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From the Kushans to the Shahis. Numismatics.

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analysing the differences between the letter forms here and in scripts in ordinary acute angled Brahmi from India, has shown that both the Skandar and Ganesa inscriptions represent transition scripts – probably in the eighth century AD.

The decline in the use of Bactrian script in the Shahi period seems to be related to the growing loss of territory in Bactria and western Afghanistan to the advance of Islam, which brought with it the use of Arabic. The corresponding growth in the use of Indian script in eastern Afghanistan – Proto-Sharada being derived from Brahmi and Gupta script – was the natural consequence. The Shahis looked increasingly to Gandhara, Kashmir and the Panjab.

The clear evidence of the important role of this script in Afghanistan during the eighth and ninth centuries comes from the long series of Shahi coins from the later eighth century AD, in which both obverse legends and mint control marks use Sharada, while the Bactrian legend that had been found on the first issue of Spalapati is completely ousted from the coinage,²⁹³ Foucher²⁹⁴ noted nine Sharada inscriptions on the River Alishing twenty-five kilometres from Tagarhi, and the Bourgeois²⁹⁵ have reported four more between Qargha'i and the town of Laghman on the granite rocks at the side of the valley. A defaced rock inscription of Shahi date from Jalalabad, now in the Lahore Museum,²⁹⁶ adds little to the Afghan material, and the other published inscriptions of the Shahi period come from Pakistan.

Numismatics

*The Kushan Coinages*²⁹⁷

The Kushan coinages are among the most numerous and typologically diversified of Central Asia and India. These coins give instrumental data in front of often cryptic and conflicting written sources and epigraphic evidence. From Kujula Kadphises' bronze coinage to his successors' multiple-denomination gold coins, the Kushans show a remarkable aptitude to build up on pre-existing monetary systems and their coins may be found almost anywhere from Western China to the Afghan-Iranian border, and from Marakanda (Samarkand) to Pataliputra (Patna).

The Kushan monetary system

The Kushan kings used several weight standards, whether for monetary continuity's sake, or as a tool to control their own economy through the metal purity after almost a whole century of silver debasement which started with Hermaeus' first posthumous issues. These coins, sometimes labelled as 'imitations', copied the types from Graeco-Bactrian (Heliocles I, Eucratides I) and Indo-Greek (Hermaeus) coins, and are characterised by a progressive degradation of the style and corruption of the legend.²⁹⁸ Their attribution to the Yuezhi seems clear, while their relative chronology in regard of Kujula Kadphises' ascent to power, and his first issues, remains to be clarified.



Figure 6.96 Copper didrachm of Soter Megas, with the rayed head of Mithra and the reverse type of the king mounted on horseback (late first–early second century AD). Diameter 21 mm.


The bronze coinage of the first Kushan king Kujula Kadphises can be divided into two categories: anonymous and in his own name. Typically, the first is struck on copied denominations and types circulating in each of the localities he brought under his control (Indo-Parthians, Indo-Scythians), while the second always innovates at least on one side of the coin. The attribution of the anonymous coins to Kujula rather than to the Yuezhi is mainly based on the interpretation of the word KOPPANNOY (and its variants) as equivalent to the ‘Kushan’:²⁹⁹ the ‘Heraios’ silver coins have thus been identified with Kujula Kadphises,³⁰⁰ but this attribution has been challenged many times by numismatists. Depending on the series, several standards are used: a reduced Attic standard for the Heraios coins, the Indian (= Indo-Greek) standard for the Heracles-type coins, etc. Kujula Kadphises adopts the *tamga* ⚡ on a single series (the ‘Roman emperor’ coins), and still uses monograms on several others, doubtless depending on monetary practices.

The coins of the so-called ‘Nameless King’ (i.e. the Soter Megas coins (Fig. 6.96)) are a matter of deep controversy among numismatists and historians, even more since the discovery of the Rabatak inscription in 1993.³⁰¹ Since then, this enigmatic coinage has indeed recurrently been associated with Vima Takto, whose name appears in the inscription as grandfather of Kanishka I (and son of Kujula Kadphises).³⁰² This attribution is, however, far from being unanimous.³⁰³ Whoever the issuer was, most likely a Kushan, the Soter Megas coinage establishes a standard currency from Northern Bactria to Mathura: the general type (bust of Mithra³⁰⁴/king on horseback) follows a slightly reduced Attic standard with didrachms of c. 8.5 g and hemidrachms of c. 2.1 g.³⁰⁵ This standard coinage was intended to replace the multiplicity of local coinages that the Kushans had inherited. Numerous variations on the coins (solar rays around Mithra’s head, *tamga* with four (⚡) then three (⚡) prongs, square and cursive Greek letters, etc.) point to a huge monetary production. There are also several less numerically important series that have been associated with specific parts of the Kushan empire (Gandhāra, Qunduz and



Figure 6.97 Kushan gold dinar of Vima Kadphises, with the bearded and diademed king emerging from rocks or cloud, and Shiva naked and standing on the reverse (early second century AD). Diameter 20 mm.

Mathura), with specific weight standards. The Soter Megas coins are particularly common in Afghanistan, and Charles Masson acquired 695 examples from Begram in three years. As for Vima Takto, the only coins that can be attributed with some certainty are the bronze bull/camel one apparently bearing his name in Kharoshthi on the reverse ('Vema Tak[h]').³⁰⁶

Vima Kadphises is the first Kushan ruler to strike gold coins (Fig. 6.97), while increasing the range of denominations, notably with a new heavy bronze coin of c. 16 g, and a gold dinar (c. 8 g). His coinage deeply modifies the Kushan coins design through standardisation: from his reign forth, the obverse/reverse types always follow the king/divinity model. The king is represented in several ways: seated, on a chariot, emerging from a mountain top, inside a window, etc., although without variation on the bronze coinage (making an act of worship to a fire altar), always with the *tamga*  Recent coin discoveries have confirmed the genealogy detailed in the Rabatak inscription (i.e. that Vima Kadphises is the son of Vima Takto).³⁰⁷ The coins display a *tamga* on the obverse (sometimes also on the reverse) and a Nandivarta on the reverse. On the gold as well as on the bronze coinage, Oesho, here closely associated with Śiva, is depicted standing with or without the bull Nandi behind him, and shows some similarities with Kujula Kadphises' Heracles design. However, Vima Kadphises' first (commemorative) issues are characterised by some variation in the position of the legend (𑀘𑀓𑀭), most likely influenced by the design on Agathocles' and Antimachus I's commemorative coins. Overall and minus a few exceptions, the coinage is struck with Greek and Prakrit with a very high quality standard.³⁰⁸ Vima Kadphises uses a great deal of epithets on his coinage, especially in kharoshthi: *maharajasa*, *rajadirajasa*, *(sarva)loga iśhvarasa*,³⁰⁹ *mahisvarasa*, *tratara*. Finally, a recent die study has divided Vima Kadphises' coinage into five discontinuous phases.³¹⁰

Kanishka I introduces several major changes on his coinage: Greek is replaced



Figure 6.98 Kushan gold dinar of Kanishka, with the king standing at an altar and the reverse type of Nana (mid-second century AD). Av. diameter 20 mm.

by Bactrian, both for the king's royal titlature and for the (now indicated) names of the divinities he used as reverse types (Fig. 6.98); a wide pantheon is depicted on his coins (more than a dozen Greek, Iranian and Indian gods)³¹¹ struck with the *tamga* 𑀘; finally, kharoshthi on the reverse is abandoned, while the letter P ('sh') is introduced in the Greek alphabet. The Rabatak inscription has added much to our understanding of the depiction of such numerous divinities: their role is to confer royal authority to Kanishka I, Nana(ia) being then of first importance.³¹² Kanishka I uses fewer gold denominations than his father did, while the bronze 'tetradrachm' of c. 16 g becomes a standard unit which divides itself into halves, quarters and eights. Gold and bronze together, the divinities depicted are as follows (Fig. 6.99): *Ardochsho*, goddess of good fortune; *Ath(o)sho* (= *Hephaistos*), god of fire; *Boddo*, the Buddha; *Lroaspo*, god of animals; *Manaobago*, god of good mind; *Mao* (= Selene), goddess of the Moon; *Miuro/Miuro* (= Helios), god of the Sun; *Mozdooano*, *Nana/Nanashao* (= *Nanaia*), goddess of the Moon(?); *Oado* (= *Anemos*), god of the wind; *O(o)esho* (= Heracles), god of the wind on high; *Orlagno*, god of victory; *Pharro*, god of good fortune. At this period, there was probably a mint south of the Hindu Kush at Begram, close to the rich copper deposits of the Ghorband valley; Joe Cribb has also hypothesised the existence of two mints striking gold coins at Bactra and in Gandhāra.³¹³

Huvishka retained the weight of Kanishka I's gold dinar unchanged, while his coinage shows a slight decrease in gold fineness (down to 91%)³¹⁴ (Fig. 6.100). His early copper coins followed Kanishka I's weight system but had three obverse types – that of the king riding an elephant, the king seated cross-legged and the king reclining on a couch (in *rajalila asana*, the royal ease pose). In Masson's finds from Begram the couch lounge type is commonest and probably was the type of the Afghan mint at Begram – but the other two types are also regularly found. On gold coins, however, the king is always represented emerging from a mountain top. The place of Huvishka immediately after Kanishka I is clearly demonstrated



Figure 6.99 Kushan copper tetradrachm of Kanishka, with the reverse type of Mioro (Mithra) radiate. Diameter 26 mm.



Figure 6.100 Kushan gold dinar of Huvishka, with the reverse type of Miuro (late second century AD). Av. diameter 21 mm.

by a common reverse die used to strike a Kanishka I's late phase coin and a Huvishka early phase coin;³¹⁵ Huvishka also inherits his predecessor's *tamga* (𑀘𑀓) before using his own (𑀘𑀓). The diversification of divinities depicted which started under Kanishka I continues: almost thirty of them are engraved on the reverse of his coins. In Huvishka's later issues there was a sharp reduction in the weight standard of the main copper weight standard from c. 16 to c. 13 g, then c. 6 g, before stabilising at c. 10–12 g at the end of his reign with the introduction of a new weight standard (Fig. 6.101) The experiment was not a success: there was an extensive series of local unofficial imitations, and Huvishka's successors eventually reverted to the earlier pattern of a full value copper denomination. Apart from a few rare exceptions, Huvishka's official mints had not struck subdivisions of the standard copper denomination. Local copies, often very crude and barbarised in style, supplied this need, and are well-represented in the local museum collection at Kandahar and among Afghan finds in the National Museum; Cribb considered



Figure 6.101 Kushan copper tetradrachm of the reduced standard of Huvishka, showing the king riding an elephant and a figure of Mao. Diameter 24 mm.

them as a response to the monetary crisis and the consequent dropping in the copper weight standard.³¹⁶

Vasudeva I is likely to be the last Kushan king to rule in the Balkh region,³¹⁷ while his coinage is characterised by the almost exclusive use of Oesho on the reverse (with some rare coins depicting Vasudeva-Krishna and Nana),³¹⁸ most of the time with a bull. Vasudeva I uses the *tamga* 𑖀. The multiple royal representations introduced by Huvishka are also abandoned, being replaced with the king-sacrificing type of Vima Kadphises and Kanishka I (with the later addition of an altar trident). The weight standard for gold coins remains the same, with a dinar weighing c. 8 g, but Vasudeva introduces a new main copper standard of c. 8–10 g and a lighter one of c. 4–6 g. In the later issues of the gold coins bearing the titles of Vasudeva, we see the emergence of two sequences.³¹⁹ The northern series, which retain the Shiva and the bull reverse while adding a trident and a Nandivarta on the obverse, evolves into the distinctive scyphate or saucer-shaped gold dinars on which eventually we find cursive Bactrian inscriptions, and kings like Hormizd and Vahran with a Sasanian headdress. The southern series introduces Brahmi letters in the field replacing the Nandivarta, and the type is eventually changed by Vasudeva's late Kushan successors to the reverse type of an enthroned goddess Ardochsho, a type copied by the local chiefs of the Panjab and the Guptas. Vasudeva's coins are often quite worn, especially the copper ones, which might be explained by their use beyond the sole reign of Vasudeva, whose types were borrowed by some of his successors. Finally, interestingly enough, Vasudeva is the first Kushan king to have a name of Indian origin.

Foreign influence

In these monetary reforms and experiments we see foreign practices adapted to local Kushan needs. Soter Megas' standard coinage is characterised by its

monetary reform and the use of the (slightly reduced) Attic standard introduced in Central Asia by the Seleucids. Thus, this coinage certainly succeeded in creating a currency that was not liable to fraud through debased imitations. While Vima Kadphises retains the Attic standard for his gold coins, the introduction of the lighter gold dinar (c. 8 g) during Kanishka II's reign was probably inspired by the current Roman *denarius aureus*.³²⁰ The presence of Roman coins in Central Asia and India is well-attested through hoards finds and Kujula Kadphises' 'Roman' series, on which coins the obverse depicts a Julio-Claudian bust. The use of reverse types derived from Indo-Greek, Indo-Parthian, Indo-Scythian and Roman coin designs³²¹ and the rapid adoption of a localised production system under Kujula Kadphises, followed by a possible centralisation under Vima Kadphises,³²² reflects a unique mix between standard Hellenistic monetary practices and Kushan habits in the context of the early empire.

Coins in Buddhist stupa deposits

A large number of Buddhist stupas in Afghanistan were examined by C. Masson and J. M. Honigberger in the early nineteenth century.³²³ They often found among the treasures deposited in the relic chamber coins of the period in which the relics were deposited and the stupa was built. At the Bimaran stupa, from which the Bimaran reliquary was recovered, there were four billon coins with the *tamga* of Kujula Kadphises. In Tope 3 at Bimaran there were 27 coins of Soter Megas. In Tope 4 at Chahar Bagh there were 28 copper coins of Kanishka I. Particular interest attaches to the stupa deposits that also contained Roman coins. From the Ahin Posh Tope near Jalalabad, three Roman aurei of Domitian, Trajan and Sabina, the wife of Hadrian (AD 119–138), were found with ten gold dinars of Vima Kadphises, six of Kanishka I and one of Huvishka,³²⁴ and gold coins of Vima Kadphises and Kanishka were found with an aureus of Trajan (AD 98–119) at Shiwaki near Kabul. These associated Kushan and Roman finds provide important *prima facie* evidence for the context and date of Kanishka.³²⁵ Recently, a gold stupa deposit, consisting of two parts containing 23 gold Kushan coins (Vima Kadphises, Kanishka I and Huvishka) and two Roman aurei (Nero and Domitian), has been discovered in or near Begram.³²⁶

Other hoards and site finds

Because there was no Kushan silver currency³²⁷ following the dramatic debasement of this metal in the first century BC, most substantial payments had to be made in copper coinage, and this explains the commonness of Kushan copper coins in Afghanistan. Excavations at sites of Kushan date such as Begram, Surkh Kotal and Balkh have provided substantial numbers. In Begram, following the French excavations in 1936–7, the Kushan coins have been published in detail by Osmund Bopearachchi.³²⁸ apart from Vima Takto, all the Kushan kings from Kujula

Kadphises to Kanishka II or Vasishka are represented (including Eucratides I and Hermaios' posthumous imitations). Particularly important for the interpretation and the chronology of the later coinage, as well as for understanding their relations with the Kushano-Sassanians, are the hoards of late Kushan copper coins in Central Asia museums.³²⁹ Particularly interesting are the coins in the 1946 hoard from the Begram excavations which contain coins of the earlier Shiva type deliberately cut at the edge to reduce the amount of copper so as to assimilate the coins to the lower weight of the next group. Recent excavations led by French archaeologists in Balkh and Mes Aynak (Afghanistan), as well as in Termez (Uzbekistan), have yielded still unpublished Kushan coins.³³⁰ However, Kushan gold coins were highly valued internationally, as the hoard of 104 gold coins depicting just four Kushan kings found at the monastery of Debra Damo in Ethiopia demonstrates.³³¹

The Late Kushan coinages

The seven Late Kushan kings are distributed over a *c.* 120-year period, and succeed each other in the following order: Kanishka II, Vasishka, Kanishka III, Vasudeva II, Mahi, Shaka and Kipunadha. Their coinages are characterised by a progressive drop in gold fineness and weight standards.³³² Parallel to the high-quality gold issues, the copper coinage is often crudely struck, with part of the type off flan, and rarely has any legible legend, especially from Vasudeva II onwards, and the appearance of whole words in Brahmi. The obverse type remains the same for all the Late Kushan kings (i.e. the king sacrificing with a trident) with the exception of Vasudeva II (on whose coins the king is sometimes seated). Among the later issues, Oesho and Ardochsho are both depicted, but the latter becomes predominant after the reign of Vasudeva II.³³³ One can distinguish three major stages for the bronze coins:

1. Dumpy Oesho and the bull coppers, sometimes with a Nandivarta symbol, struck to a weight standard of 6 g (Vasishka) (Fig. 6.102).
2. Dumpy Ardochsho coppers with an increasingly arched termination of the King's dress – from 5 to 8 g (Kanishka II, Vasishka) (Fig. 6.103).
3. Crude Ardochsho coppers with very crude form for the king – from 3 to 6 g (Kanishka III, Vasudeva II, Shaka, Kipunadha) (Fig. 6.104).

Some of the later series are cast local copies and moulds for their manufacture have been found in Pakistan.

Although some Ardochsho coppers have traces of a Brahmi letter in the field and were thus possibly issued in the mint responsible for the Ardochsho gold, all the three later Kushan copper series are represented in quantity at late Kushan sites across Afghanistan. Copper weight standards seem to be reduced under each king's reign and are often a determining feature of the identity of the king.³³⁴ They are represented in a series of overlapping hoards in the National Museum which

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Figure 6.102 Kushan copper unit (c. 4.5–6.5 g) of Vasishka, with the king standing at an altar, and Oesho in front of a bull on the reverse (mid-third century AD). Diameter 19 mm.



Figure 6.103 Kushan copper unit (c. 7.5 g) of Kanishka II, with the king standing at an altar, and Ardochsho on the reverse (first half of the third century AD). Diameter 20 mm.



Figure 6.104 Kushan copper unit (c. 1.6–3 g) of Shaka, with the king standing at an altar, and Ardochsho on the reverse (early fourth century AD). Diameter 18 mm.

contain coins of successive issues and reinforce the evidence of metrology, type development and stratigraphy for the sequence. Finally, the last Late Kushan kings overstruck Kushano-Sassanian coins, aggravating the reduction in weights, before the demise of the empire c. AD 350.

Sasanian Influences

The Kushano-Sasanian coinages

Whatever may have been the political status of the later Kushan empire, there was certainly a sharp growth in Sasanian influence, which is seen most clearly in the so-called Kushano-Sasanian coinage.³³⁵ The Kushano-Sasanian gold scyphates have been found on the Amu Darya, at Qunduz, in Badakshan and in hoards from Charikar and Kabul.³³⁶ Kushano-Sasanian copper coins have a more localised distribution. The small series with neat Bactrian legends are well-represented from the Balkh excavations and in the Mazar-i Sharif Museum, and may have been intended to provide fractional denominations for the later Kushan copper currency. The larger series with a dumpy fire altar begins in the Indus Valley with an issue of Shapur II c. AD 365. Coins derived from this coinage provided the later copper currency at Begram and Hadda and constitute a further stage in the development of the standard denomination.

The Tepe Maranjan hoard and other Sasanian finds

The hoard from Tepe Maranjan near Kabul³³⁷ containing 368 Sasanian silver drachms – 326 of Shapur II, 28 of Ardeshir II and 14 of Shapur III (AD 383–388), with 12 gold Kushano-Sasanian scyphates – provides important evidence for the previous metal currency of eastern Afghanistan, the dating of the Kushano-Sasanian gold coinage and the chronology of Kidara, who became king of the southern Kushan provinces.

Sasanian silver coins from Shapur II onwards are commonly found in Afghanistan. They were reported from Sistan.³³⁸ Hackin notes that they are common at Herat, Maimana and Shahr-i-Banu near Tashkurgan, and they are frequently found in the neighbourhood of Kabul.³³⁹ Masson encountered them at Begram and they were well-represented among the silver coins found in stupas near Hadda. In the absence of an indigenous silver coinage, Sasanian silver obviously filled the gap, even in territories beyond the Sasanian empire.

*Coinage of the Huns*³⁴⁰

The earliest coins of the new Hephthalite kingdom in Bactria consisted of silver drachms of Sasanian type with the usual obverse of Shapur II (309–379) but struck from dies which had been meant to replace Shapur's name with the

Hephthalite title *Alchono*.³⁴¹ In the following century we see the development of the Hephthalite currency of silver drachms based on the Sasanian denomination retaining a fire altar on the reverse but with a distinctive Central Asian bust, the Hephthalite tamgh and Bactrian legends.³⁴² Other coins with the same types have Brahmi legends, but these seem to have been struck for circulation in the Indus valley and Kashmir. The Hephthalite coins of this period from Tope 10 at Hadda, found with five Roman gold solidi of Theodosius, Marcian and Leo (AD 457–474), seem to have been mostly Hephthalite coins with Bactrian legends. Several of the later silver drachms of Sasanian kings found in Afghanistan have Hephthalite countermarks and seem to have been coins paid in tribute by the Sasanians after their defeats under Firuz, countermarked to serve as Hephthalite currency.

The coins of the Nezak

In the succeeding years, silver drachms with the legend *Nezak Shah*, and the copper denominations that accompanied them, provided the currency of Kabul, the Kohdaman and Kohistan districts.³⁴³ The copper coins are common at Begram, and a noteworthy hoard of silver coins of this type was discovered at Gardez in 1957.³⁴⁴ The variety of styles and scripts used in this coinage suggests that there may have been a number of issues by different kings over a broad spread of time; but there is serious disagreement about their attribution. Earlier scholars associated them with the Hephthalites, but there is much to commend the view that they are coins in the Hephthalite tradition but of the Turki period of the later sixth and early seventh centuries AD.

The issues of Vrahitigin

Demonstrably later, because they are sometimes overstruck on the drachms of Napki Malka, are the silver drachms of Vrahitigin.³⁴⁵ They have a bust three-quarters frontal of the king with legends in both Bactrian and Proto-Sharada, and the facing head of a divinity crowned by flames with a Pahlavi legend on the reverse. The king's crown has a wolf's head design – the wolf being the legendary ancestor of the Turki race. The deity is copied from the type on coins of Khusru II (AD 591–628). Vrahitigin's coins have been found in the Indus valley and from the stupa at Manikyala in northern Pakistan; Lord acquired 40 specimens from north of the Hindu Kush mountains and Cunningham received around thirty from Kabul. These rare coins seem to be issues of the Turki Shahis of the later seventh century AD.

From this period is the small group of coins, buried in a cinerary urn below the princely couple in Niche E at Fondukistan. It includes countermarked coins of Sri Sahi and two silver drachms of Khusru II. One of these was struck in year 37 (i.e. AD 657), but the two countermarks can be dated to AD 682 and 689.³⁴⁶

Gadhैया paisa

The base silver Gadhैया currency of Rajputana and Gujarat (from the eighth century AD),³⁴⁷ derived ultimately from a Sasanian prototype, is sometimes found in Afghan collections, and a hoard discovered near Kandahar was offered for sale in the bazaar at Kabul during 1973.

Problems with the Shahi Coinage

The pattern of the coinage

Between AD 750 and 1000 the currency of eastern Afghanistan and Gandhara was provided by the extended issues of the silver coinage of the Shahis, at first the kings of Kabul and subsequently the rulers of Ohind.³⁴⁸ Throughout the whole of this period the Shahis used standard obverse type of a recumbent Indian humped bull with the reverse type of a horseman. Most of the coins have an obverse legend in Sharada script – either *Sri Spalapati Deva* or *Sri Samanta Deva*, but these are titles, not personal names, Spalapati being a Sanskritised version of a Bactrian title for commander-in-chief and Samanta having some significance in Sanskrit. Bull and horseman coins of this series in both silver and billon are all of approximately the same weight and were clearly intended to pass as the same denomination. We can, however, distinguish the successive issues of the coinage by the letters and other symbols serving as privy marks in the reverse field and can put them into their chronological sequence by a study of the developing changes in the type, and from the small but progressive reduction in the real silver content of the denomination and the weight standard to which successive issues were struck.

Silver coins of *Spalapati Deva*

The earliest group of the Shahi silver coins is distinguished by its obverse legend – the titles *Sri Spalapati Deva*. Coins with this legend are struck between 3.1 and 3.5 g with a remarkably uniform content of 70% silver. In the first issue of this group the reverse legend repeats in cursive Bactrian script the Sharada of the obverse. This is copied but progressively misunderstood in subsequent issues. At one stage in the series a Brahmi legend, *Shahi Deva*, is substituted, but this in turn is misunderstood and becomes a decorative scroll that has been mistaken for an Arabic date. In issue there is a series of small letters serving as privy marks below the horseman on the reverse.

Silver coins of *Samanta Deva*

The second major group of this coinage has the obverse legend *Sri Samanta Deva*. It is still in good metal, but now with a wider variation in silver content of between

60 and 70% and is struck to a slightly lower weight range of between 2.9 and 3.9 g. Again we can distinguish a series of issues by the use of Sharada letters and other control marks. Associated chronologically with this group are two comparatively rare issues, one with *Sri Khudavayaka Deva* struck to the distinctly lower weight standard of the Arabic dirhem of the reformed currency introduced by 'Abd al-Malik, possibly to be associated with the Muslim capture of Kabul in AD 870, and the other with *Sri Bhima Deva*, perhaps the King Bhim known from inscriptions to have been the ruler in Hund around AD 950.

The Shahi copper denominations

The copper issues constituted a complementary denomination that provided the small change for the Bull and Horseman silver. They too suffered a progressive reduction in weight and have privy marks, sometimes echoing those on the silver, that enable us to establish their chronological sequence. The Bull and Horseman coppers of Spalapati are succeeded by the Lion and Elephant coppers of Vakka and, finally, the Lion and Elephant coppers of Samanta.

The billon currency

The third major group – coins in billon with the Samanta Deva legend that have a silver content of 25 to 30% – only shows a sharp reduction from the last silver issue, with no progressive debasement that could bridge the gap. The reason seems to have been that the Shahis had exhausted their reserves of bullion and were deprived of the important silver mines of Panjshir which seem to have passed permanently under Muslim control by the middle of the tenth century AD. This was the billon currency that was copied extensively by the Islamic rulers of Ghazni, and by the dynasties of Kanauj, Ajmir and Delhi.

Hoards and site finds

The principal evidence for the distribution of Shahi coins in Afghanistan has so far been drawn from collections made in Kabul and its locality. The arrangement set out above has necessarily been based on internal numismatic analysis; but the sequence of the copper issues has now been tested and confirmed by the stratified finds from the excavations at Damkot near Chakdara in Pakistan.³⁴⁹ A hoard of 199 copper Shahi coins, all of Vakka Deva found in Jalalabad in 1971, a silver hoard all of the last silver issue of Samanta Deva discovered at Shiwaki in 1970, a silver hoard of unknown but Afghan provenance containing three worn coins of Spalapati and three issues of Samanta, offered for sale in Kabul bazaar in 1972, and a silver hoard of some fifty coins of Samanta Deva from Qunduz offered for sale in Kabul bazaar in 1976 will produce important new material for study.