

Copper Coins of Vima Kadphises in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi

Gul Rahim Khan and M. Nasim Khan

Introduction

The National Museum of Pakistan Karachi possesses more than sixty thousand coins of various dynasties and states that were issued and circulated in different eras. The coins of ancient dynasties of this region represented by the museum are in immense number. Amongst these the Kushan dynasty, which is known to have ruled from 1st to 4th century CE, is well known for its coins struck both in gold and copper. The gold coins of this dynasty (including earlier dynasties) and copper coins of the two emperors i.e. Kanishka and Huvishka lying in the National Museum of Pakistan are already published by the author in various research journals (Khan, 2009/a; 2009/b & 2010/a). In this respect it is the 4th paper of a series of the Kushan coins lying in the cabinet of the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi.

As evident from the title, this paper is based on the copper coins of Vima Kadphises, third emperor of the Kushans. Earlier this ruler had long been considered as the son and successor of Kujula Kadphises but during the second half of 20th century he was placed after the nameless king 'Soter Megas' and now is firmly confirmed in the same position after the discovery of the Rabatak inscription (Sims-Williams & Cribb 1996 & Sims-Williams, 2008, 53-68). In this way he was the third ruler in succession after Kujula Kadphises and Vima Taktu. The reign of Vima Kadphises was occurred in the beginning of 2nd century and would likely to have concluded before 127 CE, i.e. beginning of Kanishka Era (Falk, 2001, 127-33 & 2004, 167-73; Bopearachchi, 2007, 50;

Cribb, 2005 & 2008, 67; Loeschner, 2008, 15-18).

The coins of this ruler are common and frequently found in the Oxus Valley (Zeymal, 1997, 90-94; Abdullaev, 2004, 272-79), Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Gangetic region in India (Altekar, 1950, 121-23; Jain, 1965, 118-19 & 1966, 1-5; Srivastava, 1986, 142-43; Srivastava, 1980 & 1989, 119-23; Gupta, 1994, 22-31). According to numismatic evidences, Vima Kadphises had extended the Kushan rule further east beyond the limits of Mathura. In these regions the coins of this ruler are normally reported in hoards which found together with the coins of his successors i.e. Kanishka and Huvishka.

This was Vima Kadphises who originated the true Kushan coinage, which thereafter with little modifications adopted and developed by the subsequent rulers of the dynasty. He started the gold coins of dinar standard (8.00 gm) and the heavy copper of tetra-drachm unit (c. 17 gm). These coins were further known in other denominations as well. In the time of Huvishka the copper coins were then issued in one denomination, which progressively struck in reduced weight by him and the successors (Khan, 2010/b & 2011). The credit also goes to Vima Kadphises who introduced the full length figure of monarch in standing position shown on the obverse of his copper coins. The basic idea of standing figure was derived from the reverse design of the Parthian king Gotarzes, who ruled from 40/41 to 51 AD (Mukherjee, 1960, 110). The king is shown standing frontally with head turned to left and right hand sacrificing over altar. He wears long

kaftan over tunic, loose trousers and heavy boots of the Kushan style. This type of standing figure was uniformly appeared on his all copper coins and a rare specimen of silver (Rosenfield, 1967, 25). This style of standing figure became the characteristic feature of the Kushan coinage and was commonly used by all the successors. With the case of Huvishka, this figure is rarely seen on the copper coins but not known on his gold. The gold coins of Huvishka were struck with variety of other designs mostly taken from Vima Kadphises' gold but not shown in standing position as cited above.

The reverse of copper coins of Vima Kadphises bears a single design i.e. Śiva (or Oesho) standing with his mount, bull. The figure of Śiva is shown standing frontally and bull standing behind the deity is facing to right. The deity holds a trident in his raised right hand and animal's pelt or drapery in the left leaning against bull's hump. Śiva wears beaded string over his left shoulder and transparent mantle where erect phallus is visible and the folds of mantle are clearly seen over his lower body particularly the legs. Moreover, the figure bears three-pronged flames at top of the head and sometimes he is shown with prominent breasts. Joe Cribb elaborately discussed this deity and identified all varieties of the figure appeared on the gold and copper coins of Vima Kadphises and successors (Cribb, 1997). In this analytical study, he noted two normal and four exceptional varieties of Śiva on the coins of Vima Kadphises.

On the copper coins of Vima Kadphises, the reverse figure seems to be three-headed Śiva, as interpreted by John Perkins (2007). Many good examples of the National Museum of Pakistan such as nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 31 and 37 bear similar evidence, which further strengthen the views of three-headed Śiva highlighted by Perkins. The lateral heads are usually seen as side

blobs. But on some fine examples as described by Perkins the lateral heads are distinguishable i.e. human and horned animal (prob. antelope) (Perkins, 2007). In this respect Bopearachchi (2007, 43-44) and Srinivasan (2008, 132) also have the same views of three-headed Śiva found on the coins of Vima Kadphises.

The copper coins of this ruler are usually known in three denominations such as tetradrachm (c. 17 gm), di-drachm (8.5 gm) and drachm (4.2 gm) units of Attic standard. This kind of weight analysis representing copper coins of Vima Kadphises and other Kushan rulers was elaborately discussed by MacDowall (1960). The heavy unit coins (tetradrachm) of this ruler are more common than the lower denominations of copper. Besides this, the copper issues generally fall into two categories: (a) monolingual coins and (b) bilingual coins. The monolingual coins contain a Greek legend on the reverse, and reel and beaded border on the obverse. These coins are generally suggested to have issued from Bactria. But Robert Bracey has a different opinion regarding the production of these issues and considered them the initial stage coinage of Vima Kadphises (Bracey, 2010, 42). The bilingual coins have a Greek legend on the obverse and Kharoshthi on the reverse were likely to have issued to the south of the Hindu-Kush. Each category is further classified into sub-varieties by the cited above weight units.

Looking to the number of Vima's copper with other Great Kushan rulers like Kanishka and Huvishka, the coins of this ruler are comparatively less common. Accordingly the National Museum of Pakistan contains forty one coins of this ruler as compare to the ninety one coins of Kanishka (Khan, 2009/b) and fifty six of Huvishka (Khan, 2010/a). The catalogue of coins of the Punjab Museum Lahore also represents same kind of statistical data about these coins i.e. thirty

two of Vima Kadphises, 108 each of Kanishka and Huvishka (Whitehead, 1914, 183-207).

These coins are well reported and discussed in every catalogue related to the Kushan period. There is no major dispute about the sequence and attribution of the copper coins of this ruler. However in the beginning of numismatic studies of the Kushans some scholars have placed Vasudeva copper along with Vima Kadphises. This arrangement was made due to the close similarities of the coin designs of both the rulers (Masson, 1834; Thomas, 1858; Wilson, 1841).

Recent Work on Vima's Copper

As described above, the two-grouped classification i.e. monolingual series of coins and bilingual series of the copper coins of Vima Kadphises has been the well known mechanism on the basis of which these coins were usually catalogued in the early works. But in the result of recent scholarships the bilingual coins of Vima Kadphises are further classified into several varieties. In this regard Michael Mitchiner's classification is very comprehensive who classified the bilingual coins into two series (1978, nos. 2 & 3). These series are generally marked by the arrangement of legend: (a) Greek legend on the obverse is interrupted by the king's head with depiction of large 'phi' and (b) Greek legend written in continuous form above the king's head. In second series, Mitchiner noted some changes in Kharoshthi legend; the title *śvarāsa* is inscribed as *śvarāsa* instead of complete version hence vowel 'i' is dropped on these coins (Mitchiner, 1978, 407). Besides this, he also observed other changes like the arrangement of Kharoshthi legend (continuous/ interrupted), title or name composition and position of club and *tamga*.

Perkins who identified three-headed Śiva figure on the copper coins of Vima also classified the bilingual issues into three sub-groups (Perkins, 2007, 36). His classification is generally focused on the style of legend, altar variations, heads of Śiva, letter forms and word deterioration. Robert Bracey while conducting extensive work on the die study of gold and copper coins of this ruler marked four varieties of the bilingual issues of copper. The order of these varieties is as follows: D1, A1, A2 and B1 (Bracey, 2010, 42-44). The first three varieties are corresponding with the first bilingual series and the fourth with the second bilingual series of Mitchiner. Bracey's classifications are almost similar with those of Perkins but he observed many new elements like the number of spikes in a club, tip of sword underneath the kaftan of ruler, design of altar, style of legend and words composition particularly in the Greek legend. His way of classification is very sensible and helpful to understand the scheme of Vima coinage. Further, he is very conscious about the distribution and sequence of these varieties and the coins of the last group are treated separately and considered them the different style of coinage (Bracey, 2010, 42-44).

In view of the above mentioned works, generally looking same, Mitchiner's way of arrangements provide a basic order with great details of the copper coins of Vima Kadphises. The recent two contributions, as described above, are usually the developed forms of Mitchiner's classification. Both the scholars (Perkins, 2007 and Robert, 2010) conducted extensive survey for the study of these coins and hence were able to reorganize them in several sub varieties after detailed analysis. These important works were carried out in different backgrounds which addressed the issues with new perceptions. The present authors, following the procedures of cited-above scholars,

would like to rearrange the copper coins of Vima Kadphises in a new sequence.

New Sequence of Bilingual Issues

The National Museum of Pakistan does not represent any coin of the monolingual series and thus all coins of Vima Kadphises are bilingual. Moreover, the monolingual coins are generally rare and only few are reported from other collections (Perkins, 2007, 32; Göbl, 1984, 72). In view of the collection of the National Museum of Pakistan, thirty seven pieces are of tetradrachm unit (nos. 1-37), one of didrachm (no. 38) and three of drachm weight respectively (nos. 39-41).

The bilingual coins in terms of legend arrangement, as described by Mitchiner, are classified here into two categories. But the fore-mentioned order of these series is hereby reorganized meaningfully to understand the sequence of these coins. The coins bearing Greek legend in continuous forms are placed first in order and the coins having Greek legend interrupted by the king's head are to be followed. The first category is represented by eighteen coins (nos. 1-18) and the second by nineteen (nos. 19-37). The legend continuity above figure's head on one side or the both is regularly seen on the different issues of Kujula and the same style of Greek legend on the reverse of monolingual series as well as both sides of bilingual issues of Vima Taktu. In this way the copper coins of Vima Kadphises having continuous legend particularly Greek on the obverse (Mitchiner, 1978, series-3 & Bracey 2010: B1) have their close connection with the coins of his predecessors. These coins would likely to be arranged earlier in sequence (Chart-1). This was the pre-Kushana style regularly appeared on the coins of preceding dynasties. Moreover, the author does not feel any need to re-discuss the reverse (Kharoshthi) legend in this

context as it is elaborately highlighted by the cited-above authors.

The second variety having a new style of legend, interrupted by the king's head on the obverse of Vima Kadphises (Mitchiner, 1978, series-2 & Bracey, 2010, D1, A1, A2), was then regularly followed by his successors i.e. Kanishka, Huvishka, Vasudeva etc (Chart-1). The obverse legend on the copper coins of these rulers is regularly interrupted by king's head and usually begins at 1 o'clock and terminates around 11 o'clock. It is not wrong to say that this was the Kushana style of legend, which like many other innovations, was introduced by Vima Kadphises. The detailed analysis and comparison of these coins (chart-1) obviously differentiate the two series. The said copper series of Vima Kadphises was likely to be issued in the later phase of his reign or certain coins were issued from a different mint as suggested by Mitchiner (1978). But it is difficult to say about the separate place of this issue and Perkins has also the same views in this regard (Perkins, 2007, 32). In this variety the Greek letter 'omicron' in the king's name OOHMO after 'mu' is sometimes dropped that shortly written as OOHM. This kind of name mistake is common in the said series of coins. Looking at the British Museum collection, numerous such examples are found with the absence of the last Greek letter 'O'. The same is also reported by Mitchiner in his first series of bilingual coins (Mitchiner, 1978, series-2). Moreover, Mitchiner reported few coins having the king's name spelled as OOMO (or OOHO) in his second series of bilingual coins (Mitchiner, 1978, series-3, coin nos. 3040-43). Besides this, Bracey in his variety A2 noted the king's titles BACAEYC BACAEWN inscribed without 'iota' (Bracey, 2010, 43). Similarly one coin of the National Museum of Pakistan i.e. no. 19 also

bears same kind of legend with the disappearance of 'iota'.

These unpublished coins of Vima Kadphises although do not have proper contextual record but they are most likely known to have come from somewhere in the territory of Pakistan and thus collected by the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi. In this regard, it is an important data which justify many points presented by Michael Mitchiner (1978), Perkins (2007) and Bracey (2010). The most important aspect of these coins is the rearrangements of bilingual coins of Vima Kadphises. As described earlier, the coins inscribed with the continuous Greek legend on the obverse would likely be the early issues of this ruler as they have such similarities with the coins of predecessors. Similarly the coins have the same kind of legend but interrupted by the king's head might be the later issues as the same style was adopted by the successors of Vima Kadphises for their coins. This new style of legend initiated by the said ruler thus became the characteristic feature for the obverse legend of subsequent rulers of the Kushans (see chart-1).

Acknowledgements

The author (first one) would like to pay his debt of gratitude to Dr. F.D. Kakar (Director General), Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan who granted me permission for the study and publication of these coins and staff member of the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi for their cooperation and hospitality. The author is thankful to his parent Department and University (of Peshawar) which spared him from his official duties to proceed to Karachi. The author is also thankful to Joe Cribb, ex-Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum (London), for his kind guidance and supervision. My thanks are due to the generous support of

Neil Kreitman Fund of the Royal Numismatic Society (London) granted to me for the survey of the Kushan coins in Pakistan.

Bibliography

- Abdullaev, K. (2004). A Hoard of Kushan Copper Coins from the Khalchayan Area (Sekharakat Village, Surkhandarya Region, Uzbekistan) – a Preliminary Report, *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 164, 272-79.
- Altekar, A.S. (1950). Buxar Hoard of Kushan Coins, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XII (1), 121-23.
- Bopearachchi, O. (2007). Some Observations on the Early Kushans, *Des Orientales*, Groupe pom l'Etude de la Civilisation du Moyen – Orient, XVII, 41-53, Bures-Sur-Yvette.
- Bracey, R. (2010). The Coinage of Wima Kadphises, *Gandharan Studies*, 3, 25-74.
- Cribb, J. (1997). Shiva Images on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian Coins, *Studies in Silk Road Coins and Culture, Papers in Honour of Professor Ikuo Hirayama on his 65th Birthday*, in: K. Tanabe, J. Cribb, H. Wang, Special Volume, 11-66, Kamakura.
- Cribb, J. (2005). The Greek Kingdom of Bactria, its Coinage and its Collapse, *Afghanistan Ancien Carrefour entre l'Est et l'Ouest*, in: O. Bopearachchi and M. Boussac, Turnhout, 207-225.
- Cribb, J. (2008). Coins and Chronology of Gandhara, *Gandhara – the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Legends, Monasteries and Paradise*, 64-69, Mainz.
- Falk, H. (2001). The Yoga of Sphujiddhvaja and the Era of the Kushanas, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, VII, 121-36.
- Falk, H. (2004). The Kanishka Era in Gupta Records, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, X, 167-76.
- Göbl, R. (1984). *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušanreiches*, Vienna.
- Gupta, P.L. (1994). Eastern Expansion of the Kushana Empire, *Kushan Coins and History*, 22-50, New Delhi.
- Jain, B.C. (1965). A Hoard of 757 Kushan Copper Coins from Shahdol District of Madhya Pradesh, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XXVII (1), 118-19.
- Jain, B.C. (1966). Kushana Coins from Shahdol District, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XXVIII (1), 1-5.
- Khan, G.R. (2009/a). Seleucids to Kidarites: Gold Coins in the Cabinet of National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi, *Gandharan Studies*, 3, 1-24.
- Khan, G.R. (2009/b). Kanishka Copper Coins in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi: Analysis & Classifications, *Ancient Pakistan*, XX, 59-79.
- Khan, G.R. (2010/a). Copper Coins of Huvishka in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi, *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, XXXIII (1), 61-87.
- Khan, G.R. (2010/b). Copper Coins of Vasudeva and Successors from Taxila, *Gandharan Studies*, 4, 39-161.
- Khan, G.R. (2011). Copper Issues of Huvishka from Gandhara, *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Gandharan Cultural Heritage 1-3 December 2010*, Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations Quaid-i-Azam University, 209-234, Islamabad,.
- Loeschner, H. (2008). Notes on the Yue-Zhi – Kushan Relationship and Kushan Chronology, *Oriental Numismatic Society* (15th April 2008), 1-28, London.
- MacDowall, D.W. (1960). The Weight Standard of the Gold and Copper Coinage of the Kushana Dynasty from Vima Kadphises to Vasudeva I, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XXII, 63-74.
- Masson, C. (1834). Memoirs on the Ancient Coins found at Begram, in the Kohistan of Kabul, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 3 (April), 153-174, Pls. XII-XIII.
- Mitchiner, M. (1978). *Oriental Coins and Their Values: the Ancient & Classical World, 600 BC – AD 650*, 404-409, London.
- Mukherjee, B.N. (1960). The Proto-Type of an Obverse Device of Kushana Coinage, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XXII, 109-12.
- Perkins, J. (2007). Three-headed Shiva on the Reverse of Vima Kadphises's Copper Coinage, *South Asian Studies*, 23, 31-37.

- Rosenfield, J.M. (1967). *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Los Angeles.
- Sims-Williams, N. & Cribb, J. (1996). A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, IV, 77-142.
- Sims-Williams, N. (2008). The Bactrian Inscription of Rabatak: A New Reading, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 18, 53-68.
- Srinivasan, D.M. (2008). Hindu Deities in Gandhara Art, *Gandhara – the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Legends, Monasteries and Paradise*, 130-64, Mainz.
- Srivastava, K.M. (1986). *Discovery of Kapilavastu*, New Delhi.
- Srivastava, A.K. (1980). *Coin Hoards from Utter Pradesh*, Lucknow.
- Srivastava, A.K. (1989). Treasure Trove Finds from Mathura, *Mathura: the Cultural Heritage*, in: D.M. Srinivasan, 119-123, New Delhi.
- Whitehead, R.B. (1914). *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum, Lahore: Indo-Greek Coins*, I, Oxford.
- Thomas, E. (1858). *Prinsep's Essay on the Indian Antiquities*, I, (repr), 1995, New Delhi.
- Wilson, H.H. (1841). *Ariana Antiqua: A Descriptive Account of the Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan*, London, (repr), 1997, Delhi.
- Zeymal, E.V. (1997). Coins from the Excavations of Takht-i-Sangin (1976-1991). *Studies in Silk Road Coins and Culture, Papers in Honour of Professor Ikuo Hirayama on his 65th Birthday*, in: K. Tanabe, J. Cribb, H. Wang, (Special Volume), 89-110, Kamakura.

Chart-1. Legend style: Comparison of Vima Kadphises with his predecessors and successors

King	Legend continuous		Legend is interrupted
Kujula Kadphises (Obv. & Rev.)			
Vima Taktu (Obv. & Rev.)			
Vima Kadphises (Obv. & Rev.)			
Kanishka (Obv.)			
Huvishka (Obv.)			
Vasudeva (Obv.)			

Coins images: Courtesy of the British Museum (UK) & Taxila Museum (Pakistan)

Catalogue of Coins

A. Large Coins (unit: tetra-drachm, c. 17 gm)

a. Continuous Greek legend above King's head

Obv. King standing at altar to left, wears a long cloak and trousers, and tall rounded headdress; right hand is sacrificing over altar and left holding hem of dress near waist. A trident-battle-axe stands in the left field behind altar and a club near left hand in the right field with four pronged tamga above it.

Greek legend: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΛΦΙΧΗC 1 o'clock

Rev. Tri-cephalic figure of Śiva (or Oesho) standing frontally with head in profile to left and three pronged flames emanating from the top of head. He wears transparent drapery and a long necklace over left shoulder. The figure holds a trident in raised right hand and animal's pelt or drapery in the left. *Nandipada* symbol is shown in the left field.

Khar. legend: *Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga (i)śvarasa mahiśvarasa vima kaṭhphiśasa tratara* 12 o'clock

Reference: Mitchiner, 1978, nos. 3025-35

Coin nos. 1-18

bi. Greek legend interrupted by King's head

Obv. As a, the Greek legend begins at 1 o'clock as above but terminates at 11 o'clock and the king's head is placed before the legend begins.

Greek legend: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΛΦΙΧΗC 1 o'clock

Rev. As a, but Khar. legend: *Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga iśvarasa mahiśvarasa vima kaṭhphiśasa tratara* 12 o'clock

Reference: Mitchiner, 1978, not reported

Coin no. 19

bii. Greek legend interrupted by King's head

Obv. As bi.

Greek legend: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜ ΚΑΛΦΙΧΗC 1 o'clock
(ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΛΦΙΧΗC 1 o'clock)

Rev. As bi.

Reference: Mitchiner, 1978, nos. 3008-22

Coin nos. 20-37

B. Medium Coins (unit: di-drachm, c. 8.5 gm)

Obv. As a.

Rev. As a/bi.

Reference: Mitchiner, 1978, nos. 3048-49

Coin no. 38

C. Small Coins (unit: drachm, c. 4.2 gm)

Obv. As a.

Rev. As a/bi.

Reference: Mitchiner, 1978, nos. 3050-59

Coin nos. 39-41



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21



22



23



24





25



26



27



28



29



30



31



32



33



34



35



36



37



38



39



40



41