

Deities on Kushana Coins

Kushana coinage is famous for their varied and vast devices, especially on reverse side. The reverse of the Kushana coins depicted a multitude of deities, borrowed from different religions. It is possible that these divinities reflect the religious beliefs of the Kushana rulers as well as those of the people whom they subdued. Kuzul Kadphises coins bear Greek gods like Herakles and Zeus. From the time of Vima Kadphises the different forms of Shiva become prominent and He is depicted on the coins of all Imperial Kushanas rulers. Gods and goddesses of Iranian pantheon dominate the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka. Addition of more Indian deities are also noticeable, like Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya and Amitabha on the coin of Kanishka I, and the presentation of Skanda-Kumara, Mahasena, Vishakha, besides Uma and probably Ganesha on coins is credited to Huvishka. An interesting coin of Vasudeva I shows four-armed figure of lord Vasudeva. Though number and variety of the deities are restricted from the time of Vasudeva I. Vasudeva I and his successors depict on their coins only the image of Shiva and Ardoksho.

The deities show on reverse of the coins of Imperial Kushana, bring together gods and goddesses belonging to different pantheon as worshipped and revered in those ages in Greece, Rome, Bactria and India. Names of these deities are easily known from the label written near the figure in Greek characters. The following list help in understanding the deities of the Imperial Kushana coinage.

I. Hellenistic and Roman Deities

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| 1. Elios | = | Sun god |
| 2. Ephaistos | = | Fire god |
| 3. Erakilo | = | Hercules |
| 4. Riom | = | Personified Roma |
| 5. Salene | = | Moon god |
| 6. Sarapo | = | Sarapis |
| 7. Uron | = | Water god |
| 8. Zeus | | |

II. Iranian Deities

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|---------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. Arodoksho | = | Goddess of fortune |
| 2. Ashaeiksho | = | Truth god |

3. Athsho	=	Fire god
4. Lrooaspo	=	Lightening god
5. Manaobago	=	Moon god
6. Mao	=	Moon god
7. Miiro	=	Sun god
8. Mozdoano	=	Mazdah
9. Ooromozdo	=	Ahura Mazdah
10. Nana	=	Lunar goddess
11. Nanashao	=	Nana, the ruler
12. Shaonana	=	the king Nana
13. Oado	=	Wind god
14. Oaninda	=	Goddess of victory
15. Oaksho	=	God of the river Oxus
16. Orlagno	=	War god
17. Pharo	=	the goddess of lustre
18. Shaoreoro	=	the god of metal
19. Ceres	=	Venus or Tir

III. Indian Deities

1. Boddo	=	Buddha
2. Ameto Bou	=	Amitabha Buddha
3. Metrauo Boudo	=	Maitreya Buddha
4. Sakamano Boudo	=	Shakyamuni Buddha
5. Ganesho	=	Ganesha
6. Mahaseno	=	Mahasena
7. Skando Komaro Bizago	=	Skanda Kumara Vishakha
8. Skando Komaro Mahaseno Bizago	=	Skanda Kumara Mahasena Vishakha
9. Oesho	=	Shiva
10. Oesho Ommo	=	Shiva-Uma
11. Oesho Nana	=	Shiva-Nana
12. Bazodeo	=	Vasudeva

The identification or interpretation of certain deities on the reverse of Imperial Kushana coins is still unresolved unanimously. For instance, double-headed horse shown with the figure of

Ahura Mazda; representation of lunar god not explicitly female as per the Greek tradition; Oanindo is a winged female with the attributes of victory, a diadem and sceptre, sometimes perhaps a palm, though in the Zoroastrian sources this angelic figure is male but as clear from the costumes the deity represented on coin is female. Likewise, the presentation of three male figures with the label Skanda Kumara Mahasena Vishakha whose function are now taken by one Hindu deity Karttikeya, and so on.

On Kushana coins, the most favoured position was enjoyed by Shiva who has been represented in aniconic, theriomorphic and human forms. Shiva, invariably standing with all his traditional attributes except the serpent, appears in different forms on the coins of Vima, Kanishka, Huvishka, Vasudeva and the later Kushana rulers. The multiplication of Shiva's hands and heads, besides varying nature of the attributes placed in hands is of importance to note. Vima appears a devotee of Shiva which is evident from his epithet, weapons and the representation of Shiva in different forms on coins. Shiva is represented on the coins of Vima in aniconic and human forms. The symbols like trident-battleaxe, and damaru expresses Shiva. The human figures of Shiva might be grouped into Shiva with Nandi, and Shiva without Nandi. One faced two armed Shiva invariably shown in as standing frontally in abhanga, flames emanating from the head, wearing a long robe covering the entire body from the shoulder to the ankles. On a few coins He is shown nude and urdhvalinga. He appears on the coins of Kanishka in the two-armed and four-armed form with varying attributes, viz. holds a trident (sometimes a spear or staff), water-vessel, gourd, damaru, antelope, thunderbolt and elephant-goad. Shiva is presented standing frontally in dvibhanga – wears rudraksha, armlets, bracelets and anklets. Besides, one faced, three-faced form of Shiva could be seen on the coins of Huvishka. The appearance of Shiva with three faces manifests Him as Mahadeva, the great god. On some coins of Huvishka the goddess Uma is associated with Shiva as well as with him the goddess Nanaia or Nana is also accompanied. Apart from this, the identification of Hari-Hara on coins of Huvishka is also suggested. The coins of Vasudeva I displayed His one-face and three-face form along with two-arm and four-arm with number of attributes. The coins of later Kushanas show two-arm Shiva, invariably shown with one face standing with Nandi, holds noose and trident. As for Ardhanarishvara form of Shiva, it also appears on Kushana coins.

Like Shiva, the other deities also presented in different forms and with minor variations in spelling of the legend which can be understood with the help of photographs.