as suzerains. Malik Shāh's name engraved on contemporary Kiurikid coins appears to confirm this. Chronologically, this coin could have been struck between 1089 and 1092, possibly at Loŕi which was the main city of the kingdom of Tašir-Dzoraget in the 1080s.¹⁹ The provenance of this coin may indicate the existence of a mint in Macnaberd (nowdays in the Daşkasan district of modern Azerbaijan). The fortress of Macnaberd was the centre of Gardman-P'ārisos, the eastern part of the Tašir-Dzoraget kingdom. As described above David II had moved to Macnaberd by 1111. It is, however, possible that this transfer occurred immediately after the death of Kiurike II, when David II ruled jointly with his brother Abas. We know from primary sources that Abas ruled in Tavuš, while David II possessed Gardman. Macnaberd was situated some 30 kilometres from Ganja, and this could explain the very close similarity of our coin's reverse design with the contemporary Shaddādīd coins. Such similarities have potential for the study of these eastern Caucasian coinages. While the Bagratids of Georgia and Tašir-Dzoraget belonged to the Byzantine sphere of influence as is shown by their use of Byzantine prototypes and titulature, the Kiurikids, who were in opposition to the Georgian Bagratids were more influenced by their neighbours, the Islamic states of the Ja'farids and Shaddādīds. This is reflected in their use of mixed Christian and Islamic formulae on their coins, the first time this occurred in the region.

¹⁸ Samuel Anec'i, *Hawak'munk' i groc' patmagrac'* (History of Armenia), ed. A. Ter-Mik'aelyan (Valaršapat, 1893), p. 118.

¹⁹ Matt'eos Uŕhaec'i, *Žamanakagrut' iwn* (Chronicle), ed. H. Bart'ikyan (Yerevan, 1991), pp. 248–9.

