

THE KUSHAN PANTHEON
AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KUSHAN GODDESS NANA,
IN THE LIGHT OF NEW NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE
OF ICONOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

Numismatic evidence has played a large role in the study of Kushan religion. The earliest assessments recognised the Iranian nature of Kushan religion, but later focus on elements of naming and iconography from other culture particularly Greece and India have obscured this early analysis. Recently found inscriptions and coins allow a reassessment re-establishing a clearer view of the nature of Kushan religion and its expression in coin designs, contemporary art and architecture. The opportunity presented by the discovery of new numismatic imagery of the goddess Nana allows a reappraisal of her place in the pantheon and a review of the current perspectives on Kushan religion.

Résumé

Les recherches numismatiques ont joué un rôle important dans l'étude de la religion kouchanne. Les premières investigations ont reconnu la nature iranienne de la religion kouchanne, mais l'accent mis par la suite sur des éléments de dénomination et d'iconographie provenant d'autres cultures, en particulier de Grèce et d'Inde, a obscurci des premières analyses. Les inscriptions et les pièces de monnaie récemment découvertes permettent une réévaluation qui rétablit une vision plus claire de la nature de la religion kouchanne et de son expression dans les représentations sur les pièces de monnaie, l'art contemporain et l'architecture. La découverte de nouvelles représentations numismatiques de la déesse Nana permet de réévaluer sa place dans le panthéon et de revoir les perspectives actuelles de la religion kouchanne.

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The modern understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the Kushan rulers and their court has been greatly enhanced over the last few decades by the discovery of two Bactrian inscriptions relating to royal

sanctuaries, the Rabatak inscription describing the establishment of a royal sanctuary, a house of the gods, dedicated to the goddess Nana on behalf of the fourth Kushan king Kanishka (Sims-Williams 2004) and the dedication

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of a silver dish on behalf of the same king at a shrine of the god Oēsho (Sims-Williams 2015). These added to the accounts already reconstructed from the excavations of Kushan royal sanctuaries at Mathura (Rosenfield 1967, pp. 138–53), Surkh Kotal (Schlumberger et al. 1983; Rosenfield 1967, pp. 154–63), and Khalchayan (Staviskii 1986, pp. 224–8; Mode 2013). Numismatic and sigillographic studies have also played an important role in developing an understanding of the religion of the Kushan kings (Rosenfield 1967, pp. 59–103; Grenet 1984, 2015a; Zeymal 1997; Cribb 1998, 2008; Bracey 2012; Jongeward and Cribb 2014, pp. 259–301; Shenkar 2014; Falk 2015, 2019; Adrych et al. 2017, 117–19). New numismatic evidence occasionally arises, like the two coins depicting the Kushan goddess Nana addressed here, and it is important to understand this evidence within a framework based on the role of coins in the Kushan realm.

The resources which underpin the evidence of Kushan religion and the conceptual frames within which they have been utilised continue to be interrogated and to build the view that the Kushan kings and their court worshipped a pantheon of deities largely drawn from Iranian culture, overlapping to some extent with Zoroastrianism, but with a distinct character. Deities from Graeco-Roman and Indian religions also influenced the iconography of this pantheon.

According to the Rabatak inscription, the goddess Nana played a key role in the royal cult and accordingly there has been much focus on her nature (Ghose 2006, Shenkar 2014, pp. 116–28, 298–316, and Falk 2015) since its publication (Sims Williams and Cribb 1995–6). The discovery of two new coins which present this goddess with a new iconography has now added a further dimension to her attributes and also invites the reappraisal of another representation of this goddess on an associated coin. Understanding of the place of this goddess in the Kushan pantheon continues to be developed.

The chronology of Kushan kings used here is based on my analysis of the chronological evidence presented in Cribb 2018.

THE RELIGIOUS IMAGERY OF KUSHAN COINS

Numismatic studies have long been used to create an understanding of Kushan religion and it is into this framework that the discovery of new imagery and nomenclature on Kushan coins should be examined.

The first serious attempts to understand the religious context of Kushan coin designs were made by Hoffman (1880, pp. 139–56) and Stein (1887). Both focussed on the Iranian names of many of the gods appearing on the reverse of the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka, linking

them with their Zoroastrian counterparts. ‘Dass die Turuškakönige von Hause aus Mazdajānrier waren, zeigt sowohl der Feueraltar neben ihrer Portraitfigur, als auch die Zuschriften zu den Götterbildern auf ihren Münzen’ (The fact that the Turuška kings [i.e. the Kushans] were Mazda worshippers by origin is shown both by the fire altar next to their portrait figure and by the inscriptions on the divine images on their coins; Hoffmann 1880, 144). ‘Their extremely varied reverses exhibit... the figures and names of numerous deities, many among which, as already observed by the first observers, bear an unmistakably Zoroastrian character’ (Stein 1887, p. 155) As Stein observed this feature had already been remarked upon by earlier scholars. Tod (1825, p. 340) who was the first to publish Kushan coins considered them to be Parthian issues on the basis of their imagery, but it was Prinsep (1834, 449–455) who first understood the connection of the divine images on the reverses of Kushan coins as images relating to Zoroastrianism: ‘I have ventured to give the appellation of “Mithraic” to the very numerous coins which have been proved to bear the effigy of the sun [i.e. Mithra], for they afford the strongest evidence of the extension of the religion of ZOROASTER in some parts of Bactria and the Panjab at the time of its re-assumption of consequence in Persia’ (Prinsep 1834, 554). Other articles on Kushan coins in the following decades also referred to the Zoroastrian nature of the coinage (as documented in Cribb 2007), but it was not until Hoffmann and Stein’s articles that the nature of that identification was properly discussed. Both also recognised that the ‘Zoroastrian’ nature of the coinage was not exactly as it was practiced in Iran, but that there were elements of Iranian Zoroastrianism that were missing and that there were other gods present not contained within the Zoroastrian pantheon, but there were some gods, particularly Nana which were not strictly part of Zoroastrianism: ‘In the ranks of Zoroastrian Deities the goddess NANA, very frequent on the coins... cannot fairly claim a place’ (Stein 1887, 166).

The picture recognised by these early writers, recently reaffirmed by Cribb (2008), Bracey (2012), Grenet (2015) and Shenkar (2014), later became more confused as research focussed on the Greek gods’ names featured on some coins of Kanishka I and on the representations of gods with Greek and Indian iconography and names on the coins of Huvishka. Such views became part of the accepted understanding of Kushan religion: ‘the reverse... represents Greek, Sumerian, Elamite, Persian and Indian deities... diversity of deities appears to point to a sort of religious eclecticism, although it is usually believed that it rather reflects the various forms of religion that prevailed in different parts of the vast empire of Kanishka’ (Sircar 1951, p. 147).

In this way the coinage came to be seen as demonstrating that the pantheon was ‘drawn from Rome and

Alexandria, from the Hellenized Orient, Iran, and India' (Rosenfield 1967, 69) and as 'Hellenistic, Indic, Iranian and Central Asian' (Chakravarti 2014, p. 60). In some aspects of the discourse this acquired an added dimension, guessing at the motivation behind the supposed diversity of deities, so that the Kushan pantheon's Iranian nature became obscured behind the idea that the coins represented the tolerance of other religions by the Kushan kings, and emphasised the practice of 'syncretism' (Rosenfield 1967, p. 69): 'religious toleration and syncretism (and even state patronage of certain religions)' (Mukherjee 2004, p. 267, see also Mukherjee 1978, p. 39).

The misleading rationale created by the application of inappropriate concepts for the choice of reverse designs on Kanishka I (c. AD 127–151) and Huvishka's (c. AD 151–190) coins have also been extended to explain this religious imagery through the commonly held view that the purpose of coin design was to communicate messages about the issuing ruler or state to the users of coins, often referred to as a 'propaganda' function: 'coins provide an advertisement of the religious and cultural relationships of the dynasty' (Rowland 1953, p. 124, see also Chakravarti 2014, p. 60). This concept originated in the study of Roman Imperial coinage and even in that series can be questioned as to whether it is appropriate as an explanation of coin designs (Cribb 2009, p. 500–03). This propagandist rationale for Kushan coin design has been explained in two ways. Kennedy (1912, p. 983) considered the religious imagery on the coins to be a device to engage with foreign merchants in the Persian Gulf, because he believed the coins were made for foreign trade and the gods depicted were those popular in the kingdom of Characene/Mesene at the head of the Persian Gulf: 'It was from Babylonia and Mesene that Kanishka derived the greater part of his pantheon' (idem, p. 1003). He considered that 'It is obvious at a glance that this pantheon had nothing to do with the religion of the Kushans.' (idem, p. 1004).

The alternative explanation proposed has been that the Kushan kings were trying to gain the approbation and admiration of their subjects by showing the deities which were popular within their empire: '... the desire of the Kushāna to propagate their imperial glory and might could have been responsible for the appearance of such divinities ... the idea of having so many deities on Kushāna coins seems to have been inspired by... the state policy to emphasise on deities indicating the right and might of the Kushāna rule and... the desire to reflect on coinage the faiths and religious ideas current in Bactria. ... as a medium of propaganda...' (Mukherjee 1978, 42–43).

Such ideas persist and continue to be reiterated: 'The selection of the devices, iconography, and deities for his coins was presumably not a trivial matter for these rulers

or their mint masters; rather, it was more likely a carefully thought through process that hoped for specific messages to be delivered through the numismatic medium. As such the deities placed on these coins are not necessarily a reflection of popular beliefs or personal royal devotion; instead, they are a means to propagate royal agendas to Huvishka's fellow elites both within his empire and beyond its borders.' (Mann 2014, 234).

The study of Kushan religion has often been confused by the concepts of 'syncretism' and 'tolerance', both of which emerged from Christian Europe, particularly during the periods of conflict between the Catholic and Protestant churches (Shaw and Stewart 1994, p. 4; Veer 1994, p. 196; Bracey 2012, p. 213) and of 'propaganda' which also became firmly entrenched in numismatic discourse during the period of state propagandist activities of both sides in the 20th century world wars. Their application to coin designs as evidence of contemporary religion have created many misunderstandings of their significance. The coin designs expressly indicate a relationship between the king and the divine realm and describing this using the term 'religion' (Shaw and Stewart 1994, p. 10; Veer 1994, p. 196) already leads towards the misunderstandings, and prompts the entry into the discourse of these Euro-centric concepts. The surviving evidence of the Kushan context shows an understanding that the world contained gods who affected mankind and the role of kingship was to provide protection and benefits from the gods for their subjects by making offerings to the gods on their behalf. The Kushans adopted royal imagery from their gods, such as club, flaming shoulders and haloes, suggesting the kings took on aspects of the powers of their gods as their representative on earth. Their title son of the gods, *devaputra* (in Gāndhārī) and βαγοπουρο in Bactrian, also suggests they saw themselves as having such a direct relationship with the gods. In this way they could mediate between the gods and their subjects, being part of both the divine and the human world. The raised location of the surviving Kushan royal sanctuaries suggests that their divine world was understood to occupy the space above the earth. The identity of most of the gods placed them within an Iranian context, relating to Bactria or to the original location of the ancestors of the kings, but differing in some respects to those of the kings of Iran, from Achaemenid to Sasanian times. There is, however, strong evidence of a similar understanding of the relationship between the Iranian kings and their gods (Choksy 1988), and this was shown in the imagery of both coins and reliefs in the Parthian and Sasanian period (Curtis 2007, 2012).

Syncretism implies a mutuality between the Iranian understanding of the gods and those of the Hellenistic and Indian worlds, but in the Kushan context it is more a question of taking features from other pantheons to

make the Kushan pantheon work in a figurative context. Before the Kushan period the imagery of their deities was very limited or non-existent, so there was a need to borrow from other pantheons in order to articulate the aspects of their deities visually. Kushan Oēsho borrowed iconography from the Greek world, via Iran, from Heracles and from the Indian world, via Gandhāra, from Śiva. One could describe this process as absorption.

The presence of apparently Hellenistic and Indian deities was an illusion created by their labels (in the case of the Hellenistic ones) or their labels and borrowed iconography (in the case of the Indian ones). This was already apparent long ago: 'They are not Greek divinities at all, but popular indigenous divinities under Greek names and a Greek disguise' (Kennedy 1912, 1005). The only exception was the Buddha, who was added to the pantheon on Kanishka's coins, but had a clear Indian identity. The Rabatak inscription contains a line of interlinear text which makes it clear that when the Indian gods Mahasena and Vishaka were featured on the reverses of Kushan coins it was because they were being identified with Zoroastrian deities (Sims-Williams 2004, 64). The representations on Kushan coins which have been identified as Śiva can also be explained in the same way because, although they share attributes with Śiva, their full iconography does not correspond with this god in the Kushan period (Cribb 1997), but the label attached to his images identifies him as an Iranian deity. During Kanishka's first issues, Oēsho was originally labelled Heracles, until the Greek inscriptions were replaced with Bactrian ones (Cribb 1998). It does not show any theological aspects of the relationship between the Kushan pantheon and the others, rather the recognition by whoever created the imagery, and the designs they appear in, that the Kushan gods shared aspects with the gods of the peoples the Kushan kings had conquered. The concept of 'syncretism' should only be applied here if it is merely used as a reflection of the borrowed iconographies and names and not of the actual merging of religious beliefs and practices, as is normally meant by the term. The concept of 'tolerance' is completely misplaced as this modern term suggests that the coin designs represent the attitude of the Kushan kings to the understandings and practices of their subjects in relation to their own gods for which there is no evidence. In contemporary Buddhist art within Kushan territory there is also a very visible representation of the absorption of Kushan gods into the Buddhist world view, where the Buddha was often accompanied by a guardian, known to modern scholarship as Vajrapani, who shared aspects of both Heracles and Oēsho in his imagery, and a place is also found for a goddess carrying a cornucopia or similar shaped object, who shared this aspect with the Kushan Ardochsho. There is also a place in these reliefs for the Indian gods Brahma and Indra, who occupied their place in the divine realm as imagined by Buddhists. It is

clear that the conception of religion at this time was not a restrictive view of the rightness of one culture's religion at the expense of others as implied by the term 'tolerance' as a relaxation of that restriction by benevolent rulers and communities. As the coin designs of Kanishka and the reported support for Buddhist communities by the Kushan kings show, a Kushan king could extend his understanding of the divine world to add the Buddha into his pantheon, without disrupting its integrity.

Such an understanding of the Kushan pantheon has been emerging more recently as the study of the imagery on coins has been reviewed within its numismatic context and in the light of the recently discovered inscriptions giving evidence of the relationship between the Kushan kings and their court and the Kushan pantheon. The coins themselves provide a better understanding of the meaning of their imagery than turning to terminology derived from the religious conflicts of early modern Europe or a questionable explanation of Roman Imperial coin design developed during more recent conflicts in Europe (Cribb 2009, 500–03). The coins of Kanishka I show a clear relationship between the Kushan kings and the gods depicted on their coins. The obverse of the coin shows Kanishka I extending his hand to make an offering at a small altar and the reverse shows deities who mostly offer a diadem or make a gesture of blessing. By considering both sides at the same time, the coin design is showing the king on the obverse making an offering to the god on the reverse who reciprocates by offering the king the diadem of kingship or blessing the king in some way. The coin design represents a transaction between the king and the god, which in contemporary culture enabled the king to rule because his offerings to the gods were acceptable and brought to the king kingship and other blessings. The design's function was to enable coins to be used as money and the image of the relationship between the king and the god was a mark of the king's ability to rule and therefore issue and guarantee the value and circulation of the coin.

Throughout history designs placed on coins served to identify the issuing authority and to show the nature of that authority (Cribb 2009). Since the arrival of Greek-style coinage in the region, coin designs have normally been intended to show the relationship between the issuer and the gods who gave them the ability to rule and to control the coinage. The significance of the obverse and reverse designs on Kanishka I's coins are clearly illustrated by the designs on the reverses of some Kushano-Sasanian coins where the king and god were shown facing each other with the king making an offering at a small altar between him and the god, who proffered a diadem to the king (Cribb 1990). The tradition of creating coin designs which indicated the king's authority through his divine right to rule was widespread in the Hellenistic world and persisted after the Greeks had lost

power to their successors (Cribb 2009, 505–506). The Kushan kings continued this tradition and passed it on to their successors, both in the north-western corner of the sub-continent and in northern India (Cribb 2003).

The transaction between the king and the gods shown on the coins is also explicit in the practice at the Kushan royal sanctuaries at Khalchayan, Surkh Kotal, Rabatak and Mat, where statues of the kings and of gods were erected and the Rabatak inscription states clearly that the gods bestow kingship on the Kushan kings (Sims-Williams and Cribb 1995/6; Sims-Williams 2004). A similar expression of the relationship between the Kushan king and the gods is to be seen on the Kanishka casket, where the king was shown making an offering of flowers to the Buddha on top of the casket who made a gesture of reassurance in return (Errington 2002). This relationship between Kanishka I and the Buddha was articulated in the same way on his coins. The king on the casket was also flanked on the casket by two of the 'Zoroastrian' gods featured on his coins, Miro (sun) and Mao (moon), both of whom were shown offering him symbols of kingship. The depiction of the king on the casket, standing on the earth with his head among the gods and Buddhas also characterises his role as the mediator between his subjects and the divine realm.

The Kushan pantheon as we can observe it today through the coins and inscriptions which name its constituent members remains at present a construct of modern scholarship which the discovery of new inscriptions and new coins will continue to develop and contribute to our broader understanding of the nature of the cultic practices and understanding of the divine realm of the Kushan kings and their elite and of whatever elements of their subject people who had the same cultural origins. The excavation of more Kushan period sites and the discovery of more cultic images from their territory will also add to the background to the currently reassembled pantheon. It remains clear that the majority of their subjects had a different understanding of the divine realm and different cultic practices and these had little impact on the Kushan kings apart from their engagement with Buddhism and its absorption into their role as mediators between their subjects and the divine realm.

Analysis of the coins and their functionality and production creates an understanding of the nature of the presence on them of Kushan gods, as well as of the ways in which the divine images were deployed by the Kushan mints. Göbl (1984, 23) opened this question by suggesting that the gods on the coins were used to indicate which of four workshops at the mint made each coin, but the structure of the coinage, as now understood, shows that there were only two work stations in action, distinguished initially by the headdress worn by the king making coins at Kanishka I's main mint and they occupied the same physical space at the mint, using separate

obverse dies, but sharing reverse dies (Cribb 1998, 93–96). An analysis of the use of the dies with which the coins were struck shows that the divine images on the reverses of the coins were used in sequence and each god was used to distinguish individual batches of coins being produced. It is possible to see that the gods were used to mark batches because in the sequence of dies if a reverse die was broken during the batch, then a second die with the same deity was introduced to complete the batch (Cribb 1998, p. 95). In the reign of Wima Kadphises (c. AD 113–127) the two workshops seem to have been distinguished by the direction in which the king was facing and there was only one deity on the reverse, following earlier mint practice. Kanishka I's coinage introduced the use of multiple gods to regulate the production in batches and for the rest of his reign and that of his successor Huvishka such a practice continued. In the next reign of Vasudeva I (c. AD 190–230), after an initial issue with two deities on the reverse, the mint reverted to only depicting one deity, with variations in iconography marking phases of production, and this practice continued until the end of the reign. From the reign of Kanishka II (c. AD 130–247), the different mints used different gods to distinguish their individual production, normally Ardochsho at the main gold mint and Oēsho at the subsidiary gold mint. In the second half of Vasudeva I's reign control marks were introduced to distinguish phases of production, and in later reigns this practice continued. Göbl's analysis of the sequence of Kushan coins of the period immediately after Vasudeva I led him to suggest that the two different gods represented two competing kingdoms and religious factions, but it is clear that the distinction was between the different mints during the reigns of Kanishka II, Vasishka (c. AD 247–267) and Vasudeva II (c. AD 267–297) (Göbl 1984, 70–71).

The organisation of the coinage and the treatment of the gods on the coins show that all the gods depicted on Kushan coins were there as symbols of the king's authority as the source of his kingship (Cribb 2009, p. 514), and that they were included in the royal pantheon as worshipped by the king on the coins and seen as the source of his authority in order to validate the coinage and that they were used as devices to manage its production. The designs showed that the coins could be trusted as official money and were not intended as propaganda to impress or persuade his subjects or foreign merchants and states, or to document religious practice in his realm.

NEW COINS AND AN ASSOCIATED COIN

The two new coins (Figs 2 and 3) published here, which appeared on the market recently, one in an auction, the other in the collection of Pankaj Tandon, were struck from different dies but with the same designs.

Both are quarter dinar issues of the Kushan king Kanishka II with reverse image of Nana (figs 2 and 3). They represent fractions of a dinar type (fig. 1a) already known since it was first published by M.F.C. Martin (1933) of the Royal Engineers in India, and President of the Numismatic Society of India, 1929. B.N. Mukherjee later rediscovered the coin in a Calcutta collection and made it the subject of a monograph (1969). Martin and Mukherjee attributed the coin to a king 'Kaneshko', who they understood was later than the Kushan king Huvishka. Robert Göbl (1984) listed the coin as his type

660, attributing it to Kanishka II who 'interrupts [the reign of] Vasudeva II' (unterbright Vāsudeva II). Göbl identified the third phase of Vasudeva I's coinage with a ruler he called 'Vasudeva II', and saw him as in conflict with Kanishka II (1984, pp. 75–77, 1993, p. 39). He considered this coin to have been struck by Kanishka II at a mint he had captured from 'Vasudeva II'. Another example of the type (fig. 1b), struck from the same pair of dies has recently come to light, confirming all the details visible in the poor photographs published by Martin and Mukherjee.



Fig. 1a Gold dinar of Kanishka II, 22.5mm, 7.91g (Location unknown, formerly Narendra Nath Singh Singhi collection; Mukherjee 1969, pl. 1; Göbl 1984, type 660).

Obverse: King standing on base line of dots facing left, wearing overcoat over tunic and leggings and pointed headdress with diadem ties, with halo before face, end of sword suspended from waist showing below hem of overcoat by left leg, holding trident in his raised left hand and making an offering at a small altar surmounted by a trident with his extended right hand. Blundered Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 1.00: $\text{PAONANO PAO KANHPKO KO\text{P}ANO}$.

Reverse: goddess seated frontally on lion facing left, wearing a long dress with an under-shift, her hair dressed in ringlets, a diadem with ties to right and left and earrings, lunar crescent emerging from shoulders, holding sceptre with a finial of three ball-shapes in a row in her raised left hand and offering a diadem in extended her right hand, tamga in left field above the goddess' right arm. Her feet rest in an oval shape marked with dots, perhaps a representation of coins, as on some Kushan versions of Ardochsho on coins of Kanishka II (Göbl 1984, types 549–53) and Vasishka (idem, types 556–66). Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 2.00: $\text{N\text{Q}NEITO}$. Bactrian Δ or A control mark in right field.



Fig. 1b Another example of gold dinar of Kanishka II as Fig. 1a, struck with the same dies. Pankaj Tandon collection #703.70, 23mm, 7.96gg.

The newly discovered quarter dinars and the related dinar all seem to be issues made early in the reign of Kanishka II. Like the issues of his main gold mint they show him wearing Kushan court dress: an overcoat, open at the front with the front opening and gradually separating as it descends towards the hem just below the knees. Under the overcoat he wears a tunic which is about the same length as the overcoat and belted at the waist. Under the skirt of the tunic he is wearing leggings which

are tied at the ankle. The leggings are probably suspended from a belt under the tunic. On his head he wears a cone-shaped helmet-like headdress with diadem ribbons. There are marks down the side of the king's face which could be cheek pieces, long hair or sideburns. The structure and execution of the king's figure and his trident and fire altar are very similar to those of the coins issued at the main Kushan gold mint at Balkh at the end of the reign of Kanishka II's predecessor Vasudeva I. At



Fig. 2 gold quarter dinar of Kanishka II, 14mm, 1.97g
(Aman ur Rahman collection; CNG Triton sale XXV, lot 5191).

Obverse: King standing on base line of dots facing left, wearing overcoat over tunic and leggings and pointed headdress with diadem ties, with halo before face, end of sword suspended from waist showing below hem of overcoat by left leg, holding a trident in his raised left hand and making an offering at a small altar surmounted by a trident with his extended right hand. Blundered Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 1.00: $\text{PAON[AN]O PA[O] KA[NH]PKO KOPANO}$. Uncertain V-shaped control mark in right field

Reverse: goddess seated frontally on lion facing left, wearing a long dress and earrings, holding trident in her raised left hand and offering a diadem in her extended right hand, tamga in left field above goddess's right arm. Abbreviated Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 2.00: $\text{N}\Omega$.



Fig. 3 gold quarter dinar of Kanishka II, (Tandon collection 704.50, 13mm, 1.75g,

said to have been found at Pind Dadan Khan, between Islamabad and Sargodha in the Punjab, with coins of Vasishka).

Obverse: King standing facing left, wearing overcoat over tunic and leggings and pointed headdress with diadem ties, with halo before face, holding a trident in his raised left hand and making an offering at a small altar surmounted by a trident with his extended right hand. Blundered Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 1.00: $\text{[PA]ONANO [PAO KANH]PK]O KOPANO}$.

Reverse: goddess seated frontally on lion facing left, wearing long dress and earrings, holding a trident in her raised left hand and offering a diadem in her extended right hand, tamga in left field above goddess's right arm. Abbreviated Bactrian inscription clockwise beginning at 2.00: N . Showing traces of mount on reverse.

the end of Vasudeva I's reign this mint was taken over by the Sasanian Kushanshah Ardashir I, so it seems possible that these coins of Kanishka II were issued just between Vasudeva I's reign and the Sasanian conquest. If this is the case, then they were issued in Bactria c. AD 230 (Cribb and Bracey *in press*).

The newly discovered dinar and quarter dinars lack a reliable provenance. One of the quarters was reported as found in Pakistan in the Punjab, but this cannot be verified. The Kanishka II dinar originally published by Martin (1933) was probably collected in the north-western part of the subcontinent, as Martin was a British Army officer based in Peshawar, who collected coins in the region and sometimes indicated their provenances. The international trade in ancient coins of South and Central Asia remains a problem, both for correctly tracing the origins and contexts of new discoveries, but also for preserving the heritage of these regions. The trade in coins is often conducted in a clandestine way with dealers disguising or concocting provenances (often to enhance their market value) for the pieces they have on offer, so obscuring their true origins. These coins were probably minted in northern Afghanistan, but at the period when Kushan rule retreated from north-western Afghanistan before the Sasanians, this could explain why Martin's example and one of the new coins were reported from Pakistan, where the Kushans re-centred their empire. The likely Pakistan origin also illustrates the ancient movement of coins which means that even if their place of minting can be determined, the location of their discovery could be anywhere that Kushan coins circulated, from Uzbekistan to Bangladesh. The almost two hundred years practice of collecting coins in the region (Cribb 2007) also further confuses their provenances, as coins often emerge from old private European, North American and South Asian collections long after their original discovery. For example the gold dinar (fig. 1a) was rediscovered by Mukherjee (1969, p. ix) in a private collection in Calcutta and, if it had not been published by Martin, an Indian rather than a Pakistan provenance would be mistakenly presumed. The newly discovered coins were removed from their place of discovery, either recently or in the past, so their provenances cannot be reconstructed with any confidence. Whenever and wherever they were found it remains unclear whether they were, like many coin finds, accidental discoveries during farming and construction work, or illegal diggings on archaeological sites.

The presence of Nana on a coin of Kanishka II, parallels her appearance on the reverse of the first issue of the reign of Vasudeva I (Göbl 1984, type 514). It is possible that both Kanishka II and Vasudeva I's use of Nana on their initial issues was related to the role of this goddess as a leader in the investiture of the king, as the

following issues used other gods. It is also possible that the place of Nana on Kanishka II's coins was to distinguish the issuing mint from the gold mint, in Gandhāra or at Begram, which used enthroned Ardochsho images and the other two mints which used Oēsho or standing Ardochsho.

The important position of Nana within Kushan religion is apparent in the choice of her image on the coins of four Kushan kings, Kanishka I, Huvishka, Vasudeva I and Kanishka II and in the references to her in the Rabatak inscription. As discussed above her place on coinage had a functional as well as a religious significance. In the reign of Kanishka I she was featured in all phases of his gold and copper coins, but under Huvishka she only had this level of prominence in his gold issues and the first phase of his copper coins. On these coins she appeared on an equal basis with several other Kushan deities, particularly Miuro, Mao, Athsho and Oesho. In the production sequence under Kanishka I coins with her image were made first together with coins featuring Miuro (Cribb 1998, 93–96). The diminution of her role on the copper coins in the latter part of Huvishka's does not necessarily indicate any decline in her cult, but rather a change in the use of gods on the coins, as by the end of Huvishka's reign only two deities were routinely featured on the coinage, Ardochsho and Oesho. This pair of gods continued to dominate coin design until the middle of the reign of Vasudeva II when Oesho also disappeared from the coins. The significance of these changes should not be exaggerated as, although coins provide us with a large part of our understanding of Kushan religion, the choice of coin designs was part of the systems used to regulate the issue of coins, so such changes should primarily be seen as administrative changes rather than as evidence of preferences by the king for particular deities or the waxing and waning of particular aspects of royal cult. In the absence of other forms of witness to Kushan religion the evidence from coins should always be framed within the monetary context of its divine imagery.

THE NŌNEITO INSCRIPTION

The dinar's first publishers were not able to read its reverse inscription. Martin read it as NŌN..., Mukherjee as NŌNASAO (Nōnasao), suggesting it was a corrupt form of NANAPAO (Nanashao = royal Nana) and Göbl as NANA. In his review of Mukherjee's publication of the coin, Bivar suggested reading the inscription as NŌNAIA (1971, p. 615). Later Göbl drew the inscription to look like NŌNISTO (Nōnisto), but did not transliterate it (Göbl 1993, pl. 4). Closer examination shows that the inscription should be read as NŌNEITO (Nōneito), an alternative name for Nana, also to be found

on coins of Huvishka where it is spelt in two different ways: NΩNEITO (Nōneito) or NΩNITO (Nōnito). This spelling has already been alluded to in relation to two coins inscribed NΩNITO in the American Numismatic Society collection (Jongeward and Cribb 2015, p. 275–6). The inscription on the dinar has also been read as NΩNITO by Falk, and he attributed the coin to Kanishka II, recognising its links with the coins of Vasudeva I and the NΩNEITO coins of Huvishka (2015, p. 291).

Göbl illustrated three examples of Huvishka's gold dinars with the Bactrian inscription NΩNITO, but read them as NΩNYO (1984, types 302.1 and 357.1 and 2), and listed four other examples (302.2 and 3, and 357.3 and 4). He also listed two more examples in his catalogue of the Craig Burns collection in the Bern Museum (Göbl 1993). These represent three different varieties (302 = table 1: type 1; 357 = type 5 and type 6). Including the pieces published by Göbl there are 28 known examples of Huvishka gold dinars with this version of Nana's name, and they represent striking from seven different dies, three with NΩNEITO (types 2, 3 and 4) and three with NΩNITO (types 1, 5 and 6), plus a blundered

version of NΩNITO, omitting the T (type 7). They are listed here in their order of issue, with types 5–7 being die linked, so produced about the same time. All the examples were made at Huvishka's subsidiary gold mint, located in Gandhāra, from the third through to fourth phase in the second half of his reign (Cribb and Bracey at press) (Fig. 4). There is also one example of a copper coin inscribed NΩNEITO (type 8), also struck in Gandhāra at the local copper mint. This coin is exceptional, even though and so-far unique. It shows Nana in her normal pose holding lion-forepart wand and bowl, but facing a kneeling figure with crescent horns emerging from his shoulders. The crescent is faint on this example due to wear and corrosion, but is confirmed by other examples (Fig 4b), which also show the same scene, but Nana is labelled NANA and the kneeling figure is identified as a Karalrang (high official of the Kushan court), called Omoiagogano. In the inscription: OMOIAGOΓANO KAPAΛPAΓΓO = Omoiagogano Karalraggo (my reading is published by Falk and Sims-Williams 2017, pp. 136–7; Cribb and Bracey at press).

Table 1 Nana coins of Huvishka, inscribed NΩNEITO, or NΩNITO, nos 1–7 gold dinars, no. 8 copper unit.

Type	Bactrian inscription	design	Göbl die numbers	coin	source	diameter and weight
1	NΩNITO	Nana facing left, holding lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand, with billowing robes; haloed head, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in left field.	obv II-44 rev 3-4 (G302)	a	British Museum 1879,0501.66; Göbl 1984, no. 302.1	20mm, 7.87g
				b	CNG Triton sale X (2007-01-09), lot 485	8.05g
				c	CNG sale 91 (2012-09-19), lot 456,	20mm, 7.90g
				d	CNG sale 81 (2009-05-20), lot 715	7.83g
				e	CNG sale 93 (2013-05-22), lot 714; Nomos AG sale 12 (2016-05-22), lot 139; CNG sale 106 (2017-09-13), lot 583	21mm, 8.05g
				f	Roma sale 23 (2022-03-28), lot 478	22mm, 8.03g
				g	Bern Museum 88.169, Göbl 1993, no. 274	21mm, 8.02g
				h	American Numismatic Society 1944.100.63667; Göbl 1984, no. 302.2; Jongeward and Cribb 2015, no. 766	21mm, 7.93g
				i	Poddar collection; Göbl 1984, no. 302.3	
				j	Pankaj Tandon collection #691.40	21mm, 8.06g
2	NΩNEITO	Nana facing right, holding ribboned lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in right field.	obv III-1	a	CNG e-sale 148 (2007-08-08), lot 170	21mm, 7.96g
				b	Pankaj Tandon collection #601.1	20mm, 7.91g
				c	Ashmolean Museum no. HCR86943	7.75g

Type	Bactrian inscription	design	Göbl die numbers	coin	source	diameter and weight
3	NΩNEITO	Nana facing left, holding lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand; haloed head, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in left field.	obv XII-1	a	Private collection	21mm, 7.91g
				b	Pankaj Tandon collection #703.21	22mm, 7.82g
4	NΩNEITO	Nana facing right, holding lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand; haloed head, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in right field.	obv XII-1	a	CNG sale 82 (2009-09-16), lot 798; Falk 2015, p. 265, fig. 3 (reverse only)	7.70g
5	NΩNITO	Nana facing right, holding ribboned lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand; haloed head, no crescent. Royal tamga in right field.	obv XII-2 rev 1-43 (G 357)	a	Location unknown; Göbl 1984, no. 357.2	
				b	Roma e-sale 95 (2022-04-13), lot 585	21mm, 7.88g
				c	Berlin Museum, Göbl 1984, no. 357.3	7.85g
				d	Nascia sale (1963), lot 3; Göbl 1984, no. 357.4	
6	NΩNITO	Nana facing right, holding ribboned lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in right field.	obv XII-2 rev 1-42 (G357)	a	British Museum IOC.327, Göbl 1984, no. 357.1	20mm, 7.96g
				b	http://coinindia.com/galleries-huvishka.html	
				c	Bern Museum 88.201 Göbl 1993, no. 296	22mm, 7.85g
				d	In trade, found in Dir District, Pakistan	
				e	CNG sale e.531 (2022-01-25), lot 457	21mm 7.98g
				f	Pankaj Tandon #384.20	22mm, 7.92g
				g	CNG sale 91 (2012-09-19), lot 459	21mm, 8.00g
7	NΩNIO	Nana facing right, holding ribboned lion-forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand; haloed head, crescent on brow. Royal tamga in right field.	obv VI-1	a	Gorny & Mosch sale 170 (2008-10-01), lot 1603; CNG sale 81 (2009-05-20), lot 718	7.88g
8	[NΩ] NEITO	Nana facing right, [holding lion forepart wand in right hand, bowl in left hand], haloed head, crescent on brow, before kneeling figure facing left, extending hands together, with crescents emerging from shoulders. Royal tamga in between figures.	copper unit: King climbing mountain, holding club in right hand and sceptre in left hand, or climbing onto the back of a bird facing left.	a	Pankaj Tandon collection #692.14	25mm, 10.21g



Fig. 4 Huvishka gold dinars with images of Nana inscribed ΝΩNEITO (Nōneito) or ΝΩNITO (Nōnito) (1a British Museum 1879,0501.66; 2a Classical Numismatic Group e-sale 148 (2007-08-08), lot 170; 3a private collection; 4a Classical Numismatic Group sale 82 (2009-09-16), lot 798; 5b Roma e-sale 95 (2022-04-13), lot 585; 6a British Museum IOC.327; 7a Gorny & Mosch sale 170 (2008-10-01), lot 1603; 8a Pankaj Tandon collection #692.14, 25mm, 10.21g; 8b Aman ur Rahman collection, king seated on mountain, goddess labelled Nana and kneeling figure with crescent horns on shoulders labelled the karalrang Omoia-gogano, 8c Aman ur Rahman collection, king seated on couch, same reverse die as 8b.

The iconography of Nana on these coins, standing figure in long gown holding lion-forepart wand and bowl, with a lunar crescent on her brow, is the same as on Kanishka I, Huvishka and Vasudeva I's coins inscribed NANA, and as on those inscribed NANAPAO, apart from their addition of a sword worn by the goddess. Normally Nana is shown facing to the right, but on Huvishka's types 1 and 3 she faces left. These coins reading Nōneito show that the inscription on the dinar of Kanishka II and the abbreviation on his quarters represents an intentional spelling of a variant name of the goddess Nana.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF KANISHKA II'S NANA COINS

Although the Huvishka coins show that these Kanishka II coins are intended to depict Nana, the iconography of the goddess on them does not match that on Huvishka's coins. The familiar lion-forepart wand and the bowl are missing. On the dinar she still has the lunar crescent on her brow, but also a lunar crescent emerges from her shoulders as on the images of the Kushan moon god Mao on the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka. She is also holding a sceptre with three balls in line at its top in her right hand. These features are absent on the new quarter dinars. All three coins, however, show the goddess seated on the back of a lion and offering a diadem. In place of the sceptre with three balls both the quarters show the goddess holding a trident in her right hand.

As Mukherjee (1969, p. 12) observed, Nana seated on a lion also appeared on a coin type of Huvishka (Göbl 1984, type 359) (fig. 5). A garnet seal in the British Museum has the same design (fig. 6). Huvishka's Nana on lion coin was struck at his subsidiary gold mint using the same obverse die (XII-2) as Nōnito types 5 and 6. It is clear from this that the die engraver(s) or their instructors at Huvishka's subsidiary mint in Gandhāra did not feel bound to follow the iconography or nomenclature for Nana normally used on Kushan coins, but were aware of an alternative iconography and name for Nana. Because the goddess was seated on lion and had a lunar attribute, Mukherjee (1969, pp. 18–20 and 50) identified her as a syncretism of Nana with the lion-mounted Indian goddess Durgā, consort of Śiva, and her manifestation as Ambā (mother). He also associated her with the Greek goddesses Artemis (huntress and moon goddess) and Tyche (good fortune). In her study of Nana, Ghose (2006) has drawn attention to several other representations of a goddess seated on lion from Kushan territory, particularly to one (idem, p. 101, 111, fig. 18) in a Gandharan Buddhist relief found at Ranigat where she also has the lunar attribute emerging from her shoulders as on

Kanishka II's dinar, and holds a bowl in her left hand (Nishikawa 1994, vol. 2, p. 135, pl. 101, no. 6; Ghose 2006, pp. 111, fig. 18). Ghose diverged from Mukherjee's analysis and saw the lion-mounted images of Nana in the Kushan period as influential on later representations of Durga, rather than as a syncretism (idem, pp. 102–3). A more detailed account of Nana's iconography and its development before Kanishka II has been set out by Shenkar (2014, pp. 116–28, 298–316, figs. 92–119).



Fig. 5 Gold dinar of Huvishka, showing the goddess Nana sitting on a lion (British Museum 1888,1208.555, 20mm, 7.89g).



Fig 6 Garnet seal depicting Nana wearing long dress and crescent on brow, holding bowl and lion-forepart wand, seated on lion inscribed in Bactrian: ΦΡΕΙΧΟΔΑΝΟ (Phreichodano, a personal name) (British Museum 1892,1103.100, 20×17mm; Callieri 1997, no. U 7.23).

He refers to the lion mount, lunar crescent, sceptre and diadem on the dinar.

Both Ghose (2006, pp. 99–100) and Shenkar (2015, pp. 119–121) discussed Nana's role as bestower of royal authority on the Kushan kings, as evidenced by the Rabatak inscription and the title royal added to her name on coins of Kanishka I (Göbl 1984, types 36, 50, 54, 60 and 810) and Huvishka (types 153, 165, 283 and 303). Both attribute a royal Nana coin to Wima Kadphises, mistaking a copper coin of Kanishka (Göbl 1984, type 810) for an issue of Wima Kadphises (Ghose 2006, pp. 99 and 108, fig. 5; Shenkar 2015, p. 199). They also refer to copper coin types of Huvishka showing a figure kneeling before Nana (see type 8 above). This figure was identified as the king by Ghose (2006, pp. 100 and 108, fig. 7d), but only as a person by Shenkar (2015, pp. 120 and 298, fig. 93). The kneeling figure, who wears a lunar crescent emanating from his shoulders, perhaps as a mark of attachment to the goddess, is identified by the inscription on some examples of the type as a *karalrang* (see above).

Falk (2015) argued that the crescent on the brow of Nana identified her as the planet Venus, and hence with the Greco-Roman goddess of love Aphrodite/Venus. He suggested that the lunar crescent on the dinar of Kanishka II represented a change, during the late Kushan period, in the previous perception of 'the "original" Nana' as Venus (idem, p. 291) and cited as a parallel the Ranigat Nana with lunar crescent emerging from her shoulders, mentioned above, as another example of the same change in the period of Vasudeva I, with the 'wrong crescent'. The link between Nana and the planet Venus is plausible and well-argued by Falk. The use of the moon as an identifier of the planet Venus is frequently encountered in ancient art, and stems from the most distinctive appearance of the planet alongside the crescent moon. Using a star emblem alone was insufficient to identify the goddess as Venus is one of several planets and of thousands of visible stars, the crescent moon distinguished its star emblem from others. A crescent on its own, particularly when the goddess linked with the planet was shown, could therefore be a marker indicating that the deity was to be identified with the planet Venus. Falk proposed that the crescent was the symbol for the planet Venus because the ancients could detect the crescent form of the planet Venus, but the evidence for this is very thin and it is difficult to use to justify the idea that the crescent itself was a widely used image of the planet on the basis of rare sightings of this feature of the planet. The planet was represented as a star symbol or embodied as a goddess in most of the ancient visual contexts cited by Falk, but accompanied by the planet's distinguishing marker, the crescent moon, to indicate which star was intended. The crescent moon was the marker for the

planet Venus because they were the brightest objects in the evening and night sky and they were particularly spectacular when their monthly conjunction coincided with the waxing or waning crescent moon.

Nana's links back to ancient Mesopotamia are well known and discussed and her name suggests she can perhaps be traced back to Nanaya in the Akkadian pantheon (Westenholz 2014, pp. 168–70), where she was identified in ancient texts as a goddess of love (Schumann and Sazonov 2021, pp. 282–3). Early texts also liken her to a bright heavenly body, the sun or the moon, and address her as star as bright as the sun, and her emblem is described as a star (Westenholz 2014, pp. 172–3, 181). Later Babylonian texts (idem, p. 286) give her the role of bestower of kingship. All these aspects survive into the Kushan period. The attributes of lion mount and crescent moon are more difficult to trace before her emergence in Bactria. An early representation of her on a stele shows the goddess seated on throne with lion's feet and under symbols of a star, a lunar crescent and a solar disk (Westenholz 2014, pp. 169–170, fig. 1). The star on the stele can only be the planet Venus, but it is not clear whether these symbols are showing the divine cosmos or relating to the goddess depicted more directly. Another early Mesopotamian text also records that her temple was named after the moon (Westenholz 2014, pp. 174). Schumann and Sazonov (2021 p. 292) suggest that the moon emblem identifies her role as mother goddess, but the moon emblems fit well as a marker of her identification with Venus, the brightest body in the sky apart from the sun and moon and the most distinctive conjunction of Venus with the moon is with the waxing crescent moon in the western sky, even visible in the twilight. There are also linkages with the lion in the Akkadian texts (Westenholz 2014, p. 174) suggesting the lion feet of her throne in the stele have a specific meaning. Nevertheless such symbols also seem to be related to other gods of Mesopotamia, such as Assyrian Ishtar, identified with the planet Venus by her star emblem (idem, p. 176), so such prototypes for the appearance of similar symbols associated with a Kushan goddess with the same name about two millennia later should be treated with some caution.

The linkage of Bactrian Nana with the crescent moon and lion appears with the first coinage related to her in the region. The early first century AD silver coins from north-western Bactria issued in the names of Sapalbizēs (the frequently used spelling Sapadbizēs is a misreading), Arseilēs and Pulagēs (Senior 2001, vol. 2, p. 214, types A4–6) show Nana's lion mount and her name in Greek NANAIA together with a crescent resting on a lambda shape. The next appearance in Bactria was at the beginning of Kanishka I's reign when he issued copper coins which featured Nana (inscribed NANAIA) or Miiro

(inscribed ΗΛΙΟΣ) (Göbl 1984, types 767 and 766). These were struck with a pair of obverse dies which showed the king wearing two different crowns, an Iranian soft cap or a crescent, which could be seen as linking the king with these two deities.

The crescent continued to be a feature of the headdress of Kushan kings, often appearing as a V-shaped device on the front of the king's headdress (the crescent became a V-shape because it was viewed from the side), and can be seen in the same position but frontally on the representation of a Kushan king making an offering to a bodhisattva in a Gandharan relief in Lahore Museum (Ingholt and Lyons 1957, p. 134pl. 287).

CRESCENT FROM EMANATING SHOULDERS

As shown above, the use of the name Nōneito with Nana and the presence of her lion mount indicates a broader knowledge of the goddess's iconography and nomenclature on the part of Huvishka's die engravers or their instructors, so it should not be seen as a matter of ignorance that the Kanishka II dinar's design shows a lunar crescent emerging from the goddess's shoulders. The representation of a worshipper of Nana with the same feature on copper coins during the reign of Huvishka, as mentioned above, supports the intentionality of such an iconography. The same large crescent emerging from shoulders feature also appears on an image of Nana seated on lion, holding a bowl and foliate sceptre (broken) with a ball finial, on a bronze plaque (fig. 7), said to have been found in Afghanistan (Ghose 2005) and re-examined by Shenkar (2015, pp. 121 and 303, fig. 100). This goddess has been dated by Ghose to the post-Kushan period, perhaps the Turkic Shahi period, 7th–8th centuries, but an earlier date in the Hun period should not be ruled out. She wears a crown ornamented with a circular device within a crescent flanked by flying diadem ribbons, a detail appearing on Kidarite Hun, Hephthalite/Alchon Hun and early Turkic coins in Afghanistan. Another image of Nana from the Hun period, with both crescent horns emerging from shoulders and a trident appears on a recently discovered gold plaquette (fig. 8). The goddess does not have a crescent on her headdress, but is identified as the planet Venus by the star in front of her face. The trident has curved side prongs like those appearing on those carried by Śiva on 6th–7th century on Hun coins from Kashmir (Cribb 2016, figs 1–9 and 15).

The crescent and circle device flanked by flying ribbons of the bronze plaque is worn in the crown of the Hephthalite 'King of the East' Adomano, c. 500–520, on his Bactrian gold dinars (Vondrovec 2015, vol. 1, p. 154, type 85) (fig. 9). On the reverse of his coins is

a lion-mounted goddess with a crescent on her brow, she is facing frontally and the lion's head faces right. This goddess wears a long dress and earrings and holds a diadem in her raised right hand and a trident with ribbons over her shoulder with her left hand. The prongs of the trident resemble ears of wheat. When compared with the trident and diadem holding Nana on Kanishka II's quarter dinars, it can be suggested that this figure is also a representation of Nana. This Hephthalite coin type and the plaque and plaquette witness the continuing cult of Nana in post-Kushan period Bactria, and her continuing association with lion, crescent and trident. Surviving elements of Nana's iconography, particularly the lion mount and the crescent can be seen in other parts of Central Asia (Ghose 2006; Shenkar 2015, pp. 120–7; Minardi 2013, 126–30) and will be further discussed below.



Fig 7 Nana with crescent emerging from her shoulders, seated on a lion. Drawing (© Linda Crook 2022) based on bronze plaque (after Shenkar 2015, p. 303, fig. 100), said to have been found in Afghanistan, 6–7th century.



Fig. 8 Nana with crescent emerging from her shoulders, standing facing right, wearing knee-length dress with arched hem, with trident above her extended left arm, from which is suspended a bag, and holding an unidentified object in her raised right hand; star before her face in upper right field, foliage in lower right and left fields. Gold repoussé jewellery plaquette, Pankaj Tandon collection #695.55, 26mm, 0.75g



Fig. 9 gold dinars of Adomano, Hun king of the East, c. 500–520, showing Nana seated on lion on reverse (a private collection; b Classical Numismatic Group sale e500, 2021-09-22, lot 573, 35mm, 7.12g; c Aman ur Rahman collection KS-AV 76, 30.5mm, 5.71g).

SYRIAN CONNECTIONS

Further examination of the question of Nana's association with the planet Venus can be sought in another lion-mounted goddess in the Near East identified as a manifestation of Venus (Budin 2004, 128–32). She is Atargatis depicted as riding on a lion or seated on a throne supported by two lions in representations on the coins of the city of Hierapolis/Bambyke/Manbog in Syria of the Roman period (Wroth 1899, pl. XVII, nos 14 and 15), but she does not wear a crescent. However on her first numismatic appearance on this city's coins the crescent moon was shown alongside her bust, or she was represented simply as a crescent, both identified with her name written in Aramaic on the coins (Andrade 2017) (fig. 10). Roman period silver coins of the same city, issued in the reign of Caracalla, 198–227 (Bellinger 1940, pp. 42–3) shows Atargatis riding a lion or seated on a lion throne holding a sceptre with a row of ball shapes, and the same sceptre in a niche between her and her consort, the sky god Hadad, who is identified with Zeus, both wielders of thunderbolts (fig. 11). The same sceptre with three ball shapes is also placed between these gods in a 2nd–3rd century relief from Dura Europos (Elsner, J. 2000, pp. 57–60, fig. 11) (fig. 12). An alternative identification has been suggested for the sceptre with three balls in the representations of Atargis, suggesting that is a Roman military standard (Millar 1993, p. 247). This sceptre with three ball shapes is held by Nana on Kanishka II's dinar and by Kushan kings from Vasishka, to Shaka (c. AD 302–42) (fig. 13). Atargatis's identification with the planet Venus and her Greek manifestation Aphrodite is attested in first century AD inscriptions from her sanctuary on the island Delos, which also links her with Hadad/Zeus (Budin 2004, pp. 130–2). Such a connection of a Sky god of thunder with the goddess of the planet Venus parallels that of Kushan Nana with the Kushan god Oēsho who also wields a thunderbolt, further supporting Falk's identification of Nana with the planet Venus. On Kushano-Sasanian coins the representation of Oēsho as the 'exalted god' normally show him with trident and bull like the Kushan version of the deity, but on some examples he is shown enthroned as Zeus with a crescent on the front of his crown (Cribb 1990, pl. VI, nos 58 and 59) is often shown in Hellenistic depictions, again suggesting the same linkage between gods representing the planet Venus and the sky.

The three balls motif took on a different form in later Sogdian representations of Nana seated on lion. On one example, a silver dish from Choresmia (western Uzbekistan) in the British Museum (BM 1877,0820.1, 124mm, 127.5g Westenholz 2014, p. 194, fig. 10; Minardi 2013, pp. 113–4, figs 2 and 3), she holds in her right hand, resting on her right knee, a sceptre with a cluster of three



Fig 10 silver staters (didrachms) of Bambyke-Manbog, Syria, 4th century BC, showing the goddess Atargatis (named in Aramaic 'Atarate' with a crescent and being worshipped as a crescent (1 Roma sale XIV, 2017-05-16, lot 272, 23mm, 8.23g; 2 Roma sale XI, 2016-04-07, lot 490, 23m, 8.16g m).



Fig 11 silver tetradrachms of Hierapolis-Bambyke, Syria, in names of Roman empress Julia Domna (193–217; issued c. 215–17) and emperor Caracalla (198–217), showing the goddess Atargatis-Aphrodite riding on a lion and seated on a lion throne holding a sceptre with three ball shapes, next to a small shrine with the same sceptre and the enthroned figure of her consort Hadad-Zeus (1 Classical Numismatic Group Triton sale XXII, 2019-01-08, lot 538 24mm, 12.16g; Classical Numismatic Group sale 111, 2019-05-29, lot 507, 26mm, 11.74g).



Fig. 12 Atargatis-Aphrodite seated on a lion throne with a sceptre with three ball shapes in a small shrine. Drawing (© Linda Crook 2022) based on the stone relief of Atargatis and Hadad excavated at Dura Europos, Yale University (after Elsner, J. 2000, pp. 57–60, fig. 11).



Fig. 13 Gold dinar of Kushan king Shaka (c. 302–342), showing the king holding sceptre with three ball shapes (British Museum 1893,0506.42, 21mm, 7.78g).

balls on the end and has three balls in the crescent on the front of her crown. Her crown has the crenelations of the crown of Anahita in Sasanian art (Shenkar 2015, pp. 69–74). Any connection between Nana and Anahita will be discussed below. Like Kushan Nana she holds a bowl in her left hand, but has two extra arms held above her head holding a wheel and crescent, symbols of the sun and moon. Minardi illustrated two other silver dishes with very similar designs of Nana on lion holding a sceptre topped by three balls and a bowl and with a crescent in her crenelated crown (Minardi 2013, p. 116, figs. 5 and 6) and a fourth which shows the goddess seated on a throne, with similar attributes, but no crescent in her crown.

The three balls could represent an astral conjunction, perhaps of Venus with Jupiter and the moon or another heavenly body. The three-ball emblem, normally in a triangle also appears as three dots on Kushan coins during Vasudeva I's reign, below the bull of Oēsho (Göbl 1984, types 500, 506, and during Vasudeva II's (idem types 576–7), above the throne of Ardochsho (Cribb and Bracey at press). It also appears as a motif on Sasanian coins (e.g. Alram and Gyselen 2003, pl. 23, Shapur I, no. A16, 26, 86–7, A25, 116, A38) and Kushano-Sasanian coins (e.g. Cribb 1990, pl. III, nos 14, 15, 19 and 26). In later times the emblem was used as the signature mark of the Central Asian ruler Timur (1336–1405), where it is known to have represented a conjunction. Timur used a title with the same connotation *ṣāhib-qirān* 'Lord of the Conjunction' and this was inherited by the Mughal emperors (Balabanlilar 2007, pp. 6–7).

NANA AND UMA

Apart from the connections with Aphrodite/Venus coming from the West there is some material which points to another association for Nana, connecting her with the East. In the Rabatak inscription (Sims-Williams 2004, line 2) Kanishka I's kingship is said to have been bestowed by the goddess Nana (NANA). Further into the inscription (lines 9–11) there is a list of gods whose images are to be erected at the sanctuary (BAΓOΛAΓTO, abode of the gods) 'in the presence of glorious Umma [OMMO]' (line 9). The list of gods (lines 9–10) to be depicted is 'the above-mentioned Nana and the above-mentioned Umma, Aurmuzd [AOPOMOZΔO], Muzhduwan [MOZΔOOANO], Sroshard [ΣPOΨAPΔO] – (interlinear: who in Indian is called Mahāsena [MAA-ΣHNO] and is called Viśākha [BIZAGO]) – Narasa [NAPΑΣAO], and Mihir [MIIPO]' (Sims-Williams 2004, 56). As translated by Sims-Williams there appear to be two distinct gods, Nana and Umma, placed in the leading role at the sanctuary (lines 2 and 9), but it seems

plausible that a single goddess is being referred to with two different names and, instead of translating the Bactrian word *αμγα* as 'above-mentioned', it could be translated as 'same' as has been suggested by Gnoli (2009, 144), because a form of this word *υαμγο* meaning 'same' is used in the Bactrian documents (Sims-Williams 2007, 271–2). On coins of Huvishka both Nana and a goddess labelled OMMO are paired with the Kushan god Oēsho (Nana/Oēsho Göbl 1984 type 167; Ommo/Oēsho type 310). The image of Nana carries her usual lion-protome wand, but Ommo carries a flower. It appears that the Bactrian OMMO represents the name of the Indian deity Umā, consort of Oēsho's Indian parallel Śiva and that she was equated with NANA as part of the Kushan pantheon. The practice of double-naming Kushan gods with their Indian equivalent is attested in the Rabatak inscription by the interlinear inscription indicated above (between lines 9 and 10). This identification of Nana as the consort of the Kushan god Oēsho, and their identification with the Indian gods Śiva and Umā offers an explanation of the trident, the attribute of Oēsho, being held by Nana on Kanishka II's quarter dinars and the dinars of Adomano. Oēsho can also be seen with a crescent on his forehead on the imitation coins issued by the Kushano-Sasanians when they first started issuing gold coins in northern Afghanistan (Göbl 1984, pp. 55–60, types 662–698).

NANA AND ANAHITA

Another connection of Nana is illustrated by her depiction on Kushano-Sasanian coins. Nana is featured and named in the Bactrian inscription BAΓA NANA (goddess Nana) on a coin type of the third Sasanian Kushanshah Peroz I, c. 245–70 (Cribb 1990, pl. IV, no. 31). She is shown as a bust rising out of a Sasanian fire-altar/throne on the reverse of this type, with her head surrounded by a halo and surmounted by a crescent. This issue also includes coins with a representation of Oēsho, with the Kushano-Sasanian name BOPZAOANΔO BAΓO, meaning 'exalted god', rising from the fire-altar/throne, struck from the same obverse die as those with Nana on the reverse. Once again this places Nana alongside Oēsho. A later Kushano-Sasanian coinage makes the same juxtaposition with Oēsho for the Sasanian goddess Anahita. On the coins of Hormizd II Kushanshah, c. 300–3, the place of Oēsho, the exalted god, on his predecessor's coins is taken by Anahita, identified in Pahlavi as *n'hyt* *MRWTA* (Lady Anahita) (Cribb 1990, pl. I, no 5, pl. III, no. 25). These images show on the gold coins the goddess enthroned wearing a long dress, a flat crown and earrings, holding a diadem in her right hand and a bow in her left, or on the copper coins as a bust

wearing the same flat crown and earrings, holding a diadem in her right hand and a spear in her left, emerging from the top of a fire altar.

The connection between Nana and Anahita is, as Grenet says, a matter of debate (2015a, p. 210), but the substitution of one for the other on Kushano-Sasanian coins is suggestive and there are other reasons for linking them, such as their shared role as bestowers of kingship (Grenet 2015b, p. 132, 137–8). Although there are many of the divine figures of the Iranian pantheon depicted in the Kushan coinage, the absence of Anahita is most easily explained by her place being taken by Nana, but the lack of contemporary sources keeps the question open. The link between Nana and Anahita remains controversial and difficult to resolve (Shenkar 2015, pp. 116–7). The crenellated crown seems to be one of Anahita's key attributes, perhaps inherited from the Greek city goddess of good fortune Tyche. She wears this crown on two of her representations on Kushano-Sasanian coins (Cribb 1990, pl. 3, nos. 16 and 17) and on Sasanian coins of Hormizd I (Shenkar 2015, p. 248, fig. 19) and in a relief of Narseh (*idem*, p. 249, fig. 21). Otherwise her iconography doesn't overlap with Nana.

An image labelled Nana on a gold dinar type of Huvishka's main gold mint (Göbl 1984 type 260) is often cited as linking Nana with Anahita and with the Greek goddess Artemis, because she holds a bow (Falk 2015, p. 290, fig. 31; Shenkar 2015, pp. 120 and 300, fig. 96), the same attribute as Anahita on the gold coin of Hormizd II Kushanshah mentioned above. However such connections cannot be argued from this coin as it does not depict Nana, but has a mislabelled image of Teiro as depicted on another Huvishka gold coin (type 234). Falk (2015, p. 290) suggested that the Teiro coin was a recutting of a die showing Nana with bow, but there is no evidence on the coin of such recutting and the writing of the Bactrian inscription TEIPO conforms exactly with Bactrian script style on this period of Huvishka's coinage, the structure of production at Huvishka's mint at this period suggests a die engraver's mistake in adding the name of Nana to an image of the goddess Teiro, rather than a novel iconography for Nana (Bracey 2012, p. 215). There are several other examples of mislabelled deities on Kushan coins, particularly in the reign of Huvishka.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of these two new quarter dinars of Kanishka II and a reappraisal of the dinar issued at the same mint and time raise many questions about the identity and imagery of the Kushan goddess Nana and about her connections with other deities in cultures to East, West and North. The connections Nana has with the

Kushan god Oēsho allow her attributes to be extended to provide iconography for Umā the consort of Śiva, India's counterpart to Kushan Oēsho. Oēsho's trident was adopted by both Śiva and Umā in her manifestation as Durgā. Nana's lion also appears to have been adopted for Durgā. In her turn Nana was sharing the crescent and the lion mount with other deities further West. Her role in the Kushan world also suggested a connection with the Iranian deity Anahita, but without a clear resolution of the issue of their relationship. As Doris Srinivasan concluded: 'a great synthesis took place and possibly her popularity is because she meant so many (and different?) things to so many (and different?) people' (Srinivasan, 1997, p. 304). Although the priestly component of the Kushan court apparently had an understanding of Nana within the Kushan pantheon, the Rabatak inscription showed an interest in finding cognates to Kushan gods in other religions, and at the level of the officials and workers in the mint this awareness of religious parallels to Kushan gods could have extended even further. For the Kushan elite Nana had a clear and distinct role and her own characteristic attributes, but the everyday reality of ruling in a foreign land and encountering other religions and their gods created the situation summarised by Srinivasan, but as a process of absorption by the Kushan elite, rather than synthesis. There can be little doubt that those creating iconography in India, Sogdia and post-Kushan Bactria and Gandhāra were involved in the same process of seeing Kushan gods as cognates of their own deities, particularly in the way the iconography of Nana and Oēsho impacted on those of Shaivite deities in India.

The new coins fit well within the standard practice of the die engravers of Kushan coins and the selection of gods from the Kushan pantheon to feature as images on the coins. The adornment of Nana with a shoulder mounted crescent fits well into her existing iconography, even though in a novel way, and was part of her role as the goddess of the planet Venus, being identified as the star often appearing in the evening sky with the new moon. The introduction of a trident as one of her attributes is unexpected, but links her closely with the Kushan deity Oēsho, who appears elsewhere on Kushan coinage as her consort. Her apparent links with the Indian goddess Durgā/Umā, consort of Śiva, reflect the Kushan absorption of iconography from Indian deities to create images of their gods, rather than mingling of Nana with Durgā/Umā. The later representations of Durgā and Śiva with tridents are more likely to represent their importation of Kushan iconography in Hindu image making, than the Kushan die-engravers borrowing this device from the Indian context.

The value of the new coins to the study of Kushan royal cult is to reinforce the connection between Nana and Oēsho as leading figures in the Kushan pantheon.

The appearance of Nana on coins later than Huvishka in issues of Vasudeva I and Kanishka II and the featuring of three balls on later coins show that she continued to have a place in Kushan royal cult, even though the decision had been made for functional reasons to only feature Ardochsho and Oēsho on the coins of the later Kushan kings. Reference to Nana can also be seen in the presence of the crescent on Kushan royal crowns and of lion-topped sceptres on coins of Huvishka (Jongeward and Cribb 2015, pp. 253–4, bust types 4C, 5A and 5B) and of the eleventh Kushan king Mahi (c. AD 297–302) (Göbl 1984, p. 41, type 588.1). The recently discovered representation of a Kushan king on a textile found in a Xiongnu tomb in Mongolia shows him seated next to a lion on top of a tripod (Yatshenko 2012, pp. 43–4, fig. 5). The king can be identified as Kujula Kadphises because of its close resemblance to the image of this king on one of his coin types, as both wear the same dress, jacket with overlapping front, leggings and a long sword and are both seated on a curule chair (Jongeward and Cribb 2015, p. 21, no. 105). The lion as an emblem of the goddess Nana in a royal context spans the whole of Kushan history, from the first king to the eleventh.

The new coins and the re-examination of other representations of Nana on coins and on metal or stone show the continuity of her role in the Kushan pantheon as an important part of Kushan royal cult, as the primary bestower of kingship. Her absence on most late Kushan coins is not significant in terms of her cult, but an indicator of a different practice in mint organisation which began in the reign of Vasudeva I, with the replacement of the broad pantheon depicted on the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka by a limited set of gods used to distinguish the mints. The presence of symbols associated with Nana on late Kushan coins suggest her continuing position as a leading figure in the pantheon of Kushan royal cult.

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