

НУМИЗМАТИКА И ЭПИГРАФИКА

УДК 902 737

<https://doi.org/10.24852/2587-6112.2025.6.246.253>

THE COIN HOARD FOUND IN IMISHLI, AZERBAIJAN

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This article provides information about the coin hoard discovered in 2017 in the Qızılkənd area of the Imishli district, Azerbaijan, which is attributed to Alexander the Great. The hoard was found by a local resident in the Zilitəgə area. It has been determined that the hoard consists of 9 silver drachma coins. Researchers have shown that the coins date back to the time of Alexander the Great and reflect the economic of his empire. Through the study of the design and symbols on the coins, it was determined that they bear typical features of the Hellenistic period and explain the trade and economic connections of the time during the reign of Alexander the Great. The article also notes that when compared with other coins from the Alexander the Great period found in Azerbaijan, this discovery demonstrates the vastness of the trade and economic networks of the time. It emphasizes the economic and cultural significance of Azerbaijan during the Hellenistic period. The hoard from Imishli is an important finding that confirms the existence of economic and trade relations in the South Caucasus.

Keywords: archaeology, money, coins, Alexander, Greek-Macedonian, Azerbaijan, Imishli, tetradrachm, numismatic, treasure.

МОНЕТНЫЙ КЛАД, НАЙДЕННЫЙ В ИМИШЛИ, АЗЕРБАЙДЖАН

М. Мустафаев

В статье представлена информация о монетном кладе, обнаруженном в 2017 году в районе Гызылкэнд в Имишлинском районе Азербайджана, который принадлежит Александру Великому. Клад был найден местным жителем в районе Зилитепе. Установлено, что клад состоит из 9 серебряных драхм. Исследования показали, что монеты относятся к эпохе Александра Великого и отражают экономику его империи. Изучив дизайн и символы на монетах, было установлено, что они обладают характерными чертами эллинистического периода и объясняют торговые и экономические связи того времени при правлении Александра Великого. Также отмечается, что при сравнении с другими монетами времен Александра Великого, найденными в Азербайджане, это открытие демонстрирует масштабы торгово-экономических сетей того времени. Подчеркивается экономическое и культурное значение Азербайджана в эллинистический период. Клад из Имишли является важным открытием, которое подтверждает существование экономических и торговых связей на Южном Кавказе.

Ключевые слова: археология, деньги, монеты, Александр, греко-македонский, Азербайджан, Имишли, тетрадрахма, нумизматический, сокровище.

Introduction:

Money has evolved as a natural and lawful phenomenon in the historical development of human society. Since ancient times, various items such as tools, livestock, food products, and jewelry have served as money.

Over time, people began replacing natural exchange goods with metal coins. The earliest metal coins appeared in the 8th century BC along the shores of the Aegean Sea, particularly in Media and Greece (Kazamanova, 1969). As centuries passed, the development of currency circulation and trade networks progressed from ancient times to the modern era.

In recent years, archaeological discoveries have become increasingly important in understanding the evolution of monetary systems. Notably, in 2017, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology) received information regarding the discovery of a coin hoard by a resident of Gizilkend, Imishli district.

Discussion:

The research indicates the significant historical and economic value of this discovery. Led by archaeologist M.M. Mustafayev, the excavation team visited the Imishli district to meet



Fig. 1 The area called Zilitepe of Imishli district

Рис. 1. Местность под названием Зилитепе в районе Имишли

Etiram Hesenov, the local resident who found the hoard. Hesenov discovered the coins while grazing sheep, hidden inside a small clay vessel in a place called Zilitepe. Archaeological investigations at Zilitepe unearthed human skeletal remains and fragments of clay vessels from ancient times. The site is located at geographical coordinates 39°44.722'N, 048°05.111'E, and 11 meters above sea level (Mustafayev, 2019) (Fig. 1).

The coins were studied by A. Guliyev, an archaeologist and the head of the “Numismatics” department of the expedition. Guliyev identified the coins as silver drachmas from the period of Alexander the Great (Mustafayev, 2018). These coins provide valuable information about the economic interactions of the time, particularly the trade networks influenced by Alexander the Great's empire. The fact that the hoard contained only coins from Alexander the Great's reign—rather than a mixture of coins from different periods—highlights the Macedonian Empire's significance in the region.

The Imishli hoard offers valuable insight into the economy and trade of the South Caucasus after Alexander's death. The comparison with other hoards discovered in Azerbaijan and surrounding regions further enriches our understanding of currency circulation and the scale of trade networks in that era (Mustafayev, 2018).

“Methods of studying the coins.”

The study of the coins involved analyzing their size, weight, and design, and comparing them to other known coins from Alexander the Great's time. The depiction of Alexander on the obverse

and Zeus on the reverse was particularly useful in identifying the origin and political context of the coins. The study of these coins, along with archaeological excavation reports and historical sources, offered insights into the reasons for burying the hoard, such as economic instability or political tension (Mustafayev, 2018).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter. Beneath the eagle, the monogram “GA” is engraved. Below the throne, the Greek letter Σ (sigma) is depicted (Fig. 2; 3).



Fig. 2 drachma 1a

Рис. 2 драхма 1a



Fig. 3 drachma 1b

Рис. 3 драхма 1b

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.84 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm



Fig. 4 drachma 2a
Рис. 4 драхма 2а



Fig. 6 drachma 3a
Рис. 6 драхма 3а



Fig. 5 drachma 2b
Рис. 5 драхма 2b



Fig. 7 drachma 3b
Рис. 7 драхма 3b

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter. On the right side of the scepter, the word "Alexander" is engraved along the edge of the coin. In front of Zeus knees, an amphora (jar) with two handles is depicted. Below the throne, the monogram "A" is engraved (Fig. 4; 5).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

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Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he

holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 6; 7).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

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Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 8; 9).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.



Fig. 8 drachma 4a
Рис. 8 драхма 4а



Fig. 11 drachma 5b
Рис. 11 драхма 5b



Fig. 9 drachma 4b
Рис. 9 драхма 4b



Fig. 12 drachma 6a
Рис. 12 драхма 6а



Fig. 10 drachma 5a
Рис. 10 драхма 5а



Fig. 13 drachma 6b
Рис. 13 драхма 6б

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 10; 11).

6. Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 12; 13).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 14; 15).



Fig. 14 drachma 7a

Рис. 14 драхма 7а



Fig. 15 drachma 7b

Рис. 15 драхма 7б

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he

holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Fig. 16; 17).

Silver Drachma. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC)

Weight: 3.8 g

Diameter: 17–18 mm

Obverse (AV): The center of the coin features a depiction of Alexander the Great (Hercules). He is shown facing left, wearing a helmet designed in the form of a lion's head.

Reverse (RV): The center of the coin depicts Zeus seated on a throne. In his right hand, he



Fig. 16 drachma 8a

Рис. 16 драхма 8а



Fig. 17 drachma 8b

Рис. 17 драхма 8б

holds an eagle, and in his left hand, he holds a scepter (Mustafayev 2018) (Fig. 18; 19).

Archaeological discoveries across Azerbaijan and its neighboring regions reveal a notable presence of coins from the Hellenistic period, especially those from the era of Alexander the Great and his successors. These finds provide valuable insight into the spread of Hellenistic culture and the influence of various dynasties in the Caucasus region.



Fig. 18 drachma 9a
Рис. 18 драхма 9а



Fig. 19 drachma 9b
Рис. 19 драхма 9б

For instance, in Southern Dagestan, near the Gorkhyanov Soviet farm in the Kasumkend district, a hoard of Seleucid coins was uncovered, as noted by V.P. Dzagurova. Similarly, in Tbilisi, a discovery of six Bactrian coins in 1874 (Pakhomov V.A. *Hoard...*, vol. II, 1938, p. 10, No. 319; Zograf A.N. *Distribution of Ancient Coin Finds in the Caucasus*. — TONG, vol. 1, 1945, p. 41, No. 79, p. 64–65) further supports the widespread circulation of coins from the Hellenistic world in the Caucasus region.

The region's numismatic landscape includes imitations of Alexander the Great's staters, predominantly found in Colchis, a region bordering Iberia. These imitations, as well as those of Lysimachus' staters, were especially prevalent in the coastal parts of Western Georgia (Kapanadze D.G. *Georgian Numismatics*. Moscow, 1955, pp. 35–40; Dadasheva S.A. *Main Features...*, p. 83). It is likely that the production of imitative coins in Georgia began in parallel with the practice in Albania. Early imitations,

such as those found in the Gabala hoard, were of high artistic quality and closely resembled the originals. However, over time, the quality of these imitations declined, with later examples using previous imitations as models instead of original coins.

Significant discoveries include the first documented coin of Alexander the Great found in Azerbaijan: a silver tetradrachm discovered in 1897 near the village of Gulustan in the Goranboy district. Another tetradrachm from the same ruler was found in Shamakhi in 1920. These discoveries are part of a broader trend of coin finds that suggest the widespread distribution of coins from Alexander the Great's reign and from later rulers, including the Seleucids.

For example, in 1925 and 1929, hoards containing coins from Alexander the Great's reign (336–323 BC), as well as Seleucid kings such as Antiochus IV (175–164 BC), Antiochus V (164–162 BC), and Demetrius I (162–150 BC), were discovered near the Barda district (Seyfəddini, Babaev, Rasulova, Əliyev, and Dadaşova 2015). Further discoveries in 1933 (Ordubad), 1964 (Zangilan), 1966 (Gabala), and more recently in 2017 (Imishli), have continued to highlight the rich numismatic heritage of the region, showcasing coins from Alexander the Great and Seleucid rulers.

In 1957, a significant treasure was unearthed near Khınısli in the Shamakhi district, consisting of over two hundred coins. These included coins from Lysimachus (323–281 BC), the city of Athens (250 BC), and a variety of Seleucid and Parthian rulers, along with a denarius from the Roman Republic dated to 82 BC. This hoard also contained local imitative coins that reflected the artistic traditions of the region (Paxomov 1962, Paxomov 1962a).

A further significant discovery occurred in 1966, near the village of Chukhur Kabala in the Kabala district, where seven hundred silver coins were recovered by the Kabala archaeological expedition. This hoard contained coins from a diverse array of cultures, including Macedonia, Thrace, the Seleucids, the Arsacids, Bactria, and various local imitative issues (Radjabli, 1997).

Additionally, coins similar to those of Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, and the Arsacids have been discovered near earthen tombs in the villages of Nuydi and Gegeli (Nərgizava) in the Aghsu district. One coin was found inside a clay cup, and another in the hand of a skeleton,

which is referred to as the "Haron coin." These finds further underscore the regional circulation of Hellenistic and later coins.

These discoveries collectively paint a picture of a region deeply integrated into the ancient world's trade and political networks, where coins from a variety of rulers—ranging from the Macedonian kings to the Seleucids, and the Arsacids—were circulating and being imitated. The numismatic evidence serves as a testament to the region's historical connections with major powers of the ancient world.

Conclusion:

The discovery of the coin hoard in Imishli is a remarkable find that provides invaluable insight into the economic and trade networks of the South Caucasus during the Hellenistic period. The coins, all from the era of Alexander the Great, underscore the significant role that this region played in the broader economic landscape of antiquity.

These findings confirm Azerbaijan's position as an important crossroads for cultural and economic exchanges during the Hellenistic era.

The discovery of coins from various Hellenistic rulers, alongside those of Alexander the Great, highlights the region's involvement in the vast trade networks of the time and reflects the political and economic importance of Azerbaijan in the ancient world.

The Imishli hoard is not only a testament to the circulation of Alexander the Great's coins but also serves as a key piece of evidence for understanding the broader patterns of monetary circulation and trade within the South Caucasus. It emphasizes the ongoing influence of Alexander's empire even after his death, with these coins continuing to circulate in the region long after his reign.

In conclusion, the hoard found in Imishli stands as a crucial discovery, contributing to our understanding of the economic systems, trade routes, and cultural interactions in Azerbaijan during the Hellenistic period. The significance of this hoard for the history of Azerbaijan is undeniable, offering profound insights into the region's economic and political dynamics during this time.

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Статья поступила в журнал 24.01.2025 г.
Статья принята к публикации 30.05.2025 г.