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

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Abstract: This article concerns the dating of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsest (Gospel of John) on the basis of a refined interpretation of the monetary term ***zaizowzña*. In the first part of paper the etymology of the word ***zaizowzña*, that derived from the Sasanian monetary term *zūzā* ‘dirham’ is offered and justified. The Albanian umbrella term ***zaizowzña* indicated a general concept of a ‘zuza-like (coin)’, which unified wide range of various imitations of Hormizd IV’s silver coins (or *ZWZWN*, as they named in Pahlavi on coins), struck in the end of the 6th century after defeating of Varhrān Čōbīn in 592 as payment to the Byzantine army, as well as typologically close to them pre-reform Islamic coins of the Sasanian type struck in the 7th – beginning of 8th centuries (so-called Arab-Sasanian coins). In the Caucasian Albanian Gospel of John the word ***zaizowzña* was used to translate the Greek *δηνάριον*, but in the corresponding places of Armenian or Georgian translations were used another words — *dahekan/drahkani*, *denar* or *satiri/statiri* (etymology of these words also discussed and shown that they are not related to Sasanian *zūzā*). Thus, the use of a special term for Greek *δηνάριον* is not associated with the established translation tradition and unequivocally indicates its local, Caucasian Albanian origin. The period of time when ***zaizowzña* coins were used in the Transcaucasia is outlined, and it is shown that the Sinai edition of the Albanian Gospel of John was completed between the beginning of the 6th century and the beginning of the 10th century.

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

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

INTRODUCTION¹

The discovery of two Caucasian Albanian palimpsests of the Gospel of John and Lectionary (hereinafter the language of these manuscripts is simply called Albanian) in the late 1990s in the collection of the St. Catherine monastery in the Sinai was a milestone event in Caucasian studies. The truly heroic work of reading the lower layer of the palimpsests, its decoding

¹ I am deeply grateful to late Dr. Jim (James A.) Farr for his patient language editing, to Dr. Timur A. Maysak (Institute of Linguistics of RAS) for the opportunity to get acquainted with *CAPS* and to Dr. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis (British Museum) for discussion about the finds of Parthian coins.

and publication by the international team of researchers consisting of J. Gippert, W. Schulze, Z. Aleksidze and J.-P. Mahé [*CAPS* 1; *CAPS* 2; Maysak, 2010] that followed has greatly enriched our knowledge of Caucasian Albania. While in no way minimizing the outstanding accomplishments of the publishers, I would like to address in this article one particular aspect which, in my opinion, did not receive the correct interpretation, which influence on the dating of the Palimpsests (first part of the article) and which possibly point to the area of their writing (second part of the article).

I. THE TIME OF WRITING OF THE ALBANIAN GOSPEL OF JOHN: ETYMOLOGY AND SEMANTICS OF THE ALBANIAN MONETARY TERMS

***zaizowz-ńa AND **da[hekan].*

One of the key issues faced by the team of Albanian palimpsest researchers was the issue of their dating. In their preliminary publication J. Gippert and W. Schulze pointed out [Gippert, Schulze, 2007, p. 205] that the external dating of the manuscript is impossible since other Albanian manuscripts are missing, while the internal dating can be ascertained by a *hapax legomenon* in the text of the Gospel of John – the word ****{me}[za](i)zow(z-ńa)* (here – in the editors' reconstruction) [*CAPS* 2, p. V–29], used as a translation of the Greek *δηνάριον* 'denarius' in John 6:7. Both in the preliminary publication and in the subsequent monographic edition of the palimpsests [*CAPS* 1, p. I–30], the publishers reproduced the word ***zaizowz-ńa* in the palimpsest by adding the syllable *me-* to the beginning of the word, transforming it into ****{me}[za](i)zow(z-ńa)* (should be read as *mezaizuzńa*), and then etymologized it, but in an incorrect way from a numismatic point of view. According to W. Schulze, the constructed form originated from the Latinized version of the name of the usurper Mezezius (Μιζιζιος, Arm. *Mžez Gnni*), whose year of reign (669) is the *terminus ad quem* of the use of this term [*CAPS* 1, p. I–30]. The *-ńa* suffix in Albanian, according to the text publishers, serves to express the relationship, and ****{me}[za](i)zow(z-ńa)* was literally translated as a "coin that is characterized by the image of the emperor Mezezius," [*CAPS* 1, p. II–21], in other words – *Mizizius* 'coin).

Historically, this denominative way of forming coin names was really effective, but the reality makes the proposed reconstruction impossible. The fact is that the rebelling general Mezezius, according to Michael the Syrian, ruled Sicily only for seven months in 669, and managed to issue a limited quantity of donative gold solidi with his name, which to this day are among the rarest of Byzantine coins. Naturally Mezezius' short-term and limited emission in distant Sicily could not leave any trace in the money circulation of Byzantium or Transcaucasia, and, accordingly, had no reflection on either local language, or Greek and Syriac.

The Austrian numismatists W. Seibt and N. Schindel informed the publishers of this discrepancy. N. Schindel proposed an only correct connection between the Albanian term and the Syr. *zuzā* [Gippert, 2012, p. 242], meaning 'drachma'. However, in his improving publication, J. Gippert was not satisfied with the form *zaizowzńa*, suggesting the reconstruction of the Albanian word as *dai-zowzńa*, with the *dai* part being translated as 'green'. The term *dai-zowzńa*, according to him, "may be a genitive case form of the stem *dai-zowz*, denoting the 'denar' as a 'green', i.e. 'copper' or 'bronze' coin equivalent to a drachm, matching the genitives of *δηνάριον*, *dahekan* and *drahkani* in the Greek, Armenian and Georgian versions" [Gippert, 2012, p. 243]. However, this interpretation unfortunately also has neither historical nor typological confirmation, since in the course of its development *the name of a coin* made of one metal could be transferred for *naming the coin* made of another metal (see below), unlike the *name of a monetary unit*, which was never transferred to *another monetary unit* (*contra* "denar, ... equivalent to drachm," according to J. Gippert) with the *addition* of the metal or color name. Moreover, no special copper or gold

coins circulating in the Christian Transcaucasia are known to be so popular that their name could be used to translate the word from the *δηνάριον* / *dahekan* / *drahkani* group.

The importance of this *hapax* in the Albanian text makes one pay careful attention to its reconstruction and etymology, for which it is necessary to turn to the historical and economic context in which a new numismatic term for the Albanian gospel could appear.

It is known that during the sixth-seventh centuries the Sasanian authorities strengthened their position in Eastern Transcaucasia, culminating in the 560's construction of a series of Transcaucasian defensive structures by Xusrō I Anōšīrvān (r. 531–579), the largest of which was the fortification network in the region of Derbent [Gadzhiev, 2015, p. 7–8]. Xusrō I was succeeded by his son Hormizd IV (r. 579–590), whose government was overshadowed both by internal problems with the elite, and the ongoing war with Byzantium, which started back in 572. In 588, the Göktürks, instigated by the Byzantines, set off for Iran, and in spite of their numerical superiority, were defeated near Herat by the Sasanian army led by Varhrān Čōbīn. However, soon thereafter Varhrān Čōbīn refused to obey Hormizd IV and separated from him, which fueled the existing dissatisfaction with the *šāhanšāh* and led to the overthrow of Hormizd IV in 590 and his blinding by his wife's brothers; such that his son (and nephew of the conspirators) Xusrō II was declared *šāhanšāh*. Quickly gaining strength Varhrān Čōbīn refused to obey the new *šāhanšāh* and moved to Ctesiphon. Xusrō II and his associates were forced to flee to Byzantium, where he appealed to emperor Maurice (r. 586–602) with a request for military aid. This was a truly extraordinary event in the history of the tense relationship between Sasanian Iran and Byzantium. Nevertheless, the emperor agreed to grant Xusrō's request and allocated him 40 *centinaria* (1,440 kg) of gold, as well as to send his Mesopotamian army, led by John Mystacon and the Armenian commander Narses. Byzantine mission was successful – Varhrān Čōbīn was defeated in the Battle of Blarathon (near Ganzak-i Āturpātākān) and fled to Ferghana. In return, Xusrō II gave Byzantium substantial territories in Armenia, Iberia and Mesopotamia. In addition, according to al-Ṭabarī, after defeating Varhrān, Xusrō II sent to Maurice and distributed among his soldiers 20 million dirhams [Al-Tabari, 1879, p. 1000]. Michael the Syrian wrote, that Xusrō II gave each Byzantine warrior 400 *zūzā* [Michel de Syrien, 1901, p. 387; Anonymi auctoris Chronicon, 2000, p. 645]. Arab. *dirham* and Syr. *zūizi* ~ *zūiza/zūzā* (also recorded in the Middle Persian ostracones and papyri of the 6th-7th centuries [Nikitin, s. a., p. [2]]), along with the Arm. *zowzay*, Georg. *zuzi* or Mishn. Hebr. *zūzā* [Ačāryan, 1973, p. 107] all denoted the same Sasanian silver coin, traditionally called *drachma* in the numismatic literature.

The payment of so many drachmas caused a significant financial strain in Iran – an average weight of drachmas of that time was four grams, so the total weight of the silver coins that the Byzantine army took to Mesopotamia was about 80 tons. Of course, a part of this volume was old coins left in the treasury, but the numismatic data testify a very special series of coins, apparently hurriedly issued just to pay for the services of the Byzantine troops.

This series consists of rather crude issues with the name of late Hormizd IV that are easily distinguished from his current coins (*fig. 1*)² in a number of iconographic, technological and epigraphic aspects, which excludes them from ordinary Sasanian coin emissions. The iconographic differences consist in a substantial simplification of depicting the portrait of the *šāhanšāh*, the reduction of the crown's and clothes' detailing. The technological innovation in the coins of this series was an additional stroke through a soft (lead?) strip on the reverse for a more convex rendering of the *šāhanšāh*'s profile on the obverse, which left characteristic traces on the reverse³

² Иллюстрации находятся на цветной вклейке.

³ I completely agree with the opinion of A.B. Nikitin on the origin of distinctive convexity of the *šāhinšāh*'s portrait on the coins of this series precisely because of the additional stroke [Nikitin, s. a., p. [3]] *contra* opinion of I.G. Dobrovolsky about the “natural” formation of convexity due to the fineness of the coin blank and “filling” of

(this was easily done due to the constant orientations between of the Sasanian coin's dies of this time – always strictly 3 hrs). The epigraphic differences consisted of rough rendering and distortion of the inscriptions, often being completely unreadable, omitting words from the monetary legend and the barbaric mintname on a significant number of coins from this group (fig. 2). The Sasanian coin's canon was violated by exhibiting the immobilized (abnormally early) years of mintage (fig. 2–6, especially year “six” in this case), while in a significant number of these coins the mint is replaced by the denomination – the Aramaic ideogram *ZWZN*, *ZWZN*’ or *ZWZWN* written in Pahlavi letters [Nikitin, 1996, p. 171]⁴ (fig. 3, 4, 6). Many coins of this series have additions to the canonical legend, such as the names of the production regions: ‘LMNY [Zeno, no. 107264], ‘LMYN [Nikitin, s. a., no. 3.1.] (fig. 4), ‘LMN’ [Nikitin, s. a., nos. 2.1–2.11, 4.1–4.5, 5.2–9.6], ‘LM [Nikitin, s. a., no. 1.7] for Armenia, GWLC’N [Nikitin, s. a., no. 1.8] for Georgia, the title of the issuing governor *bythš* ‘bidaxš’ [Nikitin, s. a., no. 12.1], and some other Pahlavi words that haven’t yet been read.

The fact that the issue of these coins could be carried out in the operating Sasanian army without a permanent location, which resulted in denoting the coin's denomination, not the mintname, was initially pointed out by A.B. Nikitin [Nikitin, 1996, p. 172]. The coins of this time were executed quite carefully: they retain the weight of the Sasanian drachma and all the inscriptions are readable, but they already contain the denomination *ZWZN*’ and the immobilized year [Nikitin, s. a., p. [2]]. Soon, a huge output of one (or several, no less likely) coinage centers, organized to pay the Byzantine army, began to predominate over coins from other Sasanian mints in the monetary circulation of Transcaucasia [Nikitin, s. a., p. [2]] and gave rise to a large number of local anonymous imitations (with cross, names of regions, or the title of the issuer) and became a prototype for the issue of personalized coins with a progressive schematization of the image and inscriptions. A somewhat different group, according to A.B. Nikitin [Nikitin, s. a., p. [4]], consists of issues with well-read inscriptions made by the Iberian princes Guaram-Gurgenes I (r. 571 – ca. 590) (see coin in fig. 5), Vaxtang (r. end of 6th century) and Step’anoz I (r. ca. 590 – ca. 602).⁵ And another group consists of coins of Muḥammad ibn Marwān, Arab governor of the North in 684–709/710 (fig. 6), minted in Barḡa’a or Derbent in the first decade of the 8th century (attribution, dating and the place of the issue of this coins are published with a question mark) [Seab, 2003, nos. 1–3].⁶

As was rightly pointed out by W. Seibt and N. Schindel, it is precisely the name of the silver drachma *ZWZWN* in Pahlavi that must be seen in the Alb. ***zaizowz-ña*. It is clearly related to the Arm. *zowzay*, with a quite common metathesis of borrowing that can be compared to Arm. *dang* > Alb. *dagin*. As for its real content, the use of the Albanian relative suffix *ña* after ***zaizowz* should have apparently indicated a more general concept of a ‘zuza-like (coin)’, which unified all various imitations of Hormizd IV coins, as well as the pre-reform Islamic coins of the Sasanian type (Arab-Sasanian coins), which were in circulation.

The terms derived from the Pahl. *zwzwn* are absent in the Armenian⁷, Georgian and Syrian translations of the Gospels, so it is impossible to assume the Albanian translation borrowed it *from them*, but it is necessary to assume the appearance of this term in the area where Albanian was

convexities of the obverse's die with silver [Dobrovolsky, 1977, p. 161]. Traces of using this strip are clearly visible on the coins presented in fig. 2, 3, 4 and especially in fig. 6.

⁴ E.A. Pakhomov specified 19 graphical variants of this ideogram on the imitations [Pakhomov, 1959, p. 8, Tab. 1, nos. 1–9, 19–28].

⁵ See the last review of the Georgian-Sasanian coins [Akopyan, 2011].

⁶ See also new coins of this seria in the Zeno.Ru – Oriental Coins Database (<https://www.zeno.ru/showgallery.php?cat=9685>).

⁷ The translation of the Holy Writ on Armenian was started from the Syrian, but it was continued and completed already with Septuagint without involving the Hebrew original [Novoseltsev, 1976, p. 58–59].

spoken. This happened only after the beginning of the 6th century, when the already abstracted term from the *dahekan* / *drahkani* group finally lost its real content (see below), but was still preserved in two *loci* of the original version of the Gospel translation and could be replaced by the term *zwzwn* that spread due to the Sasanian post-war huge coin emission⁸.

Thus, the period when the Pahl. *zwzwn* via Arm. *zowzay* could penetrate into the Albanian language, and in other words – *the time after which the Sinai edition of the Albanian Gospel of John was completed*, must be limited by the beginning of the 6th century. As for the upper limit of this process, it must be extended to the beginning of the 10th century. This position of the upper limit is due to the fact that the Sasanian-type coins did not come out of circulation immediately after the beginning of minting of post-reform Islamic dirhams in the early 8th century in the Transcaucasia (beginning from AH 81 / AD 700–701 in Dabīl-Dvin, AH 85 / AD 704 in Tiflīs-Tp'īlisi, AH 89 / AD 707–708 in Barda'a-Partav and Albanaq-Kabalaka (?), AH 90 / AD 708–709 in Ġanza-Ganjak, AH 93 / AD 711–712 in Bāb-Derbent, see fig. 7–8) [Klat, 2002, p. 38, 44, 74, 90, 105, 252; Akopyan, 2019, p. 328–331].

The fact that both Sasanian coins and post-reform Islamic dirhams continued to co-exist at the same time is proven not only by numismatic data (to be discussed more fully in the second part of the article), but also by the narrative data – the terminology of both Armenian and Arab sources of the 8th–9th centuries reflects the separate naming of each of the coin groups, as strictly epigraphic Islamic dirhams cannot be confused with Sasanian coins bearing the images of the *šāhanšāh* and *ātašdān* (fire altar) with two standing figures (compare fig. 1–6 and fig. 7–8). Armenian chroniclers of this time know two kinds of real coins: the purely Islamic *dirham*, which was called Arm. *dram* (for example, “30 drams” in the *narratio* about the Baghdād events of 737 [Martyrdom of Vahan Gołtn'ac'i, 1994, p. 300]) and the Sasanian *zūzā*, which was known as Arm. *zowzay* (in calculating the tax from Armenia under Caliph as-Saffāh (r. 750–754) [Lewond, 1862, p. 89–90]). In describing the events of the 8th–9th centuries, these terms, connected to the Kufic *dirham* and the Sasanian *zuza*, were opposed by the general concepts of *dahekan* ‘money’ (when describing the events in Armenia in AH 85 / AD 704: “generously distributed *dahekans*” [Martyrdom of Vahan Gołtn'ac'i, 1994, p. 300]) and in the expression “annual salary” – Arm. *zdahekanac' tareworn* [Lewond, 1862, p. 89–90]) or simple Arm. *arcat* ‘for ‘silver’.

This co-existence was similarly reflected in the Arab sources, for example the 9th century historian al-Balādhurī, who describes the results of coinage reform of 'Abd al-Malik (finished in AH 79 / AD 698–699), clearly distinguishing post-reform epigraphic dirhams and dinars (*al-dinānīr al-manqūṣat*, ‘dinars with a cut [inscription]’) from Byzantine dinars (*al-dinānīr rūmiyya*), as well as dirhams from Persia (*al-dirāhim min qarab al-ā'āğam* or *al-dirāhim kasruwiyya*) and Ḥimyar (*al-dirāhim ḥimyarīyya*) [Al-Belādsorī, 1866, p. 465–467].

In order to understand why the Alb. *zaizowzña*, which denoted a very specific circle of typologically similar silver coins, was engaged to translate in John 6:7 a term from the *dahekan* / *drahkani* group, it is necessary to turn to the semantics of the Greek, Armenian and Georgian terms in the period, followed by the introduction of Christianity in Transcaucasia.

Both the Greek and Syr. *dīnār* terms in the Gospel derive from the name of the silver Roman coin *dēnārius* (literally ‘consisting of ten’) that was introduced into circulation in 268 BC and gradually devalued to a bronze coin by the time of Aurelian (r. AD 270–275), and then completely disappeared from the coinage. However, the devalued denarius was preserved in the form of a counting unit *denarius communis* fixed during the monetary reform of Diocletian (r. AD 284–305)

⁸ Of course, the first version of the translation of the Gospel into Albanian can be dated from the beginning of the 6th century. However, the replacement of the terms that have dropped out of use is not uncommon when correcting Biblical translations, which in the first place affected monetary terminology that quickly lost its relevance due to geographic and economic barriers.

[Sutherland, 1961], while a large amount of the latter was calculated in gold (*denarius aureus*). In the first half of the 3rd century the gold Roman denarius was adopted in Sasanian Iran both as a weight standard for the gold coin and its name *dynr* – *dēnār* (minted since the time of Ardašīr I (AD 224–240) for ceremonial purposes) [Gignoux, Bates, 1995], and at the end of the 7th century *dēnār* gave its name to the Arabian gold *dīnār*.

In contrast, the origin of the Arm. *dahekan* and the Georg. *drahkani* is associated with another coin – *darik* (δαρεικός, στατήρων Δαρεικῶν;⁹ Hebr. *darkemonin*,¹⁰ *adarkonim*¹¹), a gold coin weighing 8.4g, introduced by Darius I (r. 521–486 BC) in Asia Minor [Alram, 2012] and minted from high-grade gold until the expedition of Alexander the Great in 330 BC. Regarding its name, the ancient etymologist Julius Pollux (fl. 2nd century AD) confirms that it comes from the name of King Darius¹². This very same etymological relationship was reflected in the Armenian, in which the name of the *darik* – **darehakan* ‘[stamp or coin] of Darius’ was formed from Darius’ name in its Armenian form *Dareh* with the addition of a productive suffix *-akan*, used in the meaning of collective multiplicity (this is the main version in Hr. Ačaryan’s work on the subject [Ačaryan, 1971, p. 614–615])¹³. The earliest forms of this word are recorded in the oldest Armenian manuscript Gospel of Luke dated 989 – *darhekan* and *dahekan*, where the first is exceptionally remarkable by the preservation of *-r-*.¹⁴ In spite of the Iranian origin of the suffix *-akan*, the form **darehakan* was most likely formed in Armenian, since in ancient Persian the name of Darius *Dārayava(h)uš* in the possessive form would be **dārayawaka* [Shapur Shahdazi, 2012].

It makes clear that the semantics of the *dahekan* in 5th century Transcaucasia (based on the Armenian and Georgian translations of the Gospel) has shifted from the ‘gold coin’ to the ‘silver coin’. The process of changing of the meaning of the term *dahekan* hasn’t ended and in the future – *dahekan* began to denote any coin in general [Malxasyanc’, 1944, p. 483]¹⁵ and even more abstractly – a unit of something, the integer. Thus, the use of the word *dahekan* in the meaning of a *single estate* has been registered in legal documents [Malxasyanc’, 1944, p. 483]. And the same manner as in coins or in weights, a one-sixth part of a *dahekan* in the legal sense was called *dang* (from the Pers. *dāng* ‘one sixth part’), and one twenty-fourth part was called *t’asu* (from the Pers. *tasū* ‘1/24 part of a *miṭqāl*’) [Hinz, 1970, p. 20]. This sort of shift accompanied by the saving of the usual term with the devaluation of its metallic content and further abstraction from the physical object is well known to numismatics. As an additional illustration, we can once again point to an example of the Roman denarius (silver coin → base silver coin → copper coin → unit of account), as well as the evolution of the Islamic *dīnār* (gold coin → silver coin → base silver coin → copper coin → unit of account); and such examples are many.

It is quite obvious that in the light of the above, etymologies that connected δαρεικός to OPers. *dari* ‘gold’ [Herzfeld, 1938, p. 413–426], and Arm. *dahekan* to the OPers. *dah* ‘ten’ (similarly to Latin *dēnārius*) [Hübschmann, 1972, S. 133], should be rejected, as they are impeded by the semantics of these concepts. The fact is that in 141 BC denarius was equivalent to sixteen

⁹ Hdt. IV.166, VII.98.

¹⁰ Ezra 2:69; Neh. 6:19.

¹¹ 1 Chron. 29:7; Ezra 8:27.

¹² Pollux, *Onomas.* 3.87, 7.98.

¹³ In the Old Armenian unstressed *-e-* usually does not change in the word, however, in some cases it can disappear (*aseln* / *aslan*, *t’it’erən* / *t’it’ran*) or turn into *i* (*dew* / *diwi*) [Tumanyan, 1971, p. 25, 91]. It is quite possible to add *h* in a number of consonants *l*, *r* and *w*, before which the change of *-e-* is fixed. The search for analogies to confirm the fallout of *-e-* is seriously complicated by the fact that in case of **darehakan* > *darhekan* this process is most likely to date back to the pre-Grabar (i.e. pre-literate) period.

¹⁴ See: Luke 7:41 and Luke 10:35 (*darhekan*), Luke 20:24 (*dahekan*) in the “Gospel of Luke” of AD 989 (MS Matenadaran No. 2374, olim Ejmiacin No. 229); and Matt. 20:10 (*darhekan*) [CAPS 2, p. VI-48].

¹⁵ See also form of the end of 12th century *dahekanahat* ‘forger’ from *Lawcode* of Mxit’ar Goš [Mxit’ar Goš, 1975, p. 148].

asses (instead of ten), and later, as indicated, was steadily devalued. It is absolutely impossible to imagine that during the period 267–141 BC (while the denarius was still equal to ten asses), the Parthians, who at that time minted their own high-grade silver drachmas in a very different way, would use the coins of Rome – their eternal enemy, and more so, so intensely that they needed not only to borrow, but to *translate* their name: not a single find of Roman denarii has been detected on the territory of the Parthian Empire. Apparently, the border between Rome and Parthia was impenetrable for coins of neighboring states. Numismatic data indicate the circulation of Roman coins only in the Roman (Western) Transcaucasia and only from the 1st century BC (when the denarius equaled sixteen asses), whereas in the Iranian (Eastern) Transcaucasia, the Parthian coin was used [Pakhomov, 1926, p. 17]. Only at the change of epochs the denarii of Augustus (r. 30–14 BC) became the main coin in the areas of Roman rule, which at that time equaled sixteen asses [Pakhomov, 1926, p. 18]. In other words, the mass penetration of the Roman denarii to the East is recorded only in the era when it was equal to not ten, but sixteen asses. In Parthia itself denarii have not been archaeologically recorded at all, which makes it impossible to etymologize it by translating the meaning into Middle Persian. Singular cases of finding mixed hoards containing a small admixture of Roman and Parthian coins are known only from the limitrophic zone, saturated with coins of various states located between empires¹⁶. The translation of the meaning is pointless also due to the fact that the calculation of the denarii through the number of copper asses in it had no sense *outside* the Roman Empire issuing asses (due to the domestic nature of any copper coin). And only in the second half of the 5th century, during the reign of šāhanšāh Pērōz (r. 459–484), spread of denarii in Asia has been recorded, but of completely different denarii – a gold coins (*denarius aureus, aurei*) [Göbl, 1971, p. 27–28], the name of which was borrowed in the MPers. *dēnār* to denote gold emissions.

The use of terms derived from the Arm. *darehakan* in both the Armenian and Georgian Gospels for translating the Greek δηναρίον (the development of Arm. *darhekan* > *dahekan* corresponds respectively to the Georg. *drahkani* and *daekani* registered in the Georgian Gospel) suggests a word from the same group was also chosen for the Albanian translation.

And rightly so, in two places (Matt. 20:10 and 20:13), the Armenian *dahekan* corresponds to the partially preserved Albanian word started with *da-* (the rest of the word is nonrecoverable) [CAPS 1, p. I–30]. Despite the correct indication of the parallel Armenian forms (*darhekan* and *dahekan*), publishers for some obscure reason suggested reading this word in the form **da[gin]*. However, this recovery is impossible, because the Armenian word *dang*, which corresponds to it (as known by the publishers) [CAPS 1, p. II–18, IV–53] denoted in the Gospel translations solely a copper coin – ἀσσαρίος ‘ass’ (cf. Matt. 10:29, Luke 12:6; the antiquity of this correspondence is confirmed from the manuscript of 989¹⁷); moreover, it is the Alb. *dagin* (in the form of *dagn-own*) that was expected in the translation of the term *ass* in Matt. 10:29 [CAPS 1, p. III–23]. This is why the restoration of the Alb. **da[hekan]* or **da[rhekan]*, corresponding to the δηναρίον, i.e. in a form completely borrowed *via armeniaca*, looks quite natural (the necessary explanations for such restoration: the Albanian retained *-h-* in borrowings: Alb. *gehena* ~ Arm. *gehen* ~ Georg. *gehenia* ~ *γέενα* etc. [CAPS 1, p. II–7]; while the evolution **da[ekan]* < Georg. *daekani* is obstructed by the fact that the diphthong *ae* is unrecorded in Albanian [CAPS 1, p. II–17]).

¹⁶ Only three mixed hoards of this kind are known: I) hoard of silver coins from Saṇakunk', Armenia — more than 178 silver coins, 99 of them Roman and 8 Parthian [Pakhomov, 1954, no. 1530; Mušelyan, 1973; *IGCH*, no. 1746], II) hoard of silver coins and silver items from Mallekhia, Caucasian Albania (village of Xınıslı, modern nation of Azerbaijan) — more than 330 coins, 1 of them Roman and 162 Partian [Pakhomov, 1966, No. 2008; *IGCH*, no. 1745], and III) hoard of silver and copper coins from Nisibis — 1 silver denarius and 623 copper coins, one of which Parthian [*IGCH*, no. 1788].

¹⁷ “Gospel of Luke” of AD 989 (MS Matenadaran, no. 2374, *olim* Ejmiacin, no. 229).

Thus, it is necessary to state the presence of at least two different Albanian words for *δηνάριον* – **zaizowz-ña* (mentioned once in the palimpsest) and **da[hekan]* (mentioned twice in the palimpsest). Such alliteration is usual for the Gospel translations – the Armenian translation in its turn offers two terms for the *δηνάριον* – the translation *dahekan*¹⁸ and the calque *denar*,¹⁹ and the Georgian text uses *drahkani*²⁰ and *satiri*²¹ / *statiri*²² (i.e. the *σΎτήρ* ‘stater’). It should be noted that the question of the causes and chronology of alternations and changes of the monetary terms in the Caucasian translations of the Holy Writ has not yet been explained, although the importance of such study is obvious, since the Bible translations are both the earliest (5th century) texts in the Transcaucasian languages, and the least modified ones due to canonicity of their content, so that all the novelties in them are indicative of describing certain processes.

Thus, based on the analysis of the time of usage of the Albanian monetary term **zaizowz-ña*, which denoted the whole of various imitations of the coins of Hormizd IV and pre-reform Islamic coins of the Sassanid type, *the time, not earlier than the Sinai edition of the Albanian Gospel of John was completed*, must be limited from the beginning of 6th century and until the beginning of the 10th century – the period of use of these coins in the Transcaucasia (that will be discussed in detail in the second part). This is in good agreement with publishers’ opinion about the time the writing of the manuscript “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]. Based on the data obtained in this work, in its second part, an attempt will be made to identify the area of writing Albanian Gospel.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANS – American Numismatic Society

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.

IGCH – Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards

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¹⁸ Matt. 18:28, 20:2, 20:9, 20:10, 20:13, 22:19; Mark 6:37, 12:15, 14:5; Luke 7:41, 10: 5, 20:24; John 6:7 [Zōhrapean, 1805].

¹⁹ John 12:5; Rev 6:6 [Zōhrapean, 1805].

²⁰ Matt. 20:2, 20:10, 20:13; John 6:7 [CAPS 2, p. VI–46, VI–48, VI–49, V–29].

²¹ Matt. 20:8, 20:13 [CAPS 2, p. VI–48, VI–49].

²² Matt. 20:2 [CAPS 2, p. VI–46].

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Fig. 1. Sasanian Iran, Hormizd IV, drachma (3.95g), mintame YZ (Yezd), regnal year 12 / AD 590 [Zeno, no. 32].



Fig. 2. Armenia or Caucasian Albania, imitation of the drachma of Hormizd IV (4.02g), mintname “AW”,¹ regnal year “12” [Zeno, no. 165211].



Fig. 3. Armenia or Caucasian Albania, imitation of the drachma of Hormizd IV (3.1g; clipped), with word *ZWZWN* on reverse, no mintname, regnal year “6” [Zeno, no. 119545].



Fig. 4. Armenia, imitation of the drachma of Hormizd IV (weight unknown), with words *LMNY Armenia* on obverse and *ZWZWN* on reverse, no mintname, regnal year “6” [Zeno, no. 107264].

¹ Here and further the immobilized dates of mintage and the mintnames are quoted. Mint abbreviation AW possibly regards for Hormizd-Ardašēr, and later for Sūq al-Ahwāz, in Hūzestān [Tyler-Smith, 2017, p. 120].



Fig. 5. Iberia, Guaram-Gurgen I, drama (2.64g), mintname “ŠY”, ² no year [ANS, no. 1999.54.1; Akopyan, 2011].



Fig. 6. Umayyad Caliphate, governor of the North Muḥammad b. Marwān (?), dirham (2.94g), with inscription ZWZWNN on reverse, no mintname, regnal year “6” [Zeno, no. 182379].



Fig. 7. Umayyad Caliphate, temp.al-Walīd I, dirham (2.70g), mintname Arrān (Partav), AH 90 / AD 708–709 [Zeno, no. 182384].



Fig. 8. Umayyad Caliphate, temp.al-Walīd I, dirham (weight unknown), mintname Ġanza (Ganjak), AH 90 / AD 708–709 [Zeno, no. 76002].

² For identification of mint ŠY see discussion in the last work of S. Tyler-Smith [Tyler-Smith, 2017, p. 128–131].