

# ANCIENT PAKISTAN

Volume XXIX – 2018



Research Bulletin of the  
Department of Archaeology  
University of Peshawar



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Volume XXIX – 2018

**EDITOR**

Ibrahim Shah, PhD

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University of Peshawar**

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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
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in his extended right hand and a trident in his left. A four-pronged *tamga* is placed in the upper left field and the legend OHᵑO is written vertically upwards in the right.

Of these, two coins (nos. 1 and 2) belong to the official issues of Vasudeva I (c. 190-227 CE), sixth and last ruler of the great Kushans. These coins of Vasudeva I portray *nandipada* symbol on the obverse and hence belong to the third and last phase of mint A (main mint) (Cribb and Oddy 1998; Khan 2009:9-11, chart A, nos. 20-21; Jongeward and Cribb 2015:135-36, nos. 1091-1093). The remaining coins except one of the hoard are associated to the imitation series of Vasudeva I. The exceptional coin (no. 14) is said to have imitated issues of Kanishka II. These coins, as described above, were issued by the Kushano-Sasanians in Afghanistan. This series of coins were issued in imitation of the *nandipada* series of the last phase of main mint (A) of Vasudeva I. The imitation coins of Vasudeva I characteristically display dots in various places on the reverse and obverse. Besides this, other gradual changes were made in the form of execution and in the increasing size of the coins, the corrupt form of legend, a new style of ribbons (symmetrically fall on both sides of the shaft) on the left trident, the form of the flames above the right shoulder of king, the addition of a crescent to the brow of deity and a circular device to the shaft of trident on the reverse, etc. This imitation series of Vasudeva I is believed to have issued from Bactria (Afghanistan) under the control of early Sasanian kings Ardashir and Peroz when they captured this area from the Kushans after the end of Vasudeva I or beginning of Kanishka II rule. These gold imitations are known to have minted before the rule of Vasishka (c. 247-67 CE) and thus formed a contemporary series with the rule of Kanishka II (c. 227-47 CE). This scheme of imitation then led to the commencement of true Kushano-Sasanian coinage in Bactria when the new rulers removed the Kushan names (Vasudeva [I] and Kanishka [II]) and began to write their own names in succession. The Kushano-Sasanian imitation coins were likely produced in the same pattern after making the addition of many symbols like dots and rosettes, swastika and a triangular

motif (or Brahmi letter *er*) on the obverse and crescent on the forehead of the reverse figure. Similarly, the Bactrian legend was changed into cursive writing and flat round coins into broad scyphate shape (Jongeward and Cribb 2015:136-37, 180). The top hair of the reverse figure (deity) was converted into flames to assimilate it with the Zoroastrian mythology. Apart from this, Kushano-Sasanian elements can also be seen in the new form of dress, the variety of crowns with globe above them, and the long curly hair and beard on the image of the king. The reverse figure is shown with Sasanian style of dress.

Most of Vasudeva I imitations of the hoard (nos. 3-13), as discussed above, portray dots in various positions particularly shown on the reverse. But one example (no. 14) of this series bears a rosette above the *nandipada* on the obverse and a swastika symbol below the bull's head on the reverse. The blundered legend of this coin may be read as [p]AO NANOᵑAO K-OΔHᵑAO KOᵑA (beginning at 1 o'clock) so is different from other coins. Basically, Göbl deciphered this legend as [p]AO NANOᵑAO-X-OΔHᵑAO KOᵑAN and referred to a different ruler named Xodeshah or Chodeshah (Göbl 1984:55, nos. 662-65). Later Joe Cribb attributed this coin to the imitation series of Kanishka II after rearranging the legend AONANOᵑAO KA?Hᵑ?O KOᵑA (Cribb 1990:155, no. 55). The same series of coin is recently published by the same author with new reading [p]AONANOᵑAO KANHᵑAO KOᵑANO (begins at 1 o'clock; Kanishka, Kushan king of kings) (Jongeward and Cribb 2015:182, nos. 1694-). In view of the addition of dots and other symbols, these coins were issued from Bactria after the end of Vasudeva I or beginning of Kanishka II rule in Bactria. These coins seemed to have issued parallel to the reign of Kanishka II, the immediate successor of Vasudeva I, who first lost the control of Bactria and then Kabul Valley to the Sasanians. However, he retained the eastern part of the Kushan empire stretching from Gandhara in the northwest to the Ganges Valley in the east. The rule of Kanishka II as evidenced from his coins and dated inscriptions lasted from c. 227 to 247 CE.

Earlier, one such hoard of 21 gold coins was



reported from Topi (Swabi), a nearby locality in the Peshawar valley. According to distance scale of the Google Earth map, the site of Topi is located about one hundred kilometres east of Abazai village. The Topi hoard comprised 5 late issues of Huvishka and 16 of Vasudeva I. In further classifications, these are 9 examples of the main mint and 7 coins of the subsidiary mint of Vasudeva I. According to the published photographs, the coins of main mint can be arranged in three phases (early, mid and late) of production while the coins of subsidiary mint belong to two phases (early and mid). According to this arrangement, 3 coins bearing *nandipada* symbol on their obverse obviously belong to the late phase of the main mint of Vasudeva I. The contemporary issues of the late phase of subsidiary mint (B), displaying Brahmi letters in the right field, are not present in the Topi Hoard.

The author of the report on the Topi hoard classified these coins differently, calling them the issues of eastern and western mints. According to his categorization, the coins of eastern mint are inscribed with Bactrian legend BAZOΔHO and coins of the western mint BAZΔHO. Further he proposed that these coins were produced in several emissions from different localities such as A, B, M, P, T and W. He placed the western mint, producing Vasudeva coins in two workshops, somewhere in Gandhara. He assigned three coins with the *nandipada* symbol to Afghan issues (Burns 1990:16-21, pl. 2-3). Before this Burns also attributed the gold issues of Vasudeva to various emissions struck at different mints. This article on Vasudeva I coins came out soon after the publication of Göbl's monumental work on Kushan coins (Göbl 1984). This classification of Burns was confused and over complicated (Burns 1985:44-70). Before this, a similar classification for Vasudeva I coins was carried out by Mitchiner where he credited the main series of coins (our main mint / Bactria mint) to the Peshawar mint and second series to the Taxila mint (our subsidiary mint B) (Mitchiner 1978:446f).

In contrast, Göbl assigned such coins to two rulers of the same name: Vasudeva I and Vasudeva II. He defined the gold coins of Vasudeva II as those with the *nandipada* symbol on their obverse.

This series includes all coins bearing Vasudeva's legend both the life issues of Vasudeva I and the imitations (Göbl 1984:640-59, 666-700). But new research distinguishes the life issues of Vasudeva I from the imitations struck by the early Kushano-Sasanian rulers. It can also be shown that the *nandipada* series of coins was issued from the main mint located in Bactria (Afghanistan). Apart from this, other coins of Vasudeva I and the Late Kushans were issued from the subsidiary mint placed somewhere in Gandhara (Pakistan) (Cribb 1990, Oddy and Cribb 1998, Khan 2009:9-10, chart-A, Jongeward and Cribb 2015:135-36). Cribb's attribution of this mint to Peshawar is based on the loss of this mint during the reign of Vasishka when the Sasanians extend their rule as far as Peshawar under the Sasanian emperor Shapur I (240-270 CE). Bracey recently identified some die links of *nandipada* series of Vasudeva I for the subsidiary mint as well. He also suggests a different location for the subsidiary mint i.e. south of the Indus most probably Taxila. He made this assumption on the finding of seven coins of subsidiary mint (4 mid phase and 3 late phase) of Vasudeva I known from Taxila (Bracey 2012:124-25; Khan 2008: nos. 17-23).

The *nandipada* coins in the Topi hoard belong to the later phase of Vasudeva I reign (c 190-227 CE) which means it was buried 20 to 25 year earlier than the hoard of Ray Dheri (Abazai, Charsadda). Another small gold hoard (or parcel) of the same nature, containing eight coins of Vasudeva I, was reported long ago from Peshawar and is now in the British Museum. Of these, 6 coins (4 early phase and 2 mid phase) belong to main mint and 2 to subsidiary (early phase) (Bracey 2012:124-25). Due to the absence of late issues of Vasudeva I, the Peshawar hoard should be placed earlier in the sequence than the Topi hoard. A similar group of 6 gold coins of Vasudeva I is also known from Kashmir Smast (Mardan). This is not a certified hoard but these coins are believed to be found in one area. This parcel includes 4 coins of the mid phase and 1 of the late phase of the main mint and a single coin of the mid phase of the subsidiary mint of Vasudeva I (c. 190-227 CE) (Nasim Khan 2008: nos. 48-53). Due to the absence of post-Vasudeva coins, the date of these

coins is obviously earlier than the hoard of Ray Dheri. Another parcel of gold coins, observed by the present authors, is published in the catalogue of Peshawar Museum (Ali *et al.* 2004). This parcel of coins is mentioned with the site name Tor Dher (Swabi), situated on the right bank of river Indus just few kilometers downstream from the famous site Hund. This parcel comprised 1 coin of Kanishka I, 2 of Vasudeva I imitations of the main mint, 13 of Vasishka, 4 of Kanishka III and 1 of Vasudeva II. This hoard (or parcel) belongs to the reign of Vasudeva II (c. 271-300 CE), which is about 30 years later than the hoard of Ray Dheri. Apart from this, several other gold hoards of the Kushan period are known from this region (Gandhara including Swat and Taxila), but chronologically they belong to the later phase of the Late Kushans. Such hoards are reported from Jaulian (Marshall 1921: nos. 4-7, pl. xxix, j-m; Khan 2008: nos. 51-54), Dharmarajika (Marshall 1951:283; Khan 2008:39-60), Swat (Mitchiner 1980; Burns 1985:55-56), and Rustam (Khan *et al.* 2013:35-46).

### The Copper Coins

The number of copper coins of the hoard under discussion shown to the author is equal to those of the gold coins. Accordingly, only fourteen copper coins are known and they are not properly cleaned and chemically treated. This lot represents a single coin of Vasudeva I and the rest of Kanishka II, the successor of Vasudeva I. The only specimen of Vasudeva I is in bad condition and stylistically belonged to the late phase of his rule. It portrays the standing figure of king at altar on the obverse and standing figure of Oesho before bull on the reverse. The copper design of Vasudeva I is almost identical to his gold coins. The Bactrian legend on such coins is off flan and unclear.

After Vasudeva I, the remaining thirteen copper coins can be assigned to the period of Kanishka II. These coins are uniform in their designs, but are in different styles. They generally display the standing figure of the king at an altar on the obverse and the goddess Ardoxsho seated on a throne on the reverse. The Bactrian legend on these coins is also off flan and illegible. On the coins of Vasudeva I, the king is wearing

armour, but on those of Kanishka II the king is clothed in a kaftan. Some coins of Kanishka II are fairly very fine and bear Kharoshthi letter *vi* in the right field of obverse (no. 16) but some are characteristically crude and stylized. Such crude coins were probably issued during the late phase of Kanishka II's rule.

### Conclusion

It is difficult to be absolute about the deposition of this hoard, as three quarters of the hoard is missing from our analysis and comparison. But in view of the available material, both the gold and copper coins belong to the same period, late in the reign of Kanishka II. The minting, circulation, collection and deposition period of this hoard was the same and unambiguous. The earliest coins both of gold and copper belong to the late phase of Vasudeva I (c. 190-227 CE). But the main collection of gold coins, imitations of Vasudeva I and Kanishka II, was contemporary with the period of Kanishka II. Similarly, the main assemblage of copper is from the life issues of Kanishka II hence it belongs to the reign of this ruler (c. 227-47 CE). According to these contents, the hoard under discussion is thought to have buried at the end of Kanishka II's rule and before the beginning of Vasishka reign, i.e. mid of the 3rd century CE.

## CATALOGUE

### A. Gold Coins

#### *Vasudeva I*

##### Type 1. Standing king and Oesho with bull

*Obv.* King standing frontally with head turned in profile to left, wearing chainmail coat and trousers and peaked crown decorated with pearls and circular device in the centre and visor at forehead, ribbons of diadem fallen over left shoulder. A semi-circular nimbus appears before king's head, flames emanate from his right shoulder and a banner like design behind king's head. The king makes offering with right hand and holds a trident in the left

hand, another trident bound with ribbon stands in the left field behind altar and *nandipada* symbol is in the right field.

**Bactrian legend:** βαΟΝΑΝΟβαΟ ΒΑ ΖΟΔΗΟ ΚΟβαΝΟ begins at 7 o'clock

**Rev.** Oesho standing facing, wearing dhoti, with *ushnisha* at the top of head, hair fallen on both side shown in dots enclosed by a flaming halo. The deity holds a diadem in his extended right hand and a trident in his left, behind him a bull standing to left, *tamga* in the left field above his right hand. Legend ΟΗβαΟ vertically upwards in the right field behind bull.

Reference: Göbl 1984: 640A

Coin nos. 1 (8.00g), 2 (7.86g)

### *Post Vasudeva*

#### **Type 2.1. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 1, but the king's figure is slightly stylized and Bactrian legend written in cursive style.

**Rev.** As 1, but a prominent dot appears along the left side, one small below the *tamga* and three dots below head of bull and a circular device is added to the shaft of the trident held by the deity in his left hand.

Reference: Göbl 1984:641 (reverse dot scheme is different)

Coin no. 3 (7.92g), 4 (7.91 g)

#### **Type 2.2. Sanding king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.1, but a dot appears between right leg of the king and altar in the left field, Bactrian legend in cursive style.

**Rev.** As 2.1, but one more dot is added to the right side of the *tamga* in the left field.

Reference: Göbl 1984:644

Coin no. 5 (7.92 g)

#### **Type 2.3. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.1.

**Rev.** As 2.1, but a group of three dots below head of bull.

Reference: Göbl 1984:646 (reverse scheme of

dot is different)

Coin no. 6 (8.00 g)

#### **Type 2.4. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.1, but the diadem ribbons on the left trident longer and a small dot below right hand and above altar, legend is cursive and defaced.

**Rev.** As 2.3.

Reference: Göbl 1984:646

Coin no. 7 (8.00 g), 8 (7.95 g)

#### **Type 2.5. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.1, but flames over shoulder are shown in a line, trident in the left field with ribbons falling one each to each side of trident and two dots are shown above *nandipada* in the right field.

**Rev.** As 1, but a group of three dots near the *tamga* and a single dot below legend and tail of the bull in the right field.

Reference: Göbl 1984:647.1

Coin no. 9 (7.93 gm)

#### **Type 2.6. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.5, but flames almost disappear and with three dots above *nandipada* in the right field.

**Rev.** As 1, but a group of three dots between rear leg of the bull and the shaft of the trident held by the deity in the left hand.

Reference: Göbl 1984:648

Coin no. 10 (8.00 g)

#### **Type 2.7. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

**Obv.** As 2.6, but two additional dots below *nandipada* and one dot between right leg of the king and altar in the left field.

**Rev.** As 2.1, but deity with large round eyes and perhaps moustache, one dot on the left of *tamga* and groups of three and two dots below the head of bull.

Reference: Göbl 1984:655 (dot not seen between king's right leg and altar on obverse)

Coin no. 11 (7.93 g)

**Type 2.8. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

*Obv.* As 2.5, a group of three dots above *nandipada* in the right field.

*Rev.* As 2.3, but the deity with a very long nose.

Reference: Göbl 1984:654 (obverse)

Coin no. 12 (7.93 g)

**Type 2.9. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

*Obv.* As 2.6, but short flames appear over right shoulder as seen on no. 1, three dots above *nandipada* in the right field and one dot between the king's legs and one in the outer side of trident in the left field. Legend  $\beta$ AONANO $\beta$ AO BA O ZΔHO KO $\beta$ ANO begins at 7 o'clock

*Rev.* As 2.1, but a group of three dots below the head of bull, one on the left of *tamga* in the left field and one outside the legend in the right field.

Reference: Göbl 1984:665 (obverse looks like 664.1)

Coin no. 13 (8.00 g)

**Type 2.10. Standing king and Oesho with bull (Legend Kodéšāh)**

*Obv.* As 2.6, but there is a rosette above *nandipada* in the right field, legend  $\beta$ AONANO $\beta$ AO K-OΔH $\beta$ AO KO $\beta$ ANO ... 1 o'clock

*Rev.* As 2.1, but there is crescent at the forehead of deity, star (plus mark) below the head of bull and a large dot between rear legs and of the bull and shaft of trident held by the deity in his left hand. The legend is written as OOH $\beta$ O

Reference: Göbl 1984:652-54 (obverse)

Coin no. 14 (8.00 g)

**B. Copper Coins*****Vasudeva I*****Type 3.1. Standing king and Oesho with bull**

*Obv.* King standing at altar to left as 1, but tridents, symbols and legend invisible.

*Rev.* As 1, but legend and *tamga* are not traceable.

Reference: Göbl 1984:1004?

Coin no. 15 (9.20 g)

***Kanishka II*****Type 4.1. Standing king and Ardoxsho**

*Obv.* King standing facing with head in profile to left, wearing embroidered kaftan, trousers and crown, right hand sacrificing over altar and holding sceptre in the left. Bactrian legend unclear, Kharoshthi letter *vi* is in the right field.

*Rev.* Ardoxsho seated on a throne, wearing long robe, usually holding diadem in the right hand and cornucopia in the left but here they are not clear. Similarly, legend and *tamga* are also not seen.

Reference: Göbl 1984:1017

Coin no. 16 (7.63 g)

**Type 4.2. Standing king and Ardoxsho**

*Obv.* As 4.1., but letter in the right field is unclear.

*Rev.* As 2.1., throne is visible and the deity is holding diadem in the right hand and cornucopia in the left.

Reference: Göbl 1984:1017

Coin no. 17 (8.27 g), 18 (8.25 g), 19 (7.38 g)

**Type 4.3. Standing king and Ardoxsho**

*Obv.* As 4.1., but features are unclear and executed in rude style.

*Rev.* As 4.1.

Reference: Göbl 1984:1017

Coin nos. 20 (7.80 g), 21 (7.79 g), 22 (7.70 g), 23 (7.03 g), 24 (6.75 g), 25 (6.68 g), 26 (6.64 g), 27 (6.40 g), 28 (5.90 g).

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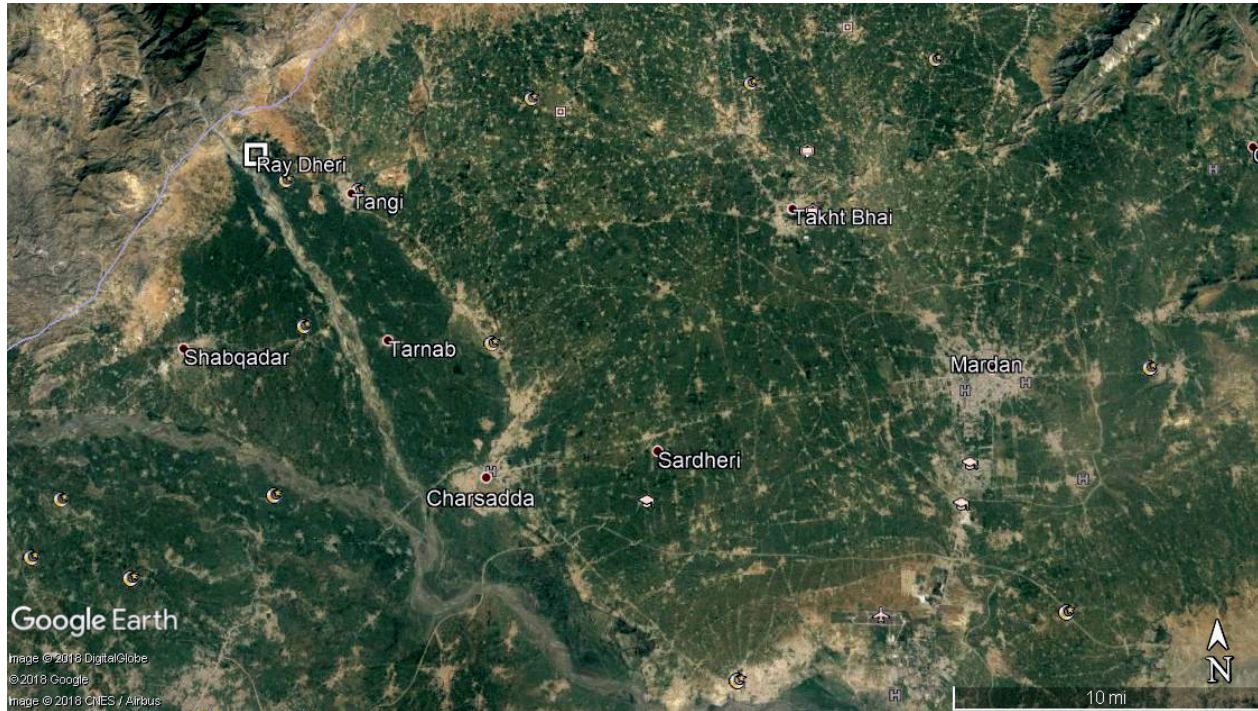


Figure 1. Location of the site, Ray Dheri (Abazai) (Source Google Earth, 24 May 2017)

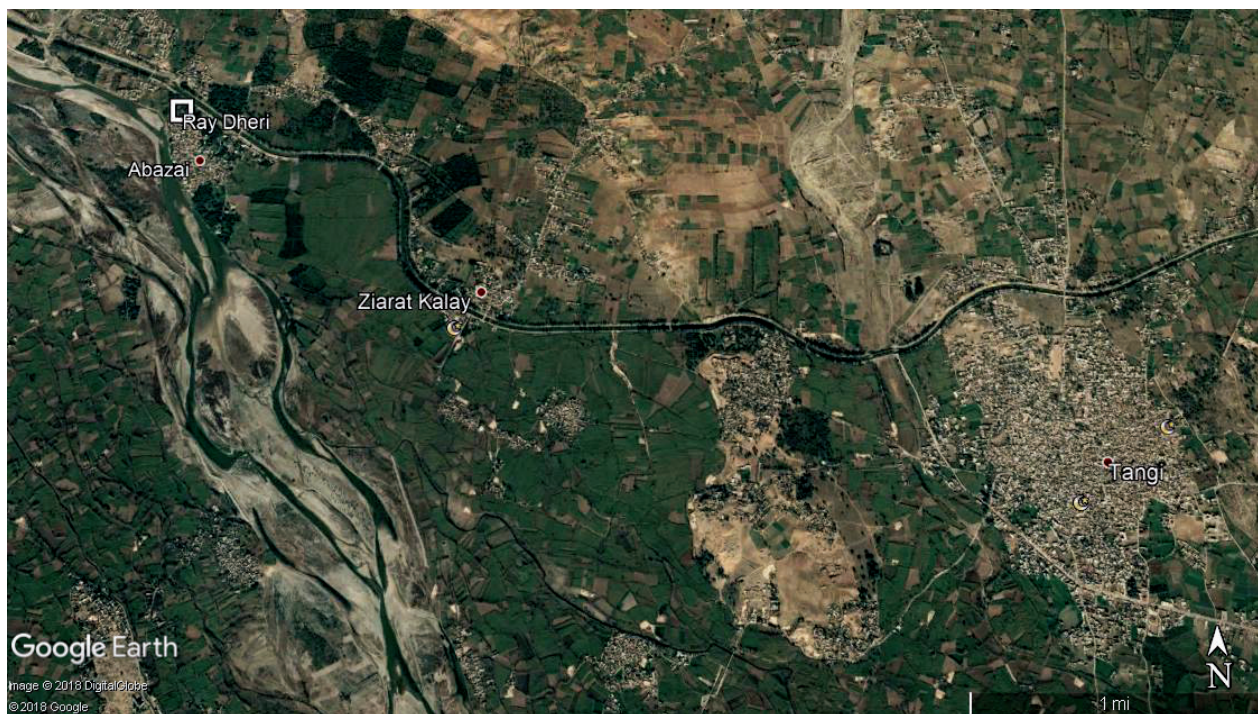
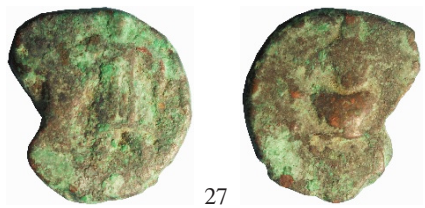
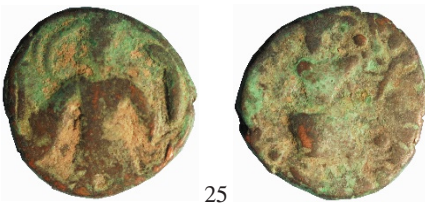
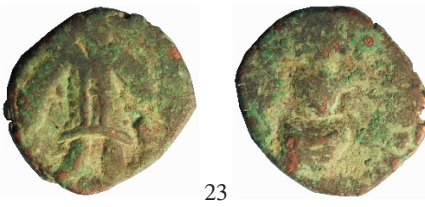
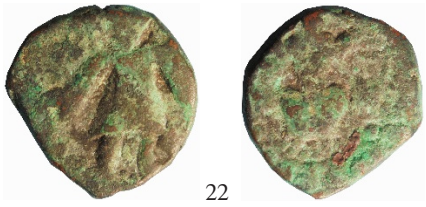
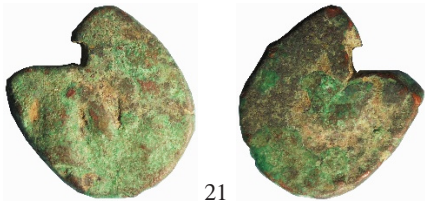
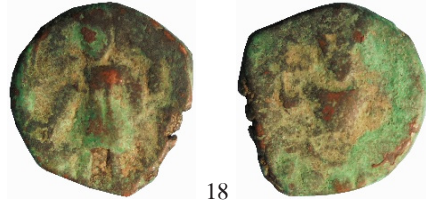
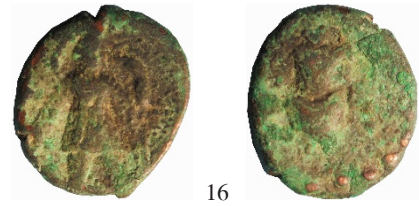
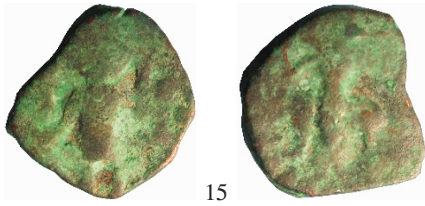


Figure 2. Close-up location of the site, Ray Dheri (Abazai) (Source Google Earth, 24 May 2017)









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