

The Kushan Coins From Rangapur

Tara Nanda Mishra

The Village and People of Rangapur

Rangapur Village and Panchayat is in Rautahat district of Narayani Anchal. The village is nearly five miles south-west of Chandra-Nigahapur (a small township on the eastern portion of Mahendra-Raj-Marg), and three miles west-south of Chandra-Nigahapur-Gaura-Raj-Marga (still in the process of construction). The village is settled on the west of forest-range and Lamahi-Khola (a rivulet flooded with water only during the rainy-season), flowing north-south, at the distance of a furlong east of the village. The village of Rangapur constituted of nearly five-hundred thatched houses; among them there are also few pucca buildings. It is mainly inhabited by Tharu population along with some landless sudra class of people working as agricultural labours. The only means of livelihood of the village is agriculture. Paddy, pulse (Masoor) and Sugarcane are its chief agricultural products.

The Find-Spot of the Kushan-Hoard

A terracotta hoard of Kushan coins, approximately numbering 400 to 500, had been discovered in the centre of the Lamahi river, nearly a mile north-east of the village of Rangapur. In the Lamahi river near

Telinia-Peti, some of the villagers, Mushar by caste, while fishing in the river, discovered the coin hoard, which was so rolled that it looked like a circular stone pebble. When the discoverer of the hoard knew that it was a terracotta pot without an opening he broke the pot and to his great surprise found copper coins scattered on the ground. The coins had been divided among the villagers, who rushed to the scene, hearing the news of the treasure-trove. Among them thirty-six coins had been collected from the villagers by me, as I went there on an official duty from the department, after receiving the news of the discovery of those coins from the Royal Palace. It is to note that six coins from the same hoard, had already been received by the Department of Archaeology, which were earlier sent from the Royal Palace. Thus Among the coins of that hoard, altogether, forty-two copper Kushan coins came into the possession of the government.

Why the coin-hoard was found in the River?

One may raise the question, how the coin-hoard was found buried in that river-bed, where there was no trace of any ancient city in the neighbourhood.

There are two possible answers to offer against this query.

- 1) In all the circumstances there must be a Kushan and either earlier or slightly latter period ancient site in that area. And due to the natural cutting or erosion of the ancient mound by flood in the Lamahi River, the hoard had been rolled down, might be many kilometres away from its original site.
- 2) The second answer to the question can be found in the following way: The historical owner of the treasure might have hidden the hoard in the middle of the river and failed to collect it. Hiding treasures (kept in a bronze pot) in the river or on the edge of the river has been recorded in the Jataka stories.¹ Maha-Padma Nanda, one of the wealthiest emperors of Magadha, had also buried his treasure in the bed of the Ganga river, after causing a great excavation.²

Telinia-Peti-Garhi

I tried to explore the ancient site in the area from where the coins had been found, which did not produce any success. I had examined a mound called Telinia-Peti-Garhi, near the find spot of the coin. It was an eight metre high, roughly circular mound. And that was a natural (or geological) formation made by the river, cutting it from two sides. Not a single antiquity or potsherd had been found from the site.

The Water-Spring Called Bhavari

The next place of importance, as indicated by the villagers, was a water-spring in the bed of the Lamahi river, only five hundred metres south of Telinia-Peti-Garhi. According to the villagers there was constant flow of water in the Bhavari area, which never dries-up.

A Brick Temple Site

Two miles south of Rangapur Village, a brick temple had been found in a ruined state. It had been badly dug-up by the villagers to collect brick and stone-slabs from the temple. The temple had been built with kiln-burnt bricks (of L. 12"XB.8"X. thick 2.3/4"; 11.1/2"X0"X2.1/2 sizes). The sand-stone blocks had been used in the door and for the pavement of the floor. Some pieces of ornamented door-jams and lintel were still lying scattered over the site. As reported by the villagers, a Siva-Linga from the site had been taken away by a Giri Sanyasi to Gaura Bazar in the year 2023 V. S. (1967 A. D.). Another Ganesh icon had also been removed from the site and placed at the nearby village called Parasawa or Pratapur. All this proves that it was originally a Saiva Temple with Ganapati and possibly, also Kumar, two sons of Siva, generally found associated with most of the Siva temples. From the size of the bricks and decorated stone pieces the temple can be dated between 10th-12th cent. A. D.

1) Ataka katha, 1/227, 323, also Dr. R. K. Mookherjee, Hindu Civilization, Hindi trans. P. 313.

2) Tawney, trans. of Katha saritsagar, I, 21;

Turnour, Mahawanso, P. XXXIX; also, The Age of Imperial Unity, P. 34; A Tamil poet also narrates the same story. Aiyangar, Beginning of South Indian History, P. 89.

Who were the Kushanas ?

The Kushanas were a branch of the famous Yueh-chi tribe and held from Tien-Shan range in Chinese Turkestan or from the Kan-su Province of China. To the Chinese, the barbarians living in the North-West during the fourth century B. C., were known as Kusha-yue-chi. The Ta-yue-chi is explained as meaning the 'great Lunar Race'. Moon was the presiding deity of the Kushanas, is proved by the representation of moon on a large number of Kushan Coins. The deity with the names Salene, Moa and Mana-obago appears on Kushan coins with crescent behind their shoulders.

Miaus

One of the Yueh-chi branch of Yueh-chi tribe, called Kuei-Shuang or Kushana under the leadership of Miaus establishing a matrimonial alliance with the last Greek Prince Hermaeus ruled over Kabul.

Kuzul Kadphises

A successor of Miaus named Kuzul-Kadphises, after overthrowing the Parthians from Kabul valley (who had temporarily besieged the valley from the Greeks), extended his domain over Kin-pin, Kabul, and up to the tiers of Persia. He was the first king to enter India, through Punjab. He issued coins independently, as well as depicting the portrait of the last Greek King Hermaeus and with his own name.

Wema Kadphises

The next Kushan King was Wema Kadphises, whose territory extended deep inside India, between the Indus and the Ganges. He issued gold coins imitating the Romans in weight (124 grains) and size. He embraced the Hindu religion and proclaimed himself "Mahesvara" (follower of Lord Siva).

Kanishka

Then came to power, the greatest Kushan King, Kanishka by name. He extended his territory over Madhyadesa, Uttarapatha and Aparanta divisions of India. The eastern limit of his empire was Bihar, western was Khorasan, in the north it was extended upto Khotan and Konkan was the southern limit. He ruled between 78-102 A. D. Kanishka took Devaputra as his title. The title of Devaputra, meaning as 'Son of Heaven', was originally used by the Chinese emperors. The Pali jataka³ mentions the terms 'Deva' and 'Devaputra' (Devocha nama devaputra). Kanishka has been described as 'Devaputra king', in the Chinese Tripitakas, such as the Sutralankara, the Samyukta Ratnapitaka and Dhara-Pitaka-Nidana-Sutra. The title Devaputra has been used by Kanishka and his successors in their different inscriptions.⁴ His Sui-vihara (in the Indus Valley) inscription reads—"Maharajasya rajatirajasya Devaputrasya Kanishkasya".⁵ Kanishka ruled for twenty-three years. He was the founder of the Saka era in 78 A.D., which was his year of ascending the throne.

3. Jataka, comentary III, P. 261.

4. Sylvain Levi, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXXII, 1903, P. 382, 'Notes on the Indoscythians.' Also Bhaskar Chattopadhyaya, The Age of the Kushanas, 1979, Calcutta.

5. The forty-one seals, sealings and Vase inscriptions recently found from Piparahawa (in the Basti distt., U. P., India),

reading "Om Devaputra Vihare Kapilavastu or Mahakapilavastu Bhikshu Sanghasa", literary means that the vihara at Piparahawa was made by Devaputra (most probably Kushan King Kanishka), and was a Sister-organisation of Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sangha. It is to note that Kanishka was a

Vasishka

The successor of Kanishka was Vasishka whose Sanchi Buddhist image inscription dated 106 A. D., gives him also the title of Devaputra.⁶ He had a very short rule and no coins of Vasishka has yet been found.

Huvishka

Like Kanishka he had also an extensive empire. Kabul, Kashmir, and Mathura were included in his domain. Mathura was now a great centre of Kushan power. Like Kanishka and Vasishka, Huvishka had also taken the title of "Devaputra".⁷

Kanishka II

He was ruling in some part of north India along with Huvishka. He is recorded in the Ara (in Bihar State) inscription, where he is also having his title 'devaputra'. No coin of this king has been found.

great patron of Buddhism. He had also built stupa and viharas at Pesawar (his ancient capital city named purushpur in Pakistan), and Mathura (in U. P., India). He had organised the Fourth Buddhist Council held at Kashmir (but according to some scholars it was held at Purushpur, his capital city). He had most probably patronised great Buddhist scholars like Buddhaghosa, Basumitra, and Katya-yani-Putra etc. Charaka, a great physician after jivaka (patronised by Bimlisara of Magadha), had been a jewel of his court. The Banyan groove Vihara, two miles south of Kapilavastu (can be identified with Ananda Baga of Taulihawa, two miles south of Tilaurakot), was established within two years of preaching of Dharma by Buddha (R.K.

Vasudeva I

The last great Kushan king was Vasudeva I, who ruled from the year 145-146 A. D. Most of his inscriptions have been found around Mathura region. His coins generally bear the portrait of Siva and rarely exhibit an Iranian deity.

Kanishka III & Vasudeva II

Numismatic evidences furnish us with the existence of Kanishka III and Vasudeva II, as successors of Vasudeva I. The Chinese sources supply us the evidence that Vasudeva II in 230 A. D., had sent an ambassador to the Chinese emperor. After these kings, the Kushan power collapsed and gave rise to the republican powers like Yaudheyas and Kunindas (in east Punjab), Nagas (in the Padmavati, Mathura and Central India), during the 3rd century A. D. The Guptas rose to power in the northern India and became a powerful master of the whole of Uttarapatha.

Mookherjee, Hindu Civilization, Hindi trans, Chapt. on Kapilavastu). It was the Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sangha organised during Lord Buddha's life-time. Latter on, many sister organisations of Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sangha might have spread in the neighbouring areas. From the time of Lord Buddha (5th cent. B. C.), the Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sangha at Piparahawa (in Basti distt. U. P., India) survived till the age of the Kushanas (2nd cent. A. D.) is proved by those seals and sealings.

6. Sanchi Inscription reads as- "Maharajasya rajatirajasya devaputrasya Shahi Vasishkasya."
7. J.R.A.S. 1952, P. 116, A small Mathura inscription reading "Maharaja-rajatirajadevaputra Huvishkasya Pitamahasya."

Silent Features of Kushan Coins

The Kushan Kings issued coinage on the imitation of the Greeks, Parthians and the Romans. This was but natural, as they had succeeded the Greeks, overthrown Parthians and had trade relations with the Romans. The flow of Roman gold into India and the necessity of trade-balance with Rome and China encouraged the Kushan Kings to issue gold coins in India, on the imitation of Roman Aurei. Most probably, this was the first time in Indian history that gold coins were made.⁸ The Kushan kings also issued few varieties of silver coins. The Kushan coins are circular, represent artistically the portraits of kings, gods, goddesses and animals. On the reverse of the coins a number of Greek, Roman, Iranian, Hindu and Buddhist deities are depicted. The deities represented on the coins are Zeus, Heracles, goddess Nike, goddess Ardoxsho, Helios, goddess Nania, god Mao (moon), Athso, Mihira, Mithra (Greek sun-god), Oado (Persian god of wind), Bodo (Buddha), Oesho (Siva), Skanda-Kumara, Uma, Heracles and Ganesh etc. Persian deities like Shariwar, Luhrap, Orlagno, Uranus, Oanindo, Athsho (god of metals), Pharro (holding purse), have also been depicted.

The king is represented on the coins wearing conical head dress (peaked cap), long coat, trouser and high tartar boots. All the Kushan Coins are inscribed. The inscriptions engraved on the coins of Kuzul-kadphises and Wema-kadphises are in the double scripts (Greek and Kharosthi and

bilangual (Greek and Prakrit). But Kanishka discarded the use of Kharosthi and engraved only Greek script and language on his coins. His successors followed him. The weight of the Kushan coins are 18.4 grains and 9.8 grains.

The royal titles present over the Kushan coins are - "Basileus" (Saviour), "Satya Dharmasthitasya" (follower of Dharma), "Maharajasa rajarajasa devaputrasa kujulakara-kapasa" (great king, king of kings, son of Heaven), "Maharajasa rajadirajama hatasa tratarasa", "Maharajaratirajasarva loga Isvara Mahesvara Tratra" (of Wema-kadphises), the Greek legend reading "Basileus Basileon kanishkou" (of Kanishka, the king of kings), the Persian legend reading - "Shaonana Shao Kaneshki Koshano" (Kaniska, the Kushan, the Sahan-Shaha), etc.

The Description of Coins Found From Rangapur

Six Coins sent from the Royal Palace to the Department of Archaeology

No. 1. Obverse- King offering over Fire Altar on the right side, the left hand kept in akimbo position over the waist, the sword hanging from the waist on the left side, legend (not visible) arranged semi-circular way, impressed on the left side. King wearing head-dress, long coat and high boots.

8. Though the mention of gold coins issued in India, earlier than the Kushan period is found in the literatures, no gold coin has yet been found from any archeological excavations. One or two pieces of gold punch-marked coins has been

purchased by the Rahula Sansthan Museum at Gorakhpur, but it is difficult to accept their authenticity. Most probably they are fake P. M. coins copied by some expert gold-smith on the samples of Silver Punch Marked coins.

Reverse- Deity seated over stool, leg hanging below the seat.

This coin belongs to King Vasudeva.

No. 2. Obverse- King riding on an elephant; both the king and elephant facing towards left.

Reverse- A standing male deity. The surface of the reverse has become rough because of heavy corrosion.


This coin belongs to Huvishka

No. 3. Obverse- King standing and offering over fire-altar on the right side, his left hand placed over the waist in akimbo position.

Reverse- Female deity holding noose and seated over a cushioned seat.

No. 4. Obverse- The King standing, wearing long coat, trouser and high boots. He is offering on fire altar with his right hand, left hand raised above and holding a sceptre. The head of the king is not visible on the coin. Two or three letters are visible on the left side edge of the coin.

Reverse- Mahasena (Kumara) with two heads and four hands. In his upper right hand he is holding a lotus flower. Left lower hand is hanging down. The deity is wearing a dhoti in the lower part of the body, there is no dress in the upper portion. Below the lower

right hand is a symbol  of Huvishka.

This is a coin of Huvishka.

No. 5. Obverse- King on elephant facing and moving towards left.

Reverse- Not clear, because of heavy corrosion, the features are lost.

No. 6. Obverse- Bold standing figure of king, offering over fire from the right hand, left hand in akimbo position placed over the waist. The king is wearing cap, long coat, trouser and high boots.

Reverse- Siva standing before a Brahmi humped and horned bull, bear footed, holding trisula (trident) in the right hand, left hand placed over the bull, his matted hairs hang down and looking like horns. A string (perhaps a garland) hanging down around his knees. Nandi pada or Tri-Ratna symbol on the right side above the back of the bull. This is a coin of Kuzul-kadphises. Except the legend all the symbols and figures of the coin is very clear.

The Thirty-Six coins brought from Rangapur

Bag No. 1. (a) Obverse- King standing and offering on fire-altar with his right hand. He is holding sceptre with his left hand. He is wearing long coat, trouser, high boots and a cap.

Reverse- A male deity standing and facing on the right side.

- (b) Obverse- King standing and offering over fire-altar. Left hand raised above the shoulder and holding a flag-staff.
- Reverse- A female deity standing in tribhanga posture. The coin is circular but clipped off from below the line of the figures.
- (c) Obverse- The king offering over fire-altar with his right hand. Left hand raised above and holding a flag-staff. The king is wearing similar royal dress as above.
- Reverse- Deity standing, his right hand indicating something on the right side. His left hand placed over his waist in akimbo position.
- (d) Obverse- Standing figure of king in kushan dress.
- Reverse- Standing deity. Kushan king's symbol placed on the right side of the deity.
- Bag No. 2. Obverse- King standing in his Kushan dress. Circular dots mark the edging of the coin.
- Reverse- Goddess Ordoxo seated cross legged over a seat or flower. There are four pieces of coins of this group.
- Bag No. (2) B. Obverse- Not clear
- Reverse- Goddess Nike standing and holding Palm-Branch. This feature appears on the coins of Kuzulkadphises.
- Bag 2. (C) Obverse- King in akimbo posture standing and facing towards right side.
- Reverse- Not clear.
- Bag. No. 3. Obverse- King riding on elephant.
- Reverse- Male deity possibly Mihira, standing, his right hand indicating something on the right side, left hand in akimbo position. This is a coin of Huvishka. There are fourteen coins of this group.
- Bag No. 4. Obverse- King offering over fire altar with his right hand, his left hand resting over his waist.
- Reverse- A standing male deity in Kushan dress. There are three pieces of coins belonging to this class
- Bag No. 5. Obverse- King offering at fire-altar. He is wearing long coat, trouser, high boots and peaked cap.
- Reverse- Buddha standing, his head had been rubbed away, his right

hand is raised above, left hand in akimbo position, but not resting on the waist. The inscription BO▷▷O (Buddha) in Greek, arranged on the left side of Buddha.

This is a coin of Kanishka and the full inscription, generally found on the coins are 'CAKAMANANA BO▷▷O! But on this coin the beginning portion of the inscription is lost, due to rubbing.

Bag No. 6. Obverse-

King seated over a cushioned seat with one of his leg placed in a triangular way (raised above). The faint impression of the inscriptions can be seen on the left side.

Reverse- God Athasho (god of Metals) standing, facing right side, holding wreath in right hand and tongs in left hand, which is hanging below. The god has prabhamandal (hallo) behind his head. Short flag-staff is shown standing on the left side.

There are two pieces of this series of

coins. It belongs to king Huvishka.

Bag No. 7. Obverse- King seated cross legged over a seat. His right hand in akimbo position, and left hand raised above. Few Greek letters arranged in semi-circular way, on the left.

Reverse- Not clear
This is a coin of Huvishka.

Bag No. 7A. Obverse- King seated over cushioned seat.

Reverse- Standing deity with prabhmandala around the back of his head, right hand stretched towards right, left hand in akimbo position.

Bag. No. 8. Obverse- Figures not clear. Letters in Greek arranged on the bottom and left edge of the coin.

Reverse- Deity (ordoxo) seated over lotus. On the bottom and left edge the Greek letters are engraved.

Bag No. 9

There are two coins in this bag. They are so-much rubbed, that the features and the inscriptions on the obverse as well as on the reverse have been completely lost.

Kushan coins found from other sites in Nepal

Mr. Walsh reports⁹ that he found two coins of Wema-kadphises (85-120 A. D.) and one of Kanishka (120-150 A. D.), which were dug-up at Kathmandu, and were sent to him by Colonel Pears, a British resident in Nepal. He thinks that the Kushan coinage were brought to Nepal either by the pilgrims or by the merchants, and they might have been in circulation in Nepal in the early times.

Mrs. Debala Mitra in 1962 collected Kushan copper coins during her exploration in the Kapilavastu district from different sites like-Pipri, Kadzahawa and Sisania.¹⁰ She had also noticed a Kushan coin with the device king offering over fire-altar from Lumbini.¹¹ The writer also found several Kushan coins from his excavations at Tilaurakot. Among them mention can be made about a coins where Siva was depicted as Pasupati with his matted hairs hanging over his fore-head. The Risso-University team, excavating at Tilaurakot, had found a hoard of Kushan coins having eighteen hundred and four coins. They belonged to Wema-kadphises, Kanishka and Huvishka. The coins of Wema-Kadphises was, king and Siva type. The Kaniskha coins were Vato type, Siva type, Mithra type, Naniya type, Athasho type, Mao type, Buddha type, Helios type and Nana type. The coins of Huvishka found were, only three types- such as the king on elephant, king on couch type, and king on lotus type.

The writer had also been shown, by

a native of Kathmandu, some Kushan coins collected along with the Licchhavi coins, found from a vegetable garden.

The influence of Kushan coinage over the Nepalese coins

The Kushan coinage has a lot of influences, over the Nepalese coins. Mr. Cunningham thinks that the Nepalese coins (during the Licchhavi period) are direct descendants of the copper money of the Kushans.¹² Prof. Rapson also supports¹³ the theory of Cunningham. The depiction of elephant, bull with trident and axe type (on the Pasupati coins), the depiction of Bhogini on the Mananka coins (copied from Ardoxo or Lakshmi of the Kushan coins), are some of the features borrowed from the Kushans. The Vaisravana or Kubera shown on the Nepalese coins have its influence from the Pharro (Persian god Pharro, holding purse) type of the Kushan coins. Though the Nepalese coins borrowed some features and scripts also from the Yaudheyas and the Guptas, the impact of the Kushan coinage on the Nepalese coins in the depiction of features and weight, are more than any other coins.

Chemical Report of Central Conservation Laboratory

By:- Bhimbar Singh Thapa.

The 42 nos. of copper coins which were sent to the laboratory for cleaning and preservation were well studied before the chemical treatment. The coins were buried under the soil in presence of soluble

9. E. Walsh, *The Coinage of Nepal*, P. 8-9,
10. Mrs. D. Mitra, *Excavations at Tilaurakot and Kodan and Exploration in the Nepalese Tarai*, 1972 P. 195,

11. Mrs. Mitra, *ibid*, P. 203.

12. A Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, 1963, P. 114.

13. E. J. Rapson, *Indian coins*, P. 32.

salts and plenty of moisture. In presence of oxygen gaseous sulphur and chloride compounds, the chemical change had taken place to red oxide of copper (cuprite), basic copper chloride (cupric chloride) which was green in colour. To remove the Malachite a very dilute organic acid was used (3% solution of citric acid in water) then the acid was completely removed in running

water. The coins were dried in warm oven. After few minutes 5% solution of paraloid B-72 in Toluene was applied as a preservative coating.

Suggestion:-

The coins should be placed in warm and dry area, wrapping in absorbant cotton or in Antinist paper.