

A Hoard of Kushan Coins from Mingora

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The late William F. Spengler, Jr. was a noted collector and author, with strong ties in Afghanistan and Pakistan, who passed away in 2005. I recently had the opportunity to look through some of the coin stocks he left behind. Among these stocks was a group of 27 Kushan coins gathered together and marked as being the “Mingora hoard.” Knowing how meticulous Bill was, and knowing of his closeness to some of the sources in the area, I feel fairly certain that this group of coins did indeed constitute a hoard that must have been found in or near Mingora, the largest town in the Swat valley of Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. As there was a list in Bill’s handwriting of the 27 coins packed in with the group, I feel fairly certain also that the 27 coins constituted the entire hoard and not just the remnants of a larger group from which the cherries had been picked. The group forms a chronologically logical set, a fact which supports the idea of this being a hoard. For all these reasons, despite the facts that the provenance is somewhat uncertain and that there is no guarantee that some coins were not picked out of the hoard before Bill ever saw it, it seemed worthwhile to record the group.

The coins were all of bronze and included:

- 2 Vima Kadphises AE units (or tetradrachms),
- 8 Kanishka AE ½ units (or didrachms) of the “year 1” Greek series,
- 14 Kanishka AE units (or tetradrachms) of the later Bactrian series, and
- 3 Kanishka AE ½ units (or didrachms) of the later Bactrian series.²

The coins are illustrated in the following table. Each coin is identified by its catalogue number in Göbl’s Kushan atlas,³ and the weight, diameter and die axis are provided in each case.

	
Coin 1: Vima Kadphises AE unit (G 761) 16.48 gm, 25 mm, 12 o'clock	Coin 2: Vima Kadphises AE unit (G 761) 15.82 gm, 25 mm, 12 o'clock

¹ I wish to thank Joe Cribb and Robert Bracey for many useful discussions on Kushan coins over the years.

² Robert Bracey remarked that it was unusual to find didrachms in a hoard of Kushan bronzes.

³ Robert Göbl: *Münzprägung des Kušānreiches*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984.

	
<p>Coin 3: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 7.92 gm, 21-22 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 3: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 8.07 gm, 21-23 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 5: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 8.02 gm, 22-23 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 6: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 8.22 gm, 21-22 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 7: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 8.25 gm, 21-22 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 8: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 766) 8.23 gm, 21-24 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 9: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 767) 8.41 gm, 21 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 10: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 767) 8.14 gm, 21 mm, 11:30 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 11: Kanishka AE unit (G 774) 16.43 gm, 26-27 mm, 1 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 12: Kanishka AE unit (G 774) 17.08 gm, 25 mm, 12 o'clock</p>

	
<p>Coin 13: Kanishka AE unit (G 774) 16.67 gm, 24-26 mm, 12:30 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 14: Kanishka AE unit (G 768) 16.90 gm, 26-27 mm, 1 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 15: Kanishka AE unit (G 768) 16.65 gm, 25-26 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 16: Kanishka AE unit (G 768) 16.78 gm, 24 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 17: Kanishka AE unit (G 776) 17.32 gm, 26 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 18: Kanishka AE unit (G 776) 17.89 gm, 24 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	
<p>Coin 19: Kanishka AE unit (G 783) 16.92 gm, 24-25 mm, 12 o'clock</p>	<p>Coin 20: Kanishka AE unit (G 783) 15.74 gm, 25-26 mm, 12 o'clock</p>
	

Coin 21: Kanishka AE unit (G 783) 16.68 gm, 24-26 mm, 1 o'clock	Coin 22: Kanishka AE unit (G 783) 17.78 gm, 25-26 mm, 12 o'clock
	
Coin 23: Kanishka AE unit (G 781) 16.73 gm, 24-25 mm, 1 o'clock	Coin 24: Kanishka AE unit (G 781) 16.19 gm, 25-26 mm, 12 o'clock
	
Coin 25: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 771) 8.94 gm, 21 mm, 12 o'clock	Coin 26: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 771) 8.97 gm, 20-21 mm, 12 o'clock
	
Coin 27: Kanishka AE ½ unit (G 782) 8.57 gm, 21 mm, 12 o'clock	

A detailed breakdown of the hoard coins is as follows:

- 2 Göbl 761: Vima Kadphises AE units,
- 6 Göbl 766: Kanishka AE ½ units of the Greek series, Helios reverse,
- 2 Göbl 767: Kanishka AE ½ units of the Greek series, Nanaia reverse,
- 3 Göbl 774: Kanishka AE units of the Bactrian series, Mao reverse,
- 3 Göbl 768: Kanishka AE units of the Bactrian series, Miuro reverse,
- 2 Göbl 776: Kanishka AE units of the Bactrian series, Nana reverse,
- 4 Göbl 783: Kanishka AE units of the Bactrian series, Oado reverse,
- 2 Göbl 781: Kanishka AE units of the Bactrian series, Oesho reverse,
- 2 Göbl 771: Kanishka AE ½ units of the Bactrian series, Miuro reverse, and
- 1 Göbl 782: Kanishka AE ½ unit of the Bactrian series, Oesho reverse.

Notable by their absence are the bronze units of the Bactrian series with Athsho reverse, which are just about as common as the reverses with Mao and Miuro. Also absent are the

full units with the Mithra legend spelled *Mioro*, although there are two half units with that legend.

It is worth remarking that the die axes on all the coins are at 12 o'clock, or at slight deviations from that norm. Clearly, the mint workers were trying to keep the die axis quite regular.

Looking at Kanishka's crowns, we see that coin 3 features the crescent-topped crown, similar to the crown seen on the gold issues Göbl 25 and 26 (Göbl's "1.krone"), while all the crowns on the remaining year 1 Greek legend coins (coins 4-10) are the pointed type as on G 27 and 28 (Göbl's "2.krone"). These coins, issued in year 1 of Kanishka's reign, and that feature the Greek legend BACIAEYC BACIAEWN KANH̄KOY, were undoubtedly all minted at the main mint, which was labeled mint A by Göbl.

We see the same two crowns on the remaining coins which belong to the later Bactrian series (coins 11-27). The legend on these coins is in Bactrian: ḡAO KANH̄KI (*Shao Kaneshki* ... King Kanishka). Almost all the crowns that can be identified are the pointed type,⁴ except for coin 18, which features the crescent type crown. There are no coins that can be identified as featuring the ribbed type of crown (Göbl's "3.krone," seen on G 52-80 in the gold series), although 7 of the 17 coins have unidentifiable crowns. The composition of the crown types further strengthens the cohesiveness of the hoard. We know that the crescent type crown was used only for a very short time, as it is quite rare. Initially, it appears that both the crescent and the pointed crowns were used, but the crescent type was apparently phased out quite quickly. It seems that the ribbed type crown appeared later in Kanishka's reign, and was possibly issued from a different mint than the pointed type crown.⁵ Since we do not see a ribbed crown on any coin in the hoard, it could well be that the hoard consists of only early coins of Kanishka. In other words, it may have been buried some time in the middle of Kanishka's reign, before the ribbed crown type had been introduced.

The wear on the coins creates some doubt about this conclusion, however. The two Vima Kadphises coins are quite worn, as one might expect for the oldest coins in the group. But all the Kanishka coins also show some wear and the Bactrian issue coins are just about as worn as the Greek issue coins. This suggests to me that all of the coins had circulated for some time. If the coins had been buried mid-way through Kanishka's reign, we might have expected there to be some coins that showed almost no wear at all, but that is not the case. An alternative explanation for the absence of any of the ribbed crown types could be that the ribbed type coins were minted at a different mint, and the coins from that mint did not circulate very much in the area where this hoard was put together. In that case, the hoard coins could have circulated for some time before being buried. This explanation seems more consistent with the wear pattern we observe on the hoard coins. Thus this hoard seems to provide weak evidence that the ribbed type coins were issued from a different mint than the crescent and pointed crown types.

Mitchiner attempted to separate Kanishka's Bactrian legend bronze coins by a different criterion: whether or not the deity on the reverse of the coin wore a

⁴ Coins 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21, 23, 26 and 27 can be identified with the pointed crown. The crown is not visible enough on coins 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 24 and 25.

⁵ I have elsewhere pointed out that, just as Kanishka's gold coins feature three types of crowns, identified by Göbl, so do his bronze coins. See Pankaj Tandon: "The Crowns on Kanishka's Bronze Coins and Some Additional Shiva Images on Kushan Coins," unpublished manuscript, June 2010.

“transparent” or “solid” robe.⁶ His types 3074-3138, which he attributes to Taxila and Pushkalavati, have a transparent garment, such that the upper part of the deity’s legs can be seen in outline. A number of coins in the hoard have this characteristic, such as coins 13, 16, 23 and 27. On the other hand, Mitchiner’s types 3139-3153, which he attributed to Kapisa, had the deity wearing a “solid” garment such that the upper parts of the legs were not outlined. A number of hoard coins have this characteristic, such as coins 11, 12, 14, 15, 24, 25 and 26. Thus the hoard seems to suggest that the “transparent” and “solid” types may not have been issued at different mints. Göbl assigned them to the same mint, and this hoard would support his position over that of Mitchiner.

Finally, there are no coins from Göbl’s Münzstätte B (types 794-819) or Mitchiner’s “Eastern Series” (types 3154-3189). This hoard would support the attribution of these types to a different mint.

Overall, therefore, this “Mingora hoard” is a very coherent group of coins, all of which were probably minted at the “main mint” of the Kushan kings. This may have been in Bactria or, more likely given its proximity to the Swat valley, Gandhara.

⁶ Michael Mitchiner: *Oriental Coins and their Values: The Ancient and Classical World*, London: Hawkins Publications, 1978.