

Coins

Greek inscriptions, royal portraits, and images of Greek deities such as Athena were standard features on coins issued by the Indo-Greek rulers of Central Asia and northern Afghanistan during the centuries just before the Common Era. Many Indo-Greek coins bore translations of the Greek into a local script and language on their reverse sides, indicating the great cultural diversity in this area of the ancient world.

The combination on coins of royal portraiture and divine imagery—a powerful statement of divinely sanctioned rule—was used for many centuries in Central and South Asia, as others of these coins show.

The acquisition of all coins was made possible in part by the Society for Asian Art.

EARRINGS ON REVERSE SIDE

SECOND ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT



Elephant, obverse side of a coin issued by the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus I
Approx. 180–160 BCE
Afghanistan, former kingdom of Bactria; or Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara
Silver
F1999.38.7



The Greek deity Athena, reverse side of a coin issued by the Indo-Greek king Menander I
Approx. 155–130 BCE
Afghanistan, former kingdom of Bactria; or Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara
Silver
F1999.38.6

THIRD ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT



Standing portrait of the Kushan king Vima Kadphises, obverse side of a coin issued by Vima Kadphises
Approx. 75–100
Northwest India or Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Bronze
F1999.38.12



Standing portrait of the Kushan king Kanishka, obverse side of a coin issued by Kanishka
Approx. 127–150
Northwest India or Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Gold
F1999.38.5



The Iranian deity Ardoksho, reverse side of a coin issued by the Kushan king Huvishka
Approx. 126–163
Northwest India or Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Gold
F1999.38.2



The Indian deity Shiva (identified as Oesho), obverse side of a coin issued by the Kushan king Vasudeva
Approx. 163–200
Northwest India or Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Gold
F1999.38.1

FOURTH ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT



The Gupta king Chandragupta I and his queen, Kumaradevi, obverse side of a coin issued by the Gupta king Samudragupta
Approx. 330–376
Northwest India
Gold
F1999.38.3



The Indian deity Lakshmi, reverse side of a coin issued by the Gupta king Kumaragupta I
Approx. 414–455
Northwest India
Gold
F1999.38.4

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FIRST ROW



Earrings

Approx. 300–500

Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara

Gold and garnets

Gift of the M. J. Engel Memorial Fund,

B86M6.1-.2

Ancient jewelry rarely survives. The metals were often melted down and used to make pieces in a more up-to-date style.

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THE GALLERY**

Connections with the Worlds of Greece and Rome



These sculptures and others in this gallery may call to mind Greek and Roman art. How did such sculptures come to be made so far from Greece and Rome?

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire in 330 BCE, and continued to march eastward toward India. Though he turned back before moving into India, his generals established Greek-ruled colonies in neighboring areas (in what are now Pakistan and Afghanistan).

Though the Greeks soon lost power, these areas continued to have some cultural links with the Greco-Roman world for more than five hundred years. For instance, the Greek language continued to be used for certain purposes, as can be seen from the Greek inscriptions on coins in the nearby case.

In the panel with five worshipers, the garments resemble Greco-Roman robes, and the column recalls Corinthian examples. Both the winged male figures and the centaur-sea serpents are also based on Greco-Roman models.



Architectural elements with centaur-sea serpents

Approx. 100–200
Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Stone (talc schist)
The Avery Brundage Collection, B6OS83 and B6OS84



Five worshipers

Approx. 100–300
Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Stone (schist)
The Avery Brundage Collection, B6OS327



Winged male figures

Approx. 100–300
Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Stone (schist)
The Avery Brundage Collection, B6OS565

Both of the reliefs shown below would have decorated Buddhist architectural monuments. The decorative motif of a garland carried on the shoulders of lively figures originated in the Greco-Roman world but became popular in several parts of ancient India. Here are examples made at about the same time, but some fifteen hundred miles apart in present-day Pakistan and southeastern India. Both areas had contact with the Greco-Roman world, and Roman coins and other evidence of trade are found all over southeastern India.



Fragment of a garland carried by a male figure

Approx. 150–250
India; probably Gummididurru, Andhra Pradesh state
Limestone
Museum purchase, B77S2



Garland carried by boys

Approx. 100–300 or later
Pakistan; ancient region of Gandhara
Stone (schist)
The Avery Brundage Collection, B62S30+

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