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	<p>Numismatic Evidence from the Avey Temple: Archaeological Insights into Monetary Circulation, Economic Interaction, and the Socio-Political Landscape of Caucasian Albania in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages</p>	
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<p>Abstract</p>		
<p>In the western region of Azerbaijan, particularly within the territory of the Gazakh district, numerous churches and temples reflecting the material culture of Caucasian Albania are encountered. These monuments are considered significant historical legacies of the Albanian state. As one of the regions where Christianity spread widely, the area preserves architectural and artistic monuments that embody the material cultural heritage of Caucasian Albania, among which the Avey Temple occupies a prominent place. Archaeological investigations conducted in 2023 at the Avey Temple and its surrounding areas yielded dozens of noteworthy artifacts. Archaeological research has played a crucial role in studying the ancient and medieval historical past of Azerbaijan in general, and of the region in particular. Among the discovered materials, copper coins are of exceptional interest. These monetary artifacts provide valuable insights into the level of trade exchange, commodity-money relations, and the general state of economic and commercial activity among the local population during the investigated periods. Furthermore, the discovery of coinage within the area enables a more comprehensive understanding of the political landscape of the region during certain phases of the Middle Ages. Numismatic evidence thus serves as an important source for reconstructing both the economic mechanisms and the broader socio-political dynamics of the period.</p>		
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Introduction

In 2023, the Gazakh Archaeological Expedition carried out extensive archaeological investigations in the Gazakh district, focusing on the Albanian temple located on Mount Avey, its surrounding areas, and the Dash Salahli caves. Situated within the territory of the Avey State Historical and Cultural Reserve, the Albanian temple stands at the summit of Mount Avey at an elevation of 922 meters above sea level. The monument, dated to the 7th century (Inventory No. 283), is protected by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a historical and architectural monument of national significance [Najafov, 2024, p. 18].

In certain sources, the monument is also referred to as the “Moon Temple.” The Albanian temple is located on the southern peak of Mount Avey and was constructed using local Avey stone composed of limestone and shell-bearing material. The two-nave (two-chambered) structure, measuring 4.5×3.5 m and 3.5×2.5 m respectively, features a vaulted ceiling in its northern section and a conical dome covering the southern section [Mammadova, 2004, p. 98]. The temple complex includes two churches, auxiliary buildings, fortress walls, and several subsidiary structures [Akhundov, 1986; Mammadova, 2004, p. 98].

By synthesizing data from various historical sources and scholarly literature with materials obtained through archaeological excavations, it can be reasonably assumed that the temple was constructed during the 5th–7th centuries, within the period of the Caucasian Albanian state. Some scholars emphasize that, based on its architectural style, the monument bears a closer resemblance to pre-Christian Albanian structures, with pronounced influences from Roman and Greek architectural traditions evident in its construction techniques and stylistic elements [Akhundov, 1986].

According to one interpretation, the term “Avey” derives from ancient Turkic languages and means “House of the Moon,” suggesting that the temple may have been dedicated to Selene, the Moon goddess of ancient Greek mythology. It is a well-established fact that pre-Christian Caucasian Albania practiced polytheism, with worship directed toward Roman and Greek deities. Another hypothesis proposes that the site functioned as a hunting area; even today, in the Gazakh dialect, the word “ov” (hunt) is pronounced as “oy.” However, considering the mountainous rather than flat terrain of the area, this interpretation raises certain doubts and remains debatable [Najafov et al., 2024, p. 69].

Architectural Context, Burial Practices, and Numismatic Evidence from the Avey Temple

The construction of the Avey Temple on the summit of a mountain, directly atop a steep and rugged rock formation, strongly suggests that the site was not intended as a place of public worship. Rather, it appears to have functioned as a restricted sacred space, likely accessible only to a selected group—most probably priests—who visited the site periodically to perform religious rituals. This interpretation highlights a clear functional and symbolic distinction between the Avey Temple and another Albanian church located within the territory of Aşağı Əskipara village in the Gazakh district, on the left bank of the Jogaz River [Akhundov, 1986].

In contrast to the secluded and elevated Avey Temple, the second monument is situated within a settlement area and was evidently open to the broader population. Christian elements are immediately recognizable in its architectural and decorative features. Notably, an Albanian cross is carved above the entrance, while the columns display ornamental motifs composed of vegetal patterns and fish imagery—symbols commonly associated with early Christian iconography. The monument is believed to have been constructed in the Syrian architectural style during the 5th–8th centuries. Additionally, inscribed gravestones were identified within its courtyard, further attesting to its function as a communal religious center [Najafov et al., 2024, p. 70].

Graves within the courtyard of the Avey Temple were first documented in the 1870s–1880s. The headstones of these burials are decorated in a style characteristic of Caucasian Albanian funerary art. One particular stone bears a carved Albanian lotus flower, accompanied at its upper corners by a rosette divided into eight segments, symbolizing the Sun—an iconographic motif frequently encountered in Albanian material culture [Akhundov, 1986].

Certain Armenian researchers have advanced claims asserting that the Avey Temple belongs to present-day Christian Armenia, that it was founded by Mesrop Mashtots, and that it represents the “Saint Sarkis Monastery” located on Mount Surbsarkis [Anokhin, 1981]. These assertions are entirely unfounded and bear no relation to historical or archaeological reality. Such interpretations lack empirical evidence and contradict both material data and the broader historical context of Caucasian Albania.

Coin Finds Revealed During Archaeological Excavations

Archaeological excavations conducted in 2023 were carried out both inside the temple complex and within its northern, southern, and eastern courtyards. The primary objectives of the excavations were to determine whether human burials existed within or near the temple, to clarify the structure, construction techniques, and chronology of the monument, and to analyze the recovered artifacts in order to establish their cultural and chronological affiliations. A comparative assessment of burial practices and the construction phases of the temple was also undertaken [Najafov, 2024].

Excavation areas were selected both inside the Avey Albanian Temple and in its courtyard. Inside the inner chamber, a 2 × 2 m excavation trench was opened. In some Albanian-period temples and churches, burials—often associated with saints or religious figures—are known to exist within the interior space. For this reason, archaeological investigations were carried out inside the temple; however, no burials were identified in this area [Najafov, 2024, p. 28; Najafov et al., 2024, pp. 70–71].

In contrast, excavations conducted primarily near the entrance area of the courtyard revealed 34 burial graves, all covered with stone slabs. In front of the temple entrance, at a depth of only 10 cm below the modern ground surface, a human skeleton was discovered laid directly on top of a headstone belonging to an earlier grave (Grave No. 1). This burial likely dates to a later period. It appears that due to the presence of an earlier grave's headstone at the designated burial location, the deceased was interred directly above it and subsequently covered with soil [Najafov, 2024, p. 23].

The burial rite itself is noteworthy. The deceased was laid on his back in a west–east orientation, with the right arm extended along the body and the left arm bent at the waist and placed over the pelvic area—consistent with Christian burial customs. Several bones of the lower legs and toes were damaged or missing, likely due to the shallow depth of the burial, which exposed the remains to post-depositional disturbance. Anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains indicates that the individual was a male of large body size. The right tibia was noticeably curved, suggesting a possible anatomical or pathological condition affecting the lower limb.

A particularly unusual feature of the burial was the placement of the skull inside a clay brazier filled with ash and charcoal. The brazier was thick-walled, of low height, and partially preserved; its intact section was recovered from beneath the skull [Najafov, 2024, p. 24]. The custom of placing a clay brazier beneath the skull is of significant ritual interest. It may be associated with fire-related rites, reflecting older belief systems that persisted alongside Christian practices.

Comparable practices have been documented by S. M. Gaziyeu, who associated fire rituals observed in Early Iron Age burials at Karimly (Oghuz district) with primitive religious beliefs centered on fire worship. In these burials, hearths were lit near the head of the deceased, and horn-shaped vessels were placed nearby [Gaziyeu, 1962]. Gaziyeu also reported the discovery of clay braziers in several graves at the Muncuqlutepe site, located between the Sarisu and Garabaldir rivers [Gaziyeu, 1973, p. 149]. In total, nine soil graves dating to the early 1st millennium BCE were studied at Karimly, with clay braziers found in Graves No. 1, 3, 5, and 8 [Gaziyeu, 1973, pp. 149–155]. A hearth was identified next to Grave No. 5, containing three quadrangular braziers with wide bases and narrowing upper sections [Gaziyeu, 1973, p. 156].

Fragments of an iron dagger were discovered near the lower back of the skeleton. Due to severe corrosion and fragmentation, it was not possible to reconstruct its original form with certainty.

A copper coin was recovered from the area of the lower jaw of the skull (Fig. 1). Despite moderate corrosion, the inscription was legible and revealed that the coin is a copper dirham minted during the reign of **Abaqa Khan** (1265–1282). The dirham was struck in Tabriz in AH 663 (1265 CE), the year of Abaqa Khan's accession to the throne. The coin has a diameter of 20 mm and a weight of 2.76 g and belongs to the “Qaan al-‘Adil” type. It is highly probable that the coin was placed in the mouth of the deceased—a practice known in certain Christian burial traditions.

The discovery of a copper coin in direct association with the human skeleton is of exceptional importance for establishing the chronological framework of the burial. It provides firm numismatic evidence for dating the interment and contributes valuable data for understanding the continuity of ritual practices and monetary circulation in the region during the late medieval period [Najafov, 2024, p. 24; Najafov et al., 2024, p. 71, Fig. 5].



Figure 1. Copper dirham dating to the reign of the Ilkhanid (Hulaguid) ruler Abaqa Khan, discovered at the Avey Temple.

Comparable coins issued during the reign of Abaqa Khan sometimes feature a Christian cross alongside an Arabic inscription reading: *“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—one God”* [Brack, 2011]. The presence of such explicitly Christian iconographic and epigraphic elements on Ilkhanid coinage reflects the complex and transitional religious landscape of the period, as well as the pragmatic use of religious symbolism by ruling elites to legitimize authority among diverse populations.

It is well known that the religious policies of the early Ilkhanid rulers contributed to increasing tensions between the indigenous population and the Mongol newcomers, exacerbating both internal instability and external political pressures within the state. Mongol princes frequently instrumentalized religion in their struggles for power, aligning themselves with different faiths—whether Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam—depending on political expediency. Within this context, the appearance of Christian motifs on early Ilkhanid coinage can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy aimed at securing the support of Christian communities in the Caucasus, Iran, and Anatolia.

For this reason, during the initial phase of Ilkhanid rule, it is not uncommon to encounter monetary issues bearing Christian religious content, including crosses, Trinitarian formulas, and invocations reflecting

Christian doctrine. Numismatic evidence thus serves as a valuable historical source for tracing shifts in religious policy and ideological orientation within the Ilkhanid state.

A decisive transformation occurred during the reign of Ghazan Khan (1295–1304). In his struggle to secure political legitimacy, Ghazan Khan renounced the pagan beliefs to which he had adhered since childhood, formally embraced Islam, and proclaimed it once again as the official religion of the state. This conversion marked a turning point in Ilkhanid history. Ghazan Khan's religious reform restored Islam's central position within the state apparatus, re-establishing it as the dominant ideological and legal framework of governance.

Following these reforms, Islamic expressions reappeared prominently in state decrees, coin inscriptions, and the public recitation of the *khutba* [Najaf, 2009]. In recognition of these sweeping changes, Ghazan Khan became known as the “renewer of Islam of the sixth (Hijri) century.” His policies significantly weakened the institutional positions of paganism, Christianity, and other religions within the Ilkhanid realm. As a result, many temples, churches, and Jewish places of worship (synagogues) constructed during earlier periods were destroyed or repurposed, while mosques and *khānaqāhs* (Sufi lodges) were erected in their place.

In this broader historical framework, the copper dirham discovered beneath the jaw of the deceased at the Avey Temple acquires particular significance. Not only does it provide a reliable terminus post quem for the burial, but it also reflects the complex religious and political dynamics of the Ilkhanid period. The coin represents tangible evidence of the continued circulation of Ilkhanid currency in the region and illustrates how imperial monetary systems intersected with local burial practices, religious traditions, and cultural continuity in medieval Caucasian Albania.



Figure 2. Second Copper Dirham Discovered at the Avey Temple

The second coin specimen represents a surface find (Figure 2). This monetary artifact was discovered in the courtyard of the temple at the initial stage of reconnaissance and test excavations. As with the first coin specimen, the surface of this copper dirham bears Islamic sacred expressions, including the invocation of the name “Allah.” The presence of identical religious inscriptions on both coin specimens indicates that they belong to the same general historical and ideological context and were circulating within an Islamic monetary environment during the late medieval period.

Classification and Chronological Attribution of the Coin Finds

Archaeological excavations conducted at the Avey Albanian Temple and its surrounding areas yielded a number of artifacts that allow for a more precise assessment of the monument's long-term historical use and chronological development. Among these finds, ceramic materials constitute a particularly informative category.

Fragments of unglazed pottery—including sherds of storage jars, cups, pitchers, plates, and other household vessels—were identified. These ceramics were produced from mixed clay compositions and reflect everyday utilitarian ware rather than elite or ceremonial production [Najafov, 2024, p. 32]. There is little doubt that these ceramic assemblages date to the 9th–13th centuries. In addition to unglazed pottery, glazed ceramic fragments and a small number of glass artifacts were also recovered (Mursaquliyev, et al., 2025). These materials correspond chronologically with the copper coin finds, suggesting contemporaneous use and reinforcing the proposed dating of the archaeological context.

During excavations carried out on the southern slope of the temple, an iron arrowhead was discovered adjacent to a headstone. The arrowhead is well preserved and features a heavy, robust tip, indicating its function as a long-range weapon designed to penetrate armored targets during medieval and earlier warfare. Its tang-shaped base suggests attachment to a wooden shaft. Typologically, the arrowhead corresponds to forms commonly used by Seljuk Turks in the 12th century. The artifact measures 4.5 cm in length and provides additional chronological support for dating the site’s activity to the medieval period. Together with the copper coins, this find contributes to a more coherent reconstruction of the historical timeframe represented at the Avey Temple.

Numismatic Parallels and Regional Monetary Circulation

Dirhams from the Ilkhanid period preserved in the Numismatic Collection of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan offer valuable comparative material for understanding monetary circulation during the reign of the Hulaguid (Ilkhanid) rulers (1256–1358). These coins provide essential information on Azerbaijani mints and the broader economic system of the era [National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Numismatic Collection, inv. nos. NF19987, NF6014, NF19548].

Typically, such silver and copper dirhams bear *tawhīd* inscriptions on the obverse, along with the name of the mint and the year of issue according to the Hijri lunar calendar. The reverse usually features the titles and names of Ilkhanid rulers. Numismatic evidence confirms the active operation of mints in cities such as Tabriz, Tus, Hamadan, Maragha, Barda, Shirvan, Alinja, and Nakhchivan. One notable specimen preserved in the museum collection is a 2.5-gram coin issued during the reign of Abaqa Khan, minted in Tabriz in AH 678 (1279/1280 CE). The obverse bears *tawhīd* inscriptions arranged in three lines, with the mint name and date around the margin, while the reverse displays the ruler’s titles and name inscribed in five lines in the Uyghur script [National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Numismatic Collection, inv. no. NF19987].

The closest numismatic parallel to the copper coins discovered at the Avey Temple is a copper dirham struck in honor of Arghun Khan (1284–1291) (Figure 3.1). This coin, classified as AR ½ fineness and weighing 1.15 grams, was minted at the Tabriz mint. The obverse features Arabic inscriptions accompanied by the depiction of a large-clawed bird, with a solar symbol positioned above it and a star depicted in front. The reverse bears the inscriptions “Allah,” “Muhammad,” and *lā ilāha illā Allāh*. This copper dirham was discovered in Georgia (AH 689, A-2148A, Jim Farr Collection).

The striking iconographic and epigraphic similarities between this coin and the specimens recovered from the Avey Temple strongly suggest a shared monetary tradition and confirm the circulation of Ilkhanid copper currency across a broad geographic area encompassing Azerbaijan, the South Caucasus, and adjacent regions. These parallels further reinforce the chronological attribution of the Avey coin finds to the late 13th century and highlight the integration of the site into wider economic, political, and cultural networks of the medieval Ilkhanid world.



Figure 3. Copper Dirhams Struck in Honor of the Ilkhanid (Hulaguid) Ruler Arghun Khan (1284-1291)

Another closely related numismatic specimen is a copper coin minted during the reign of Arghun Khan and currently preserved in the Numismatic Collection of the Tbilisi Museum. The iconography and inscriptions on both sides of this coin correspond fully to those described above (Figure 3.2). This further confirms the typological consistency of Arghun Khan's copper issues and demonstrates their wide circulation across the South Caucasus.

Within the Numismatic Collection of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, among materials dating to the Hulaguid (Ilkhanid) period, a particularly noteworthy silver dirham minted in Karabakh in AH 750 (1349 CE) has been preserved [Pakhomov, 1926]. This silver dirham, weighing 1.18 grams, represents a later phase of Ilkhanid monetary production and reflects both administrative continuity and evolving ideological expressions.

On the obverse, within an elliptical cartouche, the first line bears the Arabic word “*Sultan*,” the second line presents the name “*Anushirvan*” in the Uyghur script, and the third line reads “*May his rule be everlasting.*” Along the outer margin of the cartouche, an Arabic inscription states: “*Struck in Karabakh in the year seven hundred and fifty.*” The reverse features a rectangular central cartouche containing three lines of Arabic text: “*There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*” Surrounding this inscription are the names of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs: *Abu Bakr / Umar / Uthman / Ali*. This remarkable coin constitutes one of the most informative Ilkhanid dirham specimens discovered in Azerbaijan and highlights the continued use of Sunni Islamic formulas in official monetary iconography during the later Ilkhanid period.

Among other Ilkhanid coin types, issues attributed to Ahmad Teguder and Öljaitü deserve particular attention due to their ideological and numismatic significance.

The coin of Ilkhan Ahmad Teguder (1282–1284) was minted in Tabriz in AH 682 (1283/1284 CE). This 2.5-gram coin bears, on its obverse, a central three-line *tawhīd* inscription, with the mint name and year of issue placed along the margins. The reverse displays three six-pointed stars, beneath which four lines in the Uyghur script record the ruler's titles, followed by a fifth line in Arabic bearing the name “*Ahmad*”—the ruler's Islamic name. This coin reflects Ahmad Teguder's conversion to Islam and the transitional nature of religious symbolism during his short reign.

The coin of Ilkhan Öljaitü (1304–1317) was minted in Tabriz in AH 714 (1314/1315 CE) and weighs 3.9 grams. On the obverse, six lines of Arabic text in the central field present the ruler's titles and name, surrounded by the mint name and date. The reverse features a central *tawhīd* inscription, followed by the phrase “*Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,*” beneath which appears “*Ali is the friend (wali) of Allah.*” In the sixth line, the name of Tabriz is recorded, while the surrounding field lists the names of the Twelve Imams revered in Shi'i Islam.

This coin clearly demonstrates the strengthened influence of Shi'i Islam during the reign of Öljaitü Khan, whose policies significantly promoted Shi'ism within the Ilkhanid state [Saunders, 1971]. The explicit inclusion of Shi'i formulas and the Twelve Imams on coinage marks a decisive ideological shift and provides valuable numismatic evidence for understanding religious transformations in the early 14th century.

Taken together, these comparative coin specimens—from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and neighboring regions—strongly contextualize the copper dirhams discovered at the Avey Temple. They confirm that the site was integrated into broader Ilkhanid monetary circulation networks and that its archaeological assemblage reflects the complex political, religious, and economic dynamics of the late 13th and early 14th centuries in the South Caucasus.



Figure 4. Copper Dirham Minted during the Hulaguid (Ilkhanid) Period

The copper dirhams of the Hulaguid (Ilkhanid) period discovered at the Avey Temple (Figure 4) are fully consistent with information provided by medieval written sources regarding the condition of unified monetary circulation and the implementation of monetary reforms in Azerbaijan, which had been subordinated to the Mongols' fifth ulus during this era.

It is well established that from the 1230s onward the so-called “silver crisis” was gradually overcome, and silver coinage began to be minted again in Azerbaijan. The silver-based monetary system was restored, and silver coins were issued in greater quantities than gold [Najaf, 2009]. The highest monetary units were the *tūmen* and gold and silver *balish*. Lower-denomination currency included the *dinar*, *fals*, and silver *dirham* [Seyfeddini et al., 1998]. By the second half of the thirteenth century, only gold *tūmen* and gold *balish* remained in wide circulation, although silver *dinar* issues also began to appear during this period [Morgan, 2007]. Foreign gold coins likewise circulated within Azerbaijan's monetary system.

During the reign of **Ahmad Teguder** (1282-1284), a noticeable decline in coin value began, intensifying toward the end of the thirteenth century. The Ilkhanid state entered a severe financial crisis, resulting in the depletion of the state treasury. In response, in 1294, by decree of **Gaykhatu**, paper money (*chao*) was introduced in Tabriz. This paper currency was intended exclusively for internal circulation. The reform aimed to forcibly accumulate gold and silver coins in the state treasury and prevent their outflow to foreign lands—effectively an early attempt to halt the drain of precious metals from state reserves. However, the population refused to accept paper money, and the reform ultimately failed. Rather than stabilizing finances, Gaykhatu Khan's paper money experiment further aggravated the fiscal crisis.

A decisive transformation occurred under **Ghazan Khan** (1295-1304), who implemented comprehensive economic and social reforms, including the stabilization of coinage and the creation of a unified monetary system across the entire Ilkhanid state. To prevent abuses, Ghazan Khan established a standardized coin type marked by three discreet identifying symbols. His monetary reforms facilitated the expansion of trade and restored regular monetary accounting in commercial transactions, leading to increased state revenues. The revival of trade and rising demand for currency necessitated the opening of new mints [Najaf, 2009].

Within the territory of the Ilkhanid state, as many as seventy-five mints operated. New mints were established in Salmas, Urmia, and Saray-i Mansuriyya, while the mints of Barda, Ganja, Tabriz, Maragha, Nakhchivan, Beylagan, and Ghazaniyya (Shanbi-Qazan) resumed activity. During the reign of **Öljaitü** (1304-1316), conditions again shifted: multiple coin types circulated simultaneously, the weight and intrinsic value of coins declined, and the number of active mints decreased. Under Sultan **Abu Sa'id** (1316-1335), coin fineness was relatively maintained, but coin weight gradually and consistently diminished. Consequently, purchasing power and real value declined, while copper coinage continued to serve as the primary medium for everyday transactions.

Conclusion

The medieval copper coins recovered from the Avey Temple and its courtyard through archaeological excavations constitute a valuable source for studying monetary circulation and the history of commodity-money relations in medieval Azerbaijan. These numismatic materials enable scholars to trace political and religious processes unfolding during the Ilkhanid (Hulaguid) period—particularly at the moment when Islam was emerging as the official state religion.

Notably, even prior to the reign of Ghazan Khan—before Islam was formally established as the state religion—coinage produced in state mints already featured Islamic attributes. This is especially significant given that the Mongols themselves adhered to pagan beliefs and practiced shamanism, while the majority of the population under Ilkhanid rule consisted of Muslims. To consolidate authority and enhance ideological legitimacy, the Ilkhanid rulers increasingly employed Islamic religious symbols on coinage well before Ghazan Khan's official conversion.

Numismatic evidence also confirms that during the reign of **Abaqa Khan**, certain coins even incorporated Christian symbols—demonstrating the pragmatic and adaptive nature of Ilkhanid religious policy.

Overall, the discoveries from the Avey Temple provide comprehensive insights into the functioning of commodity-money relations in Azerbaijan during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These finds illuminate the dynamics of monetary circulation, economic reform, and ideological transformation in medieval society and underscore the value of numismatic evidence as a key historical source for reconstructing Azerbaijan's medieval past.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in full compliance with the ethical standards applicable to archaeological research and cultural heritage studies. All archaeological investigations were carried out with the official permission and supervision of the relevant state authorities, including the Avey State Historical and Cultural Reserve and in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The excavation, documentation, conservation, and analysis of archaeological materials were performed following internationally accepted professional and ethical guidelines for archaeological research. No human subjects or living organisms were involved in this study. The research did not involve any form of experimentation on individuals or communities, and therefore did not require approval from an institutional

ethics committee. All findings are reported transparently, without fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data.

Author Contributions

- **Shamil Najafov:** Conceptualization of the study; supervision of archaeological research; historical and archaeological analysis; interpretation of numismatic data; writing of the original draft; critical revision of the manuscript.
- **Seadet Aliyeva:** Coordination of fieldwork within the Avey State Historical and Cultural Reserve; contribution to archaeological documentation; contextual analysis of cultural heritage; review and editing of the manuscript.
- **Mehrac Mammadov:** Participation in field investigations; cataloguing and preliminary analysis of archaeological finds; data collection; assistance in manuscript preparation.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or manuscript preparation.

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