

The Crowns on Kanishka's Bronze Coins and Some Additional Shiva Images on Kushan Coins

Pankaj Tandon¹

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to offer this small piece of research in honour of Joe Cribb's retirement from the British Museum. Joe's past contributions to Indian numismatics are well-known and it is fitting that they be honoured. But I expect there is a lot more to come. This retirement could be a great gain for numismatic research as Joe will now have more time to publish his large backlog of unpublished work. So, rather than the unpublished PowerPoint presentations that he so freely shared, we will have finished papers fleshing out his ideas. The field of Kushan numismatics will be particularly enriched by this anticipated research output, and I look forward to it with keen anticipation.

In this paper, I explore two aspects of Kushan numismatics, both building directly on Joe's prior work. The first relates to the crowns on Kanishka's bronze coinage, and the second to images of Shiva on Kushan coins.

The Crowns on Kanishka's Bronze Coins

The first time I met Joe was on a visit to the British Museum in 2006. I had been exchanging emails with him for years, mostly questions from me that he would patiently answer. His generosity was on display during my visit also, where he freely shared his ideas and time with me. One particular observation that he shared at that time was that Kanishka's year 1 bronze coins could be differentiated by crown type just like the gold coins could.² This gave me the idea to check if a similar differentiation could be extended to the later bronze coinage as well. The answer is yes, as I will show.

In his encyclopedic survey of Kushan coinage, Göbl (1984) had noted that Kanishka's gold coins could be classified according to differences in the type of crown being worn by the king. The three basic crown types identified by Göbl are shown in Figure 1. I will refer to Crown I as the "crescent" type, because the crown often looks like a large crescent on top of the king's head. Crown II could be called the "pointed" type on account of its shape, and Crown III will be referred to as the "ribbed" type.³

Crowns I and II were the only ones used on the year 1 Greek-legends gold coins⁴ (Göbl types 25-28 and the Anemos-reverse type published by Tanabe, 1990), while Crown III came into use only later in the king's reign, possibly at a different mint. Among the year 1 gold series, we know of five different reverse types, featuring the gods

¹ Over the years, I have benefited greatly in my understanding of Kushan coins from discussions with Joe Cribb and Robert Bracey, for which I am grateful. Any errors are of course mine alone.

² This is an example of the kind of ideas and observations that have remained unpublished because of Joe's heavy workload.

³ I am grateful to Peter Linenthal for suggesting this term.

⁴ Kanishka's first coin issues carried legends only in Greek. As we know from the Rabatak inscription, some time in the first year of his reign, Kanishka ordered the use of Bactrian (it was called Arian in the inscription) rather than Greek on the inscription, and we can infer that he ordered a similar language shift for his coinage also. We do know that the Greek-legends coins are relatively scarce and it is therefore quite plausible that they were issued just during the early part of the first year of Kanishka's reign.

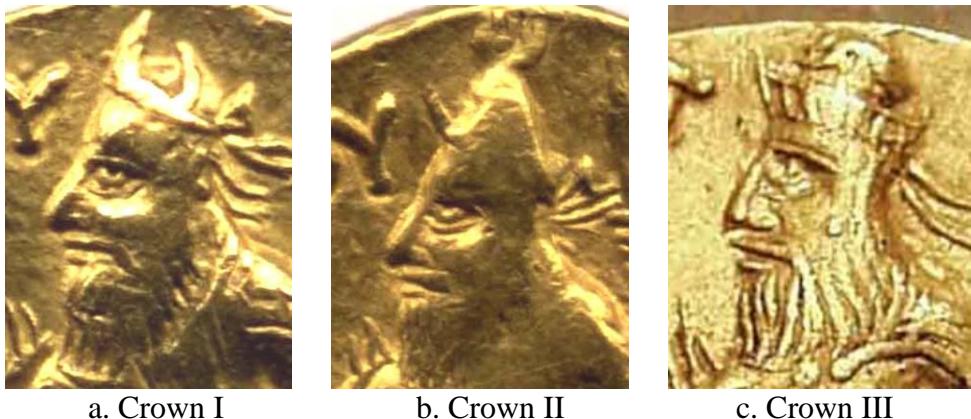


Figure 1: Kanishka's three gold crown types⁵

Helios, Salene, Nanaia, Hephaistos and Anemos. According to Göbl's detailed analysis, the Helios, Salene and Anemos types were all matched only with the crescent crown, while the Nanaia and Hephaistos types were paired only with the pointed crown. As an aside to my main thread, I publish in Figure 2 a year 1 gold coin with Helios reverse that features the *pointed* crown, an obverse type previously unknown for the Helios reverse. This coin provides further evidence that all of the year 1 gold coins were produced in a single mint with two work stations, a point that Joe has been arguing for many years,⁶ and which was recently shown by Bracey (2009) to be true for Wima Kadphises's gold coinage.



Figure 2: A Kanishka year 1 dinar with Helios reverse and pointed crown

⁵ (a) Göbl 25.1, (b) Göbl 27.1, (c) Göbl 57 type. First two photos courtesy British Museum.

⁶ This is yet another unpublished idea of Joe's, although this idea has been fleshed out in one of his PowerPoint presentations.

To return to the main point, what Joe pointed out to me during my 2006 visit was that the year 1 bronze coins also featured two crown types, just like the gold coins did. The year 1 bronze coins featured two reverse types: a Helios reverse (Göbl type 766) and a Nanaia reverse (Göbl type 767). But Göbl did not distinguish between obverse types. Joe pointed out that the bronze coins featured the same two obverse types as did the year 1 gold coins: a crescent type and a pointed type. The crowns can be seen clearly in Figure 3. Note that the crescent shape is more prominent on these bronze coins than it was on the

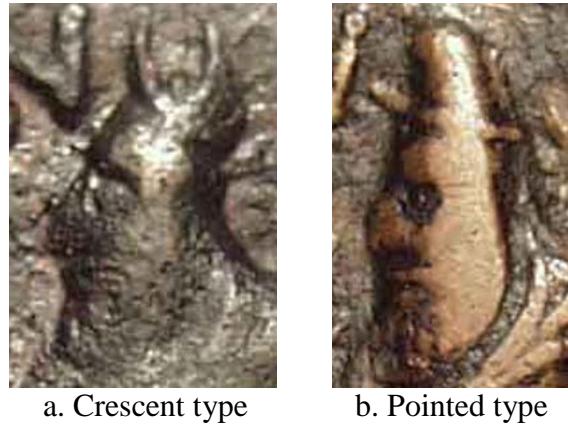


Figure 3: Kanishka's Year 1 bronze crown types

gold coins. Also, the pointed type has dispensed with the ornament at the top, which was clearly visible in Fig. 1(b) and Fig. 2. In Figure 4, I present four coins, showing two Helios reverses and two Nanaia reverses, with a crescent and a pointed obverse for each reverse type, to illustrate Joe's observation.



Figure 4: Kanishka's Year 1 bronze types

The question that then arose in my mind was: If Kanishka had different crown types for his year 1 gold *and* bronze coins, and also for his later gold coins, must he not have had different crown types on his later bronzes as well? We know of later gold coins, featuring Bactrian rather than Greek legends, with all three obverse crown types. So it would be reasonable to expect later bronze types with all three obverse crown types as well. Sure enough, I was indeed able to find later bronze types with all three obverse crowns. The task was difficult, because the majority of Kanishka's bronze tetradrachms or full units have the crown either off the flan or too worn to be conclusively identified. Nevertheless, I was able to find examples of all three obverse types. Renditions of the crown types on the later bronzes are shown in Figure 5.

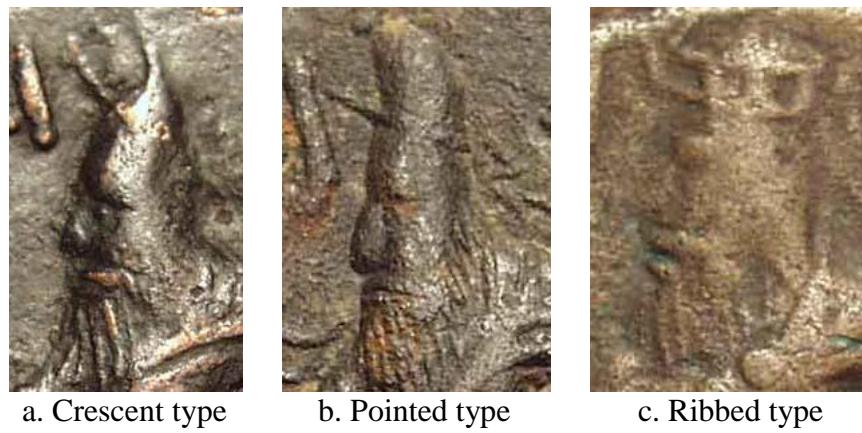


Figure 5: Kanishka's later bronze crown types

Of the different crown types, the crescent type seems to be the rarest. Out of hundreds of coins I examined, I found only three examples, two with Nana reverses, and one with a Mithra (Mioro) reverse. Of the remaining two types, the pointed type seems to be the more common, although not by much. I have found pointed types with the following reverses: Athsho, Mao, Mithra (Mioro), Nana, Oado, and Oesho. Finally, for the ribbed type obverse, I have found reverses featuring the following deities: Athsho, Buddha, Mao, Mithra (Miiro) and Oado. Because these have not yet been noted in the literature, I show examples of each type in Figure 6.





c. Pointed type with Athsho reverse



d. Pointed type with Mao reverse



e. Pointed type with Mioro reverse



f. Pointed type with Nana reverse



g. Pointed type with Oado reverse



h. Pointed type with Oesho reverse



i. Ribbed type with Athsho reverse



j. Ribbed type with Buddha reverse



Figure 6: Kanishka's later bronze types

In retrospect, the rarity of the crescent type should not have been surprising, because the gold crescent types are also very rare. Göbl doesn't distinguish between the crowns in defining his types. However, for his types 31-33, he notes the occasional presence of the first crown (the crescent type). As far as I can tell, he illustrates only two coins; Göbl 31.1 is a Miro reverse and 33.1 is an Athsho reverse, both with the same obverse die featuring the crescent crown. All other coins in types 31-33 have pointed crowns. From type 34 onwards, Göbl simply notes "2. krone," indicating perhaps that they all feature the pointed crown. He did not point out coins 35.1-3, Nana reverses, where the obverse dies seem to clearly have crescent crowns. Coin 35.1 uses the same die as the original Greek-legends coins, re-cut to reflect the Bactrian language legend, and coins 35.2 and 35.3 use the same obverse die as 31.1 and 33.1.

Thus, in the later Bactrian-language phase of the coinage, the crescent crown was used on three gold types: Miro, Athsho and Nana, and, as far as we can tell, there may have been only two crescent-crown dies, the original one from year 1, re-cut, and one other. Therefore the crescent type seems to have been phased out fairly quickly and, as a result, very few of the gold coins carrying the crescent crown are known. In the bronze coinage, the crescent-crown types also seem rare. I found only three examples, with just two reverse types: Mithra (Mioro) and Nana. Extrapolating from the gold types, I would expect that crescent-crown bronzes were also struck with Athsho reverses, but perhaps no others. One might have expected Mao reverses with this crown type as well, following on the year 1 Salene type, but so far I know of no such coins, either in gold or in bronze.

I should note that the three crescent-crown bronzes I found used three different obverse dies. I also checked to see if I could find a die match of any of the three reverses with other Kanishka bronzes but was unable to find any such die match.

What is the significance of finding these different crown types on Kanishka's bronze coins? To the collector, such differentiation is of interest as it defines different

coin types. But to the numismatist, such differentiation is important as it helps us understand the development of the coinage. For example, we now know that the gold and bronze coinages were developed in close parallel to one another. During the Greek-legend phase in year 1, both gold and bronze coins were issued with two crowns, the crescent and the pointed types. When the switch-over to Bactrian legends took place, the same crown types were continued on both the gold and the bronze coins. Relatively soon thereafter, the crescent crowns were discontinued on both metals. At some point, whether before the discontinuation of the crescent crowns, soon afterwards or somewhat later cannot be deduced conclusively, the ribbed type was introduced, again on both metals, and perhaps at a different mint.⁷ So the gold and bronze coins were developed in close parallel, no doubt in the same mints and under the same mint authorities.

The differentiation of crown types is also a first step to classifying coin dies and hence to die analysis. This is an area that awaits future scholarly work.

Some Additional Shiva Images on Kushan Coins

In this second section of my paper, I provide an addendum to some earlier work Joe did on images of Shiva on Kushan coins. In Cribb (1997), Joe had provided a census of all known images of Shiva on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian coins. Over the years, I have collected several Kushan coins that feature Shiva images not covered in Joe's census, and I offer them here as an addition to his excellent compilation. As all of these coins are new types, I will provide their photos and details first and then connect them to Joe's schema for the Shiva images on Kushan coins. I have also added one or two previously known coin types for reasons that will become clear from my commentary.



a. Huvishka AE unit, 11.34 gm, 26 mm



b. Huvishka AE unit, 11.28 gm, 25 mm



c. Huvishka AE unit, 11.00 gm, 25 mm



d. Huvishka AE unit, 10.84 gm, 26 mm

⁷ Göbl believed that, in the gold series, the ribbed crown types (G 52-74) constituted a third emission from the same mint (the first being the Greek legend coins G 25-28 and the second being the Bactrian legend coins with crescent and pointed crowns G 31-51). Further, he asserted that a parallel series of ribbed crown types (G 75-80) were issued from a second mint. However, Göbl did not show any die match between coins from his emissions 2 and 3. Thus it is an open question if the third emission was truly from the same mint or from a different one.



Figure 7: Some new or unusual Shiva reverse types on Kushan coins

Coin 7a is a known type (Göbl 902) but its Shiva image had been omitted from Joe's compilation. It is an example of a three-headed Shiva with two arms, and so would belong in Joe's Table II (p. 47) preceding the two Vasudeva coins. Shiva's pose on this coin is very unusual for two reasons. First, the (proper) right arm is held in front of the body rather than out-stretched, the only Kushan coin on which this feature is present. Normally, the right arm would be held out, with the hand holding the trident shaft. But here the right hand is in front of the body; as a result, we cannot see what object Shiva holds in this hand. The trident, with an axe-head on the shaft, simply stands on its own. Second, Shiva holds an antelope in his left hand, the only Kushan coin on which he is shown with only two arms yet holding the antelope.

Coin 7b is an unpublished type with a cross-legged Huviṣka on the obverse and a four-armed, three-headed Shiva image on the reverse. It would belong in Joe's Table VI and seems to differ from the three coins in that table, as the lower left hand of Shiva seems to hold an antelope on this coin. Unfortunately, we cannot see the attributes in the other three hands, perhaps a trident in the upper left hand, and a thunderbolt and diadem

in the two right hands. This coin is also highly unusual and very interesting for another reason: Huvishka seems to be wearing a Sasanian style crown. Since the Sasanian rise to power occurred well after Huvishka's reign, one wonders if their crowns might have been inspired by this Huvishka crown.

Coin 7c is a known type (Göbl 903) and Joe included the Shiva image as well ... see A8 in his Table I (p. 46). I have included this coin because it is probably the finest specimen known of this rare type and shows in particular a very clear example of the Kharoshthi legend on the reverse. Stefan Baums has suggested in a private communication that the correct reading of this legend is Yodhavate. Coin 7d is an unpublished variant of 7c in that the elephant on the obverse faces left rather than right.

Coin 7e is another unpublished type which might almost be considered a companion to the previous two coins. The coin belongs to the Yodhavade (or Yodhavate) series. Although the attributes of the deity on this coin are not very clear and therefore the deity cannot be definitively identified, it appears to be an image of Shiva with two arms (like the previous type), holding what appear to be a thunderbolt in the raised right hand and a lion skin in the lowered right hand. If this reading of the coin is correct, it forms a complement to the previous type, where Shiva is shown with two *other* attributes, the trident and the water pot. The fact that the coin does not show a trident does make the attribution as Shiva somewhat tenuous, as the trident is normally a defining attribute. However, I am hard pressed to identify any other deity this could represent. If it is Shiva, the image would belong in Joe's Table I.

Coins 7f and 7g are two examples of an unpublished copper type of Huvishka, showing the king in a seated, almost squatting, position on the obverse and a four-armed one-headed Shiva on the reverse. Once again, no trident is visible, nor is there a legend identifying the deity. However, the identification of the deity as Shiva is certain because of the four arms and the clear antelope being held in the lower left hand. The two coins seem to share the same obverse die, but the reverse dies appear to be different. Shiva's pose on these coins is somewhat idiosyncratic, as the upper arms are not raised as high as they normally are. Apart from the antelope, we can identify the diadem, held here in the *upper* right hand. The objects in the other two hands cannot be identified. This image would belong in Joe's Table Vb.

Coin 7h and 7i are both unpublished gold dinars of Vasudeva I with unique Shiva reverses. Coin 7h belongs to Vasudeva's early series where the king is shown sacrificing at a fire altar without any trident above it, while coin 7i belongs to the later series where there *is* a trident above the fire altar. The reverses of both coins show a three-headed four-armed Shiva with Nandi the bull. The most interesting aspect of these images is that the head on the right is that of an animal, most probably an antelope or a goat.⁸ The treatment of the animal head is very similar to what we see on the coins of Wima Kadphises, such as type A3 in Joe's paper (p. 54) or coin 5 in Perkins (2007).⁹ A further remarkable feature of these Shiva images is that Shiva is shown with shoulder

⁸ I believe Perkins (2007: 34) must have been referring to one of these coins when he mentions a gold coin of Vasudeva I with a three-headed Shiva reverse, with one of the heads being of a horned animal. Perkins mentions that the coin was in a private collection and that Joe had brought it to his attention. I had shared these coin images with Joe when I had first discovered them some years ago.

⁹ Perkins (2007) pointed out that the object behind Shiva's head on the gold coins is not a hair bun, but an animal head, and that some of Vima Kadphises's copper coinage featured three-headed Shiva reverses with one animal head. See also Bracey (2009) for a more detailed discussion of the gold coinage.

flames, a feature that has not been observed on any Kushan coinage as far as I know, although it appears that other Vasudeva coins, of Göbl types 500 and 506, also show Shiva with shoulder flames. The common feature of these coin types is that they are the only Vasudeva types to depict Shiva with four arms. These coins also call to mind the two known sculptural pieces of the period showing Shiva with side animal heads and discussed by Joe in his paper.¹⁰ Other than the animal head and the shoulder flames, Shiva's attributes on these coins are what we might expect: diadem in the upper right hand, lotus in the lower right hand, trident in the upper left hand, lion skin over the lower left forearm and water pot in the lower left hand, as on Joe's type F1. The images belong on Joe's Table IV.

Finally, coin 7j is another known type that has not been noted sufficiently and was left out of Joe's survey. It is a gold dinar of Kanishka III,¹¹ showing Shiva with three heads, and it was published by Göbl as coin 7 of type 635. All other coins of the type showed Shiva with just one head; the fact that this type has three heads appears to have been overlooked. It was pointed out as such by Mahajan (1998). Shiva has two hands, holding a diadem and trident. The coin belongs in Joe's Table IV.

To make these additions compatible with Joe's census, I conclude by showing them in the form of Table entries in the same way that Joe did in his Tables I-VI, and then follow that with enlargements of the Shiva images themselves, as Joe did. I have numbered them in a manner consistent with Joe's numbering system. In this context, I have numbered the type represented by coin 7a as B0, to indicate that it precedes B1 (since Huvishka precedes Vasudeva).

Table of Line Drawings

I	Siva alone – one head	two arms
Huvishka	A10 Coin 7e	thunderbolt lion skin
II	Siva alone – three heads	two arms
Huvishka	B0 Coin 7a	trident-axe antelope

¹⁰ See the images 10 and 11 on p. 65.

¹¹ Göbl assigned this coin to Kanishka II and that is the widely used attribution. However, Joe has attributed this to Kanishka III in the British Museum's trays and I concur with this attribution. A full explanation will no doubt appear in Joe's forthcoming BM catalogue of Kushan coins, an example of how Joe's retirement is going to help along the publication of his unpublished ideas.

IV	Siva and Bull – three heads	two or four arms
Kanishka III	E4 Coin 7j	trident diadem halo
Vasudeva I	F5 Coins 7h-i	trident diadem lion skin lotus
Vb	Siva alone – one head	four arms
Huvishka	H6 Coins 7f-g	diadem antelope others unknown
VI	Siva alone – three heads	four arms
Huvishka	M1 Coin 7b	antelope others unknown



A10



B0



Figure 8: Enlarged photos of Shiva images

References

- Bracey, Robert, 2009, "The Coinage of Wima Kadphises," *Gandharan Studies*, 3: 25-74.
- Cribb, Joe, 1997, "Shiva images on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian coins," in *Studies in Silk Road Coins and Culture*, ed. Katsumi Tanabe, Joe Cribb and Helen Wang (Kamakura: The Institute of Silk Road Studies): 11-66.
- Göbl, Robert, 1984, *Münzprägung des Kušānreiches* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften).
- Mahajan, Nupam, 1998, "A gold stater of Kanishka II with three-headed Shiva image on reverse," *Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter* 156: 19.
- Perkins, John, 2007, "Three-headed Śiva on the Reverse of Vima Kadphises's Copper Coinage," *South Asian Studies* 23: 31-37.
- Tanabe, Katsumi, 1990, "The Kushan Representation of ANEMOS/OADO and its Relevance to the Central Asian and Far Eastern Wind Gods," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 1: 51-80.