

КУЛЬТУРА И ПИСЬМЕННОСТЬ

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REVISITING THE QUESTION OF THE TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING
OF THE CAUCASIAN ALBANIAN PALIMPSEST
ACCORDING TO NUMISMATIC DATA (PART II)

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Abstract: *The second part of the article continues the study of question of the the time and place of the creation of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsest (Gospel of John) on the basis of a refined interpretation of the monetary term **zaizowzña (which was done in the first part of the article). Based on the conclusions of the first part that word **zaizowzña used as generalized name for Sasanian-type silver coins, the second part of the article studies distribution of these coins in the South Caucasus. Hoards with such coins were analyzed and the geographically compact area with their highest concentration, where the coins designated by the term **zaizowzña have been in circulation for the longest time is determined. The identified region coincides with the Kingdom of Heret'i (late 8th – early 11th centuries), located in the upper part of the Alazani valley. On the basis of numismatic mapping of hoards with **zaizowzña and their single finds, the borders of the Kingdom of Heret'i (different from the limits of ancient Lpinia-Heret'i in the broad sense) were clarified, and its subregions were determined. Based on the analysis of the meaning of the Gospel termin **zaizowzña, the analysis of the area and time of circulation of these coins, it is concluded that the Albanian palimpsest could have been created in the Kingdom of Heret'i, where **zaizowzña remained in circulation until the end of the 9th century, and until the first half of the 11th century the Armenian Christianity prevailed (which was followed by the Caucasian Albanians, who used the liturgic Caucasian Albanian language).*

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Gospel, Hereti, imitations, Islamic numismatics, Sasanian numismatics, zuza.

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*In memoriam Jim Farr (1948–2018),
first reader of this article*

As it was shown in the first part of the work [Akopyan, 2021], based on the analysis of the time of existence of the Albanian coin term **zaizowz-ña, which denoted a set of various imitations of the coins of Hormizd IV and pre-reform Arab-Sassanian coins, the time when Sinai edition of the Albanian Gospel was completed, is necessary to limit from the beginning of the 6th century and until the beginning of the 10th century (herein the publishers attribute the writing of the manuscript from the end of the 7th century to the 10th century, leaning towards a later date)

[CAPS 1, p. I–32]. In the development of this analysis, in the second part of the work, an attempt is made to identify the area of writing the Albanian palimpsest.

II. ON THE PLACE OF WRITING OF THE ALBANIAN PALIMPSEST: PECULARITIES OF THE MONETARY CIRCULATION IN THE KINGDOM OF HERET'I (LATE 8TH – EARLY 11TH CENTURIES)

The place where the Albanian palimpsest was written is never discussed by its publishers – by default it's assumed to be in the Caucasian Albania, and a special part of the publication is devoted to this geographical and political concept [CAPS 1, p. vii–xix]. However, taking into account the publishers' opinion already quoted above that the manuscript was written in the period “between the late 7th century and the 10th century, with a later date being a bit more probable than an earlier one” [CAPS 1, p. I–32], such general geographical definitions can only be used for delineating the historical territory of the Caucasian Albania (and even more broadly – *the historical territory of the Albanian world*), since at the specified time its territory was occupied by several states with various levels of independence and with different state religions – Orthodox or Armenian Christianity and Islam. Is it possible to determine more accurately the political formation in which the liturgical Albanian (for purposes of the Albanian Church of Armenian Christianity) could be used in the indicated time period up to the end of the 10th century on the basis of a refined reading and etymology of a hapax? In this regard, it seems appropriate to point to one observation which may shed light on the location where the Albanian manuscripts were written.

The Sasanian *zuzas* started to circulate intensively in Armenia and Caucasian Albania in the 3rd–4th centuries [Mousheghian, 1997, p. 78–79] and somewhat later in K'art'li. The observed vector of their penetration is logical – from Araxes to the north, so in the Caucasian Albania the Sasanian drachmas started to prevail by the mid-5th century [Pakhomov, 1959b, p. 9], and in Eastern Georgia from the second half of the 5th century [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 27–28]. A significant number of hoards and individual finds of the Sasanian coins evenly cover the entire region, so that the numismatic data in East Transcaucasia cannot be a basis for defining a particular area of the Sasanian drachma-zuz circulation. As already mentioned, the beginning of Islamic coinage in Transcaucasia did not change the monetary supply overnight – for quite some time, up to the 10th century, mixed hoards consisting of Sasanian drachmas and Arab dirhams (including Sasanian-type Arab-Sasanian coins and drachmas of Ṭabaristān) have been discovered in the Transcaucasia.

However, it is indicative that half (thirteen out of twenty-seven or twenty-five) of the known mixed Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards were found on a small area in the upper course of the Alazani River (Arm. *Lop'nas* [Hewsen, 2001, p. 45], *Lowbnas* [Movsēs Kalankatvac'i, 1984, p. 69]) up to the confluence of the Muxax River (mod. Qaraçay), above the beginning of the proper Alazani (Arm. *Ałowan*) [Hewsen, 2001, p. 45] (the topography of hoards from the upper Alazani is outlined in *fig. 9*; their catalogue is given in the Table 1, where coins are divided into the following types: *zūzās* – Sasanian coins and a Sasanian-type Islamic coins and *dirhams* – purely epigraphic Islamic coins; a methodologically important grouping of Arab-Sasanian coins together with Sasanians, and not with epigraphic Islamic dirhams continues the tradition established by I.L. Dzhalaganian [Dzhalaganian, 1979]). In its turn, the topography of the other fourteen (or twelve?) hoards reveals a high dispersion and is not reducible to any historical and cultural area¹.

¹ Other 14 (or 12) Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards from the rest territory of Transcaucasia: Askeran (1934 and 1935; maybe these are two parts of one hoard), Barda (1940), Dilip'i (1949), Garni (1930), Gedabey (1964), Karchag (1903), Manglisi (2017), Martuni (1962) and Nerk'in Getašen (1961) (maybe these are two parts of one hoard), Pařavak'ar (1970), Qazax (1961), Syunik' (1986), Yardimli (1967).

The outlined territory in the upper Alazani was occupied by the northern part of the historical region of Lpinia (Geo. *Heret'i*, Arm. *Lp'ink'*, *ašxarh Lp'noc'*, Arab. *Lībān*), more precisely – Lpinia in the narrow sense [Gadzhiev, 1998]. Lpinia occupied the area between the Gates of Dido and the Gates of the Šak'i, mentioned by Ibn al-Faqīh as *abwāb al-Dūdāniya* and *abwāb al-Šakkī* [Ibn al-Faqīh, 1902, p. 15], the latter, apparently, were in the area of the Zaqatala Wall [Pakhomov, 1950], also known as *sadd al-L.b.n.* Lpinia in the west (which was not a part of the First Albanian kingdom, nor part of the Albanian marzpānate) and the region of Čor/Derbent in the east were two very special regions on the western and eastern “ends” of Caucasian Albania. Both of them occupied strategically important “regions of border walls”, keeping Transcaucasia from the mountaneers of Caucasus. Their geographical position indicates that they were the *outer parts* not of proper Albania, but rather of the *polyethnic Albanian world* of the 5th–7th centuries (or Albania in the broadest sense by M.S. Gadzhiev [Gadzhiev, 2015, p. 39]), which was *opposite* to the ethnically Armenian or Georgian regions of Transcaucasia. A simple comparison of the titles of the Transcaucasian Catholicos of the 6th century serves as a clear illustration of this – the detailed and triple title *Catholicos of Aluank', Lpink' and Čor* [Movsēs Kałankatvac'i, 1984, p. 91, 121, 171] contrasted with the short titles like *Catholicos of Greater Armenia* or *Catholicos of K'art'li*.

The singularity of the Lpinia territory from the numismatic point of view was also discussed earlier [Dzhalaganian, 1979, p. 13], however, without clarifying the political status of the region, whereas when restoring political boundaries of the states it is absolutely important to allocate areas with the same type of monetary management and, consequently, a single fiscal practice.

Ten out of twelve Sasanian-Islamic mixed coin hoards of Lpinia were found in the northern part of the left-bank of the Alazani Valley (which is proper Lpinia or the *Duchy² of Štori*), two hoards from its southern part (the region of Geo. *Eliseni* or *Duchy of Mač'eli*, Arm. *Elni* or *Xeni*), hoard No. 5 found on the right bank village Kondoli (*Duchy of Vejini*). With the exception of hoard No. 13, all these finds contain only whole coins. Hoards Nos. 1, 4 and 11 are concentrated in the northernmost area of the region, which is reasonable to attribute to the area of the alleged localization of the Dido Gates and, possibly, the fortress of Naxčevani [Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 126–127]³. In terms of numismatics, there is also a very remarkable area between the Šorosxevi and Areši rivers in which five hoards were found. In this region, the concentration of the mixed Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards is exceptional: two of the same-type hoards were found during the last two centuries in the village of Mt'isjiri (Nos. 2 and 6) and three within 7 km from it, in the microregion of adjacent villages of Leliani and Ap'eni (Nos. 8, 9 and 12); it is quite possible to connect the place of these findings with the fortresses of Kart'ubanis-c'ixe or Gorisc'klis-c'ixe [Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 121]. The places where the “accidental” monetary finds were concentrated clearly signal the need to search for their archaeological context [Sedykh, 2008, p. 13–16].

Hoard No. 13, which is the latest concealed in *terminus post quem* (*tpq*) comes from Aliabad (located in Eliseni) and reflects the terminal stage of circulation of the Sasanian coins which contained in it only in the form of secondary morphogenesis – small fragments of coins and ingots. Its composition reflects the organization of a completely new way of monetary tradition and the beginning of circulation of silver by weight in the form of broken coins and ingots, which sharply differs from the earlier Sasanian-Islamic coin haords of Lpinia.

² These Duchies reflects administrative division of 11th century and based on fortress' names but not on historical region names. Their list was described only in 18th century by Vaxušti Bagrationi [Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 126–127].

³ *Contra* mapping of R. Hewsen Λοῦβιον Κώμη, “the village of Lubins,” was *not* located here [Hewsen, 2001, p. 67] but lying on the Iberian-Albanian border according to Ptolemy. It is reasonable to associate this Λοῦβιον Κώμη with the “city of Heret'i” (an early medieval Geo. *Xorant'a*) at the confluence of Alazani and Iori [Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 125; Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 103; *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 2013, c. 14].

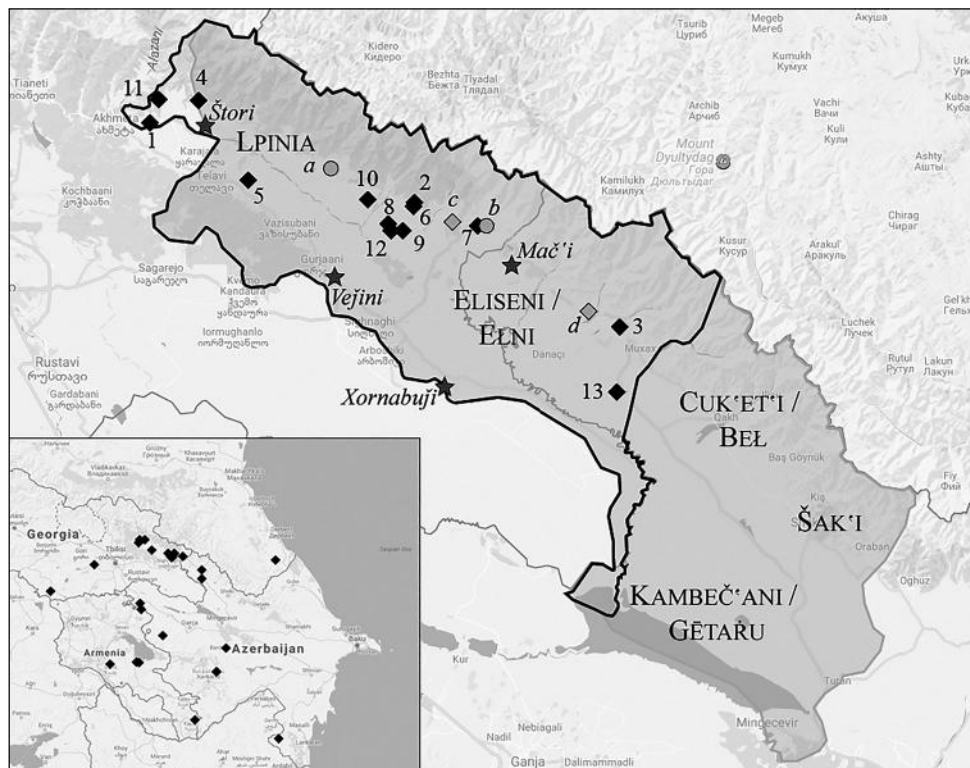


Fig. 9. Topography of the finds of mixed Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards within the boundaries of the Heret'i Kingdom (late 8th – early 10th century) and in Transcaucasia (on the inset). The highlighted areas are the corrected boundaries of the Heret'i Kingdom in the late 8th – early 10th century (—) and the territory of Lpinia-Heret'i in a broader sense (■)⁴. Marked the places of finding of the Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards (◆, 1–13), single finds of Sasanian coins (●, a–b) and hoards that haven't been completely described, but contained Sasanian coins (◆, c–d), as well as centers of four Duchies of Heret'i of the beginning of the 11th century (★).

The time of production of the coins contained in the hoards (except for the very late hoard No. 13) covers the period from the beginning of the 7th to the end of the 9th century, whereas the *tpq* of these hoards (from 766 to the end of the 9th century) span a period of over one and half centuries. A small number of solely Sasanian coin finds in this area – one coin from Qvareli [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 43, no. 36] (on fig. 9 – a) and from Šroma [Dzhalagania, 1979, p. 29–30] (b) and not completely described hoards from Baisubani⁵ (c) and Katex [Pakhomov, 1938, p. 20, no. 379]⁶ (d), which could be Sasanian-Islamic, forces us to refrain from the opinion of I.L. Dzhalagania [Dzhalagania, 1979, p. 30], about the early time of the penetration of the Sasanian drachmas into this region. So far, the numismatic data strongly support the appearance of silver coins in this region only along with the flow of Islamic dirhams, and the beginning of

⁴ The boundaries of Lpinia-Heret'i in the wide sense given according to M.S. Gadzhiev [Gadzhiev, 1998, p. 16].

⁵ Only 3 coins from the hoard are described: two of them are identified as from one hoard [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 66, no. 10], and one more separately from them, but marked as found at the same year and place [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 41, no. 30].

⁶ We only have the information that several coins from this hoard were identified as Sasanian.

this process should be dated no earlier than from the *tpq* of the earliest hoard (hoard No. 1, *tpq* 766), which pushes the beginning of circulation of silver coins in the region to the last quarter of the 8th century.

According to the late and only Georgian chronicles, from precisely this time (from 787, by Vaxušti Bagrationi) [Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 127] and up until the beginning of the 11th century, the territory of the northern part of Lpinia-Heret'i (Lpinia-Heret'i in the narrow sense) was occupied by the independent Kingdom of Heret'i, separated by the actions of the nephews of the Adarnase I the Blind of Tao/Tayk' (r. 742–780) [Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 128]. Heret'i existed as a kingdom until the beginning of the 10th century, when king Kvirike I of Kaxet'i (r. 893–918) amassed enough power to force the Heret'i ruler Adarnase to restrict his title only to a *patricius* [Essays on the History of Georgia, 1988, p. 272]. However, the later rulers of Heret'i, such as Išxanik († beg. of the 10th c.), again called kings. As for the religious life of the Heret'i Kingdom, it practiced Armenian Christianity from the 7th century (both before Išxanik and after, since having rejected it, the latter returned back to the Armenian faith) [*K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 2013, p. 144; Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 128] with Albanian as its liturgical language.

Numismatic mapping, based on a positive interpretation of the *archaeological void* as an indicator of complete absence of a particular phenomenon, but not as meaningless silence, indicates a unique and uniform economic zone of joint existence of Sasanian and Islamic coins at the late 8th – late 9th century developed on the discussed territory which supports the following conclusions:

a) The Heret'i Kingdom had its own way of monetary circulation that sharply differed from that in the adjacent regions – Kaxet'i, K'art'li-Iberia and proper Albania.

b) Based on the numismatic data, the northwestern boundary of the Heret'i Kingdom should be moved away from the river Štori (*contra* [Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 127]) to the Štori and Alazani watershed, *i.e.* the eastern border of the Pankisi Gorge. This is indicated by the finds of hoards in Zemo Alvani (No. 1) and P'ič'xovani (No. 10) above the river Štori.

c) The southeastern border of the Heret'i Kingdom, according to the topography of the mixed Sasanian-Islamic coin hoards, must be limited to the gorge of the Muxax River, excluding further southern regions Beł (Geo. Cuk'et'i) and Šak'i. In addition to the hoard data, this assumption is also confirmed by the list of Duchies of the Heret'i Kingdom that were enumerated in *Matiane k'art'liša* [*K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 2013, p. 155]⁷ and repeated by Vaxušti Bagrationi [Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 129] including only the areas of Štori, Xornabuji, Vežini and Mač'eli. This list does not mention any point south of the Eliseni region, and areas like the important Šak'i and the extensive Xunzaxi (Sarir on the northern side of Caucasus range) are depicted as if they are managed from the small near-border fortress of Mač'eli, which of course is only *animus possidendi*.

Therefore, based on the description of Vaxušti Bagrationi, it is necessary to strictly delineate the territories:

i) the Kingdom of Heret'i until the beginning of the 11th century – the upper Alazani Valley (perhaps, only its left-bank), meaning Lpinia or Heret'i in the narrow sense,

ii) Heret'i in a broad sense – the eastern region of the Kaxet'i Kingdom,

iii) The territory south of them, which was later occupied by the Second Albanian Kingdom (the areas of Eliseni and Šak'i) with its center at Šak'i.

Since the Second Albanian Kingdom (Arm. *t'agaworut'wn Alwanoc'*, the Kingdom of Albania, Arab. *al-mamlakat Šakkī*, the Kingdom of Shakki, ruled by *al-šāhib Šakkī*, the Lord of

⁷ D.L. Muskhelishvili's comment list in *Matiane k'art'liša* is surprising: "the Kingdom of Heret'i included the well-known territory of the cantons Šak'i, Kambeč'ani and the proper Heret'i" [Muskhelishvili, 1982, p. 36] – but there is no information either about Šak'i or Kambeč'ani on the list!

Shakki) was also called *Heret'is samep'o* – the Kingdom of Heret'i in Georgian, such homonymy was the reason for its frequent confusion⁸ with the former Kingdom of Heret'i, which existed earlier and was located further north – both in *K'art'lis c'xovreba*, and modern researches, for example, by D.L. Muskhelishvili.

According to the narrative and numismatic data, the external boundaries and internal territorial division of the Kingdom of Heret'i kingdom are the following. Since its formation in the second half of the 8th century it was divided into four Duchies [*K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 2013, p. 155; Muskhelishvili, 1982, p. 45], known by the Georgian names of the central fortresses of the 11th century – the left bank Štori (the historical Lpinia, from the area where Alazani River flows out of the Pankisi Gorge to the Mač'isxevi Gorge) and Mač'eli (the historical Eliseni/Elni/Xeni, from the Mač'isxevi Gorge to the Muxax River), and the right bank Vejini (from the T'urdo River to the K'iziqi River) and Xornabuji (from K'iziqi to the inflow of Alazani into the Kura River). The Kingdom of Heret'i was surrounded by the Caucasian Range from the northeast and the Kaxet'i Range from the southwest.

After the Kingdom of Heret'i was incorporated into the Kingdom of Kaxet'i, the territory of the Heret'ian duchies somewhat changed: the areas above the Štori River on the left bank and the T'urdo River on the right bank of Alazani were excluded from Heret'i and added to the districts of Tušet'i [Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 125–127], while the Duchy of Mač'eli nominally included the regions of Šak'i (and Bel lying between Mač'eli and Šak'i) and Xunzaxi (Avaria), to which the Kaxet'ian king Kwirike III laid his claim. The contemporary sources did not retain any direct information about the extension of the power of Kwirike III over Avaria (Vaxušti Bagrationi, who mentioned it, worked in 18th century), while the struggle between the Kaxet'ian kings and Širwānšāhs for Šak'i continued during the first half of the 11th century, which was directly indicated by Mūneġġim-Bašī. Thus, he writes about the independent actions of Šak'i infidels in 992 [Minorsky, 1953, p. 22], and records that the Kaxet'ian king Axsit'an II (1058–1084) began to rule in Šak'i only in 1067 [Minorsky, 1953, p. 20]. Exactly because of the struggle for Šak'i V. Minorsky refrained from directly identifying the toponym “Šakki” of that time with the Heret'ian or the Kaxet'ian kingdoms in general⁹.

The fact that the upper part of the Alazani Valley upheld a marginal position towards the regions under the Arab or Georgian authority and was geographically clamped¹⁰ became the reason

⁸ D.L. Muskhelishvili justly noted that the Georgians generated “the name of this kingdom [the Kingdom of Šak'i or Heret'i] using the names of their closest neighbors, the ancient Albanian tribe of the Hers, while the Arabs – using the name of the capital, the city of Šakki. The Armenians and the Byzantines called it this way because it arose in the territory of the former Albanian kingdom”, while “the Georgian sources also sometimes use the term Šak'i, instead of the term Heret'i”, indicating the confused toponyms in *K'art'lis c'xovreba* [Muskhelishvili, 1982, p. 37–38].

⁹ See [Minorsky, 1963, p. 94] *contra* [Muskhelishvili, 1982, p. 48]. Contrary to the doubts of V. Minorsky [Minorsky, 1953, p. 28], Mūneġġim-Bašī does not mean Kaxet'i under Šakki at all, when he lists the fortresses of Taṭiyān, Mūġkank/Mūġkang (the “Mūġan fortress”) and al-Bayda (the “White fortress”), which Anūšīrwān Šaddādid planned to give to Šakki [Minorsky, 1953, p. 18]. It is quite possible that these fortresses were located on the northern (K'ojašen, mod. Axarbarax) or southern (mod. Bozdağ) mountain ridges, bordering the Kura in the area of the modern Mingachevir reservoir, where the Ġanza-Šakki border was actually supposed to be. Naming of the Kaxet'ian kings as the “Kings of Šakki” in *Tārīḥ-i Bāb al-Abwāb* [Minorsky, 1963, p. 118] or *Zubdat al-Tawārīḥ* [Al-Husaynī, 1980, p. 54] dates back to the time only after they annexed Šak'i, which happened during the reign of Axsit'an II (r. 1058–1084) or constitutes an extrapolation of these events to earlier situations – like when Arč'il “transferred Šak'ih” to Adamase the Blind [*K'art'lis c'xovreba*, 2013, p. 112; Vaxušti Batonišvili, 1904, p. 134].

¹⁰ It is difficult to agree with the opinion of M.D. Lordkipanidze and D.L. Muskhelishvili that “one of the main routes that connected Georgia with the residence of the Arab governor in the Transcaucasus – Bardavi was running through Heret'i” [*Essays on the History of Georgia*, 1988, p. 275]. The direct and fastest way from Tiflīs to Barda'a in Arrān passed via Kura valley, and was used so often, that the Arabs considered Tiflīs as a city *situated in Arrān* [Al-Istakhri, 1927, p. 17; Minorsky, 1953, p. 6]. At the same time, the geographically closed position in the valley surrounded by mountain ranges from the three sides, back then allowed the Kingdom of Heret'i to get separated from K'art'li and remain independent for several centuries.

why the high-quality silver coins, like Sasanian *zūzās*-drachmas and Islamic dirhams kept here during the longest period of time. Analyzing their mixed hoards, it is necessary to pay attention to the following two facts.

First, the Sasanian coins are featured in the form of an admixture in the hoards of the late 8th–10th centuries of any size (from nine coins to few kilograms), which indicates the penetration of coins into all classes of the Heret'ian society. Only after the 9th century the circulation of silver fragments and silver ingots replaced them. In the numismatic typology, the hoards consisting of coins with such a wide interval between the dates of their issues can be interpreted in two ways. In the case of coin economies, with the prevailing share of coin payments and a high level of coin circulation, these kinds of hoards reflect an “instantaneous face” of circulation, while their appearance signals that all the coins that got into the hoards were current at the same time and place. In case of more archaic situations (for example, in monetary or mixed coin-monetary economies), these kinds of hoards can actually be called the “hoards of long accumulation,” as the coins received in the form of imports were not used immediately, but rather held for a long period of time.¹¹ Undoubtedly, the analysis of numismatic data allows referring the Kingdom of Heret'i to the number of those monetary economies that developed in the 8th–9th centuries in the territories adjacent to the Islamic regions, where silver coins were issued, or the territories contacting and trading with them (the Khazaria, Rus', Scandinavia).

The Sasanian-Islamic mixed coin hoards from Heret'i represent a rather long period (no less than a century), which testifies to their “natural” archaeologization, not related to the external aspects, so that the hoards themselves can be considered as personal accumulations handed down from generation to generation, which were gradually falling out of circulation. Moreover, it is necessary to associate the widespread use of silver coins in the Kingdom of Heret'i with the coinage by the Kaxet'ian king Kwirike III the Great precisely after the annexation of Heret'i (and perhaps in Heret'i, as predominantly all coin finds of the Kaxet'ian coins originate from the modern Azerbaijani part of the historical territory of the Heret'i) [Akopyan, Vardanyan, 2013; 2015] and precisely in the form of Georgian-Arabic bilingual coinage that is known to us. The importance of Heret'i was unquestionable – if earlier Kwirike III was the *king of Kakhs*, then after the annexation of Heret'i he became the *king of Rans and Kakhs*, and the newly added region was put first in his title. Secondly, we don't know any hoard of the 8th–9th centuries from the territory of the Kingdom of Heret'i that does not contain at least one Sasanian coin, which directly testifies to the firm and deep penetration of the Sasanian *zūzās*-drachmas into the everyday life of the region. In order to summarize all of the above, it should be noted that the analysis of the numismatic material unambiguously indicates the saturation of the economy of the Kingdom of Heret'i with silver coins in the period of its independence from the late 8th century to the early 10th century. The reasons which triggered this process maybe follow.

The narrative sources keep silent about the exact exports which the Alazani Valley could possibly offer the Arabs in the 8th–10th centuries and cause the flow of silver coins from them. The complex archaeological and historical-economic study of the region in the 8th–10th centuries has not yet been conducted, so we can only assume that the local exports did not contain agricultural products traditional for this fertile region since they were not different from the products of the neighboring regions of Transcaucasia. In terms of agrarian conditions, the Alazani Valley did not exceed (and does not exceed up to the present) the neighboring Kura-Araxes lowland, which was firmly controlled by the Arabs from Barda'a since 752 and through which the silver coins were coming into the Kingdom of Heret'i.

On the other hand, the regular finds of the Islamic dirhams outside *dār al-Islām* or out of the Arab trade routes with the North look extraordinary considering their complete absence in the

¹¹ A well-researched example of this situation is the Vikings' hoards of the 9th–10th centuries from Scandinavia.

territories with the *dār al-ḥarb* or *dār al-daʿwa* status – for example, in the Bagratid kingdom of Ani, which haven't become a transit route for the Islamic silver [Akopyan, 2016], or the non-mainstream areas of the Christian kingdoms of Transcaucasia.

When trying to explain this phenomenon, it is necessary to reject two well-known economic models that could be used by analogy with other regions where the Islamic dirhams circulated in the 8th–9th centuries. These are the models of the Islamic silver *transit* through the Kingdom of Heret'i or the *plunderage* of the Islamic regions by the Heret'ians. A complete absence of monetary silver in the regions lying behind the Kingdom of Heret'i (in Kaxet'i, Tušet'i, Didoet'i or Avaria) testifies contrarily the first model. The second model is impossible due to the fact that there is no information about such events in the Arab sources, which regularly reported on wars with the infidels, as well as by Vaxušti Bagrationi's direct reference to the aloof way of life of the kingdom before the beginning of the 11th century: “up to now [*i.e.* 11th century], the names of the kings of Heret'i and their deeds are neither represented nor mentioned, because they *lived for peace and for themselves* [highlighted by me – A.A.]” [Vaxušti Bagrationi, 1976, p. 128].

Weak archaeological research of the region, followed by the absence of information from the narratives, does not yet allow us to suggest a solid explanation of the situation outlined by numismatic analysis. However, the typological uniqueness of the numismatic situation (the finds of silver coins outside the transit routes and outside *dār al-Islām*, as well as the dead end of the region for the flow of silver coins) along with the geographical position of the Kingdom of Heret'i between the two “gates” (Dido and Šak'i) and between the two ridges (Caucasian and Kakhetian) seem to make the following assumption enable. It is quite possible that the regular finds of Sasanian-Islamic mixed coin hoards from the territory of the Kingdom of Heret'i of the 8th–10th centuries reflected payments from the Arabs to the Heret'ians for providing the protection of the mountain passes from the South-Western Daghestan to the Alazani Valley and further to the Kura-Araxes *mesopotamia*, which could be invaded by the highlanders of Didoet'i, Tušet'i, Avaria and the Samur Valley.

The fact that this kind of invasion of the highlanders did happen is indicated by rare reports preserved in the chronicles. Thus after the end of the governorship of Yazīd b. Usayd in Arminiyya (in 780 according to coins) [Vardanyan, 2011, p. 118], the city of Šamkur was destroyed by the Siyavordis, which Ibn al-Āṭir characterized as “the people who gathered from all around” [Ibn al-Āṭir, 1940, p. 19]¹². The last phrase would have been unclear without the narrative of Mūneġġim-Başı, dating back to the time somewhat later than 967, when more than 400 Saririans including horsemen, descended to Ġanza, where they merged with the Siyavordis, settled on the banks of the Kura River and started their raids [Minorsky, 1953, p. 13]. Undoubtedly, here we have the fixation of a certain model, which existed as the union of the Siyavordis, who lived on the right bank of the Kura, with the people of the southern Daghestan. Other information dates back to 1049, when Anūšīrwān Šaddādīd, who ruled on the right bank of the Kura River from Ġanza, wanted to surrender some fortress of K.rnštān to the “Didos” [Minorsky, 1953, p. 18, 28], most likely, to reduce their pressure on the Amīrat of Ġanza. The above mentioned “Didos” can be considered as a metaphorical generalization of the threat from the north, but not as the avant-garde, which consisted of the ancestors of the modern Tsez and moved so far to the south (Anūšīrwān Šaddādīd wanted to transfer the boundary fortresses to Šak'ins, Abkhazians and Byzantines – in this situation the appearance of proper Didos seems doubtful). The process of formation of such metaphorical ethnonyms is widely known; we find another example in Ibn al-Āṭir, who named Georgians as *Khazars* because of the threat behind them [Ibn al-Āṭir, 1940, p. 123].¹³

¹² M.I. Artamonov dates the destruction of Šamkur by the Siyavordis in 750's, a hundred years before the resettlement of 300 families of Khazar Muslims here [Artamonov, 2002, p. 333].

¹³ Leonti Mroveli writes that the Khazars began to use Dar-i Alān and K'art'li for penetration into Transcaucasia: “they opened up ... the Aragvi gates, which are the [gates] of Darial” [K'art'lis c'xovreba, 2013, p. 17].

It should be noted that the kings of Heret'i maintained the tranquility of the border of *dār al-Islām*, which was lying along the Kura for almost a two centuries between the first two invasions of highlanders (after 780 and after 967); and the archaeologization of twelve of the thirteen hoards (Nos. 1–12) dates back almost exactly to that time. Apparently the liquidation of the Kingdom of Heret'i by Kwirike III violated the balance of forces in the region and opened the way from the south-western Daghestan to the Kura, which was used by the highlanders who forced Amīrat of Ġanza to give up a certain (borderline?) fortresses in the middle of 11th century.

This way, the analysis of the hoard materials shows that the Kingdom of Heret'i was the region of the most prolonged use of the Sasanian *zūzās*-drachmas until the end of the 9th century. If the future lexico-statistical analysis can reveal a certain obsolete layer of the Albanian lexis closer to the assumed date of the Gospel writing (from the end of the 7th to the 10th century, with the preference towards the end of this period), it will be necessary to postulate the creation of the Sinai version of the Albanian Gospel exactly in the Kingdom of Heret'i, which practiced the Armenian Christianity with the Albanian liturgical language up until its annexation by the Kingdom of Kaxet'i in the early 11th century.

In this perspective, it is also quite logical that the Albanian texts of palimpsests were written over with the Georgian ones: since the reign of the Kaxet'ian king Kwirike III, who annexed Heret'i, the Georgian language became the liturgical and official language (which is indicated, for example, by the epitaphies and coins), and the next 11th–12th centuries saw the active linguistic and religious assimilation of the Heret'i population from the side of the Kaxet'ian kingdom, and then the united Georgian kingdom [Gadzhiev, 1998, p. 30].

TABLE 1.

LIST OF SASANIAN-ISLAMIC MIXED COIN HOARDS
FROM THE TERRITORY OF KINGDOM OF HERET'I (8TH – 11TH CENTURIES)¹⁴

No	Coin dates or <i>tpq</i> of the hoard	Size of the hoard	Composition of the hoard				Place and time of finding
			<i>zūzās</i>		<i>dirhams</i>	Other items	
			Sasanian coins	Islamic coins of Sasanian type	Islamic post-reform coins		
1	604–766	4 coins (part of the hoard)	1	—	3 (2 Um., 1 ‘Abb.)	—	Mt. Baxtrioni, Zemo Alvani, 1960 [Dzhalagania, 1979, p. 53; Tsotselia, 2003, p. 90, no. 30; Tsotselia, Depeyrot 2010, p. 156, no. 808]
2	590–779	9 coins	7	2 (Ṭab.)	—	—	Mt’isjiri, 1988 [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 80, no. 21; Tsotselia, Depeyrot 2010, p. 157, no. 811]

¹⁴ Abbreviated names of dynasties and coin groups in the Appendix: 'Abb. – 'Abbāsids, Aḡl. – Aḡlābids, Arab.-Sas. – pre-reform Islamic coins of Sasanian type, Idr. – Idrisids, Kuf. – Islamic epigraphical (Kufic) coins in general, Tāh. – Tāhirids, Ṭab. – spāhbeds of Ṭabaristān, Um. – Umayyads (incl. Spanish Umayyads). The asterisk indicates the descriptions of the hoards with essential inaccuracies.

3	End of 8th century	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Zaqatala District, 1969 ¹⁵
4	592–808	150 coins	12 (Sas., Arab.-Sas.)		138 (90 coins of 8th c., 46 coins of 9th c., 2 coins with unclear dates)	—	P'šaveli, 1937 : description A [Pakhomov, 1940, p. 37, no. 822];
		127 coins	1	126 (6 Um., 118 'Abb., 2 Aḡl.)		—	description B [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 83, no. 24];
		129 coins	1	1 (Arab.-Sas.)	127 (5 Um., 120 'Abb., 2 Aḡl.)	—	description C [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 80, no. 21; Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 162, no. 820]
5	589–814	201 coins	5	4 (Arab.-Sas.)	192 (5 Um., 187 'Abb.)	—	Kondoli, 2012 ¹⁶
6	593–820	304 coins	3	—	301 (17 Um., 281 'Abb., 3 Idr.)	—	Mt'isjiri, 1961 : description A [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 86, no. 27];
		305 coins	3	—	302 (17 Um., 282 'Abb., 3 Idr.)	—	description B [Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 163–164, no. 824]
7	599–820	38 coins (part of the hoard)	1	1 (Tab.)	36 (7 Um., 29 'Abb.)	—	Kavširi, 1921 ¹⁷

¹⁵ The hoard is not described; A.M. Radzhabli gave only the general information about it [Radzhabli, 1973, p. 208].

¹⁶ Preliminary statement on the discovery of this hoard was made by Dr. Medea Tsotselia (State Museum of Georgia) at the ICON II conference (State Hermitage, 2016), to whom I am deeply grateful for the information about the hoard, kindly provided in a personal message.

¹⁷ In the last descriptions of the hoard a Tabaristān coins counted amongst of Kufic [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 84, no. 25; Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 160, no. 816]. This descriptions complement each other and do not contradict the primary description of E. A. Pakhomov [Pakhomov, 1938, p. 24–25, no. 393].

8	603–829	171 coins	1	7 (1 Arab.- Sas., 6 Tab.)	163 (Kuf.)	—	Leliani, 1924: description A [Pakhomov, 1938, p. 24–25, no. 395];
		171 coins	2	169 (1 Arab.- Sas., 168 Tab.)	—	—	description *B [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 85, no. 26] ¹⁸ ;
		171 coins	2	6 (5 Arab.- Sas., 1 Tab.)	163 (12 Um., 151 'Abb.)	—	description C [Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 161–162, no. 818]
9	589–834	392 coins	16	24 (4 Arab.- Sas., 20 Tab.)	352 (Kuf.)	—	Ap'eni, 1924: description A [Pakhomov, 1938, p. 25, no. 396];
		410 coins	16	—	394 (Um.)	—	description *B [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 88–89, no. 29];
		394 coins (calculation of the parts gives 405)	16	26 (6 Arab.- Sas., 20 Tab.)	363 (14 Um., 346 'Abb., 2 Idr., 1 Tāh.)	—	description C [Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 160–161, no. 817]
10	591–862	11 coins (calculation of the parts gives 9); whole hoard weights <i>ca.</i> 2 kgs	1	1 (Tab.)	8 ('Abb.)	—	Near Čikaani, 1900 [Pakhomov, 1959a, p. 74–75, add. to no. I-81; Tsotselia, Depeyrot, 2010, p. 156, no. 807]
11	592–893	116 coins	3	—	113 (13 Um., 90 'Abb., 2 Idr., 8 unknown)	—	P'ič'xovani, 1960 [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 87, no. 28]
12	604 – 9th century	5 coins	1	1 (Tab.)	3 (1 Um., 2 'Abb.)	—	Leliani, 2002 [Tsotselia, 2003, p. 85, no. 26, coin no. 1]
13	7th century – final decades of 10th century	713.02g of silver coin fragments (4070 pcs.), 6 silver ingots (total 642.67g)	Single frag- ments	—	Great bulk of fragments	6 silver ingots (total 642.67g)	Aliabad, 1910 [Pakhomov, Orlov, 2015]

¹⁸ In the description Sasanian coins are Nos. 2 and 3; and Kufic coins counted amongst of Tābaristān coins.

ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS – The Caucasian Albanian Palimpsests of Mt. Sinai. Vols. I, II. Ed. by J. Gippert, W. Schulze, Z. Aleksidze, J.-P. Mahé. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

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