



**Roman Coins from Supsa-Kvavilnari
(Lanchkhuti Municipality, Guria)**

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to identify and describe randomly discovered silver coins in 2013 and 2023 along the eastern Black Sea coast, specifically in the Guria region. The focus will be on the villages of Kvavilnari and Supsa within the Lanchkhuti municipality. The research aims to determine various attributes of these coins, including their country of origin, city, emission years, and metrological parameters. Additionally, the study will explore the existence of parallel materials and investigate the reasons and methods contributing to the circulation of these coins within the specified research area.

Following the conducted research, it was established that the discovered coins in Kvavilnari and Supsa represent Roman emperors

from the following periods: drachmas with the names of Septimius Severus (193-211) - 3 coins, Julia Domna (†217) - 3 coins, Geta (209-211) - 2 coins, Caracalla (198-217) - 2 coins, and Fulvia Plautilla (202/5-211) - 1. Additionally, a Denarius of Septimius Severus (1 unit) was found in Supsa. Historically, Colchis was a part of the province of Cappadocia, and Roman forts along the eastern Black Sea coast often had garrisons transferred from this region. The political circumstances were accompanied by corresponding economic relations. Drachmas minted in Caesarea were widely circulated in Western Georgia during Roman times, serving as the primary means of exchange.

In the study of coins, the paramount consideration is the examination of the discovery site. The area of Supsa-Ureki has yielded Roman coins in the past. In 1942, during earthworks in Ureki, a Roman aureus, its replica, and several Caesarean drachmas were uncovered. Subsequently, in 1949, the same location revealed Cappadocian treasures, both accidentally and during archaeological excavations. The presence of Caesarian and Roman coins at the research site is associated with the Roman garrison stationed in Tsikhisdziri and Poti. Some scholars suggest that Septimius Severus established a garrison in the village of Moedani within the Lanchkhuti municipality. In such a scenario, the discovery of Roman coins in Kvavilnari and Supsa is considered natural and does not necessitate special commentary. The numismatic artifacts examined align seamlessly with the established patterns of coin circulation in Colchis. The unearthing of these coins underscores the imperative for archaeological investigations at the research points.

Keywords: Supsa; Kvavilnari; coin; Caesaria; Rome; Colchis.

Introduction

The numismatic material obtained here serves as valuable information for a comprehensive study of the Roman defensive line, kno-

wn as "Pontos Limes," situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea during the 1st-4th centuries AD. This material contributes to the understanding of the functioning, chronology, identification of military units, supply mechanisms, relationships between the army and the local population, economic aspects, and coin circulation in the region of Colchis. Notably, this includes the first-time publication of coins from the Roman Empire that were accidentally discovered along the Guria coastline.

In 2013, a tomb was inadvertently discovered in the territory of Kvavilnari, revealing 11 silver drachmas among other items. The numismatic material obtained from the study includes coins from the following Roman emperors: Septimius Severus (193-211) - 3 coins, Julia Domna (†217) - 3 coins, Geta (209-211) - 2 coins, Caracalla (198-217) - 2 coins, and Fulvia Plautilla (202/5-211) - 1 coin. These coins were minted in Caesarea, Cappadocia, and share a common design, featuring the profile of the emperor on the obverse and the mountains of Argeos on the reverse. The coins are currently preserved in the Museum of Local Lore in Lanchkhuti (Inventory No. 5349-1/11).

In 2023, a silver denarius minted in Rome in the name of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) was also accidentally discovered on the banks of the Supsa River.

Methodology

To conduct the research, we delved into specialized literature, identified parallel material, and determined the mint, monarch, and emission years of the numismatic artifacts. Our study included an exploration of the chronology of the circulation of Caesarian coins and Roman denarii in Georgia. Additionally, we examined the history of the research area to determine the reasons and methods through which these coins entered circulation.

Discussion

In 2013, in the village of Kvavilnari (Lanchkhuti municipality), in Shota Managadze's yard, a tomb was accidentally discovered con-

taining various items: a glass flask-shaped vessel, fragments of a glass spice jar, a glass cup, a clay bowl, a bronze spoon and fibula, fragments of a ceramic vessel, an iron axe, a spearhead, and 11 silver coins (Varshalomidze, Rogava, Imnadze, 2023: 28). The coins were minted in the city of Caesarea in the Roman province of Cappadocia and bore the names of the family members of the emperor Septimius Severus:

1. Septimius Severus (193-211), Caesarea, drachma, 197, d. 18/19 mm. W. 1.67 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Septimius Severus facing right. Around AY Λ CEΠ CEOYHPOC

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. section below € T € (Sydenham, 1978: 97; Erkiletlioglu, 2019: 366).

2. Septimius Severus (193-211), Caesarea, drachma, 194, d. 19/17 mm. W. 2.22 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Septimius Severus facing right. Around AY Λ CEΠ CEOYHPOC

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. Section below €TB (Sydenham, 1978: 95).

3. Septimius Severus (193-211), Caesarea, drachma, 194, d. 18/17 mm. W. 2.56 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Septimius Severus facing right. Around AY Λ CEΠ CEOYHPOC.

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. Section below €TB (Sydenham, 1978: 95).

4. Julia Domna (193-217), Caesarea, 207, drachma, d. 19/18 mm. W. 2.61 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Julia Domna facing right. Around: IOYΛΙΑ ΔΟΜΝΑ ΑΥ

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on whose slopes plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΙ. Section below ΕΤ ΙΕ (Sydenham, 1978: 105).

5. Julia Domna (193-217), Caesarea, 207, drachma, d 18/17 mm. W. 2.03 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Julia Domna facing right. AROUND IOYΛΙΑ ΔΟΜΝΑ ΑΥ

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΙ. Section below ΕΤ ΙΕ (Sydenham, 1978: 105).

6. Julia Domna (193-217), Caesarea, drachma, 209, d. 19/18 mm. year 2.65 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Julia Domna facing right. AROUND IOYΛΙΑ ΔΟΜΝΑ ΑΥ

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΙ. Section below ΕΤ ΙΖ (Sydenham, 1978: 105).

7. Geta (209-211), Caesarea, drachma, d. 19/18 mm. W. 2.75 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Geta facing right. around ΓΕΤΤΙ ΓΕΤΑΚΑΙ

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΙΝΕΩΚ section below ΕΤ ΙϚ

8. Geta (209-211), Caesarea, drachma, 206, d. 18/19 mm. W. 2.09 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Geta facing right. Around ΓΕΤΑΚΑΙ ΓΕΤΤΙ

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: ΜΗΤΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΙΝΕΩΚ. Section below ΕΤ Ι Δ (Sydenham, 1978: 113).

9. Caracalla (198-217), Caesarea, drachma, 206, d. 20/19 mm. W. 3 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Caracalla facing right. AROUND AY K M AYP ANTΩNINOC

Reverse: In the center of the coin is depicted the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. Section below ΕΤ ΙΔ (Sydenham, 1978: 110).

10. Caracalla (198-217), Caesarea, drachma, 198, d. 18/19 mm. W. 2.42 gr. The coin is broken.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Caracalla facing right. AROUND AY K M AYP ANTΩNINOC

Reverse: The center of the coin depicts the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. Section below ΕΤΕ (Erkiletlioglu, 2019: 368).

11. Fulvia Plautilla (198-217), Caesarea, drachma d. 18/19 mm. W. 1.90 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bust of Plautilla facing right. Around PLAVTILLA AVGOSTA

Reverse: In the center of the coin is depicted the mountains of Argeos, on the slopes of which plants grow, with a star at the top. Around: MHTPO KAICAPI. Section below ΕΤΙΒ.

In 2023, a silver denarius was also accidentally found on the banks of the Supsa River. We were asked to define the coin. The money remained with the finder (Varshalomidze, Rogava, Imnadze, 2023:28).

Septimius Severus, denarius. Struck in 210 in Rome. d. 20 mm. W. 2.7 gr.

Obverse: In the center of the coin is a bearded bust of Septimius Severus facing right, around: SEVERVS PIVS AVG BRIT

Reverse: In the center of the coin is a full-length portrait of Victoria standing. He holds a long palm branch in his hand, on which

is placed a round shield. Below the palm reads a small R. Around: VICTORIAE BRIT (Mattingly, 1936: 296, Tab. XLIV, 4)

Both sides of the denarius read the title of Septimius Severus "Britannicus", this inscription was first placed by the Roman emperor Commodus on coins minted in 184-191 AD, Septimius continued to imprint this protocol on bills after his successful campaign in Britain in 208 (Abramzon, 1994: 162- 163).

As a result of the study, the numismatic material of the collection looks like this: Septimius Severus (193-211) - 3, Julia Domna (†217) - 3, Geta (209-211) - 2, Caracalla (198-217) - 2, Fulvia Plautilla (202/5-211) - 1. The earliest coin was minted in 194, and the latest in 209. It should be noted that the coins are worn, it seems that they have been in circulation for a long time. The tomb should be dated to the early 10s of the III century. The coins were struck at Caesarea in Cappadocia. They are of the same type, the profile of the emperor is depicted on the forehead, and the mountains of Argeos on the back. About 1,800 Caesarian coins have been identified in Georgia. Most of them depict the Argeos mountains. Nothing is known about the genesis of the mentioned coin type in Georgian numismatic literature. We tried to address the research in this regard as well.

Argeos (modern Erjias, Turkish Erciyes Dağı) mountains are located in inner Anatolia. It is the highest mountain in Cappadocia. The mountains of the gods are first mentioned in an ancient Hittite inscription discovered in Tekirderbent, a village on the road to Argeos, under the name of Harhara. In Hittite Harhara means white, because of the snowy cover (Yfuk Kara, 2016: 304). The deification of these mountains originates from the Hittite period, the Hittite inscription carved on a stone in Khatush mentions Mount Argeos, the meeting of two divine mountains is depicted there, one of them is Mount Argeos (YfukKara, 2016: 308). On various objects, bronze sculptures, ships, coins, the depiction of mountains as a deity began intensively from the period of the Roman Empire. Archelaos, the last king of the Capp-

adocia kingdom, placed these mountains on the slopes for the first time, BC. 37-17 (Belis, 2021: 74). Argeos mountains were intensively depicted on Caesarian coins from the time of the Roman emperor Tiberius (14-37 AD). The mentioned mountains are found on Caesarian numismatic products in various combinations: the mountains of Argeos with a star on top or a human image, in the form of an agalm or in the middle of a temple (Sydenham, 1978: 19-20). Different deities decorated with a crown in the shape of the Argeos mountains, for example Serapis, are found more rarely (Erkiletlioglu, 2019: 370). The last monarch who minted coins of this type in 243 was Gordian III (YfukKara, 2016: 306).

Coins minted in Cappadocia have been entering Georgia since the time of Ariarathes I (333-322 BC). He was the last satrap of Persia and the first king of the kingdom of Cappadocia. B.C. In 332, he declared himself the independent Cappadocia satrap. He made Gaziura (Turhal) castle near present-day Zile (Zela/Tokatis İlş) his residence and issued coins here (Erkiletlioglu, 2019: 83). A coin minted at this mint was found in a pine forest during an archaeological dig in 2017. The drachma cut in the gaziura entered the pine grove together with the Sinopian products. This discovery is of great importance, because not only in Pzhivnar, but for the first time in Georgia, the price cut in this coin center was discovered. It is also the earliest Cappadocian coin found in our country (Varshalomidze, 2023: 44-52).

Cappadocian coins of the Hellenistic period were found in Georgia in Vani - Ariarat VI (130-116 BC) – 1; Ariarat VII (116-101 BC) – 1; Ariarat IX (101-87 BC) – 2; Ariobardzane I (96-63 BC) – 3 (Dundua, Lortkipanidze, 1977: 133-137); in Aghayan (Casp region) - Ariarat IV (220-163 BC) -1 (Dundua, 1993: 93); and in Mtskheta – Ariobardzane I (96-63 BC) - 1 (Dundua, 1987: 145). In this period, the circulation of Cappadocia minted coins did not have an intensive character. In the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, the coin circulation of Colchis was dominated by Caesarian coins, the topography of which was found

in Georgia is wide. In Gurzul (the same as Gerzeuli - Abkhazia, Gulripsh) in 1926, a large treasure was accidentally found and scattered. The surviving part of 469 pieces was studied by M. Ivashenko. 467 of them were minted in Caesaria (Ivashenko, 1931: 2-32), 13 in the hoard of Nabakevi (Abkhazia, Gali) (Golenko, 1964:68) and 907 coins in the hoard of Eki (Senaki municipality) were minted in Caesaria (Dundua, 1979: 5-6). In addition, Caesarian coins were found in Gonio (Varshalomidze, 2009: 52-53; Varshalomidze, 2021: 147-148; Varshalomidze, 1999:93, varshalomidze, 2000:81-87), Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili, 1993: 104), Ureki and Supsa (Dundua, 1997: 118), Nokalakev (Abramishvili, 1987: 274-287.), in Vani (Dundua, Lortkipanidze, 1977:127), in Sefieti (Makalatia, 1944: 217-259; Dundua, 1979: 5-6.), in Tsebelda (Trapsh, 1971: 207-211; Voronov, Yushin , 1973: 171-191; Voronov, Yushin, 1979: 181-198), in Sukhumi (Trapsh, 1971: 280-429; Shamba, 1993:57-74), in Bichvinta (Dundua, 1975:280-418; Lortkipanidze, 1991:98-105).

According to the prevailing opinion, the chronological period for Caesarian coins of the imperial age found in our country spans from the end of the 1st century to the middle of the 3rd century (Varshalomidze, 2009: 53). The presence of Caesarian coins diminishes from the end of the 2nd century, and from that time onward, common imperial type denarii became part of the coin circulation in Kolkheti. This shift was notably accentuated from the beginning of the rule of Septimius Severus. Roman denarii are discovered in significant quantities in the hoards of Sefieti and Eki. The majority of denarii found in our country were minted in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, including Syria and the metropolis itself. The chronological limit of their distribution in the Lazika territory is marked by the commencement of the rule of Alexander Severus in 222 AD (Dundua G., Dundua, T. 2006: 117-119).

Eusebius V of Ariarathes (163-130 BC) renamed Cappadocia's capital Mazaka to Eusebeia. In 11-9 AD, it was designated as Caesar. In

17 AD, Cappadocia became a Roman province, significantly elevating the importance of the Caesarian mint. Starting from the time of Tiberius, it became the Roman imperial mint, producing both silver and copper coins. While the Antioch mint retained Syriac features until the time of Valerian, the coins from Caesarea, despite featuring Greek legends, bore a distinctly Roman character. The imperial portrait closely followed the style adopted by the Roman mint, with Mount Argeos being the only local type. Most reverse types resembled the personifications depicted on Western coins. Hence, during the first two and a half centuries of the Christian era, Caesarea can be seen as a bridge between the coinage of the East and the West. The establishment date of the imperial mint is estimated to be around 30 AD. The Imperial Mint primarily focused on issuing silver products, and gold coins were not minted here (Sydenham, 1978: 2-3). Caesarea, situated near the border, witnessed an intensified minting of silver coins during military campaigns against the eastern neighbors of the Roman Empire, such as Parthia and Persia (Arslan, 1992: 13-15). Trajan, for instance, carried out a large-scale coin emission during his 6th consulship, from 112-117 AD, to financially support his policies (Erkiletlioglu, 2019: 273). The fees collected were mainly utilized for the main department and the garrisons stationed in the provinces of Cappadocia (Arslan, 1992: 13-15).

In the study of numismatic monuments, the crucial aspect is understanding the context of their discovery. The unearthing of coins from the early 3rd century in the Supsa-Kvavilnari region is historically significant. Roman coins from the same era have been previously discovered in these areas. In 1942, during earthworks in Urek, a Roman aureus, its replica, and several Caesarean drachmas were unearthed. In 1949, Cappadocian coins were serendipitously found in the same vicinity and later during planned archaeological excavations (Dundua, 1996: 102). Additionally, in 1995, the archaeological expedition of Guria identified traces of an ancient fortification in the

village of Moedani, situated 12 km from the sea coast. Among the collection materials, a brick fragment with the inscription LEG was discovered, indicating (Legio XV Apollinaris) (Todua, Murvanidze, 1997: 108-110). This finding attests to Roman control over the inland regions of Colchis-Lazica, extending beyond the sea coastline. The area in question likely formed part of the Fazi fortification system (Fifia, 2008: 47), along with the nearby Vashnari fortress (Todua, Kiknadze, 2008: 14).

During this period, the coast of Colchis was integrated into the Cappadocia complex, and the Roman garrisons were under the authority of the Cappadocian legate. The garrisons in the coastal fortresses of Colchis were complemented by units of the XII and XV legions stationed in Eastern Cappadocia. Notably, in the II-III centuries, these vexillations were positioned along the Rize-Khopa line (Todua, Kiknadze, 2008: 14). The presence of Roman military units in the inner regions of Colchis likely occurred during the rule of Emperor Septimius Severus. The exposed bricks in the village square and the concurrent presence of Roman military units should be dated to the time of Septimius Severus. Based on a comparison of archaeological and written data, events in the Eastern Black Sea region unfolded as follows at the end of the 2nd century: from 193 to 197, the Kingdom of Lazeti took advantage of the situation in Rome and freed itself from imperial influence. However, Emperor Septimius Severus ultimately defeated his rivals in 197, swiftly returned to the East, decisively defeated the Parthians, and recaptured northern Mesopotamia in 198-199. A new Roman province, Mesopotamia, was established in the conquered territory, after which Severus conquered Lazet. To strengthen the empire's position in the eastern Black Sea region, Septimius Severus implemented fortification measures. The Roman outposts on the Colchis coast were upgraded, and additional military forces were deployed inland, in Maidan, Vashnari, and Archeopolis (?) (Pipia, 2010: 62).

Conclusions

Thus, the coins minted in Caesarea, bearing the names of family members of Emperor Septimius Severus and accidentally discovered in Supsa and Kvavilnari, have added new locations to the map of Roman coin distribution. The appearance of these coins may indeed be linked to the military campaigns of Septimius Severus in Colchis, given their proximity to Tsikhisdziri, Pazisi, and the village of Moedani. From a numismatic perspective, the coins do not represent distinct types; analogous and similar drachmas constituted the primary means of circulation in the territory of Western Georgia in the early 3rd century.

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ტაბულა



Table

Caesarea of Cappadocia

1-2-3 - Septimius Severus (193-211)

4-5-6 - Julia Domna (193-217)

7-8 - Caracalla (198-217)

9-10 - Geta (209-211)

11 - Fulvia Plautilla (198-217)

Rome

12 - Septimius Severus (193-211)