

Two Gold Hoards of the Late Kushans from Rustam, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract:

A hoard or a group of coins with its categorically stated find spot is brought here for the attention of scholars. Such hoards prove quite helpful in establishing circulation of particular coins at a certain period and place. The present lots of coins are important evidence concerning coinage and history of the Late Kushans in ancient Gandhara region.

This paper deals with two hoards of gold coins reported from the same locality; one is recently recovered and the other was found some years ago. Of these, the recent hoard of coins (referred to as Hoard-A) was reported from Milanderai, an archaeological site near Rustam, Mardan Division, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. The owner of the hoard has shown to the authors a parcel of coins in July 2012. Upon request photographs of these coins were provided to us for the purpose of research for which we are grateful to him. Due to inaccessibility to these coins, their weight and dimension could not be determined, however, on the basis of the photographs their brief introduction is presented in this paper. The hoard comprises twenty nine gold pieces of dinar unit of the Late Kushan period, presenting sixteen coins of Vasudeva II and thirteen coins of Shaka.

Hoard-A

This hoard generally represents one design of coins showing standing figure of a king, sacrificing with his right hand over altar, on the obverse and enthroned Ardoxsho on the reverse. All coins of Vasudeva II exhibit Brāhmī letters, read together as *Vasu*, in the right field and the Shaka coins

also bear Brāhmī letters, read as *Shaka*, in the same position. In addition, these coins also bear various letters in other areas on the obverse. Due to the scheme of letters, the coins of Vasudeva II are distinguished into five varieties. The coins of Shaka also fall into five sub-varieties on the same scheme. These coins are arranged according to the varieties of the letters and referred to by the number of Göbl's catalogue, published in 1984.

The analytical study shows that the gold coins of this period are known to have been issued in debased metal (Maity 1958: 162-71; Oddy & Cribb 1995: 275-92). The gold contents of the Late Kushan series were progressively reduced in course of time. In the light of cited sources, the first two varieties (type 1.1-1.2) of Vasudeva II belonging to Göbl's nos. 571 and 577 contain 85% gold and the last two (type 1.4-1.5) to Göbl's nos. 574 and 576 have 78% to 77% gold. It was during the reign of one king that the contents of gold coins drastically reduced by 8%. The gold contents of one variety (type 1.3) are unknown due to uncertainty of letters. Similarly the first three varieties (type 2.1-2.3) of Shaka belonging to Göbl's nos. 580, 579 and 581 contain 77% to 75%

gold. On the basis of gold quantity they are close to the gold contents in later coins of Vasudeva II. The remaining two varieties (type 2.4 – 2.5) having similarity with the Göbl's nos. 591 and 594 contain 48% gold. In view of this comparison, the gold contents of the present collection likely to be ranged from 85% to 48%. However, the Shaka coins in terms of gold contents in them fall in three standard categories having 75%, 60% and 50% gold respectively (Oddy & Cribb 1995: 278). But, the present lot represents the first and last categories of coins. Similar analysis of gold coins of the Kushan rulers in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, was carried out by SK Maity (1958: 162-71). He observed gradual reduction of gold contents in the Late Kushan coinage such as *Sita* of the Shaka coins, containing low gold contents than those of *Vasu* (Vasudeva II). The arrangement of Brāhmī letters on the coins and in the light of experimental analysis of gold content by Oddy and Maity, the present hoard seems to have been buried in the later phase of the Shaka period.

Hoard-B

In addition to the above mentioned Hoard-A, the principal author came across some gold coins of another small hoard of the Late Kushans. It also reported from the same area, Rustam, which was accidentally found by a local farmer while ploughing his fields in 2002. Photographs of these coins were provided to the author by one of his friends for study. The said photographs are not fine and clear as they were taken with old fashion camera whereas their scanned images were passed on to me. Later on the scanned record was

also lost and the author found only rough copy of its print outs which are hereby re-scanned for the present paper. Accordingly their analytical study was concluded but the results could not be published in time. Now, the photographs of the said collection (Hoard-B) are arranged herewith the coins of new hoard (-A) for comparison and analytical study in order to understand the numismatic importance of the two hoards of the same era recovered from the same area.

The second group (Hoard-B) comprised 11 gold coins where two specimens (nos. 30-31) are identified for Vasudeva II and the remaining nine (nos. 32-40) for Shaka. The coins of Vasudeva II are of a single variety bearing additional letters *ga* underneath left arm and *vi* between king's right leg and altar (Göbl 1984, no. 576). But the Shaka coins on the basis of Brāhmī letters on their obverse are divided into three sub-varieties:

- (a) name *Shaka* in the right field and letter *mi* underneath left arm with addition of letter *me* between king's right leg and altar [Göbl 1984, no. 580],
- (b) name *Shaka* in the right field and letter *mi* underneath left arm of the king [Göbl 1984, no. 579], and
- (c) name *Shaka* in the right field and letter *bhra* underneath left arm of the king [Göbl 1984, no. 589].

The nature, scope, quantity and contents of the gold hoards of the Later Kushans (Vasudeva II and his successor Shaka) from Rustam suggest that they were found likely to be intact. All coins of the Hoard-

A except one example (no. 28) belong to mint-B categorized by R Bracy in his chart for the gold coins of Shaka (Bracey 2012: 121, Fig. 4). In this way the place of issue and area of circulation of these coins was the same. The original owners of the Hoards A and B seem to be contemporary who accumulated their coins in the period of Vasudeva II and Shaka. The later coins of Shaka in both the hoards indicate that they were buried in the same period perhaps during the later days of the said ruler or just after his death. The discoveries of such hoards in one location also reveal the same kind of episode, i.e., natural catastrophe or political change occurred in the area during the mid of the 4th century CE, the advent of the Sasanians and Kidarites.

Comparison with Other Late Kushan Hoards

One gold hoard of the Great Kushans reported from Topi, east of Swabi town, was published by Burns (1990: 16-21). The town of Swabi, situated in district of the same name, is located to the east of Mardan. The town of Rustam is lying on the northeastern border of Mardan district. Topi and Rustam are located at the foot hills of the same area and not far away from each other. The Topi hoard yielded five coins of Huvishka and sixteen of Vasudeva I. All the three phases of gold coins of Vasudeva I were included in the Topi hoard and thus it certainly belongs to the late phase of Vasudeva I reign. The period of Topi hoard is about a hundred years earlier than the recent hoards (A and B, mentioned above) of the Late Kushans from Rustam.

Another gold hoard of the Late Kushans, containing eighteen coins of Shaka, is known from Hasanabdal, in Attock district, west of Taxila. The contents and burial period of this hoard is similar to those reported from Rustam. Similarly a small hoard of four gold coins of the Late Kushans was found by John Marshall at Jaulian, Taxila, in 1921. These coins uniformly bear a square tubular bar at the top edge which is termed by the author as the coin-pendants. This collection was excavated from a monastery cell no. 19 (Marshall 1921: 57, pl. xxix, j-m and 1951:385, no. 95, a-d). The author placed these coins amongst amulets and pendants, Class-IV (chapter-30). Of these, one coin belongs to Vasudeva II and three to Shaka (Khan 2008: nos. 51-54). So the period of deposition of this collection is identical to those found at Rustam and Hasanabdal.

Still another discovery of two small gold hoards from Bannu, an old city in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, also belongs to the period of Shaka of the Late Kushans (Burns 1985: 56-57). One of the hoards containing twenty gold dinars was found in 1980 and the other having twelve gold dinars was reported in 1983. All coins of the first one uniformly bear Brahmi letters *sita* and *vi*, while those of the second *pa* along with the name Shaka in various positions on their obverse (Burns 1985: 56-57).

Besides their discovery from Pakistan, many similar hoards of gold coins of the same period are also reported from Rajasthan, Utter Pradesh and Haryana provinces of north-west India. Such findings have been made at different times and published by different authors

(Srivastava A.K. 1969: 27-30; Srivastava C.S. 1969: 48-49; Pokharna 1981: 25-35; Mitterwallner 1986: 1-49; Gupta & Kulashreshtha 1994: 117-119, 157, 178-79; Mail Bid Sale 2002: 129-30, no. 60). These hoards represent the gold coins by the latest ruler Shaka or his successors (see Table-A). These hoards also reveal political setback instigated by the Guptas in the 4th century CE.

In view of the available numismatic evidence, a major breakdown of the Late Kushans seems to have occurred simultaneously in Gandhara and the Bannu region and northwest India during the last days of Shaka or just after his rule in the mid of the 4th century CE.

Table A: Late Kushan Gold Hoards with Shaka Coins

King	Hoards Reported from India				Hoards Reported from Pakistan							
	Jaipur Hoard	Jhunjhunu Hoard	Bijnor Hoard	Hisar Hoard	Rustam Hoard-A*	Rustam Hoard-B	Bannu Hoard-A	Bannu Hoard-B	Hasanabdal Hoard	Jaulian Coins	Sargodha Hoard	Auction Coins
Kanishka I												
Huvishka												5
Vasudeva I	2	2		2								1
Vasudeva's Imitations												1
Kanishka II				2								
Vasishka												3
Vasishka or Kanishka III												3
Kanishka III	2	2		2								8
Vasudeva II	2	2		2	16	2				1		4
Shaka	3	3	1	1	13	9	12	23	18	3	21	4
Mahi		1									1	
Magra	1											
Kipunadha											16	
Gadakhra (Samudra Gupta)												
Gadahra (Kirada)												
Gadahra (Piroyasa)												
Kushano-Sasanians												4
Gupta			4	11								
Total	10	10	5	20/86	29	11	12	23	18	4	38	33

Catalogue of Coins

Hoard A

A1. Vasudeva II

Type 1.1. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Vasu, vi, sa*

Obv. King standing frontally with head turned to left, wears diadem, conical crown adorned with crest and pearls, embroidered dress, trousers and long boots, sword underneath garment, right hand sacrificing over altar and holds staff bound with fillet in raised left. A trident bound with fillet stands in the left field behind altar; Brāhmī letter *Vasu* in the right field, *vi* between legs and *sa* between king's right leg and altar.

Bactrian legend partly preserved

Rev. Female figure facing frontally seated on a high backed throne, nimbate, wears long robe and crown, holds diadem with long ribbons in extended right hand and cornucopia in crook of left arm. *Tamga* is on the left and legend ΑΡΔΟΧΠΟ (down) on the right.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 571

Coin no. 1

Type 1.2. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Vasu, ga, bha*

Obv. As 1.1, but scheme of Brāhmī letters is as: *Vasu* in the right field, *ga* underneath left arm and *bha* between king's right leg and altar in the lower left field.

Rev. As 1.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 577

Coin nos. 2-6

Type 1.3. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Vasu, ga*

Obv. As 1.1, but scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Vasu* in the right field, *ga* underneath left arm and there is either *bha* or *vi* or the letter is dropped in lower left between right leg of the king and altar.

Rev. As 1.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, nos. 576-77 (?)

Coin nos. 7-10

Type 1.4. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Vasu, ga, vi, bha*

Obv. As 1.1, but scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Vasu* in the right field, *ga* underneath left arm, *vi* between legs and *bha* between king's right leg and altar.

Rev. As 1.1, but the reverse design struck twice on all these coins.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 574

Coin nos. 11-13

Type 1.5. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Vasu, ga, vi*

Obv. As 1.1, but scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Vasu* in the right field, *ga* underneath left arm and *vi* between king's right leg and altar.

Rev. As 1.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 576

Coin nos. 14-16

A2. Shaka**Type 2.1. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Shaka, mi, me***

Obv. King standing frontally with head turned to left, wears diadem, conical hat adorned with crest and pearls, embroidered dress, trousers and long boots, sword underneath garment, right hand sacrificing over altar and holds staff bound with fillet in raised left. A trident bound with fillet stands in the left field behind altar; Brāhmī letter *Shaka* in the right field, *mi* underneath left arm and *me* between king's right leg and altar in the lower left field.

Bactrian legend partly preserved

Rev. Female figure seated on a high backed throne facing frontally, nimbate, wears long robe and crown, holds diadem with long ribbons in extended right hand and cornucopia in crook of left arm. *Tamga* is on the left and legend ΑΡΔΟΧΠΟ (down) on the right.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 580

Coin nos. 17-20

Type 2.2. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Shaka, mi*

Obv. As 2.1, but the scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Shaka* in the right field and *mi* underneath left arm of the king.

Rev. As 2.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 579

Coin nos. 21-23

Type 2.3. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Shaka, pa*

Obv. As 2.1, but the scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Shaka* in the right field and *pa* underneath left arm of the king.

Rev. As 2.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 581

Coin nos. 24-27

Type 2.4. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters: *Shaka, sita, mi*

Obv. As 2.1, but the scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Shaka* in the right field, *sita* underneath left arm and *vi* between king's right leg and altar.

Rev. As 2.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 591

Coin no. 28

Type 2.5. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters: *Shaka, sya* with a small circle, *bha*

Obv. As 2.1, but the scheme of Brāhmī letter is as: *Shaka* in the right field, *sya* with a small circle underneath left arm and *bha* between king's right leg and altar.

Rev. As 2.1.

Reference: Göbl-1984, no. 594

Coin no. 29

Hoard B**B1. Vasudeva II****Type 1.5. As above (A1.1), Brāhmī letters *Vasu, ga, vi*****Obv.** King standing to left as 1.1, Brāhmī letter *Vasu* in the right field, *ga* underneath left arm of the king and *vi* between king's right leg and altar.

Bactrian legend fragmentary

Rev. As A1.1, Tamga in the left field and legend APΔOXPO in the right.**Reference:** Göbl- 1984, no. 576

Coin nos. 30-31

B2. Shaka**Type 2.1. As above (B2.1), Brāhmī letters *Shaka, mi, me*****Obv.** As 2.1, Brāhmī letters *Shaka* in the right field, *mi* underneath left arm of the king and *me* between king's right leg and altar.**Rev.** As 2.1.**Reference:** Göbl - 1984, no. 580

Coin nos. 32-36

Type 2.2. As above, Brāhmī letters *Shaka, mi***Obv.** As 2.2.**Rev.** As 2.1.**Reference:** Göbl- 1984, no. 579

Coin nos. 37-39

Type 2.6. King standing at altar/ enthroned Ardoxsho; Brāhmī letters *Shaka, bhra***Obv.** As 2.1, Brāhmī letters *Shaka* in the right field and *bhra* underneath left arm of the king.

Legend is off flan.

Rev. As 2.1.**Reference:** Göbl - 1984, no. 589

Coin no. 40

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Hoard A



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