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HISTORY OF COINAGE IN AZERBAIJAN

Albania. Imitating the coins of Alexander the Great, silver, tetradrachm



AZERBAIJAN IS THE ANCIENT HISTORIC LAND OF THE AZERBAIJANI PEOPLE. THE PLACE NAME "AZERBAIJAN", DESCRIBED BY ANCIENT GREEK WRITERS POLYBIUS (204-121 BC), STRABO (54 BC - 17 AD), PLINY (23-79) AND OTHERS AS "ATROPATENA" - BASED ON THE COMMON NAME OF THE ACHAEMENID SATRAP OF MEDIAN ATROPATENA AND THE FOUNDER OF THE STATE OF ATROPATENA, ATROPAT - IS FIRST FOUND ON NUMISMATIC MONUMENTS.

On coins minted from the 3rd century BC at the Ecbatana mint, one of the cultural and economic centers of Atropatena, the name of Azerbaijan is given as a monogram of the Greek letters ATP - ATP = <ATPonativn>, or AT - AT=<ATponativn> later, on numismatic and lapidary monuments of the Sassanid time in Pahlavi script AT and AT - AT and AT - AT

<ATUPATAKAN>, on the dirhams of the Arab Caliphate and Azerbaijani feudal states of the Middle Ages - Sajids, Salaris, Aqqoyunlu and others in Arabic script AT - Azerbaijan, under which the country has been known for about 1,500 years.

The history of Azerbaijan is recorded in material and spiritual culture, and numerous archaeological and ethnographic artifacts, including

numismatic monuments. Azerbaijan has a rich numismatic heritage. The numismatic fund of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan of the National Academy of Sciences (NF NMHA) - the national center that collects, stores and records numismatic facts - has over 100,000 coins, most of which consist of coins found on the territory of the republic and were minted by Azerbaijani states. The NF

also has coins minted by conquerors in Azerbaijani cities and more or less solid collections of coins from nearly all foreign and CIS countries.

Azerbaijan has long attracted the attention of various peoples and states with its military-strategic, natural-geographic and trade-economic status and rich natural resources, which in turn contributed to the country's contacts with the civilized world. As a result of these relations, the coin appeared in Azerbaijan. It was the silver tetradrachm and drachma of Alexander the Great, which was the main means of exchange throughout the vast Greco-Macedonian Empire. After that, coins of the Hellenistic states of Seleucia and after its collapse - coins of Parthia, Bactria and states of Asia Minor (Bithynia, Cappadocia and Pontus) began to appear in Azerbaijan. Over the past few centuries, more than ten hoards of ancient coins have been found in Azerbaijan.

Due to the influx of antique coins, Azerbaijan entered the sphere of monetary circulation, which stretched for as much as two thousand years until its northern part - the territory of the present Azerbaijan Republic - was annexed by tsarist Russia in the early 20th century.

Familiarization with the coin, multilateral contacts with the Hellenistic cultural circle and the high economic potential of ancient Azerbaijan, located at the crossroads of ancient trade and international transit routes through northern Azerbaijan - Albania (water) and southern Azerbaijan - Atropatena (land - the Great Silk Road) - opened a qualitatively new stage in the development of monetary circulation here. Starting from the 3rd century BC, the capital city of Albania Kabalak (now Gabala) minted its own silver coins - imita-

tion coins of Alexander the Great. The latter, as we know, were minted as trade coins for a long time after the death of the great conqueror and served as the basis for imitation coins in the entire Hellenistic periphery from Central Asia to the British Isles. These so-called "barbaric imitations" were issued anonymously, and their circulation had a local nature. With the increasing arrival of coins from the Hellenistic states of Seleucia and Parthia, role models of these coins emerged as well.



From the 2nd century BC, the inflow of Parthian coins into Azerbaijan increased. Among them, silver drachmas of Mithridates II (124-88 BC) and especially, coins of Artabanus III (10-38), who hailed from the Atropatids - Kings of Atropatena - southern part of historical Azerbaijan on the paternal side, were common. The coins of this king with the monogram \bar{A} -

"Atropatena" - were minted in the second capital of the Parthian Arsacids and the main city of Atropatena - Ecbatana (now Hamadan). Their minting continued posthumously under the Arsacids and was a major component of means of circulation not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the entire South and even North Caucasus.

The stagnation of economic life and the disruption of commodity-money exchange, typical of the early medieval period, were reflected in the monetary economy of Azerbaijan. The issue of Albanian imitation coins, which thoroughly degraded over the centuries, ended in the late 1st century BC. The Parthian drachma, which was of higher quality and de jure "authorized", probably played a major role in this, while the gradual decline of the economy that took place under the last Arsacids led to the proliferation of barter.

Coinage in Azerbaijan experienced strikingly intense development in the late 5th - first half of the 7th century while it was within the sphere of the money circulation of the Sassanid Empire. This is evidenced by the many treasures of Sassanid silver drachmas (often in conjunction with Byzantine ones), made mainly at Azerbaijani mints established in major production, craft, cultural, military and political centers of the country - Shiz, Ardabil, Nakhchivan, Barda and Baku and Derbent, which were also the main centers of the commodity and currency turnover.

The time when Azerbaijan was part of the Arab Caliphate is characterized by the development of cities, commodity production and trade. The earliest regions where Caliphate dirhams were minted were Aran and Azerbaijan whose coinage was

Atropatena. Darius (60 BC), silver, drachm



known from 89 = 707/8 and 105 = 723/4, respectively. New mints were opened - Aran (Baylakan) Janza (Ganja), al-Yazidiyya (Shamakhi), Balkh al-Bayza and Arz Al-Khazar. A more significant political and economic factor of the period was the emergence of feudal states with dynastic rule "sikka" - monetary regalia, and "khubah" - mentioning of the name of the ruler at Friday prayers - in various parts of Azerbaijan.

Silver dirhams of Mazyadid - Shirvanshahs states, Sajids and Salariids - were involved in international trade on a par with those of the Caliphate and covered the huge Afro-Asian-European market in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The passive trade balance of the East in this trade (export of large quantities of the silver dirham) served as one of the causes of the depletion of silver among its exporters and sources and of the notorious

"silver crisis" - one of the economic phenomena that gave rise to the Muslim Renaissance - in the monetary trade of Middle Eastern countries from the 10th century. In internal urban trade, silver gradually gave way to copper, while gold took the dominant position in international and domestic long-distance cargo-monetary exchange with all the monetary functions. The enhancing role of gold as an international currency of that period is confirmed by the treasures of gold dinars of the Caliphate, Buveyhids, Seljuks, and in particular, Byzantine solidi of the 11th-12th centuries, which are more common in Azerbaijan.

Despite the Mongolian massacre which delayed the development of socio-economic and cultural life in Azerbaijan for years, from the beginning of the 14th century, old cities were gradually restored and new cities were founded - Alagoz, Bazar,



Abbasids. Kharun ar-Rashid, Aran, 170=786/7, dinar, gold



Babi, Balik, Geshtasbi, Gargar, Gara Agaj, Garabag, Mahmudabad, Pol-i Araz and Hunan, which were better known, by the way, because of their coin production. Internal and external trade relations were established. Commodity-money relations became more intensive, and their need for means of circulation was met by the revived silver dirham of the Ilkhanids. Gazan Mahmud's unified dirham weighing 2.13 g was minted in more than forty cities - mints of Azerbaijan.

The new currency - tenge, which weighed 6.2 g and was introduced by Aksak Timur (Tamerlane) instead of the Central Asian "miri", which had lost its value by the end of the 14th century, and the Jelairid dirham (about 1 g), was the basis of the monetary systems of Azerbaijani feudal states in the 15th century. - Qaraqoyunlu, Aqqoyunlu and Shirvanshahs, but made way for

the heavyweight (9.36 g) and high-quality shahi of Ismayil I (1501-1524) with a nominal value of 50 copper dinars in the early 16th century. The latter's right of coinage is proved by the coinage of 60 mints – cities that were part of the vast empire he created – the Azerbaijani Safavid state.

The long wars between ethnically related Turkic states (Safavids, Osmanids and Sheybanids) during the 16th century had a detrimental effect on the further status of Azerbaijani statehood, leading to a significant decline in the number of mints. In the course of these wars, the weight of the shahi fell steadily, reaching half a mithqal (2.34 g) at the end of the century, and the monetary unit "Mohammadi" (Mahmudi) introduced by Mohammad Khudabandeh (1578 - 1587), weighing only one mithqal (4.68 g), was replaced by Abbas the Great (1587 - 1628) with a new currency unit - abbasi (7.68 g), which also served as the basic unit in the Azerbaijani feudal khanates that emerged in the second half of the 18th century with their anonymous silver and autonomous copper coinage. The North Azerbaijani khanates were soon annexed by Tsarist Russia, and Northern Azerbaijan, which entered the empire's sphere of money circulation, lost its right of coinage, which was restored one century later in 1919 by the first independent Azerbaijan Republic, but in the form of paper issues in connection with the transition of the world monetary system from coins to paper money. 🌟

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