

**Commentary, Contextualisation and Interpretation of the  
Bactrian Inscriptions of the Kušān Period**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Prolegomena</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1. The Kušān in historical memory and research history	18
2.1.1. Historical memory of the Kušān	18
2.1.1.1. Buddhist Memory	18
2.1.1.2. Chinese historiography	19
2.1.1.3. Indian memory	20
2.1.1.4. Central Asian memory	21
2.1.1.5. Western historiography	22
2.1.1.3. Summary	23
2.1.2. Research history of Kušān Bactrian	24
2.2. The historical environment of the Kušān	31
2.2.1. The "historical environment" as a concept	31
2.2.2. Achaemenid and Seleukid Bactria	32
2.2.3. The Graeco-Bactrians and the Hellenistic Far East	40
2.2.4. The Yuezhi Period in Bactria	42
2.2.5. Provincial Gandhāra	47
2.2.6. Imperial India	53
2.2.7. Western Iran	56
2.2.8. Kommagene	60
2.2.9. Rome	62
2.2.10. The Silk Road	62
2.2.11. The Tarim Basin and China	65
2.2.12. The Steppe	66
2.2.13. The Post-Kušān World	69
2.2.14. The Spread of Buddhism	70
<b>3. Kušān Chronology</b>	<b>73</b>
3.1. The problems	73
3.2. The Kušān Sequence	74
3.2.1. The Yuezhi Period	74
3.2.2. The "Heraios" coinage	75
3.2.3. Kujula Kadphises	76
3.2.4. Vima Takto/Sōtēr Megas	77
3.2.5. Vima Kadphises	80
3.2.6. Kaniška I	80
3.2.7. The successor of Kaniška I	81
3.2.8. Huviška	82
3.2.9. Vāsudeva	83
3.2.10. The later Kušān	83
3.3. The second century of the Kaniška Era	84
3.4. The Date of Kaniška	86
3.4.1. Preliminary Statements	86
3.4.2. Numismatic Synchronisms	87
3.4.2.1. The "Roman" coins of Kujula Kadphises	87

3.4.2.2. The weight standard of Vima Kadphises	88
3.4.2.3. Iconographic studies	89
3.4.2.4. The Ahin Posh deposit	90
3.4.3. The Śaka Era	91
3.4.4. The year 127/28 CE	93
3.4.5. The third century CE	94
3.4.6. Conclusion	98
3.5. The introduction of a new era by Kaniška I	99
<b>4. The Kušān Bactrian Inscriptions as Literary Texts</b>	<b>103</b>
4.1. The Bactrian language in the Kušān Empire	104
4.1.1. The native language of the Kušān	104
4.1.2. The Graeco-Bactrian script of the Kušān period: Phonology and orthograph	105
4.1.2.1. α	106
4.1.2.2. β	106
4.1.2.3. γ	106
4.1.2.3.1. γγ	107
4.1.2.4. δ	107
4.1.2.5. ε	107
4.1.2.6. ζ	108
4.1.2.7. η	109
4.1.2.8. θ	109
4.1.2.9. ι	110
4.1.2.10. κ	110
4.1.2.11. λ	111
4.1.2.12. μ	111
4.1.2.13. ν	111
4.1.2.14. ο	112
4.1.2.15. π	112
4.1.2.16. ρ	113
4.1.2.16.1. ρρ	113
4.1.2.17. σ	113
4.1.2.18. τ	114
4.1.2.19. υ and /h/	114
4.1.2.20. φ	115
4.1.2.21. χ	116
4.1.2.22. ω	116
4.1.2.23. β	117
4.1.2.24. Word Ending	117
4.1.3. The process of adapting Greek script for writing Bactrian	118
4.2. Kušān language policy	123
4.3. Thematic and stylistic observations on the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions	128
4.3.1. Possible literary influences	129
4.3.2. Introductory Formula	130
4.3.3. The Proclamation of Kaniška I	132
4.3.4. The Year One	134
4.3.5. Enumeration of Conquest	136
4.3.6. σιδηιανο προβδο	137
4.3.7. Lists	139

4.3.8. Orders and their fulfilment	140
4.3.9. Repetitive structures	143
4.3.10. Blessing formulae	147
4.3.11. Textual self-reference and intertextuality	149
4.3.12. Huviška and SK4	152
4.3.13. Conclusions	156
<b>5. Kušān Titulature</b>	<b>158</b>
5.1. The Heraios coinage	158
5.2. Titles with the name of Kujula Kadphises	162
5.3. The Sōtēr Megas coinage	164
5.4. Vima Takto and DN1	169
5.4.1. ραϕτογο ι λαδειγο	170
5.4.2. βαγο ι ηζνογο	173
5.4.3. κιδι πιδο ι χοβε ιανε βραοδανε λφαχτο	175
5.5. Vima Kadphises	175
5.6. Kaniška I	177
5.6.1. Titles on the coins	177
5.6.2. Titles from Rab	178
5.6.2.1. χοαζαοαργο	179
5.6.2.2. κιδι ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι βραοδανι αβορδο	181
5.6.2.3. βαγεποορο	186
5.7. Huviška and SK4	186
5.7.1. The titles from SK4	187
5.7.2. οανινδο	188
5.8. Vāsudeva	189
5.9. Kaniška II	189
5.10. Vāskušāna	189
5.11. Vāsiška	189
5.12. Kaniška III	191
5.13. Conclusions	192
<b>6. The βαγολαγγο and the Kušān dynastic cult</b>	<b>194</b>
6.1. The Kušān Pantheon	195
6.1.1. οισποανο μι βαγανο	195
6.1.2. Ομμα: The divine community of Rabatak?	197
6.1.3. The Numismatic Pantheon	203
6.1.3.1. Coinage types and recipients	205
6.1.3.2. Sequence	207
6.1.3.3. The god of Vima Kadphises	210
6.1.3.4. The Gods from the Greek issue of Kaniška I	211
6.1.3.4.1. Nana (NANAIA)	212
6.1.3.4.2. Miio (ΗΛΙΟC)	216
6.1.3.4.3. Mao (CΑΛΗNH)	217
6.1.3.4.4. Aθšo (ΗΦΑICTOC)	213
6.1.3.4.5. Oado (ANEMOC)	219
6.1.3.5. Other deities on Kaniška's coinage	220
6.1.3.5.1. Oēšo	223
6.1.3.5.2. Ardoxšo	226
6.1.3.5.3. Lrooaspo	227

6.1.3.5.4. Manaobago	229
6.1.3.5.5. Mozdoano	232
6.1.3.5.6. Orlagno	236
6.1.3.5.7. Pharro	238
6.1.3.5.8. Boddo	241
6.1.3.6. Deities from the pantheon of Kaniška I reappearing on the coins of Huviška	243
6.1.3.6.1. Nana	243
6.1.3.6.2. Miuro and Mao	246
6.1.3.6.3. Aθšo	248
6.1.3.6.4. Oado	249
6.1.3.6.5. Oēšo	249
6.1.3.6.6. Ardoxšo	252
6.1.3.6.7. Lrooaspo	254
6.1.3.6.8. Manaobago	254
6.1.3.6.9. Pharro	254
6.1.3.7. Deities of the pantheon of Huviška not on the coins of Kaniška I	255
6.1.3.7.1. Sarapo	255
6.1.3.7.2. Maaseno, Skando Komaro and Bizago	258
6.1.3.7.3. Rišto	262
6.1.3.7.4. Ōromozdo	263
6.1.3.7.5. Oaxšo	265
6.1.3.7.6. Šaorēoro	266
6.1.3.7.7. Iamšo	268
6.1.3.7.8. Teiro	271
6.1.3.7.9. Oanindo	273
6.1.3.7.10. Ašaeixšo	274
6.1.3.7.11. Ērakilo	275
6.1.3.7.14. Deineiso	277
6.1.3.7.13. Local Indian issues	277
6.1.4. The Pantheon of Kaniška I and Huviška in summary	278
6.1.4.1. Groups 0, 1a and 1b	283
6.1.4.2. Group 2	284
6.1.4.3. Group 3	286
6.1.4.4. Group 4	287
6.1.4.5. Groups 5a and 5b	287
6.1.4.6. Group 6	289
6.1.4.7. Group 7	290
6.1.4.8. Group 8	291
6.1.4.9. Groups 9 and 10	292
6.2. The divinity of the Kušan emperor	292
6.2.1. Iconographic links between the Kušan emperor and the Numismatic Pantheon	292
6.2.1.1. Vima Kadphises	293
6.2.1.2. Kaniška I	297
6.2.1.3. Huviška	302
6.2.2. The emperor rising from the mountains	310
6.2.3. The Kušan emperor as a god	314
6.3. The βαρολαγγο and cult of Surkh Kotal	318
6.3.1. The Rabatak Pantheon	324

6.3.1.1. Nana	325
6.3.1.2. Omma	326
6.3.1.3. Aoromozdo	327
6.3.1.4. Mozdoano	330
6.3.1.5. Srošardo, Narasao and Miio	330
6.3.1.6. The nature of the Rabatak pantheon	332
6.4. Kušan religion in summary	333
<b>7. Kušan Imperial Strategy</b>	<b>335</b>
7.1. Kušan Expansion	335
7.1.1. Kujula Kadphises	335
7.1.2. Vima Takto	341
7.1.3. Vima Kadphises	342
7.1.4. Kaniška I.	342
7.1.4.1. αδραγο	343
7.1.4.2. ωζοπο	344
7.1.4.3. σαγηδο	344
7.1.4.4. κωζαμβο	344
7.1.4.5. παλαβοτρο	345
7.1.4.6. ζιριτιαμβο	345
7.1.4.7. Mathurā	346
7.1.4.8. The Campaign	347
7.1.4.9. The βατριαγγε	348
7.1.4.10. αρουγο ι υνδο	350
7.1.5. Limits of Kušan Expansion	352
7.2. Roman-Kušan Contacts	353
7.2.1. Preliminaries	353
7.2.2. The Kušan in classical sources	354
7.2.3. Numismatic Evidence	360
7.2.3.1. Material and Weight Standards	360
7.2.3.2. Iconography	363
7.2.3.2.1. Western deities on Kušan coins	363
7.2.3.2.1.1. The Greek Pentad on the coins of Kaniška I	363
7.2.3.2.1.1.1. Ēlios and Salēnē	364
7.2.3.2.1.1.2. Nanaia	366
7.2.3.2.1.1.3. Ēphaistos	366
7.2.3.2.1.4. Sarapo	367
7.2.3.2.1.5. Ērakilo	369
7.2.3.2.1.6. Deineiso	371
7.2.4. Greco-Roman iconography for eastern deities	371
7.2.4.1. Ardoxšo	371
7.2.4.2. Rišto	372
7.2.4.3. Šaorēoro	373
7.2.4.4. Oanindo	373
7.2.4.5. Oēšo	374
7.2.5. Chariot coins of Vima Kadphises	375
7.2.6. The "Roman" coins of Kujula Kadphises	376
7.2.7. Kušan Titles	376
7.2.8. Material Evidence	378
7.2.8.1. The Begram Hoard	378

7.2.8.2 Seals and gems	379
7.2.8.3. Other finds	380
7.3. Kušān-Arsakid Contacts	380
7.4. The Kušān and Central Asia	385
7.5. The Kušān and the Indian Subcontinent	388
7.6. Kušān Imperial Administration	390
7.6.1. Administrative Topography	390
7.6.1.1. Bactria	390
7.6.1.2. India	393
7.6.2. Administrative Titles	395
7.6.2.1. αμβουκαο	395
7.6.2.2. φαρδαμγανο	396
7.6.2.3. αῤτοοαλγο	396
7.6.2.4. καταλραγγο	398
7.6.2.5. ωστειγο	402
7.6.2.6. ζηνοβιδο	403
7.6.2.7. χαρο	403
7.6.2.8. [•]αορανο	404
7.6.3. Iranian titles in Indian contexts	405
7.6.3.1. <i>hamāarakāra</i> and <i>gañja-hāmāarakara</i>	405
7.6.3.2. <i>kharāsalerapati</i>	407
7.6.3.3. <i>haysārpāti</i>	408
7.6.3.4. <i>vakanapati/bakanapati</i>	409
7.6.3.5. <i>horamurta</i>	411
7.6.3.6. <i>manapākapati</i>	411
7.6.3.7. <i>divīra/divira</i>	412
7.6.3.8. Interpretation	413
<b>8. Conclusion: A suggested narrative for Kušān history</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Appendix I: A catalogue of Kušān Bactrian inscriptions</b>	<b>427</b>
1. Dašt-i Nawur (DN1)	427
1.1. Description	427
1.2. Location and Discovery	427
1.3. Reading History	428
1.4. Text and Translation	429
1.5. Significance	431
2. Rabatak (Rab)	432
2.1. Description	432
2.2. Location and Discovery	432
2.3. Reading History	434
2.4. Text and Translation	435
2.5. Significance	438
3. Nukunzuk Silver Plate (NSP)	439
3.1. Description	439
3.2. Location and Discovery	439
3.3. Reading History	439
3.4. Text and Translation	440
3.5. Significance	441
4. The Surkh Kotal Inscriptions	442



4.1. Grande inscription pariétale (SK1)	442
4.1.1. Description	442
4.1.2. Location and Discovery	442
4.1.3. Reading History	443
4.1.4. Text and Translation	443
4.1.5. Significance	443
4.2. Inscription inachevée (SK2)	444
4.2.1. Description	444
4.2.2. Location and Discovery	444
4.2.3. Reading History	444
4.2.4. Text and Translation	445
4.2.5. Significance	445
4.3. Palamedes Inscription (SK3)	446
4.3.1. Description	446
4.3.2. Location and Discovery	446
4.3.3. Reading History	446
4.3.4. Text and Translation	447
4.3.5. Significance	447
4.4. Nukunzuk Inscription (SK4)	448
4.4.1. Description	448
4.4.2. Location and Discovery	448
4.4.3. Reading History	448
4.4.4. Text and Translation	449
4.4.5. Significance	451
4.5. Minor Inscriptions from Surkh Kotal (SK5-10)	452
5. Airtam Inscription (Ayr)	453
5.1. Description	453
5.2. Location and Discovery	453
5.3. Attempted re-reading	453
5.3.1. Material	453
5.3.2. Reading and commentary	454
5.3.3. Conclusions	457
6. Dil'berdžin Inscriptions (Dil 1-4)	458
7. Vāsudeva Silver Pyxis (VSP 1-4)	458
8. Almosi Gorge Inscriptions (AG1-3)	459
9. Inscribed Kušān Bactrian seals and sealings	461
9.1. Callieri Cat U 7.4	461
9.2. Callieri Cat U 7.11	461
9.3. Callieri Cat U 7.22	461
9.4. Callieri Cat U 7.23	462
9.5. Callieri Cat U 7.29	462
9.6. Callieri App. S 5	463
9.7. Callieri Cat U 7.3	463
<b>Appendix II: A Glossary of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>Appendix III: Chronological Table of the Kušān Emperors</b>	<b>483</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>485</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>522</b>
<b>Kurzfassung der Ergebnisse</b>	<b>523</b>
<b>Summary of Results</b>	<b>526</b>
<b>Selbstständigkeitserklärung/Declaration of Authorship</b>	

## **Preface**

A number of deliberations have led me to publish my dissertation, which was defended on 18.12.2023 at Institut für Iranistik, Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Freie Universität Berlin, in the present shape. Chief among the reasons is the pressure for publication within two years of defence which would not have given me enough time for all the desirable revisions. I therefore present the dissertation here in largely unaltered form from its submitted version, save for the correction of some glaring errors, and intend to present the results in more accessible and readable form shortly, together with the results of further research conducted since. Some important new developments in Kušān studies, especially the decipherment of the Issyk Kušān script and new readings of the inscription of Dašt-i Nawur could not be incorporated into this work.

This dissertation has a long and turbulent history, as will no doubt quickly become apparent in a linear reading, and many of the plans originally devised had to be changed due to unforeseen changes of personal and professional circumstances and the impact of lockdown measures during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The result is a less coherent work than originally intended, a flaw I am all too well aware of.

I have many people to thank for supporting me and my work. My first word of thanks must go to my *Doktorvater* Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, who introduced me to the Bactrian inscriptions early in my MA studies and has accompanied the development of my interest and research ever since. Without his guidance, nothing of what I present here would ever have been possible. I further thank Alberto Cantera, my second supervisor, who seemed to have an instinct for providing me with professional opportunities whenever my work was in danger of floundering. Both supervisors also supported my acceptance to the program “Languages and Cultures of the Silk Road” of

the Berlin Graduate School of Ancient Studies, which provided a better academic framework and support than I could ever have expected. In the same context, I received a generous three-year scholarship from the Einstein Center Chronoi, which enabled me to completely focus on my research. Of the people at BerGSAS I would like to especially thank Regina Attula-Ruetz and Carmen Marcks-Jacobs, and my fellow doctoral candidates for welcoming me and making me feel at home in this institution. Many other individuals have made many great and small contributions to this dissertation in shape of expertise, comments, criticism, important literature or simply interest and encouragement. It is impossible to name them all here, but I believe that the contributions of Iris Colditz, Federico Dragoni, Shervin Farridnejad, Götz König, Gunvor Lindström, Maria Macuch, Lauren Morris, Yusef Saadat, Lore Sander, Mette Bangsborg Thuesen and Arash Zeini have left profound impact. I also thank Nicholas Sims-Williams for commenting on the appendix. All remaining faults and mistakes in this work are my own.

It is impossible for me to think that I could have taken even one step along this journey without the love and support from my parents, my brother, and especially from Svet and Teddy.

From the moment I first envisioned a dissertation on Kušān history, I intended to dedicate it to the memory of my grandfather Herbert Härtel (1921-2005), who first introduced me to the Kušān many years ago, and whose spirit was ever-present in all these years. I did not expect then that I would also dedicate it to the memory of my father, Wolfgang Härtel (1947-2023), who witnessed its completion but not its submission.

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the study of the ancient world has seen a remarkable shift away from understanding the Greco-Roman civilisation as the chief agent and towards an increasing incorporation of what used to be regarded the “fringe cultures” or “fringe territories” of Eurasia into the narrative. The study of the Achaemenid, Seleukid, Arsakid and Sāsānian Empires has increasingly been undertaken to explore their own history and merits rather than regard them as adversaries to the history of the cultures of the Mediterranean world.<sup>1</sup> This shift has also affected the study of ancient Central Asian history. Recent studies have begun to raise questions of identities and interactions among the local populations of ancient Central Asia and the impact of the great powers in these imperial backwaters.<sup>2</sup> However, it is hard to deny that a certain Eurocentrism prevails. The period of Central Asian history that has received the largest increase in scholarly attention is that of Hellenism, in which “western” Greek and “oriental” local cultures interacted in this region of the world. While much important work has been done to deconstruct traditional notions of the Hellenistic East as a time of Greek domination over Asia, especially those of glorious Greek kingdoms centred in the regions of Bactria and Gandhāra, and even to put the validity of the Hellenistic label itself into question, the viewpoint remains first and foremost one of western self-reflection.

Unfortunately, this western self-reflection is hardly carried over to the post-Hellenistic period of Central Asian history. A similar amount of native data, perhaps even more,

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<sup>1</sup> While some early contributions such as Altheim/Stiehl 1970 already attempted to change the focus, it can be said that the real watershed was in the 1980s with the Achaemenid History Workshops, which had a significant effect on the study of the Hellenistic East. A. Kuhrt/S. Sherwin-White (eds), *Hellenism in the East. The Interaction of Greek and non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*. Berkeley/Los Angeles 1987 and Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993 must be regarded the landmark publications in this regard.

<sup>2</sup> Some recent examples include Mairs 2014, Jacobs et al 2017 and Payne/King 2020.

now exists for the study of the history of the Kušān Empire, which dominated the regions of Bactria and Gandhāra from the first to the third centuries CE. Like Hellenistic Bactria, there are only fragmented and scattered historiographical reports on Kušān history, so that archaeology plays an important role in uncovering this period. Unlike Hellenistic Bactria however, a number of epigraphic sources have been found throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in which the Kušān élites speak to us in the Iranian language of the time and place, which is now called Bactrian.<sup>3</sup> One of these inscriptions – the Rabatak Inscription – attests that this language was called “Aryan” in the Kušān period,<sup>4</sup> a meaning that should better be understood as “Iranian”.<sup>5</sup> Bactrian is closely related to other Middle Iranian languages such as Sogdian, Khwarezmian and Parthian. The corpus of these Kušān Bactrian inscriptions is relatively small. There are only four inscriptions with substantial content that can be read as coherent texts.<sup>6</sup> Their historical value however is immense, as they provide many details on the history, religion, and imperial self-view of the Kušān Empire. They are also of linguistic significance, as they document the earliest stages of written Bactrian and allow for a glimpse into the process of reducing this language to writing.

It should be expected that the discovery of these inscriptions provided a stimulus for Kušān studies and led to an attempt to view the history of this empire through its native, Bactrian lense. However, while Iranian linguistics and religious studies have so far greatly profited from the material in these inscriptions and other Kušān sources, the

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that no epigraphic record exists from Hellenistic Central and South Asia at all, but its historical value is by no means comparable to the content of these Kušān Bactrian inscriptions. The most intriguing historical study of this record is found in Mairs 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Attested in the adverbial form *arīao* in Rab 3.

<sup>5</sup> cf. chapter 4.2.

<sup>6</sup> Here abbreviated as DN1 (Dašt-i Nawur 1), Rab (Rabatak) NSP (Nokonzok Silver Plate) and SK4 (Surkh Kotal 4). A full catalogue of the inscriptions with text and translation is found here in Appendix I. The new readings of DN1 by J. Halfmann, S. Bonmann, S. Fries and N. Korbzow, and F. Palunčiić, D. Palunčiić and B.T. Maharaj, could not be taken into account here (cf. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 67 (2014), 5-51).

history of the Kušān Empire as a whole remains locked in traditional ideas. These are, in short, the presentation of the Kušān as middlemen in the spread of Buddhism from India to Central and East Asia, and in transcontinental trade spanning the region between East Asia and the Mediterranean. The Kušān Empire is thus characterised as a creature of the Silk Road, profiting of commerce flowing through its realm and of the civilisatory achievements of the Buddhists and of the Hellenistic legacy prevalent in the regions under its control. Any agency ascribed to the Kušān themselves is typically tied directly to the goal of facilitating the flow of this exchange.<sup>7</sup> Even a recent exhibition devoted to the archaeology of Uzbekistan opened in Berlin in May 2023 presents the Kušān first and foremost as taking the legacy of Hellenism and regards its primary role in history as providing an infrastructure for the spread of Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> The Kušān only rarely feature in textbook literature on Iranian history,<sup>9</sup> and, due to their expansion into the subcontinent, are much more commonly regarded as part of Indian history.

The aim of the present study is to develop a view of the Kušān Empire that is detached from such preconceptions and to regard it as what it was, first and foremost: An empire of the ancient world. Since the primary written imperial record is in an Iranian language, and their content at first glance contains much Iranian material, it is believed that it is justified to establish the hypothesis that the Kušān Empire is to be regarded as politically and culturally Iranian in context with the ancient Iranian empires of the Achaemenids, Arsakids and Sāsānians. This study aims to test this hypothesis, while

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<sup>7</sup> e.g., the the Kušān chapter in Benjamin 2018.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.smb.museum/ausstellungen/detail/archaeologische-schaetze-aus-usbekistan/> (retrieved 19.05.2023)

<sup>9</sup> A case in point is Wiesehöfer 1994, 161 where Kušān history is summarised in a mere paragraph. Frye 1984 is a notable exception, allowing the discussion of the Kušān much more space. Vol 3.2 of the Cambridge History of Iran features a mere ten pages on the Kušān. While this is in part due to the much lower number of sources available at the time, it nevertheless shows how underrepresented the Kušān are in modern Iranian historiography.

acknowledging that the Kušān are simultaneously a part of Indian history, and not intending to diminish the Indologist viewpoint.

This study focuses on the aforementioned Kušān Bactrian inscriptions as a primary source for Kušān history and intends to contextualise, analyse and interpret the information they provide. Due to the nature of these inscriptions, it is necessary to use a considerable number of external sources of varying nature to create a context in which the desired information can be extracted from the Kušān inscriptions. These include numismatic data, inscriptions from other Iranian empires, other Iranian texts that are closely related in time and language, and historiographical notes found in Classical (Graeco-Roman) and Chinese sources. Archaeology also plays an important role, since they provide the material context for the Kušān and in some cases also the direct context for the inscriptions. Inscriptions from Kušān India written mostly in Gandhārī and other Prakrits are also of great importance, although most of these are private donor inscriptions and not as close in genre to the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions as would be expected.

This approach to the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions resulted in four distinct but interrelated studies. The first study (chapter 4) concerns the language and texts of the inscriptions themselves. It investigates the Kušān language policy, why the Greek script was chosen to write Bactrian, and finally the position of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions in the literary history of Iran. The second study (chapter 5) analyses the imperial titulature used by the Kušān emperors in the inscription, its historical development and its political message. The third study (chapter 6) attempts to understand the religion presented in the inscriptions and other imperial documents – especially coins – as it deviates significantly from norms established in Iran and India at the time. Chapter 7 is strictly speaking two distinct studies attempting to understand the imperial strategy of

the Kušān. It first investigates the imperial expansion and attempts to answer to the commonly held belief that the Kušān were guided by commercial interests especially with regards to the Roman Empire. The second part (7.6) seeks to establish what the imperial footprint of the Kušān looked like by examining the information on the administrative topography and hierarchies from the Kušān inscriptions. By way of a conclusion, chapter 8 intends to present the narrative of Kušān history indicated by these studies. This main part of the present work is prefaced by two introductory chapters. The first (chapter 2) provides a brief research history on the study of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions and the historical backdrop for the entire work which is here called the “historical environment” of the Kušān. This term is meant to describe the various cultural and political entities the Kušān interacted with directly and indirectly and which provide further sources for the present study. The second introductory part (chapter 3) briefly addresses the question of Kušān chronology. This problem cannot be avoided in any large work on Kušān history, since many questions are still disputed among scholars. Since no new sources are presented here, it is not intended to provide definitive answers, but merely a reasoned opinion on the most important aspects.

Some known deficiencies of the present study must be addressed. The study is that of a historian working primarily with written Iranian, and to a lesser extend, Greek and Latin material. These are the fields the author is trained in. Since I have no formal education in Indology and Sinology, the study is wholly dependent on the works of other scholars in the use of Indian and Chinese texts, and I have to the best of my ability attempted to evaluate their works critically. I do have some formal education in archaeology and art history and thus feel more confident in using archaeological and material (especially numismatic) sources. For these reasons, the weight put on the



individual sources may be somewhat subjective. I have done my best to avoid serious imbalance and to attribute to the source material the importance it deserves.

## 2. Prolegomena

### 2.1. The Kušān in historical memory and research history

#### 2.1.1. Historical memory of the Kušān

##### 2.1.1.1. Buddhist Memory

The most vivid traditional memory of the Kušān Empire comes from Buddhist legends and histories spread throughout Central Asia and into China. As Rosenfield 1967 put it, “Fragments of stories and adventures are scattered throughout a vast range of religious and historical lore – but scattered in a most surprising fashion”.<sup>10</sup> There is no coherent history of the Kušān Empire or biography – or hagiography – of any of its rulers extant. Nevertheless, a hagiographic tradition is tangible in the case of Kaniška I, a ruler whose memory, although distorted through many layers of legend, must have been present for a long time in Central Asian Buddhism.

The passages from Chinese texts containing Buddhist traditions on the Kušān and specifically on Kaniška I have been collected, albeit in translation only, and annotated by Zürcher 1968.<sup>11</sup> The author does not believe that much historical information can be gathered from these texts.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, some passages of ostensibly historiographical nature have been extracted and assembled in Falk 2015a.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of the Buddhist content, not in Falk 2015a, revolves around two topics: the conversion of Kaniška I to Buddhism and his initiation of a great Buddhist council in Kashmir. The conversion narrative speaks of a prediction of the Buddha that in the

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<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, 374-87. cf. also Rosenfield 1967, 28-39. Due to the nature of the present work, the following is based entirely on these publications and left entirely summaric.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, 357.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, 115-18 (§§ 098, 100, 101, 102).

future, king Kaniška will build a majestic *stūpa* in Pešāwar and that upon hearing this revelation, Kaniška did indeed convert to Buddhism and build this *stūpa*, which was of extraordinary size and magnificent splendour.<sup>14</sup> After his conversion, Kaniška then sought to unify the Buddhist doctrine in a council held in Kashmir.<sup>15</sup>

Other traditions saw in Kaniška a great conqueror expanding to Xinjiang, the Pamirs and India, and it is tempting to see in the accounts at least an echoing of his historical activity.<sup>16</sup> Kaniška appears as an Aśoka-like figure,<sup>17</sup> guilt-ridden after a bloody war against Anxi (Parthia), but also insatiable in his desire for conquest. Kaniška is undefeated in battle in all these accounts but is eventually murdered at the hands of his courtiers who do not allow him to rule the entire world.<sup>18</sup>

The Buddhist memory of Kaniška I is therefore existent, but it is difficult to find a historical Kaniška or Kušān Empire here. The Buddhists were clearly not interested in keeping an accurate historical record of the Kušān Empire in the sense of a western historian.<sup>19</sup> As such, the Buddhist traditions are of great importance for the cultural impact the Kušān Empire had in Asian history, but this aspect, while deserving a greater degree of contextual study, is not in the focus of the present work.

#### **2.1.1.2. Chinese historiography**

The closest to an extant narrative of Kušān history in written sources can be found in Chinese annals and histories, most importantly the *Han Shu* and *Hou Han Shu*, but also

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<sup>14</sup> As noted by Rosenfield 1967, 35, A. Cunningham attempted to find this *stūpa* and the attached *vihāra* without producing convincing results.

<sup>15</sup> On the historicity and importance of this council cf. the literature cited in Tremblay 2007, 85-86.

<sup>16</sup> Zürcher 1968, 358.

<sup>17</sup> Lamotte 1988, 426.

<sup>18</sup> Falk 2015a, 117-18 (§ 102).

<sup>19</sup> Zürcher 1968, 357.

the *Shiji* for earlier history in the Yuezhi period.<sup>20</sup> Frustratingly, these narratives end in the reign of Vima Takto. Kaniška I is never mentioned in Chinese historiographical sources.<sup>21</sup> The point of view is naturally that of imperial China, and there is very little more than generic information on the Kušān rulers and their military activity. Only Zhang Qian provides some detailed information of Bactria under the Yuezhi.<sup>22</sup> Han China had little interest in the dynastic history of the Kušān, and while the information that is provided is too important to be ignored, the present conclusion must be that there will have been no active memory of the Kušān Empire in China after its end, although it was saved and available in the imperial records.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.1.1.3. Indian memory

In modern Indian historiography, the Kušān play an important role as one of the great ancient empires of India and precursors to the Gupta.<sup>24</sup> This is however a result of the rediscovery of the Kušān by modern scholars. As Falk 2003 points out, Kaniška I (and the Kušān in general) is virtually absent from non-Buddhist Indian literature.<sup>25</sup> Not even the name of the Kušān was preserved in Sanskrit literature, and they were referred to merely as Tocharians,<sup>26</sup> suggesting they were viewed as foreign occupiers. Only the *Rājatarāṅgiri* of Kalhaṇa, a poetic chronicle dated to 1184 shows that the memory of the Kušān had not been entirely eradicated at this point, as it mentions the three kings

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<sup>20</sup> These passages make up a substantial part of Falk 2015a and are too many to cite here individually. They have also been collected in translation in Zürcher 1968, 358-74 and form the basis of Benjamin 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Chinese Buddhist texts do mention him though, cf. above, chapter 2.1.1.1.

<sup>22</sup> Falk 2015a, 63-67 (§§ 036-039).

<sup>23</sup> The name was still known to chroniclers in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, cf. Falk 2015a, 138-39 (§ 132).

<sup>24</sup> Thapar 2002, 282-84.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Falk 2015a, 136-37 (§ 130).

Huška, Juška and Kaniška.<sup>27</sup> Even here, however, they are no longer remembered as Kušān, but as Turuška (Tocharian) kings.

#### 2.1.1.4. Central Asian memory

In India, the Kušān Empire was succeeded by the Gupta who, by the time of Candragupta II (c. 380-415 CE) had reached a point when they could confidently establish their own imperial identity.<sup>28</sup> In Bactria and Central Asia, the memory of the Kušān Empire was kept alive for at least two centuries after it had been conquered by the Sāsānians. There was no Sāsānian province of Balkh, but a Kušānšahr ruled by a Kušānšāh(ānšāh) subject to the Sāsānian emperor;<sup>29</sup> as such they were also recognised by their Bactrian subjects.<sup>30</sup> These Sāsānian Kušānšāhs known primarily from their coinage were probably part of the Sāsānian house themselves, as they all had Sāsānian dynastic names.<sup>31</sup> However, even the various rulers of the “Iranian Huns” used this title in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, as attested by its use on Kidarite coins<sup>32</sup> and on a seal from Samarkand, a city never even part of the original Kušān Empire.<sup>33</sup> Apparently, the memory of the Kušān only gradually faded here, even as Bactria retained the name Tuḥāristān into the Islamic period.

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<sup>27</sup> Falk 2015a, 139 (§ 133); cf. also Falk 2003, 96 for the dating and attribution.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Thapar 2002, 285.

<sup>29</sup> As such it appears in the province list in ŠKZ Pa 02.

<sup>30</sup> Apart from the coinage they issued in Bactria with that title (on which cf. Cribb 1990), this is also apparent from the Bactrian document ba (BD2, 52-55).

<sup>31</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 198.

<sup>32</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 229-39.

<sup>33</sup> ur Rahman/Grenet/Sims-Williams 2006. cf. also the reference to Yuezhi rulers of Samarkand in the 10<sup>th</sup> century *Jiu Tangshu*, Falk 2015a, 138-39 (§ 132).

### 2.1.1.5. Western historiography

The Kušān are last mentioned in Sāsānian records in the Paikuli inscription of Narseh.<sup>34</sup> Afterwards, no sources that would be expected to mention them are extant, so it is impossible to say when exactly the name fell out of use here, although the political entity of the Kušānšahr, as far as it concerned the Sāsānians, ceased to exist with the conquest of Bactria by the Hephthalites in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. The *Karnāmag* of Ardaxšīr I does not mention the Kušān by name, despite referring to his campaigns in the east in passing.<sup>35</sup> Despite this, the name of the Kušān must have been preserved in the *Xwāday-nāmag* tradition, as Ṭabarī mentions Kušān envoys submitting to Ardaxšīr.<sup>36</sup> The reference contains no further information, and it is impossible to say if Ṭabarī had any knowledge of who these Kušān were, although the context places them in the east. However, Ṭabarī does not connect them with Balkh or outer Khorassān, which are mentioned shortly before that.

In further western historiography, the Kušān appear only very rarely in the first place. The Armenian historian Moses Khorenats'i mentions an alliance between the Arsakids and the Kušān under Vehsachan (Vaskušān?) who is located in or beyond Balkh.<sup>37</sup>

Roman knowledge of and interest in the Kušān Empire will be discussed below in chapter 7.2. For the present context, it is interesting to note that the closest thing to a description of the Kušān Empire extant in Roman sources is thought to come from the description of the Persian (Sāsānian) Empire in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>38</sup>

In book XXIII, an ever so brief mention of a “Bactrian” Empire is found that had

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<sup>34</sup> NPi §92. The Bactrian letter ‘ba’ mentioning the κοβανοβαο is certainly later, albeit undated. Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 67 date this document to c. 350 CE, although the mention of the κοβανοβαο is in fact one of the dating criteria (cf. *ibid.*, 48-49).

<sup>35</sup> On Ardaxšīr's eastern campaign and its sources cf. Widengren 1971, 745-48, although some of his statements must be read with caution. It is inexplicable why he does not consider Balkh a part of the Kušān Empire but instead part of the province of Marv.

<sup>36</sup> Bosworth 1999, 15.

<sup>37</sup> Falk 2015a, 128-29 (§ 119).

<sup>38</sup> Falk 2015a, 133-34 (§ 126).

conquered its neighbouring territories and forced their name upon them before being conquered by the Persians.<sup>39</sup> Ammian further mentions several tribes subject to the Bactrians, including the Tochari. Interestingly, Ammian does not connect the Bactrians in any way to his mention of the Cuseni in his famous narrative of the siege of Amida in 359 CE, a mention generally accepted to refer to the Kušān.<sup>40</sup> This would suggest that while Ammian had knowledge of the Kušān Empire and its history, it was at best rudimentary and through a Roman lens that viewed the Kušān as “Bactrian”, not “Kušān”. His mention of the Cuseni may be derived from Sāsānian records.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.1.1.3. Summary

This survey was kept intentionally brief and without the intent to be exhaustive. What it shows however, is that the fate of the Kušān as a “forgotten” empire is not due to a lack of prominence or impact on the territories it controlled. Roman and Chinese sources had at best a patchy interest in the relevant territories and the extant record is incomplete specifically for the period of the height of Kušān power under Kaniška I and his successors. The lack of information is not unexpected. Han China ceased its western ambitions in this period, and the lack of interest of classical sources outside their direct cultural and political sphere is well-known and discussed.<sup>42</sup> It is more

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<sup>39</sup> Ammian XXIII.6.55.

<sup>40</sup> Falk 2015a, 134 (§ 127), although not mentioning the presence of the Cuseni at Amida (XIX.2.3).

<sup>41</sup> Another possibility is that Ammian XXIII.6.55 does not refer to the Kušān at all, but the Graeco-Bactrians. The only historical reference is a vague allusion to a conflict with an *Arsaces*. This could, in principle, of course be any Arsakid emperor, as the Arsakids used Arsakes as a generic throne name. However, the western historians did not follow this practice, as even Ammian proves directly afterward, referring to a Mithradates in XXIII.6.56. A conflict between the Graeco-Bactrians and the Arsakids under Arsakes I is, however, well-established by Troguus-Justin XLI.4.5-10. Falk 2015a, 133 (§126), does not remark on this when the entirety of Ammian XXIII.6.55-60 is included under the header “The Kushan in retrospect”. There is however evidence that Ammian included at least some information on the Kušān period in this passage, when he writes *Gentes isdem Bactrianis oboediunt plures, quas exsuperant Tochari* (Several peoples are subject to these same Bactrians, notably the Tochari). This statement in particular is however difficult to interpret and may be a confusion on Ammian’s part (cf. also Falk 2015a, 120 (§104)).

<sup>42</sup> For some recent contributions cf. e.g. J. Morgan, *Greek Perspectives on the Achaemenid Empire. Persia through the Looking Glass*. Edinburgh 2016; I. Madreiter, *Stereotypisierung – Idealisierung –*

interesting that the Kušān memory faded in India. This may be comparable with the neglect towards the Arsakids in the compilation of the *Xwaday-nāmag* traditions in the later Sāsānian Empire.<sup>43</sup> It is unwise to assume a deliberate and immediate purge from records in this case, but there was certainly no greater interest in the hapless predecessors who vanished in the initial expansion of their own empires by later Gupta and Sāsānian redactors.

In Bactria and Central Asia, where there was no “successor empire” to the Kušān in the strict sense, the Kušān legacy was kept alive for much longer and even seems to have been a source for political legitimacy. The Sāsānians, rather than directly incorporate the Kušān territories as provinces into their empire, chose to retain the polity of the Kušānšahr during their initial hold over Central Asia. However, this policy may be part of the reason why the memory of the Kušān was alive for so much longer here. This indicates a particularly strong imperial presence of the Kušān in Bactria, a point that provides important context for any investigation of the sources from this period.

### **2.1.2. Research history of Kušān Bactrian**

By the time of modern historical research into Asian history, the Kušān Empire had been entirely forgotten save for a few references scattered throughout Indian, Chinese and Buddhist literature known probably only to a handful of individuals and by all indications no longer properly understood. The Kušān had to be “rediscovered” from the scratch, a process that Cribb 2007 has traced from the first mention of the Kušān in a modern western historical work in 1756 to the definitive identifications of Kušān

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Indifferenz. Formen der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Achaimeniden-Reich in der griechischen Persika-Literatur. Wiesbaden 2012 (both for the Achaemenid period).

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed and differentiated discussion of this, cf. Pourshariati 2008, 33-160.



coins by A. Cunningham in 1845.<sup>44</sup> Since this article contains all the detail that could be asked for, the early history of Kušān studies requires no further comment here.<sup>45</sup>

Until into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kušān studies was primarily a discipline of Indology and Indian archaeology. The Iranian origin of the Kušān was recognised, and they were often included in the “Indo-Scythian” label.<sup>46</sup> Kušān inscriptions were found particularly in the Mathurā district and Gandhāra written in Brahmī and Kharoṣṭhī script.<sup>47</sup> The Bactrian language was not yet recognised as such, although it was recognised that the Kušān coin legends used a modified version of the Greek alphabet to write an Iranian idiom.<sup>48</sup>

In 1952, the Délégation archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) began excavations in Surkh Kotal, arguably the most prominent Kušān archaeological site in Afghanistan. In the early campaigns, a number of fragmentary inscriptions were found that were first read and discussed in Curiel 1954. Henning 1956 added comments on one inscription (SK3) in which he recognised that one word in this inscription, βαρολαγγο, was to be derived from OIr. *\*baga-dānaka-* with the Sogdian cognate βγδ'n`k and -βγδ`nyy, a word that was also the base for the GN Baghlān, the district where Surkh Kotal was located. As it turned out, Henning here already recognised the

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<sup>44</sup> The importance of this development can be observed when reading the accounts in Lassen 1838 and Wilson 1841 (both of which are referred to in Cribb 2007), where the lists of Kušān sovereigns are hopelessly confused. Lassen was unable to connect the Kaniška of Buddhist tradition with the coins of a sovereign he termed Kanerko (i.e., the Bactrian spelling KANHĀKO). Later, Lassen 1866 incorporated these identifications, although the sequence was still far off (i.e. placing Huviška before Kaniška I). Wilson spread the Kušān emperors over three dynasties (“Barbaric”, “Indo-Parthian” and “Indo-Scythian Princes of Kabul”) together with various Indo-Parthian and Indo-Scythian rulers.

<sup>45</sup> Next to the original publication in Errington/Curtis 2007, the article was reprinted with different pagination in Jayaswal 2012.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. Cunningham 1893, but even van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949 still included the Kušān in the “Scythian” period, albeit using quotation marks.

<sup>47</sup> Landmark publications include Konow 1929 and Lüders 1961 (published posthumously). A collection of Kušān inscriptions is found in Satya Shrava 1993. The latter will now be superseded by the catalogue in M.C. Skinner, *Marks of an Empire. Extracting a Narrative from the Corpus of Kuṣāṇa Inscriptions*. Washington 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Cunningham 1893, 114-15; Tarn 1997, 125 and 304-05 speaks of a Sogdian dialect spoken in Bactria and of the “Saca” language of the Kušān reduced to writing using Greek letters on the coins.

two most characteristic features of Bactrian: The development of OIr. /\*d/ to /l/ and \*-*ānaka-* to *-āng-*.

In 1957, a great monolithic inscription was found at the site (SK4M) which was first publicised by J. de Menasce and E. Benveniste at the XXIV International Orientalist Congress in the same year. The *editio princeps* was published by Maricq 1958. Maricq attempted to provide both a reading and a linguistic commentary for the language he termed *étéo-Tokharien*. His article was subject to profound criticism by Henning 1960, who in many points disagreed with him based on his Middle Iranian expertise. Henning suggested to call the language “Bactrian”, as he was certain that it was the native dialect of the region rather than the language imported by the Kušān. He determined, in agreement with Maricq, its close relation to Sogdian, Parthian, Khwarezmian, Yidgha-Munji and Pashto, concluding that “it is thus in its natural and rightful place in Bactria”.<sup>49</sup> Henning provided much important linguistic commentary that is still valuable today but did not attempt a full reading and translation of the inscription. He did however recognise with M. Boyce that the language was the same as that of a fragment in Manichaean script in the Berlin Turfan collection.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, blocks of two further versions of the same inscription (SK4A and SK4B) were found and Benveniste 1961 provided a full edition of all three versions of SK4 together with the known blocks of another fragmentary inscription (SK1) and a new reading of SK3. Benveniste investigated the differences between the three versions of SK4 but did not provide a linguistic commentary or translation.

Such an attempt had by this time however been made by Humbach 1960, who interpreted the inscription as a Mithraic hymn written in a hitherto unknown old Iranian

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<sup>49</sup> *Op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Op. cit.*, 55, fn. 8.

language. Humbach was first inspired by his reading of the monograms in the inscription as reading ΔEIOO MIYPO.<sup>51</sup> The very elaborate interpretation was dismissed by Benveniste 1961<sup>52</sup> and rejected by Gershevitch 1963 in a lengthy review. Only Mayrhofer 1963 attempted to find merit in Humbach's interpretation, which led to a bemused response by Henning 1965b. Humbach attempted to perpetuate his reading in his *Baktrische Sprachdenkmäler*,<sup>53</sup> which was once again negatively reviewed by Gershevitch 1967b.<sup>54</sup> While many of the criticisms were aimed at Humbach's reading of SK4, Gershevitch also discussed the limited corpus of Bactrian manuscripts and seal inscriptions known at the time. The same author also reviewed Göbl 1965, an attempt to read the three versions of SK4 without any linguistic preconceptions on a purely epigraphic basis.<sup>55</sup> Most of the criticism is aimed at Göbl's reconstruction of the sequence of the inscriptions, but it also contains a full translation of the inscription, the first outside of Humbach's work. Göbl 1967/1 also collected all the known Bactrian seals and sealings and interpreted them as Kušān or post-Kušān.<sup>56</sup> Further grammatical work on Bactrian was limited due to the sparse corpus. Morgenstierne 1970 and Sims-Williams 1973 provided some brief comments on Bactrian syntax and phonology respectively, the former subject being picked up once more by Sims-Williams 1985a.

In the meantime, however, some important new developments had occurred. A conference on Kušān chronology held in London in 1960 stimulated further research in the field.<sup>57</sup> Soviet archaeologists were active in the Central Asian Soviet republics and

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<sup>51</sup> First in FS Lommel, then Humbach 1960, 12.

<sup>52</sup> *Op. cit.*, 140.

<sup>53</sup> Humbach 1966.

<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, outside of the boundaries of Iranian Studies Humbach's interpretation was more successful and can still be found in the most widely distributed overview of Indian history, Kulke/Rothermund 1998, 103.

<sup>55</sup> Gershevitch 1967a.

<sup>56</sup> *Op. cit.*, 219-56.

<sup>57</sup> Published in PDK.

in Afghanistan, excavating important sites from the Kušān period, such as Dalverzin Tepe, Ayrtaṃ, Karatepe, Fayaztepe and Ḥalčayān (all in Uzbekistan) and Dilberdjin in Afghanistan.<sup>58</sup> Work in Afghanistan also continued and Fussman 1974 published the Dašt-i Nawur inscription, a trilingual text with a Bactrian version. Davary/Humbach 1976 followed with a different reading which N. Sims-Williams later judged as more reliable.<sup>59</sup> Soviet archaeologists discovered new fragmentary inscriptions in Dilberjin (Dil1-4) and Ayrtaṃ (Ayr).<sup>60</sup> This new material was made accessible outside of the Russian language sphere by Davary 1982. This work, despite its title, is far more than a dictionary. It is still valuable today as a collection of all the Bactrian material known until this point. Its greatest weakness is that it places the etymological and grammatical interpretations of Humbach next to those of other scholars, leaving non-specialists at a loss as to which ones to follow.

Unfortunately, Davary 1982 also does not recognise the new edition and translation of SK4 in Gershevitch 1979, which to this day constitutes the definitive version with a few modifications. A further reading and translation with some important linguistic notes was prepared by Lazard/Grenet/de Lamberterie 1984.

The rest of the 1980s saw little progress in Bactrian studies. Harmatta 1986 published a speculative reconstruction of the fragmentary Ayrtaṃ inscription which is of no historical value. Importantly however, Göbl 1984 published the standard reference work on Kušān numismatics. In 1988 and 1989, N. Sims-Williams produced the articles

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<sup>58</sup> Overviews over Soviet activity in Kušān Central Asia can be found in two conference volumes published by the Committee on the Study of Civilisations of Central Asia of the Commission of the U.S.S.R., *Центральная Азия в Кушанскую Эпоху*, Moskva 1974. Presentation of the archaeological results is found especially in volume two. An overview is found further in the three-volume work by Kruglikova et al, *Древняя Бактрия*, Moskva 1969-1973. A detailed summary in French is furthermore provided by Staviskij 1986 and for a more general audience in German in B.J. Staviskij, *Mittelasiens. Kunst der Kuschan*. Leipzig 1979.

<sup>59</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 58-59.

<sup>60</sup> Dil: Livšič/Kruglikova 1979, 98-112. Dil5 is in cursive script and therefore likely post-Kušān. Ayr: Turgunov/Livšič/Rtveladze 1981.

on Bactrian for Encyclopædia Iranica and CLI respectively, summarising the entire knowledge of Bactrian at this point, which amounted to extremely limited surveys.

In 1993, the Rabatak Inscription (Rab) was discovered in the context of the Afghan Civil War and published by Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 with a reading, translation, glossary, and historical commentary. In this article, N. Sims-Williams already mentioned the appearance of the Bactrian Documents,<sup>61</sup> which would significantly enhance the corpus of the Bactrian language and of which the first were published in 1997. They are now accessible in three volumes.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Callieri 1997 collected all the known Bactrian seals and sealings once again with a commentary by N. Sims-Williams.

The importance of Rab for Kušān and Bactrian studies can hardly be overstated. It is a lengthy text of an early period written in Bactrian, providing much linguistic information that is lost in subsequent developments of Bactrian. Its content is of great importance for Kušān studies. While SK4 was a building inscription of relatively limited historical content, Rab provides many details for Kušān history and religion. It thus attracted much attention from scholars of Iranian studies. Fussman 1998 published a lengthy historical treatment. Mukherjee 1998 provided a new reading based on the same source photographs used by Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96.<sup>63</sup> This reading was vastly different to that of N. Sims-Williams and could not be confirmed by two further readings of the same author: Sims-Williams 1998, based on new photographs, and Sims-Williams 2008, based on an investigation of the stone slab itself in the Afghan National Museum in Kabul. The latter constitutes the definitive reading and translation of the inscription, and all these articles provide much important linguistic commentary.

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<sup>61</sup> *Op. cit.*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> BD1-3.

<sup>63</sup> This reading is reproduced in Goyal 2005, 88-92 without explanation why it is given preference over that of N. Sims-Williams. The historical commentary following it is therefore of no use.

Further studies of the inscription and individual religious aspects were provided by Huyse 2003, Humbach 2003,<sup>64</sup> Gnoli 2009 and Panaino 2009. All these however are based on older readings which have been superseded by Sims-Williams 2008 and sometimes provide a wrong impression of the actual content. Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005 provide a new reading for a previously poorly explained seal inscription of Kaniška II or III. A collection of translations of selected Kušān Bactrian inscriptions was provided, with brief comments, by Sims-Williams 2012.

A new inscription on a silver plate (NSP) was presented by Sims-Williams 2015 with the customary translation and linguistic commentary. It was published in a volume edited by H. Falk together with a collection of literary sources on the Kušān Empire including all the known Bactrian inscriptions.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, Jongeward/Cribb 2015 published a new reference on Kušān numismatics that, while not entirely replacing Göbl 1984, provides an important update on the subject. The latest linguistic discoveries include a silver pyxis from the time of Vāsudeva with four short Bactrian labels,<sup>66</sup> and a series of three inscriptions from the Almosi Gorge in Tadjikistan found in the summer of 2022. Of the latter, one is in Bactrian and includes the name of the Kušān emperor Vima Takto.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Where the readings of Henning and Gershevitch are accepted and the author's own interpretation is disowned.

<sup>65</sup> Falk 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Falk/Sims-Williams 2017. A silver plate with a Bactrian inscription published in Sims-Williams 2013 may be late Kušān or early post-Kušān according to the author (*ibid*, 197).

<sup>67</sup> Preliminary publications include Davary 2022 and Bobomulloev/Khodzhaev/Bobomulloev 2023. The inscriptions and site were also subject of a workshop in Dushanbe on 01.03.2023.

## **2.2. The historical environment of the Kušān**

### **2.2.1. The “historical environment” as a concept**

The elusiveness of the Kušān Empire in literary and, to a lesser extent, archaeological sources means that much indirect study is necessary for deeper understanding. This includes comparing situations before and after the Kušān period in territories that belonged to its empire to establish an approximation of conditions in the Kušān period. It also includes comparing what is known from the structure of the Kušān Empire to structures of better-known polities in hope of gaining data that may fill some gaps. A large amount of comparable material is necessary here in order to establish certain tendencies and patterns that may safely also be attributed to the Kušān Empire.

All this material will be gathered from empires, polities, societies, and literary and archaeological contexts which the Kušān interacted with directly and indirectly. Direct interaction would include such empires, polities, societies, and contexts either contemporaneous to the Kušān Empire or immediately preceding them in the territory of their own empire and of which the Kušān can be said to have been direct recipients. Indirect interaction includes historical contexts detached from the Kušān Empire by a larger chronological frame, thus preceding or succeeding the Kušān on the territory that belonged to their empire. Some entities and contexts are also further detached both in time and space from the Kušān, but still provide important cultural links that need to be included in this discussion.

In practice, this array of entities and contexts spans a large space between India, Iran, China and the Mediterranean, and a time frame lasting from the Achaemenid period (550-330 BCE) to early Islamic Bactria (8th century CE). Theoretically, the possibilities for comparison and contextualisation are limitless. For the sake of this

study however, boundaries need to be imposed that both allow for thorough study and safe conclusions, and do not overstretch the abilities and competence of a single researcher. These confines will here be given the overarching label of a *Historical Environment* as a single term for all the entities and contexts outlined above. In the following, the individual elements of this Historical Environment as encountered in this study will briefly be introduced and their relevance for Kušān history will be explained.

### 2.2.2. Achaemenid and Seleukid Bactria

The Achaemenids provided the earliest identifiable imperial context for Bactrian history.<sup>68</sup> There is general consensus in the sources that Bactria became part of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great (559-530 BCE), although the exact process, not to speak of the chronology, is obscure.<sup>69</sup> Bactria, together with the neighbouring Areia, Khwarezm, Sogdia, Gandhāra, Sattagydia<sup>70</sup> and Arachosia are listed as *dahyāva*- in DB §6, which is understood to reflect the Achaemenid Empire at the end of the reign of Cambyses II (530-522 BCE).<sup>71</sup> Bactria was one of the few territories to remain loyal to Darius I (522-486 BCE) upon his accession, its governor Dādṛši- fighting on his side against the rebellious Margianans.<sup>72</sup> In an early study on Achaemenid Central Asia, P. Briant has cautioned against using the lack of documentary evidence from Central Asia to make arguments about the Achaemenid presence or policy there.<sup>73</sup> The progress of

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<sup>68</sup> The thesis of an eastern Iranian empire predating the Achaemenids, on basis of the Avestan civilisation or the Kayanid dynasty of Iranian tradition, has been brought forth time and again by scholars following Christensen 1931, e.g. Yarshater 1983, 438 (with W.B. Henning) or perhaps more infamously as a "Kayanid Empire" by W. Nagel, *Ninus und Semiramis in Sage und Geschichte*, Berlin 1982, repeated by Jacobs 1994, 32 and 209, where it is presented as the foundation of the administrative division of the Achaemenid north-east.

<sup>69</sup> Hdt. I,153; Ctes. FGrH 688 F 9; Xen. Kyr. I,1,4, etc.

<sup>70</sup> On the location cf. Schmitt 2014, 259 (Θatagu-).

<sup>71</sup> On this understanding cf. Jacobs 2017, 23.

<sup>72</sup> DB §38-39.

<sup>73</sup> P. Briant, *L'Asie Centrale et les royaumes proche-orientaux du premier millénaire*. Paris 1984, here 59-61.



the study of the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, archaeological investigations in Bactria and the discovery of a group of Aramaic administrative documents from the Achaemenid period in Bactria have since confirmed this caution.<sup>74</sup> Bactria was an integral part of the Achaemenid Empire and Bactrian individuals took part in an exchange spanning the entirety of the empire. While there can be no doubt that Bactria was a province in the top tier of Achaemenid administration,<sup>75</sup> there does not seem to be any consensus on the exact nature of this administrative unit and the extent of control exerted from the satrapal seat at Bactra.<sup>76</sup>

Bactria was conquered by Alexander the Great from 329-327 BCE. The reports on this part of Alexander's campaign by Arrian and Quintus Curtius Rufus have long shaped the idea of the political and social structure of Bactria in the Achaemenid period and beyond.<sup>77</sup> One of the most important passages in this regard concerns the outbreak of the general revolt of Bactria and Sogdia against Alexander in late 329 BCE. Arrian narrates that while campaigning along the Iaxartes, Alexander summoned for a general

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<sup>74</sup> A detailed overview of Achaemenid Bactria involving all the mentioned sources is found in W.F.M. Henkelman, *Bactrians in Persepolis - Persians in Bactria* in Lhuillier/Boroffka 2018, 223-55. On the study of Achaemenid administration in general cf. B. Jacobs, W. F.M. Henkelman, M.W. Stolper (eds), *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich*, Wiesbaden 2017, here esp. the contributions by Henkelman (w. pp. 150-217 on the Achaemenid presence in the provinces neighbouring Bactria) and Folmer on the Aramaic documents. The Aramaic documents are published in J. Naveh, Sh. Shaked, *Aramaic Documents from Ancient Bactria (Fourth Century BCE) From The Khalili Collection*, London 2012. Achaemenid archaeology in Bactria is presented in several contributions in J. Lhuillier, N. Boroffka (eds), *A Millennium of History*, Berlin 2018 and X. Wu, *Land of the Unruly-ables: Bactria in the Achaemenid Period* in K.O. Weber et al (eds), *Fitful Histories and Unruly Publics*, Leiden/Boston 2017, 258-87.

<sup>75</sup> A *dahyu-* in the Old Persian inscriptions and a *σατραπεία* in Classical texts (*νόμος* in Herodotus), but note the recent arguments for abandoning the list of satrapies in Hdt. III,89-94 by B. Jacobs, *Die altpersischen Länder-Listen und Herodots sogenannte Satrapienliste (Historien III 89-94)* in FS Nagel (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 306), Münster 2003, 301-43 and especially K. Ruffing, *Die 'Satrapienliste' des Dareios: Herodoteisches Konstrukt oder Realität?*, AMIT 41 (2009), 323-40. A less extreme but still pessimistic view towards Herodotus is found in Klinkott 2005, 87-109.

<sup>76</sup> Jacobs 1994, 208-27 considers Bāxtriš a *Großsatrapie* consisting of the *Hauptsatrapien* Bāxtriš, Suguda, Gādāra, Haraiwa, Dahā, Sakā tigraxaudā and Sakā haumavṛga, further including the *Kleinsatrapien* Bactria, Marguš, Sogdia, Derbicae, Gādāra and Paropamisus. This construct, which relies in part on the idea of a Kayanid Empire (see above), has seen general criticism, but no detailed refutation (as discussed by Jacobs 2003). Klinkott 2005, 126-27 does not adopt this system but still argues for the existence of a *Großsatrapie*, which in the case of Bactria means it was a *Doppelsatrapie* together with Sogdia.

<sup>77</sup> Arr. Anab. IV,5,4-14,4; Curt., VII,7,31-VIII,8,23.

assembly of Sogdian and Bactrian ὑπάρχου at Zariaspa (Bactra). These hyparchs however mistrusted Alexander's motives and instead revolted against the Macedonians.<sup>78</sup> This mention of hyparchs has been immensely influential in the characterisation of Bactria as a feudal society by classicists.<sup>79</sup> Holt 1988 even goes so far as to argue that Alexander replaced a traditional feudal structure with a stricter, imperial one.<sup>80</sup> This point of view can hardly be maintained any longer, less because of the questionable use of terms such as *feudal* (which F.L. Holt puts in quotation marks) and more because of the increasing understanding of Alexander as the “Last Achaemenid” whose administration marked a period of continuity rather than change.<sup>81</sup> Some of the best evidence for this comes from Bactria itself, where the aforementioned Aramaic administrative documents are dated to the reigns of Artaxerxes III (359-338 BCE), Darius III (334-330 BCE) and Alexander, showing that the administrative system of Bactria remained intact and unchanged after Alexander's conquest.

The scholarly view on early Hellenistic Bactria has been greatly influenced by the impression of the province's breakaway from the Seleukid Empire in c. 250 BCE. In attempt to explain this development, some authors have argued for a centrifugal dynamic inherent to the province. Plischke 2014 even suggests to read the Aramaic documents in this light, claiming they indicate the attempt of a local governor to gain

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<sup>78</sup> Arrian, *Anab.* IV,1,4. Curt. VII,6,15 states that it was Spitamenes and Katanes who agitated this revolt claiming that Alexander was planning to kill all Bactrian *equites*.

<sup>79</sup> Noteworthy examples include Tarn 1997, 121 where terms such as *baron* and *serf* are used uncritically and Schachermeyr 1973, 341-43, whose prose of a *Volkskrieg* and uncritical use of feudalistic terms such as *Baron* or *Ritter* betray the lasting presence of *völkisch* ideology in his work (in this respect cf. M. Pesdisek in *Mensch Wissenschaft Magie* 25, 41-71 and also F. Schachermeyr, *Indogermanen und Orient*, Stuttgart 1944, 348-56 with an unrestrained terminology also involving a rare analysis of Kušān history under a National Socialist pretext). Attempts at more descriptive interpretations of the role of the hyparchs without employing feudalistic terminology (while not necessarily explicitly rejecting the idea of a feudalistic structure) are found e.g. in Bosworth 1980, 17-18 and Briant 1984, 81-88.

<sup>80</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>81</sup> For a critical discussion, cf. M. Brosius, *Alexander and the Persians*. In: J. Roisman (ed), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*. Leiden/Boston 2003, 169-93.

autonomy from central authority.<sup>82</sup> Engels 2017 expresses a similar view citing as evidence the facts that the governorship of Bactria went to particularly high-ranking members of the Achaemenid royal family as a sort of sub-kingdom, “the attempt by Bessos to establish a separate authority, the stiff resistance offered by this region to Alexander and, finally, the attempt by Greek settlers to return to their homelands”.<sup>83</sup> None of these arguments are particularly convincing. The cases of supposed disobedience found in the Aramaic documents are without further context so that it is impossible to determine just how common or uncommon such occurrences were in Bactria and in the other provinces of the empire and how typical or atypical Bactria was as a province.

If there is indeed a notable frequency of particularly high-ranking Achaemenid princes in the position of Bactrian satrap, interpretations such as it being a sub-kingdom are only one possible explanation. Holt 1988 and Klinkott 2005 have argued that Bactria was a key province in the empire due to its wealth and strategic location, making its governorship all the more prestigious.<sup>84</sup> Klinkott 2005 points out that Lydia, Egypt and Babylonia were governed by individuals of similar rank.<sup>85</sup>

The other arguments used by Engels 2017 can be attributed to the special political and military circumstances of Alexander's campaign. Bessos did not attempt to establish an

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<sup>82</sup> *Op. cit.*, 74-75.

<sup>83</sup> *Op. cit.*, 318-19.

<sup>84</sup> Holt 1988, 42; Klinkott 2005, 58. Note however that the latter also suggests that the prestige may be explained by the fact that Bactria was the core territory of an empire preceding the Achaemenids. Holt 1988, 39-40 further offers some reasoning that Bactria was the homeland of the royal house of Darius I. The onomastic speculation here is particularly unfortunate, especially in equating the name of Dādr̥ši- in DB §38-39 with that of Darius (Dārayava.u-). On the explanation of this name cf. Schmitt 2014, 161. The connection between the Hystaspes (Vištāspa-) the father of Darius and the Vištāspa of the Avesta is no longer generally upheld. The other question implied here, that of a dynastic change between "Teispids" and "Achaemenids" between Cambyses II and Darius I has recently been critically reviewed by B. Jacobs, "Kyros der große König, der Achämenide". Zum verwandtschaftlichen Verhältnis und zur politischen und kulturellen Kontinuität zwischen Kyros dem Großen und Dareios I. In: R. Rollinger et al (eds), Herodot und das Persische Weltreich. Wiesbaden 2011, 635-663.

<sup>85</sup> *Op. cit.*, 55-58.

authority separate from the Achaemenid Empire but to defend what was left of the Achaemenid realm against the invading Macedonians. For this reason, he styled himself as an Achaemenid emperor Artaxerxes V after the murder of Darius rather than found some new political entity.<sup>86</sup> The revolt of the Greek settlers on the other hand seems to confirm a more rebellious attitude in Bactria if it is taken into account that the Greeks were supported by local Bactrians in their desire to revolt and leave for their homelands.<sup>87</sup> However, it needs to be pointed out that according to Diodor, the revolt only broke out upon news of Alexander's death in India.<sup>88</sup> It is possible that a Bactrian support may have been motivated by animosity towards the Macedonian rulers remnant of the very bitter war fought only a few years prior, but it is hard to argue for a special Bactrian resistance in these years in the light of the many cases of revolt and corruption Alexander faced upon his return from India.<sup>89</sup>

The revolt and bitter resistance Alexander faced in Central Asia is an argument of a different quality, and in older literature it is often referred to as a sort of national resistance.<sup>90</sup> The intensity of local resistance Alexander faced in Bactria and Sogdia was unprecedented in his campaign up to that point, and despite several attempts, it has not been satisfactorily explained.<sup>91</sup> It needs to be pointed out that the revolt broke out

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<sup>86</sup> Arr. anab. III,25,3.

<sup>87</sup> Curt. IX,7,11.

<sup>88</sup> Diod. XVII,99. Curt. IX,7,11 does not mention this but clarifies that the revolt was *non tam Alexandra infensi quam metu supplicii*.

<sup>89</sup> Will 1986, 163 may still be right in arguing that Alexander had lost control over Bactria, Sogdia and northern India by the time he returned to Babylon.

<sup>90</sup> Altheim/Stiehl 1970, 204-05.

<sup>91</sup> These attempts are far too numerous to discuss exhaustively, but a small selection here intends to demonstrate what kind of argumentative foundations tend to be used: Apart from the aforementioned "national" character of the resistance, Altheim/Stiehl 1970 find a strongly religious component which is based entirely on the name of Spitamenes, arguing, "bezeichnend war, daß dieser Zarathustra's Geschlecht (avest. spitāma-; mittelpers. spitāmān) entstammte" (p. 205). Holt 1988 attempts to find the cause of the revolt of the Sogdians and Bactrians against Alexander in the foundation of Alexandria Eschata, arguing with Curt. VI,6,13 and Arrian, Anab. IV,1,3-4 that "[it] was, in fact, just after the site had been chosen and the city planning begun that the immediate area rose up in revolt" (pp. 54-55); Holt argues that this foundation was perceived by the local population as a foreign disruption of historically grown relations and structures. In more recent reference literature, the Central Asian revolt is surprisingly glossed over, avoiding the discussion of its causes altogether, e.g.: B.S. Strauss, Alexander: The Military

when there was no longer a representative of the Achaemenid central authority present in Bactria, but a new pretender to the rule over Bactria, that is, Alexander, appeared with a completely foreign army and no experience in dealing with local Bactrian political, social and cultural realities. This seems to be hard to reconcile with the observation that the Achaemenid administration continued without interruption into the reign of Alexander,<sup>92</sup> but even so it cannot be denied that the political circumstances had changed. The revolt died down when Alexander changed his approach to local élites, especially with the marriage to Roxane, suggesting perhaps that he promised to honour the conditions that existed in the Achaemenid period.<sup>93</sup> In any case, Central Asia found itself under extraordinary circumstances during Alexander's invasion that do not warrant the Bactrian response to be interpreted as being indicative of a particularly rebellious nature of the province or its population.

There is thus no argument to be made that Bactria was governed by an especially centrifugal attitude. It does not appear as though Seleukos I had any particular difficulties in reintegrating Bactria to his empire<sup>94</sup> or that it was a troublesome province in his reign or that of Antiochos I.

The reasons for the foundation of an independent Graeco-Bactrian state have long been discussed by scholars, yet again without much consensus.<sup>95</sup> The reason may be the lack of clarity in the sources. However, even if the precise chronology and motivation behind

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Campaign. In: J. Roisman (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*. Leiden 2003, 140, 153; W. Heckel, King and "Companions" (in the same volume), 220-21; K. Nawozka in *Jacobs/Rollinger 2021/I*, 480.

<sup>92</sup> As shown by Aramaic Document C4, cf. Naveh/Shaked 2012, 21, 199-212; for an analysis also Tuplin 2017, 660-69.

<sup>93</sup> This is the view advanced prominently by Bosworth 1980, 10-11 and reinforced by Holt 1988, 67-68 and 75.

<sup>94</sup> Despite the Sophytos coinage, cf. O. Bordeaux, *Sôphytos et Andragoras. Deux cas de monnayages autonomistes entre Bactriane et Parthie séleucides*. *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 122 (2021), 77-154.

<sup>95</sup> An overview of the points under discussion with rich literature can be found in Plischke 2014, 233-36; more recently the discussion has been continued by J. Jakobsson, *Dating Bactria's independence to 246/6 BC?* In: *Mairs 2021*, 499-509.

the breakaway of the Diodotids must remain obscure, some general observations can still be made. The independence occurred at a time when Seleukid central authority had to pay much undue attention to the far west of the empire because of the Second and Third Syrian Wars and the rise of Pergamon. It is particularly telling that no Seleukid response to the revolt of Parthia and Bactria is recorded before the campaign of Seleukos II that ended unsuccessfully in 227 BCE, by all accounts at least 20 years after Bactria and Parthia had first revolted.<sup>96</sup> It is equally important to note that the rule of Andragoras in Parthia will have lasted for little more than a decade before the Aparni overran the province and founded the Arsakid Empire.<sup>97</sup> It is presently impossible to know if the independence of Parthia and Bactria was caused by the threat of nomad tribes such as the Aparni, or if the loss of Seleukid central authority triggered Aparni aggression. The circumstances do suggest however that the eastern provinces were experiencing a lack of response by the Seleukid central authority and decided that establishing an independent rule would be more beneficial. The fact that this happened some five decades after the foundation of the Seleukid Empire rather speaks for a long-lasting loyalty to the Seleukids that was eventually left unrewarded, not for a latent desire for independence.

Seleukid rule is traceable in Bactria especially at the site of Ai Khanoum, by all indications a Greek *polis* of some political significance, where documents attesting a Greek-language administration involving Iranian individuals have been found.<sup>98</sup> In recent years, new archaeological evidence for an imperial Hellenistic presence has been found, perhaps most spectacularly the fortress of Uzundara in Uzbekistan that appears

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<sup>96</sup> cf. Plischke 2014, 236-39.

<sup>97</sup> cf. Plischke 2014, 226-29.

<sup>98</sup> Recent interpretations of Ai Khanoum include Plischke 2014, 109-17, Mairs 2014 57-101 (with a more detailed and nuanced view) and G. Lecuyot, Ai Khanum, between east and west: A composite architecture, in: Mairs 2021, 539-52.

to have been founded under Antiochos I.<sup>99</sup> It is undeniable that the Seleukid period marked the introduction of Greek as the primary administrative language. This is apparent from administrative documents from the above-mentioned sites,<sup>100</sup> but also from the appearance of Greek inscriptions in a local, evidently Iranian context such as the Oxos temple at Takht-i Sangin.<sup>101</sup>

Taken together, the Achaemenid and Seleukid periods in Bactria mark the introduction of what has been termed an "imperial signature".<sup>102</sup> It is quite possible that the sophistication of administration and planning employed by these two empires was novel to Bactria. Even though a culture such as the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex of the Bronze Age is unthinkable without a certain degree of administrative capabilities,<sup>103</sup> and even if a body such as the Kayanid Empire proposed by W. Nagel and others existed, the sheer territorial dimensions of the Achaemenid and Seleukid Empires were unprecedented. These dimensions required a much more elaborate administration than anything that had been seen before, but they also returned an amount of material resources and manpower that was unlike what Bactria would have encountered before. It is hard to imagine that after profiting from being an integral part of such an empire for over 250 years, the Bactrians would have left it voluntarily, and it is equally hard to imagine that the country would not have been deeply imprinted by its imperial experience. The Seleukids confirmed the independence, or at least the autonomy of Bactria following the *anabasis* of Antiochos III (209-206 BCE),<sup>104</sup> but

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<sup>99</sup> N. Dvurechenskaya, The Hellenistic Fortress of Uzundara. In: Chr. Baumer, M. Novák (eds), Urban Cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids. Learnings and conclusions from new archaeological investigations and discoveries. Proceedings of the First International Congress on Central Asian Archaeology held at the University of Bern, 4–6 February 2016 Wiesbaden 2019, 153-62.

<sup>100</sup> Collected in Rougemont 2012, 214-55.

<sup>101</sup> Collected in Rougemont 2012, 196-99.

<sup>102</sup> On the term cf. Jacobs et al 2017, xi and *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> This is abundantly visible in the glyptics of the culture on which cf. now S. Winkelmann, BMAC Glyptics. Typology, context, function, and background. In: B. Lyonnet, N.A. Dubova (eds), The World of the Oxus Civilization. London/New York, 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Polyb. XI,34,9-10.

this did not mean the imperial legacy vanished. Instead, Bactria itself went on to become the point of origin of two empires: The Graeco-Bactrian expansion to the Indian subcontinent and later, the Kušān Empire.

### **2.2.3. The Graeco-Bactrians and the Hellenistic Far East**

The Graeco-Bactrian kingdom existed for about a century, from its foundation under Diodotos I in c. 250 BCE until it was destroyed by a nomad invasion in c. 140 BCE.<sup>105</sup> In the early 2nd century BCE, the Graeco-Bactrians began to expand south of the Hindukush and into the Indian Subcontinent. By the time the Greeks appeared in the Punjāb, this new empire had probably already split.<sup>106</sup> These two new polities are conventionally termed the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek realms. There appear to have been attempts to reunite both territories, most notably under Eukratides I, who according to Trogus-Justin rose to power in Bactria and went on to expand into India,<sup>107</sup> probably meaning uniting both the Indo-Greek realm and other unknown polities under his power. The same source goes on to narrate that he was murdered by his son soon after,<sup>108</sup> and Greek power in Bactria soon appears to have waned.<sup>109</sup> Numismatists have identified three successors of Eukratidēs I in Bactria with overlapping reigns, Hēlioklēs I, Eukratidēs II and Platōn.<sup>110</sup> Meanwhile, the Indo-Greeks south of the Hindukush once again became independent, beginning a new phase of imperial expansion, although reports that they invaded the Gagnetic Plain under Menander I are probably exaggerated.<sup>111</sup> After Menander's death in c. 130 BCE, the Indo-Greek realm became

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<sup>105</sup> Mairs 2021 constitutes the definitive reference work on what is termed the Hellenistic Far East.

<sup>106</sup> cf. Coloru 2009, 195-99.

<sup>107</sup> Iust. XLI.6.4.

<sup>108</sup> Iust. XLI.6.5.

<sup>109</sup> Iust. XLI.6.2-4.

<sup>110</sup> Coloru 2009, 236-39.

<sup>111</sup> Strab. XI.11.1 and XV.1.27. cf. Cribb 2021, 653, who suggests that the reports are in fact referring to the Kušān expansion "as recorded in the Rabatak Inscription". However, this is impossible for Strabo's account, as he wrote in the Augustaeon and early Tiberian periods, long before the expansion referred to



increasingly divided into smaller reigns and the political dominance the Greeks had once held disappeared.<sup>112</sup>

In recent years, the question of Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek identity has been raised and analysed to some extent.<sup>113</sup> There is no doubt, on the one hand, that the Indo-Greeks gradually adopted a more and more Indian identity beginning with the introduction of bilingual Greek and Gandhārī coin legends under Pantaleon and Agathokles. The process is only very rarely visible due to the lack of sources, but the inscription on the Hēliodōros Pillar from Besnagar, in which Hēliodōros, the Greek ambassador (*yonadūtena*) of Antialkidas proclaims his Vāsudeva worship, is a spectacular example for the degree of cultural assimilation taking place.<sup>114</sup>

The process of cultural development is even less visible in Greek and post-Greek Bactria, although some questions of Greek identity appear in the Kušān period. It is therefore important to raise the question of the longevity of Greek culture and heritage in order to assess Hellenistic influence on the Kušān Empire. What becomes increasingly clear from the progress of archaeological research is that the independence of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom did not mark a break in the administrative and cultural patterns. It is observed in sites such as Aī Khanoum, Takht-i Sangin and Uzundara that sites founded and maintained in an imperial Seleukid context remained in use throughout the Graeco-Bactrian period.<sup>115</sup> If such sites were destroyed or abandoned, it was after the nomad invasions that occurred in the reigns of the last Graeco-Bactrian

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in the Rabatak Inscription or even that of Kaniška's predecessors. Note however that Strabo himself is sceptical about reports of Menander campaigning east of the Punjāb (XI.11.1). The point made in Cribb 2021, 653 that none of Menander's coins have been found east of Taxila is important.

<sup>112</sup> This can be observed almost exclusively by way of numismatics, on which cf. Boppearachchi 1991.

<sup>113</sup> Notably Mairs 2014, but cf. now contributions in Mairs 2021.

<sup>114</sup> cf. Mairs 2014, 117-133, also Härtel 1987, 576-77.

<sup>115</sup> cf. the relevant chapters (10-16) in Mairs 2021.

kings. However, there is enough evidence to show continuity in urban sites from the Hellenistic to the Kušān periods.<sup>116</sup>

#### 2.2.4. The Yuezhi Period in Bactria

The end of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom at the hand of invading nomads is surprisingly well-attested in the literary sources. The most detailed account is found in Chinese narratives of the migration of a group known as the Da Yuezhi (Great Yuezhi).<sup>117</sup> The Chinese identify the Kušān Empire as having been founded by a group of these Yuezhi some time after they settled in Bactria. An important note further refers to the nomad group of the Sai who were displaced by the Yuezhi during their migration process and moved south, through what may be the Karakorum Pass, thus into Kashmir.<sup>118</sup> The Sai are identified as a group of Saka.<sup>119</sup>

This same migratory movement is referred to in two Classical texts. Strabo notes that the Ἰασιοί, Πασσιανοί, Τόχαροι and Σακαραῦκαι conquered Bactria from the Greeks.<sup>120</sup> Trogus-Iustin note that the Scythian tribes of the Saraucae and Asiani occupied Bactria and Sogdiana<sup>121</sup> and later that the Arsakids under Artabanos I were at war with the Tocharii.<sup>122</sup> There can be no doubt that the Σακαραῦκαι/Saraucae refer to Saka groups, while the identity of the Ἰασιοί/Asiani and Πασσιανοί is less clear. The Τόχαροι/Tocharii are commonly identified with the Yuezhi.<sup>123</sup> Recently there have been attempts to trace the same migratory route narrated by Chinese sources for the Da Yuezhi in Central

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<sup>116</sup> e.g. in Dil'berdžin (Staviskij 1986, 268) and Termez (Staviskij 1986, 277).

<sup>117</sup> These sources have been assembled to a narrative by Benjamin 2007, although his conclusions often disagree with other scholarship and the author himself admits that he only worked with translations. A comprehensive collection of Chinese and other texts and translations dealing with the Yuezhi migration and rule in Bactria with research notes is found in Falk 2015a, 30-85.

<sup>118</sup> Falk 2015a, 45-46 (§019).

<sup>119</sup> Hill 2015/II, 261-69.

<sup>120</sup> Strab. XI,8,2.

<sup>121</sup> Iust. 41, prol.

<sup>122</sup> Iust. 42,2.

<sup>123</sup> cf. Hill 2015/II, 117-18 for a brief summary of the debate (and a sceptical conclusion).

Asian toponyms recorded by Ptolemy that seem in various ways to contain the name of the Τόχαροι.<sup>124</sup> Further arguments in favour of this identification include the use of the name Τοχοαρστανο for Bactria as early as the reign of Kaniška I<sup>125</sup> and the local name Tōkrī Tīlā for the site of the Māt *devakula* that seems to refer to the Tocharian name.<sup>126</sup> If the fact of such a cataclysmic nomad invasion in Bactria is clearly attested, the details remain elusive. It is generally believed that there were several phases or waves of invasion with differing effects. R.C. Senior reconstructed three distinct Saka migrations or migration routes between the Issik-Kul region, where the Yuezhi supposedly displaced the Sai, and the greater Indus Valley region where they eventually settled down.<sup>127</sup> According to this reconstruction, the groups first split in the Ferghana Valley from where one group migrated through the Karakorum and Pamir ranges, ending up in Kashmir and Taxila. Senior suggests the western branch of this migration through the Pamir may have been responsible for the destruction of Aī Khanoum that is archaeologically visible.<sup>128</sup> This Saka group then manifested itself in the coinage of Mauēs. A second group moved through Sogdiana and Margiana to Drangiana and Arachosia where it settled down and founded the Indo-Parthian kingdom. It is this group that gave the historical region of Drangiana its new name, Sakastan (Sīstān). It would go on to expand into the Indus Valley where it would later be displaced by the Kušān. A third group split from this Indo-Parthian group while leaving Sogdiana and moving into Bactria, thus constituting the Saka nomads that destroyed the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, then moving across the Hindukush and up to Peshawar, manifesting itself in

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<sup>124</sup> Falk 2015a, 48-50 (§022) with the map on p. 46, Fig. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Attested in NSP 4.

<sup>126</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 140.

<sup>127</sup> Senior 2001/I, 7-14.

<sup>128</sup> Less so in the text (*Op. cit.*, 11) but the map on p. 13 shows this branch touching the city.

the Vonōnid coinage. The Mauēs and Vonōnēs groups (or ‘clans’) were then later united by king Azēs.<sup>129</sup>

If this scenario is correct, it would mean the Yuezhi/Tocharians(?) followed soon after, perhaps even driving the Saka before them. The destruction of Ai Khanoum is typically considered to be directly connected with the end of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, although its destruction is often considered to be the result of inner-Bactrian fighting rather than the nomad invasion.<sup>130</sup> Senior seems to leave this question open, suggesting that it may have been either the “Mauēs” or “Vonōnēs” Saka group who were responsible. The date of this event commonly argued for is 145 BCE.<sup>131</sup> What is of greater importance however is that the Chinese ambassador Zhang Qian encountered the Yuezhi settling in and around northern Bactria in 121 BCE.<sup>132</sup>

At some later point, the Yuezhi split into five distinct principalities ruled by *yabghus* (*xihou* in Chinese sources). The *Hou Han Shu* directly states that they conquered the kingdom of Daxia and split it up into five realms. This kingdom of Daxia was evidently the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom.<sup>133</sup> The principalities are called Xiumi with the capital Hemo, Shuangmi with a homonymous capital, Guishuang with the capital Huazo, Xidun with the capital Bomao and Dumis with the capitals Gaofu and Dumis.<sup>134</sup>

The locations of the Yuezhi principalities are difficult to establish because of the problems involving the identification of the Chinese geographical names.<sup>135</sup> Grenet 2006 proposes to locate Xiumi in Karategin in the Vakhsh valley, Shuangmi in Hisar west of Dushanbe, Guishuang in the lower Vakhsh valley, Xidun in the Kafirnigan

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<sup>129</sup> *Op. cit.*, 14.

<sup>130</sup> Posch 1995, 96. For a detailed discussion of the evidence and an affirmative yet more critical conclusion, cf. Mairs 2014, 171-74.

<sup>131</sup> J. Cribb *apud* Falk 2015a, 47, lists a series of strong arguments against this date.

<sup>132</sup> Falk 2015a, 63-67 (§§036-039).

<sup>133</sup> Hill 2015/II, 133-61.

<sup>134</sup> HHS 88/118.9a-9b (2921), cf. Falk 2015, 70-74 and Hill 2015/1, 28-29.

<sup>135</sup> The contributions trying to identify the principalities before Grenet 2006 are collected in Hill 2015/1, 329-61- Grenet 2006 is briefly summarised with critical remarks in Falk 2015a, 75-78.

valley, and Dumi beyond the lower Surkhan-Darya, the town of Dumi being identical with Termez, but rejecting the identification of Gaofu with Kabul.<sup>136</sup>

Falk 2018 does not follow in locating the principalities in the narrow geographical margin of northern Bactria, but instead considers a much bigger territory. Based on a critical examination of the Chinese toponyms, it is tentatively proposed to locate the *yabghu* of Xiumi in Roshan, Shuangmi in Chitral, Guishuang further to the north in Sogdiana, the *yabghu* of Xidun in Balkh or Bamiyan and Dumi further to the west. It is believed that such a wider geographical distribution along the trade routes linking South Asia and China is a more satisfactory explanation for the apparent wealth and power that allowed Kujula Kadphises to later sustain a long war of conquest and build the foundations of a great empire while also being able to support the Han emperor in his military campaigns in Xinjiang.<sup>137</sup>

The *yabghu* phase is hard to trace outside the literary sources. Numismatically, it is at first defined by the issue of imitation coins of the last Graeco-Bactrian monarchs, Hēlioklēs and Eukratidēs.<sup>138</sup> There are also rare issues with names of local rulers and helmeted busts on the obverse derived from portraits of late Graeco-Bactrian rulers. These coins bear the names of Sapadbizes/Sapalbizes, Agesiles/Arseiles, Pabes and Pseigacharis.<sup>139</sup> A unique coin from the Mir Zakah II hoard minted in the name of a Nastēn, son of Xatran may be added to this, although its context is entirely obscure.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Op. cit.*, 332-36.

<sup>137</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33-34.

<sup>138</sup> Maps of the distribution of these coinages can be found in Falk 2015a, 75-76.

<sup>139</sup> cf. Rtveldze 1993/94 for a study of these coins, but for newer readings and interpretations F. Michetti, *Antroponimi battriani sulla monetazione pre-kušānide. Tre proposte di etimologia. Parthica 25 (2023), 103-25.*

<sup>140</sup> O. Boppearachchi, *Naštēn, a hitherto unknown Iranian ruler in India.* In: FS Hirayama, 67-74 (reprinted in Boppearachchi 2015/I, 520-27). Stylistic considerations lead the coin to be dated to c. 50 BCE-30 CE, the presence of a Kharoṣṭhī *akṣara* however suggests that the coin was not minted in Bactria.

The necropolis of Tilya Tepe is also typically associated with this period of Bactrian history.<sup>141</sup>

The Yuezhi period of Bactria in general is very poorly known.<sup>142</sup> However, it is clear that the unity of Bactria disintegrated in the course of the nomad invasions and initially, the Da Yuezhi existed alongside a number of autonomous cities, most likely in southern Bactria.<sup>143</sup> The situation may resemble that indicated by the Sogdian inscriptions of Kultobe, tentatively dated to the period before the second half of the third century CE, that also suggest the existence of autonomous city states without an overlord.<sup>144</sup> Such city states would however soon have been integrated into Yuezhi rule.<sup>145</sup>

It seems clear enough that the Yuezhi succeeded the Graeco-Bactrian kings in very close chronological proximity. It is not clear if the kingdom was destroyed in a first invasion wave of Saka nomads followed by the Yuezhi or if the Yuezhi themselves destroyed the kingdom. However, even if the former is the case, the Yuezhi appeared not much later, the transition period from Graeco-Bactrian to Yuezhi rule likely did not span much more than a decade.<sup>146</sup> The memory of a Hellenistic kingdom in Bactria was still fresh at this time and the one visible document from this time, the coinage, represents a direct connection to the Greek rule.<sup>147</sup> Later, the Kušān Empire would

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<sup>141</sup> Rtveldze 1993/94, 92-93.

<sup>142</sup> Despite the title, Posch 1995 is only partly concerned with this period and provides very little material for study.

<sup>143</sup> Falk 2015a, 65 (§037).

<sup>144</sup> Sims-Williams/Grenet 2006, 106-07.

<sup>145</sup> Falk 2015a, 67 (§039).

<sup>146</sup> The two chronological markers are the destruction of Ai Khanum in c. 145/40 BCE discussed above and the embassy of Zhang Qian at the Yuezhi court in 121 BCE (Falk 2015a, §036). It should not be ignored that the Yuezhi are in this period never described as living south of the Oxos (i.e., occupying the territory of Ai Khanoum), and with increasing frequency, scholars are pointing out that the occupation of Ai Khanoum did not end with the military conquest, cf. most recently Martinez-Sève in Mairs 2021, 224.

<sup>147</sup> The coinage in question is imitation coinage of the last Greek kings in Bactria, Eukratidēs I and especially Hēlioklēs I, cf. Falk 2015a, 75-76.

demonstrate that many ideas of Graeco-Bactrian kingship survived this transition period and still influenced the idea of legitimate reign.

### 2.2.5. Provincial Gandhāra

Gandhāra is featured in the earliest Old Persian *dahyāva* list in DB §6 as *Gandāra*.<sup>148</sup>

This indicates that the territory was already conquered by Cyrus in the course of his eastward expansion. Just how far this expansion went is unclear, as historically, Gandhāra encompassed the entire territory from the Kabul Valley, Peshawar, Mohmand, Swat, Bajaur, Baner and part of Kohat.<sup>149</sup> The Elamite and Babylonian versions of DB use *[pa-ru-ba-ra-e]-sa-na* and *pa-ar-ú-pa-ra-e-sa-an-na* respectively where the Old Persian reads *Gandāra*.<sup>150</sup> This reflects the name *Paropamisadai* (and variations thereof) found in Classical authors to denote the mountain tribes living in the Paropamisos (Hindukush).<sup>151</sup> Herodotus does not know this name and instead speaks of the Γανδάριοι in his *nomoi* list. (III,93,3). Later Elamite and Babylonian versions of the *dahyāva* lists use variants of the name *Gandhāra*.

To further add to this confusion, DB §45 locates a fortress called Kāpišakāniš in Arachosia. This place has been identified with Kāpiša north of Kabul based on the first element Kāpiša- of what is taken to be a compounded name.<sup>152</sup> Supposing there was not “more than one place called Kāpiša”,<sup>153</sup> it was historically located in Paropamisadai.<sup>154</sup> There is thus no way of knowing for certain which territories were included in the Gandāra of DB §6.

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<sup>148</sup> Schmitt 2009, 39.

<sup>149</sup> Jansen 2009, 27.

<sup>150</sup> Weissbach 1911, 12-13.

<sup>151</sup> A. Herrmann, Paropamisadai. RE 36.3 (1949), 1778.

<sup>152</sup> cf. Vogelsang 1992, 127 w. fn. 26 for references.

<sup>153</sup> Vogelsang 1992, 127, fn. 26.

<sup>154</sup> Ptol. Geogr. VI.18.4.

Leaving this problem aside, there is no doubt that the area known to modern historians as Gandhāra was part of the Achaemenid Empire at least from the reign of Darius I onward. The *dahyāva* lists do not allow for any other conclusion, since the territories of 𐎠𐎲𐎠𐎫𐎧𐎺𐎠 (Sattagydia) and Hinduš (India), which feature in most subsequent lists,<sup>155</sup> could not have been held without the control of Gandhāra. Furthermore, the Achaemenid inscriptions make it clear that Gandāra was a *dahyu*- of same rank not only as the other *dahyāva* of the subcontinent, but also as such territories as Bactria, Babylonia or Egypt.

In eastern Gandhāra,<sup>156</sup> Achaemenid presence is attested by way of pottery in Taxila,<sup>157</sup> Chārsaḍḍa,<sup>158</sup> and in the Swāt Valley.<sup>159</sup> More important however are other traces of the “imperial signature” of the Achaemenids determined by Callieri 2004 in the entirety of Gandhāra: The silver punch-marked coinage from Taxila, the use of Aramaic at Taxila, Kandahār and Hadda and finally the “Greco-Persian” seals used in north-western India.<sup>160</sup> These factors indicate that there was Achaemenid rule and legacy in eastern Gandhāra even if it is not visible in the sources of Alexander's campaigns in the territory.<sup>161</sup>

The status of Gandhāra in the Alexander historians is ambiguous. There is no mention of a satrap of Gandhāra, but Arrian (Anab. V,28,6) mentions that Alexander made Nikanōr satrap of the lands west of the Indus.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> For an overview cf. Briant 2002, 173.

<sup>156</sup> For Achaemenid sites in western Gandhāra (i.e., in what is now Afghanistan) cf. Ball 2019, Map 5.

<sup>157</sup> Dani 1986, 41.

<sup>158</sup> So according to Vogelsang 1987, 185; Wheeler 1962, 40 (his citation) seems to date the corresponding pottery type VI to the Indo-Greek period through the find of a coin of Menander.

<sup>159</sup> Müller-Karpe 1983, 17, 20, 71 for Balambat, Stacul/Tusa 1977, 185-89 (based on the same pottery analysis as in the above footnote in Vogelsang 1987) for Aligrāma.

<sup>160</sup> *Op. cit.*, 13; reviewed by Henkelman 2017, 179-80.

<sup>161</sup> Henkelman 2017, 174-86.

<sup>162</sup> It is not clear why Klinkott 2000, 79 separates this satrapy (which, to be sure, may well have also been Sattagydia) from Gandhāra and fuses the latter with Drangiana and Arachosia under the satraps Barsaentes (Achaemenid) and Menon (Macedonian). The corresponding sources (Arr. Anab. III,21,1; 28,5; Curt. VI,6,36; VII,3,5; IX,10,20) do not allow for such a conclusion.



Such absence of evidence does not necessarily mean that Achaemenid rule over the Indus Valley including eastern Gandhāra had eroded by the time of Darius III. The lack of a Persian satrap may have to do with the diplomatic correspondence Alexander entertained with Taxila before his invasion.<sup>163</sup> If a satrap had been overthrown by local élites before Alexander's appearance in Taxila (326 BCE), it may perhaps not be surprising that Achaemenid structures are not so visible in the literary sources.<sup>164</sup> It will however be argued in chapter 7.6.3. that the presence of an abundance of Iranian titles in the epigraphic record of Kušān Gandhāra and other Indian territories is not due to the introduction of a homogeneous Kušān administration, but instead may well represent an inheritance from the Achaemenid period. The provincialisation of Gandhāra and neighbouring territories in the Indus Valley by the Achaemenids should not be in doubt, and here, the origin of an imperial administrative tradition is found that was still in existence in the Kušān period.

This is not a contradiction to the political picture that presented itself to Alexander's army. The whole Indus Valley seems to have been fragmented into a large array of rivalling political entities. How this played out in the Achaemenid period is unknown, although it may be speculated that the role of the Achaemenid satraps in these territories may have included the mediation between rivalling local rulers. With the collapse of Achaemenid power, the conflicts broke out and Alexander got involved in one such struggle between Taxila and the kingdom of Poros which culminated in the Battle of the Hydaspes.

Opinions differ on whether the Indian provinces were ever an integral part of Alexander's empire, just as there does not seem to be a consensus towards the question

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<sup>163</sup> Arrian, *Anab.* IV,22,6.

<sup>164</sup> cf. the statement by H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (*AchHist* IV, 263): “when one decides to look from the bottom, it is often hard to see the [Achaemenid] empire”.

if Macedonian rule was still upheld at the time of his death.<sup>165</sup> This issue is of little importance here, because either way a disintegration of imperial rule over Gandhāra can be observed in the following years that seem to have been taken as an invitation to expansion by the rising Maurya Empire under Chandragupta. Seleukos I ceded all claims to the territories south of the Hindukush to the Maurya probably in 304/03 BCE.<sup>166</sup> As a result, all of Gandhāra together with neighbouring territories was once more an integral imperial province, as a number of Aśokan inscriptions testify.<sup>167</sup>

The Maurya Empire had collapsed by 205 BCE. Following his siege and peace at Bactra, Antiochos III encountered a ruler named Sophagasēnos whom Polybios (XI,34,11) calls “king of the Indians” (βασιλέα τῶν Ἰνδῶν). He was clearly no Maurya emperor and there is no other record of him. Most historians seem to locate this meeting in Arachosia,<sup>168</sup> and it is frequently argued that Sophagasēnos was the son of Virasēna, a local ruler of Gandhāra.<sup>169</sup>

The Indo-Greeks appear in Gandhāra under the rule of Agathokles and Pantaleon, as the distribution of the coinage suggests.<sup>170</sup> These kings also introduce the first bilingual Greek-Gandhārī coin legends. Agathokles is also the first king to feature Buddhist iconography on his coins and both kings include images of a standing lion on some of their reverses, which would later be adopted by the Indo-Scythians and eventually also featured on Yuezhi coins with a legend identifying the figure as the goddess Nanaia.

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<sup>165</sup> Schober 1981, 90-91 dates the end of Macedonian rule in India to 315 BCE due to the mention of the satrapies in the Triparadeisos conference (cf. Klinkott 2000, 68-69).

<sup>166</sup> On the dating cf. Plischke 2014, 178-80.

<sup>167</sup> For a general overview with exhaustive literature cf. Falk 2006a on Mansehra (pp. 127-29), Shahbazgarhi (132-35), and pp. 241-53 for "Greek and Aramaic Edict Sites" in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Kandahar, Laghman, Pul-i Darunta, Taxila).

<sup>168</sup> Schmitt 1964, 92; Lerner 1999, 52.

<sup>169</sup> So Schmitt 1964, 92 with reference to Narain 1957, 8, Macdonald 1935, 442 and Thomas 1935, 512; the latter bases this on Buddhist tradition, on which cf. Lamotte 1988, 216-18; also *op. cit.*, 260: “Should the Vṛsasena of the Buddhist list or the Vīrasena or Tāranātha be identified with the Sophagasenus (Skt. Subhāgasena) (...)?”

<sup>170</sup> Boppearachchi 1991, 58-59. *Ibid* believes the kings ruled simultaneously, a point that cannot be discussed here.

Indo-Greek coins are attested in Gandhāra, specifically in Taxila, until the reigns of Hermaios, Archebios and Tēlephos, which seem to have been contemporaneous with each other and with the reign of the Indo-Scythian king Mauēs. The role of Taxila is also indicated by the Hēliodōros Pillar from Besnagar, where it is mentioned as the seat of king Antialkidas. The transition of power from the Indo-Greeks to Mauēs, whichever way it happened, is dated by Bopearachchi 1991 to c. 80 BCE.<sup>171</sup> Afterwards, Indo-Greek coinage is still found east of Gandhāra in the Punjāb issued by six or seven sovereigns until the entire region came under the control of the Azids and Kṣatrapas.<sup>172</sup> If anything, these ephemeral Indo-Greek kings show that the north-west of the subcontinent was politically fragmented in this period. Up to three Indo-Greek monarchs reigned simultaneously in different areas.<sup>173</sup> If Gandhāra was ever a province in an Indo-Greek empire, it was so in the early days of their expansion that culminated in the reign of Eukratidēs I. Afterwards, perhaps with the exception of the reign of Philoxenos, it was the home of smaller Indo-Greek realms.

This situation remained largely the same in the subsequent periods, although there was a tendency to again form larger imperial bodies under the Indo-Scythians under Mauēs and the Azids. These formations never lasted for very long however, even though attempts at the creation of an "imperial signature" were undertaken, as e.g., the introduction of a dynastic era of Azēs shows. It is also in this context that the first *kṣatrapa* coinage appears, indicating that there was an overarching imperial administration with provinces ruled by satraps. With the lack of sources, it is hard to

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<sup>171</sup> *Op. cit.*, 126.

<sup>172</sup> Bopearachchi 1991, 125-41.

<sup>173</sup> The reconstruction of Bopearachchi 1991 is best illustrated in the chart on p. 453, although Bopearachchi 1998 provides some important updates.

determine where exactly this system originated, although the form *kṣatrapa* is most likely an inheritance from the Achaemenid period.<sup>174</sup>

Taxila also seems to have been the seat of the Indo-Parthians under Gondophares, and in any case, Gandhāra was a stronghold of their power. This is indicated by the coinage, which also shows that even when Taxila was taken by Kujula Kadphises, Peshawar was not.<sup>175</sup> The “imperial” character of Indo-Parthian rule is however much more difficult to determine. The Indo-Parthians certainly had imperial ambitions, as the titulature of the sovereigns found on their coinage indicates. However, the *Periplus Maris Erythraeis* (PME) suggests that at least in Sindh, any attempt at establishing imperial authority failed due to the infighting of Parthian aristocrats.<sup>176</sup>

In Gandhāra itself, the early Kuṣān period is also marked by the emergence of minor dynastic rule, exemplified by the Apracarājas and the Oḍirajas.<sup>177</sup> In the latter case, their dependence on the Kuṣān is made explicit in the Senavarma Inscription.<sup>178</sup> Both dynasties seem to predate Kuṣān domination, and their attestation does not last long into the Kuṣān period, although this may be due to archaeological chance.

The influence the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians had on the emerging Kuṣān Empire should not be underestimated. The Kuṣān used the Indo-Greek era in their time-keeping and the titulature established in the early Kuṣān period suggests that the Indo-Parthians in particular were seen as rivals on the same level as the Kuṣān at first. Both points will be discussed in detail below. However, it cannot be said for

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<sup>174</sup> R. Schmitt, *Der Titel "Satrap"*, in: A.M. Davies, W. Meid (eds), *Studies in Greek, Italic and Indo-European Linguistics*. Offered to Leonard R. Palmer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday June 5 1976. Innsbruck 1976, 373-390, esp. 384-85, and 388 on the explanation of the form, which is not Achaemenid Old Persian *per se* (which is attested as *xšaçaṣpāvan*), note *ibid*, fn. 81 on the literature explaining it as an Achaemenid inheritance nevertheless.

<sup>175</sup> cf. Falk 2018, 34.

<sup>176</sup> PME §38.

<sup>177</sup> For a survey of sources on these two dynasties cf. R. Salomon, *Dynastic and Institutional Connections in the Pre- and Early Kuṣāṇa Period: New Manuscript and Epigraphic Evidence*. In: Srinivasan 2007, 267-86.

<sup>178</sup> On this inscription in particular cf. von Hinüber 2003.

certain how much in terms of political and administrative structures the Kušān inherited from these predecessors, and a fundamental difference needs to be emphasised: The Kušān succeeded in creating a lasting empire in the territories of Bactria and Gandhāra where these preceding dynasties failed to do so.

### 2.2.6. Imperial India

It is hardly a coincidence that the foundation of the Maurya Empire by Chandragupta followed shortly after the fall of the Achaemenids, the death of Alexander and the collapse of imperial authority at the western fringes of the Indian Subcontinent. The exact causality however is not yet understood.<sup>179</sup> However, influence from the Achaemenids and perhaps the Macedonians is undeniable,<sup>180</sup> as the Maurya controlled a considerable number of territories that had once been Achaemenid. In 303 BCE, Seleukos I ceded all territories south and east of the Hindukush to Chandragupta, confirming Maurya rule over the former Achaemenid *dahyāva* of *Ṭataguš*, *Gandāra*, *Hinduš*, *Maka* (Gedrosia?) and *Arachosia*.<sup>181</sup>

While there is no preserved administrative record as in Iran and Bactria, the “imperial signature” of the Maurya is abundantly visible in the Aśokan edicts, a series of inscriptions narrating the emperor's conversion to Buddhism and marking Maurya dominance over a vast geographical space.<sup>182</sup> With regard to the formerly Achaemenid territories it is particularly interesting that the inscriptions found in Kandahar were written in Greek and an Iranian language in a highly ideographic Aramaic script.<sup>183</sup> The

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<sup>179</sup> cf. the lucid narration of Maurya history and its dynamics in Thapar 2002, 174-208, which however cannot provide a reason for the inciting of Maurya expansion and dominance in the first place.

<sup>180</sup> One artistic influence that has been much discussed are the Aśokan pillars which are commonly thought to have been designed based on Achaemenid models, cf. Falk 2006a, 139-49 for a detailed discussion. cf. Jacobs 2016, 69-71 for a critical view on Achaemenid influence on Maurya architecture.

<sup>181</sup> Strabo XV.2.9., App. Syr. LV.282. cf. also Mehl 1986, 176-79 and Plischke 2014, 181-87.

<sup>182</sup> The archaeological sites are collected in Falk 2006a.

<sup>183</sup> Schmitt 1994, 177-79.

latter confirms a lasting “imperial signature” of the Achaemenids by way of imperial Maurya documents, the former is one of several epigraphic attestations of a prevailing Greek influence in Central Asia in the latter half of the 3rd century BCE.

The imperial legacy of the Maurya is, at least to a certain extent, preserved in the *Arthaśāstra*, a text traditionally attributed to Kautilya, the chief mentor and advisor of Chandragupta and his son Bindusara.<sup>184</sup> This text probably will have had bearing on Kuśān rule in India, but its involvement is outside the scope of the present work.

The presence of Maurya legacy in the Kuśān Empire should not be underestimated, even if it will oftentimes no longer be visible. The most important connection between the Maurya and Kuśān is the origin of Kharoṣṭhī and Brahmī epigraphic tradition under the Maurya that remains unbroken into and beyond the Kuśān period. Moreover, the Kuśān inherited Buddhist, Jaina and Brahman thought and culture that dated back to the Maurya and before that. As the first native empire on Indian soil, and one that was particularly open to western contact and influence,<sup>185</sup> the Maurya will have established and shaped imperial paradigms that must still have been alive in the Kuśān period, although the details are now elusive.

The Maurya Empire fell into decline after the reign of Aśoka and by the time of the *anabasis* of Antiochos III, any Maurya control over the Punjāb had vanished. By c. 180 BCE, the Maurya had been deposed by the Śuṅga, whose reign was plagued by constant wars that did not seem to have allowed them to establish their own imperial voice.<sup>186</sup> However, there also seems to have been a certain rejection of Maurya traditions and

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<sup>184</sup> For a critical discussion of the attribution, cf. now M. McClish, *The history of the Arthaśāstra. Sovereignty and sacred law in ancient India*. Cambridge 2019, esp. pp. 83-110.

<sup>185</sup> cf. Falk 2006b.

<sup>186</sup> An exception may be a markedly anti-Buddhist policy that can be observed archaeologically in the decline of Buddhist monuments in the Śuṅga period, cf. Thapar 2002, 210.

influences from the west.<sup>187</sup> In the west of the former Maurya Empire, the disappearance of imperial influence led to the re-establishment of autonomous local tribal and oligarchic structures mostly in the shape of the rule of *kṣatriya* clans.<sup>188</sup> These are particularly well established in Mathurā and Sāketa (Ayodhyā), where the sequence of a Deva (only in Sāketa), Datta and Mitra group is identified, mostly based on the coinage.<sup>189</sup> As already indicated above, the Indus Valley is marked at this time by a political fragmentation caused by the dissolution of Menander's Indo-Greek Empire and the invasion of Saka nomads. The latter eventually expanded into the Gangetic plain beginning at some point in the first century BCE. Here, two major polities appear, the realm of the Northern Kṣatrapas extending from the Punjāb to Mathurā and that of the Western Kṣatrapas, who seem to have extended from Taxila further south to Ujjain and along the west coast of peninsular India from the early 1st century CE on.<sup>190</sup> It is interesting that the imperial idea of these emerging Saka dynasties was based on their role as governors (*kṣatrapas*, satraps) rather than, apparently, the foundation of a new monarchic tradition. This stands in contrast to the Scythian dynasties of the Punjāb which emphasise an overarching claim to power from the titulature of their monarchs alone. Mauēs, the Vonōnids, the Azids and the Gondopharids all claim the title King of Kings, whereas even a powerful *kṣatrapa* such as Rajuvula with his abundant coinage does not claim to be more than Great Satrap (*Maha Chatrapa*).<sup>191</sup> The nominal overlords to these Kṣatrapas seem at first to have been Mauēs and the Azids,<sup>192</sup> but it appears possible that the Western Kṣatrapas did not take an imperial claim even after

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<sup>187</sup> Falk 2006b discusses various examples in which the Śuṅga appear as an “indigenous” dynasty versus the “foreign-inspired” Maurya and the foreign dynasties of the Saka, Kṣatrapa and Kuśān.

<sup>188</sup> Thapar 2002, 211.

<sup>189</sup> Archaeological evidence for Mitra and Datta rule in the Mathurā district is available from Sonkh, cf. Härtel 2007, 320-25. For Mitra, Deva and Datta rule in Sāketa (Ayodhya), cf. H. Bakker, *Ayodhyā/I*. Groningen 1986, 20-24. For the Mitras in Kauśambī cf. Sharma 1969/I, 18-19.

<sup>190</sup> For an overview and discussion of the evidence cf. Salomon 1974.

<sup>191</sup> A term he may have coined himself, cf. Salomon 1974, 17.

<sup>192</sup> Salomon 1974, 16.

the Azid and Gondopharid reign vanished, as that would have put them at odds with the emerging Kušān.<sup>193</sup> The independence of the Western Kṣatrapas on the other hand seems to have been put on display by the introduction of the Śaka Era.<sup>194</sup>

As with the Maurya, the impact Indo-Scythian legacy had on the Kušān Empire should not be underestimated, but since the Saka and the Yuezhi are closely related and seemed to have appeared in South Asia in the same migratory wave, it is difficult to determine which “nomad” or “Saka” elements in the Kušān Empire were Kušān and which were Indo-Scythian. This is a problem for determining the impact of Kušān rule on the Indian Subcontinent. However, since Bactria has always been Yuezhi territory in the time of migration, it is not of so much concern when evaluating Kušān rule there.

The decline of Kušān rule in India is followed by the rise of the Gupta Empire, a period of unprecedented cultural and artistic blossoming in India. It is hard to imagine that the Kušān did not have any direct or indirect influence here, and the Gupta must have inherited Kušān structures on their former territories. However, this is a question that must be left to the field of Indology.

### **2.2.7. Western Iran**

The reciprocal nature of relations between Bactria and western Iran during the Achaemenid period has recently been analysed by Henkelman 2018. The presence of Bactrians in Persepolis is attested in the Persepolis Fortification Archive and the author draws the general conclusion that their various roles “unmistakably show their full inclusion in the overall social structures the Persians maintained, expanded and adapted

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<sup>193</sup> Salomon 1974, 17 considers it “fairly likely, that some of the kṣatrapas here considered as “Śakas” were actually associated in a subordinate position with the earlier Kušānas”. It is however later discussed that the title (*mahā*)*kṣatrapa* “was felt to be sufficient to identify the contemporaneous ruler of the main dynasty of Western India” (p. 21), so that there was no longer even a nominal overlord.

<sup>194</sup> cf. Falk 2012, 132 for a brief overview of the sovereigns suspected to have introduced it, also chapter 3.4.3. for a discussion on the Śaka Era.



to the imperial context".<sup>195</sup> No comparable material exists for the early Seleukid period. However, a frequently cited Babylonian astronomical diary attests that in 274/73 BCE, the Babylonian satrap received 20 elephants sent from the Bactrian satrap to the Seleukid king (Antiochos I).<sup>196</sup> This shows that the communication lines between Bactria and the west of the Seleukid Empire were stable and that the Bactrian satrap was a reliable subordinate to Antiochos since the elephants were required for his war effort, in other words that Bactria was an integral part of the Seleukid Empire.

The collapse of Seleukid authority in the east, the foundation of the Graeco-Bactrian and Parthian, then Arsakid kingdoms in the mid-3rd century left Bactria isolated from a greater imperial administration. The history of eastern Iran between the independence c. 250 BCE and the *anabasis* of Antiochos III 212-205/4 BCE is obscure, but a few pieces of information are preserved that are of interest here. Initially, it seems as though the satraps Diodotos of Bactria and Andragoras of Parthia were allied in their effort to gain independence from the Seleukids and probably to defend themselves against the Aparni. The Aparni under Arsakes were hostile to both Parthia and Bactria, whether they were still Seleukid satrapies or already independent kingdoms.<sup>197</sup> When Seleukos II undertook his ill-fated campaign against the Arsakids and Bactrians in 236-230 BCE,<sup>198</sup> he faced the allied forces of Arsakes and Diodotos II, son of Diodotos I.<sup>199</sup> It is regrettable that nothing further is known about these early Bactrian-Arsakid interactions, especially as it would probably be expected that the kingdoms were similar

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<sup>195</sup> *Op. cit.*, 243.

<sup>196</sup> Sachs/Hunger 1988, no. -273, p. 344-45. This text is cited in most recent works on the Seleukid Empire, e.g., Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 46-47; Kosmin 2014, 1-2.

<sup>197</sup> Lerner 1999, 13; Overtoom 2020, 81. Trogus-Iustin XLI.4 are explicit that Diodotos I was an enemy to Arsakes.

<sup>198</sup> On the dating cf. Plischke 2014, 237 w. fn. 446.

<sup>199</sup> The death of Diodotos I prior to the campaign of Seleukos II is supported by Lerner 1999, 34 (but contradicted by *ibid.*, 43!), Plischke 2014, 237 and Overtoom 2020, 06; however, Iust. XLI.4.9 does not force a conclusion either way.

in many ways.<sup>200</sup> This alliance does not seem to have existed anymore by the time of the *anabasis* of Antiochos III.<sup>201</sup> The outcome of the *anabasis* as far as it concerns Bactria is instructive on the Seleukid view of the issue. Antiochos confirmed the royal status of Euthydēmos and formed a marriage alliance with Euthydēmos' son Dēmētrios.<sup>202</sup> A similar policy was applied to Xerxēs of Sōphēnē and the Arsakids.<sup>203</sup> To Antiochos, these kingdoms were clearly subjected vassal states,<sup>204</sup> but there can be little doubt that the settlement was regarded more as a treaty or an alliance between two equals by Euthydēmos.<sup>205</sup>

Following the renewed crisis of Seleukid authority after the Peace of Apameia (188 BCE), it can reasonably be inferred that Bactrian-Seleukid relations were effectively no longer existent.<sup>206</sup> Relations between Bactrians and Arsakids on the other hand were hostile, as Strabo and Trogus-Iustin speak of a war between Parthians and Bactrians under Eukratidēs I that ended catastrophically for the latter.<sup>207</sup>

The takeaway from all this is that by the time Graeco-Bactrian rule ended with the Yuezhi invasion, Bactria had not had a functional relationship with western Iran for

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<sup>200</sup> Note the remarks by Plischke 2014, 236 that Arsakes “hatte wohl ein bereits voll organisiertes und strukturiertes Reich von Andragoras übernehmen können”, especially concerning the use of Parthian as a “Lokal- und Reichssprache” and Aramaic and Greek as administrative languages. Plischke does not provide any evidence for this interpretation of the role of the Parthian language so that one is left to speculate if this refers to the administrative *ostraca* from Nisa, which however date to the first century CE (Huysse 2009, 88), or the coin legends with the name or title WHŠW(WR) and Arsakes I.

<sup>201</sup> Lerner 1999, 46, Plischke 2014, 260; Tarn 1997, 74 even infers that the coup of Euthydemos against Diodotos II had to do with this alliance, though in typical fashion provides no evidence other than an assumption: “for the alliance with Parthia cannot have been popular with the Greeks”.

<sup>202</sup> Polyb. XI.34.1-9.

<sup>203</sup> Plischke 2014, 266, 269.

<sup>204</sup> Schmitt 1964, 89-92.

<sup>205</sup> It is tempting to consider Euthydēmos' part of the treaty the defence of the Central Asian frontier against the nomads, but the majority of scholars (Tarn 1997, 82 and lit. in Plischke 2014, 273, fn. 737; Plischke herself is agnostic in this issue) seems to favour the view that the nomad threat mentioned by Polybios XI,34,5 is in fact to be understood, as Tarn puts it, that “Euthydemos threatened to call in the Sacas”, i.e. the nomads were allies of Euthydēmos, but cf. the refutation by Walbank 1967, 313. For diverging views cf e.g. Schmitt 1964, 89.

<sup>206</sup> On Bactria and the Seleukids after Apameia cf. P.F. Mittag, *Antiochos IV. Epiphanes. Eine politische Biographie*. Berlin 2006, 323-26, although it boils down to a simple statement: “Letztlich lässt sich auf der derzeitigen Quellenlage nichts über das seleukidisch-baktrische Verhältnis zur Zeit Antiochos' IV. sagen.”

<sup>207</sup> cf. Overtoom 2020, 155-58 with the sources.

many decades and had not been integrated to a western Iranian imperial context for a century. Any political, cultural, administrative, or economic imprint that the Yuezhi inherited in Bactria that was of western Iranian origin would have been there since the Seleukid or Achaemenid period. Any structural parallels that at this time would have existed between Bactria and the Arsakid Empire, which was now the direct western neighbour of Bactria, would have been caused by the shared imperial heritage and the similarity of both cultures.<sup>208</sup> Arsakid-Yuezhi/Tokharian relations are almost unknown except for a, however important, note by Trogus-Justin (XLII.2.1) that Artabanos I (128-124/3 BCE) waged a war against the Tocharii in the course of which he died after being wounded in the arm. The chronology indicates that this war most likely was in connection with the Yuezhi conquest of Bactria.<sup>209</sup>

It will be discussed below that there is very little evidence for direct Arsakid-Kušān interaction, although this situation has to do with the lack of archaeological and literary record. The same goes for the Indo-Parthian kingdom, which was the direct southern neighbour of the Kušān. It seems to have existed as a vassal state throughout Arsakid history in Sīstān and Arachosia possessing a certain degree of autonomy that is still reflected in Sāsānian sources indicating the realm of a Sagān-šāh in ŠKZ §37, and NPi where Warahrān the Sagān-šāh is illegitimately claiming the Sāsānian throne, whereas a Manichaean text records the conversation between Mani and the Tūrān-šāh.<sup>210</sup>

It seems clear now that following the overthrow of the Arsakids in 224/26 CE, the Sāsānians soon conquered the Kušān Empire as far as Peshawar,<sup>211</sup> thus leaving a remnant of the Kušān Empire in the subcontinent.<sup>212</sup> The exact circumstances are

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<sup>208</sup> It should not be left unremarked here that ancient authors speculated that Arsakes I may have been a Bactrian, cf. Strabo, XI.9.3.

<sup>209</sup> On the sources cf. Falk 2015a, 61-62 (§§033, 034).

<sup>210</sup> Sundermann 1981, 20-24.

<sup>211</sup> ŠKZ §3.

<sup>212</sup> Epigraphically attested cf. chapter 3.2.10.

unknown, although Ṭabarī reports that the Kušān Empire was already subdued under Ardaxšīr I.<sup>213</sup> As the relief at Rag-i Bibi shows, Bactria was definitely under Kušān control under Šābuhr I,<sup>214</sup> as is reaffirmed in ŠKZ and NPi.<sup>215</sup> The Sāsānians apparently had a certain interest in retaining Kušān imperial structures and the Kušānšahr headed by a Kušānšāh, probably a member of the Sāsānian royal house as the use of Sāsānian dynastic names suggests,<sup>216</sup> existed as a vassal state of considerable autonomy. The Kušāno-Sāsānians even had the privilege to issue their own gold coinage.<sup>217</sup> NPi suggests that the Kušānšāh had a very high hierarchical rank among the kings subjected to the Sāsānian emperors, as he is named first in the list.<sup>218</sup>

### 2.2.8. Kommagene

While the history and culture of most of Hellenistic Iran remains obscure, the small kingdom of Kommagene at the upper Euphrates is often discussed for its merging of Iranian and Greek cultural elements that parallels Kušān Bactria in many ways. It is also one of the few territories in which the sources on Iranian religious thought are at

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<sup>213</sup> Tab. I, 820 (Bosworth 1989, 15).

<sup>214</sup> For the iconographic reasons for dating the relief to the reign of Šābuhr I cf. Grenet et al 2007, 257-61. The attribution has recently been contested in K. Maksymiuk, A. Kubik, P. Skupniewicz, *The Rock Relief at Rag-i Bibi: Can it be Considered as Sasanian?* In: Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences et al, (eds), *Ancient and Medieval Cultures of Central Asia (The Formation, Development and Interaction of Urbanized and Cattle-Breeding Societies)*. Proceedings of the international scientific conference dedicated to the 100th birth anniversary of Doktor Nauk in Historical Sciences Anatolii Mandelstam and the 90th birth anniversary of Doktor Nauk in Historical Sciences Igor' N. Khlopin. 10-12 November 2020, St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg 2020, 239-43. The attribution of the relief to the Kušān period suggested here is however equally problematic, as such rock reliefs and depictions of Kušān emperors on horseback (let alone on a royal hunt) are otherwise unknown

<sup>215</sup> ŠKZ §3; NPi §91..

<sup>216</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 198.

<sup>217</sup> The most detailed study on Kušāno-Sāsānian coinage is Cribb 1990, with a more recent overview (with a different sequence) in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 197-201.

<sup>218</sup> While acknowledging the different grouping, Göbl 1993, 52-53 nevertheless believes that the Kušānšāh was of equal rank to the Roman emperor in his relationship to the Sāsānian emperor and takes this as evidence that NPi speaks of the Kušān (specifically Huvīška), not the Kušāno-Sāsānians: "Die Inschrift des Narsē ist durch das intentionelle Verschweigen von Abhängigkeitsverhältnissen umgekehrt ein Beweis für die absolute Souveranität des damaligen Kušānkönigs." It is not proof for anything of the sort however, as long as there is no explicit description of the relationship. If one wanted to take NPi as an argument for Göbl's interpretation of Kušān history, the most that can be said is that it does not decisively disprove it.

least somewhat eloquent in the Hellenistic period. Kommagene existed as an independent kingdom from 163 BCE to 17 CE and again from 38 to 72 CE.<sup>219</sup> It is most significant for being the site of an extensive dynastic cult established by Antiochos I (69-36 BCE) that is archaeologically visible throughout the territory but was centred around a sanctuary designated as a *hierothesion* on the summit of the Nemrud Dağı. The cult is described in detail in several inscriptions of which that on the Nemrud Dağı is the most detailed.<sup>220</sup> The most important element is the worship of a selected pantheon consisting of three syncretistic Greco-Iranian deities (Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollōn-Mithras-Hēlios-Hermēs, Artagnēs-Hērakles-Ares), the deified Kommagenean motherland (Pantropou Kommagēnē) and Antiochos himself, of whom colossal statues were set up in the sanctuary. The cult also included ancestral worship, which is visible in a gallery of relief slabs showing the two lines from which Antiochos saw himself a descendant: His fatherly line of Iranian stock descended ultimately from the Achaemenid Darius I, and his motherly Greek line traced back to Alexander the Great. The Kommagenean cult seems to have been abandoned shortly after the death of Antiochos I and it is easy to dismiss it as a curious footnote of Hellenistic history. However, many serious parallels exist with what is known the dynastic cult of Kušān Bactria. These are too numerous to ignore and indicate that neither cult was created *ex nihilo* and that at the very least, both may have had a common antecedent that is no longer apparent today.

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<sup>219</sup> For a comprehensive presentation cf. J. Wagner (ed), *Gottkönige am Euphrat. Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene*. Mainz 2012<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> cf. Waldmann 1973 for the editions and translations, although the interpretations have found serious criticism in a number of reviews.

### **2.2.9. Rome**

According to the chronology of H. Falk, which is used here, the Kušān Empire flourished simultaneously to the period of the early and high Principate, from the early first to the first half of the third century CE. This means that Kušān history coincided with the apex of Roman imperial power and culture. It is a natural assumption that both empires interacted with each other, considering on the one hand the extensive commercial interest towards India on the part of Roman merchants, and on the other hand that they by all indications had the Arsakid Empire as a mutual adversary.

Despite the abundance of literature on commercial contact between Rome and India, comparatively little attention is paid to the Kušān Empire in many of these studies. This is mainly because literary evidence for Roman-Indian commerce fades at the time of the rise of the Kušān Empire. Archaeological evidence does not step in to take its place, with the notable exceptions of the Begram hoard, which is arguably the most significant find of Roman artefacts in South and Central Asia, mingled with Chinese items. There are however significant problems with its archaeological contextualisation which have only recently been re-evaluated.

The evidence for Roman-Kušān interactions will be discussed in detail in chapter 7.2., particularly concerning the question whether economic and political relations with Rome played any role in the strategy of Kušān expansion and economic politics.

### **2.2.10. The Silk Road**

In recent years, scholars engaged in the discipline of Global History have paid some attention to the Kušān Empire. The main interest, it seems, stems from the location of the empire's urban centres at key junctions of the continental trade networks of Eurasia collectively known as the Silk Roads. Raschke 1978 already noted that the Kušān “are

frequently described as middlemen par excellence: a giant empire whose wealth was based on the silk trade”.<sup>221</sup> Such a commercialist characterisation prevails today. It is the way the Kušān Empire is presented in a recent best-selling book by P. Frankopan,<sup>222</sup> but it is perhaps the most strongly emphasised by Benjamin 2018, where it is argued that “Kushan merchants and officials functioned as important intermediaries in the movement of goods and ideas across Eurasia”,<sup>223</sup> and it is suggested that the Kušān Empire was the key factor in the flourishing of Silk Road trade.<sup>224</sup>

While Benjamin 2018 in particular emphasises that the main historical role of the Kušān lay in the establishment of the Silk Roads as a durable trade network, Falk 2018 by contrast has suggested that the rise of the Kušān was possible primarily because the Yuezhi *yabghus* profited from their position along already established trade routes that connected both sides of the Central Asian mountain ranges. Indeed, the exchange of goods between Bactria, the north-west of the Indian subcontinent, the Tarim Basin, Mongolia, and areas beyond on both sides is archaeologically visible as early as the Neolithic period.<sup>225</sup>

To be sure, no scholar will be so excited about the subject matter to suggest that continental trade came into being out of nowhere in the Kušān period. What is suggested is much rather that the height of Kušān power established an unprecedented imperial peace among territories that had previously not been politically united that allowed for the establishment of institutions and infrastructures which allowed commerce to flourish on an entirely new scale. There is some merit to this idea, since the regions of Bactria, Gandhāra, the Ganga-Yamuna Doāb and the Tarim Basin had

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<sup>221</sup> *Op. cit.*, 639.

<sup>222</sup> P. Frankopan, *The Silk Roads. A New History of the World*. London/New York 2016<sup>2</sup>. Here especially pp. 19 and 23.

<sup>223</sup> *Op. cit.*, 176.

<sup>224</sup> Benjamin 2018, 202 and repeated (almost verbatim) on pp. 279-80.

<sup>225</sup> cf. A. Redlich, *Studien zum Neolithikum Mittelasiens*. Bonn 1982, 348-50.

indeed never been collectively dependent on one central authority. Moreover, the Kušān did issue a large and uniform coinage to an extent that had not been seen before in these territories. Kušān fiscal politics were indeed a revolution, as prior to this, the individual territories had used a wide array of coins that varied significantly in terms of metrology, denomination, issuing authorities and even material.<sup>226</sup> A large and unified coinage allowed for ease of transactions within the empire, and easier convertability with foreign currencies.

Such an interpretation of the Kušān Empire as defined by its commercial role cannot go entirely unwithspoken. Scholars such as W. Ball have recently begun to criticise and deconstruct the Silk Road as an artificial construct by modern historians.<sup>227</sup>

From what can be observed and will be presented in the present work, there was no particular emphasis on commerce in the imperial self-representation of the Kušān, at least not to an extent that suggests a particularly strong perception as it being a pillar of Kušān power. It is true that the Kušān used coins as a representative medium, and it appears that their most visible dynastic monuments were built at busy traffic junctions. This, however, is not in any way extraordinary in the ancient world. The Kušān emperors represented themselves as warriors first and foremost, and while prosperity and material wealth are one of the promises they gave to their subjects by way of the deities depicted on their coin reverses, it would be a stretch to interpret this as an emphasis on trade as a primary political concern.

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<sup>226</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 7.

<sup>227</sup> Benjamin 2018, 5-6 acknowledges this criticism but effectively dismisses it by announcing a study that would not rely “upon some clichéd falsehood” but a careful study of the available sources.



### 2.2.11. The Tarim Basin and China

With the Gansu Corridor as an *Urheimat* of the Yuezhi, the Kušān will likely never have felt as isolated from the region beyond the Karakoram, Pamir, and Tian Shan ranges as modern (western) intuition might suggest. This is worth pointing out because before the nomad migrations of the second century BCE, these mountain ranges were very much a barrier for political expansion and have throughout history more commonly marked political borders than not. The Kušān were the first major polity in recorded history which ruled in Bactria but originated on the other side of the mountains. With this in mind, it should be considered that the Kušān always had an eye on the proceedings in the Tarim Basin, which indeed the sparse historiographical record indicates. As noted above, Falk 2018 has elaborated that the Yuezhi and Kušān controlled at least some of the major traffic routes connecting the Tarim Basin to Bactria and Gandhāra. A control of commerce may have been one reason for this, but based on historical experience, it would seem likely that the Yuezhi and Kušān were also aware that these were potential migration and invasion routes that they felt they needed to secure.<sup>228</sup>

Early on, such a safeguarding of the Yuezhi and Kušān frontiers may have primarily derived from the impression of the Xiongnu dominance that forced the Yuezhi out of their homelands in the first place.<sup>229</sup> By the time the Kušān Empire had consolidated under the successors of Kujula Kadphises however, the westward expansion of Han China under the leadership of Ban Chao will have been the main concern of the Kušān emperor in this territory. Chinese sources record hostilities and Kušān military support

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<sup>228</sup> Senior 2001/1, 10-14 reconstructs several Saka migration routes, some of which led through the very passes in the Pamir and Karakoram mountains that Falk 2018 suggests were controlled by the Yuezhi *yabghus*.

<sup>229</sup> cf. Falk 2015a, 37-57 (§§009-027).

to kingdoms in the Tarim Basin resisting against Ban Chao.<sup>230</sup> Even after the return of Ban Chao to China and his death, Kušān activity in the Tarim Basin is recorded, which indicates that they considered the crescent from Shan-Shan to Kucha their sphere of influence.<sup>231</sup> Falk 2018 suggests that the interactions with China shaped Kušān self-representation on their coins at least insofar as the messages found there were intended to be understood by the Han emperor.<sup>232</sup> Diplomatic contacts between the two empires are attested throughout Kušān history.<sup>233</sup> How much Chinese influence shaped Kušān history in the time of Kaniška I and beyond is however difficult to say, and it is necessarily outside the scope of the present work.

### **2.2.12. The Steppe**

The nomad origin of the Kušān is steadily apparent in early Kušān art. The Kušān emperors were depicted in nomad dress with a kaftan and boots on coins and in sculpture. Many portraits of such nomad type are found throughout the Kušān realm, although it is not always possible to determine whether these depict Kušān personnel or exhibit an earlier Saka inheritance. Only Huviška does not always take on such an appearance on his coins. Several deities on Kušān coin reverses are also dressed in the nomad manner. Unlike the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians, however, the Kušān emperors are almost never shown mounted.<sup>234</sup> Tombs in Bactria from the Yuezhi/Kušān period also attest the nomad inheritance archaeologically.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Falk 2015a, 97-99 (§074).

<sup>231</sup> Falk 2015a, 110-11 (§ 93), 115 (§098).

<sup>232</sup> *Op. cit.* 5-6.

<sup>233</sup> Falk 2015a, 103 (§081); cf. however Yü 1986, 416 noting a similar exchange in which the tribute-bearers from Kashmir were ordinary merchants.

<sup>234</sup> The only exception may be found on a belt plaque from a statue of Caṣṭana, cf. Rosenfield 1967, 181-83.

<sup>235</sup> On tombs in Bactria in the Kušān period cf. F. Grenet, *Les Pratiques Funeraires dans l'Asie Centrale Sedentaire. De la Conquete Grecque a l'Islamisation*. Paris 1984, 95-111, and 219 on the nomad heritage and the interpretation as "nomades sédentarisés".

With all this being said, the nomad element the Kušān brought to Bactria was hardly novel. Interactions between the sedentary population of Bactria and nomads living in the territory are attested as far back as the BMAC culture or perhaps even earlier.<sup>236</sup> Classical authors stress time and again that the nomad way of life was something inherently Bactrian, despite their awareness of an urban population as well.<sup>237</sup> Bactrian cavalry is attested in the Achaemenid military from Xerxes' invasion of Greece to the Battle of Gaugamela.<sup>238</sup> The evidence for pastoral lifestyle, horsebreeding and nomad populations in and around Bactria is abundant.

If the presence of nomads is nothing out of the ordinary for Bactrian history, something that was new in Bactria was the establishment of an empire that was ruled by a dynasty of nomadic origin. The Achaemenids, Seleukids and Graeco-Bactrians were by all practical means dynasties accustomed to a sedentary way of life. They faced the problem of attempting to integrate a nomad population into an imperial structure based on sedentary élites. In these attempts, many costly mistakes were made, the most famous of which were the Massagetai campaign in which Cyrus perished, the failed Scythian campaign of Darius I and the long and disastrous Central Asian war of Alexander.<sup>239</sup>

The Achaemenids unified the territories east of the Caspian Sea and south of the Syr Daryā river politically. The Achaemenid inscriptions speak of *dahyāva*, but it should be considered that the administration was necessarily different from the largely sedentary territories of the western parts of the empire. It is under this pretext that the

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<sup>236</sup> A case study for the BMAC culture (albeit focusing on Turkmenistan) is found in B. Cerasetti, Who Interacted with Whom? Redefining the Interaction between BMAC People and Mobile Pastoralists in Bronze Age Southern Turkmenistan. In: B. Lyonnet, N.A. Dubova (eds), *The World of the Oxus Civilization*. London/New York 2021, 487-95.

<sup>237</sup> cf. e.g. Strabo XI,11,3.

<sup>238</sup> Hdt. VIII,113; Arr. Anab. III,8.

<sup>239</sup> This is one of the main points raised by Holt 1988.

Bactrian satrap is sometimes considered more a viceroy of the Central Asian territories than a governor, especially because the satrapies of Bactria and Sogdiana are often described in classical sources as forming a political unity.<sup>240</sup>

This unity dissolved in the Hellenistic period without the exact process being clear.<sup>241</sup>

The Kušān apparently never attempted to reunite these territories, as there is no indication to force the conclusion that Sogdiana or Khwarezm were ever part of the Kušān Empire.<sup>242</sup> Although it would be expected that there were intense commercial relations between Kušān Bactria and Sogdiana, as there doubtlessly were with Khwarezm, the evidence is elusive.<sup>243</sup>

Commercial relations transcended these territories by far.<sup>244</sup> However, it is noteworthy that, being of nomad origin themselves, the Kušān never seem to have made the attempt to extend their rule over territories that were predominantly inhabited by nomadic societies. Instead, in the Kultobe inscriptions, it appears that individual autonomous cities were left to deal with hostile nomads without the influence of a foreign overlord.<sup>245</sup> While Sogdiana and Khwarezm may have been in the sphere of Kušān political and economic influence, it seems these territories were left as buffer zones towards the steppes which the Kušān knew well to stay away from.

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<sup>240</sup> This is very strongly indicated in Jacobs 1994, 208-16; Klinkott 2005, 126-27 argues that, despite the Sogdians being under Bactrian command at Gaugamela, the administrative unity dates to 328 BCE.

<sup>241</sup> Stark 2021, 83-84.

<sup>242</sup> cf. Grenet 1996, 369-70 on the archaeology of Samarkand contemporaneous to the Kušān and the verdict “l'autorité politique de l'empire kouchan n'a sans doute jamais débordé au nord des Monts Hissar”.

<sup>243</sup> Mitchiner 2012, 107 calls Sogdiana a “Kushan economic zone”. On the other hand, de La Vaissière 2005, 84 (w. Zeimal) points out “the extreme rarity of Kushan coins in Sogdiana” which “does not argue in favor of a strong foreign presence in Sogdiana”. Evidence for Kušān influence in Khwarezm comes primarily from Toprak-Kala, cf. M. Minardi, *Ancient Chorasmia. A Polity Between the Semi-Nomadic and Sedentary Cultural Areas of Central Asia*. Leuven et al 2015, 114-16 w. lit.

<sup>244</sup> Sulimirski 1970, 120 notes that Kušān pottery was found in Sarmatian tombs in the lower Volga area.

<sup>245</sup> Sims-Williams/Grenet 2006, 106. Alternatively, it is possible, as discussed *ibid* by F. Grenet, that Sogdiana formed a unified kingdom known to the Chinese as Kangju at this time. Even so it would have been independent of the Kušān, although it remains possible that it could have been a vassal.

### 2.2.13. The Post-Kušān World

Rezakhani 2017 has suggested to view the Kušān Empire as the originator of a political idea of East Iran.<sup>246</sup> There is considerable merit to this interpretation as apparently even in the 5th century CE, a Hunnish ruler held the title of Kušānšāh in Samarkand, a territory that was by all indications never even part of the Kušān Empire.<sup>247</sup> There seems thus to have been a certain weight in a legitimacy attached to the Kušān. Bactria itself appeared as the Kušānšahr, i.e., the Kušān Empire in Sāsānian records,<sup>248</sup> indicating that there was a structural continuity. This possibility is especially attractive because the late Kušāno-Sāsānian period marks the date of the earliest known legal and administrative Bactrian Documents (BD).<sup>249</sup> From the earliest documents, this corpus displays an established and tested legalistic and administrative system that is attested with some developments but no radical breaks or changes until the early Islamic period. It is particularly significant that the corpus belongs to a very limited geographical space because this allows an observation of the *longue durée* in Bactria.<sup>250</sup> This corpus is thus significant also for the Kušān period because many of the institutions and circumstances documented here would be expected to have already existed in Kušān Bactria. However, there is also a marked Sāsānian influence and the later conquerors of Bactria, including Hephthalites, Turks and Arabs, also make their presence felt quite strongly in some of the documents.<sup>251</sup> In projecting information from these documents back into the Kušān period, great care is therefore necessary, as is a case-by-case approach.

In India, the Kušān were succeeded by the Gupta who apparently absorbed the last remnants of their empire. As Falk 2006b has pointed out, the Gupta seemed to initially

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<sup>246</sup> A point made throughout the work, but most concisely argued *op. cit.*, 70-71.

<sup>247</sup> ur Rahman/ Grenet/ Sims-Williams 2006; cf. also Rezakhani 2017, 87.

<sup>248</sup> ŠKZ §3.

<sup>249</sup> BD1, BD2, BD3. On the chronology of the Bactrian Documents cf. Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018.

<sup>250</sup> cf. N. Sims-Williams, The Bactrian Documents as a Historical Source. In: Payne/King 2020, 231-44.

<sup>251</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2002.

have been relatively open to foreign influences, i.e., such coming from the geographical west,<sup>252</sup> which may be an indicator of an imperial Kušān legacy here. However, the Gupta eventually turned towards a more indigenous Indian identity similar to the Śuṅga prior.<sup>253</sup>

In this regard, it is necessary to point out the role the Sogdians went on to play along the Silk Road into China. It has been suggested that the Sogdians succeeded Bactrian merchants who travelled the same roads and established a trade network of their own in the Kušān period.<sup>254</sup> There is very little direct evidence for this, but a Bactrian legacy is felt for example in Bactrian loanwords in Tocharian.<sup>255</sup> It must at this point remain speculative if the Sogdian trade network that becomes apparent as early as the Ancient Letters from the early 3rd century CE was built on the work of Bactrian predecessors. However, this Sogdian material constitutes some of the earliest Middle Iranian texts postdating the Kušān Empire together with the Manichaean canon. These texts therefore provide important information in reconstructing the historical circumstances under which the Kušān Empire existed.

#### **2.2.14. The Spread of Buddhism**

The exchange of religious ideas is always implied with cultural, economic, and political interactions. Consequently, the religious landscape of Bactria in the Kušān period was diverse, a fact that is commonly held to be reflected in the pantheon of deities depicted on the coin reverses of Kaniška I and Huviška. This numismatic pantheon will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.1.. However, the role Buddhism plays in the Kušān

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<sup>252</sup> *Op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> de La Vaissière 2005, 180.

<sup>255</sup> Such are distilled in Schwartz 1974. This thread was followed by X. Tremblay, *Irano-Tocharica et Tocharo-Iranica*. BSOAS 68 (2005), 421-49, although here the findings are much more speculative.

Empire requires some comment, especially as it will largely be left disregarded in the present work.

Buddhism was first elevated to an imperial religion under the Maurya emperor Aśoka. The occasional appearance of Buddhist symbolism on Indo-Greek coins and the role ascribed to Menander in the *Milindapañha* shows the increased importance Buddhism gained in that period. This increase continued in the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian periods.<sup>256</sup>

The reign of Kaniška I is often presented as a watershed in Buddhist history. The emperor's role in Buddhist tradition is much analysed, and the increase in quality and quantity of Buddhist art during and after his reign is striking. Kaniška has variously been called a patron of Buddhism, a second Aśoka or a Buddhist version of Constantine the Great,<sup>257</sup> and for a long time, his conversion to Buddhism was taken as a fact.

A patronage of Buddhism under Kaniška is indeed unquestionable. This is, at the very least, visible on a small number of coins issued towards the end of his reign which show the Buddha on their reverse with legends identifying him as Boddo, Sakamano Boddo (Śākyamuni) and Mētrago Boddo (Maitreya). The presence of a massive stūpa in the town of Kaniṣkapura reported by a Chinese monk is archaeologically confirmed,<sup>258</sup> although the assumed dimensions may be due to later alterations.<sup>259</sup>

It is also evident that under Kaniška I, there was an active Buddhist community in India that is archaeologically visible. This remained unbroken until the late Kuṣān period,

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<sup>256</sup> It is impossible and unnecessary here to give an overview over the vast archaeological and artistic evidence, and it shall suffice to point to Fussman 2015, 153-55, where some of this evidence is briefly presented. The history of Buddhism prior to the Kuṣān is narrated in detail in Lamotte 1988, which despite its age (original publication in 1956) remains unsurpassed in terms of detail and lucidity.

<sup>257</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 29-30.

<sup>258</sup> The site in question is Shāh-jī-kī Dherī near Peshawar. The identification is based on the inscription of the so-called Kaniška Reliquary found here. For a detailed discussion, cf. Dobbins 1971.

<sup>259</sup> Dobbins 1971, 22.

and in fact most epigraphic documents from the Kušān Empire are Buddhist and Jaina donor inscriptions.

In the Kabul Valley and other Afghan territories south of the Hindukush, vibrant Buddhist life is also visible by way of a multitude of *stūpas* and *vihāras* of which only very few have been satisfactorily investigated archaeologically. In Bactria however, Buddhist presence in the Kušān period is much scarcer.<sup>260</sup> The archaeological record is no doubt highly incomplete,<sup>261</sup> so any conclusion here must be made with caution. Nevertheless, Fussman 2015 argues that Buddhists in Bactria had stronger competition with local religions, although there was some official support from Kušān authorities.<sup>262</sup> Buddhist establishments were nevertheless found, prominently in Termez, Ayrtaam and Dal'verzin-tepe. A Buddhist presence in Bactria is thus undeniable, as is its good relationship with Kušān authorities, but at least from the presently known archaeological record, Bactria was still a far way from being a stronghold of Buddhism.

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<sup>260</sup> For an overview cf. Fussman 2015, 180-94.

<sup>261</sup> cf. the remark by Fussman 2015, 179 on the poor state of archaeological exploration of valleys between Bāmiyān and Balkh.

<sup>262</sup> *Op. cit.*, 195-96.



### 3. Kušān Chronology

#### 3.1. The problems

The literary sources on Kušān history survive in such a patchy manner that they cannot be used to establish an uninterrupted, reliable sequence of Kušān rulers, let alone to link the reigns of individual Kušān emperors to an established absolute chronology. Consequentially, Kušān chronology has been and remains a contentious issue which has been controversially and at times polemically discussed since the mid-19th century and has produced a vast amount of literature which cannot be adequately reviewed here.<sup>263</sup>

The problem of the sequence of Kušān emperors has for the most part been gradually resolved through numismatic, epigraphic and art historical analysis, although some questions, especially concerning the late Kušān period, remain open. The problem of Kušān absolute chronology revolves around the identification of the year one of an era used by Kaniška I and his successors (the Kaniška Era, sometimes also called the Kušān Era) with a year of the Common Era. A majority opinion was established in the early 2000s based on studies by H. Falk.<sup>264</sup> This debate has lost much of its urgency, but individual scholars continue to dispute the consensus and promote differing ideas.<sup>265</sup>

It will not be possible to provide definitive answers for the open questions in the following. However, since the problem of chronology plays such a significant role in Kušān historiography and in the interpretation of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions, it is necessary to present a reasoned opinion on chronological issues here.

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<sup>263</sup> The most important literature was produced by several conferences held in London in 1913 and 1960 (published in *JRAS* 1914 and *PDK* respectively) and in Dushanbe in 1968 (published in Gafurov 1970). A further publication of note is *CAC* resulting from a conference in Vienna in 1996. Other articles and statements will be referred to throughout the following chapter without an attempt at exhaustiveness. For a general overview until 1960 cf. *PDK*, for the debate since then cf. Bracey 2017.

<sup>264</sup> Falk 2001 and 2005, cf. also Falk 2012.

<sup>265</sup> For some instances, cf. Falk 2012.

## 3.2. The Kušān Sequence

### 3.2.1. The Yuezhi Period

In 121 BCE, the Han ambassador Zhang Qian described the land of Bactria (Daxia) as being under the rule of the Da Yuezhi.<sup>266</sup> This is the ending point of a long odyssey that saw the Da Yuezhi leave their homeland in the Gansu Corridor after being attacked by the Xiongnu under Modu in c. 206 BCE.<sup>267</sup> The Da Yuezhi migrated in several steps through the Jade Gate southwards until settling down in Bactria.<sup>268</sup> The details need not concern here, but it is noteworthy that the Chinese *Han Shu* and the western authors Strabo and Trogus-Iustin agree that it was invading nomad forces from the north who conquered Bactria and ended Greek rule there. This event is believed to be archaeologically visible in Ai Khanoum and commonly dated to 145 BCE.<sup>269</sup> However, J. Cribb has brought some important concerns towards this date,<sup>270</sup> meaning that all that can be said for certain is that it happened before 121 BCE.

Zhang Qian describes the Da Yuezhi as unified under one ruler. At a later point, the Yuezhi appear in the *Han Shu* as split into five principalities, each governed by a *xihou*, a term that is commonly translated with the traditional nomad title of *yabghu*.<sup>271</sup> The early Yuezhi rulers issued imitation coins of Heliokles and Eukratides, the last Greek rulers in Bactria.<sup>272</sup>

Some rare coins with the names of Yuezhi rulers were also minted.<sup>273</sup> These names include Sapalbizēs, Agesilēs, Pseigacharēs and Pabēs. The coins show a bust with a

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<sup>266</sup> cf. Falk 2015a, 63 (§036) for text and translation.

<sup>267</sup> cf. Falk 2015a, 42 (§016).

<sup>268</sup> The sources are assembled in Falk 2015a, 37-63. The reconstruction by Benjamin 2007 disagrees with the commentary in Falk 2015a.

<sup>269</sup> Posch 1995, 88-96. But cf. now Mairs 2014, 170-74, where an alternative explanation involving inner-Bactrian conflicts is discussed.

<sup>270</sup> Cribb *apud* Falk 2015a, 47.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. BD2, 215b.

<sup>272</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 15.

<sup>273</sup> The study of Rtveladze 1993/94 is based on a total of merely 30 specimens together with an unspecified total number of Phraates IV overstrikes (see below) which however seem to be considerably

Graeco-Bactrian helmet, apparently modelled on the issues of Eukratidēs I, on the obverse and a deity on the reverse. In the case of Sapalbizēs and Agesilēs, this is Nanaia in shape of a lion adorned with a crescent. The reverse design is similar to Indo-Scythian coins of Azēs, Zeionisēs and Kharahostrēs, although they lack the crescent and do not identify the lion with a deity.<sup>274</sup> Pabēs coins have Hēraklēs on the reverse. Some coins of Sapalbizēs are found as overstrikes on coins of Phraatēs IV (38-2 BCE) and imitations thereof, locating this ruler in the late 1st century BCE along with the distribution of his coins in western Bactria.<sup>275</sup> The coins of Agesilēs and Pabēs evidently belong to the same general context, but they cannot be provenanced and thus evade any detailed analysis.<sup>276</sup>

### 3.2.2. The Heraios coinage

The Yuezhi coinage is succeeded by the so-called “Heraios” or “Heraus” coins, which mark a significant iconographic departure. The sequence was first discussed by Cunningham 1888, where connections with the coinage of Kujula Kadphises are seen.<sup>277</sup> The obverses show the engraving of a nomad prince with long hair, moustache, and a diadem around his head. His skull may be slightly elongated. The reverse depicts a horseman with a flying Nikē figure holding a wreath above his head. The reverse has a Greek legend which reads, with variations, ΤΥΠΑΝΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΗΙΑΟΥ ΚΟΡΡΑΝΟΥ and between the legs of the horse either ΣΑΝΑΒ or ΑΝΤΕΙΧ. The designation “Heraios” (Latinised “Heraus”) coinage derives from various readings of

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fewer than one hundred, most of which come from a hoard of 69 coins, cf. *op. cit.*, 82. cf. also now F. Michetti, *Antroponimi battriani sulla monetazioni pre-kušānide: tre proposte di etimologia*. *Parthica* 25 (2023), 103-25.

<sup>274</sup> Senior: 102, 116, 133 and 143. Senior: 79, also of Azēs, has a lion with a slightly different posture. Coins of Nahapana (Senior: 308) also show a lion in a similar posture but strong differences in detail and execution.

<sup>275</sup> Rtveldze 1993/94, 86-88.

<sup>276</sup> Rtveldze 1993/94, 83.

<sup>277</sup> *Op. cit.*, 51-52.

HIAOY as the name of the issuing sovereign. Cribb 1993 argues that the design of the legend suggests that KOPPANOY is in place of the sovereign's name and further adds that Kharoṣṭhī legends on copper coins with this design read *maharayasa rayatirayasa devaputra kuyula kata kapasa*, meaning that the coins were issued by Kujula Kadphises.<sup>278</sup> Falk 2015a and 2019 agrees with this interpretation and suggests to read the controversial HIAOY as a rendering of Chinese *xihou*.<sup>279</sup> The fine quality of many of the dies used for these coins also suggests an imperial mint with good resources, something conceivable under Kujula Kadphises but not in a petty Yuezhi kingdom.<sup>280</sup> While not universally accepted,<sup>281</sup> this interpretation of the “Heraios” coinage to Kujula Kadphises seems to be a reasonable explanation.<sup>282</sup>

### 3.2.3. Kujula Kadphises

The name of Kujula Kadphises is known from a variety of sources. The *Hou Han Shu* calls him Quijiuque and describes him as the *xihou* of the Guishuang who defeated the other Yuezhi *xihou* and established the Guishuang dynasty as the dominant power. It later mentions that he died at the age of over 80,<sup>283</sup> although there is no indication how long he had been king before that. Kujula Kadphises is also mentioned as the overlord in the Senavarma Inscription from Oḍi, which was likely located in the modern-day Afghan-Pakistani border area.<sup>284</sup> The inscription is dated to the year 14 of king Senavarma, unfortunately not linked to any better-known era. The bulk of attestations comes from the coinage, however. Two chronological details are of importance here.

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<sup>278</sup> The Kujula coins in question are the “bull and camel” types, cf. Senior: B11.

<sup>279</sup> Falk 2019, 5-6, already suggested by J. Cribb in Falk 2015a, 88. For further discussion of the legends see below, chapter 4.2.

<sup>280</sup> Falk 2015a, 86.

<sup>281</sup> Falk 2015a, 85-86.

<sup>282</sup> The alternative interpretation, according to which Heraios was a Kushan chief preceding Kujula Kadphises, is found e.g. in D.W. MacDowall 2003.

<sup>283</sup> But see the concerns raised by G. Fussman *apud* Falk 2015a, 97 (§071).

<sup>284</sup> von Hinüber 2003, 7.

First, many coins are overstrikes of coins of the Indo-Parthian Gondophares, who himself is dated to the years 98 and 103 of the Azēs Era.<sup>285</sup> Second, a certain issue of Kujula shows a bust modelled on Augustus.<sup>286</sup>

Falk 2012 argues that the Azēs Era begins in 47/46 BCE and is thus actually based on the Arsakid Era of 247/46 BCE.<sup>287</sup> If so, the years 98 and 103 would be 50/51 and 55/56 CE respectively. The latter is of importance because it is mentioned in the same inscription as the 26th year of Gondophares. As an advanced date in the reign of Gondophares, it heightens the chance that it is close to Kujula Kadphises, who apparently wrested the rule from him in many parts of his empire.<sup>288</sup> Therefore, it is a reasonable assumption that Kujula Kadphises was in power in the 50s CE. Alternative suggestions for the Azēs Era would shift it ten years earlier or later,<sup>289</sup> which would not significantly threaten this construct, especially if a long reign of Kujula is assumed based on his old age at the time of his death.

#### **3.2.4. Vima Takto/Sōtēr Megas**

Until the discovery of the Rabatak Inscription, the succession of Kujula Kadphises posed a problem. The *Hou Han Shu* narrates that after Quijiuque died, his son Yangaozhen succeeded him.<sup>290</sup> This Yangaozhen was long considered to be Vima Kadphises and, based on the common surname, the father-son relation of Kujula Kadphises and Vima Kadphises was taken as a given.<sup>291</sup> However, a very large series

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<sup>285</sup> Falk 2015a, 89 (§060). The year 103 from Takht-i Bāhī is not explicitly named as pertaining to the Azēs Era but is a reasonable assumption given that 98 is explicitly in the Azēs Era.

<sup>286</sup> cf. the analysis in Mahler 2008, where any later models are excluded for stylistic reasons, and especially the discussion on the coin reverses, which are shown not to rely on any particular Roman example but are instead an original creation.

<sup>287</sup> *Op. cit.*, 136-37.

<sup>288</sup> Bopearachchi 1998b, 391

<sup>289</sup> cf. Falk 2012, 136.

<sup>290</sup> Falk 2015a, 100-01 (§077).

<sup>291</sup> e.g. Rosenfield 1967, 17 f.

of coin issues was identified to belong between the coinage of Kujula Kadphises and that of Vima Kadphises. These coins do not bear the name of the issuing monarch but instead identify him by the titles ΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΒΑCΙΑΕΩΝ CΩTHΠ ΜΕΓΑC/*Maharajasa rajatirajasa mahatasa tratarasa*. Consequently, the sovereign was known either as the “nameless king” or by his title as Sōtēr Megas.<sup>292</sup> There was much speculation on his role in Kušān history and a possible dynastic struggle, but the discovery of the Rabatak Inscription seemed to settle this issue because it introduced the name Vima Takto precisely where numismatists placed Sōtēr Megas in the Kušān succession.<sup>293</sup> Several coins and monuments, including the seated statue from Māt and the Dašt-i Nawur Inscription, were now attributed to Vima Takto rather than Vima Kadphises as previously, as the inscriptions rendered the name in variations of *Vima Tak...*

The only outspoken critic of the identity of Vima Takto with Sōtēr Megas was O. Bopearachchi, who, based on the newly found Pipal Mandi hoard, believed that Sōtēr Megas was a distinct individual, suspecting him to be the general left to rule over India by Kujula Kadphises as narrated by the *Hou Han Shu*. Bopearachchi 2008 believes that Sōtēr Megas then usurped against the rightful emperor, Vima Takto and that it was only Vima Kadphises who restored imperial Kušān power.<sup>294</sup> This suggestion did not find general acceptance, although critics may have gone too far in declaring the pedigree coins of Vima Kadphises naming Vima Takto on the reverse forgeries.<sup>295</sup> Cribb 2015 has suggested that the Sōtēr Megas coinage was introduced under Kujula Kadphises as a step in a general coinage reform in the Kušān Empire that was continued by his son.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> For an extensive earlier study cf. MacDowall 1968.

<sup>293</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 97-99.

<sup>294</sup> *Op. cit.*, 49-50.

<sup>295</sup> So criticised by Falk 2019, 12-15.

<sup>296</sup> *Op. cit.*, *passim*.

H. Falk in particular has argued that the lack of a personal name on the coins is to be seen in conjunction with several anonymous documents of Kujula Kadphises that merely name him “King Kušān”.<sup>297</sup>

From a strictly chronological perspective, this issue is of lesser importance because there are clear chronological markers for the time of Vima Takto. Apart from the list in Rab 12-13, this concerns the inscription DN1 which is dated to the month Gorpiais in the year 279 and attributed to Vima Takto. An inscription with the same date has been found at Surkh Kotal (SK2).<sup>298</sup> It is an incomplete spolia, the original location of which is unknown. The dating formula is written in Greek and the month is of Macedonian origin, which suggests that the era is also of Greek origin. This is chronologically acceptable, as based on the considerations above, Vima Takto will have reigned in the latter half of the first century CE at the earliest, which already necessitates the era to have its origin in the Hellenistic period. The best suggestion brought forth is that the era in question is an Indo-Greek era started in 175/74 BCE and likely originates with Antimachos I who once more united the Greek realms to the north and south of the Hindukush, perhaps by overthrowing Agathokles and allying with Apollodōtos.<sup>299</sup> It is noteworthy in this regard that Antimachos took the epithet *theos* on his coins,<sup>300</sup> a point that may suggest that the introduction of the new era stood in connection with his apotheosis.<sup>301</sup>

If the calculation by Falk/Bennett 2009 and the attribution of the era are correct,<sup>302</sup> this would date Vima Takto to 104 CE. This would place only two Kušān emperors in the span of over fifty years, perhaps significantly longer. Falk 2015a, based on a suggestion

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<sup>297</sup> Discussed e.g. in Falk 2015a, 86.

<sup>298</sup> However, the date could also be read as 275.

<sup>299</sup> Falk 2010, 136 referring to C. Rapin.

<sup>300</sup> On all his coins, cf. Boppearachchi 1991, 183-87. Noted by Falk 2012, 136.

<sup>301</sup> For different suggestions, cf. Kosmin 2018, 264 fn. 140.

<sup>302</sup> *Op. cit.*, 208.

by F. Thierry, proposes 90 CE as a second date based on the appearance of a “viceroy Tak” in the report of Ban Chao's activities in Central Asia.<sup>303</sup>

### **3.2.5. Vima Kadphises**

Vima Kadphises is firmly placed between Vima Takto and Kaniška I in Rab 12-14. Even before the discovery of the inscription however, the position was secured by way of numismatic analysis.<sup>304</sup> Vima Kadphises introduced gold coinage to the Kušān Empire. His obverses are of a greater variety than those of Kaniška I,<sup>305</sup> but some features found on the latter's coinage are not yet observed on that of Vima Kadphises. Vima's coin legends are Greek, something continued under Kaniška I at first before they are switched to Bactrian.<sup>306</sup> Vima also does not include legends identifying the god on his coin reverses.

The only date available for Vima Kadphises is 287 from an inscription in Khalatse.<sup>307</sup> This places him in good chronological sequence to Vima Takto if the era is taken to be the same as that of DN1 and SK2. The above chronology would place Vima Kadphises in c. 112 CE. The quantity of available material for Vima Kadphises is relatively small, but there is no way of knowing if this is due to a short reign, a lack of power or mere archaeological chance.

### **3.2.6. Kaniška I**

Rab 12-14 confirms that Kaniška I was the son and direct successor of Vima Kadphises. His reign lasted for a minimum of 23 years as it is attested from the year 1 of the Kaniška

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<sup>303</sup> *Op. cit.*, 97-100, esp. §075.

<sup>304</sup> Mac Dowall 1975, 55.

<sup>305</sup> For a thorough discussion see below, chapters 5.2.1.1.-5.2.1.2.

<sup>306</sup> However, note the palaeographic variations discussed below in chapter 3.2.3.

<sup>307</sup> Falk 2015a, 109 (§091).



Era to the year 23.<sup>308</sup> However, he may have reigned for up to 25 years, as the earliest known date of Huviška is the year 26.<sup>309</sup>

One of the main problems with dates involving Kaniška from a sequential perspective is that, as is generally accepted by scholars now and will be discussed below, the Kušān did not include a century designation in epigraphic records, thus beginning to count anew from the year 1 after the year 99 elapsed. The Kušān emperor during this change of centuries was Kaniška II, which makes it difficult to determine from the text alone whether an inscription is dated to the reign of Kaniška I or II.

### **3.2.7. The successor of Kaniška I**

There is unfortunately no epigraphic record documenting the dynastic sequence of the Kušān emperors directly following Kaniška I. Before the "dropped hundreds" thesis mentioned above became generally accepted, it was believed that the successor of Kaniška I was Vāsiška, as his inscriptions were commonly held to date to the years 24-28. This idea ran into several problems, however. First, no coins were known of an emperor Vāsiška that fit stylistically between the coins of Kaniška I and Huviška. All coins minted in the name of Vāsiška evidently belonged to the late Kušān period, leading R. Göbl to assume two emperors named Vāsiška.<sup>310</sup> Second, the Ārā Inscription (CKI 158) mentioned a Kaniška, son of Vāsiška reigning in the year 41. This led to much unfortunate speculation involving co-regencies and similar constructs that has contaminated much literature on Kušān history.<sup>311</sup> The arguments brought forth by

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<sup>308</sup> Falk 2015a, 111 (§094).

<sup>309</sup> Falk 2015a, 120 (§105).

<sup>310</sup> R. Göbl, Vāsiška II., ein bisher unbekannter König der Kušān. AÖAW 1965, 283-300; The article is an extreme example of the sometimes excessive hypothetical constructs created to advance particular ideas for Kušān chronology. At the time of writing, the author was evidently unfamiliar with the thesis of the "dropped hundreds" advanced by Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949, although he later accepted it and included only one Vāsiška in his sequence, cf. Göbl 1979, 120.

<sup>311</sup> A noteworthy example is Rosenfield 1967, 60, which places a Huviška I next to Vāsiška, then sees the line of Vāsiška continued by a Kaniška II and a Huviška II.

Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949 and 1986 for the existence of a second century of the Kaniška Era are now generally accepted, and the assumption of emperors such as Vāsiška II and Huviška II no longer necessary. Instead, it can now be considered certain that Kaniška I was directly succeeded by Huviška.

### 3.2.8. Huviška

Huviška is dated by inscriptions to the years 26-60 KE. In light of the discussion above, there can now be no doubt that Huviška directly succeeded Kaniška I. His early coinage also still includes the *tamgha* of Kaniška I rather than his own. It is generally assumed that Huviška was the son of Kaniška I. There is however no indisputable statement in any source that says so.<sup>312</sup> This question is not merely academic, because the inscription SS 66 states that the *devakula* of Māṭ was founded by the grandfather of Huviška. If Huviška was the son of Kaniška I, this would be clear evidence that Vima Kadphises founded the sanctuary. Unfortunately, the part of the inscription naming this grandfather is lost. The only systematic excavations conducted in the Mathurā District were at Sonkh, where evidence was uncovered that the place seems to have fallen under Kuśān rule early in the reign of Kaniška I.<sup>313</sup> This should inspire some caution towards the identity of Vima Kadphises as this grandfather, and it remains possible that Huviška, who must have been a relatively young man at his accession as his long reign suggests, may have been the grandson, not the son of Kaniška I.

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<sup>312</sup> Note the reservations expressed on epigraphic grounds by Falk 2015a, 123 (§109) on a coin that could be interpreted as naming Kaniška father of Huviška (or vice versa!) found in Sonkh by H. Härtel.

<sup>313</sup> See below, chapter 6.1.4.7.

### 3.2.9. Vāsudeva

The reign of Vāsudeva is attested for the years 68 to 98 KE. This leaves an eight-year gap between the last attestation of Huviška and the first of Vāsudeva. There is nevertheless no reason to doubt that Vāsudeva directly succeeded Huviška, especially because the coins seem to form a sequence.

### 3.2.10. The later Kušān

Vāsudeva was succeeded by Kaniška II, whose attested dates range from (10)4 to (1)18 KE.<sup>314</sup> His epigraphic attestation is still relatively abundant and attests his reign in the Mathurā, Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur and Swabi Districts of India and Pakistan. He is the last Kušān emperor attested in Bactria by way of coin finds,<sup>315</sup> meaning that at some point during his reign Bactria fell to the Sāsānians. For the year (1)22, an emperor Vaskušan is attested in an inscription from in the Sāñchī Museum.<sup>316</sup> The name BAZOKOPANO also appears on some gold coins (Göbl: 628-632). Nevertheless, Göbl 1984 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015 consider these coins as belonging to Vāsiška.<sup>317</sup>

The next two emperors are more firmly established in the dynastic sequence. Vāsiška is attested in three inscriptions dating between (1)24 and (1)30 KE, of which two (SS 59, 62) are from Mathurā and one (CKI 230) is from Kamra in the Attock District, indicating that Kušān imperial rule was still enforced in the Punjāb and the Doāb. Vāsiška is succeeded by Kaniška III, who explicitly mentions he is the son of Vāsiška

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<sup>314</sup> However, cf. below chapter 6.6.1.3.9.5. for differing opinions on the attribution of CKI 149 to Kaniška I and II.

<sup>315</sup> According to Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 149, the often-encountered statement that Vāsudeva (I) was the last Kušān emperor in Bactria (so Fussman 1983, 44; Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 131) is based on a misattribution of coin finds from Surkh Kotal. Heidemann/Naue forthcoming also list 11-13 identified specimens of Kaniška II found in Balkh. I thank S. Heidemann for kindly providing me with this information.

<sup>316</sup> Falk 2015a, 127 (§118), for further details cf. Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949, 312-14.

<sup>317</sup> So already Göbl 1979, 120, where it is stated that "Er [Vaskušan] ist mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit mit Vāsiška identisch", but no reason is given.

in the Ārā Inscription of the Attock district in the Punjāb. It is dated to the year (1)41 KE.<sup>318</sup> Kaniška III is no longer attested in Mathurā and he is also the last Kušān emperor attested epigraphically. Following him, a number of Kušān sovereigns are attested by coins only. The sequence established in Jongeward/Cribb 2015 is Vāsudeva II, Mahi, Shaka and Kipunadha. Göbl 1984 puts Vāsudeva II and Xodēšāh in this position and considers them contemporaneous to Kaniška II.<sup>319</sup> Generally, R. Göbl assumes that after Vāsudeva (I), the empire fell apart and individual sovereigns fought over control. All other coinage is considered as belonging to usurpers. These problems cannot be discussed any further here, but it is worth mentioning that Falk/Sims-Williams 2017 make an argument for only one Vāsudeva, suggesting that the later coinage in the name of Vāsudeva may be imitation coinage.<sup>320</sup> While the main argument for this comes *e silentio* from lack of inscriptions of later Vāsudevas, it also needs to be considered that no unproblematic sequence for the late Kušān involving a Vāsudeva II can be established.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, J. Cribb argued that the coinage ascribed in Göbl 1984 to Vāsudeva II (and added to the Vāsudeva I coinage in Göbl 1993) and Göbl's Xodēšāh are in fact imitation coinages of Vāsudeva I and Kaniška II respectively, issued by the early Kušāno-Sāsānians.<sup>322</sup>

### 3.3. The second century of the Kaniška Era

There is no Kušān inscription with a date greater than 98. As discussed above, this has long led to extensive hypothetical constructs to explain the overlapping dates of individual Kušān emperors. The simpler solution is that Kušān inscriptions again

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<sup>318</sup> The note in Falk 2015a, 129 (§121) referring to CKI 148 seems to be an error, as CKI 148 is already mentioned for Kaniška II (ibid, 126-27, §117) which also seems to be correct considering the dates.

<sup>319</sup> First expressed in Göbl 1979, 120-23.

<sup>320</sup> Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 122-24.

<sup>321</sup> For a brief overview cf. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 149-50.

<sup>322</sup> Cribb 1990, 155 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 179-80.

started counting at 1 after a century elapsed, a practice Falk 2001 referred to as “dropping the hundreds”.

This possibility was first considered by E. Thomas, who believed that the Kaniška Era was the fourth century of the Seleukid Era.<sup>323</sup> Suggestions involving the assumption of “dropped hundreds” were brought up time and again,<sup>324</sup> until Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949 established the idea as the only possible explanation for stylistic observations in Mathurā sculpture. A number of examples are presented here that represent stylistic developments that must post-date sculptures dated to the reign of Vāsudeva but that have inscriptions dating them to the early decades of the Kaniška Era.<sup>325</sup> Two particularly notable examples are presented again *pars pro toto* in Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1986.

Further arguments were brought forth by Härtel 1996, where the distribution of the title *devaputra* and the designation Bodhisatva on inscriptions from Kapardin or Cakravatin Buddha statues from Mathurā is analysed. The dropping of the Bodhisatva title correlates with the stylistic development of the dress of these Buddha statues, indicating stronger influence from Gandhāra, which is also believed to have led to a greater acceptance of the use of the *devaputra* title.<sup>326</sup> Both are developments during the reign of Huviška, i.e. the Kaniška using the title on similar Buddha statues must be Kaniška II, so the corresponding years must pertain to the second century.<sup>327</sup> Härtel states that these observations “strongly support the theory of the existence of a second Kuṣāṇa century”.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> E. Thomas, Bactrian Coins and Indian Dates. JRAS NS 9 (1877), 1-21 (esp. p. 6).

<sup>324</sup> e.g., V.A. Smith, The Kushān, or Indo-Scythian, Period of Indian History, B.C. 165 to A.D. 320. JRAS 1903, 1-64.

<sup>325</sup> *Op. cit.*, 235-62; note however that while the stylistic arguments appear to be generally accepted today, the palaeographic investigations have been refuted by palaeographic investigations, cf. Härtel 1996, 103 w. Sander 1983, 119-24.

<sup>326</sup> *Op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>327</sup> *Op. cit.*, 102-03.

<sup>328</sup> *Op. cit.*, 104; also recognised by Falk 2001, 121.

The existence of a second Kušān century also found support from the Kušān coin sequence. The style and quality of engravings and the progression of Bactrian cursive script in the legends on the coins of Vasiška evidently postdate those of Vāsudeva (I) and Kaniška II, a fact that is only explicable if the date of the Ārā Inscription is in the second century, unless one assumed a numismatically invisible Vāsiška I. Likewise, the coin sequence suggested the existence of an emperor Kaniška III after Vāsiška, something that would be confirmed by the Kamra Inscription if it too is dated in the second century.

There can thus be little remaining doubt that the existence of a second century of the Kaniška Era is a fact. It provides the only satisfactory explanation for a number of observations that would otherwise require complicated and unprovable hypothetical constructs.

### **3.4. The Date of Kaniška**

#### **3.4.1. Preliminary Statements**

On basis of the preceding discussion, several preliminary statements can be made about the date of Kaniška, i.e., the identification of the year one of the Kaniška Era with a date of the Common Era.

First, there can be little doubt that Kujula Kadphises reigned in the middle of the 1st century CE, and that he was a contemporary of Gondophares. This would locate Kujula around the end of the first century of the Azēs Era.

Second, the two emperors between Kujula Kadphises and Kaniška I, Vima Takto and Vima Kadphises, are dated to the 270s and 280s of an unspecified era. The proximity of these late dates to the end of a century suggests that the Kaniška Era is a re-dedication of this era and the year one of the Kaniška Era is in fact the year 301 of this unknown

era. Otherwise, one would have to accept that Kaniška introduced a new era shortly before or, less likely, after the ongoing century of the era in use elapsed, as the last attested date in this era is 287. The use of Greek month names and a Greek dating formula in DN1, together with the fact that the Kušān rose in Bactria, where Hellenistic traditions were still alive, suggest that the era is of Indo-Greek origin.<sup>329</sup>

Third, it appears certain that there was a second century of the Kaniška Era. The last attested date is (1)41 in the Ārā Inscription. Kušān rule in Bactria ended around or shortly after the turn of the century, as the last Kušān emperor attested there is Kaniška II, who came to power between 98 and (10)4. The next attested year in Bactria is the year 43 on the Sen-gul plate, which is likely the same era as that of the Bactrian documents, an era that will be discussed below.<sup>330</sup>

### **3.4.2. Numismatic Synchronisms**

Since no Kušān emperor is mentioned by name in a source that is dated in an identified era (i.e., an era safely linked to the Common Era), various other ways have been sought to identify the date of Kaniška. Of these, numismatic synchronisms with Roman coinage have been investigated particularly thoroughly. Unfortunately, the results have never provided more than approximations.

#### **3.4.2.1. The “Roman” coins of Kujula Kadphises**

Kujula Kadphises issued a series of coins with an imperial Roman bust on the obverse and a depiction of the ruler seated on a curule chair on the reverse. The obverse coin

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<sup>329</sup> Falk/Bennett, 2009, 500-01.

<sup>330</sup> Sims-Williams 2013, 194. cf. also Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 15. The earliest dated Bactrian document is ‘A’, dated to 110.

legends are in Greek, the reverse in Kharoṣṭhī. These coins seem to be associated especially with Taxila.<sup>331</sup>

Attempts have been made to establish a derivation of these coins from similar Roman designs containing an image of the emperor seated on a curule chair on the reverse. None of the supposed parallels have proved convincing, and it appears as though the reverse design is a Kuṣān innovation based on the actual physical use of a Roman curule chair by Kujula.<sup>332</sup> The obverse portrait seems to be based on a type issued by Augustus showing Gaius and Lucius Caesar on the reverse.<sup>333</sup> Supposing these coins were issued in the lifetime of both Gaius and Lucius, they must have been minted before 2 CE. Since Kujula is well-established to have ruled in the mid-first century CE, this date is not particularly useful. Nor do metrological considerations provided by MacDowall 1968 add anything of significance, because these would only provide the Flavian period (69-96 CE) as a *terminus ad quem*.<sup>334</sup> Thus, while providing additional confirmation of Kujula's reign in the first century CE, the “Roman” types do not help to establish any precision in the dating.

#### **3.4.2.2. The weight standard of Vima Kadphises**

Cunningham 1892 already observed that Kuṣān gold coins were based on the denominations and weight standards of Roman *aurei*.<sup>335</sup> D.W. MacDowall has studied these weight standards more closely, hoping that a parity between the gold coins introduced by Vima Kadphises and a chronologically secure Roman issue could be

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<sup>331</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 25.

<sup>332</sup> So already MacDowall 1968, 144-45 and more recently Mahler 2008. For a discussion of the interpretation of this iconography see below, chapter 6.2.6.

<sup>333</sup> Mahler 2008, 299.

<sup>334</sup> *Op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>335</sup> *Op. cit.*, 70.



established.<sup>336</sup> According to his observations, Kušān gold dinars were consistently struck on a standard of 8g after being introduced by Vima Kadphises, “though the purity of the gold used was progressively decreased”, while the Roman *aurei* took the opposite development.<sup>337</sup> Only *aurei* of Augustus issued between 19 and 12 BCE were based on a standard of 8g. As MacDowall 1960 noted, this would arrive at a date far too early for Vima Kadphises.<sup>338</sup> The coinage reform of Nero in 64 CE reduced the coin standard drastically, although Domitian (81-96 CE) and Nerva (96-98 CE) restored the early heavier standards.<sup>339</sup> If taken into account that exact parity would never be expected in the first place,<sup>340</sup> this leaves the termini for the introduction of the coinage of Vima Kadphises as before or just shortly after 64 or in the 80s or 90s CE, supposing that at least a general convertability with current Roman coinage was aimed for.<sup>341</sup>

### 3.4.2.3. Iconographic studies

While D.W. MacDowall studied the weight standards of Kušān coins, R. Göbl focused on iconographic parallels between Kušān and Roman coinage in the same hope to find a synchronism.<sup>342</sup> The parallels found by the author will be discussed in detail below in chapter 6.2.3.2. While some points are convincing, not all hold up to scrutiny. Nevertheless, the general results achieved deserve mention. Göbl 1960b finds a synchronism between Kujula Kadphises and Augustus based on the “Roman” types of Kujula.<sup>343</sup> This point was discussed above and considered of little historical value. For

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<sup>336</sup> MacDowall 1960 and 1968; MacDowall 1960 also extensively discusses Kušān copper coinage but does not find any Roman precedents.

<sup>337</sup> MacDowall 1968, 144.

<sup>338</sup> *Op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>339</sup> MacDowall 1960, 67.

<sup>340</sup> MacDowall 1960, 68 and (verbatim) 1968, 144.

<sup>341</sup> MacDowall 1960, 68. On this issue see also below, chapter 6.2.3.1.

<sup>342</sup> Göbl 1960b and 1968; like MacDowall 1960 and 1968, the study was first presented for the 1960 Kaniška conference but published in expanded form in JNSI 22 (1960) before PDK was published in 1968.

<sup>343</sup> *Op. cit.*, 80-81.

Vima Kadphises, Göbl 1960b considers the coin reverses showing the emperor in a triumphal *biga* as indicating a synchronism with the Flavian period or even Traian's coinage,<sup>344</sup> a point that inspires strong scepticism.<sup>345</sup>

For Kaniška I, Göbl 1960b believes that a date before Hadrian (117-138 CE), and more precisely before 128 CE, is not possible.<sup>346</sup> Of his points, the felid sceptre of Nana and the iconography of Ardoxšo stand out as the most convincing instances of Hadrianic influence, although it is necessary to point out that Göbl 1960b only takes numismatic evidence into account and the iconographic influence might have come from other sources.

For Huviška, Göbl 1960b finds the most available material for comparison, and thus also the most parallels. Again, many warrant caution, but the Huntress Nana, Rišto and Šaoreoro parallels indicated here do seem convincing and would place Huviška as a contemporary to the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161).<sup>347</sup> Göbl 1960b concludes that “from the present evidence we gain the year 128 A.D. as the earliest possibility for the date of Kanishka”.<sup>348</sup>

#### 3.4.2.4. The Ahin Posh deposit

There are only very few coin hoards including both Kušān and Roman coins.<sup>349</sup> The most important and frequently discussed is a deposit from the *stupa* of Ahin Posh near Jalalabad.<sup>350</sup> It contained ten gold dinars of Vima Kadphises, six of Kaniška I and one of Huviška together with an *aureus* each of Domitian, Traian and Sabina. The latter is

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<sup>344</sup> *Op. cit.*, 81-82.

<sup>345</sup> See below, chapter 6.2.5.

<sup>346</sup> *Op. cit.*, 82-84.

<sup>347</sup> *Op. cit.*, 84-87.

<sup>348</sup> *Op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>349</sup> A rare example is the find of Kušān coins in Charakenean contexts, which is of little chronological help because the chronology of Charakenean rulers is equally contested, cf. Schuol 2000, 234-35.

<sup>350</sup> For references cf. Ball 2019, 13-15 (§17).

the most important piece, as *aurei* of Sabina were struck only between 128 and 137 CE. The condition of the coins has also received some attention and according to MacDowall 1968, “[those] of Vīma were rather worn, those of Kaniṣka rather less so, and that of Huviṣka was virtually *fleur de coin*”.<sup>351</sup> The coin of Sabina is described here as “well worn” while Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 describe it as “damaged, but its detail is still fresh and free from wear”.<sup>352</sup> While this synchronism cannot be absolute proof of anything, since the coins may have been in circulation for any amount of time before being deposited, it does suggest a placement of the three Kuṣān emperors in the first half of the second century CE.

### 3.4.3. The Śaka Era

The earliest serious contender for the identity of the Kaniṣka Era is the Śaka Era which is still in use in India and starts in the year 78 CE.<sup>353</sup> The name of the era already suggests that it is associated with Iranian nomad tribes who likely introduced it to the subcontinent. A historical argument for the equation of the Śaka and Kaniṣka Eras is that Kaniṣka I was a historical figure of such significance that the continued use of his era for such a long time is easily imaginable.<sup>354</sup>

Fussman 1974 has argued that the identity of the two Yuezhi emperors of the *Hou Han Shu*, Quijiuque and Yengaozhen, with Kujula Kadphises and Vima Kadphises, is not certain.<sup>355</sup> The outcome of his discussion is that the reigns of Kujula Kadphises, Sōtēr

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<sup>351</sup> *Op. cit.*, 143.

<sup>352</sup> *Op. cit.*, 105. Among the numerous descriptions of this coin, none seems to have picked up on the note by MacDowall 1968 that “it appears to have been a cast copy (i.e. an ancient Roman forgery) in good gold; and this makes it impossible to assess the period during which it has circulated by its loss of weight from the original standard” (p. 143, fn. 3).

<sup>353</sup> The Vikrama Era was discussed early on as a contender, going by the assumption that Kaniṣka predated Kujula Kadphises. This was decidedly ruled out in the 1913 conference, cf. Basham in PDK, ix.

<sup>354</sup> Found e.g. in Fussman 1998, 640–41.

<sup>355</sup> The same argument, albeit with the intention to prove a different date, was made by R. Göbl, e.g. in Göbl 1984, 7, fn. 2.

Megas and Vima Kadphises should be placed rather early in the first century CE, thus allowing for a reign of Kaniška I to commence in 78 CE.<sup>356</sup> Fussman 1998 discusses this evidence again with the same outcome, although stating, “[elle] ne preuve certes pas que Kaniška ait commencé à régner en l'an 78, elle ne l'interdit pas non plus”.<sup>357</sup> This statement does little to convince of the necessity to identify the Kaniška Era with the Śaka Era. More importantly perhaps, Falk 2001 has advanced some evidence that may indeed “interdit” such an identification. It is shown that the *Yavanajātaka* of Sphujiddhvaja distinguishes between *koṣāṇa* and *śaka* years.<sup>358</sup> To assume that in the light of this, the Śaka Era is identical to that of Kaniška I would require the existence of a second Kušān Era commencing 149 years later, for which there is no further evidence. The interpretation offered by Falk 2001 will be discussed below in chapter 3.4.4.

Another argument which most certainly speaks against 78 CE being the year 1 of Kaniška comes from late Kušān rule. As mentioned above (chapter 3.2.10.), the last Kušān emperor attested in Balkh is Kaniška II, whose known dates are (1)04 and (1)09 KE. He is succeeded by Vāsiška, who only has one attested date, (1)22 KE, and of whom no coins have been found in Balkh. There is no doubt that Kušān Bactria was conquered by the Sāsānians, so that the numismatic record would indicate that they followed directly after Kaniška II.<sup>359</sup> If the reckoning started in 78 CE, the year (1)22 KE would be 200 CE, even before the reign of Ardaxšīr I. Clearly this is impossible.

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<sup>356</sup> *Op. cit.* 43-50; cf. also Fussman 1980, 37-42.

<sup>357</sup> *Op. cit.*, 639.

<sup>358</sup> *Op. cit.*, 126.

<sup>359</sup> The question of the “Vāsudeva II” coinage of Göbl 1984 (attributed to Vāsudeva I in Göbl 1993) and an emperor “Xodešāh” identified by Göbl is answered by Cribb 1990 as imitation coinage of Vāsudeva I and Kaniška II respectively, issued in the early Kušāno-Sāsānian period. This would follow the practice of imitating late Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coinage after the Indo-Scythian (and Yuezhi?) takeover. A detailed investigation of this question would be interesting, but cannot be done here.

As for the Śaka Era, Falk 2001 and 2012 has argued that the initiator is perhaps not of such significance, as the starting date of 1 April 78 CE marked the start of at least four astronomical cycles, which would explain its popularity with astronomers.<sup>360</sup> The lasting impact of the era would therefore not be due to the importance of its founder but its astronomic usefulness.

#### **3.4.4. The year 127/28 CE**

The majority of scholars have long preferred a date in the first half of the second century CE. A centre of gravity in this range are the years 127/28 CE.<sup>361</sup> mentioned above, Falk 2001 involved the *Yavanajātaka* of Sphujiddhvaja in the discussion. According to the reading here, the difference between the Śaka Era of 78 CE and the Kušan Era is 149 years, which would lead to a Kušan Era starting in 227/28 CE. It is then further argued that this refers to the second century of the Kaniška Era discussed above in chapter 2.3. because a date in the third century CE is historically implausible.<sup>362</sup>

There is much further evidence to support a starting date of 127/28 CE of the Kaniška Era. The historical context, as Falk argues, is certainly in favour. The last Kušan emperor attested in Bactria is Kaniška II, who reigned a century after Kaniška I. All evidence points towards the fact that the western part of the Kušan Empire was conquered by the Sāsānians around that time.<sup>363</sup> The synchronisms with Roman numismatics also strongly support this date.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Falk 2001, 131-33; 2012, 132.

<sup>361</sup> e.g. Smith 1902 and 1903, where it is suggested that the Kaniška Era is identical to the popular Laukika Era as described by Bīrūnī, which begins in 128 CE. Further approaches resulting in this date are discussed sceptically by Rosenfield 1967, 255-56.

<sup>362</sup> Op. cit., 130.

<sup>363</sup> cf. chapter 2.2.7.

<sup>364</sup> cf. chapter 3.4.2.

Falk/Bennett 2009, based on Cribb 2005, have further suggested that the beginning of the Kaniška Era is in fact the year 301 of the Indo-Greek Era used in DN1 and SK2.<sup>365</sup> This interpretation would provide a convenient solution in line with the established dynastic sequence of the Kušān, although it cannot offer an easy explanation for the phrase κιδι ιωγο χρονο νοβαστο σαγωδι βαγανο σινδαδο in Rab 2-3 which will be discussed in chapter 3.5.

The dating of Falk 2001 has been established as *communis opinio* with only few scholars outspoken against it.<sup>366</sup> Falk's precise argumentation based on Indological and calendaric reasoning cannot be assessed here. However, the date fits well with the historical reasons mentioned, and there is thus no reason to diverge from this widely accepted date, especially because there is no viable alternative.

### 3.4.5. The third century CE

Third century dates have been proposed early on.<sup>367</sup> The arguments have never been compelling, as e.g. Majumdar 1968 founds the hypothesis of such a date on statement quoted from H. Chavannes that “at the middle of the third century of our era, the power of the Kushan kings was at its height”.<sup>368</sup> This “middle of the third century” was in fact the reign of the Han emperor Ming (227-239 CE), and the compilation of information discussed by Majumdar 1968 only suggests that the Kušān ruled Bactria and parts of India before 227 CE, a fact that does not contradict a destruction of Kušān rule in Bactria under Ardaxšīr I (224-239/40 CE) or Šābuhr I (240/42-270 CE). The suggestion

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<sup>365</sup> *Op. cit.*, 501-02. cf. also Falk 2012, 136.

<sup>366</sup> For a response to these criticisms w. lit. cf. Falk 2012, 134-35.

<sup>367</sup> The date 144 CE proposed by R. Ghirshman which was favourably received only by few scholars (e.g. Gupta *apud* PDK, 120) need not be discussed here, as Rosenfield 1967, 257 points out its fundamental weakness: “The simplicity and apparent demonstrability of Ghirshman's theory belie the fact that it rests fundamentally upon a single and unproved assumption: that Shāpūr I interrupted the Kushan reckoning at the year 98”.

<sup>368</sup> *Op. cit.*, 153.

brought forth that the Kušān Era is identical to the Traikūṭaka Era is equally unconvincing,<sup>369</sup> as the Traikūṭaka realm lay outside the territories of the Kušān Empire and the era may simply have been founded by the Traikūṭakas themselves.

The most prominent and outspoken proponent of a third-century date for Kaniška I was R. Göbl. In the 1960 conference, he presented iconographic studies that led him to determine 128 CE as a *terminus post quem* for the date while also suggesting that Kaniška I was a contemporary of the Roman emperor Hadrian, Huviška of Antoninus Pius. He soon modified his opinion, however. He first determined that the Kušāno-Sāsānian coinage began in the reign of Šābuhr II (309-379).<sup>370</sup> Following this, he argued that the coinage of Vāsudeva (I) was directly succeeded by the Kušāno-Sāsānian coinage which ran parallel to that of the later Kušān, a point that is generally uncontested.<sup>371</sup> This led to a calculation in reverse that determined the date of Kaniška to be around 225 CE, which was later modified with regards to the Bactrian Era of the Tochi Valley inscriptions which was believed to have started in 232 CE. The author repeated his chain of arguments in numerous publications,<sup>372</sup> but while a few detail aspects were modified, the core points remained the same as presented in Göbl 1967. The main argument was the synchronism between Šābuhr II and the Kušāno-Sāsānian Hormizd I, which Göbl 1967 established through a coin of Šābuhr II “der in der selben Münzstätte entstanden ist und wohl sogar von der Hand des selben Graveurs gearbeitet ist” as a coin of Hormizd I from Marv.<sup>373</sup> The Šābuhr II type is dated by Göbl 1967 to

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<sup>369</sup> *Op. cit.*, 154.

<sup>370</sup> The arguments are repeated and modified across Göbl's publications, but the most detailed presentation is found in Göbl 1967/2, 275-301.

<sup>371</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 197-98; note however the contradiction in *ibid*, 149 where it is stated that Kaniška II was the last Kušān emperor attested in Bactria.

<sup>372</sup> First presented in Göbl 1964 (with reference to the then-forthcoming Göbl 1967), then in Göbl 1984, 57-58, Göbl 1993, 49-86 and finally Göbl 1999; numerous other publications also make reference or add details to the dating.

<sup>373</sup> *Op. cit.*, 276.

350-360 CE.<sup>374</sup> The similarity of the reverse designs is undeniable and was so also noted by Cribb 1990, but it is questionable if this is enough to establish a synchronism. Cribb 1990 points out that the prototype for this design may be traced back to the Sāsānian Hormizd I (270-271) or, more likely, Vahrām II (276-293).<sup>375</sup> The only argument to contradict this is R. Göbl's insistence that the engravings were likely made by the same individual. The coin reverses are no doubt close, and there is no reason to doubt Göbl's judgement. The question is whether he is correct in his chronological assessment. Some serious objections have been cast here. Cribb 1990 has remarked that the obverse of the Hormizd I coin is much closer to those of the Sāsānian Vahrām II (276-293).<sup>376</sup> Much more important however is that Cribb produced a specimen of the Göbl type in question for Šābuhr II which had a reverse die link to an earlier type of Hormizd II and could even demonstrate that the legend was recut from the Hormizd type.<sup>377</sup> Göbl 1993 could not but acknowledge that, but nevertheless argued that the Šābuhr coin was of a later type and the die link "skipped" the earlier issue.<sup>378</sup> If Göbl is to be taken seriously, the coin Cribb has shown would have had to re-use a die that was at the time between 20 and 50 years old. Göbl neither produced a parallel for this assumption, nor did he acknowledge a need for such.<sup>379</sup> According to Cribb's argumentation however, the synchronicity is not in fact between Hormizd I and Šābuhr II, but between Hormizd I and Hormizd II (303-309), or possibly even earlier.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> *Op. cit.*, 284. For this reason, R. Göbl assumes that the campaign of Šābuhr II in East Iran in 356/57 described by Ammian was against the Kušān, cf. *ibid*, 285-89.

<sup>375</sup> *Op. cit.*, 169.

<sup>376</sup> *Op. cit.*, 167 (f. 18).

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>378</sup> *Op. cit.*, 80. Schindel 2012, 68 not following Göbl, discusses the die and its origin in greater detail.

<sup>379</sup> Göbl 1999, 159: "The re-utilisation of older dies is such a common practice in numismatics that we can dispense with further inquiries". On the very next page, Göbl asserts that the dies used in the earlier issues of Šābuhr II "gradually die out", whereas just a few paragraphs later it is again stated that "the preservation of older dies and their occasional reuse [in the Marv mint] is not a cause for surprise and (...) a common numismatic phenomenon."

<sup>380</sup> Cribb 1990, 167 (fn. 18).



Despite his insistence to the contrary,<sup>381</sup> Göbl 1967 does seem to realise that the stylistic similarity of two coin reverses is far too weak a link to carry the weight of his chronological construct alone. He therefore introduced a medallion from the British Museum with the obverse imitating a coin of Constantine the Great dated to 325/326 CE and the reverse imitating an Ardoxšo reverse of Huviška.<sup>382</sup> Göbl 1967 considers it an “unüberwindliche Hürde” to explain how a later imitation would have used an Ardoxšo reverse of such early date as a model rather than a later one where the goddess is seen enthroned.<sup>383</sup> This is, in essence, the only argument for why he believed the obverse and reverse of the medallion must be contemporaneous and date to the years 326-330 CE, which would lead to a dating of Huviška in the same period.<sup>384</sup>

It should be sufficient to point out here that Göbl's medallion is unprovenanced and devoid of any archaeological context. It need not be denied that it is old,<sup>385</sup> but as there is no evidence for its purpose, there is also no ground for assuming that the models for the engraving must have been contemporary to each other or to the engraver, or that the engraver even regarded the models as being of any particular significance. For all that can be said of it, it may have been a fancy ornament designed to appeal to a particular sense of historicising fashion. These same considerations also apply to two further medallions introduced by Göbl 1999.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> e.g. *ibid*, 275, remarking on the second piece of evidence “sofern es dessen noch bedarf”.

<sup>382</sup> How important this medallion was to R. Göbl becomes clear by the fact that he published it in two separate articles (Göbl 1976 and 1987a) alongside extensive discussions in Göbl 1964; 1967, 301-08; 1993, 23-24 and 1999, 163-65. Göbl 1999, 167 seems to retract from this emphasis by claiming it (and two other medallions) to be a mere “*addendum*”.

<sup>383</sup> *Op. cit.*, 306-07.

<sup>384</sup> By Göbl 1993, 23-24 the interpretation has changed somewhat and it was now argued that the medallion must be from a period after Vāsudeva (I).

<sup>385</sup> cf. P.L. Gupta, British Museum Romano-Kushana Medallion. Its Nature and Importance. *JNSI XXXVIII* (1976), 73-81.

<sup>386</sup> *Op. cit.*, 165-68.

Based on these two interpretations, Göbl provided an enormous body of evidence that appears compelling at first.<sup>387</sup> However, it is soon clear that all his interpretations of sources rely on the truth of the two hypotheses discussed above. They cannot carry this sort of weight however, and R. Göbl's refused to consider other explanations for the phenomena he observed. Based on the evidence so far provided, the hypothesis of a third-century date for Kaniška must be put to rest.

### **3.4.6. Conclusion**

Majumdar 1968 poetically wrote of avoiding “theories skilfully woven of a finely spun thread of numismatic or archaeological data, which, like the spider's web, extorts our admiration but breaks at the slightest touch”.<sup>388</sup> As shown above, this ironically also goes for his own hypothesis and that of R. Göbl which agrees with his dating. The discussion has shown that a date of 127/28 CE does not find a compelling contradiction and agrees with the data as it is presently known. It will therefore be adopted in the following.

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<sup>387</sup> The most complete listing and discussion is found in Göbl 1993, 49-76. Some of the arguments were repeated in N. Schindel, When Did the Kushano-Sasanian Coinage Commence? In Payne/King 2020, 201-29.

<sup>388</sup> Majumdar 1968, 150.

### 3.5. The introduction of a new era by Kaniška I

Aside from the discussion of Kušān chronology, the existence of the era of Kaniška I itself deserves attention. It was of evident importance for Kušān political thought, as Rab 2-3 makes explicit mention of the foundation of the era: κιδι ιωγο χρονο νοβαστο σαγωδι βαγανο συνδαδο “who inaugurated the year one as the gods pleased”.<sup>389</sup> The mention of this foundation only makes sense if it is seen in context with the preceding grand titulature and the statement that Kaniška was granted his kingship by Nana. It is not part of the narrative context, which is introduced with the following στηα.<sup>390</sup>

The foundation of a new era is nothing unheard of for the region and period. Indeed, there appears to be quite an abundance of such, including the Seleukid, Arsakid, Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthian eras together with the Vikrama and Śaka eras.<sup>391</sup> Even though Falk 2012 has argued quite convincingly for the identity of several of these eras as new centuries of preceding ones, only the Indo-Parthian and Kaniška Eras can conclusively be eliminated as stand-alone ones. This places the Kaniška Era in particular in an interesting position. It appears to be the fourth century of an Indo-Greek era inaugurated in 175/74 BC.<sup>392</sup> As argued above, one of the most compelling reasons for believing so is that the year one of Kaniška I is close in time to the late-3rd century dates of his predecessors Vima Takto and Vima Kadphises, who used Greek calendars.

Falk 2004 has argued that the “dropping of hundreds” introduced by Kaniška I could be seen as influenced by the Roman *saeculum*, a one-hundred year period describing “[t]he idea of a maximal life span and of rejuvenation”.<sup>393</sup> Kaniška I in this sense would

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<sup>389</sup> On the meaning of νοβαστο “tied down” in the sense of “inaugurated” or “completed” cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 82.

<sup>390</sup> cf. chapter 4.3.3.

<sup>391</sup> Note also the three eras of the inscription ŠVŠ, cf. R. Altheim-Stiehl, Das früheste Datum der sasanidischen Geschichte, vermittelt durch die Zeitangabe der mittelpersisch-parthischen Inschrift aus Bīšāpūr, AMI N.F. 11 (1978), 113-16.

<sup>392</sup> First suggested by Cribb 2005, 214; picked up by Errington/Curtis 2007, 55, 67 and Falk/Bennett 2009, 208 and most recently incorporated in Falk 2012, 136.

<sup>393</sup> *Op. cit.*, 168.

have rejuvenated the Kušān Empire, and it would be particularly tempting to see in this act the completion of a hundred-year period elapsed since the foundation of the empire by Kujula Kadphises, which is completely possible in the established confines of chronology. If such an act of creation of a *saeculum* is indeed the case, then it would be very unlikely that the year 1 KE is the year of Kaniška's accession to the throne, and since the last known date before Kaniška is 287, this would leave a 13-year time-frame for his accession.

This possibility is worth considering especially in light of the major campaign to conquer India that Kaniška would have then deliberately planned to commence in the year one. H. Falk's suggestion of rejuvenation of the empire would thus have been marked especially by an unprecedented military conquest and territorial expansion. This, in turn, was marked by the establishment of monumental dynastic sanctuaries in the Kušān homeland that, under Kaniška, receives an upsurge in importance. This may not least be expressed by the introduction of Bactrian coin legends and thus the *de facto* establishment of Bactrian as the primary imperial language.

Falk 2015b takes these deliberations even further and suggests that Kaniška introduced a whole new calendar based on seasonal months starting with the monsoon and centred around a festival devoted to Nana and her conferral of royal authority.<sup>394</sup> This calendar then never proved popular in India and was soon abandoned. Falk 2015b also argues that this calendar was only introduced in the Indian parts of the empire.<sup>395</sup> This seems difficult to accept if one wants to maintain the point that Kaniška I intended to impose his authority on the whole empire, and introducing a completely new calendar to newly-conquered territories seems to be an arbitrary act that would only invite resistance. On

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<sup>394</sup> *Op. cit.*, 284-89.

<sup>395</sup> *Op. cit.*, 286.

the other hand, Kaniška would have demonstrated his awareness for distinct Indian and Iranian parts of the empire this way and might have used such a policy as a compromise solution to maintain his authority.<sup>396</sup>

In a study of the Seleukid era and its political and ideological meaning, Kosmin 2018 refers to “the copycat Arsacid and Kanishka Era counts” evidently unaware of the reasoning of the Kaniška Era as a *saeculum* of the Indo-Greek Era.<sup>397</sup> Both eras are briefly discussed and it is argued specifically for the Kaniška Era that the Rabatak βαρολαγγο was “explicitly” connected by Kaniška I to his foundation of a new era and calling it a “year one temple” and an “epoch-sanctuary” of Seleukid and Arsakid style.<sup>398</sup> The foundation of the βαρολαγγο in the year one as documented in Rab 20 is certainly no accident, but some of the details also pointed out by Kosmin do somewhat contradict the thesis developed here. First, the argument developed by Falk/Bennett 2009, that the Kaniška Era is the fourth century of the Indo-Greek era, which is not otherwise discussed in the book, is followed. Second, the statues of the predecessors of Kaniška I are also mentioned. This does not very well fit with the idea of the year one marking a new time especially in connection with the theories developed about the Seleukid (and, by extension, Arsakid) eras. After all, elsewhere the author writes of the Seleukids, “Seleucid temporality comes to resemble significant and well-studied features of Islamic time: the total discontinuity of a new beginning and the consigning of all pre-epochal phenomena to the historical basement of a *Jahiliyya* or “age of ignorance””.<sup>399</sup> How this could agree with an ancestral gallery set up by Kaniška I, the founder of this new epoch, is not addressed.

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<sup>396</sup> This would agree with the appreciation of a distinct Indian identity expressed in Rab 10a.

<sup>397</sup> *Op. cit.*, 41. *Ibid*, 99-100 on the other hand is aware of the arguments developed by Falk/Bennett 2009 of the Azēs Era being the third century of the Arsakid Era and the Kaniška Era as the fourth century of the Indo-Greek Era.

<sup>398</sup> *Op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>399</sup> *Op. cit.*, 90.

Falk's *saeculum* hypothesis appears far more likely, and the turn of a century may have been used by Kaniška to inspire enthusiasm, among his élites at least, for an expansion of imperial power that resulted in the conquest of India. Caution should be taken to go beyond this. It may be tempting to suggest an apotheosis of Kaniška in this context, but there is no evidence that he went beyond his predecessors in this regard. Indeed, the grandiose titulature found in Rab 1-2 remarkably does not represent an innovation, but is an almost verbatim repeat of DN1, even concerning the title βαγο ηζβογο “god worthy of worship”. The only difference, as will be discussed in chapter 6.2 is that Kaniška invokes divine favour as one of the bases for his rule.

## 4. The Kušān Bactrian Inscriptions as Literary Texts

### 4.1. The Bactrian language in the Kušān Empire

#### 4.1.1. The native language of the Kušān

The Kušān originated as invaders of Bactria. As such, they brought their own language which likely remained in use after the Kušān adopted Bactrian as the language of their imperial proclamations. Until Vāsudeva, the Kušān emperors had names that most likely belonged to their own language. The names of the first three emperors, Kujula Kadphises, Vima Takto and Vima Kadphises all contain surnames, a feature that is otherwise unattested among the Kušān. Sims-Williams 2002 provides some speculation on the meaning of these names, providing evidence that allow the conclusion that they may be of Iranian origin.<sup>400</sup> Among the following emperors, the three names Kaniška, Huviška and Vasiška all share the suffix *-iška* (Bact. -ηῖκο) which is commonly interpreted as a hypocoristic.<sup>401</sup> This seems to be particularly the case for Vasiška, which may be a hypocoristic of Vāsudeva.<sup>402</sup> The same may be true for Huviška (Οοηῖκο, Οουηῖκο), which is a possible hypocoristic of the name Vima (Οοημο).<sup>403</sup> The same suffix also appears in the name Κοζγαῖκο attested in SK4.<sup>404</sup> While the names of the emperors can be etymologised as Iranian, some other names appearing in a Kušān context provide more problems. These include Αλδῖο found on the seal Callieri Cat U 7.29, the aforementioned Κοζγαῖκο, Νοκονζοκο, found in Rab, NSP and SK4, Πιαῖο in Rab and possibly Χιργομανο in SK4, all of which are high officials with non-Bactrian names.<sup>405</sup> The name Kušān (Κοῖανο) itself also falls into this category. Sims-Williams

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<sup>400</sup> *Op. cit.*, 236-37.

<sup>401</sup> Sims-Williams 2002, 238-39.

<sup>402</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 42-43 (§ 60).

<sup>403</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 111 (354).

<sup>404</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 80 (§ 217).

<sup>405</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 80 (§217); 89 (§289); 115 (§371); 148 (§521).

2002 suggests that the language of these names is Iranian but otherwise unattested, and also the source of the common hypocoristic *-ške/-ška* in Tocharian B.<sup>406</sup> Some reasons are given here for considering it a Saka language.<sup>407</sup>

It is unknown if this language was used by the Kušān in any official capacity. A candidate for such a documentation would be the unknown language and script of DN3 and 5. This script has also been identified on objects from Khalchayan,<sup>408</sup> Surkh Kotal (SK7) and the Begram Hoard.<sup>409</sup> Recently, two inscriptions from the Almosi Gorge in Tadjikistan from the reign of Vima Takto have also been discovered with this script, together with a third one in Bactrian.<sup>410</sup> With the most recent finds, it has been possible to partially decipher the script and identify it as being based on Imperial Aramaic.<sup>411</sup> It has been suggested that it would be the language native to the area of the Dašt-i Nawur,<sup>412</sup> but this is unlikely for three reasons. First, the script seems to have been in use in Surkh Kotal and in northern Bactria in an official capacity. Second, in Kandahar, the use of Aramaic to write the local Iranian language is attested on an Aśokan Edict. It is likely that in the Dašt-i Nawur region, some 300 km away but directly linked to Arachosia, the same scribal tradition would have existed. Third, as mentioned, the script was found on objects from Bactrian locations far away from the Dašt-i Nawur.

The hierarchy of the languages in the Dašt-i Nawur inscriptions seems to speak against it being the language of the emperors, however. It comes only at third place after Bactrian and Gandhārī. However, the latter two can be considered the imperial *linguae francae* of the empire, whereas a native Kušān language would only have had

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<sup>406</sup> *Op. cit.*, 237-39.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-40.

<sup>408</sup> Fussman 1974, 27.

<sup>409</sup> On SK7 cf. Schlumberger et al 1983/I, 137-38 and Fussman 1974, 23.; on Begram cf. Morris 2021, 381.

<sup>410</sup> Bobomulloev, Khodzhaev, Bobomulloev 2022.

<sup>411</sup> cf. now Bonmann/Halfmann/Korobzow/Bobomulloev 2023. The remarks by Fussman 1974, 23 on the script are thus superseded. The language is certainly Middle Iranian.

<sup>412</sup> Fussman 1974, 33.



ceremonial significance for the emperors. The situation may be comparable to that of the Bisotun inscription, where an Old Persian version was added only after the Elamite and Babylonian ones were already written.

#### **4.1.2. The Graeco-Bactrian script of the Kušān period: Phonology and orthography**

In the Kušān period, Bactrian was written in Greek script. The Greek script is however highly defective for writing a Middle Iranian idiom. It is incapable of distinguishing plosives and fricatives or palatals and non-palatals. Its distinction between long and short vowels is incomplete and it lacks a grapheme for /h/. Some of these deficiencies were accounted for in various ways. A new grapheme β was developed for /š/ and various ways were devised for writing /h/. However, many ambiguities remain which continue to pose problems for the interpretation of some words.

Some writing conventions for phonemes not reflected in the Greek script can be determined from loanwords. In the Kušān period, these are mainly of Indian origin, although in the later Bactrian documents, these gradually include Middle Persian, Turkic and even Arabic. A particularly important piece of evidence is a fragment in the Berlin Turfan Collection written in Bactrian in Manichaean script (MB).<sup>413</sup> This fragment is not unproblematic, as it is of significantly later date than the Kušān inscriptions and the script is not always unambiguous, but it provides much information which helps to interpret the phonetics of the language. In the following, the individual graphemes used in the Graeco-Bactrian script will be analysed in order to determine the level of Greek language influence on the adaptation process.

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<sup>413</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2009 for the full publication (with references to earlier work) and Sims-Williams 2011a for a phonological study based primarily on the fragment.

#### 4.1.2.1. α

Both long and short /a/ exist in Bactrian, as MB shows.<sup>414</sup> There is no graphical distinction and α can reflect both in the same word, as e.g. in αβαβγο in which the former α is short < \*apa "away from", the latter long < \*āpa- "water".

#### 4.1.2.2. β

It appears that β should generally be regarded as fricativised in Bactrian. MB seems to show this as the norm, with plosive /b/ only appearing in loanwords. However, the Manichaean script is not always used consistently in this way. In Greek script, there are some indications that a fricative is to be assumed, especially in proper names such as βαζ(ο)δηο < Vāsudeva, βιζαγο < Viśakha or loan forms such as διβοποτρο < *devaputra* (Bactr. βαγεπουρο). However, β was evidently also used for loanwords with a plosive /b/ such as παλαβοτρο reflecting Skt. Pāṭaliputra-, and Βοδδο (Buddha). This is supported by evidence from M 1224. For the most part, the fricative /β/ is found, except for *b'gy(g)ynd* (r13), *bwt* (r18) and *zmbwd'ng* (v14), all of which would be loanwords as suggested by Sims-Williams 2009.<sup>415</sup>

#### 4.1.2.3. γ

The Manichaean fragment writes both plosive /g/ and fricativised /γ/, the former developing from Old Iranian /\*k/, the latter from initial and postvocalic /\*g/.

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<sup>414</sup> Sims-Williams 2011a, 245-46.

<sup>415</sup> Explicitly only for the reason of non-fricativised /b/ for *b'gyg op. cit.*, 258; *bwt* is "Buddha" (*ibid.*, 262) and *zmbwd'ng* is an adaptation of Skt. *jambu-dvīpa-* (*ibid.*, 265).

#### 4.1.2.3.1. γγ

Double gamma follows the Greek convention of writing a nasal /ŋ/ as in βαγολαγγο < \*baga-dānaka- with the typical Bactrian development of OIr. -\*ānaka- to Bactrian -αγγο. /ŋ/ can also be a development of OIr. /\*mk/. Both variants are found in αγγαδδιγγο < \*ham-gata-dayana-ka-. Bactrian /ŋ/ can also simply be the nasal resulting from Old Iranian /\*ng/, as in ασαγγε "(of) stone" < \*atsanga-.

#### 4.1.2.4. δ

The Manichaean fragment does not contain any instance of the letter /δ/. It is thus unclear if Delta in Bactrian was used to express only plosive /d/ or also fricative /ð/.<sup>416</sup> The later Bactrian convention of writing δδ before a palatal vowel does not yet occur in Kušān Bactrian. The only occurrence of δδ here is in αγγαδδιγγο (Rab 18), explained by Sims-Williams 2008 as \*ham-gata-da-yana-ka-,<sup>417</sup> meaning it would be the result of a merging of -t- and -d-. For the spellings δδ and Δ in later Bactrian, N. Sims-Williams suggests that possibly, they “were adopted as unambiguous ways of indicating [d] at a period when δ in most positions had come to be pronounced as a fricative [ð]”.<sup>418</sup> This phenomenon is first attested in document ‘F’ dated to 470 CE, meaning it would not be expected in the Kušān period.<sup>419</sup>

#### 4.1.2.5. ε

The use of ε suggests that advantage was taken of the ability of the Greek script to distinguish between long and short /e/ by way of ε and η. However, the evidence paints

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<sup>416</sup> Sims-Williams 2011a, 246.

<sup>417</sup> *Op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>418</sup> BD2, 39.

<sup>419</sup> Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 60 (criterion 1a), where some attestations are dated slightly earlier to 462 CE.

a more complicated picture. Most commonly, ε is found in conjunction with ι, apparently in an attempt to write a long /ī/ by way of ει. This convention is lost in later Bactrian and ει is gradually replaced simply by ε or ι in the Bactrian documents.

Without ι, ε is found most commonly as a case ending plural direct or oblique singular. In Kušān Bactrian, there is only one case of ε not in this function, in κεδο in SK4M 2, spelled κεδι in SK4B 3 and κιδο in SK4A 3.<sup>420</sup> Its Sogdian cognate is κδ',<sup>421</sup> Parthian \*(?)kd',<sup>422</sup> indicating ε as a short vowel. A single ε also appears in a 3rd plural perfect active ending νιβιχτιγενδι (Rab 11, 17), the ε later written ι.<sup>423</sup>

#### 4.1.2.6. ζ

Typically, ζ writes a voiced alveolar fricative /z/, but in some cases, it is also used to denote voiced and voiceless palatals. This is especially apparent in loan forms such as βιζαγο (Viśakha), ζιριτ[ι]αμβο (Śrī-Campā), κωζαμβο (Kauśāmbī) and κοζουλο (Kujula). It also seems to write native palatals, in words such as χουζο < \*xwřžu- and ριζαο < \*xsijā. This use of ζ is continued in the Bactrian Documents. MB provides ample evidence for both /z/ and the palatals.<sup>424</sup> The identity of ζ with /z/ was apparently so strong that it was the source for spelling mistakes, as the form υασιλογανζειγο in SK4B 25-26 next to the “proper” form αστιλογανσειγι in SK4M 22 suggests.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Not to be confused with rel. pron. κιδο “who, whom, whose, which, whoever, etc.” < \*ka- + -δο (BD2, 222), cf. Henning 1960, 49, fn. 1. There are only few cases in the Bactrian Documents of ε appearing on its own not in a suffix. In most cases, it seems to be a dialectal variant of initial α turned ε, twice ε rather than ιε and only one clear case of initial ε from OIr. \*u or \*ā in εζ-, although it is attested only once, making it possible that it would regularly be spelled differently. The verb εδρ- is of unknown etymology. In most other cases, ε reflects ει, sometimes ιε (usually from ιειρο).

<sup>421</sup> GMS §1519.

<sup>422</sup> GWMI, 216.

<sup>423</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 93.

<sup>424</sup> Sims-Williams 2011a, 248-50.

<sup>425</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2011a, 249, also Henning 1965b, 79.

#### 4.1.2.7. η

Most commonly, η seems to write Bactrian /ē/ from OIr. /\*ai/ or semivocalic /\*y/. For the former feature cf. e.g., ρηδγε, MP *rēdag* < \**raitaka*, for the latter e.g. ηζνογο < \**yazniya-ka* vs. MP *yazad*,<sup>426</sup> μαρηγο < \**mar(i)yaka*. A derivation from \*a or \*ā is also seen, e.g., κηρι < \**karya-* or \**kārya-*, μαζδηγγο perhaps < \**maz-dā-ka*.

It is also commonly used to write closed front vowels in loan forms, such as βαζ(ο)δηο < *Vāsudeva*, σαγηδο < *Sāketa* or μαασηνο < *Mahāsenā*, while the exact nature of the vowel in Kušān names such as οσημο, κανηβκο or οσηβκο is unclear.

A problematic case is ανδηζο, in which -δηζο may be an archaic variant of common Bactrian λιζο < \**dizā-*, suggesting that at some point, OIr. /\*i/ may have developed into (proto-)Bactrian /ē/ before becoming /i/.

#### 4.1.2.8. θ

N. Sims-Williams remarks that θ would not write a voiceless dental fricative /θ/, as such would not be expected to have survived in Bactrian, but rather it is to be seen as a “historical writing for [h]”.<sup>427</sup> The reasoning is that with the exception of two proper names, it only appears in the spelling for ιθαο < \**iθā*. Bactrian ιθα- later develops into ια- and is frequently written with a superscript line “to mark the omission of the expected υ = [h]”.<sup>428</sup> The use of the letter almost exclusively for this word should inspire some caution, especially as it appears written this way in Kušān Bactrian already. It would be difficult to explain a “historical” or historicising spelling in a recently introduced script, which suggests that at least in the Kušān period, /θ/ may still have survived in this isolated case, although it seems that it developed to /h/ in later Bactrian.

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<sup>426</sup> Kušāno-Bactrian IAZOΔO and late Bactrian ιεζιδ- are both clearly Middle Persian loan forms (cf. BD2, 217b).

<sup>427</sup> BD2, 218a.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

In Kušān Bactrian, the letter also occurs on coins of Kaniška I and Huviška in the writing of the divine name AΘPO.<sup>429</sup> It would be hard to explain this spelling as reverence to a historical form of the name, especially as /θ/ not only disappeared in the divine name Mupo < \*miθra-, but scribes also had a strong tendency to reflect /h/ < /\*θ/ in this name, as spellings such as μυπο, μυπο, μυπο etc. suggest. The presence of θ should thus probably be taken as genuine in the time of the conception of the coin legends.

#### 4.1.2.9. ι

Apparently, ι is both used to write a short vowel /i/ and, preceding other vowels, a semi-vocalic /y/, e.g., ιωναγγο. It seems as though the letter can take both functions at the same time, as in αριαο < \*ariya-□ι. Long /ī/ is usually written ει. The combination ηι only appears in Kušān Bactrian as the 3 sg. encl. pron. \*-hai and the 2 or 3 sg. opt. ending,<sup>430</sup> and should thus represent a diphthong rather than a long vowel.

#### 4.1.2.10. κ

There is no particular anomaly with κ writing a voiceless velar stop /k/. In the earliest Kušān coins of the Heraios type, the word *Kušān* is occasionally written with an initial χ rather than κ, suggesting perhaps the presence of a phoneme between a velar stop and a velar fricative that cannot entirely accurately be represented by κ or χ, although this may be a phenomenon of the native Kušān language rather than Bactrian. The letter is of some importance especially in personal names in Bactrian, as it sometimes appears

<sup>429</sup> Either < nom. sg. OAv. \*atərəš or gen. sg. Av. aθrō, cf. Humbach/Faiss 2011, 66 and Grenet 2015, 214.

<sup>430</sup> The latter is critically discussed in Jügel 2015, 97-100.

in an intervocalic position which normally in Bactrian should have turned to  $\gamma$ , thus indicating a name of non-Bactrian origin.

#### 4.1.2.11. $\lambda$

The development of OIr. /\*d/ via /\* $\delta$ / to /l/ is one of the most characteristic features of Bactrian. There are only two cases in Kušān Bactrian in which  $\delta$  is written where  $\lambda$  would be expected. The first is  $\alpha\gamma\gamma\alpha\delta\delta\iota\gamma\gamma\omicron$ , where the writing  $\delta\iota\gamma\gamma\omicron$  rather than \* $\lambda\iota\gamma\gamma\omicron$  may be influenced by the preceding  $\delta$  of  $\alpha\gamma\gamma\alpha\delta$ - < \**hamgata*, although here a religiously inspired archaism should not be excluded in the face of the name  $\delta\iota\upsilon\omicron/\delta\delta\iota\upsilon\omicron$  for the 24th day of the month in the Zoroastrian calendar from the Bactrian documents.<sup>431</sup> The second case of the preservation of OIr. /\*d/ can be found in the word  $\alpha\nu\delta\eta\zeta\omicron$  which writes  $-\delta\eta\zeta\omicron$  as what might be an archaic form of  $\lambda\iota\zeta\omicron/\lambda\iota\zeta(\gamma)\alpha$ .

#### 4.1.2.12. $\mu$

There is in principle no problem with  $\mu$  writing /m/, although note should be taken of the appearance of a doubling of the consonant in  $\omicron\mu\mu\alpha$  in Rab 9 and 10 that is unique in the entire Bactrian corpus. Sims-Williams 2017 argues that it may be the result of the assimilation of a consonant cluster \*šm.<sup>432</sup> Falk 2019 however suggests that  $\omicron\mu\mu\alpha$  may not be an Iranian word at all, but a Semitic loanword.<sup>433</sup>

#### 4.1.2.13. $\nu$

Old Iranian /\*n/ is typically preserved and written with  $\nu$  in Bactrian. However, a nasal / $\eta$ / can develop in various ways and is written  $\gamma\gamma$  (qv.) following Greek convention. In

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<sup>431</sup> Sims-Williams/de Blois 1998, 151 suggest a loanword.

<sup>432</sup> *Op. cit.*, 451. The hypothesis presented here on the identity of  $\omicron\mu\mu\alpha$  together with that of Falk 2019 will be discussed in chapter 6.1.2.

<sup>433</sup> *Op. cit.*, 31.

two known cases from Kušān Bactrian, /\*rn/ develops into the written form ρρ (qv.). /\*n/ is lost in καρἀλαργγο < \*karāna-dranga.

#### 4.1.2.14. ο

One of the most versatile letters in the Graeco-Bactrian alphabet, ο regularly reflects semi-vocalic Old Iranian /\*w/ and a short back rounded vowel /u/. It is unclear if it also writes a voiced labiodental fricative /v/, as this is usually reflected by β.

οο seems to reflect a syllable /hu/ as in οοηρκο “Huviška” (or more accurately then “Huwēšk”), although internally it may also sometimes represent /h/ as in βαγεπουρο (otherwise βαγεπουρο). In combination with υ, ου can represent a long /ū/ following Greek convention as in κοζουλο,<sup>434</sup> although it might also represent the combination -uh- as in βαγεπουρο.

A final -ο typically functions as a marker to end the word, although the possibility exists that at least sometimes it also represents a genuine final vowel (qv. chapter 4.1.2.24.).

#### 4.1.2.15. π

The Old Iranian voiceless labial stop /\*p/ is preserved and written using π. MB indicates that at some point, postvocalic /\*p/ had developed into a fricative /β/,<sup>435</sup> but there is no indication of this in Kušān Bactrian. Possibly this is reflected in νιβισ-/νοβισ < \*ni-pinsa-/pixšta-, although it would be very early.<sup>436</sup> The only further indicator for a fricativisation would be the GN λαφο which is generally interpreted as reflecting Greek Δράψακα and variations thereof.<sup>437</sup> If this is the case and the name is indeed

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<sup>434</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 80 (§218).

<sup>435</sup> Sims-Williams 2011, 246.

<sup>436</sup> For a discussion of further examples cf. Gholami 2014, 33.

<sup>437</sup> Lazard/Grenet/Lamberterie 1984, 205.



derived from an Old Iranian *\*Draḥšaka-*, the form using ψ should be regarded a Greek alteration, as Old Iranian */\*f/* is generally preserved in Bactrian.

#### 4.1.2.16. ρ

OIr. */\*r/* is preserved and written using ρ. Old Iranian */\*r̥/* is developed to /ιρ/, e.g. κῖρδο < *\*kr̥ta-*.

#### 4.1.2.16.1. ρρ

Kušān Bactrian features two occasions of a doubling ρρ which both seem to reflect a consonant cluster */\*rn/*: ζορριγο < *\*zr̥haka-* with the vowel apparently displaced by metathesis, and φαρρο < *\*h̥uarnah-*. This phenomenon is not observed in later Bactrian. Instead, any reference to an /n/ following /r/ is lost, as seen in φαρο. This spelling is already found on numerous coins of Huviška, but not on those of Kaniška I.

This appearance of ρρ should not be put in relation to the spelling KOPPANOY found on the Heraios coinage, where it rather reflects a stage towards the development of ʁ (qv.).

#### 4.1.2.17. σ

MB shows that Greek σ writes three distinct sounds, /s/, /ś/ and /c/.<sup>438</sup> All three variants seem to appear in Kušān Bactrian. /s/ is by far the most common. /ś/ is relatively rare but does occur, importantly in αβισσι (MB *hβysś*) and οισποανο (MB *wysp*). As in MB, σ also reflects OIr. /č/, e.g. ασιδο (MB (')*cyd*). /ś/ from Indian proper names is however regularly written ζ.

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<sup>438</sup> Sims-Williams 2011, 247; cf. already Henning 1960, 49.

αβισσι in Kušān Bactrian may be explained as /s/ from αβισο encountering the particle -ισο < \*čid, meaning that apparently two different phonemes written with the same Greek letter are found here. The same seems to be true for αρηισσο with the ordinal αρηισο and the same enclitic -σο. λασσο however represents an ordinal \*dasama-čiya- with reduction of -σμοσ- to -σσ-.<sup>439</sup>

#### 4.1.2.18. τ

OIr. /\*t/ is preserved in initial positions and following consonants, whereas postvocalic it develops to /d/. Sims-Williams 1985a has shown that οτο is not a contradiction to this rule, as it developed from οδο + -δο, the τ resulting from the encounter of the two δ. The same applies to ατο. Postvocalic -τ otherwise occurs as a 3 sg. pret. verbal ending,<sup>440</sup> while βατριαγγο and παλαβοτρο are an Indian loan forms. αγιτα is best explained as a verbal ending, although the word is problematic.<sup>441</sup>

In the case of ζιριτ[ι]αμβο (*Śrī-Campā-*), τ seems to reflect a palatal /c/ although as a foreign geographical name, it is probably indeterminable what exact phonological value it was meant to express.

#### 4.1.2.19. υ and /h/

The most common use of υ in Bactrian is to write /h/ for which there is otherwise no grapheme in the Greek alphabet. This use is however not consistent. In Kušān Bactrian, the same words can appear written with and without υ. Thus, Rab, NSP and SK4B write variations of βαγεποορο, SK4M and A write βαγεπουορο. It is common to find initial υ representing /h/ in the Bactrian Documents, but this is very rare in the Kušān

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<sup>439</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 261.

<sup>440</sup> Sims-Williams 1985a, 114-16.

<sup>441</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 60-61.

inscriptions, with only three known instances, all in SK4:  $\upsilon\alpha\rho\upsilon\gamma\omicron$  (vs  $\alpha\rho\upsilon\gamma\omicron$  in Rab),  $\upsilon\iota\rho\sigma\omicron$  and  $\upsilon\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\lambda\omicron\gamma\alpha\nu\zeta\epsilon\iota\gamma\omicron$  in SK4B vs  $\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\lambda\omicron\gamma\alpha\nu\sigma\epsilon\iota\gamma\iota$  in SK4M. Overall, there is a stronger tendency in all variants of SK4 to write  $\upsilon$  for /h/ where it is not done so in Rab. There are other ways of writing /h/ in Kušān Bactrian if the phoneme is not simply omitted. The presence of /h/ is often indicated by a doubling of the preceding vowel, as in  $\beta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\pi\omicron\omicron\rho$  or  $\mu\upsilon\rho\omicron$  vs the spellings  $\beta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon\rho\omicron$  and  $\mu\iota\upsilon\rho\omicron$ .<sup>442</sup> Sometimes, it even seems as if  $\omicron$  is used to write /h/, as some coin legends reading MIOPO seem to suggest. As noted above, the use of  $\theta$  for /h/ in  $\iota\theta\omicron$  seems unlikely to have been the original intention, although it likely came to be read this way at some point. In the Bactrian Documents, it became commonplace to write a superscript line to indicate a missing letter, most commonly /h/.

In combination with  $\omicron$ ,  $\upsilon$  sometimes also writes a long /ū/ as in  $(\upsilon)\alpha\rho\upsilon\gamma\omicron$  and  $\lambda\rho\upsilon\gamma\omicron$ , although the combination can also write -uh- as in  $\pi\omicron\upsilon\rho\omicron$  and  $\lambda\rho\upsilon\mu\iota\nu\alpha\nu\omicron$ . The use of initial  $\upsilon$  to write a syllable /hi/ in  $\upsilon\nu\delta\omicron$  is exceptional and only found in this word.<sup>443</sup>

#### 4.1.2.20. $\phi$

A rare letter,  $\phi$  appears almost exclusively at the beginning of a word in Kušān Bactrian and almost always leading a consonant cluster /fr/. In the few exceptions to this, the consonant cluster is broken by a vowel, but still always representing either  $\phi\alpha\rho$ - or  $\phi\omicron\rho$ -. Of the four instances of  $\phi$  occurring in a non-initial position, three are proper names ( $\kappa\alpha\delta\phi\iota\sigma\omicron$ ,  $\lambda\rho\alpha\phi\omicron$ ,  $\beta\alpha\phi\alpha\rho\omicron$ ) which may represent archaic or non-Bactrian forms. Only in one case does  $\phi$  appear in a non-initial position in a regular Bactrian word,  $\lambda\phi\alpha\chi\tau\omicron$  in DN1 6-7, so read by Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 without explanation,<sup>444</sup> but

<sup>442</sup> This speaks against the reconstructed form *Mihir* for  $\mu\iota\upsilon\rho\omicron$  as suggested e.g. by Sims-Williams 2008, 56.

<sup>443</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 59-60.

<sup>444</sup> Op. cit., 95.

apparently reflecting Sogdian δβ'yz “to gain”. This tendency appears to be due to the limited vocabulary of Kušān Bactrian, as the letter appears more frequently and in different positions in the Bactrian Documents.

#### 4.1.2.21. χ

For the most part, the OIr. velar fricative /\*x/ is preserved in Bactrian and written with χ. In some cases, χ seems to be derived from OIr. /\*h/, e.g. χοβι < \*hwa-paθya- and χοτο < \*hušta-, although the etymology of the latter is controversial and \*xwarta has also been suggested. There are some hints that χ may also have occasionally reflected a velar stop. These include the early spelling ΧΟΠΑΝΟΥ on some coins of Kujula Kadphises and the possibility that Khotanese *kšuna* may be derived from Bactrian χβοβο.<sup>445</sup>

#### 4.1.2.22. ω

In Kušān Bactrian, ω appears in two distinct roles. At the beginning of the word, it appears to be derived from OIr. /\*awa/, e.g. ωσταδο < \*awa-stāta-, and ωσπορδο < \*awa-sprta-. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that in Rab, the name of Ahura Mazda is written as Αορομοζδο in Rab, but later appears as WOPOMOZΔO on the coins of Huviška. Within a word, it usually represents the OIr. diphthong /\*au/, e.g. βωγο < \*bauga and ωναγγο < \*yauna-ānaka.

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<sup>445</sup> This proposal agrees with H.W. Bailey's etymology of Khot. *kšuna*-. Meanwhile, the suggested derivation of χβοβο from Greek χρόνος first suggested by Humbach 1966/1, 23-24 has been put into question, cf. now M.J.C. Scarborough, χβοβο '(calendar) year, (regnal) year', JRAS 2021 (= FS de Blois), 599-607.

In the case of  $\omega\gamma\omicron < *aiwaka-$ ,  $\omega$  seems to unusually represent  $/*wa/$ . There should be no doubt that  $\omega$  represents  $/\bar{o}/$  as a long vowel distinct from  $/o/$  or  $/u/$ .<sup>446</sup>

#### 4.1.2.23. $\rho$

The only new letter developed for the Graeco-Bactrian alphabet is  $\rho$ . This development process can be observed on early Kušān coins which still possess Greek language legends. The  $/š/$  of the word Kušān was at first written in various ways, including PC and PP before the the latter form was developed into the merging of the two Rhos into  $\rho$ .<sup>447</sup> As such,  $\rho$  always represents  $/š/$ , which is commonly inherited from OIr., although in a postvocalic position  $/*š/$  sometimes develops into  $/h/$ , e.g.  $\nu\alpha\alpha\rho\tau\omicron < *ni-šašta-$  and  $\epsilon\mu\omicron\alpha\nu\omicron < *imaišānam$ . Initial  $\rho$  also represents OIr.  $/*xš/$  as in  $\rho\alpha\omicron\rho < *xšaθra-$ , and in the case of  $\rho\alpha\tau\rho\iota\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$ , it seems to have lost the initial  $k$  from the Indian form *kṣatriya* (or *kṣatrapa*).

#### 4.1.2.24. Word Ending

It has long been recognised that Bactrian words always end in vowels, most commonly  $-o$ . This has led to the supposition that, rather than representing a genuine vowel,  $o$  has developed into an unpronounced marker to end the word. In Kušān Bactrian, words ending in other vowels are still relatively abundant, serving various functions, including oblique endings, noun gender and verbal endings, while conjunctions and pronouns ending in  $-ι$  are also frequent. It is tempting to regard the final  $-o$  on coin legends to have developed from a Greek genitive ending  $-ου$  in the face of the development from the Heraios and Kujula Kadphises coinage.

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<sup>446</sup> Gholami 2014 does not properly distinguish between the two forms and mixes them uncritically on pp. 61-63. This is regrettable as some exceptions seem to be listed (e.g.,  $\sigma\alpha\beta\omicron\lambda\omicron < *sapauda-$ ) that would deserve an investigation.

<sup>447</sup> This use of  $\rho$  for a palatal  $/š/$  or  $/ś/$  can already be seen on coins of Spalirises, cf. Senior: 73-75.

An aspect that has been left largely unregarded is that the three versions of SK4 differ significantly regarding the word endings. SK4B presents a number of words ending in different vowels, most commonly -ι while SK4M, the version that was eventually put on display, almost uniformly ends words in -ο. There are only few exceptions to this rule, the oblique forms *κανηβκι* (SK4M 2), *ασαγγε* (SK4M 13) and *βαγε* (SK4M 4 and 15), and the article *μα*. The situation leaves the impression that there was a deliberate purge of any final vowels other than -ο that however shied away from eliminating oblique endings. SK4B is revealing in this aspect, as it shows a tendency towards uniform endings, but makes occasional mistakes that are grammatically explicable, e.g., writing *λιζα* rather than *λιζο* in SK4B 6, a spelling supported by Rab 22.

#### **4.1.3. The process of adapting Greek script for writing Bactrian**

Greek was the primary administrative language of Bactria from the Hellenistic period on. Although there was initially no break in the use of Aramaic after the conquest of Bactria by Alexander, Greek had become the favoured language in religious contexts by ca. 300 BCE, as the inscriptions from the Oxus Temple in Takht-i Sangin attest.<sup>448</sup> The Aśokan inscription from Kandahar shows that by his reign (268-232 BCE), Greek was favoured over Iranian and Aramaic literary traditions in this region. The Sōphytos Inscription also from Kandahar puts further weight to this interpretation.<sup>449</sup> Coins minted in Bactria under the Seleucids and Graeco-Bactrians carry exclusively Greek legends and, unlike coins from territories to the south and the east adopting Indo-Greek traditions, continue to do so until the Kušān period. At Aī Khanoum, all monumental

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<sup>448</sup> Rougemont 2012, 196-99, recently re-evaluated in Ivanchik 2013 and by Melloni 2020.

<sup>449</sup> Mairs 2014, 113-17.

and most administrative texts found were written in Greek.<sup>450</sup> Based on this evidence, it is safe to say that by the Kušān period, any Aramaic administrative tradition originating from the Achaemenian Empire had died out. This is worth pointing out because the Aramaic tradition was kept in Sogdiana, Parthia and the Persis even though Greek *poleis* also existed in these territories and Greek was used by imperial governments during the Seleukid and Arsakid periods.<sup>451</sup> Bactria represents a unique case in the preservation of Greek best explained by the relatively long rule of Greek dynasties here contrary to other Iranian territories.

Ivantchik 2013 has interpreted an unexplained Greek inscription on a limestone bowl from Takht-i Sangin as an early attempt to render the native Bactrian language in Greek script.<sup>452</sup> The inscription is dated by palaeographic considerations and archaeological context to the mid-to second half of the 2nd century BCE.<sup>453</sup> This leaves a gap of at least two centuries before the first full Bactrian text written in Greek script, DN1, is known from the reign of Vima Takto. This is a problem insofar as the palaeography of the Kušān inscriptions is closely related to that of the texts from Takht-i Sangin. This is less clear with the limited number of graphemes on the limestone bowl, but quite apparent with the inscriptions from the Oxus Moulds from the same site, which date to approximately the same period. These inscriptions have been interpreted by Ivantchik 2013 as Greek, albeit composed by someone with insufficient knowledge of the Greek language and with what is probably an Iranian name. This interpretation is taking into account dialectological developments of Greek in Bactria, such as the disappearance of

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<sup>450</sup> But note an Aramaic ostrakon from the temple with indented niches in Aī Khanoum, Rapin/Grenet 1983, 347-48 and further two other small non-Greek inscriptions of which one, apparently in Bactrian, postdates the Greek period (*ibid*, 348-49).

<sup>451</sup> However, Aramaic was apparently not entirely extinct, as the development of the script of the unknown language shows, see above chapter 4.1.1.

<sup>452</sup> *Op. cit.*, 137-139.

<sup>453</sup> The dating is either contemporary or prior to the Oxus Moulds which are dated to the mid-2nd century BCE by a coin of Heliokles, cf. Ivantchik 2013, 136-137, also Rougemont 2012, 199, both with further (archaeological) literature.

the dative case.<sup>454</sup> Apparently, the Kušān were exposed to a culture in which written Greek was already degrading, and in which cursive variants of the script were used for monumental purposes.

The only evidence available to bridge the gap between the finds at Takht-i Sangin and DN1 are coin legends. The most instructive case for the interaction between Greek script and non-Greek language is the Heraios coinage which is now most commonly attributed to Kujula Kadphises.<sup>455</sup> It exhibits some of the problems faced when reducing what is probably Bactrian to writing using the Greek script. The most urgent problem seems to have been the rendering of the phoneme /š/ which features in the name *Kušān*. Evidently, it was not considered sufficient to employ one of the established conventions of reflecting Iranian /š/ in Classical Greek.<sup>456</sup> The favoured solution involved the adaptation of the letter Rho, which may indicate that /r/ had become palatalised in Bactria, similar to Czech /ř/. Most commonly, the name was written KOPPANOY, i.e., doubling the Rho probably to distinguish it from a regular /r/ sound as found in the word TYPANNOYNTOC in the same legends. A variation is found in the spelling KOOANOY, in which /š/ seems to have been rendered by a simple doubling of the preceding vowel, something that resembles later methods of writing /h/.<sup>457</sup> Later Heraios issues spell the word XOPCANOY, which may be interpreted as a middle way of combining a palatalised /ř/ with the more traditional practice of reflecting Iranian /š/ with Sigma. Some issues of Kujula Kadphises on the other hand spell XOPANCY. Apart from the difficulty of finding an acceptable way of reflecting /š/, these legends also seem to imply that the /k/ in the Kušān name was not pronounced the same as in

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<sup>454</sup> *Op. cit.*, 128.

<sup>455</sup> cf. chapter 3.2.2.

<sup>456</sup> Reflecting /s/ as in Ὑστάσπης for Vištāspa- and Ξέρξης for Xšayaṛšan-.

<sup>457</sup> cf. chapter 4.1.2.19.



Kujula Kadphises for instance but was perhaps aspirated.<sup>458</sup> If it existed, this difference was apparently not very significant however, and apart from these coin legends, the word is spelled exclusively with Kappa.

The double Rho variant seems to have been the favoured one, and eventually the two Rhos were merged into one grapheme ϐ. This single letter is already established in DN1, so the decision to merge the letters must have been made late in the reign of Kujula Kadphises or early in that of Vima Takto. It is noteworthy that the ϐ of DN1 has an open loop, as does the Rho, and the script of DN1 as a whole reflects the “angular” version that seems to have been the more prestigious variant of the Greek script at the time,<sup>459</sup> and closely resembles the script from the Oxus Moulds. Both the “angular” and the “round” version of cursive Greek were used for inscriptions simultaneously under the early Kušān. This is evident from the three versions of SK4, but also from the “angular” variant used in NSP next to the “round” in Rab. The most significant departure in NSP and SK4 from DN1 is that the loop in Rho and ϐ is consistently closed. The “round” variant of the script however soon became the favoured one, apparently already under Vima Kadphises.<sup>460</sup> The Omikron, Sigma, Epsilon and Omega on the coin legends of Vima Kadphises are always round. Rho and ϐ appear on coin legends only from Kaniška I onwards. The loop in ϐ is always closed, Rho has a tendency to be closed, although open forms do appear occasionally. The letters continue to develop on Kušān coin legends however, towards the forms found in the “cursive Bactrian” script found in the Bactrian documents and later inscriptions. There is a marked shift from the coin legends of Huviška to those of Vasudeva I, which can be seen in the size of the

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<sup>458</sup> cf. chapter 4.1.2.21.

<sup>459</sup> Ivantchik 2013, 135-136.

<sup>460</sup> cf. SK2 in Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983/2, pl. 17; however, SK1 was still written in angular script, cf. *ibid*, pl. 35.

letters and the distance between them, but also the prevalence of a round Alpha, which already appears occasionally in SK4B.<sup>461</sup>

The three versions of SK4 are in any case instructive for the existence of a monumental Bactrian script which closely follows the cursive Greek used for inscriptions in Bactria next to a further development of these cursive forms towards cursive Bactrian. SK4B shows many of these cursive Bactrian forms, especially marked in the case of  $\alpha$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\zeta$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\sigma$  and  $\omega$ . Interestingly, the occasional angular  $\rho$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\phi$  and  $\beta$  is found, whereas SK4M, which apparently represents the “official” variant for public display, purges these completely with the exception of  $\rho$  and  $\sigma$ , while maintaining an angular  $\alpha$  not found in SK4B. SK4A on the other hand has a strong tendency towards angular shapes. It seems that several scribal tendencies existed and there was confusion over which variants were the ones officially endorsed, leading to multiple variants even within the same version of the inscription. Interestingly, this confusion did not seem to exist in Rab, where the letters have a higher degree of uniformity even than SK4M. The script of Rab is by and large that of SK4M with the exception of the round  $\alpha$  which is of the same shape as found in SK4B.

A strange deviation is found on the first gold issue of Kaniška I, which has Greek legends.<sup>462</sup> It seems to use a variant of monumental Greek script distinct from the cursive Greek used in Bactria. This is most apparent in the bar of the  $\alpha$ , which is pointed down in the middle and does not extend in an angle from the lower left corner as common in cursive Greek. This variant of the Alpha is found commonly in monumental Greek inscriptions from the Seleukid period in western Iran but is not known from any

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<sup>461</sup> The palaeography of SK4 is easiest followed using the plates in Göbl 1965. A tracing of Rab is found in Sims-Williams 2008, 54 (reproduced in Sims-Williams 2012, 77).

<sup>462</sup> Göbl: 25-32.

inscriptions in Bactria.<sup>463</sup> It appears that Kaniška wanted to emphasise the Greek language of the coin legends as opposed to the Bactrian ones, which appear on gold issues with the same iconography to these Greek issues. However, it is curious that this type of monumental script disappears in western Iran after the fall of the Seleucids to reappear without any known precedent on the coinage of the Arsakid Gotarzes II (40-51 CE).<sup>464</sup> In the Arsakid Empire, this may have been used deliberately as an archaisising element, but its sudden and singular appearance on Kaniška's coinage more than half a century later is more mysterious. Whether any native model in Bactria was available to the engravers is doubtful, as there is no trace of this type of script in the however scarce epigraphic record.

#### **4.2. Kušān language policy**

It has been shown above that the process of reducing Bactrian to writing using Greek script was a lengthy one, but also that it cannot be regarded as a mechanical process in which phonemes and graphemes were simply equated with each other. There are reasons to believe that in the Kušān period, there were still individuals in Bactria who spoke and wrote Greek and were involved in the adaptation process. A strong indicator is the inscription SK3 which was written in Bactrian but with a Greek colophon suggesting the inscription was written by a certain Palamedes. The sequence of letters  $\alpha\iota\delta\nu\omicron\sigma$  in Rab 23 has also been suggested to be indicative of a scribe with a Greek name.<sup>465</sup> In this case however, the colophon must be in Bactrian, as otherwise the name would be expected to be in genitive case as in SK3.

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<sup>463</sup> L. Morris informed me that this Alpha type is found on some unpublished Greek inscriptions from Sīstān.

<sup>464</sup> Sellwood: 66.

<sup>465</sup> Sims-Williams 1998, 88. The reading of the word was modified in Sims-Williams 2008 (without further comment), although the ending which the interpretation as Greek is based on is retained.

In this regard, it is important to discuss a sentence from Rab 3-4 that has attracted much attention:

οτηια ι ωναγγο οασο οζοαστο ταδηια αριαο ωσταδο

And he \*issued a Greek \*edict [and] then he put it into Aryan.

The verbatim translation of this sentence poses few problems. Both verbs have other attestations in Kušān Bactrian. οζοαστο (3. sg. pret.) is found as PPP in Surkh Kotal, where it refers to the gods of the sanctuary (i.e., the statues) being “led out” to Lraf, probably meaning that they were removed from the sanctuary and brought to safety when there was a military threat to the sanctuary.<sup>466</sup>

The case of ωσταδο is a bit more complicated. It reappears in all three major Kušān inscriptions. The two further occurrences of the verb in Rab 6 and 7 are in connection with αβο ι σινδο, resulting in the meaning “(he) placed (something) to his will”, in this context meaning that he had subjugated or conquered India. A different meaning is found in NSP 2, where the 1.sg. tr. pret. ωσταδημι is used to describe an act of Kaniška towards Nokonzok namely “placing” him as an equal (αμσασογο) to his father and grandfather.<sup>467</sup> In SK4M 18, the verb is used in 3. sg. pret. to refer to the physical installation of an unidentified item (αλβαργο) during the construction work of the well of Surkh Kotal. Hence, the variety of possible semantic meanings of ωσταδο is quite wide, which adds a first layer of difficulty to the interpretation of the sentence.

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<sup>466</sup> SK4M, 12, here PPP οζοοαστο next to the (purely orthographic) variants αζοοαστο (SK4 A, 18) and ζοοαστι (SK4 B, 16).

<sup>467</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 259-260.

More problematic however is the meaning of  $\alpha\alpha\sigma\omicron$ . It can be understood as a noun referring to the wider field of “speech”, and suggestions have been made to translate it with “speech”, “edict”, “proclamation” and “language”.<sup>468</sup>

Based on these semantic ambiguities, a literal translation of the sentence would be: “And he (Kaniška) led out the Greek speech and placed/installed Aryan (Bactrian)”, which could be understood in two different ways: Either Kaniška abolished the Greek language and replaced it with Aryan, or he published something in Greek and then had it translated to Aryan.

One strong argument in favour of the first possibility is that prior to Kaniška I, coin legends in Bactria were either monolingual Greek or bilingual Greek-Kharoṣṭhī. After his early issues, Kaniška changed the legends to Bactrian and Greek never reappeared on coin legends in this region.

However, the meaning of  $\alpha\alpha\sigma\omicron$  as “language” is not strongly supported by evidence in other Iranian languages. Only the *Šabuhragān* uses the MP cognate  $w'c$  in this way:

*kw (h'nz) gwnggwng w'c br'd 'wd d'n'd*

damit es (ebenso) die verschiedenen Sprachen spreche und verstehe.<sup>469</sup>

However, the context is that “every kind” (*gwnggwng*) of  $w'c$  is spoken by the *mzn ghwdg'n*, a pejorative term translated by Hutter 1992 as “Mazan-Mißgeburten”, “Mazan misbreeds”. It therefore seems questionable whether a structured language is alluded to here. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case, and the choice of a word that rather means “speech” in the widest sense than “language” in the structured sense seems

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<sup>468</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 82-83, 93, but somewhat contrary *ibid* 110-11 (this part being authored by J. Cribb whereas the preceding section was by N. Sims-Williams). Fussman 1998, 596-97 supports the suggestion made here, that Kaniška made a proclamation in Greek and had it translated to Bactrian.

<sup>469</sup> Hutter 1992, 991-993 and 1079-1080 (pp. 88, 92-93).

to be deliberate. The other cognates of  $\alpha\alpha\sigma\omicron$  in Avestan,<sup>470</sup> MMP/Parthian<sup>471</sup> and Sogdian<sup>472</sup> all point to the meaning “speech” or “proclamation”.<sup>473</sup>

Unless one assumes that  $\omega\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron\ \alpha\alpha\sigma\omicron$  was used as a derogatory term, for which there would be no evidence save for the aforementioned quote from the *Šabuhragān*, the word  $\alpha\alpha\sigma\omicron$  appears to refer to a proclamation made by Kaniška in Greek, and which was later translated into Bactrian (Aryan) and cited or paraphrased in Rab and NSP.

This seems to reflect the famous passage from the Bisotun Inscription:

*§70 ima dipicičam, taya adam akunavam patišam ariyā*

(ist) dies die Fassung der Inschrift, die ich hinzugesetzt habe, (und zwar) auf Arisch.

If these two passages are understood to be genuinely parallel,<sup>474</sup> it appears that both languages were placed next to ones previously used but did not replace them.

The indication is that Greek was treated with respect by the Kušān as an element of Bactrian culture and identity. The disappearance of Greek coin legends should not be seen as an abolition of the Greek language but as a development towards a more encompassing Bactrian identity that included its Greek elements by continuing the use of the script. If viewed from this perspective, the policy of Kaniška I seems less aimed against any Greek legacy in his empire, and more at a pronunciation of the Bactrian in contrast to the Indian. After all, it is not only Greek that disappears from Kušān imperial coinage under his rule, but also Gandhārī.<sup>475</sup> Kaniška seems also to drop or reduce many

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<sup>470</sup> n. *vačah-* "1) Sprechen, Rede, Wort (als Tätigkeitsbezeichnung); im Gegensatz zu Denken und Handeln (oder ähnl.) 2) Ausspruch, Spruch, Wort, Diktum" (AirW 1340-1341)

<sup>471</sup> n. *w'c* "word, speech", e.g. for Pth. M 215 V 10 (Durkin-Meisterernst 2010, §333b), cf. DMMPP, 333b.

<sup>472</sup> Apparently only attested in *prw'c-* "denigrate, slander" (SCE, 81).

<sup>473</sup> Although OAv. combines v. *vac-* "dire" (Kellens 1995, 48) with the preverb *fra-* for the sense of "to proclaim", e.g. repeatedly in Y. 45, *at frauuaxšiiā*, while OP uses the verb *ša-*, Schmitt 2014, 256.

<sup>474</sup> cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83.

<sup>475</sup> With a few exceptions in copper legends under Huviška including Göbl: 984.

Indian iconographic elements that were prominent under his father. The god of Vima Kadphises, a seemingly predominantly Indian conception, is reduced in prominence and, if one can even speak of a direct continuity, given the Iranian name Oēšo.<sup>476</sup> In the Rabatak Inscription, the ethnic identifiers used are  $\omega\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$  and  $\alpha\rho\iota\alpha\omicron$ .<sup>477</sup>  $\omega\nu\delta\omicron$  appears quite literally as an afterthought in the identification of Srošardo with two Indian deities in the gloss. It is apparent that, unlike Vima Kadphises, Kaniška does not want to appear as an Indian emperor but a Bactrian one, moreso as one who has subjected India to his will.

The adaptation of the Greek alphabet for Bactrian was not Kaniška's work, but that of his predecessors. Bactrian appears as a fully written language under Vima Takto. This indicates that Greek and Iranian were intertwined to form a “Bactrian” identity, although this name was never used by the Kušān. Both elements were still individually known and pronounced as such in Rab, but they could not be entirely separated.

A perhaps more astonishing factor is that, once Bactrian was established as a written, imperial language, the Kušān kept modifying its conventions. It appears that the orthography was streamlined according to an unknown set of linguistic ideals. Some words, such as  $\lambda\iota\zeta\gamma\alpha$ , were modified to simpler forms ( $\lambda\iota\zeta\omicron$ ). The word endings were developed into a uniform -o, reducing some of the complexity of the language. It appears that several scribal schools existed which had differing orthographic and palaeographic ideas. This is apparent from a comparison of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions. The “round” and “angular” variants of the script competed under the early Kušān emperors, as did certain orthographic ideas such as those concerning the writing of /ī/ or /h/. This is seen both on the inscriptions and the coin legends. The latter give a

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<sup>476</sup> cf. chapters 6.1.3.3. and 6.1.3.5.1. which especially discuss the thoughts of Falk 2019.

<sup>477</sup> Although strictly speaking, these refer to languages, not ethnicities.

particularly instructive example in the case of the name of the god *Miθra*, whose Bactrian form would most likely be *Mihr*. The coin legends produce the variants  $\mu\upsilon\rho\omicron$ ,  $\mu\iota\rho\omicron$ ,  $\mu\omicron\rho\omicron$ ,  $\mu\omega\rho\omicron$ ,  $\mu\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron$  and  $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\rho\omicron$ . Some of these variants may simply be misengravings, but others seem to display a general uncertainty in how to properly reproduce the /h/ and the quantity of the first vowel. This is also reflected in the inscriptions, where the variants  $\mu\upsilon\rho\omicron$  and  $\mu\omega\rho\omicron$  are found. The Kušān could apparently never fully get this under control, but it explains why there was an interest and effort to develop a standardised system of orthography even at the expense of grammatical complexity. The Kušān language policy was apparently an integral part of a general imperial strategy.

### **4.3. Thematic and stylistic observations on the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions**

N. Sims-Williams noted in the first discussion of the Rabatak Inscription when discussing perceived similarities between Rab and DB: “Such similarities must be considered in the light of recent discussion (e.g. Skjærvø 1985; Huyse 1990) of the linguistic, thematic and structural parallels between Achaemenian and Sasanian inscriptions,” further suggesting that there was direct Kušān knowledge of the Achaemenid inscriptions or that Kušān, Achaemenids and Sāsānians shared a common oral tradition.<sup>478</sup>

This suggestion was picked up by P.O. Skjærvø and Ph. Huyse in subsequent publications.<sup>479</sup> These discussions were however necessarily limited due to the insufficient reading of Rab and the fact that the Bactrian Documents were not yet available for study. Meanwhile, the study of Old and Middle Iranian style and

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<sup>478</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83.

<sup>479</sup> Skjærvø 1998, Huyse 2003.



intertextuality has also been advanced by a number of publications, for which Skjærvø 1985 provides the foundation.<sup>480</sup> The following intends to pick up on a number of observations made previously, to relate them to the corpus of Kušān inscriptions and discuss the extent to which the inscriptions can be placed in the Iranian literary tradition.

#### **4.3.1. Possible literary influences**

If looking at the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions as a genre of imperial epigraphic literature, the most obvious places to look for possible literary influence would be the inscriptions of the preceding empires that had existed in the domain of the Kušān. These would include the Achaemenid, Seleukid and Maurya Empires, together with the very limited corpus of Indo-Greek, Śuṅga and Indo-Scythian epigraphics. The neighbouring Arsakid Empire would also be expected to produce parallels. Of these, the corpus of Mauryan inscriptions consisting of the Aśokan edicts, is easily ruled out. Their intention, composition and style are so different from the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions that an influence seems highly unlikely. This may come as a surprise, as they were written in languages the Kušān were directly in contact with, including Greek, Iranian, Gandharī and other Indian Prakrits. At least some of the edicts will have been visible to people living in the Kušān Empire, and it may therefore be tempting to regard the lack of any stylistic overlap as a conscious choice on part of the Kušān. However, this lack may simply be explained by the very different genres of the texts and perhaps also by the fact that they were not spread to Bactria where, by all indications, the Kušān literary tradition began.

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<sup>480</sup> Apart from Skjærvø 1985, this includes Huyse 1990, but cf. also Skjærvø 1999 for Avestan-Old Persian intertextuality.

Having been a satrapy both of the Achaemenid and Seleukid Empires, Bactria was however no doubt exposed to the literary production of both empires. For the Achaemenids, this must be assumed by analogy to other, better explored parts of the empire.<sup>481</sup> For the Hellenistic period, the existence of a Greek library in Ai Khanoum has been proven, and epigraphic material from the Seleukid and Graeco-Bactrian periods has been uncovered.<sup>482</sup> A Greek influence is furthermore indicated by the statement in Rab 3-4 in which a proclamation by Kaniška I in Greek language and its translation into Bactrian is mentioned. The Sōphytos inscription from Kandahar also shows that original Greek literary texts were composed locally, although the inscription probably dates to the early Seleukid period and comes from an area outside the later Kušān Empire.<sup>483</sup>

#### 4.3.2. Introductory Formula

The first parallel that Skjærvø 1985 finds between Achaemenid and Sāsānian inscriptions is that of the “presentation of the king, his descent and his realm”.<sup>484</sup> The two examples used here are DB §1 and ŠKZ Pth 1. In both inscriptions, the emperor introduces himself with his titles,<sup>485</sup> the general definition of his empire and his dynastic descent. DN1, Rab and NSP also begin with an introduction of the sovereign, although there are some marked differences. The Achaemenid and Sāsānian inscriptions begin with a self-introduction of the emperor in first person, denoting the emperor as the author of the text. This is clarified beyond any doubt by the introductory use of OP

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<sup>481</sup> A case in point is the discovery of fragments of the text of the Bisotun Inscription from Babylon (in Babylonian) and Elephantine (in Aramaic), for a full list of references cf. Schmitt 2009, 9.

<sup>482</sup> Collected in Rougemont 2012, 200-55.

<sup>483</sup> Rougemont 2012, 173-82 with exhaustive commentary and literature. For a discussion of the cultural context, cf. Mairs 2014, 102-17.

<sup>484</sup> *Op. cit.* 593-94.

<sup>485</sup> The parallels between the Kušān and other titlature are discussed in chapter 5.

*adam*, MP/Pth ANE (*an/az*) in most Achaemenid and Sāsānian inscriptions respectively.

None of the known Kušān Bactrian inscriptions begin with this sort of self-introduction. DN1 begins with an oblique construction βαονανδε βαι “of the king of kings”, but the inscription is too poorly preserved to discern whether it is written in first or third person. Rab is definitely written in third person, and as Rab 15 suggests, the author is Šafar the καραλαργγο. There is however no first-person construction preserved in Rab, although the very beginning and the ending of the inscription are obscure. NSP begins with a similar construction as DN1, βαονανδι βαο οαρειγο, translated by Sims-Williams 2015 as “At the court(?) of the king of kings”. The inscription is notable for possessing a personal introduction αζο μο νοκονζικο ι πιορο μαρηγο “I, Nukunzik, his father's servant”, following the introduction of the emperor.

The bilingual inscription of the Heraklēs statuette from Mesene (BHM) begins in a similar way,<sup>486</sup> introducing Vologaisēs as the King of Kings, son of Mithradatēs, but follows seamlessly with the introduction of the narrative context, something which neither the Achaemenid and Sāsānian, nor the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions do. The Bactrian inscriptions introduce the narrative context with the conjunction ταδο/ταδι in Rab 3 and NSP 1. The same may be true for DN1 7, and Davary/Humbach 1976 suggested as much.<sup>487</sup> DN1 provides a further parallel to BHM in that it precedes the introduction of the emperor with a dating formula. The lacuna at the beginning of Rab would also allow for such a date. The Sāsānian inscriptions ŠVŠ, ŠPs I and ŠPs II begin

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<sup>486</sup> QGP II, 461 (Greek), 569-71 (Parthian).

<sup>487</sup> *Op. cit.*, 13, noting both variants in the text in analogy to SK4. Fussman 1974, 16-17 does not find ταδι here, instead reading [νη?]ιδι. However, the photo suggests that the letter read as I by G. Fussman is extended as an A preceding the Δ. Indeed, the shape of the A does not match with most of the otherwise cursive A shapes of the inscription, but the palaeography of the entire inscription is so messy that a variation in shapes is not unexpected. Furthermore, ταδι would indeed be expected here by analogy, as the titulature seems to end in DN1 7, making the introduction of a new clause likely at this position.

in a similar way, although the latter two do not use an era but date according to the year of the reign of Šābuhr II.<sup>488</sup> ŠVŠ is more complex in its dating, using three different eras and clearly distinguishing between the date and emperor.

There is some similarity to the introduction of the date and reigning monarch to manumission inscriptions from Seleukid Susa,<sup>489</sup> which may be comparable to the dedicatory inscriptions BHM and NSP, as well as possibly DN1 and Rab.

### 4.3.3. The Proclamation of Kaniška I

Rab follows the titulature of Kaniška I with the statement that he introduced his own era and then that  $\sigma\tau\eta\alpha\ \iota\ \omega\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron\ \omicron\alpha\sigma\omicron\ \omicron\zeta\omicron\alpha\sigma\omicron\ \tau\alpha\delta\eta\iota\alpha\ \alpha\rho\iota\alpha\omicron\ \omega\sigma\tau\alpha\delta\omicron$ , lit. “He led out the Greek speech and put (it) into Aryan”. This statement attracted quite some attention from the start, with Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 already pointing out the similarity to DB §70 *ima dipiciçam, taya adam akunauvam patiřam ariyā* “(ist) dies die Fassung der Inschrift, die ich hinzugesetzt habe (und zwar) auf Arisch”.<sup>490</sup> As discussed in chapter 4.2, the statement is most likely not to be understood as meaning that Greek was abolished as an official language in favour of Bactrian, but rather that Kaniška I made a proclamation in Greek that was later translated to Bactrian. This interpretation strengthens the parallel to DB §70, as both speak of a translation of a text, although there is no parallel in semantic formula.

There is only a narrative purpose to this statement if it is taken to introduce the following passages. Whereas the preceding two statements are introduced with  $\kappa\iota\delta\iota$  “who has”, this one is now introduced with  $\sigma\tau\eta\alpha$  “and he”. This suggests that a new

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<sup>488</sup> DN1, despite the oblique construction does not seem to suggest the year in the first line is “of” Vima Takto, both because the dating is in Greek rather than Bactrian, and because the year 279 clearly refers to an era, not to the reign of the emperor himself.

<sup>489</sup> Rougemont 212, §§ 13, 14, 16, 17 and 20.

<sup>490</sup> Schmitt 2009, 87; Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83.

section in the narration is introduced that is detached from the introduction of the emperor Kaniška who obtained his kingship from Nana and the gods and who inaugurated the Year One. Although new clauses are usually introduced with *ταδι/ταδο* (*τα* + enclitic clause-introducing particle *δι/δο*), statements introduced with *τα-* merged to a preceding *οδο* resulting in *στο* are found repeatedly in Bactrian.<sup>491</sup> Rab 3 adds the 3rd sg. enclitic pronoun *-ηια*.<sup>492</sup>

The statement *στηια ι ιωναγγο οασο οζοαστο ταδηια αριαο ωσταδο* is therefore clearly connected to the following passage in the text, not the preceding one. This would lead to the conclusion that what follows is a citation, either a direct quote or a paraphrase, of said proclamation. Interestingly, the following sentence lacks the connecting particle and instead features the only known expression of an imperfect in Bactrian in the past participle *φροαγδ-* combined with the verb *αζο*.<sup>493</sup> The object of the sentence seems to be the word *αγιτα*, which Sims-Williams 2008 suggests to translate as a verb or noun “(to) capture” with reference to the Bactrian Document ‘cg7’, however remarking that “the construction of the sentence is rather awkward”.<sup>494</sup>

The construction of the sentence seems to reflect an epiphraasis as found in Achaemenid inscriptions, especially in DB.<sup>495</sup> This seems apparent from the addition of *αβο βατριαγγε βαορε* as a second subject to the verb *φροαγδαζο*, which was already connected to *αβο ι υνδο*. A literal translation of the phrase would thus read “to India there was proclaimed, to the cities/realms of the *βατριαγγε*”, with *αγιτα* following as an object.<sup>496</sup> This breach of conventional syntax gives the impression of a poetically

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<sup>491</sup> Sims-Williams 1985b, 12; BD2, 249a.

<sup>492</sup> This is unique in Kušān Bactrian, although in the Bactrian Documents, the derivative forms *στηιο* and *στιο* appear occasionally.

<sup>493</sup> Durkin-Meisterernst 2007, 43-44.

<sup>494</sup> Op. cit., 60-61.

<sup>495</sup> Schmitt 2016, 50-53.

<sup>496</sup> For the word order subject-verb-object cf. Gholami 2014, 207-08.

composed text which may have followed similar conventions as the Achaemenid inscriptions. Following the assumption that the sentence is a citation of a proclamation by Kaniška I, this would suggest that oral proclamations of the Kušān were embedded in Iranian literary tradition, although specifics are hard to grasp.

A close but different parallel is found in NSP 2-3: ταδι ... ..... πιδο ι ωγα χβονα αβο μο υνδο φροαγδο “Then [in] the year one [...] was proclaimed to India”.<sup>497</sup> The conjunction ταδι, which introduces a new clause, is present, unlike in Rab, but the statement is in past tense, not the imperfect. Unfortunately, the subject of the latter sentence is missing. However, if one assumes a genuine parallel, it would be expected to be one or two words representing the conquest of India, as this is what Rab goes on to state in detail.<sup>498</sup> In this case, Rab would provide a verbatim quote or at least a close paraphrase to the original source text, while NSP summarises the content. This recalls DNā §4: *A. uramazdā, yaθā avajna imām būmītm yaudantīm, pasāvadim manā frābara (...)* *adamšim gāθavā niyašādayam*; “Ahuramazdā, als er diese Erde in Aufruhr geraten sah, da(raufhin) hatte er sie mir verliehen (...) habe ich sie (wieder) an den (rechten) Platz gesetzt;“. This appears to summarise the events narrated in detail in the Bisotun Inscription. The implication is that at the root of the Rabatak Inscription lay an official propaganda text similar to DB, ŠKZ or NPī, and this was cited in detail in Rab, and in reference by NSP.

#### 4.3.4. The Year One

Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 already noted with reference to DB that “both Darius and Kanishka refer repeatedly to the fact that the events recounted in the inscription

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<sup>497</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 260 speaks of “the almost identical wording of the Rabatak inscription”.

<sup>498</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2015, 260.

took place within a single year”.<sup>499</sup> This assessment is based primarily on the initial reading of Rab, which gave an incomplete understanding of lines 19-23. The only date that could be read with certainty at the time was the year one in Rab 2, 4, 19 and 20, which seemed to give the year a particular prominence in the inscription. It appeared as the year in which Kaniška I ascended to the throne, in which he conquered India and in which the Rabatak βαρολαγγο was founded. This emphasis on events in the first year of the reign of the emperor did seem to reflect the narratives of DB and NPi.

Sims-Williams 2008 however puts this into doubt. While the three readings are confirmed here, further dates are found in Rab 19 and 20. It becomes clear that the βαρολαγγο was not completed before the year 3 and that Kaniška was still busy in India in the year 6. NSP 4 even suggests that the activities in India were still ongoing when Rab was written, and that the campaign was only over in the year 10.

However, if as discussed above the phrase αβο ιωγο χρονο αβο ι υνδο φροαγδαζο (...) is a quotation from Kaniška's proclamation, there might still be some relevance to the fact that the Indian campaign was initiated in the year one of his reign. Darius I does not only say that his battles against the liar kings took place in one year, but also that it was the year of his accession.<sup>500</sup> This same emphasis on events following the accession of the emperor is found in ŠKZ §6, where it is said that Gordian III assembled his troops to march against Ērānšahr in what is presented as a response to the accession of Šābuhr I.<sup>501</sup> Just as the causality is misrepresented here,<sup>502</sup> Šābuhr I omits any further

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<sup>499</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83. cf. also Skjærvø 1999, 14, where this motif is considered part of an ancient oriental inheritance in DB.

<sup>500</sup> DB §10: *ima, taya manā kṛtam C pasāva yaθā xšāyaθiya abavam*; DB §52: *hamahyāyā θarda, pasāva yaθā xšāyaθiya abacam*; cf. Schmitt 2009, 75.

<sup>501</sup> ŠKZ Pa §6: W AMT nhwšt pty hštr HQAYMWt HWym gwrtnyws kysr MN hmk prwm gwt W grm'ny' hštr z'wry hngwšn OBDt W OL 'swrstn 'pr 'ry'nhštr W LN AT[Y]t (...); cf. Huyse 1999, 25-26.

<sup>502</sup> It was not the accession of Šābuhr but the threat the Sāsānians posed in the east in general that was the *casus belli* for the Romans. There is however no doubt that Gordian was strictly speaking the aggressor in this particular war, and Roman propaganda had to resort to evoking the Achaemenid Empire

chronological reference, leaving the impression that the campaign of Gordian III was one single event that occupied the beginning of the reign of Šābuhr I.<sup>503</sup> A similar narrative can also be observed in XPh, in which Xerxes I states that upon his accession to the throne, there was one *dahyu-* in revolt and one in which Daiva worship was being practiced, and Xerxes restored order and destroyed the Daiva cult.<sup>504</sup>

There are however also elements missing from the known Kušān inscriptions that are commonplace elsewhere. Despite referring to the idea that kingship was both seized by the Kušān and granted by divine favour, there is no narrative of how the emperors ascended to their thrones as found in DB, XPf §4 or NPi.<sup>505</sup> The Kušān employed other statements of legitimacy not used by the Achaemenids and Sāsānians,<sup>506</sup> so that a total absence of such a narrative text should not be surprising.

#### 4.3.5. Enumeration of Conquest

None of the known Kušān inscriptions contain a list of countries ruled by the emperor that is in any way similar to the *dahyāva* lists provided by the Achaemenids and the various province and vassal lists of the Sāsānian inscriptions. The closest resemblance is Rab 4-6, where six Indian βαορε conquered by Kaniška I are listed. This is clearly not a comprehensive list of territories held by the emperor but intended to reaffirm the claim that Kaniška conquered ἀουγο ι υνδο “All India”. Interestingly however, the list in Rab closes with the phrase οιδρα αδα αβο ι ζιριτιαμβο “as far as Śri-Campā”. This

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and the Graeco-Persian Wars of the 5th century BCE for legitimisation of the war, cf. Huttner 2008, 184-85 w. lit.

<sup>503</sup> In fact, Šābuhr succeeded Ardaxšīr I as sole emperor in 240/41 and the Battle of Misiche took place in 244, cf. Huttner 2008, 188.

<sup>504</sup> XPh §4-5, cf. Schmitt 2009, 166-67.

<sup>505</sup> There is also no known statement of the new emperor surpassing his predecessor in his feats as discussed by Skjærvø 1999, 15 or mentioning the achievements of the predecessor in honourable terms, as is done frequently by Xerxes I, cf. eg. XPc §3 or XPf §4.

<sup>506</sup> Including the elaborate titulature and the establishment of dynastic cults, both of which are significant departures from Achaemenid and Sāsānian parallels. These are discussed in detail below in chapters 5 and 6.



echoes DNa §4 *Pārsahyā martiyahyā dūraj r̥štiš parāgmatā* (...) *Pārsa martiya dūraj hacā Pārsā parataram patiyajatā* “Des persischen Mannes Lanze ist weit in die Ferne hinausgegangen (...) Der persische Mann hat fernab von Persien den Feind zurückgeschlagen“.<sup>507</sup> The parallels in ŠKZ are even stronger. ŠKZ Pth 03 reads *kwšnhštr HN prhš ‘L pškbwr W HN ‘L k’š swgd W š’šstn* “(...) (und) das Kušānreich bis vor Pešāwar (?) und bis nach Kāšgar (?), Sogdien und Taškent“.<sup>508</sup>

Interestingly, it is the description of the Kušānšahr that is defined by the frontier points in ŠKZ. The Parthian does not mirror the Bactrian semantically however, as rather than reflecting οἰδρα ἀδα αβο, it writes *HN prhš ‘L (yad fraxš ḍ)*.

#### 4.3.6. σιδηιανο προβδο

A closer semantic match to the aforementioned might be found in the following phrase σιδηιανο προβδο οδο μανδαρσι [●]αορανο αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο (Rab 6). The general meaning of this sentence is clear. It expresses that the aforementioned locations were submitted to Kušān rule. However, the precise translation is unclear because the word προβδο is ambiguous.<sup>509</sup> N. Sims-Williams suggests two possible meanings, either a Skt. loanword *prabhu-* “general”,<sup>510</sup> or a verb 3 sg. pret. “reached”.<sup>511</sup> The latter possibility is attractive not only because it would avoid viewing the whole clause as verbless,<sup>512</sup> but also because it would find a semantic correspondence in Sogd. *kt`mw*

<sup>507</sup> Schmitt 2009, 103.

<sup>508</sup> Huyse 1999, 23-24. These parallels have also been noted by Skjærvø 1998, 655-56.

<sup>509</sup> The analysis of σιδηιανο is also not free of problems, although its rendering into English as pronoun “whatever, whichever” seems secure in any case, cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83-84, 94 and Sims-Williams 2008, 61.

<sup>510</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 93.

<sup>511</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 61-63.

<sup>512</sup> cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83.

*ZYn n'pw p(r)[']'γt- 'γ'nt* “which countries they reached” in the Sogdian Ancient Letter II.<sup>513</sup>

A literary translation of the phrase would thus be “whatever (he) reached and the other (μανδαρσι) generals ([●]αορανο), (he) (sg.!) put to (his) will (αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο).”<sup>514</sup>

The sentence is elliptic in nature, as both the object and the subject are merely implied in σιδηιανο and προβδο respectively. The subject however is not only contained elliptically in the verb, but also extends to οδο μανδαρσι [●]αορανο, following the verb.

While the verb preceding the subject is not unheard of in Bactrian,<sup>515</sup> it is an unusual word order which suggests a deliberate stylistic choice. As such, it resembles epiphrases as found in Old Persian inscriptions, most famously DB §62 *A. uramazdāma, i upastām abara utā aniyāha bagāha taya, i hanti* “Ahuramazdā hat mir Beistand gebracht und die anderen Götter, die es gibt.”<sup>516</sup>

It should also be mentioned that the statement σιδηιανο προβδο οδο μανδαρσι [●]αορανο αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο οτηια αρουγο ι σινδο αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο resembles ŠKZ Pth 05, which also summarises the conquest: *W ZNH 'wnt hštr W hštrdr W ptykwspn hrw LN pt-y b'z W 'BD-kp-y HQ' YMW-t HWY-n* “Und all die vielen Länder und Könige und Landesherren /grI: und diese vielen Völker und die Herrscher all dieser Völker/, die alle habe ich Uns in Tributpflichtigkeit und Untertänigkeit versetzt.”<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Sims-Williams 2001, 268 (l. 10). Sims-Williams 2008, 62 suggests that προβδο may function “as a suppletive past stem to πρησ- “to reach, attain”” attested in the Tang-i Safedak Inscription (Lee/Sims-Williams 2003, 171). πρησ- is identified as cognate to Sogdian *pr'ys*, of which *pr'γt* is the past stem (DMSB, 147a) and *p(r)[']'γt- 'γ'nt* forms the 3. pl. pret. The other semantic correspondence is found in the shared relative pronoun *kt'm/σινδο* in *kt'mw* and σιδηιανο respectively. In this respect it is noteworthy that other literary formulae existed in Sogdian to express “up to”, cf. MKG 395 *mrxxw 'k(w) [R]Bk' rxyss-nt 'ykyrdō prm* “bis hin zum [gr]oßen Alexandria”, (Sundermann 1981 39), also DMSB, 115b (*mrx-*) on this construction.

<sup>514</sup> KKZ 11-12 is similar in meaning (cf. also Skjærvø 1985, 595 together with DNa §4), but different semantically.

<sup>515</sup> cf. Gholami 2014, 205-208 for examples.

<sup>516</sup> Schmitt 2009, 82. For further examples cf. Schmitt 2016, 50-53.

<sup>517</sup> Huyse 1999, 25.

#### 4.3.7. Lists

There are four lists in Rab: The enumeration of conquest discussed above, the list of deities subject to the cult, the list of emperors whose statues were set up in the βαγολαγγο and the officials who carried out the order to construct the βαγολαγγο. The list of cities conquered by Kaniška I is part of the sentence introduced by αβο ιωγο χρονο αβο ι υνδο φροαγδαζο αβο βατριαγγε βαορε αγιτα ι (...). The individual parts of the list are linked by a preposition οδο ι “and of”. The emperors are similarly linked with οδο αβο, as are the three officials, simply with οδο. The list of deities takes a different shape. It is introduced by φαρειμοανο βαγανο κιδι μαρο κιδι ανδιμανι οφαρρο ομμα οσηλδι “for these gods who have come into the presence of glorious Omma, that is...”. The first two names in the list, Nana and Omma are both introduced by ια αμγα “the same”. Both names are mentioned previously in the inscription, which leads Sims-Williams 2008 to translate the phrase as “the above-mentioned”,<sup>518</sup> although it has also been suggested that it equates Nana and Omma.<sup>519</sup> More interestingly however, the five names following that of Omma are not linked by any conjunction and simply placed next to each other. Falk 2019 suggests to understand Omma as a community of deities that is then enumerated.<sup>520</sup> This would suggest that the individual names are regarded as one unit Aoromozdo-Mozdooano-Srošardo-Narasao-Miuro, similar to how the deities in the Commagenean *hierothesia* are listed with multiple names without conjunctions.<sup>521</sup> However, the gloss Rab 10a seems to suggest that the individual deities can be extracted from this group and even be interpreted individually.

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<sup>518</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>519</sup> Gnoli 2009, 144. The few occurrences of υαμγο in the Bactrian documents (for references cf. BD2, 271b-72a) could support either interpretation.

<sup>520</sup> *Op. cit.*, 31 w. fn. 64.

<sup>521</sup> Cf. e.g. Waldmann 1973, 64, l. 10-12.

If, however, the phrase  $\iota\alpha$   $\alpha\mu\gamma\alpha$   $\nu\alpha\nu\alpha$   $\omicron\delta\omicron$   $\iota\alpha$   $\alpha\mu\gamma\alpha$   $\omicron\mu\mu\alpha$  is conceptually different from the list of deities following Omma, it is interesting to note that the four lists in the Rabatak Inscription are of decreasing length. The list of conquered cities consists of six elements, that of the deities following Omma of five (disregarding the gloss), that of emperors of four and that of officials of three. This however would mean to accept that the phrase mentioning Nana and Omma is not part of the list. It would be possible that Nana and Omma relate to the list of deities the same way  $\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma\omicron$   $\iota$   $\upsilon\nu\delta\omicron$  relates to the conquered cities, in which case it would also be interesting that the positioning of these two phrases regarding the lists is inversed. It would be a stylistic argument in favour of H. Falk's suggestion, although the lack of conjunctions in the deity list should also caution against going too far in this respect.<sup>522</sup>

#### 4.3.8. Orders and their fulfilment

Rab refers directly to two orders given by Kaniška I: To found the  $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$  for the deities (Rab 7-10), and then to make and place images of these deities and Kaniška I and his predecessors in the  $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$  (10-14). These orders are carried out by Šafar, Piaš and Nokonzok. The role of Šafar is elevated here, as he is first mentioned to be the official solely in charge of building the  $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$  (14-15), and again with the other two as carrying out Kaniška's command in general (15-17). A further command is mentioned later, by which the cult with all its elements is established in the year three (Rab 20-22). Unlike the previous cases, neither this command nor its contents (i.e. the rites, attendants, etc.) are introduced earlier in the inscription, and it is hard to see it as a reference to the previous commands, as those are referred to right before it in the sentence  $(\tau)[\alpha](\delta)\iota$   $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$   $\alpha\beta\omicron$   $\iota\omega\gamma\omicron$   $\chi\rho\omicron\nu\omicron$   $\alpha\sigma\pi\alpha\delta\omicron$  (Rab 20). However, there is a

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<sup>522</sup> The problem of Omma and Falks suggestion are discussed in chapter 6.1.2.

large lacuna in Rab 20-21 which might have originally contained information that would make it easier to place this command in the logical structure of the inscription. The fact that the author of the inscription is the recipient of orders he then carried out is a notable parallel to statements in Achaemenid inscriptions in which the emperor states that he acted according to the *vašna-* of Ahuramazdā. Two examples from DSz should serve as case in point: §6 (...) *taya adam akunavam visam vašnā A.uramazdāha akunavam* "(...) was ich getan habe, alles (das) habe ich nach dem Willen Ahuramazdās getan" and §14 *vašnā A.uramazdāha –Çūšāyā paru frašam framātam, paru frašam krtam*; "Nach dem Willen Ahuramazdās - in Susa ist viel Wundervolles angeordnet worden, viel wundervolles errichtet worden;".<sup>523</sup> However, it is noteworthy that a direct order of Ahuramazdā is never mentioned, but it is stated that actions were performed *vašnā A.uramazdāha* "by the *vašna-* of Ahuramazdā". There are only four cases of *framā-*, the Old Persian cognate to Bactrian φρομαδο, used as a verb, and in all four cases it is the command of the emperor, not that of Ahuramazdā, that is referred to.<sup>524</sup> DSf §6 is a particularly interesting case as it is instructive of the relationship of the command of Darius to Ahuramazdā:

*A.uramazdāmaj upastām abara; tayamaj framātam cartanaḡ, ava ucārammaj akunaḡš;*  
 „Ahuramazdā hat mir Beistand gebracht; was von mir befohlen wurde zu tun, das hat er für mich erfolgreich gemacht;“<sup>525</sup>

<sup>523</sup> Schmitt 2009, 142 and 145.

<sup>524</sup> DSf §6, 14; DSz §14 and XPg §1; but note that the latter does not take the common form *framātam* but *frāmāyatā* and is translated by Schmitt 2009, 163 as "geplant".

<sup>525</sup> Schmitt 2009, 130.

This indicates that *fra-mā-* is something the Achaemenid emperor does, not Ahuramazdā, and therefore the Achaemenid emperor is *framātar-*,<sup>526</sup> not Ahuramazdā. There is however one notable exception to this rule, in DNa §6: *hayā A. uramazdāhā framānā, - haytaḵ gastā mā ḡadaya*; “Das Gebot Ahuramazdās, - das erscheine dir nicht übel!”<sup>527</sup> Here, the *framānā* is something that affects the reader (addressed as *martiyā*) directly from Ahuramazdā, not through mediation of the emperor.

This relationship is similar, albeit less clear under the Kušān. φρομανο is something the emperor exerts onto his subjects. NSP 1 confirms that the gods have agency, as here, Nana gives (λαδο) the kingship to Kaniška, but in Rab 2, Kaniška acquires (αβοροδο) it from the gods. In Rab, the gods have no agency whatsoever, but they do have a will (σινδο). This will is however also something Kaniška can impose on others, specifically his conquered subjects.

SK4 is particularly interesting in this regard, as it again refers to an order (φρομανο) that is, as in Rab 20-21, not explicitly introduced beforehand. While it is intuitive that this φρομανο refers to the installation of the well with all its facilities in the βαγολαγγο, it is worth pointing out that this whole activity is at first ascribed to the initiative and agency of Nokonzoko. According to SK4, he dug the well (οτηιο ασασκο μο σαδο), made the winch(?) (αχβτριγο κιρδο) and installed the beam (?) (αλβαργο ωσταδο). This is where SK4A ends the narrative, however SK4B and SK4M continue to name the officials who were actually responsible for the execution. What is of particular interest, however, is that these officials are then said to have done so according to the φρομανο of the χοαδηο. Since the official responsible for this is immediately before called “servant of Nokonzoko the καραλαγγο” (νοκονζικι καραλαραγγε μαρηγο), it appears

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<sup>526</sup> Schmitt 2014, 176.

<sup>527</sup> Schmitt 2009, 104.

logical that Nokonzoko would be the one issuing the command. While there is no direct evidence that  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  was a title borne by the Kušān emperor, he was in possession of  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron\delta\alpha\nu\iota$  according to NSP 1, and in SK4M 7, Nokonzoko himself is called  $\phi\rho\epsilon\iota\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron\gamma\omicron$  “dear to the lord” in SK4M 7. The context strongly suggests that the  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  in this compound is the Kušān emperor. It would therefore be very hard to argue that Nokonzoko is given the title  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  later on in the same inscription.<sup>528</sup> The relations between the titles  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  and  $\chi\omicron\alpha\zeta\alpha\omicron\alpha\rho\gamma\omicron$  in relation to Greek  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\rho$ <sup>529</sup> will be discussed in chapter 5.6.2.1.. If  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  in SK4 therefore refers to the Kušān emperor, it appears as a further piece of evidence that in the rhetoric of the Kušān inscriptions, the right to exert  $\phi\rho\omicron\mu\alpha\nu\omicron$  is a privilege of the emperor. If this  $\phi\rho\omicron\mu\alpha\nu\omicron$  was given by Nokonzoko however, it would find an interesting parallel in ŠPs II, where Šābuhr the Sākāšāh commands (*framād*) to have an inscription read to him and to place an inscription of its own underneath.<sup>530</sup>

#### 4.3.9. Repetitive structures

Unlike the highly repetitive Achaemenid inscriptions, the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions seem to be more economic in their construction. This is a strong indicator that they do not directly follow the Achaemenid tradition, and this also seems to be true for the Sāsānian inscriptions. Considering this, two instances of repetition appear noteworthy, one in Rab and one in SK4. Rab 6-7 reads:

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<sup>528</sup> Henning 1960, 51 (*contra* A. Maricq) and Gershevitch 1979, 61 are certain that  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  refers to the Kušān emperor. Lazard/Grenet/Lamberterie 1984, 212-13 conclude that  $\chi\omicron\alpha\delta\eta\omicron$  more likely refers to Nokonzoko, arguing that “et si Nokonzok avait agi selon les instructions du roi, il n'aurait guère manqué de le dire explicitement”. Sims-Williams 2012, 79 seems to prefer a non-committal translation “lord”.

<sup>529</sup> So already discussed by Henning 1960, 51 w. fn. 9.

<sup>530</sup> Skjærvø 1998, 655-56 suggests instead a parallel between ŠPs II and Rab 11-12/17-18, but admitting that “[t]hese (semi-)parallels are at present too vague, of course, to draw any definite conclusions about possible influences (...)”.

στη[ι]α αρουγ[ο] ι υνδο α(β)ο ι σινδο ωσταδο

“and he submitted all India to (his) will.”

This is echoed in Rab 19-20:

στι βαο ι βαγεποορο ασο ιωγο χϋρονο αβο ι οχο χϋρονο ι υνδο αρουγο νααλη[ι]ο

“And the king, the son of the gods, was \*pacifying all India from the year one to the year \*six”

The most obvious semantic difference is the replacement of α(β)ο ι σινδο ωσταδο with νααλη[ι]ο, but it is noticeable that αρουγ[ο] ι υνδο is inverted in the second case to ι υνδο αρουγο. NSP 3 adds a further variant to this, reading ωσπορδο μο υνδο “he conquered(?) India”, not only introducing a third term for the conquest,<sup>531</sup> but also removing αρουγο to be replaced with an article, i.e., writing “the India” suggesting completeness in itself. Supposing that the parallels between Rab and NSP are genuine to the point that they both cite the same original statement,<sup>532</sup> only one can be a direct quotation whereas at least one if not both citations are paraphrases. This would suggest that the inversion of αρουγ[ο] ι υνδο to ι υνδο αρουγο in Rab is a deliberate stylistic choice, with the original statement either re-worked in Rab 6-7 to make such an inversion possible or Rab 19-20 composed to mirror the original mention.<sup>533</sup> It is tempting to interpret this as a chiasmic structure as found in Achaemenid inscriptions,<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2015, 260 for an explanation for ωσπορδο.

<sup>532</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 260 speaks of “almost identical wording”.

<sup>533</sup> It is unlikely that both sentences derive from the same original source, as the former refers to a proclamation made by Kaniška I in the year one, the latter to the campaign after it had lasted until the year six.

<sup>534</sup> Schmitt 2016, 38-42.



although here it would take the unprecedented form of being spread to different sections of the inscription.

A second repetition is found in SK4. SK4M 4-5 reads:

οδο καλδο ασο λρουομινανο ιειρο σταδο ταδο ι βαγε ασο ι νοβαλμο φροχορτινδο

“and when there was an attack(?) by enemies, then the gods were displaced from (their) seat”

SK4M 14-16:

οδο καλδανο ασο λρουομινανο ιειρο βοοηιο ταδανο ι βαγε ασο ι νοβαλμο μα φροχοαφονδηιο

“and when there might be an attack(?) by enemies the gods might not be displaced from (their) seat”

It is apparent that there is an antithetical construction in the verbatim repetition and negation of the earlier phrase.<sup>535</sup> This again recalls Achaemenid inscriptions,<sup>536</sup> although again, there is the unusual situation that the construction is spread across different sections of the text.

A further repetition is found in SK4. Here, the instalment of an *αχβτριγο* (winch?) is referred to twice in the same sentence.

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<sup>535</sup> The only difference is the replacement of *σταδο* < *αστο* by *βοοηιο* < *βο-* rather than *ασηιο* (*στηιο*?), which may be owed to an elusive stylistic choice. In Kušān Bactrian, both words appear only in SK4, *βοοηιο* only in this place, *σταδο* once more in SK4M 4 in the preceding sentence: *μα λιζο αβαβγο σταδο*.

<sup>536</sup> Schmitt 2016, 26-27.

SK4M 17-20:

οτηιο ασασκο μο σαδο αχβτριγο κιρδο αλβαργο ωσταδο ιθο ατο πιδεινο σαδο πιδεινο  
αχβτριγο ναρουγο μα λιζο χουζο ποροοατο

“And above the well he made a winch(?) (and) he installed a beam(?), so that by means of this well (and) by means of this winch(?) the whole citadel fared(?) well.”

The repetition of the order σαδο and αχβτριγο seems to suggest an intentional parallelism that is strengthened by the double use of the preposition + demonstrative pronoun πιδεινο in the second mention. The parallelism is a feature also found in Achaemenid inscriptions,<sup>537</sup> and in this case it seems to indicate the important correlation of well (σαδο) and αχβτριγο. The αχβτριγο seems to be the key element here, as there is no second mention of the αλβαργο. It is also worth pointing out in this context that the description of installing these two items, αχβτριγο κιρδο αλβαργο ωσταδο, is made without a conjunction such as οδο between these two actions. The lack of a conjunction where it is expected is an asyndeton reminiscent of the list of deities in Rab 10 and the blessing formula in Rab 18-19 and may indicate that both actions are inseparable from each other. This may suggest that the αλβαργο is implied to be contained in the second mention of the αχβτριγο.

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<sup>537</sup> Schmitt 2016, 73-76.

#### 4.3.10. Blessing formulae

There is only one extant occasion of a blessing formula in the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions, namely Rab 17-19:

ειμιδβα βαγε κιδι μαρο νιβιχτιγενδι ταδανο αβο βαοναν[ο βαι] αβο κανηηκε κοβανο  
αβο ιασηδανι ζορριγι λρουγο αγγαδδιγγο οανινδογ[ο ●●●●]ινδι

“May the gods who are inscribed here [keep] the [king] of kings, Kanishka the Kushan, for ever healthy, fortunate (and) victorious!”

The sentence is problematic because it relies on the interpretation of the particle -βα in ειμιδβα that is otherwise unattested, and because the verb cannot be read entirely.<sup>538</sup>

However, the interpretation of a blessing formula seems clear. The gods mentioned here are most likely those of Rab 9-10, although it is also possible that it may refer to νανα οδο οισποανο μο βαγανο in Rab 2.

Blessing formulae are commonplace in the Achaemenid inscriptions, most frequently *mām A.uramazdā pātu utāmaj viθam* “Mich soll Ahuramazdā schützen und mein Haus”. However, a closer parallel to Rab 17-19 is found in ŠPs II:

*'PM 'pryn-y krt-y 'YK šhpwhr-y ZY MLK '-n MLK' GBR '-n p 'rswm-y 'nwšk-y W y 'wyt-  
štr-y YHWWN-t W šhpwhr-y ZY sk 'n MLK' 'RYK YHW- 't W hmyw krt-y 'BYDWN-t MH  
y zd 'n W šhpwhr-y ZY MLK '-n MLK' hwp-y MDMH-t*

<sup>538</sup> For the analysis cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 86-87. Here, the verb is read as π●●●●ινδι(?), although the reading of π is discarded in Sims-Williams 2008 and the number of letters preceding the readable suffix is reduced to four.

*u-m āfrīn kard Šābuhr ī šahān šāh mardān pahlom anōšag ud jāwēd-šahr bād Šābuhr  
ī Sagān šāh dagr zīwad ud hamē kard kunād*

(...)

*W 'LḤ 'LHY' šhpwhr-y ZY MLK'-n MLK' PWN krpkyh-y (=W) drwdst HZYTn-n*

„Und ich betete darum, daß Šāpūr, der König der Könige, der beste der Menschen unsterblich sei und in ewiger Herrschaft, und daß Šāpūr der Sakenkönig, lang lebe und immer Taten vollbringe, die den Göttern und Šāpūr, dem König der Könige, gut erscheinen mögen.

(...)

und ihn, Seine Majestät (Sg.!) Šāpūr, den König der Könige, huldvoll und gesund sehe.“<sup>539</sup>

The parallel in ŠPs II is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it reflects Rab 17-19 in that it is a lower official, Seleukos, wishing blessing on his superiors, the emperor Šābuhr II and Šābuhr Sākanšāh, although unlike Rab he also includes himself, echoing the Achaemenid inscriptions. Second, the precise wishes are similar. Kaniška I is to be healthy (λρουγο), fortunate (αγαδδιγο) and victorious (οανιδογο) for eternity (αβο ιαοηδανι ζορριγι). Likewise, Šābuhr II is to be virtuous (*krpkyh*), healthy (*drwst*), and bestowed with immortality and eternal rule. For Šābuhr Sākanšāh, the author also wishes long life and good deeds that would please Šābuhr II. The only direct semantic correspondence is in health, but the tenor of both formulae is similar. Notably however, Seleukos does not directly invoke the gods to bestow this blessing like Rab 17-19 does, but performs *āfrīn*, i.e., a prayer or a blessing by himself. In any case, a divine force invoked here is not specified. Much rather, Seleukos wishes that both Šābuhr Sākanšāh

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<sup>539</sup> Back 1978, 495-97; cf. Skjærvø 1998, 655-56, also noting NPī §89 as a parallel.

and Seleukos himself perform deeds to please the gods and Šābuhr II. It is interesting here that Šābuhr II and the gods appear as one group to the subordinates, whereas in Rab, Kaniška I and the gods are clearly separated and interact with each other in different dimensions. However, Rab takes great care to still emphasise that gods and emperor are on the same level. In ŠPs II, Šābuhr II, despite being the best, is still human, the wish for him being immortal (*’nwšk-y*) being just that, a wish.

While ŠPs II is rather extensive in its blessing, Rab 17-19 is notably concise. It presents the blessings in the three adjectives λρουγο αγγαδδιγγο οαννδογο, without conjunction similar to the list of deities in Rab 10, suggesting they are inseparable. Although such asyndetic constructions are commonplace in Achaemenid inscriptions,<sup>540</sup> they seem to be of an entirely different nature there, serving a narrative purpose. This cannot be discerned in the Kušān inscriptions with the exception of the phrasing αχβτριγο κιδδο αλβαργο ωσταδο in SK4 discussed above.

The same passage in SK4 also includes the phrase ιθο ατο πιδεινο σαδο πιδεινο αχβτριγο ναρουγο μα λιζο χουζο ποροοατο “so that by means of this well and by means of this winch(?) the whole citadel fared(?) well.” While this is not exactly a blessing formula, it does indicate the benevolent effects of action that Nokonzok did on order of the emperor, thus implying the benevolence of the emperor and his associates.

#### 4.3.11. Textual self-reference and intertextuality

Skjærvø 1985 noted that the statements about the inscriptions themselves “contain some of the most striking parallels between the Old Persian and the Sassanian inscriptions”.<sup>541</sup> These are however not reflected in the Kušān inscriptions. There are

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<sup>540</sup> Schmitt 2016, 29-34.

<sup>541</sup> *Op. cit.*, 599.

two clear extant occurrences in which the text directly references itself in the narrative part of a Kušān inscription, in Rab 10-11:

οτηια ουδοανο πιδγιρβο φρομαδο κιρδ[ι] ειμοανο βαγανο κιδι μασκα νιβιχτιγενδι

“And he gave orders to make images of the same, (namely) of these gods who are inscribed hereupon”

and in Rab 17:

ειμιδβα βαγε κιδι μαρο νιβιχτιγενδι (...)

“May the gods who are inscribed here (...)”

The phrase resembles the expression αβο μασκο ναβιχτιγο, variations of which are commonly found in the Bactrian Documents, although never employing the 3rd plural perfect form. It is also more common to find μασκο used to refer to the text itself, whereas μαρο rather refers to a geographical location such as that in which the document is written or where the recipient of a letter is located. There is only one case in which μαρο is used in the manner of Rab 17 in a Bactrian Document, in the case of Document ‘U23’ κираδο σογγο μαρο ναβισιδο “otherwise than is here written”. This wording may be confused. A parallel in ‘U19’ reads ασο ναμονδο αβο ναμονδο σογγο μαρο αβο μασκ[ο] ναβισιδο “from boundary to boundary, as is here described herein”, the highly unusual use of both μαρο and μασκο being a unique occurrence. It is also the only known certain case of μαρο being used in a legal document to describe a property or geographic space. The more common word here is μαλο, which is not found in Rab,

but once in SK4M 11:  $\pi\iota\delta\omicron\iota\omega\gamma\omicron\omicron\delta\omicron\upsilon\iota\rho\sigma\omicron\chi\beta\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\omicron\mu\alpha\lambda\omicron\alpha\gamma\alpha\delta\omicron$  “(he) came here to the temple in the year thirty-one, (in) the month Nisan”.

Rab 9 uses  $\mu\alpha\rho\omicron$  in the geographical sense as is more common in the Bactrian Documents. This may indicate that  $\mu\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha$  and  $\mu\alpha\rho\omicron$  were used much more loosely in the Kušān inscriptions than in the highly legalistic language of the later Bactrian Documents. The two phrases are also repetitions of each other, and it seems possible that  $\mu\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha$  and  $\mu\alpha\rho\omicron$  were used for the sake of stylistic variation. The use of 3rd plural perfect  $\nu\iota\beta\iota\chi\tau\iota\gamma\epsilon\nu\delta\iota$  also points in this direction, as it is only used in uncommon phrases. The topic of intertextuality in Rab and NSP has already been discussed in chapter 4.3.3. regarding the proclamation of Kaniška I that is cited in both inscriptions. There is another reference to an outside text in NSP 3-4:

$\tau\alpha\delta\iota\epsilon\iota\mu\omicron\kappa\eta\rho\iota\mu\alpha\nu\omicron\omicron\alpha\rho\omicron\kappa\iota\rho\delta\omicron$  [...]  $\sigma\iota\delta\iota\alpha\beta\omicron\mu\alpha\zeta\delta\eta\gamma\gamma\omicron\upsilon\iota\beta\iota\chi\tau\iota\gamma\omicron$

“Then I performed there this work [...] which has been written in his records(?)”

The interpretation of this passage is ambiguous. The translation above is suggested by Sims-Williams 2015 based on the context, although an alternative is discussed referring to an oath. The term  $\mu\alpha\zeta\delta\eta\gamma\gamma\omicron$  is otherwise unattested and the translation “records” is suggested “on the basis of the likely etymological connection with *\*maz-da* “to remember””.<sup>542</sup> The use of  $\nu\iota\beta\iota\chi\tau\iota\gamma\omicron$  suggests a written text that is referred to here, and if N. Sims-Williams is correct in the analysis, it would suggest some sort of annalistic text that was known to Nokonzok and likely anyone who would have been capable of reading it, since Nokonzok did not see the need of elaborating on it.

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<sup>542</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 261.

In this context, it is also interesting to consider some chronological references in Rab and NSP:

Rab 19-20 οτι βαο ι βαγεπορο ασο ιωγο χρονο αβο ι οχο χρονο ι υνδο αρουγο  
νααλη[ι]ο

“And the king, the son of the gods, was \*pacifying all India from the year one to the year \*six.”

NSP 4 τακαλδι βαονανο ι βαγεπορο ασο μο υνδα αβο μο τοχοαρστανο πιδο ι λασσο  
χρονα πιδο οανιντα μοζδο

“Then the king of kings, the son of the gods, returned from India to Tokhwarstan in the tenth year with the spoils(?) of victory(?),”

Since in all instances the year is mentioned, it is possible that the source text is an official annalistic record or an imperial chronicle which was being kept up to date,<sup>543</sup> and perhaps this is the same text Nokonzok refers to in NSP 3-4.

#### **4.3.12. Huviška and SK4**

It is interesting that the only emperor named in SK4 is Kaniška I, although the inscription is dated to the year 31 KE, which by all indications is in the reign of Huviška. Kaniška is only mentioned as the founder of the βαγολαγγο, not explicitly as the reigning monarch. Someone reading the inscription at the time when it was set up will have known the name of the reigning emperor, but it is still odd that his name would

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<sup>543</sup> The repeated mention of the year one in Rab does not seem to be derived from this chronicle, as it reflects a literary tradition of its own as elaborated above.



not be mentioned in an inscription in a dynastic sanctuary, especially if the emperor and his command feature in the inscription's narrative.<sup>544</sup> This is even more difficult to understand in light of the emphasis given in the inscription on the emperor's benevolence as discussed above.

It is possible to speculate on reasons for the omission of the emperor's name, but without any further material for comparison it would lead nowhere. It is however important to emphasise a few points concerning the oddity of SK4. It does not begin with any sort of dating. A dating formula would also be where the name of the reigning monarch would be expected. Instead, a date is found much further in the body of the inscription, in SK4M 10. Here too, the emperor is not named but rather Nokonzok, who inspected the βαγολαγγο at this time. It is also interesting that the beginning of the inscription, rather than introduce the time, the emperor or even Nokonzok as the responsible official, introduces the βαγολαγγο. Only in second place does it introduce Kaniška I as the founder of the βαγολαγγο, but he is never mentioned again in the inscription. There are some parallels in the Sāsānian corpus of inscriptions first introducing the object then the creator, some of which are authored in first, others in third person.<sup>545</sup> The invocation of a structure and its creator by someone other than the creator himself recalls some inscriptions by Xerxes I honouring his deceased father Darius I while also serving as building or labelling inscriptions.<sup>546</sup> These appear to be conscious efforts by Xerxes to present himself as the successor of his revered father and to portray himself as someone capable of completing his father's work.<sup>547</sup> It is however crucial in the face of this to emphasise the name of Xerxes as the completer of this work. This is clearly not the case in SK4. In fact, it even becomes clear that Kaniška's foundation was insufficient, as it

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<sup>544</sup> cf. chapter 4.3.8.

<sup>545</sup> ŠH, ŠTBq, ŠVŠ, MNFd.

<sup>546</sup> XPa, XPc, XPg, XSa and XSd.

<sup>547</sup> This is especially the most likely interpretation of XVa.

left the βαγολαγγο vulnerable to attack due to its lack of water supply. This could have been an opportunity to present Huviška as someone surpassing the work of his predecessor, a trope common in ancient oriental inscriptions that is also found in DB,<sup>548</sup> but again this is not done here.

The beginning of SK4 finds a surprising parallel, however. SK4M 1-2 reads:

**ειδο μα λιζο** μο κανηρκο οανινδο βαγολαγγο σιδο ι βαγο ραο κ

“This citadel (is) the temple of Kanishka the victorious, which was named(?) by the lord king Kanishka.”

It may be compared to the Bactrian Document ‘C’ 1-2:

χρονο ρ´ ν´ ζ´ δρηματιγανο μαο **εδο μο λαρηνοβωστογο** μαλο νιβιχτο αβο μο ρωβαγγο  
ραρο αβιοανδαγο σιδο ρηγανο ραζινδο (C2': ριζδο) (...)

“The year 157, the month Drematigan. This deed of gift was written here in the borough of the city of Rob which they call Regan (...)”

There is no other occurrence in the Bactrian documents in which the document is introduced with εδο μο.<sup>549</sup> Instead, it is more common to find a direct connection to the date using καλδο to express “it was the date nn when this nn was written”. Document ‘C’ is very early, dating to 380 CE and thus possibly either still in the Kušāno-Sāsānian period or shortly afterward. The most notable difference is the date at the beginning of document ‘C’, but it is in no logical connection to the introduction of the text. Document

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<sup>548</sup> Skjærvø 1999, 15.

<sup>549</sup> In fact, it is so far the only known occurrence of the phrasing in a Bactrian Document, cf. BD2, 210a (ειδο).

‘C’ seems to reflect an older tradition of legal language that may also be apparent in SK4M. If so, Nokonzok did not appear as an innovative composer but took care to use conventions of formal language in the text.

These conventions however are not those of imperial inscriptions that tie DN1 and Rab together. Nor does its composer Nokonzok feel the need to place himself in the shadow of the Kušān emperors, living or dead. He does not omit to mention that he is acting on the emperor's behalf, but it appears he felt confident enough in his position to place his own name in the inscription prominently, as the epithets he sports show, while omitting the emperor's name altogether. To further stress this point, it was possible for him to place such an inscription at the heart of Kušān power, at the entrance of a monumental dynastic sanctuary built to celebrate the accomplishments of the Kušān emperors,<sup>550</sup> thus associating Nokonzok the *καραλαργγο* with the deceased emperor Kaniška I. This recalls the boldness with which the high priest Kerdīr could place his own reliefs and inscriptions on imperial Sāsānian monuments. He was in this way even able to construct an association with the deceased Šābuhr I, whose historical authority was still a source for legitimacy in NPi, which in this prominence probably never existed. Huviška was either powerless against this or had no objections, as SK4M was found *in situ*, suggesting Nokonzok and his memory never lost this sort of favour. There is further evidence for the exalted position of the rank of *καραλαργγο* in the Kušān hierarchy which will be discussed in chapter 7.6.2.4., so there is no need to assume that Nokonzok possessed a unique position of power. The fact that he appears in these three well-preserved inscriptions may simply be a coincidence.

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<sup>550</sup> According to the excavators, it was originally embedded in the sanctuary wall, cf. Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983/1, 61.

#### 4.3.13. Conclusions

It has been shown above that the Bactrian inscriptions of the Kušān period can be regarded as literary texts composed with a sense for stylistic aesthetics. Although there are some similarities to the Achaemenid inscriptions, it is clear that the composition of the extant inscriptions does not rely on direct knowledge of the Achaemenid texts, that they do not follow the literary intentions of the Achaemenids and that they can not be regarded as directly deriving from a literary tradition introduced in the Achaemenid period. Unlike the Achaemenid inscriptions, the Kušān ones are not poetic compositions, and their prosaic tone is more reminiscent of those of the Sāsānian period.

This is not to say that the Kušān inscriptions cannot be regarded as belonging to an Iranian literary context. The use of the stylistic devices discussed above shows that composition and structure of the texts were done with literary ambitions, but the literary context that formed a repository for phrases, formulae and devices is now mostly invisible. It is also necessary to point out that the three inscriptions for which authorship can be determined were composed either directly by, or at least with strong involvement of, a very limited number of high-ranking officials. The name of Nokonzok appears in all three, so it needs to be taken into account that any literary tendency in these inscriptions should be expected to reflect the education and preferences of this small social group. Unfortunately, the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions from outside the very small geographic and historical area represented by Rab, NSP and SK4 are too fragmentary to allow stylistic comparisons.

The most material for an imperial text that may resemble the *res gestae* of Iranian emperors such as Darius I (DB), Šābuhr I (ŠKZ) and Narseh (NPi) can be found in the citations of a proclamation of Kaniška I referred to in Rab 3-4 and echoed in NSP. The

portions of the inscriptions that either quote or paraphrase this proclamation are relatively strong in their resemblance to Achaemenid, Arsakid and Sāsānaian imperial texts. This suggests that the composition of Kušān imperial proclamations had a particularly strong Iranian background. It is interesting to note here that Kaniška's proclamation was first made in Greek and then translated to Bactrian, but that the text does not resemble in any particular way similar Greek texts such as the *res gestae* of Augustus. However, unless further citations of this text are found or a Kušān monument resembling that of Bisotun, the Ka'bā-ye Zardošt or Paikuli is discovered, not much more can be said about this proclamation and its relation to Iranian literature.

## 5. Kušān Titulature

The Achaemenid and, to lesser extent, Sāsānian epigraphic corpus contain much literary material pertaining to the self-image of the Iranian monarch. The Kušān material is much more limited in this regard. There is no extant case of a Kušān emperor describing the aims of his governance or the virtues of a good emperor the way Darius I and Xerxes I do in DNb and XPl. The Kušān idea of kingship must be reconstructed from much more scattered and incomplete elements in the inscriptions and other material remains, most importantly the coins. A particularly important, and hitherto not systematically analysed source is the titulature of the Kušān emperors. In the following, the sources and evolution of the Kušān titulature will be investigated. This will be done in chronological fashion beginning with the Heraios coinage until the late Kušān period, as the individual lines of influence can be made the most visible this way.

### 5.1. The Heraios coinage

The earliest Kušān source for any sort of titulature is the Heraios coinage which Cribb 1993 attributed to Kujula Kadphises. These coins were long attributed to an otherwise unknown sovereign Heraios or Miaos (Latinised Heraus and Miaus respectively) based on the reading of a word in the legend as the genitive HPAOY or HIAOY. Cribb 1993 rejected this interpretation, suggesting that the spot where the personal name of the issuer is to be expected is in fact taken by variations of KOPPANOY “Kušān”. There is no explanation for the word HIA(I)OY, but reference is made to the word ZAOOY on the “Roman” types of Kujula Kadphises.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Cribb 1993, 130.

Falk 2018 suggests seeing here a rendering in Greek script of *xihou*, the Chinese version of the title *yabghu*.<sup>552</sup> It has long been suggested that ZAOOY itself may be a rendering of *yabghu*, although it may also be an early attempt at writing Iranian *šāh* in Greek letters. Since there is no royal or imperial title on the Heraios coins, it should be expected that they were issued in the *yabghu* phase of Kušān history and thus that the corresponding title would appear on the coins.<sup>553</sup>

It is interesting in this context that the legends of the Heraios coins also include the title τυραννοῦντος. This is a unique occurrence of the title in the Historical Environment of the Kušān. On it, Falk 2018 remarks that it “was created as an answer to the Parthian description of the king as βασιλεύοντος βασιλέως βασιλέων Ἀρσάκου (Staab 2011: 70), meaning “of Arsakes, the king of kings, acting as king”, stressing the difference between kings by name (frequent in the Parthian family) and the supreme sovereign “on duty”. This Arsacid formula was in use decades before and after Kujula's takeover. Using the hapax *tyrannountos* instead of *basileontos* seems to show that Kujula initially shied away from using the term *basileos*, “king”, for himself, possibly since he was not born as a king but was a self-made autocrat. By using a participle present of a self-coined denominative verb built on the model of βασιλεύοντος he could put stress on his ability to act according to his own will”.<sup>554</sup>

This explanation however does not take into account two important aspects. First, βασιλεύοντος is generally translated to refer to the reign of the Arsakid emperor, not as

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<sup>552</sup> *Op. cit.*, 5-6.

<sup>553</sup> It should be noted however that such a titulature does not appear on the Yuezhi coinage of Sapadbizes/Sapalbizes, Agesiles/Arseiles and Pabes.

<sup>554</sup> *Op. cit.*, 5. Fn. 9 includes references to the title *basileontos* on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Parthian coins. The translation “acting as king” is that of Falk, not Staab. The latter speaks of βασιλεύοντος as a “Partizipialform“, but his reference to Thommen’s editions and translations of Greek Arsakid inscriptions from Babylon (QGP/2, 462-64) clarify that the participle form refers to the reign of the emperor in a chronological sense, as in both cases, βασιλεύοντος is translated here as “Unter der Königsherrschaft des NN”.

being a title in itself.<sup>555</sup> Keller 2010 argues that the proper title of the Arsakid emperor is βασιλέως βασιλέων, which, emended by several epithets, is found as such in the standardised form on Arsakid coins.<sup>556</sup> βασιλεύοντος is never found on Arsakid coins, a fact that speaks strongly against the interpretation of Falk 2018. Instead, it is usually found on official documents on parchment and papyri from Dura Europos and Awroman, and on two inscriptions from Babylon, always in the dating protocol. As Staab points out, it appears in the two variants βασιλεύοντος βασιλέως βασιλέων and βασιλεύοντος μεγάλου, the latter apparently being an abbreviation of the title βασιλέως βασιλέων.<sup>557</sup> If the emperor is mentioned by title outside the dating formula or the dating formula is different, βασιλεύοντος disappears.

This is particularly notable in the Greek version of the inscription on the Heraklēs statuette from Mesene (BHM), which is introduced with the dating formula ἔτους τοῦ καθ’ Ἑλληνας (in the year 462 according to the Greeks) following with repeated mentions of royal titles, but never using βασιλεύοντος.<sup>558</sup> It should thus be considered that the word is to be translated as “in the reign of”, as commonly done in the corresponding translations, not as “acting as king”.

Likewise, the appearance of ΒΑCΙΑΕΥΟΝΤΟC on Graeco-Bactrian coins is unlikely to have the meaning “acting as king”, if only because it only appears on so-called “pedigree coins” issued by later kings (Agathokles and Antimachos I) and the sovereign thus designated was already dead.<sup>559</sup> In Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian contexts, the form βασιλεύοντος appears four times, under a ruler Mamvadi of Taxila (Senior: 161), Arsakēs (Senior: 163-164), Abdagasēs (Senior: 228-229), Gondopharēs-Sasēs (Senior:

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<sup>555</sup> cf. the preceding footnote.

<sup>556</sup> QGP/II, 623 (= Keller 2010).

<sup>557</sup> *Op. cit.*, 70.

<sup>558</sup> QGP/II, 461.

<sup>559</sup> On the distribution of the title cf. Boppearachchi 1991, 387.



243) and Sarpēdonēs (Senior: 255.30-255.42). In all but the first case, the title is βασιλεύοντος βασιλέων. It appears interchangeably with the normal βασιλέως βασιλέων, and unfortunately the Greek and Gandhārī titles seldom correspond exactly to each other, so that no explanation for the Greek can be deduced from the Gandhārī. All this does not disprove the idea advanced by Falk 2018, but it does not provide any evidence for it.

The second aspect left disregarded by the explanation in Falk 2018 is the title αὐτοκράτωρ, which was used by Arsakēs I and Theophilos<sup>560</sup> and was later rendered into Bactrian as χαζαοαργο.<sup>561</sup> While Theophilos and the later Kušān used it in connection with other royal titles, Arsakēs did not. It is difficult to explain why the Kušān initially chose the title τύραννος, which as far as can be determined at present remains unique in the Historical Environment of the Kušān, but not the more established αὐτοκράτωρ. It seems most likely that the Kušān at this early stage wished to retain their *yabghu* title as Falk 2018 argues. The use of αὐτοκράτωρ and other titles would have introduced an established titulature that the Kušān did not want to adopt. Instead, they seem to have found the Greek τύραννος as a satisfactory equivalent for *yabghu*.<sup>562</sup> Perhaps this was the title used by the Greek population of Central Asia for their Yuezhi overlords. In any case, this unprecedented adoption of a Greek title speaks strongly for the continuing presence of a Greek population in the early Kušān period.

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<sup>560</sup> Arsakēs: Sellwood: 1-4; Theophilos: Bopearachchi: Théophile Série 1.

<sup>561</sup> cf. chapter 5.6.2.1.

<sup>562</sup> Already suggested by Grenet 2015, 205.

## 5.2. Titles with the name of Kujula Kadphises

Kujula Kadphises retains the *yabghu* title in the coinage issued in his name. With the possible exception of ZAOOY, it only appears in Gandhārī legends, even when the Greek legends name Kujula rather than reproduce the old Hermaios legends. Kujula is commonly given the titles *yavuga dhramatida*, although the latter is also found extended as *sachadhramathida* on the “Roman” types. *dhramatida* is interpreted by Jongeward/Cribb 2015 as “an adaptation of the title dhrami[k]a used by Indo-Greek, Scythian and Indo-Parthian rulers in this region, translating the Greek title ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ that implies the quality of being just, and faithful to the law”.<sup>563</sup> As discussed in chapter 5.4.1., this is exactly the spectrum of connotations later expressed in Bactrian ραβτογο (i) λαδειγο in DN1 4-5 and Rab 1. δίκαιοϛ/*dhramika* is a title commonly found on Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian and Arsakid coins.<sup>564</sup> It should be noted however, that while *dhramika* has many attestations among the Indo-Scythian coinage, the Greek δίκαιοϛ has only few.<sup>565</sup> It is thus odd that Kujula Kadphises would introduce a new formation if it is a translation of the Greek title. This would be best explicable if the Greek title was in use in Bactria at the time, but the Gandhārī version was not and Kujula did not know or did not seek a connection to the *dhramika* tradition. This is a possibility considering the frequency of Hēlioklēs imitation coinage from the Yuezhi

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<sup>563</sup> *Op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>564</sup> However, Fears 1981, 868 points out that, while common among the Arsakids, and Pontic and Kappadokian kings (and, as only pointed out in fn. 179, the Kommagenean and Indo-Greek kings), the title was rare among the Ptolemaeans, Seleukids, Antigonids and Attalids, and finds a hardly convincing explanation for this: “One could assume, it would seem, justice and piety as inherent and self-evident for a Hellenic *basileus*. One could not assume these virtues as a matter of course in a barbarian potentate. Hence, the barbarian king’s need for self-advertisement to the Greek world.” Fears makes this a comparative argument to support the thesis that the Romans adapted a Hellenic “Cult of Virtues” to appeal to the Greek population of their empire. He does not attempt an explanation for the Indo-Greek usage of the title.

<sup>565</sup> These are Spalahorēs/Spalagadamēs (Senior: 69; note the title *dhramia* is found on other coins of the “Vonones Group” but not δίκαιοϛ) and Arsakēs (Senior: 163).

period in northern Bactria, which has monolingual legends reading ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΗΛΙΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ.<sup>566</sup> It is conceivable that the title was adopted from the last Graeco-Bactrian king without knowledge of or interest in its usage among other dynasties. The translation (*sacha*)*dhramathida* may thus represent a genuine Kušan interpretation.

Since there is no evidence for any strong Buddhist presence in northern Bactria in this period, the title should not be viewed as possessing any Buddhist connotation, but as derived from its use as a royal epithet of the Hellenistic period, with perhaps an unknown reinterpretation. It is interesting that the extension to *sachadhramathida* appears specifically on the coin issues of the “Roman” type discussed above. Mahler 2008 notes a “verblüffende inhaltliche Koinzidenz” to the legend *Leges et iura p(opulo) R(omano) restituit* on reverses of Octavian showing him seated on a curule chair similar to Kujula.<sup>567</sup> The author is perhaps a bit too dismissive of this parallel, as he does not recognise the apparent new formation of the *sachadhramathida* title under Kujula.<sup>568</sup> The (*sacha*)*dhramathida* title is lost together with the designation as *yabghu* on the coins in which Kujula Kadphises takes on an imperial titulature.<sup>569</sup> On these, Kujula is called *maharaya rayatiraya* and occasionally *devaputra*, which will be discussed below. These coins do not depict Kujula in any human form however but display a bull on the obverse (with a corrupt Greek legend) and a camel on the reverse. The design of

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<sup>566</sup> Note however that the Hermaios imitations which form the obverse of many of Kujula's coins, do not use the title δίκαιος but a misspelled σωτήρ.

<sup>567</sup> *Op. cit.*, 303.

<sup>568</sup> The reasons given *ibid* are that the translation of *sachadhramathida* is disputed and that the title also appears on other coin types of Kujula, namely Senior: B6.1. This coin however has the same “Roman” obverse, suggesting it belongs to the same period. The translation of *sachadhramathida* as “steadfast in the true law” found in Rosenfield 1967, 13 is apparently no longer upheld, but Falk 2019, 5 translates it as “steadfast in truth and dharma” which, if anything, comes even closer to the Roman legend.

<sup>569</sup> A Bactrian rendering ιαβγο known from Bactrian documents where they are always in conjunction with ηβοδαλο “Hepthalite” (which may still support the caveat of Davary 1982, 202), may be found in Dil4 9. The same inscription also contains the title χοαδηο; but the context is far too fragmentary to make any use of it, provided the ιαβγο title is really there in the first place.

this coinage is based on issues of the Indo-Scythian satrap Jihonika/Zeiōnisēs. Both the coinage of Jihonika/Zeiōnisēs and the bull and camel types were found in the same area, in Kashmir.<sup>570</sup> It is strange that Kujula would present himself with a full imperial titulature in Kashmir only. The title 'king of kings' was used by Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians, and thus had an active tradition in north-west India, while it had been out of use in Bactria for centuries at this point. The coinage of Kujula Kadphises was at this time not yet a unified imperial one, and thus it would be expected to reflect the local traditions of the area where it was issued. However, while this may explain the use of the title *rayatiraya*, it does not account for the total absence of royal or imperial titulature in Bactria, where the title βασιλεύς was still well-known.<sup>571</sup>

### 5.3. The Sōtēr Megas coinage

An elegant solution to the problem of complete absence of royal or imperial titulature on the coins of Kujula Kadphises in Bactria with simultaneous appearance elsewhere could be found in a proposition made by Cribb 2015. Here it is suggested that the so-called Sōtēr Megas issues followed directly after Hēlioklēs and Hermaios imitation coins and were first issued under Kujula Kadphises.<sup>572</sup> This coinage is devoid of a personal name in the legends and reads ΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΒΑCΙΑΕΩΝ CΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑC on the reverse and *Maharajasa rajatirajasa mahatasa tratarasa* on the obverse of some types. If Cribb 2015 is correct, this would mean an assumption of the title “king of kings” by Kujula Kadphises throughout the empire by the end of his reign.

If this is the case, it may also be significant that the title σωτήρ was chosen to accompany it on an empire-wide basis. Although not used by the Indo-Scythians,

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<sup>570</sup> Senior 2001, 96; Cribb 2015, 104. It is a striking coincidence that the two successors of Jihonika/Zeiōnisēs in Kashmir share the name Kusulaka with Kujula Kadphises, cf. Senior 2001, 96.

<sup>571</sup> As apparent from the use of the title on the Hermaios imitations and the coins of Vima Kadphises.

<sup>572</sup> *Op. cit.*, 106-07.

σωτήρ was the most common title after βασιλεύς used by the Graeco-Bactrians and Indo-Greeks, and it also appears on the coinage of all Indo-Parthian monarchs. Originally an epithet awarded to Hellenistic monarchs on specific occasions,<sup>573</sup> its use in the Hellenistic Far East seems to have been generic and without any specific religious message. The translation to Gandhārī *tratarā* is found first on bilingual coins of Apollodōtos I.<sup>574</sup> On bilingual Indo-Parthian coins, the title is sometimes attested both in Greek and Gandhārī, and sometimes in Gandhārī only.<sup>575</sup> This is a clear indication that the title was used consciously by the Indo-Parthians, and that their usage constitutes a seamless tradition from the Indo-Greeks.

The extension to σωτήρ μέγας is never found in Graeco-Bactrian or Indo-Greek coinage, whereas some Indo-Parthian coins feature *mahata* followed by *tratarā*. Here however, *mahata* may simply be a title in itself, because there are examples of *mahata* and *tratarā* respectively standing on their own in Indo-Parthian coinage as well. In the Kušān context however, σωτήρ, *tratarā* and the Bactrian βωγο never appear on their own, but extended with μέγας, *mahata* and στοργο respectively.

The extension is likely a genuine Kušān innovation meant to express the superior rank of the Kušān emperor over all who came before him, although it is possible that the Indo-Parthian use of the titles *mahata* and *tratarā* following each other may have been perceived as an extension or served as an inspiration for such. It is unlikely that it was meant to be understood in a religious manner.<sup>576</sup> It has been suggested that it may be

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<sup>573</sup> On the history of the use of the title cf. Dornseiff 1927, 1212-14.

<sup>574</sup> Bopearachchi: Apollodote I Série 2.

<sup>575</sup> Bilingual: Gondopharēs (Senior: 213); Abdagasēs (Senior: 224, 225). All others Kharoṣṭhī only.

<sup>576</sup> But see Dornseiff 1927, 1213: „Das [the use of the epithet for human beings] nimmt zu, als die Griechen der vielgeplagten Kleinstaaten mit den übermächtigen makedonischen Machthabern in Berührung traten. Da kommt ihnen das überschwengliche, leicht vergottende σ[ωτήρ] leicht über die Lippen, wenn solche 'Retter' in der Not kamen oder günstig gestimmt werden sollten.“ Narain 1957, 18 suggests that Diodotus “perhaps took the title 'Soter' because he considered himself the saviour of the Greeks in Bactria.” Tarn 1997, 175 explains the use of the title by the Indo-Greeks as a message to (mostly Buddhist) Indians who were to be 'saved' by Apollodotos I and Menander from Pushyamitra, who in Tarn's opinion wished to restore the Brahman religion, of which “he was a convinced, perhaps

related to Buddhism.<sup>577</sup> However, of the Greek monarchs in the region, only Agathokles is known to have used Buddhist imagery on his coins, and he notably does not use the title. A Buddhist interpretation of the title must be ruled out. This is, of course, even further emphasised by the unlikelihood of a Buddhist population seeing in the political ruler a messianic figure such as the *Maitreya*.<sup>578</sup>

The same problems arise when the title is seen in the context with other religions. Wherever soteriology is not a purely gnostic affair, the identification of the Kuṣān emperor with a messianic figure such as the *saošiiant-* or Kalki, which would be implied with the σωτήρ μέγας title, is completely unthinkable.<sup>579</sup> This also goes for the “orientalisation” of the epithet σωτήρ by way of Egyptian, Jewish, Babylonian and Iranian influence in the wake of Alexander's conquest.<sup>580</sup>

It is therefore more likely that the use of the title represents an established tradition of a more generally programmatic manner, not a reference to any particular circumstances

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even a fanatical, devotee”. However, Tarn stresses that the adoption of the σωτήρ title was purely political, “but it happened that the people to be 'saved' were in fact usually Buddhists” (*ibid*). Tarn's argumentation intends to refute the claim that the Indo-Greeks had adopted Buddhism as their religion. He further suggests that “The word *Soter* on the coins of Apollodotus and Menander may really imply a manifesto issued by Demetrius to the people of India on the lines, though not in the sense, of the famous proclamation of Antigonos I that all Greeks should be free, a proclamation which for years was a main motive power of Hellenistic history.” Narain 1957, 99 rejects this interpretation.

<sup>577</sup> Tarn 1997, 160 and 176 (see note above) rejected this idea. See also Narain 1957, 118-20 on the relations between Antialkidas and a king Bāgabhadra whose identity is not clear. On the Hēliodōros pillar from Besnagar, this king is called *trātāra* (p. 118, n. 10), and *ibid*, p. 120 calls it “an unusual epithet to be adopted by an Indian king, and must have been given him by Heliiodorus, in the inscription which was engraved at his instance. But we do not know why he chose the epithet *Trātāra*, which means 'the Saviour', for Bhāgabhadra, especially when this title was not adopted either by Antialcidas or by his immediate predecessors”.

<sup>578</sup> Although the millennial descriptions in the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* and other sources do involve specific details concerning kingship in the end times, the *Maitreya* is specifically mentioned to not be the king (named Śaṅkha in most sources), but the son of his Brahmin chaplain (Lamotte 1988, 701 ff). The *Maitrieya* is a divine figure, and an Iranian influence on the concept has been discussed (see esp. Lamotte 1988, 707-08 w. note 125).

<sup>579</sup> In an Iranian context, it may be tempting to draw a parallel to the title *bwht-rwb 'n wrhr'* of Kirdīr in his inscriptions (legible in KKZ 09, Back 1978, 411). This has been translated as meaning “Der Erlöser der Seele Warehrān's” by Back. MackKenzie 1989, 63 also favours such a translation but points out a possible (but rejected) alternative “(the god) Wahram saved (his) soul.” Based on an occurrence of the title on a seemingly unconnected seal, it is speculated here that “Kerdir's personal title was carried down in his family as a name”. See also Back's discussion and rejection of Ph. Gignoux' and Sh. Shaked's proposed translation “Kirdīr du juste Vahrām”, *ibid* 509, fn. 263.

<sup>580</sup> Dornseiff 1927, 1215-16.

within the empire. It is noteworthy that this title seems to have been of such importance to the Kušān, that at least in the case of the Sōtēr Megas issues, the use of the title overruled that of the emperor's personal name. It is one of the few titles used on early Kušān coins. In the three cases of Dašt-i Nawur, Rabatak and Kamra, the title appears in prominent spot at the beginning.

The title had by the time of the rise of the Kušān evolved from an epithet awarded to individual rulers based on a specific event or political agenda to a traditional title. While it, most likely, still transmitted a specific political idea, it no longer served to distinguish a certain monarch and his reign. Although the use of this title is not to be regarded in a messianic notion of a millennial rule, it will nevertheless have been religiously charged. The title σωτήρ in the Hellenistic world was likely understood to indicate “a divinely favoured individual, or (...) a divinity descended from heaven.”<sup>581</sup> Such an interpretation would have certainly been welcomed by the Kušān emperors, especially when titles such as βαγο ηζνογο and βαγεποορο are considered, which have a clear theological association.

Within the Iranian tradition, words related to the OIr. verb *\*bauj-*<sup>582</sup> are especially common in the Buddhist, Manichaean and Christian literature in Middle Iranian. At least in one case, the extension *bwxt'r'n wzrg'n* can be found in Manichaean Middle Persian.<sup>583</sup> This relates to the *ny'g'n prwxn*, “die glückseligen Ahnen” and is to be seen in an entirely Manichaean context. The same goes for the use of “saviour” (Pth *bwj'gr*, MP *bwxt'r*) as a title for Mani.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Curran 1988, 35.

<sup>582</sup> Cheung 2007, 18.

<sup>583</sup> Henning 1936, 21 (l. 110-11) translates it as “die großen Erlöser”.

<sup>584</sup> For references, cf. DMMPP, 31 (Pth) and 118 (Pth and MP).

More importantly, the word is found in Sogdian personal names and in the name of the ninth month in the Sogdian calendar.<sup>585</sup> Bo/Sims-Williams 2010 suggest that “The formation of the name [bwyδ't], apparently 'Given by Salvation', suggests that the abstract noun βwy may have been used as the designation of a particular deity, which is plausible in the view of the Bactrian expression βωγο στοργο 'the Great Salvation' as an honorific epithet of the Kushan ruler”.<sup>586</sup> This is an interesting, although probably coincidental parallel to the Greek use of σωτήρ as an epithet for deities and mortals. It should be considered that in the Roman Empire, one of the epithets attributed to Augustus was *mundi salvator*.<sup>587</sup> This drew from Greek and Roman traditions and shows how various soteriological ideas came to form an expression of political rationale.<sup>588</sup> It is thus conceivable that the Kušān use of the title, which must have been a conscious decision, was a culmination of a similar array of traditions and influences. Its meaning however is probably best understood as strictly in the Hellenistic tradition from which it originates, as expressing the protection of land and people the primary duty of the Kušān emperor.<sup>589</sup> The extension to μέγας/*mahata*/στοργο is most likely to be understood in the context of a greater claim to power by the Kušān, and the expression of a political agenda that aimed for the erection of a large, independent and stable empire that overcame the particularistic struggles of the Yuezhi *yabghus*,<sup>590</sup> the

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<sup>585</sup> Bo/Sims-Williams 2010, 503.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> Curran 1988, 31. But note that there is no indication that this epithet, which was attributed to him by Propertius (IV.6,36), had any official status. cf. S. Angus, *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World. A Study in the Historical Background of Early Christianity*. New York 1967, esp. p. 26.

<sup>588</sup> Curran 1988, 36-38.

<sup>589</sup> This agrees with the idea of Achaemenid kingship as represented by the satrap Arsites confronting Alexander's invasion before the Battle of the Granikos, who rejected Memnon's scorched earth tactics on the grounds that it was his duty to protect his land and people (Arr. *Anab.* I.12.10, Diod. XVII.18.3-4). For a sceptical discussion on this, see Briant 2002, 820-23 (with further sources).

<sup>590</sup> On these see most recently Falk 2018.



local Indo-Greek kingdoms,<sup>591</sup> or even the more encompassing Indo-Scythian<sup>592</sup> and Indo-Parthian rules.<sup>593</sup>

#### 5.4. Vima Takto and DN1

If the idea of the Sōtēr Megas coinage is a product of the reign of Kujula Kadphises, then by the end of his reign, the first Kuṣān emperor had taken on the titles τυραννοῦντος, *yabghu*, (*sacha*)*dhramathida*, *maharaja*, *rajatiraja*/βασιλεύς βασιλέων, *devaputra* and σωτήρ μέγας/*mahata tratara*. However, there is no attestation of the use of all these titles together. The reason for this may be the very limited epigraphic attestation outside the coin legends in which a “full” titulature of Kujula Kadphises would be expected. The only inscription naming Kujula Kadphises is the Seṇavarma Copper Plate (CKI 249), line 8g: *maharaja-rayatiraya-kuyula-kataphisa-putro sadaṣkaṇo devaputro* “Sohn des Großköngs, des Oberkönigs über Könige, Kujula Kadphises, Sadaṣkana, der Sohn der Götter”. The title *devaputro* is used here for Sadaṣkana, not Kujula Kadphises, as it follows the naming of the former.

Under Vima Takto, the situation of attestation changes. The bulk of Vima Takto's coinage is the above-mentioned Sōtēr Megas coinage. There is a limited local issue following the bull and camel type of Kujula Kadphises with the legend *maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa vematakho*.<sup>594</sup> Some types are also missing the personal name. More important however is the trilingual inscription of Dašt-i Nawur, of which the Bactrian version reads in lines 2-7:<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> cf. the verdict of Falk 2009, 27: “the number of titles used by the Kuṣānas and their magnitude increase in diametric opposition to their actual political power”. This can certainly be held true for the ephemeral Indo-Greek rulers as well.

<sup>592</sup> cf. Senior 2001 for an overview.

<sup>593</sup> The Indo-Parthian kingdom is by and large viewed as an independent Parthian state now, see e.g. Bivar 2007, 26 whereas Rezakhani 2017, 30 ff. considers at least their origins to be as an Arsakid satrapal dynasty.

<sup>594</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 115-18.

<sup>595</sup> Cited after Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 95.

βαρονανδε βαι ι βωγο ι στοργο οσημο τακτοο κοβανο ι ραβτογο ι λαδειγο ι βαγο ι ηζνογο  
κιδι πιδο ι χοβε ι ανε βαοδανε λφαχτο

“Of the king of kings, the great salvation Vima Takto the Kušān the righteous, the just,  
the god worthy of worship who according to his own will has gained the kingship”

The first five titles have direct equivalences in the titulature established by Kujula Kadphises: βαρονανδο βαο corresponds to *rajatiraja*/βασιλεύς βασιλέων, βωγο ι στοργο ι σωτήρ μέγας/*mahata tratara*, ραβτογο ι λαδειγο to *(sacha)dhramathida*/δίκαιος and κοβανο “Kušān” is always present except for CKI 249. A translation of *maharaja* is missing as on the Greek legends of the Sōtēr Megas coinage, which may be an indicator that the Bactrian translation was modelled on a Greek titulature rather than a Gandhārī one. A Bactrian equivalent of *devaputra* is also missing here, although as in Rab, it may have featured in the no longer extant body of the inscription.

#### 5.4.1. ραβτογο ι λαδειγο

ραβτογο ι λαδειγο clearly takes the place of *(sacha)dhramathida*/δίκαιος. At first glance, the use of two words that ostensibly have the same meaning appears odd. However, this appears to have been done with the intent of capturing the semantic values found in δίκαιος and *(sacha)dhramathida*. Both the Greek and Indian have a dual moralistic and legalistic sense that apparently was not present in any single Bactrian word.

The meaning of δίκαιος is primarily legalistic.<sup>596</sup> As such, δικασόουος “guardian of justice” also appears as an epithet of Zeus. In the Septuagint, it however also appears

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<sup>596</sup> Montanari 2015, 529.

in a moralistic sense,<sup>597</sup> and is to be understood as reflecting both the meaning of “justice” and “piety” when used as a title.<sup>598</sup>

For *dhramathida*, in this context a more general meaning related to lawfulness should be assumed. It is not to be understood as a purely Buddhist or Brahmanist concept,<sup>599</sup> but a general law encompassing both the spiritual and the worldly, and thus with moralistic and legalistic meaning.<sup>600</sup>

ρᾰρτογο appears to capture the moralistic sense. This is already apparent in Old Iranian. In Young Avestan, *rāšta-* is taken to mean “straight”, and is even divinised in shape of Arštāt-, the goddess of justice.<sup>601</sup> In Old Persian, *rāsta* appears to invoke a sense of moral justice, while *rštā-* seems to have both a moralistic and a legalistic meaning.<sup>602</sup> In Middle Persian, the primarily moralistic meaning is retained, and is also found in Khotanese *rrasta-* and Parthian *r`št*. In Khwarezmian and often in Sogdian, the meaning changes to “truth”, which presents a much stronger emphasis on the moralistic meaning.<sup>603</sup>

λαδειγο on the other hand has a strictly legalistic association that is clearly evident from the Bactrian sources already. The context in the Bactrian documents for words such as λαδιγο and λαδδου (both later forms of λαδειγο), λαδο “law, lawsuit, trial, court, judgement, legal statement, deposition”, λαδοβαραγο “belonging to the judges,

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<sup>597</sup> e.g. Gen. 6,9: Νῶε ἄνθρωπος δίκαιος, τέλειος ὢν ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ αὐτοῦ. See also Rehkopf 1989, 77.

<sup>598</sup> Fears 1981, 868.

<sup>599</sup> This is supported by the Greek version of the Aśokan edict from Kandahar, where *dhamma* is translated with εὐσέβεια, a word that reflects concepts of piety and godliness (but also legalistic implications, see Hacker 1965, 94 w. fn. 3), whereas not long after, *dhramika* is rendered on coins by δίκαιος with the meanings discussed above.

<sup>600</sup> See the discussion focusing on Aśokan *dhamma* in A. Bowles, *Dharma, Disorder and the Political in Ancient India. The Āpaddharmaparvan of the Mahābhārata*. Leiden/Boston 2007, esp. p. 130; also Hacker, 1965, 105: "Wenn andererseits der Dharma auch Bereiche umfaßt wie Zivilrecht, Strafrecht und Recht der absolut-monarchischen Staatsregierung, so wären wir zwar geneigt, diese aus dem Religiösen auszunehmen; da jedoch der Dharma immer auf ein jenseitiges Heil bezogen ist, sind auch diese Bereiche in das Religiöse einbezogen."

<sup>601</sup> cf. Gh. Gnoli, *Aštād*. EIr/II, 826. The goddess also appears on Kušān coins as Rišto (cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.3.), but there does not seem to be a conceptual link to the title.

<sup>602</sup> See the remarks in Schmitt 2014, 237 (*rāsta-*) and 239 (*rštā-*).

<sup>603</sup> Khwarezmian: MacKenzie 1970b, 554. Sogdian: DMSB, 167b, Gharib 1995, 343a.

judicial”, λαδοβαριγο “lawsuit” and λαδοβαρο “judge” (*l'dβr* in the Manichaean fragment, v8) leave no room for doubt.<sup>604</sup> The meaning is consistent with other Middle Iranian languages, eg. MP *dādīg*, Sogd. *d'tcyk* etc., which also supports the semantic comparisons made with ραβτογο.

The use of both words ραβτογο and λαδειγο thus seems to be an attempt to compensate for the lack of a single word that captures the entire scope of meanings found in the words δίκαιος and (*sacha*)*dhramathida*. To a certain extent, the lack of a word encompassing the whole semantics seems to be present in all Middle Iranian languages. In Sogdian, there are several occurrences of this pairing. In the Sutra of the Cause and Effect of Actions, it occurs in line 32 as *rtymys 'sty ZKZY ršty βwt 't δ't'yk* “there is he who is true and just”.<sup>605</sup> In the Sogdian text P2, lines 55-56 it is found inverted as *ZY w'β'nt skwn ZKw krz δrm ZY δ't'kw 't rīsth pr nšk'rt* “ils exposent le dharma de miracle correct et juste”.<sup>606</sup> The Sogdian text So 10100g(1) twice mentions the pairing *ršt' δ'ty* “Right Law”.<sup>607</sup> Manichaean texts mention the “Just Judge” who according to Sundermann 1981 judges over the souls of the deceased and is located in the heavens.<sup>608</sup> He is found in Parthian as *d'dbr r'stygr* and in the Bactrian Manichaean fragment (v8) as *rštyg l'dβr*.<sup>609</sup> The same term, albeit without a religious (Manichaean) connotation appears as a title in later Bactrian.<sup>610</sup> However, this pairing does not occur in Sogdian, which renders of *δ'tkry δ't(')[yk]* with the same meaning in a Manichaean psalm.<sup>611</sup>

<sup>604</sup> This is not withstanding the words λαδογαλγο and λαδοιανο in which λαδο is derivative of λαυ-, “to give, grant, allot, assign, pay” although etymologically related. For all references, see BD2, 225-26.

<sup>605</sup> SCE, 2-3.

<sup>606</sup> Benveniste 1940, 6.

<sup>607</sup> Henning 1945, 480 lines 11, 14. See also Sims-Williams 2009, 257.

<sup>608</sup> *Op. cit.*, 115 w. note 6. He is next to Jesus the Splendour and the Virgin of Light. On mentions of this character, see *ibid* and DMMPP, 133 (*d'dbr*).

<sup>609</sup> Sims-Williams 2009, 250.

<sup>610</sup> On a seal inscription: AA 5.2 (Hc033), cf. Lerner/Sims-Williams 2011, 79 and 187 and also in the Bactrian Documents, cf. “eh3” and “jb2f”.

<sup>611</sup> Durkin-Meisterernst/Morano 2010, Ps 131.

In the Christian Sogdian version of Psalm 19, another pairing occurs in verse 10: *βγ`nyk pδk` (r)[št](y) (Z)Y wyz-rw x(c)[y pr] [wysp]w`δcw*, “the judgement of God is just and right in everything”.<sup>612</sup> The Sogdian Psalter is a translation from the *Peshitta*, so that the closest correspondences are to be looked for in Syriac. In Ps19.10, *ršty* is reflected by Syriac *šryr`* “true”,<sup>613</sup> *wyz-rw* by *d-šrr`* “of truth”.<sup>614</sup> It is further interesting to note that in the Septuagint, *ršty* corresponds to *δεδικαιωμένα*, *wyz-rw* to *ἀληθινά* “true”. The pairing is thus not of the same meaning as *ršty* and *δ`t`yk*. However, it is interesting to note that in Christian Sogdian, the meaning of *δικαίος* can be reflected by *ršty* alone.<sup>615</sup> Interestingly, in the Manichaean Bactrian fragment (r10), *l`dršt* “lawful” appears to combine both words into a single compound,<sup>616</sup> suggesting that the use of the pairing has become commonplace since the Kušān period.

#### 5.4.2. βαγο ι ηζνογο

The title *βαγο ι ηζνογο* “god worthy of worship” is new. As in all other Iranian languages, in Bactrian *βαγο* is a common appellation “lord”, and the adjective *ηζνογο* seems primarily to serve as a means to distinguish this title from the common appellation *βαγο* and leave no doubt that the emperor is to be seen as a divine being.<sup>617</sup>

An Indian equivalent to this title would be *deva*, which Dani 1985 believed to have read

<sup>612</sup> Sims-Williams 2016, 18.

<sup>613</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 165.

<sup>614</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 217.

<sup>615</sup> This is of course not to say that the two words are truly identical in their meaning, since Sogdian Ps19 is a translation of Syriac, not Greek (see the commentary in Sims-Williams 2014, 39-41), but as both are renderings of the same text with the same religious ideas, the correspondence is not to be disregarded.

<sup>616</sup> Sims-Williams 2009, 249 and 263. It is here paired with *d(r)m* “dharma”, but this should be dissociated from the (*sacha*)*dhramathida* found in Kušān inscriptions, as the terminology in the fragment is Buddhist and borrowed by Manichaean authors, while the title used by the Kušān does not have such a clear religious connotation.

<sup>617</sup> Both the meaning of *βαγο* as “god” and as an honorific form of address are well-attested in Bactrian, see the references in BD2, 200. The interplay of both meanings, perhaps by way of a stylistic device, can be observed in document ‘jh’, 4-5, in which both the addressee and an unnamed god are referred to as *βαγοδοαμο* in the same sentence. For an affirmation of a concept of Kušān apotheosis, see Shenkar 2014, 58, for a rejection Verardi 1983, Fussman 1998, 588 and Grenet 2015, 20 w. fn. 27, whereas a sceptical but not entirely rejecting analysis is found in Panaino 2009.

in graffiti from the Hunza valley (CKI 279) being given to Kaniška I.<sup>618</sup> This however can be disregarded based on a new reading by Neelis 2001.<sup>619</sup> This would suggest a Greek inheritance that was not utilised by Kujula Kadphises in any extant material. The title θεός is found on coins of Antimachos I and is also given to Diodōtos (II?) on pedigree issues.<sup>620</sup> The epithet θεοτροπου “godlike” is found on coins of Agathokleia/Stratōn I and Mauēs/Machēnē, apparently referring to the ladies on the coins.<sup>621</sup> It is thus quite rare in the direct environment of the Kušān. Only in a wider Hellenistic context does the title θεός appear more frequently, a particularly notable use being that of Antiochos I of Kommagene.<sup>622</sup>

It is therefore hard to determine if the use of the title was indeed a Hellenistic heritage or a Kušān innovation. Interestingly, the Indo-Parthians and the Sāsānians seem to use an inverted title, *devavrata* “honest to the gods”<sup>623</sup> and *māzdēsn bay* “Mazda-worshipping lord” respectively. The latter case is especially interesting in the present context, as the early Sāsānian titlature clearly distinguishes between *bay* and *yāzdān*, so as to put the Sāsānian emperor in a different category from the deities who are to be worshipped and seen as the ancestors of the emperor.<sup>624</sup> This, it seems, is precisely the

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<sup>618</sup> For references cf. Falk 2015a, 109-10 (§ 092).

<sup>619</sup> *Op. cit.*, 164-65.

<sup>620</sup> Antimachos: Bopearachchi: Antimaque (I) Théos Série 1-4, 9-10; Arsakēs: Diodōtos: Bopearachchi: Agathocle Série 15.

<sup>621</sup> Agathokleia/Stratōn: Bopearachchi: Agathocléia et Straton Série 2-4; Maues/Machene: Senior: 4.1T.

<sup>622</sup> For uses of θεός as a title among the Ptolemaeans cf. W. Huß, Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit. 332-30 v.Chr. München 2001, 702.

<sup>623</sup> Falk 2010, 76.

<sup>624</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning that it has been suggested, that the coin legend of the Frataraka Baydād or Baydād *bgdt prtrk' ZY 'HLY'* could be read as *Baydād, fratarakā ī yāzdān* (See Koch 1988, 85; No reference for this reading is given, other than “die in der neueren Literatur verbreitetste Lesung”.) There is however no plausible reason to read the ideogram 'HLY' as *yāzdān* instead of *bayān/bayān*, especially because the latter form is clearly more widespread in Iranian royal titlature (See Panaino 2003, 265, esp. n. 2). In fact, the Rabatak Inscription would be the only other reference point, postdating the reign of Baydād/Baydād by at least three centuries.

opposite of what the Kušān wished to be understood, and the use of ηζνογο would account for the lack of a Bactrian form of *yazata*.<sup>625</sup>

#### 5.4.3. κιδι πιδο ι χοβε ιανε βαοδανε λφαχτο

The statement κιδι πιδο ι χοβε ιανε βαοδανε λφαχτο “who according to his own will has gained kingship”<sup>626</sup> is also new. It is hardly a reflection of the *yabghu* title or the use of τυραννοῦντος because it finds its closest resemblance in the title αὐτοκράτωρ. As will be seen in chapter 5.6.2.1., this later seems to have been developed into the title χοαζαοαργο. It is an interesting statement that specifies the legitimacy of the emperor's reign similar to the early Arsakids.<sup>627</sup> Its use by Vima Takto is therefore odd because it could be expected that he used his descent from Kujula Kadphises, the founder of the empire, as source of legitimacy. This however is undoubtedly expressed by his use of κοβανο following his own name. The dynastic designation is apparently so strong that a more precise filiation, as found under the Achaemenids, does not seem necessary.

#### 5.5. Vima Kadphises

From what can be observed in the relatively poor attestation of Vima Kadphises, the strategy of self-representation and legitimisation of the emperor markedly shifted under his reign. However, it should be taken into account that this may be purely because of the development of a new medium on which his reign can be observed today, the introduction of gold coinage. Vima Kadphises completed the work of his predecessors in introducing a unified imperial coinage, eliminating the silver denominations, now

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<sup>625</sup> Some Kušāno-Sāsānian coins use the word ιαζαδο to refer to Miiro and Oēšo, but this is best explained as a borrowing from Middle Persian.

<sup>626</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 95 *contra* Fussman 1974, 16-17 and Davary/Humbach 1976, 11-12.

<sup>627</sup> cf. M.J. Olbrycht, The titulature of Arsaces I, king of Parthia. *Parthica* 15 (2013), 63-74.

minting in gold and copper.<sup>628</sup> This went along with a complete redesign of the engravings. Vima Kadphises introduced a new way of depicting the Kušān emperor in a stylised portrait and the typical attire of the emperors. On the reverse of his coins, Vima Kadphises introduced a new divine figure who would be placed on all his coins. This god, who is commonly but perhaps erroneously identified with Oēšo and Śiva, will be discussed in chapter 6.1.1.3.

The coin legends are bilingual Greek and Gandhārī, not yet making use of Bactrian. The Greek legends on the gold coins simply read ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΧΗC. The copper coins follow the Sōtēr Megas issues with the titulature: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑC ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΧΗC. The Gandhārī legends on the gold and copper coins are much more elaborate, reading *maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga 'iśvarasa mahiśvarasa v'ima kathpiśasa tradara* “of the great king, king of kings, lord of the world, great lord, Vima Kadphises, saviour”.<sup>629</sup> The titles *sarvaloga 'iśvara* and *mahiśvara* are new and do not reappear under any subsequent Kušān emperor.

An inscription from Khalatse has a different titulature: *deva[pu]/ta / maharajasa uvimo kavthisasa*, showing that the title *devaputra* was also used by Vima Kadphises.<sup>630</sup> As the general attestation of Vima Kadphises is rather poor, it is impossible to draw the conclusion that other titles were not in use.

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<sup>628</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 7.

<sup>629</sup> Falk 2019, 28.

<sup>630</sup> The title *devaputa* was read by Falk 2015a, 109 (§091) with reference to a plate published by G. Tucci, thus superseding the reading in Konow 1929, 81 (w. pl. XV.2).



## 5.6. Kaniška I

### 5.6.1. Titles on the coins

In his coinage, Kaniška I continues the employment of stylised portraits of himself as a Kušān emperor but makes a few important changes. Rather than include only one god on the coin reverses, a new numismatic pantheon is introduced that will be discussed in chapter 6.1.3. Kaniška discontinues the use of Gandhārī coin legends, reserving the reverse legends for identifying the depicted deity. His early coinage contains Greek legends on the obverse reading ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΒΑCΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΑΝΗΨΚΟΥ but are soon switched to Bactrian ΒΑΟΝΑΝΟΨΑΟ ΚΑΝΗΨΚΙ ΚΟΨΑΝΟ. Kaniška therefore reintroduces the Kušān title that was absent from the coins of Vima Takto and Vima Kadphises together with the switch to Bactrian. The unusual Indian titulature of Vima Kadphises is lost. This seems to indicate a re-orientation of Kaniška's reign towards a Bactrian identity of the Kušān.

### 5.6.2. Titles from Rab

The Rabatak Inscription contains the most abundant evidence for Kušān titulature in Bactrian. Rab 1-3 reads:<sup>631</sup>

[●●●] αν●ο●●●●βο βωγο στοργο κανηΨκε ι κοβανο ραΨτογο λαδειγο χοαζαοαργο  
βαγ[ο] [η]ζνογο κιδι ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι ραοδανι αβορδο κιδι ιωγο  
χβονο νοβαστο σαγωνδι βαγανο σινδαδο.

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<sup>631</sup> Text and translation according to Sims-Williams 2008, 55-56.

“.. the great salvation, Kanishka the Kushan, the righteous, the just, the autocrat, the god worthy of worship, who has obtained the kingship from Nana and from all the gods, who has inaugurated the year one as the gods pleased.”

The parallels to DN1 are obvious, the titles βαγο στοργο, κοβανο, ραβτογο λαδειγο and βαγ[ο] [η]ζνογο are identical.<sup>632</sup> Although the beginning of Rab 1 is obscure, the surviving traces seem to exclude the possibility that the missing part originally read βαονανο βαο, although it is unknown what would have been there in its stead.<sup>633</sup> This is a significant departure not only from DN1 but from the preceding titulatures in general, as this would mean that Kaniška I was not introduced as ‘king of kings’ here. The title occurs twice later in Rab, although in five further occasions, Kaniška is referred to just as βαο, which in two of these occasions is extended with the title βαγεποορο.

#### 5.6.2.1. χοαζαοαργο

The title χοαζαοαργο “self-ruler” seems to condense the statement κιδι πιδο ι χοββε ιανε βαοδανε λφαχτο into a single title. Perhaps this was done to avoid conflict with the succeeding statement κιδι ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι βαοδανι αβορδο. In DN1, Vima Takto appears as actively seizing kingship, in Rab, Kaniška I as passively receiving it from Nana and the other gods. However, it appears that Kaniška cannot be

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<sup>632</sup> An interesting and thus far unexplained phenomenon is the distribution of ι, which is completely opposite in the titulatures of DN1 and Rab, the latter omitting all the uses in DN1 but adding it in κανηβκε ι κοβανο, contradicting the use in DN1 3-4 which reads οσημο τακτοο κοβανο according to Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 95. It is difficult to verify this on the available photos (Fussman 1974, pl. XIII ff; Humbach/Davary 1976, 14-15), but neither Fussman 1974 nor Humbach/Davary 1976 read an ι at the end of line 3 or the beginning of line 4 where it would be expected. It is possible that the ι is omitted due to a line break. It is uncommon for a line in a Kušan Bactrian inscription to end in isolated ι, the only preserved example ironically coming from the same inscription in DN1 5. On the use of Bactrian ι in general cf. S. Gholami, *Definite Articles in Bactrian*. In: A. Korn et al (eds), *Topics in Iranian Linguistics*. Wiesbaden 2011.

<sup>633</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 58.

solely reliant on passive reception of kingship, an element of autocracy must apparently be included. It is likely that the title *χοζαιοαργο* represents a direct translation of Greek *αὐτοκράτωρ*. It may have been an inherited title in Bactria, although the only evidence for its use here is found in the coinage of Theophilos.<sup>634</sup>

#### 5.6.2.2. **κιδι ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι ραοδανι αβορδο**

It is not surprising from an Iranian context that Kaniška cited divine favour as a source of his power. The parallels to the Achaemenid and Sāsānian dynasties are particularly strong here, even if it is Nana, not A. *uramazdā*/Ohrmazd who is cited as the chief tutelary deity.

Falk 2015b has elaborately and conclusively argued that the attribution of kingship to Nana has deep roots in the ancient Orient. The choice of Nana as the specific tutelary deity may be a unique development under Kaniška, but it appears to be nothing but the Bactrian equivalent of Venus as being the celestial body with which the concept of regality is associated.<sup>635</sup>

It was less the patronage of Nana that initially attracted the attention of scholars, but the addition of *οισποανο μι βαγανο*, “all the gods”. This statement is an echo of OP *manā A. uramazdā upastām baratu hadā visajibiš bagajibiš* “Mir soll Ahuramazdā Beistand bringen zusammen mit allen Göttern”<sup>636</sup> and MP *pty ’hwrmzd W wyspn y’ztn W ’nhty MRATY ŠME MN* “then in the name of Ohrmazd and all the gods and Anāhīd,

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<sup>634</sup> Only in the monolingual Greek series 1 (Bopearachchi 1991, 307).

<sup>635</sup> *Op. cit. passim*. The identification of Nana with Venus is based on a re-interpretation of the crescent symbol (an attribute of Nana) as representing Venus instead of being a lunar symbol. Falk offers a vast body of evidence which cannot be discussed here but suffice to say that it is a plausible solution to the problem of why two “lunar” deities appear in Kušān iconography, Mao and Nana, although there remains a problem of lunar iconography with the god Manaobago, cf. chapter 6.1.3.5.4.

<sup>636</sup> DPd §3, Schmitt 2009, 116-17.

the lady”.<sup>637</sup> Fussman 1998 also pointed out the parallel to Vedic *viśve devāḥ*,<sup>638</sup> and Gnoli 2009 further discussed the parallels.<sup>639</sup> Here, Vedic and Avestan parallels are pointed out, and it is concluded that “All-the-Gods” is a theological concept that summarises the entirety of the (in this case, Kušān) pantheon possessing a special relationship with Nana as the dispenser of regality. Schmitt 2014 concurs with this and goes further, suggesting that the group of “All-the-Gods” seems to have much deeper historical roots, as suggested by Mycenaean Greek (Linear B) *pa-si-te-o-i/pansi t<sup>h</sup>eoī<sup>h</sup>i* and Homeric *πᾶσι θεοῖσιν* “allen Göttern”.<sup>640</sup> Most importantly however, it needs to be considered that all Avestan liturgies with offerings must be made for *vīspa- yazata-*, the combination of Ahura Mazdā, the Aməša Spənta, Sraōša, Ratu Bəxəzañt and Fire together with another changing divinity of the pantheon.<sup>641</sup>

Gnoli 2009 seems to be correct in stating that the deities mentioned in Rab 8-9 and again referred to in Rab 11 “only partly coincide with “All-the Gods””.<sup>642</sup> The question then is, whether a distinct Kušān concept of *οἰσποανο μι βαγανο* can be determined. An impulsive answer would be that this concept is reflected in the numismatic pantheon with its large and eclectic variety of Iranian, Indian, and other deities. However, several arguments speak against this. The first and most important one is the list of deities in Rab 8-9 itself. Of the nine deities mentioned here (including Maaseno and Bizago from the gloss), only seven appear on Kušān gold coins in varying chronology and

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<sup>637</sup> NPi §19, Humbach/Skjærvø 1983, 14.

<sup>638</sup> *Op. cit.*, 585. Note Sims-Williams 1995/96, 82, where instead a parallel in SK4 M, 9 is pointed out: *φαρο οἰσποανο μο οαδοβαργανο* “for all creatures”.

<sup>639</sup> *Op. cit.*, 145-46.

<sup>640</sup> *Op. cit.*, 279.

<sup>641</sup> I thank A. Cantera for pointing this out to me; cf. also chapter 6.1.1.

<sup>642</sup> *Op. cit.*, 146.

frequency.<sup>643</sup> Importantly, only two ever appear on coins of Kaniška I, Nana and Miio.<sup>644</sup>

Furthermore, a large variety of cults and religious affiliations is attested in the Kušan Empire that is in no way reflected in the coinage. This need not be an argument against the identity of  $\omicron\sigma\pi\omicron\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\beta\alpha\gamma\alpha\nu\omicron$  with the numismatic pantheon, as what Rab displays is the religion of the Kušan Emperor, the dynastic cult perhaps, but not the wide-spun system of popular beliefs throughout the empire. Even with occasional concessions made to the general populace, e.g., in shape of coins with the image of Buddha, or perhaps officially sanctioned local cults, there is no reason to expect a permanent reflection in the items of royal ideology. The numismatic pantheon, it seems, has been assembled for specific purposes and the expression of specific political ideas which, naturally, would cover a wide variety of responsibilities and nuances.<sup>645</sup>

### 5.6.2.3. $\beta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\pi\omicron\omicron\rho\omicron$

The title *devaputra* is found first under Kujula Kadphises and it saw limited usage under his successors. It is not found in the introductory titulatures of DN1 and Rab, although it appears in its Bactrian form  $\beta\alpha\gamma\epsilon\pi\omicron\omicron\rho\omicron$  twice in Rab, both times in conjunction with  $\beta\alpha\omicron$ . It is found twice in NSP, once in conjunction with  $\beta\alpha\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron$ , which apparently was supposed to write  $\beta\alpha\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\beta\alpha\omicron$ .<sup>646</sup> In SK4M 8, the title is once again found in

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<sup>643</sup> If, however, one was to take the identification of Srošard and Narasao with Maaseno and Bizago in the gloss so seriously that no difference was made between the Zoroastrian and Indian counterparts by the Kušan, then the two “missing” deities from Rab 9 would be depicted in shape of Maaseno and Bizago on coins of Huviška. On the other hand, Falk 2019 has recently brought forth arguments for dissociating the  $\omicron\mu\mu\alpha$  of the Rabatak Inscription with the OMMO of the coins, and suggested to read the latter as OHMO = Vima Kadphises (following an old observation by R. Göbl), cf. below, chapter 6.1.2.

<sup>644</sup> However, the deities of the Skanda group and perhaps Ōromozdo may already have been conceived for coins of Kaniška I, cf. chapter 6.1.4.5.

<sup>645</sup> This is discussed in detail in chapter 6.1.

<sup>646</sup> Sims-Williams 2015, 257, fn. 7.

conjunction with βαο. It is not impossible that it would also have been contained in the narrative body of DN1.

The title has often been taken to reflect Greek θεοπάτωρ, lit. “having a god as father”, but also Chinese *tianzī*.<sup>647</sup> Maricq 1958 further pointed out the existence of Parthian *bgpwhr*, suggesting based on the extensive use of θεοπάτωρ on Arsakid coins, that the title is of Parthian origin.<sup>648</sup> Although this hypothesis has found some support, it has been conclusively refuted by Panaino 2003 and Gariboldi 2004, who find the origin of Greek θεοπάτωρ in the reign of the Seleukid usurper Alexander Balas, and the Arsakid usage a continuation of the Seleukid development.<sup>649</sup>

The lack of an Eastern tradition for the title<sup>650</sup> and the chronological gap between the last Arsakid emperor to use the title<sup>651</sup> and the rise of the Kušān makes it highly unlikely that the Kušān employed a local tradition in the use of this title. It is tempting, instead, to consider it a title brought by the Kušān from the Chinese frontiers to Bactria, and to regard it as a loan translation of Chinese *tianzī*.<sup>652</sup> This is supported by the fact that Chinese sources take special note of the fact that the Kušān emperor carried this title,<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> The association βαγεποορο with θεοπάτωρ was first made by Maricq 1958, 378-383, although *ibid*, 379 rejects the association with *t'ien-tseu* (*tianzī*) first suggested by S. Lévi.

<sup>648</sup> *Op. cit.*, 381. For attestations cf. DMMPP, 107a-b.

<sup>649</sup> Panaino: *Op. cit.* 272-74. Gariboldi: *Op. cit.*, *passim*. On Arsakid usage, see especially 373-77. The origin of the title is explained as an allusion to the predecessor Antiochos IV, who used the title θεός, and whom Alexander Balas claimed was his father (*ibid*, 370; cf. Maricq 1958, 380 f. and Tubach 1990, 378 n. 17). Cf. also *ibid*, 377, n. 47 on the unlikelihood for both semantic and chronological reasons of the Kušān having adopted the Arsakid θεοπάτωρ.

<sup>650</sup> Although *deva-* as a title does exist, there is enough evidence to conclude that the title βαγεποορο/*devaputra* was not in use in pre-Kušān India (cf. Panaino 2003, 273 w. n. 47), and there is also no reason to assume that Indian *deva-* was the inspiration for the title βαγεποορο/*devaputra*.

<sup>651</sup> Mithradates III (Sellwood: 40, as ΘΕΟΥΕΥΠΙΑΤΟΡΟΣ), who reigned 87-80 BCE according to Gh.F. Assar, *A Revised Parthian Chronology of the Period 91-55 BC*. *Parthica* 8 (2006) (=FS Sellwood), 55-104 (here pp. 69-75).

<sup>652</sup> This has been suggested by Humbach 1988, 111 and Chen 2002, 293-95.

<sup>653</sup> Falk 2015a, 83 (§ 054). There is another puzzling reference in the *Che eul yeou king*, the Chinese translation of a lost Sanskrit text that describes the political order of the world mentioning four “Sons of Heaven” (Pelliot, TP 22 (1923), 97-123) that are identified as that of China (Tsin), India (T'ien-tchou), Rome (Ta-ts'in) and the Yue-tche. Of the many difficulties with this, it may be mentioned that to identify a specific historical reality, this would require another monarch in India with the title *devaputra* simultaneous with the Kušān, for which there is no attestation; only the Indo-Parthians (for whom no such title is attested) would come into question as a fourth monarchy using the title simultaneously with the Romans, who used the title until the end of the Flavian period. On this see also Chen 2002, 112-13,

and that as early as the Sogdian ancient letter 2, the Chinese emperor is referred to as *βγρ'wr*.<sup>654</sup>

It has been recognised early on that *βγ'pwr* is not a genuine Sogdian form, which is instead reflected in *βgpšyy*.<sup>655</sup> It has long been argued that *βγ'pwr* was adopted from Parthian,<sup>656</sup> but the phonetic development agrees with what is known from Bactrian save for the missing /h/, so that there is no reason to not take it as a Bactrian form.

A third form found in Sogdian is *βγδρυ*. It occurs twice, but only in one text, TSP 7, ls. 29 and 34.<sup>657</sup> This appears to be a more archaic form that at least in writing reflects a phase *-δr-* between *\*-θr-* and *-š-*.<sup>658</sup> The context is the same in both cases, in a list containing the *īśvaras*, *maheśvaras* and *devaputras* (*βγδρυ*). It is thus strictly Buddhist,

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who further attempts to interpret the titles *mahārāja*, *rājātirāja*, *devaputra* and *śāhi* as referring to a Kuśān claim of power towards the rulers of India, Syria, China and Parthia; this is mostly based on the idea that the mentioned combination of titles is an “Idealfall”, for which the Bactrian material provides no support. In the light of this, it would be odd that such a Kuśān claim would be apparent on the Indian epigraphic material, which is mostly private in nature, but not on the Bactrian inscriptions, which possess a much more official character. Furthermore, the sole interpretation of *rājātirāja* as being a translation from Greek is a puzzling disregard not only of the Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian and Arsakid uses of the title, but also of its tradition in Iranian royalty in general. There is also no explanation in this context why Iranian *śāhi* would be left untranslated in Indian, while other titles are freely translated both in Indian and Bactrian.

<sup>654</sup> Henning 1948, 604-05, ls. 11, 16. *ibid*, 614 conclusively dates this letter to 313 CE, although leaving 312 as a possibility. For the present purpose, such a dating is precise enough. Other mentions of the Chinese emperor by this title include the Sūtra of the condemnation of intoxicating drink, l. 34 (MacKenzie 1976 I, 10), which is dated to 728 CE (*ibid* II, 8) and TSP 8, 166 (Benveniste 1940, 113), which Henning 1946, 736 remarks should not be read *βγρ'wr stny*, but as a compound *βγρ'wrstny*, i.e. China, further noting: “It is interesting to note that those Sogdians that lived in China abandoned the older name of that country, *čynstn*, which they had used in the “Ancient Letters”” (*ibid*).

<sup>655</sup> On the underlying phonological developments Sogd. *-pš-* < *-θr-* in OIr. *\*puθtra-* see Henning 1936, 73.579. *βgpšyy* is well-attested in Manichaean and Christian Sogdian, where it reflects the Semitic tradition of the Son of God that was adopted by the Manichaeans. (see e.g. Henning 1943, 53 w. n. 2) An ideographic form *βγ'ny BRY* found in Anc. Let. 3.1 and was first discussed in Henning 1936, 198-99 (here analysed as *βγ'ny BRy*) and likened to θεοπάτωρ (*ibid*, 199). However, a non-ideographic correspondence *βγ'n(y)pš* is found in the Christian Sogdian translation of Ps.19.5 (Sims-Williams 1985b, 89). Schwartz 1974, 259 pointed out that it relates to Syriac *hṯn'* “bridegroom”, which Dietz 1978, 112-13 (noting the ostensible correspondence to Bactrian βαγεπορο) tries to find an ethnographic explanation for. On these grounds, Sims-Williams 1991, 181, fn.3 explains the *βγ'ny BRY* of Anc. Let. 3.1. as “husband”, which agrees with the content of the letter. In the light of this, it seems noteworthy that Henning 1960 translates βαγοπορο from SK4 as *devaputra* without referring to Sogdian *βγ'ny BRY* or any other of the variants discussed here.

<sup>656</sup> Henning 1936, 73.579; also Gharib 1995, 102.2582.

<sup>657</sup> Benveniste 1940, 94, 95.

<sup>658</sup> Cf. GMS, 46.299.

which raises the question over what religious connotation the usage of the title βαγεποορο/*devaputra* by the Kušān had.

It appears strange at first that the title is not found in the grand titulature of the Rabatak protocol or the Dašt-i Nawur inscription, but there may be an explanation for this. Härtel 1996 has observed that the title *devaputra* is found as an epithet to the title *mahārāja* on a series of Buddha images from Mathurā called the Kapardin or Cakravatin Buddhas. However, under Kaniška I, only the title *mahārāja* is found, with *devaputra* only introduced under Huviška. It is reasoned that, “it must have been felt as inopportune, if not as a sacrilege for this worshipped “King of the World” [Cakravatin], if in the dedicatory inscription of such an image Kaniška would be called Devaputra”.<sup>659</sup> The observation is explicitly made only for these specific Buddha statues. However, it suggests that at least under Kaniška I, the Kušān were considerate of the religious implications the titulature held among their subjects. The Kušān must have found it in their interest to bear the title βαγεποορο/*devaputra* but seem to have been willing to compromise its position so as not to offend the religious feelings of the Buddhist population in their empire. This would also explain its absence on the coinage from Vima Takto onward, since this is the time when Kušān rule began extending into the Indian subcontinent to include a significant number of Buddhist subjects.

This line of reasoning completely rules out the possibility of a Buddhist usage of the title. While this strengthens the argument for a borrowing from Chinese, it must yet be considered that a correspondence can be found in the early Sāsānian titulature, *MNW ctr-y MN yzt`n, kē čihr az yazdān*, “whose *čihr* is from the gods.” The problem with this title lies with the interpretation of the word *čihr*, for which the meanings “origin”,

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<sup>659</sup> *Op. cit.*, 101. On the chronological implications of this observations cf. chapter 3.3.



“seed”, but also “appearance” and “nature” have been suggested.<sup>660</sup> Sundermann 1988 has pointed out sources which suggest that the title may have been understood as ambiguously by the subjects of the Sāsānian emperors as it is by modern-day translators.<sup>661</sup> The ambiguity is also reflected by the word γένος that is used for *čihr* in the Greek translations of the early Sāsānian inscriptions.<sup>662</sup> The understanding of a divine origin of the emperors is explained here as a „Reflex alter iranischer oder iranischer Vorstellungen (...) die sich nicht gegen die orthodoxen Anschauungen der zoroastrischer Priester behaupten konnten.“<sup>663</sup>

The lack of a tradition on Arsakid coins of the titles after 80 BCE does not necessarily have to mean that the title was no longer in use. Arsakid coin legends become generic after the reign of Orodes II, the successor of Mithradates III, and stay unchanged until the reign of Gotarzes II (38-51 CE), becoming generic again with Vologases II (76-80) as well as increasingly illegible. Hence, it must be put into question how much the coin legends still represented the entirety of titles in use by the Arsakids, and it is conceivable that the title θεοπάτωρ remained in use and was perhaps known to the Kušān through a no longer extant medium.

A more convincing possibility has been brought forth by Falk 2010. Here, it is believed that the Kušān title is not dependent on a Greek predecessor, but a translation of the Roman title *divi filius* that was used by Augustus based on the θεοπάτωρ title. It is argued that, in light of Panaino 2003 and Gariboldi 2004, “the Augustaeian link may survive as the only one befitting in semantics and time”.<sup>664</sup> It is possible in this context, that the Kušān adopted the title due to its correspondence with Roman *divi filius* and

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<sup>660</sup> Cf. Sundermann 1988, 339.

<sup>661</sup> *Op. cit.* 339-40.

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.* However, a Greek origin of this title is explicitly rejected here.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>664</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78.

Chinese *tiānzī*, and possibly Arsakid θεοπάτωρ, to make a claim of equality to these great empires.<sup>665</sup> The Kušān title seems to have found translations into local languages of the Kušān Empire in Central Asia.<sup>666</sup>

### 5.7. Huviška and SK4

Huviška continues the practice of Kaniška I on the coins. There are only Bactrian obverse and reverse legends in his reign and the only titulature found on his coins is ΒΑΟΝΑΝΟΒΑΟ ΟΟΗΒΚΙ ΚΟΒΑΝΟ and variations thereof.<sup>667</sup> Indian inscriptions also do not represent much of a departure, the established titles *mahāraja*, *rājātirāja* and *devaputra* appearing frequently albeit in varying combinations. Only two inscriptions feature all three titles. One inscription on a red sandstone pillar from Mathurā (SS #64) includes the Iranian *šāhi* together with *devaputra* but without any other titles.

According to the editors, Ayr 1 reads βαο οηοβκ(ο),<sup>668</sup> but this cannot be verified on the available photographs and there is also no way of knowing if any titles would have preceded this.

#### 5.7.1. The titles from SK4

As discussed in chapter 4.3.12., the name of Huviška is not mentioned in SK4 and the only piece of evidence dating it to his reign is the mention of the year 31 in SK4M 10. However, SK4M 7-8 refers to the reigning emperor by way of an epithet given to Nokonzok: φρειχοαδηγοο κιδο φρεισταρο αβο βαο ι βαγοπουρο. The compound

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<sup>665</sup> This is also assumed by Chen 2002, 111 though only in reference to the Chinese.

<sup>666</sup> Cf. Tubach 1990, 378 (w. fn. 21) for Toch. B *ñakteṃs soy* and Tumshuqese *jezdam-pūra*.

<sup>667</sup> Any exceptions would only come from local coinage, as indicated by a copper coin from Sonkh (Göbl: 984) with the legend Huviškasya (obv) and putra Kaṇikaso (rev).

<sup>668</sup> Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981, 43; Harmatta 1986, 133. cf. also here, Appendix I.5.

φρειχοαδηγο “dear to the lord” suggests that χοαδηο was a title of the emperor, so that the χοαδηο mentioned at the end of SK4 is by all indications also the emperor.<sup>669</sup> It is frequently found as an honorific title “lord” in the Bactrian documents, commonly abbreviated to χοηο.<sup>670</sup> It is also found, albeit without further extant context, in Dil4 10. Henning 1960 has regarded it as “[agreeing] in meaning with αὐτοκράτωρ = *imperator*, as demanded by Meillet's etymology”.<sup>671</sup> It would thus take the place of χοαζαοαργο, although it is difficult to determine in what official capacity it was actually used. The emperor himself is referred to as βαο ι βαγοπουρο, reflecting the use in Rab.

Kaniška I is referred to in SK4M 1-2 as βαγο βαο. This appellation is found nowhere else, and it is noteworthy in this respect that everything indicates that Kaniška was dead when SK4 was written. In this respect, it should be considered that βαγο should here not be understood as “lord” as most translators prefer, but rather as “god” as in the title βαγο (ι) ηζνογο. However, although Rab 12-13 mentions three deceased predecessors of Kaniška I, they are only named βαο individually and βαονανο as a group, clearly distinguishing them from the βαγανο also present in the inscription and the βαγολαγγο. Kaniška himself is in this context also only βαο.<sup>672</sup>

### 5.7.2. οανινδο

SK4M 1 suggests that Kaniška I was awarded the epithet οανινδο, evidently a translation of Greek νικάτωρ.<sup>673</sup> κανηβκο οανινδο is the name of the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο and it is the only attested occurrence of οανινδο together with the name of

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<sup>669</sup> SK4B 27, SK4M 23. On this identification see also chapter 4.3.12.

<sup>670</sup> BD2, 278.

<sup>671</sup> *Op. cit.*, 51, fn. 9.

<sup>672</sup> It should however not be entirely neglected that right after the conclusion of the list with χοβισαρο κανηβκε βαο, Kaniška receives for the only time in the inscription the full title βαονανο βαο ι βαγεπουρα κανηβκε; none of these titles are part of the titulature in the protocol.

<sup>673</sup> Already suggested by Maricq 1958, 356 and accepted by Henning 1960, 52 (w. fn. 4) and Gershevitch 1979, 64; Lazard/Grenet/de Lamberterie 1984, 199-201 do not see οανινδο as an epithet of the emperor.

Kaniška I. However, a Gandharī translation *jayata* appears in the titulature of the Kamra Inscription of Vāsiška,<sup>674</sup> which suggests that οανινδο was indeed an epithet of the emperor himself, not merely of the βαρολαγγο.

It is unclear what the relationship is to the Zoroastrian god Vanant- who appears in female form as Οανινδο in the guise of Nikē/Victoria on some coins of Huviška.<sup>675</sup> It is noteworthy that the epithet of Kaniška is the same form οανινδο rather than, as may be expected, an adjective such as οανινδογο as found in Rab 18-19. It could be imagined that in the context of this βαρολαγγο, Kaniška himself became an epiphany of Οανινδο, and thus the cult was dedicated to this deity.<sup>676</sup> However, SK4M 4 and 15 make it clear that multiple deities were worshipped in the sanctuary and there is no archaeological evidence of any specific Οανινδο cult.<sup>677</sup>

## 5.8. Vāsudeva

The coin legends of Vāsudeva continue to be monolingual Bactrian, although his obverse portrait marks a significant departure from his predecessors, and the reverses display almost exclusively the god Oēšo.<sup>678</sup> The numismatic titulature is unchanged: ΠΑΟΝΑΝΟΠΑΟ ΒΑΖ[Ο]ΔΕΟ ΚΟΠΑΝΟ. This same titulature is also found on VSP 2. The Indian inscriptions also follow the titulature of Huviška, commonly with the titles *mahārāja*, *rājātirāja*, *devaputra* and *śāhi*. Two inscriptions include all these titles.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> cf. chapter 5.11.

<sup>675</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.9.

<sup>676</sup> For a discussion of this with literature, cf. Lazard/Grenet/de Lamberterie 1984, 199-201.

<sup>677</sup> There is the possibility that Oanindo was depicted on a bas relief found in tower XIII (D. Schlumberger, *Le Temple de Surkh Kotal en Bactriane*. JA 242 (1954), 171), but this is far from certain.

<sup>678</sup> The exceptions being a singular Nana type (Göbl: 514), cf. also Falk 2015b, 265 and 293 on a Nōnito type not known to Göbl; furthermore, a single specimen presented by Göbl 1993, 38, showing the god Bazodeo explained by H. Härtel as an equation of the god Vāsudeva with the emperor of the same name (*ibid*, fn. 68a).

<sup>679</sup> SS #141 (not #88 as in Falk 2015a, 123 (§ 110) and SS #159 (which *ibid* refers to as "San Francisco") according to the re-reading of Falk 2002/2003, 41-45.

## 5.9. Kaniška II

The coin legends of Kaniška II are monolingual Bactrian. The coin reverses almost exclusively show Ardoxšo.<sup>680</sup> The titulature on the coins is  $\text{PAONANO}\text{PAO}$   $\text{KANH}\text{PKO}$   $\text{KO}\text{PA}\text{NO}$ . As with his predecessor, the inscriptions of Kaniška II include all the titles *mahārāja*, *rājātirāja*, *devaputra* and *ṣāhi* although no one inscription has all of them. The fullest titulature known from an inscription is *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputra kaniška*.<sup>681</sup> *Devaputra* and *ṣāhi* appear together in SS #45. The combinations occur in free variety, the only rule seems to be that *rājātirāja* cannot appear without *mahārāja*, though not vice versa. CKI 148 has the fully unique titulature *muroḍa marzaka kaniška* translated as “the Lord, the Marjhaka” by Falk 2009.<sup>682</sup>

## 5.10. Vāskušāna

There is only one epigraphic mention of Vaskušāna in which he is called *rājñō*.<sup>683</sup> His coin legends are Bactrian reading  $\text{PAONANO}\text{PAO}$   $\text{BAZOKO}\text{PA}\text{NO}$   $\text{KO}\text{PA}\text{NO}$ . The reverses exclusively show Oēšo.

## 5.11. Vāsiška

The coins of Vāsiška display the established standards of the later Kušān. The legends are monolingual Bactrian with the standard titulature  $\text{PAONANO}\text{PAO}$   $\text{BAZH}\text{PKO}$   $\text{KO}\text{PA}\text{NO}$ . The reverses show Oēšo exclusively.

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<sup>680</sup> The exception again being a Nana type (Göbl: 660). The reading of the legend as Nana cannot be verified on the photographs of Göbl 1984 (pl. 54 and 168) or in A.S. Altekar, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*. Banaras 1957, pl. I (no 7). The latter describes the legend as “illegible” (p 38). Göbl 1984, 114 remarks the coin is “verschollen”. But cf now J. Cribb, A. ur Rahman, P. Tandon, *The Kushan Pantheon and the Significance of the Kushan Goddess Nana in the Light of New Numismatic Evidence of Iconography and Identity*. JA 311 (2024), 247-66.

<sup>681</sup> CKI 147.

<sup>682</sup> *Op. cit.*, 27.

<sup>683</sup> SS #58.

There are three Indian inscriptions containing titulature of Vāsiṣka. The first two (SS #59 and #62) contain the “full” titulature *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputra śahi vāsiṣka*. The Kamra Inscription (CKI 230) is however far more extensive. It reads:<sup>684</sup>

(sam) [20]-10 katiāsa masasa tivasa trotaśe 10-3 maharajasa rajatirajasa  
ma[ha](tasa) tratarasa jayatasa detriatasa svayakhalasa maharajasa  
\*śpalasakāri[ta](sa dhra)mathidasa devaputrāsa vazeṣkasa guṣanasa  
devamanuśasamp(u)[j]ita [kaṇi]ṣkasa iśa kṣ(u)ṇami [kaśaṇadami++mi]+///

“In the year 30, in month Kārttika, on day 13, of the Mahārāja, King of Kings, of the Great Savior, the Victorious, the *detria?*, the Self..., of him who is honoured by the army of the Mahārāja, of the Righteous, the Devaputra, of Vasiṣka, the Kuṣāṇa, (of him who is honoured? by) gods and men, (...) of Kaniṣka, at this date, at Kaśaṇada, at ...”

The inscription includes all previously known imperial titles except for those unique to Vima Kadphises, even adding the epithet *jayata* reflecting οαινυδο from SK4. *svayakhalasa* is re-read as *\*svayambala* by Falk 2015a, translated as “he who has strength through himself” thus perhaps reflecting χοαζαοαργο.<sup>685</sup> There are two epithets, *maharajasa \*śpalasakāri[ta]* “honoured by the Mahārāja's army” and *devamanuśasamp(u)[j]ita* “honoured by gods and humans” not seen before in any known inscription. *detriata* remains unexplained. The reappearance of *mahata tratarā* and *dhramatida* deserve note, as they do not otherwise appear in any known Indian inscriptions. It is thus by far the closest counterpart to the Bactrian titulatures from DN1 and Rab.

<sup>684</sup> Reading and translation according to Falk 2009, 27-28.

<sup>685</sup> *Op. cit.*, 129 (§ 120).

### 5.12. Kaniška III

The coins of Kaniška III follow the established pattern of late Kuṣān coinage. The reverses exclusively show Oēšo, and the legends are monolingual. The obverse legend displays the standard titulature  $\text{PAONANO}\Phi\text{AO KANH}\Phi\text{KO KO}\Phi\text{ANO}$ .

Two Gandharī inscriptions contain the titulature of Kaniška III. The Ārā Inscription (CKI 158) reads:<sup>686</sup>

*maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa kaiśarasa Vazeṣkaputrasa Kaniṣkasa  
saṃbatśarae ekacapari śae saṃ 20 20 1 Jeṭhasa masasa di 20 4 1 iśa divasaḥṣṇami  
khade kupe Sama[davha]reṇa Toṣapuriaputr(\*e)ṇa1 matarapitarāṇa puyae atmaṇasa  
sabharyasa saputrasa aṇugraharthae sarvasapaṇa jatiṣu hitae dhamo ca likhito  
m[aya] . . .*

“(During the reign) of the Mahārāja, Rājātīrāja, Devaputra, Kaisara Kaniška, the son of Vasiška, in the forty-first year – anno 41, on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Jyaiṣṭha, at this date this well was dug by Samadavhara(?), of the Toṣapuriya scions, in honour of his mother and father, for the benefit of himself with his wife and son, for the welfare of all beings (...) [of all sorts?]. And this *dharma* has been written [by me?] ...”

Kaniška III returns to the standard titles *maharaja rajatiraja devaputra* but omitting *ṣāhi*. Instead, the inscription includes a so far singular occurrence of *kaiśara*, which is usually interpreted as Caesar.<sup>687</sup> It is only possible to speculate on the reason for the

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<sup>686</sup> Reading and translation according to Falk 2009, 28.

<sup>687</sup> e.g., Ghosal 1981, 79; Falk 2009, 28 however leaves the title untranslated as Kaisara.

adoption of this title, but it should be pointed out that there are other instances of the appearance of the title in Bactrian and Sogdian.<sup>688</sup>

A last occurrence of a Kušān titulature in Bactrian is found on the sealing Callieri App. S 5. The script is cursive so that it is unlikely that it would belong to the reign of Kaniška I. It reads:<sup>689</sup>

μαυακαηρκο ι ζαιαδο βαυρο διβο|ποτρο ι χουαχο υινδογανο βαυο

“Great Kanishka, the *devaputra* whose realm is ζαιαδο the χουαχο, king of the Indians”.

This titulature is almost completely novel, only the title *devaputra* is seen before. Interestingly, here it is not written as the standard Bactrian βαγεπορο but in an Indian loan form διβοποτρο. The Kušān emperor has also never before been designated υινδογανο βαυο and the epithet μαυα, probably taken from Indian *mahā*, is also otherwise unknown. Notably, the designation as Kušān is missing. Unfortunately, the sealing is without archaeological context.

### 5.13. Conclusions

Most titles used by the Kušān were already introduced in the reign of Kujula Kadphises. They generally follow established traditions in the areas that became part of the Kušān realm, but there are some new introductions and innovations by the Kušān. The new formation of a Gandhārī (*sacha*)*dhramatida* on basis of Greek δίκαιος instead of the use of *dhramika* established in Gandhāra but not Bactria shows that the Kušān were influenced the most strongly by a Bactrian tradition. It seems that outside of a strictly

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<sup>688</sup> On the sovereign φρομο κησαρο “Caesar of Rome” cf. Sims-Williams 2010, 145 (§507) and Vondrovec 2014/II, 553-55. In Sogdian, *kysr* is attested in historical Manichaean texts, but also in the Sogdian tale of *The Caesar and the Thieves* (Tale H, Henning 1945, 477-80).

<sup>689</sup> Reading and translation according to Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005, 588.



Bactrian context, the strongest influence on Kušān titulature is from the Roman Empire. The likelihood of this is elevated by the fact that there is a clear Roman influence on some of the coins of Kujula Kadphises, which not only betrays knowledge of and interest in Rome, but also an appreciation of political iconography. If Kujula Kadphises represented himself according to Roman standards on his coins, the adoption of Roman titles by the same monarch and his successors should not come as a surprise.

Once established, the titulature of the Kušān seems to have been used fairly consistently in its core, although there do not seem to have been any rules for the particular combination of titles. The titles βωγο στοργο and ραβτογο λαδειγο, despite their importance to the emperors, do not appear to have been particularly popular in India, as they do not appear on any known donor inscriptions between the reigns of Kaniška I and Vāsiška. However, as the Kamra Inscription shows, they were not forgotten and remained in official use.

A great problem for the interpretation is that the Indian material is far more abundant and provides a greater variety of context for the use of titulature. From Indian donor inscriptions, it is known which titles the Kušān emperors carried in the minds of local élites that were probably never directly in touch with them and represent a more general populace. This level is entirely missing from Bactria, as most inscriptions in Bactrian come from an imperial context and were composed by imperial, rather than local élites. The only exception may be Ayr, but here the inscription is too fragmentary to make any use of it in this context.

## 6. The βαρολαγγο and the Kušān dynastic cult

The Bactrian inscriptions mostly come from a religious context. Rab is the foundation inscription of a βαρολαγγο (lit. “god container”), a sanctuary dedicated to a dynastic cult.<sup>690</sup> Surkh Kotal was another such βαρολαγγο, and except for SK2, all of the Bactrian inscriptions found there are from the architectural context of the site. SK4, the only inscription of any narrative value, records the construction of a well after the water supply of the site proved insufficient during a military crisis. NSP is the dedicatory inscription on a silver plate offered as a votive to the god Oēšo. Ayr belongs in the context of a Buddhist sanctuary in Ayrtaṃ, although the inscription is too fragmentary to offer much certain information. The equally fragmentary inscriptions Dil 1-4 also come from the context of a temple in the town of Dilberdžin, although again nothing more can be said. Only the context of DN1 is unclear.<sup>691</sup> The archaeological contexts for these dynastic sanctuaries include the sites of Surkh Kotal, Dilberdžin, Rabatak and Māṭ. The latter is in the Mathurā district in India, all the others are in Bactria.

The picture presented by the sanctuaries in conjunction with the imagery on the coinage is that of an eclectic polytheistic religion in which the Kušān emperor plays a central role. This religious conception poses a major problem for the interpretation of Kušān history as it is in its entirety without parallel, an occurrence centred especially around the reigns of the two Kušān emperors Kaniška I and Huviška, and often unclear or ambiguous in its details because of the dearth of source material. In the following, the individual observable elements of this dynastic religion will be analysed in detail in hope to present a more lucid and consistent picture.

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<sup>690</sup> The term was first discussed in Henning 1956, 367, where its meaning and relation with Sogdian *βγδ' n' k* and the local GN Baghlan was correctly identified.

<sup>691</sup> A possibly artificial depression is recorded to the left of the rock (Fussman 1974, 7), but there was no archaeological investigation.

## 6.1. The Kušān Pantheon

### 6.1.1. οισποανο μι βαγανο

The invocation of “all the gods” (οισποανο μι βαγανο) next to Nana in Rab 1-2 seems at first glance to reflect the importance of *vīspa- yazata-* in Avestan rituals: Ahura Mazda and the Aməša Spəntas together with Sraōša, Ratu Bəxəzañt and Fire with a changing divinity of the pantheon. All liturgies with sacrificial offerings must be made for *vīspa- yazata-*, although in the Avestan context, Ahura Mazda seems to be included here.<sup>692</sup> In Rabatak, we find Nana as a supreme goddess detached and next to this group. Gnoli 2009 has pointed out the important parallel between the Bactrian phrase οισποανο μι βαγανο, the Old Persian *visaibiš bagaibiš* (DPd §§ 14-15, 22, 24).<sup>693</sup> and Middle Persian *wispān yazdān* (NPi §19). It is argued here that this is a common theological conception of “all-the-gods” also found in Middle Persian *pad Ohrmazd ud wispān yazdān ud Anāhīd ī bānūg nām*, derivative of a Proto-Iranian *\*uīcuai daiuā’s*. Schmitt 2014 expands on this providing the Avestan parallels and considering the Mycenaean (Linear B) *pa-si-te-o-i* and Homeric *πᾶσι θεοῖσιν* as possible parallels,<sup>694</sup> thus implying that the group of “all-the-gods”, essentially the semantic idea of the *pantheon*, is an earlier Indo-European conception.

The concept of “all-the-gods” as a group is not so remarkable in and of itself. What is interesting however is that Rab, DPd and NPi all contrast “all-the-gods” with a supreme deity whose primary function, as far as it concerns the emperor himself, is that they are the chief bestower of kingship. This is Nana in the case of the Kušān and Ahura Mazda in that of the Achaemenids and Sāsānians. This is hardly an originally Iranian concept, as Gaspa 2017 has shown that “[the] theological development of Auramazdā from one

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<sup>692</sup> I thank A. Cantera for this information.

<sup>693</sup> *Op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>694</sup> *Op. cit.*, 279. cf. also chapter 5.6.2.2..

of the many Iranian gods to royal god and patron god of the empire was probably the result of an Iranian (or Irano-Mesopotamian) interpretation of the role that Aššur had in the state theology of the Assyrian empire”.<sup>695</sup> It could nevertheless be considered an inheritance from the Achaemenid period in Bactria. The role the Graeco-Bactrians played in this tradition cannot be determined. It is apparent that the individual Graeco-Bactrian monarchs had the tendency to declare only one god or goddess from the Greek pantheon their chief tutelary deity as which it would appear on their coins. However, this numismatic reflection is precisely not a feature of the coinage of Kaniška I and Huviška. The role of Nana does not emerge clearly from the coinage, despite her occasional epithetical designation Nanašao or Šaonana.<sup>696</sup>

It is interesting that this duality of a supreme deity and the pantheon as a whole is also tangible in the *hierothesion* of Antiochos I on the Nemrud Dağı in Kommagene (Np 14-15), where Zeus-Ōromasdēs is mentioned as the god who cares for the cult law, which is also the will of the other deities.<sup>697</sup> A similar idea is found earlier when Zeus-Ōromasdēs is considered the god to whose throne the soul of Antiochos would ascend after his death but shortly afterwards, Antiochos declares his intention to make the *hierothesion* the common throne of all gods.<sup>698</sup>

It already emerges here that Nana takes the place in the Kušān Empire that was held by A.uramazdā in the Achaemenid Empire, Zeus-Ōromasdēs in Kommagene and Ohrmāzd in the Sāsānian Empire. In each case however, the supreme deity is not the only one, and has to compete with other deities in the imperial pantheon. A.uramazdā is at first in synthesis with *visaibiš bagaibiš* under Darius I, but under Artaxerxes II shares his

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<sup>695</sup> *Op. cit.*, 173.

<sup>696</sup> That the role of Nana was not properly understood before the discovery of the Rabatak Inscription is apparent e.g., in Chattopadhyay 1967, 164-67 and Rosenfield 1967, 88.

<sup>697</sup> (...) τούτοις Διὸς Ὀρομάσδου φροντίσιν ἄλλων τε γνώμαις θεῶν (...), Waldmann 1973, 70.

<sup>698</sup> (...) ἀπάντων κοινὸν ἀναδείξει θεῶν ἐνθρόνισμα (...), (N ΠΑ 45-46), Waldmann 1973, 64.

position with Anāhitā and Miθra while the other gods are marginalised.<sup>699</sup> On the Nemrud Dağı, Zeus-Ōromasdēs shares his place with Apollōn-Mithras-Hēlios-Hermēs, Artagnēs-Hēraklēs-Arēs, Pantropou Kommagēnē and Antiochos from the beginning on. In the Sāsānian Empire, Ohrmāzd is at first the only god invoked, but shares his place with Anāhīd and *wispān yazdān* in the Paikuli Inscription.

Nana thus takes the place of Ahura Mazdā in the Kušān Empire as the bestower of royalty, a role she seems to play until the end of Kušān rule in Bactria but shares her position with a larger pantheon from the beginning on, the οισποανο μι βαγανο. Her detachment from it seems to indicate a non-Avestan origin of this idea, despite the evident parallels between οισποανο μι βαγανο and *vīspa- yazata-*.

### 6.1.2. Ομμα: The divine community of Rabatak?

Rab 9 and 10 twice mention a goddess Omma who is in close association with Nana and leads a group of gods present in the cult of Rabatak in shape of statues (πιδγυρβο). This Omma is otherwise unknown except for a coin type of Huviška known from only two specimens.<sup>700</sup> Here, the reverse shows two figures facing each other. The right figure is indisputably identified as a four-armed Oēšo. The left figure however is problematic, as the legend is unclear. It could be read as OHMO, OMMO, OHHO or, as Göbl 1984 prefers, a misengraved ONNO = NONO = Nana.<sup>701</sup> The two middle letters clearly take different shapes, the first one corresponding more closely to an *Eta*, the second to a *Mu*. The different readings allow for different interpretations: OHMO = the

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<sup>699</sup> *hadā bagaibiš* are mentioned in A2Hd 1, but *visaibiš bagaibiš* are absent in A2Sa 3, which resembles the formula of DPd, where Anāhitā and Miθra join A. uramazdā now.

<sup>700</sup> Göbl: 310. The first specimen is in the British Museum and was first published by Cunningham 1892. The second one only became known on the market in 2005, cf. <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=57607> (accessed 07.12.2020, 13:30) and Falk 2019, 30.

<sup>701</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl. 23. cf. already Göbl in Humbach 1960, 57 despite the rejection of this reading. Göbl 1983, 90 had already changed his mind without providing an explanation (merely stating it is “jetzt ziemlich sicher”).

royal name Vima, OMMO as a distinct deity or as mentioned OMMO/ONNO as a misengraving of NANA.

The most commonly found reading is OMMO, which has often been interpreted as expressing the name Umā, the consort of Śiva.<sup>702</sup> The popularity of this interpretation is due to the common identification of Oēšo with Śiva (see below). The reading was supported by the appearance of the name OMMA in Rab, although Oēšo is not present here. A Śaiva element was nevertheless read into the inscription by way of Omma and Mozdoano.<sup>703</sup> The correspondence of Omma and Umā is different to explain phonologically. Initially, Sims-Williams 1995/96 explained the -μμ- as an assimilation from \*-β-μ- and compared the name with Av. *upāma-* 'highest' while suggesting a conflation with Umā.<sup>704</sup> Sims-Williams 2017 (*passim*) goes on to suggest a possible connection with the Bactrian and Sogdian personal names *Ῥομογοβανδαγο* and *ʼxšwmβntk* and the Sogdian month *ʼxšwmyc/xšwmyc*. The common element is the divine name Šumug, which is suggested to derive from *\*uxšma-kā-*, “growing, crescent” and may therefore be a lunar deity. The path of explaining a phonological development to Bactrian *Ομμᾶ* from these names is complicated,<sup>705</sup> so that *ibid* suggests deriving the word ultimately from *\*šam* "to shine". However, it is also admitted that the iconography of Ommo on Göbl: 310 has little to do with a lunar deity. The association of Ommo with Oēšo is shared by Nana, who herself is believed by Gnoli 2009 to have a lunar aspect.<sup>706</sup> Gnoli even goes so far as to equate Omma and Nana, something Sims-Williams 2017 is cautious of.

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<sup>702</sup> Cunningham 1892, 119 interpreted the figure as Nana. Rapson 1897, 324 first suggested the reading OMMO and interpreted it as Umā. This interpretation was generally accepted in literature, e.g. Chattopadhyay 1967, 166; Rosenfield 1967, 94 and Banerjea 1974, 139-40.

<sup>703</sup> Sims-Williams 1997, 338; Gnoli 2009, 148-49.

<sup>704</sup> *Op. cit.*, 84.

<sup>705</sup> So noted by Falk 2019, 48 fn. 63.

<sup>706</sup> *Op. cit.*, 144.

The identification of Ommo with Nana was already suggested by Göbl 1983 and 1984.<sup>707</sup> Göbl 1983 considers the legend a misspelling and advances another coin type, which indeed shows Nana and Oēšo in similar association, as evidence.<sup>708</sup> However, this comparison is risky. While it also appears with early Huviška obverses, the style of the reverse engraving is much cruder. Göbl: 167 is a quarter dinar, thus smaller than Göbl: 310, a dinar, so the figures are necessarily very small. Nevertheless, it is clear that the figure identified as Nana holds her typical felid sceptre while the figure on Göbl: 310 holds a twig or a branch. On one specimen, it also seems as though Nana has a halo, something the OMMO figure does not. The attribute of the deity on the left should however be enough to be wary of a connection, because Nana never has a twig or branch for an attribute.<sup>709</sup>

Falk 2019 has made this twig a central element in his identification of the controversial figure with Vima Kadphises, who also holds a twig on his later coinage. Here, an earlier interpretation by R. Göbl is reiterated, which as noted above the same author had given up later, of the figure being a *Divus Vima Kadphises*.<sup>710</sup> Göbl used the reading of the legend as OHMO, the association of Vima Kadphises with Oēšo/Śiva on his own coins and the attribute of the twig as arguments for this interpretation, while the only counter argument considered is the long, female robe. He dismisses this however, pointing out long robes of Sarapo and Aθšo, considering it a possible dress for a deceased and deified emperor.<sup>711</sup> Falk 2019 emphasises different points.<sup>712</sup> Since here, the god on the coins of Vima Kadphises and Oēšo are not considered completely identical, a stronger focus

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<sup>707</sup> Göbl 1983, 90; Göbl 1984, 21; A reading ONNO had been advanced by the same author earlier, but intermittedly rejected in favour of a reading OHMO = Vima (Kadphises) in Göbl 1960.

<sup>708</sup> *Op. cit.*, 90. The Nana-Oēšo type is Göbl: 167.

<sup>709</sup> The only other deity found with a twig or branch is Ardoxšo on a singular type (Göbl: 284), a peculiar iconography that will be discussed below.

<sup>710</sup> Cf. Göbl *apud* Humbach 1960, 57.

<sup>711</sup> *Op. cit.*, 58.

<sup>712</sup> *Op. cit.*, 30-31.

is put on the depiction of OHMO. The twig as a joint attribute between this figure and Vima Kadphises has already been mentioned. Falk goes further in identifying the unusually big nose of OHMO as an element of the portrait of Vima Kadphises.<sup>713</sup> This is an important point, as neither Nana nor any other female deity, despite the occasional grotesque deformation of the face, ever has such a big nose. The only exception may in fact be the crude execution of the figure on the Nana-Oēšo type Göbl: 167, but it must be considered that this type is a quarter dinar and thus much smaller than Göbl: 310. What may be a deliberate feature on Göbl: 310 may be a sign of poor engraving quality necessitated by the very small size of the figure on Göbl: 167.

The iconographic arguments advanced by Falk are compelling, especially as there are no clear indications that the figure is female. It would be a case of a Kušān pedigree coin, and the association with Oēšo is unproblematic if it is accepted that Oēšo is a later interpretation of the god of Vima Kadphises. The concept of the pedigree coin is not entirely foreign to the Kušān, especially when considering the coins of Vima Kadphises from the Pipal Mandi hoard naming Vima Takto on the reverse.<sup>714</sup> Prior to this, pedigree coins were minted by Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings Agathokles and Antimachos I.<sup>715</sup> The iconographic principle is different in both cases. The Pipal Mandi coins show Vima Kadphises on the obverse and his god on the reverse with a legend identifying Vima Takto as the father of Vima Kadphises. The Greek coins show the portrait of the reigning monarch on the obverse and the portrait of a dynastic ancestor, identified by a legend, on the reverse. However, in both cases the ancestor was not deified, something that could be the case for the Huviškan coins. Even if this is not the

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<sup>713</sup> *Op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>714</sup> The authenticity of three of the four coins of this type is disputed (cf. Falk 2019, 12-13 for arguments for their authenticity), but this has no bearing on the legends naming Vima Kadphises and Vima Takto in principle if at least one of the coins is genuine.

<sup>715</sup> Bopearachchi: Agathocle: Série 12-18; Antimaque (I) Théos: Série 9-10.



case, there is no reason to assume that Göbl: 310 cannot be a pedigree coin because of a unique iconography.

The greater problem is that the Rabatak Inscription indisputably features the name OMMA in a list of deities. This name and the misreading OMMO on Göbl: 310 would be a mere coincidence, which of course is possible. However, if Omma is an otherwise unknown goddess, her iconography would also be unknown and before more is known about her, it cannot be certain that the coin does not depict her. Rab 9-10 would put Nana and Omma on one level, so it is at least possible that both would find the same association on coins, even if Omma is otherwise absent from the numismatic pantheon. Falk 2019 has explored a different avenue by suggesting that Omma is not a goddess at all but a Semitic loanword *umma* denoting a community, specifically the community of deities following the mention of the name.<sup>716</sup> This would be an elegant explanation for the singular use of οφαρρο as an epithet of Omma, something that would elevate her, in light of the otherwise complete absence of the goddess from the sources.

This interpretation has the difficulty that the concept of an *umma* distinct from a general pantheon (οισποανο μι βαγανο) is otherwise unattested in Iranian sources, as is the use of a loanword to denote it. Why a Semitic loanword is used if the idea would be expected to either be Bactrian in nature or at least acceptable to Bactrian religious thought is also not explained.<sup>717</sup> The most likely source for such a loanword, and thus also the *umma* concept would be the Imperial Aramaic records from the Achaemenid period, which would suggest the concept itself would date at least to the Achaemenid Empire.

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<sup>716</sup> *Op. cit.*, 31 and 48, fn. 64.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid* is undoubtedly correct in pointing out Semitic month names as loan words in the Kušān period, but these are explicable from the adoption of the Aramaic calendar by the Achaemenid administration, cf. Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 24-26.

There is no trace of such an idea in Achaemenid sources. All known cults were devoted to specifically one deity. This is especially the case in all attested cults in Bactria from this period.<sup>718</sup> The concept of a sanctuary such as those of Rabatak and Surkh Kotal, in which a specific selection of deities was worshipped, especially in context with a dynastic cult, is almost unheard of in the Iranian world before the Kušān. There is only one, albeit prominent exception, the *hierothesion* of Antiochos I on the Nemrud Dağı in Kommagene. Here, a limited pantheon is found that however is not referred to by a general word. The parallels between the Kommagenean *hierothesion* and the Kušān βαρολαγγο have been noted before and are too strong to be dismissed.<sup>719</sup> Both sanctuaries include a limited and apparently selected pantheon in which the living monarch is also included. The Kommagenean pantheon presents syncretistic Greek-Iranian deities while the iconography of many Iranian deities under the Kušān is derived from Greco-Roman models on the coins.<sup>720</sup> It is likely the iconography was the same in cult statues.<sup>721</sup> The main difference is that the *hierothesion* included a cult statue of the deified land of Kommagene, a concept that in this explicit sense seems to have been foreign to the Kušān.<sup>722</sup> The ancestral cult, which was an important component in both sanctuaries, will be discussed below.

In summary, while the solution offered by Falk 2019 on the identit(ies) of Ommo/Omma is attractive, the lack of material for comparison makes it difficult to

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<sup>718</sup> The evidence is problematic but does not suggest anything else. The most important pieces include a temple of Bēl in the Aramaic document C1 (cf. Tavernier 2017, 103-04 for a discussion) and a cult for Anāhita in Bactria mentioned in passing by Berossos (Frg 65). The Hellenistic period provides similar such evidence in shape of the Oxos Temple at Takht-i Sangin (generally on the cult Litvinskij/Pičkjan 2004, 10-12, where a joint cult of the river and fire is considered, however) and the temple of Sarapis in Hyrkania.

<sup>719</sup> cf. eg. Rosenfield 1967, 165-67, Metzler 2012, 110 etc.

<sup>720</sup> The Roman models have been analysed (not always convincingly) by Göbl 1960b, cf. chapter 7.2.3.2.

<sup>721</sup> This point however must remain speculative before any Kušān cult statues are incontrovertibly identified.

<sup>722</sup> On the possibility of divine allegories of Kušān territories or aspects thereof see below concerning the god of Vima Kadphises (with Falk 2019, 18), Lrooaspo and Oaxšo.

accept without reservation. On the other hand, the only alternative available is to accept the elevated position in the Rabatak cult of an otherwise unknown goddess of whom no further trace can be found in the historical environment of the Kušān Empire unless Göbl: 310 is accepted as a numismatic depiction.<sup>723</sup> While the situation is not much better for some other deities in the Kušān pantheon, including Mozdoano and Manaobago, their existence as distinct gods cannot be disputed and their names can be etymologised on a somewhat more secure ground.

### **6.1.3. The Numismatic Pantheon**

Before the pantheon and cult of the Rabatak Inscription can be analysed, it is necessary to discuss the main source for the imperial Kušān religiosity, what is here called the Numismatic Pantheon. This term describes a phenomenon found chiefly in the coinage of Kaniška I and Huviška. Their coin issues show a portrait of the reigning emperor on the obverse and a deity identified by a Bactrian legend on the reverse. While this has been common practice in Bactria and neighbouring territories since the Seleukid period,<sup>724</sup> the nature of the pantheon is highly unusual. Some 30 deities are found on these reverses that come from diverse religious backgrounds. The majority is Iranian in nature. There are also deities from other religious traditions including Nana, who is of Mesopotamian origin, Sarapis, Herakles, Brahman gods belonging to the Skanda cult and some of the earliest figural depictions of the Buddha. The pantheon is a fleeting

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<sup>723</sup> Carter 2006, 352-353 proposes to identify Omma on a wall painting from Panjikent, which however is clearly related to the Siyāvaš myth.

<sup>724</sup> It should be noted though that legends identifying the deities were only introduced by the Kušān, with a brief precursor in the Yuezhi period on the coins of Sapalbizes and Arseiles identifying a lion figure as NANAIA. Pabes does not include such an identificatory legend probably because the depiction of Herakles on his coin was easily understood. As Göbl 1983, 81 notes, most of the deities on Kušān coins can only be identified by their legends. It is apparent that the Kušān were aware that the depictions of the deities were not easily understood by their iconography alone.

occurrence and Huviška's successors reduce it effectively to the depiction of Oēšo and Ardoxšo, with fleeting references to Nana.

This pantheon is a strange occurrence that is of wider religious historical significance as many of the deities receive their first and sometimes their only iconographic depiction here.<sup>725</sup> Despite this, there has been relatively little systematic study. There are several catalogues of the deities available of which Rosenfield 1967, Göbl 1984 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015 deserve special note. Rosenfield 1967 provides a generalist art historical perspective and is outdated in many details but does include some valuable commentary. Göbl 1984 is the standard reference for Kušān numismatics and has a catalogue recording iconographic variations meticulously but does not provide a commentary and is not free of errors and misattributions, some of which will be discussed below.<sup>726</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015 has a general catalogue with valuable commentary and excellent photographs but is effectively reduced to the material provided by the collection of the American Numismatic Society. While deities on coins not in this collection are also listed, the more detailed description of the iconographic variety is reduced to the deities in the collection.

The most detailed study of the Numismatic Pantheon is found in Shenkar 2014, but while the entirety of the pantheon is considered, it is a study of Iranian iconography first and foremost, so that some important aspects of the pantheon are left out of the analysis. Similar approaches are taken by Humbach/Faiss 2010, Grenet 2015 and Farridnejad 2018, all of which possess a limited scope. Apart from such wider studies, there are also many papers discussing individual deities or aspects of the pantheon.

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<sup>725</sup> So noted by Göbl 1983, 81.

<sup>726</sup> Some important *addenda* and *corrigenda* are found in Göbl 1993.

Most recently, Falk 2019 has provided a detailed analysis of Kušān religious policy with many important new interpretations for elements of the Numismatic Pantheon.

In the following, it will be attempted to systematically analyse the Numismatic Pantheon considering aspects that are often neglected or only discussed in isolation. These are specifically the sequence of the appearance of the deities and their function both individually and in conjunction as a group. While it is not intended to excessively retread the ground covered in the aforementioned studies and others, it is not possible to entirely avoid re-examining old discussions and controversies. The following cannot be an exhaustive discussion of the topic, especially as it is done from a religious and historical perspective and not a numismatic or art historical one, but it is hoped that some important new aspects emerge that help better understand the religious conceptions of the Kušān.

#### **6.1.3.1. Coinage types and recipients**

It has occasionally been remarked that the audience of the numismatic iconography needs to be taken into account when discussing its intent.<sup>727</sup> Beginning with Vima Kadphises, the Kušān issued coins in gold and copper denominations. The gold denomination is the dinar (*denarius*) most likely following the standard of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 CE)<sup>728</sup> to which Kaniška I adds the quarter dinar.<sup>729</sup> The copper denomination is the drachm found primarily as the tetradrachm and more rarely as didrachm and single drachm.<sup>730</sup>

There is evidence in Bactria for the use both types of coinage saw. Bactrian purchase contracts and legal documents typically mention the value of large transactions such as

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<sup>727</sup> e.g., Mann 2012, 131-32 (with further examples).

<sup>728</sup> MacDowall 1960, 67; cf. also chapters 3.4.2.2. and 7.2.3.1.

<sup>729</sup> Vima Kadphises also issued half dinars but these do not reappear after his reign, cf. Göbl 1978/I, 104.

<sup>730</sup> Göbl 1978/I, 104.

property or slaves in “dinars of struck gold” (ζαροζιδγο διναρο). The same currency unit is used to describe legal fines. The value of an agricultural property in the 5th century was 8 gold dinars,<sup>731</sup> indicating a high purchase power of an individual gold coin. Document ‘aj’ lists the value of a cow at one dinar and that of a horse at ten, but there is no indication for the context of this “price list”.

Donations of Kušān gold coins are attested for example in the Kashmir Smast<sup>732</sup> and the *stūpa* of Ahin Posh.<sup>733</sup> This indicates that gold coins were considered prestigious objects for pious individuals, groups, or communities to give as offerings.

There is, perhaps surprisingly, little indication that gold coins were used in long-distance commerce. Kušān gold coins are generally not found outside the territory of the Kušān Empire.<sup>734</sup> Likewise, foreign gold coins are rarely found in the Kušān territory as well. A possible explanation might be that large commercial transactions were more commonly done by way of bartering or perhaps using bullion.

The purchasing power of a copper drachm may be deduced from Bactrian Document ‘al’.<sup>735</sup> The copper drachm was undoubtedly the currency unit of regular, everyday use. Gold dinars found use in large transactions and pious donations, then likely stashed away in government and temple treasuries to ultimately be used in large projects or to fall in the hands of plundering invaders. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that gold coins were by no means entirely “invisible” outside the elites so that members of the general populace should be considered part of the audience reached with gold coins.

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<sup>731</sup> Document J 16.

<sup>732</sup> Falk 2008 143-44.

<sup>733</sup> A. Cunningham, Notes on the Gold Coins Found in the Ahin Posh Tope. JASB XLVIII (1879), 205-12.

<sup>734</sup> A notable exception is a hoard of 105 gold coins dating from Vima Kadphises to Vāsudeva with the vast majority from the time of Huviška found at Debra Damo, Ethiopia. Cf. R. Göbl, Der kušānische Goldmünzschatz von Debra Damo (Äthiopien) 1940 (Vima Kadphises bis Vāsudeva I), Central Asiatic Journal 14 (1970), 242-52.

<sup>735</sup> BD1, 164-65.

### 6.1.3.2. Sequence

Göbl 1984 presents an elaborate and detailed system of Kušān coin issues involving mints and sequences. This system does not generally seem to be adopted by numismatists working with Kušān coins.<sup>736</sup> Since in the following the sequence is going to be of some importance, a few observable chronological markers need to be established for the coinage of Kaniška I and Huviška. These will be fairly general when compared with Göbl 1984 but less risky for the use of historical interpretation. It is generally accepted that the coinage of Kaniška I begins with an issue with Greek legends. Göbl 1960a has shown that at least some of the dies used in this issue were recut with Bactrian legends while retaining the iconography. In this way, at least an early and a late phase of Kaniška's gold coinage can be established. An important characteristic of these phases is that the late phase significantly expands the pantheon. Under Huviška the numismatic pantheon becomes truly eclectic, assembling a total of 28 individual deities.<sup>737</sup> The large number of deities corresponds to the vast coinage of Huviška, whose long reign spans about 40 years. There is also an unusually large amount of obverse portrait types. Jongeward/Cribb 2015 count 13 gold types with various sub-types and six copper types and “at least 170 obverse dies”.<sup>738</sup> Göbl 1984 counts 30 obverse types, although some are only minor variations of others.<sup>739</sup> The large coinage makes it problematic to establish a reliable sequence, and any sort of quantitative analysis of the distribution of the deities on the coins can only be done with great caution. A major problem, already present with Kaniška I but amplified with Huviška, is that it is not known if the pantheon is known in its entirety. Several deities are known only from a single type and even only from one or two individual specimens.

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<sup>736</sup> For criticism specifically concerning Kaniška's Buddha coins cf. Cribb 1999/2000, 152.

<sup>737</sup> Counting according to Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 268.

<sup>738</sup> *Op. cit.*, 251 and ff. On p. 89, the number is 155 together with 587 identified reverse dies.

<sup>739</sup> *Op. cit.*, 36-37.

Prominent cases include the god Iamšo who is found on a coin that was first mentioned by Göbl 1983 and could only be included as a supplement in Göbl 1984,<sup>740</sup> and the pair of Oēšo-Ommo which was long known from only one specimen.<sup>741</sup> Therefore, it is risky to conclude that the gods Mozdooano and Orlagno, known from Kaniška's coinage, were not featured in the coinage of Huviška and draw any conclusions from this.<sup>742</sup> It nevertheless seems significant that Huviška did not continue the Buddha issues of Kaniška I, although future surprises here should not be excluded.

There are some aspects that may provide at least some minimal aid in establishing a sequence for Huviška. In the beginning, Huviška kept using the *tamgha* on the reverses of Kaniška I before replacing it with his own, indicating that some of Kaniška's dies were still used. This *tamgha* is linked to the obverse portrait types Göbl I and II which suggests that these two types belong to the beginning of Huviška's reign.<sup>743</sup> A certain evolution of the Huviškan portrait types can be observed of which the most striking manifestations are the crown and the emperor's attributes. Jongeward/Cribb 2015 suggest a very different system of categorisation for the gold coinage than Göbl 1984, proposing an “early” and a “late” phase and two mints, a main mint in Bactria and a secondary mint in Gandhāra. From these categorisations, four groups emerge, with the copper coinage constituting a fifth one. This categorisation is not as detailed as that of Göbl 1984, but with the lack of certain knowledge on many aspects of the history of Huviška's reign and the infrastructure available to the coinage, it seems more prudent to rely on the model of Jongeward/Cribb 2015.

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<sup>740</sup> Göbl 1983, 82 and Göbl 1984, 41 and pl. 171.

<sup>741</sup> See above, chapter 6.1.2.

<sup>742</sup> So noted (but not interpreted) for Orlagno by Shenkar 2014, 161.

<sup>743</sup> There are some exceptions and at least the elephant rider type (Jongeward/Cribb type 7) is also linked to this *tamgha*.





Fig. 1: An “early” gold obverse of Huviška



Fig. 2: A “late” gold obverse of Huviška

A notable development in the portraits of Huviška is that they develop from a rather peaceful depiction of the emperor to a more martial one (Figs. 1 and 2). His common attribute is an object usually described as a club but interpreted by Falk 2019 as an aspergillum.<sup>744</sup> His left hand rests on the hilt of a sword. On the later issues, the object is retained in different shape, but the emperor now holds a lance in his left hand that is leaning on his shoulder. His crown develops from what looks like a diademed cap to a richly decorated diademed helmet with ear flaps that is initially round and later takes a triangular shape. On the early portraits, the emperor has full sideburns that are no longer visible on the helmet types probably because they are covered by the ear flaps. The dress also changes from a simple tunic with a decorated round collar to a kaftan, although the tunic reappears occasionally. Notably, the helmet types also introduce a halo around the emperor's head that seems to be consistently used unlike the flaming shoulders, which appear and disappear on both the early and late types without any apparent iconographic rule. The early Gandhāra gold coins also include a type showing the emperor seated on an elephant with a lance in his right and an elephant goad

<sup>744</sup> *Op. cit.*, 38-39. This is discussed in detail in chapter 6.2.1.3. Here it will be neutrally described as an “object”.

(*aṅkuśa*) in his left hand. A similar depiction is found on one common copper type. Otherwise on the copper the emperor is seen seated on a couch or throne, cross-legged and frontally. There is only one further exception, showing the emperor standing with an altar as is typical for Kaniška I. On the gold coins, the emperor's bust is almost always seen emerging from rocks or a mountain, although there seem to be a few examples where this is clearly not the case. On the copper coinage this does not seem to be the case because the emperor is usually not shown as a bust, although in one case the depiction is interpreted as him seated on a mountain.<sup>745</sup>

For the copper coins, a chronological indicator is the established sequence of debasement. While the early coins of Huviška's reign continue the weight standard of Kaniška I, their weight standard is soon drastically reduced and only increased later, but not back to the original standard.<sup>746</sup> This indicates a major crisis during Huviška's reign, which will here be referred to as the “Huviškan Crisis”, for which there is other evidence as well. This includes the inscriptions SK4 and Māṭ as well as archaeological evidence for destruction in these two sanctuaries that may correspond to his reign.

### 6.1.3.3. The god of Vima Kadphises

The reverses of Vima Kadphises' coins depict a naked male figure holding a *triśūla* and an animal skin.<sup>747</sup> His hair is flaming and he is at least sometimes ithyphallic (Fig. 3). On some coins, he stands before a bull (Fig. 4). Some of Vima's coins also only show the bull or the *triśūla*. There is no identifying legend, but this deity is generally identified with Oēšo, a god found on coins

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<sup>745</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 258, coin 1028.

<sup>746</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 91; Göbl 1984, 64 also sees that the dies decay (“verrotten”) in this period of crisis.

<sup>747</sup> For an overview of the types cf. Göbl 1984, 43 (Oēšo types 1-3) for descriptions and pl. 168, types 1-3; also Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 266-67.



*Fig. 3: The god of Vima Kadphises*



*Fig. 4: God of Vima Kadphises with bull*

of all Kušān emperors beginning with Kaniška I. However, the iconographic differences between the god of Vima Kadphises and Oēšo are so fundamental that Falk 2019 prefers to interpret the former as Rudra-Agni-Skanda and sees him perhaps as a sort of predecessor that would evolve into Oēšo.<sup>748</sup> The individual interpretations presented cannot be discussed here but the conclusion that the god of Vima Kadphises is not strictly identical to Oēšo is convincing on an iconographical basis and will be adopted in the following.

#### **6.1.3.4. The Gods from the Greek issue of Kaniška I**

Göbl 1960a discovered that some dies used for Greek language coins of Kaniška I had been recut with Bactrian legends. On the basis of this, it was argued, and remains accepted today, that the Greek issues of Kaniška I come from the beginning of his reign and were replaced by issues that were identical iconographically but favoured Bactrian legends and identifications. The names of the deities were likewise "translated" from

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<sup>748</sup> *Op. cit.*, 15-28.

Greek to Bactrian forms. These include NANAIA who was turned to NANA, ΗΛΙΟC turned ΜΙΠΟ, CΑΛΗNH turned MAO, ANHMOC turned OΑΔO and ΗΦΑΙCΤOC turned AΘPΟ. The latter two eventually lose this degree of importance while the Bactrian coinage sees the rise of Oēšo. Göbl 1983 refers to these (with the exception of OΑΔO) as *Stammrückseiten*,<sup>749</sup> meaning they form the core reverse types of any issues made under Kaniška I. This probably expresses an elevated status of these deities in the Kušān pantheon, something which has long been recognised but sometimes inadequately discussed because of uncertainties and confusion with some individual identities. This concerned especially the lunar nature of Nana and Mao and the identity of Oēšo in particular.

#### 6.1.3.4.1. Nana (NANAIA)

Rab 2 and NSP 1 leave no doubt that Nana (Fig. 5) was the chief tutelary deity of Kaniška I, the goddess to whose favour Kaniška primarily attributed his kingship. Coins of Kaniška I and Huviška emphasise this by occasionally naming her NANAPAO or PAONANA in the legends. She plays a similar role in Kaniška's pantheon as A. uramazdā/Ohrmazd does in the Achaemenid and Sāsānian Empires. Göbl 1984 has identified 8 gold and 13 copper types of Kaniška depicting Nana on the reverse, 29 gold and 14 copper by Huviška<sup>750</sup> and one gold each by Vāsudeva I<sup>751</sup> and Kaniška II.<sup>752</sup> She is the only deity depicted on the coins of the Yuezhi rulers Sapalbizes and Arseiles (Fig. 6), although coins of Pabes show Herakles only. The reverses show a lion under a crescent with a legend reading NANAIA.

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<sup>749</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>750</sup> Excluding type 234 on which see the following.

<sup>751</sup> Göbl: 514.

<sup>752</sup> Göbl: 660 but with the iconography of Ardoxšo; cf now also J. Cribb, A. ur Rahman, P. Tandon, The Kushan Pantheon and the Significance of the Kushan Goddess Nana in the Light of New Numismatic Evidence of Iconography and Identiy. *JA* 311 (2024), 247-66.



*Fig. 5: Nana on a gold coin of Kaniška I*



*Fig. 6: NANAIA on a copper coin of Sapalbizis*

The same legend is found on the first “Greek” issues of Kaniška I before the name NANA and variations thereof are found, indicating that  $\text{N}\alpha\nu\alpha\alpha$  was considered the Greek name of the goddess, while  $\text{N}\alpha\nu\alpha$  was the Bactrian. She is not depicted on any of the subsequent Kušān coinage before Kaniška I. Her position as tutelary deity thus has only an indirect precedence in the Yuezhi period, while Kaniška's father and immediate predecessor Vima Kadphises depicted only one and the same, unnamed god on his coins.

The presence of Nana in Bactria is an oddity, as she is a goddess of Mesopotamian rather than of Iranian, Indian or Greek origin as is the rule for Kušān deities. In general, two opinions exist on the date of the introduction of her cult to Bactria.<sup>753</sup> One assumes that it arrived here in the Seleukid period, the other that her iconography can already be identified on seals of the BMAC culture. Neither opinion can easily be dismissed, as cultural contacts between Bactria and Mesopotamia were rather intense in both

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<sup>753</sup> For detailed discussions, cf. G. Azarpay, *Nanâ, the Sumero-Akkadian goddess of Transoxiana*. *JAOS* 96 (1976), 536-42 and D.T. Potts, *Nana in Bactria*. *SRAA* 7 (2001), 23-35.

periods.<sup>754</sup> Certainly her cult was well-established in Bactria by the time of the Yuezhi arrival, and they may have taken her for a local goddess whose veneration would have been approved of by the Bactrian population.

Falk 2015b has extensively studied the role of Nana under Kaniška I. The much-discussed iconography of Nana on Kušān coins with a crescent and a lion is interpreted here as relating to the planet Venus and its encounter with the constellation Leo. The same iconographic idea is identified on the lion horoscope of Antiochos I of Kommagene at the Nemrud Dağı, strengthening its association with the ideology of kingship. The iconography involving Venus marks her a goddess of victory, as this symbol was current especially in Asia Minor in the Republican Roman period and adopted by Caesar and Augustus. It is further proposed that the introduction of Kaniška's era was done in the name of Nana and that Kaniška also attempted (ultimately unsuccessfully) to introduce a new, solar calendar that would commence with a festival of Nana at the beginning of the monsoon period.<sup>755</sup>

The evidence Falk 2015b provides is compelling and the conclusions are convincing. However, Rab 2-3 does not single out Nana as the deity in whose name Kaniška introduced his new era, but rather it regards it as an act pleasing the βαγανο, i.e., a group of gods which is probably identical to the οισποανο μι βαγανο of Rab 2, and therefore the entirety of the Kušān pantheon. The suggestion of a *nanayotsave* festival as “the date of the conferral of royal authority” as suggested by a re-reading of the Huviška inscription from Māt<sup>756</sup> and thus the beginning of a new Kušān calendar is not harmed by this however, since there is no doubt that Nana was Kaniška's chief tutelary deity.

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<sup>754</sup> For the BMAC period, the evidence is presented in P. Lombard, *The Oxus Civilization/BMAC and its Interaction with the Arabian Gulf. A Review of the Evidence*. In: B. Lyonnet, N.A. Dubova (eds), *The World of the Oxus Civilization*. London/New York 2021, 607-34.

<sup>755</sup> cf. chapter 3.5.

<sup>756</sup> Falk 2015b, 286-89.

The syncretistic character of the cult of Nanaia/Nana can be traced back as early as the 3rd dynasty of Ur. She seems to have been related to or identified with Ištar, even taking over the latter's position as the daughter of the moon-god Sin and sister of the sun-god Šamaš.<sup>757</sup> Her cult remained popular in Western Asia until far into the age of Hellenism, as numerous sources attest.<sup>758</sup> Due to the syncretism she was subject to, her nature involved both a regal, martial component, and that of a fertility deity. It is likely that she retained her syncretistic identity in Bactria. In fact, it has been argued that she absorbed Zoroastrian goddesses such as Arəvdi Sura Anāhita, whose absence on Kušān coins would otherwise be hard to explain.<sup>759</sup>

Nana's connection with Anāhita is nowhere directly attested, but it has been suggested by way of the *interpretatio Graeca* of both goddesses as Artemis. The cult of Artemis Nanaia is attested in Dura Europos, and depictions of Nanaia in the guise of Artemis are known from Susa.<sup>760</sup> The identification is furthermore mentioned by Strabo (XVI,1,7). A deity Artemis Anaītis is attested in four inscriptions from Sardis and by Pausanias, and the identification of Artemis and Anahita is mentioned in passing by Plutarch and, as *Persica Diana*, by Tacitus.<sup>761</sup>

A coin type of Huviška shows Nana on the reverse holding a composite bow and drawing an arrow from her quiver.<sup>762</sup> This is unusual as she is typically depicted holding a sceptre with a lion's head and sometimes seated on a lion. This “Huntress Nana” type

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<sup>757</sup> Azarpay 1976, 536-37. cf. also Farridnejad 2018, 321.

<sup>758</sup> Azarpay 1976, 536.

<sup>759</sup> However, Anahid appears on Kušāno-Sāsānian coins of Hormizd I (Göbl: 1028). Cribb 1990 presents a coin, apparently unrecorded by Göbl 1984, of Peroz I with the reverse showing a goddess with the legend BAΓA NANA (*op. cit.*, 188 and pl. IV (no. 31). Since both deities are not simultaneous, it is not necessary to see a conflict here, especially as Peroz I is the first named Kušāno-Sāsānian ruler (Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 198) and the depiction of Nana may have been an inheritance from the Kušān (cf. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 297-98); after all, both Vāsudeva (Göbl: 511) and perhaps Kaniška II (Göbl: 660) still depicted Nana on coronation issues, and the Peroz type may be in this tradition, which would have been then abandoned by his successor as it was under Vāsiška.

<sup>760</sup> Azarpay 1976, 537 ff.

<sup>761</sup> The references are found in Brosius 1998, 236.

<sup>762</sup> Göbl: 260; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1893-0506-17](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1893-0506-17)

suggests an association with Artemis. The depiction seems to copy one introduced to Roman coinage by Hadrian.<sup>763</sup> Artemis types on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins are rare and very different from this type. The coin is a problematic piece of evidence for an identification of Kušān Nana with Artemis. More importantly however, is the existence of a single specimen with a similar iconography but with the legend reading TEIPO, apparently recut from the original NANO legend.<sup>764</sup> This legend was interpreted by Göbl 1983 to actually read MEIPO and thus dismissed as a hybrid Nana type with wrong Mihr legend.<sup>765</sup> However, the initial letter is clearly T, albeit connected to the following E. There is thus little doubt that this legend is to be identified with Tīr (Tištriya), whose attribute is indeed the bow.<sup>766</sup>

#### **6.1.3.4.2. Miiro (HAIOC)**

Miiro (Mihr, Miθra) is found on numerous issues of Kaniška I and Huviška (Fig. 8). Göbl 1984 has identified 13 distinct reverse types of Miiro including one where he is shown together with Mao and one where the god is given the Greek name HAIOC (Fig. 7). The god is usually depicted standing with a staff in his one hand and the other extended (cf also Fig. 9), sometimes holding a ribboned investiture ring. His most distinct iconographic feature is a rayed halo.<sup>767</sup> Huviška himself is also depicted with a rayed halo on one copper type where he is seen reclining on a throne or couch.<sup>768</sup> Unusually, this halo surrounds his entire body and not just his head.

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<sup>763</sup> Göbl 1960b, 85.

<sup>764</sup> Falk 2015b, 290; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1879-0501-12](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1879-0501-12)

<sup>765</sup> *Op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>766</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.8..

<sup>767</sup> This attribute is also found on the problematic Ašaeixšo coin and a Maaseno type, cf. chapters 6.1.3.7.2. and 6.1.3.7.10..

<sup>768</sup> Göbl type XXVI.





Fig. 7: HAIIOC on a gold coin of Kaniška I



Fig. 8: Miiro on a gold coin of Kaniška I

The rayed halo is an attribute unmistakably linking the deity to the sun. It should come as no surprise that Miiro replaces the Hēlios of Kaniška's first, Greek issue, meaning both deities were identified with each other by the Kušān.<sup>769</sup> Although Hēlios is commonly depicted with the rays emanating from his head directly, he is often depicted with a rayed halo on Apulian vases. On at least one type, the coinage of the Graeco-Bactrian king Platon also seems to depict him with a halo rather than have the rays directly attached to his head.<sup>770</sup> The rule however, both in Graeco-Roman depictions of Hēlios and Sol, as on Mithraic depictions from South and Central Asia, is to depict the rays either as emanating directly from his head or to have them as part of a diadem which can also be worn by Roman emperors.

#### 6.1.3.4.3. Mao (CAAHNH)

Göbl 1984 counts 12 reverse types for Mao (Māh), including one with Miiro and one from the Greek issue of Kaniška I where he is identified as Salēnē, a male version of

<sup>769</sup> Miθra was also identified with Hēlios together with Apollo and Hermes on the Nemrud Dağı.

<sup>770</sup> Bopearachchi: Platon Série 1.



Fig. 9: Mao on a gold coin of Kaniška I



Fig. 10: Aθšo on a gold coin of Kaniška I

Selēnē. His depiction is similar to that of Miiro but with a lunar crescent rising from his shoulders that takes the place of the halo (Fig. 9).<sup>771</sup>

While the role of Miiro in the Kušān pantheon has been extensively discussed, that of Mao seems to be quite disregarded even though he is of the same importance in the Kušān pantheon. On the Kušān Reliquary from Peshawar, he is depicted flanking Kaniška together with Miiro. One coin type of Huviška shows Miiro and Mao facing each other on the reverse. Despite this obvious importance and his well-attested high status in popular Iranian religion, Mao's position does not seem to have been unchallenged. He is absent in the Rabatak Inscription while Miiro is present, although this may have specific reasons as discussed in chapter 6.3.1. More telling is the appearance of a new lunar deity, Manaobago in the later coinage of Kaniška I who takes the lunar crescent as an attribute. If Manaobago is identical with Mēn as discussed in chapter 7.2.3.2.1.1.1., his presence in the Kušān Empire may resemble a similar interaction in Asia Minor in the Roman period.<sup>772</sup>

<sup>771</sup> Shenkar 2014, 99 also remarks on the rather generic array of attributes given to Mao.

<sup>772</sup> Shenkar 2014, 98.

#### 6.1.3.4.4. Aθšo (HΦAICTOC)

On the Greek issue of Kaniška I, the god HΦAICTOC is seen as a bearded man standing frontal, head facing left. He wears a ribboned diadem, has flaming shoulders and holds a ribboned investiture ring in his extended right hand and fire tongs in his left.<sup>773</sup> This image is later relabelled as AΘPO (Fig. 10). The pose is generic, although the tongs are an attribute unique to this god. The flames and fire tongs identify him as the god of fire, Avestan Ātar. However, the flaming shoulders were already an attribute of the Kušān emperor since Vima Kadphises and the tongs are not easily visible. On an issue of Huviška, he is almost entirely surrounded by flames. The flaming shoulders reappear on some depictions of Pharro. Again, he holds tongs although this time they are better visible and instead of an investiture ring, he holds a sledgehammer as a second attribute. This iconography is closer to that of Hephaistos/Vulcanus. Since in the Graeco-Roman pantheon, Hephaistos/Vulcanus is the god most closely associated with fire, this identification makes sense, although the Huviška type suggests that Aθšo also took on the role of a blacksmith, something hardly imaginable for Ātar, as the work of a blacksmith pollutes fire. The tongs on their own do not make the interpretation of a blacksmith's tools necessary, as Tanabe 1995/96 suggests that “[t]oday in Bombay, the Parsis use a pair of tongs in the ritual of the Sacred Fire as the instrument to grasp the sacred bunches of wood and put them on the fire, not as a symbol of the blacksmith”.<sup>774</sup> The sledgehammer however is definitely a symbol of the blacksmith, suggesting that Aθšo may also have been seen as a patron of craftsmanship and armoury. This is not a feature of the Aθšo of Kaniška's coinage, however. Moreover, it is hard to discern by

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<sup>773</sup> Not seen by Göbl 1984, who believes the left hand to be resting on a sword. The misidentification is repeated in Göbl 1993, 124. Rosenfield 1967, 76 does not see an object in the left hand at all and claims it rests on his hips. The tongs were however long recognised by scholars, cf. Tanabe 1995/96, 187-88 and they are identifiable on the magnified photograph of both the Aθšo and Hephaistos types in Göbl 1984, pl. 164-65. cf. Shenkar 2014, 92 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 277.

<sup>774</sup> *Op. cit.*, 187.

what path this imagery was adopted, as Hephaistos was not a popular god in the Hellenistic Far East, and no indications for his cult have been found there.<sup>775</sup> Aθšo on the other hand was so popular that his iconography went on to influence that of Vishvakarman in Gandhāra.<sup>776</sup> It appears as though the cult of Aθšo was related to that of Avestan Ātar and the influence of the iconography of Hephaistos/Vulcanus came from the desire to have an anthropomorphic image with the lack of a better correspondence. This would suggest that the idea of an anthropomorphic manifestation of Ātar found in the Sāsānian Empire including the Sāsānian Kušānšahr is a later or perhaps independent development.<sup>777</sup>

It is worthy of note that the use of a θ in the spelling of Aθšo's name is an archaism, as the voiceless dental fricative had by all indications disappeared in Bactrian.<sup>778</sup> The /š / appears to preserve an Old Iranian nominative ending.

#### **6.1.3.4.5. Oado (ANEMOC)**

A single gold coin showing Anemos as a singular wind god (rather than *Anemoi* as a divine category) first described by Tanabe 1990 indicates that the Greek issue of Kaniška I encompassed a larger pantheon than believed by R. Göbl when he described it as a tetrad.<sup>779</sup> The Greek god corresponds to Bactrian OAΔO who is found commonly on copper coins of Kaniška I and rarely on such of Huviška. Anemos is shown in profile but with his chest frontally, running from right to left. He holds a cape above his head

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<sup>775</sup> He is absent from the survey in Stančo 2012 and not found on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coinage.

<sup>776</sup> Tanabe 1995/96, *passim*.

<sup>777</sup> cf. Shenkar 2014, 90-93. The interpretation of the AΛΔPO seal as depicting Aθpo by way of Aδpo suggested by Farridnejad 2018, 315 is hard to follow both because of the very different iconographies and the unexplained reading.

<sup>778</sup> cf. chapter 4.1.2.8. Not remarked on by Humbach/Faiss 2010, 66.

<sup>779</sup> Göbl 1983, 85. The ANEMOC coin was recognised by Göbl 1993, 33.



Fig. 11: Oado on a copper coin of Kaniška I

that falls down behind him and shows ripples of the blowing wind while his beard and hair are also blowing in all directions (Fig. 11). The god has static wings behind his shoulders. The Oado types are similar although the pose is not as dynamic, the god seems to hold only a scarf above his head, and he does not have wings. On both depictions, the god is nude, although at least on one of the copper types he may be wearing short trousers.

The iconography is that of the Greek *Anemoi*, who are often depicted with wings and holding scarves or pieces of cloth to depict the blowing wind. Only recently the first Kušān gold coin of Oado from the reign of Kaniška I has been found,<sup>780</sup> which indicates that such issues were not particularly abundant. This is different with the copper coinage, which indicates that the god must have been rather popular.<sup>781</sup> The various Greek *Anemoi* were most likely reduced to one generic god *Anemos* to correspond to the Iranian god *Vāta* and his Kušān representation Oado. The iconography on the coins, which corresponds the closest to the *Anemos* Boreas, is unique in the coinage. His pose

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<sup>780</sup> O. Boppearachchi, Hitherto unpublished gold coin of Kaniška-I depicting Oado. *Ancient Punjab* 8 (2020), 1-8.

<sup>781</sup> Shenkar 2014, 153, draws the same conclusion *contra* F. Grenet.

on the Anemos type can truly be described as animated, and while it is not as lively on the Oado types, it is still a pose of movement different from the calm way other deities are depicted. Together with Heraklēs and the god of Vima Kadphises,<sup>782</sup> he is also one of the few gods depicted nude, although it could be argued the piece of cloth blowing behind him represents his costume and that he is not fully nude on the copper types. Tanabe 1990 has pointed out a depiction of a deity holding a billowing veil over their head found on a coin type of Azilises.<sup>783</sup> Senior 2001 on the other hand describes the image as “Hercules is crowning himself with a diadem” on type 43.1a.<sup>784</sup> It is therefore uncertain but unlikely that *Anemoi* were depicted on coins in the Historical Environment of the Kušān,<sup>785</sup> and thus it cannot be observed that the Kušān depiction follows a local tradition.

The loss of prominence of Oado is usually explained with the emergence of Oēšo, who is also characterised as a wind god.<sup>786</sup> The fact that Vāta as Oado represents the blowing winds as a natural force, while Vayu as Oēšo is more a cosmic force is not lost on observers,<sup>787</sup> but Vayu/Oēšo is often seen as the more powerful of the two. Vāta/Oado may have been a popular god, but Vayu/Oēšo was more appealing to the Kušān rulers and apparently, there was ultimately not enough space for both in the Kušān gold issues.

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<sup>782</sup> Not Oēšo, who is never fully nude but wears at least trousers, cf. the types depicted in Göbl 1984, pl. 168-70.

<sup>783</sup> *Op. cit.*, 62. The coin in question is listed as number 366 in Whitehead 1914.

<sup>784</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 12.

<sup>785</sup> They do not feature in the survey of Stančo 2012.

<sup>786</sup> Cf. e.g., Tanabe 1991/92.

<sup>787</sup> Falk 2019, 32-33; Malandra 2015.

### 6.1.3.5. Other deities on Kaniška's coinage

#### 6.1.3.5.1. Oēšo



Fig. 12: Oēšo on a gold coin of Kaniška I



Fig. 13: Oēšo on a copper coin of Kaniška I

The god Oēšo appears to be a Kuṣān creation. As discussed in chapter 6.1.3.3., he is usually identified with the naked deity on the coins of Vima Kadphises, but Falk 2019 has interpreted the latter as a different theological conception that may have been developed into Oēšo under Kaniška I.<sup>788</sup> The iconographic links between Oēšo and the god of Vima Kadphises consist of two attributes, trident and bull, shared by both deities. However, the iconographic differences seem to overweigh. The god of Vima Kadphises appears to have flames on his head.<sup>789</sup> Oēšo, unlike the god of Vima Kadphises, is never nude and has his hair tied in a bun on top of his head, although on some coins the depiction rather resembles the *kalathos* of Sarapis.<sup>790</sup>

<sup>788</sup> *Op. cit.*, 15-28, 32.

<sup>789</sup> Not recognised as such by Göbl 1984, 43 who remarks "Details der Kopfzier unklar".

<sup>790</sup> Falk 2019, 35.

Göbl 1984 counts 19 different Oēšo types on Kušān and Kušāno-Sāsānian coins after Vima Kadphises.<sup>791</sup> On seven of Göbl's types, he appears four-armed and on seven (albeit not always the same ones) he is tricephalic. Under Kaniška I, Oēšo appears four-armed with a robe, a diadem, and a halo (Fig. 12). He holds a *vajra* in his upper right hand, a flask in the lower right, a *trisūla* in the upper left and a goat in the lower left.<sup>792</sup> The copper coins show the god with four arms and one head with a nimbus (Fig. 13). In his upper right hand, he holds a *vajra*, a ribboned investiture ring in the lower right, a *trisūla* in the upper left and a flask in the lower left hand.

While the link between the deity of Vima Kadphises and Oēšo has so far only been questioned by Falk 2019, the religious identity of Oēšo has raised more questions. Most commonly, Oēšo is identified with Śiva. The iconographic evidence provided for this identification consist of the trident, the bull, which is identified with Nandi, and the *urdva liṅga* on the Vima Kadphises coins. However, these iconographic links are problematic, not least because all the positively identified Śiva images with the same attributes postdate the Kušān Empire and may well have been influenced by the Kušān god. An important point on iconographic grounds is that Oēšo also has many attributes that Śiva does not. This is even the case for the rather simplistic god of Vima Kadphises, whose flaming head is not an attribute of Śiva but of Agni.<sup>793</sup>

The interpretation of the name Oēšo is a further difficulty in the identification of the god with Śiva. There have been several attempts to link the name Oēšo with that of epithets of Śiva, none of which have proven convincing.<sup>794</sup> Instead, the explanation of

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<sup>791</sup> The Kušāno-Sāsānian type 16 (Göbl: 702) is inscribed in variations of BOPZAOANΔO IAZOΔO rather than OHPO, on which see below. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 299-301 count 9 different basic types in gold and copper, most of the latter with Pahlavi legends reading *bwlzawndy yzdty* (*sic*).

<sup>792</sup> Göbl: 37, 45, 51, 55, 62, 67, 72 and 78.

<sup>793</sup> Falk 2019, 15.

<sup>794</sup> cf. Lo Muzio 1995/96, 165-67 for a review. The author's own suggestion to derive the name of Oēšo from the stem *iš-* "to rule" is just as problematic as most other etymologies, since no explanation for the initial labial fricative is given.



the name by Humbach 1975 is mostly accepted today. Here, it is derived from Avestan *Vaiiuš Uparō.kairiio*,<sup>795</sup> although the nature of Vaiiu as a wind god has been considered a problem both with Oēšo's iconography and with Śiva's role.

The solution offered for these problems is to abandon the identification of Oēšo with Śiva. Tanabe 1991/92 has suggested to regard him as a wind god and equating the two Kušān deities Oēšo and Oado with the Avestan Vaiiu and Vāta. The iconographic arguments provided for considering Oēšo a wind god are rather weak,<sup>796</sup> but the equation of the Kušān with the Avestan gods has some merit. Falk 2019 also dissociates Oēšo from Śiva, providing much iconographic evidence. He also suggests interpreting Oado as the blowing wind and Oēšo as an atmospheric deity,<sup>797</sup> something that agrees both with the Vedic and the Avestan conceptions of *vāta*-/vāta- and *vāyú/vaiiu*.<sup>798</sup> Following this, Oēšo could be interpreted as a celestial deity emblematic of an idea of universal kingship. His popularity in the Kušān pantheon is easily explicable from this perspective, and it should hardly come as a surprise that his popularity with the Kušān emperors rises when their actual power decreases.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> *Op. cit.*, 404.

<sup>796</sup> Discussed briefly by Lo Muzio 1995/96, 166.

<sup>797</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33.

<sup>798</sup> Malandra 2015.

<sup>799</sup> This may be compared to what Falk 2009, 27 calls “the rule that the number of titles used by the Kušānas and their magnitude increase in diametric opposition to their actual political power”.

### 6.1.3.5.2. Ardoxšo



Fig. 14: Ardoxšo on a gold coin of Huviška (Same type as under Kaniška I but missing the halo)

Two issues of Kaniska I show the female deity APΔOXPO on the reverse. She is shown in three-quarter view indicated by the fact that both her breasts are visible.<sup>800</sup> Her head faces right and is surrounded by a halo (Fig. 14).<sup>801</sup> She usually has a ribboned diadem and wears a long robe. Her attribute is the cornucopia which is present on all her numismatic depictions. On the coins of Kaniška I and, typically, those on Huviška, she holds it with both hands. In this early coinage, she has no further attributes, although on some types of Huviška, she also holds a ribbon or a twig in her hand. Her iconography changes strongly with the coins of Kaniška II and later Kušan sovereigns, where she is usually depicted enthroned frontally and with a rug with coins scattered beneath her feet. The cornucopia and ribbon remain present, and her breasts are emphasised. Beginning with Vāsudeva I, she and Oēšo are the only deities depicted.<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>800</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 279. Not seen by Göbl 1984, 40 or Shenkar 2014, 83 who describe the figure to be in full profile. Jongeward/Cribb 2015 only provide photographs of issues of Huviška and the breasts are certainly not as pronounced on the images of Göbl: 71 and 77 (Göbl 1984, pl. 8-9), but the three-quarter profile is hardly doubtful.

<sup>801</sup> The fact that the halo appears elliptical on some issues (Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 279) is probably not of significance, because it is typically circular if present.

<sup>802</sup> The exceptions are singular Nana types of Vāsudeva I (Göbl: 514) and perhaps Kaniška II (Göbl 660); Falk 2019, 40 finds the explanation: " We know from the Rabatak inscription that Nana is needed for the inauguration, and when that is done she is dispensable."

The identification of Ardoxšo with a deity known from Zoroastrian tradition has posed problems, although it is now commonly held that she represents Aši vaŋ<sup>v</sup>hī/Ahrišwang.<sup>803</sup> The cornucopia is an attribute of Tychē/Fortuna and is exclusive to Ardoxšo on Kušān coinage. She is clearly marked as a goddess of abundance and material wealth, especially on later depictions in which she is associated with money, a feature she seems to adopt from Pharro. Her later depictions put emphasis on her breasts which also indicates a fertility aspect, although this is not yet pronounced on the coinage of Kaniška I. The cornucopia is a symbol of abundance but not fertility.<sup>804</sup> Although Roman Fortuna also has an aspect of womanhood and fertility,<sup>805</sup> this is a more obscure patronage that is unlikely to have influenced the Kušān idea of Ardoxšo. It is more likely that the iconographic link expresses the aspects of fortune and abundance more commonly embodied by Fortuna and Tychē,<sup>806</sup> indicating that the fertility and marital aspects of Aši vaŋ<sup>v</sup>hī known from the Avesta were of less concern to the Kušān.<sup>807</sup>

### 6.1.3.5.3. Lrooaspo

Under Kaniska I, one coin issue displays the god ΛΡΟΟΑCΠΙΟ on the reverses.<sup>808</sup> He is seen standing in profile to the right with his right arm extended holding a ribboned ring and with a horse in the background. He has a beard and a diadem but no halo. This depiction, which would later be modified under Huviška, agrees with the function of his Avestan counterpart Druuāspā as the patron of horses, although the latter is female.<sup>809</sup> It is not the only sex change with Kušān deities, however.

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<sup>803</sup> Humbach/Faiss 2010, 66; Shenkar 2014, 83; Farridnejad 2018, 314.

<sup>804</sup> R. Bloch, Cornucopia. DNP III (1997), 160.

<sup>805</sup> F. Graf, Fortuna. DNP IV (1998), 598.

<sup>806</sup> Links between Ardoxšo and Indian fertility cults are also indirect, as expressed by way of Hārītī, cf. Joshi 1986, 74-75.

<sup>807</sup> cf. Farridnejad 2018, 314 for a similar interpretation as "iranische Göttin der Belohnung, des Schicksals und der Fruchtbarkeit".

<sup>808</sup> Göbl: 57; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1894-0506-11](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1894-0506-11)

<sup>809</sup> cf. Humbach/Faiss 2010, 66.

As an Avestan deity, there is no need to assume an antecedent on Bactrian or neighbouring coinage if it is accepted that Avestan tradition had an influence on the Kušān coinage. However, the sex change on the coinage indicates that the Kušān introduced their own religious notions to the depiction, and therefore possibly also the cult, of Lrooaspo.<sup>810</sup> Moreover, the Indo-Greek kings Antimachos I and Nikias depicted Poseidon on their coins. These depictions are best explained when it is taken to consideration that one of Poseidon's functions was that as the patron of horses.<sup>811</sup> Lrooaspo does not share any of Poseidon's attributes, so that it cannot be argued that he does in any way represent a continuation of a Bactrian Poseidon cult. A trident similar to that of Poseidon's does appear in the depictions of two other deities however, the god of Vima Kadphises discussed by Falk 2019 and Mozdooano.

The depiction of Lrooaspo as the god of horses on Kušān coins seems explicable intuitively. The Kušān were of nomad origin, their lifestyle depended on an abundance of horses and the cavalry will have provided the backbone for their military. Lrooaspo appears with an investiture ring, and it seems as though he bestows Kaniška with the control over horses as an attribute of his kingship.<sup>812</sup>

It may be worth remarking that the Bactrian *Λροοασπο* already anticipates the name of Kay Lohrāsp found in Persian epic history. Kay Lohrāsp is the father of Goštāsp

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<sup>810</sup> Shenkar 2014, 97.

<sup>811</sup> F.L. Holt, Poseidon: In Bactria. *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/poseidon-in-bactria> (accessed 25.05.2023). Horses are found on the coins of Euthydemos I, Menander I, Hermaios and Hippistratos, although the horse is not an iconographic attribute of Poseidon. There is no reason to assume the Indo-Greeks would have invented such an attribute, especially because some coin reverses of Nikias show a dolphin and an anchor. The dolphin is an attribute of Poseidon (on the iconography, cf B. Bäbler, Poseidon II. *Ikonographie*. DNP X (2001), 205-06). The coins of Antimachos show Poseidon in a familiar pose, standing frontally holding a trident in his right and a palm leaf in his left hand. The coins of Nikias show Poseidon as the bust of a bearded man on the obverse with the above-mentioned dolphin/anchor reverses, making him identifiable only by these attributes. Both Antimachos I and Nikias are also depicted as horsemen on some of their coins, an iconography that is rare, though not exclusive to these two.

<sup>812</sup> Apart from the, albeit important, depiction of the horse, Lrooaspo therefore is fairly generic, and it needs to be pointed out that the two known Lrooaspo types are the only positively confirmed iconographic depictions of Drvāspā, see Shenkar 2014, 97.

(Vištāspa) and as such is rather to be identified with Avestan Auruuat.aspa-. Kay Lohrāsp may be conflating both Druuāspā and Auruuat.aspa-. It is of interest here that Persian tradition associates him closely to Bactria, in some cases even making him the founder of Balkh.<sup>813</sup> The Kušān depiction of Lrooaspo may belong to some early stage of this tradition and the sex change of the deity may play a role in his later association with the father of Vištāspa. Whether Kušān Lrooaspo already represents in some shape or form Bactria or Bactrian kingship,<sup>814</sup> or this association rose from his prominence in Kušān Bactria cannot be said.

#### 6.1.3.5.4. Manaobago

It is most commonly assumed that Manaobago is identical to Avestan Vohu Manah,<sup>815</sup> although Humbach 1974 suggested an Old Iranian *\*manaḡhō bayō*, suggesting a connection to Vedic Mánasas Páti.<sup>816</sup> Shenkar 2014 remains undecided on this issue seeing merit in both identifications.<sup>817</sup> His iconography differs only in detail between his depictions on issues of Kaniška I and Huviška (Figs. 15, 16). In both cases, he is seated on a throne with legs that end in lion's paws. He wears a Graeco-Bactrian helmet and has a lunar crescent extend from his shoulders. He is four-armed. In the

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<sup>813</sup> This tradition is found e.g. in Ṭabarī (645) and Ferdowsī (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh, vol. 5, p. 5, l. 30). On the role of Lohrāsp in Iranian epic tradition, cf. Christensen 1931, 92-93 (also 144 on the literary tradition of Lohrāsp); Yarshater 1983, 465-66; P.O. Skjærvø, *Kayāniān viii*. Kay Luhrāsp, Kay Lohrāsb. Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition, 2013, available at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/kayanian-viii> (accessed 25.05.2023).

<sup>814</sup> It is tempting to relate the horse to the interpretation of Falk 2019 of the bull on the Skanda-Agni-Rudra/Oēšo types as representing the land of India, the horse thus representing the land of Bactria. The association of the horse as a symbol of Bactria is not an impossible proposition as its byname in Classical literature is *Zariaspa* and Euthydemus I, still king of Bactria, depicted horses on his coin reverses. It is also plausible given the importance of horses for Bactria that may in some way resemble the importance of cattle in India. However, H. Falk's suggestion, though convincingly argued, remains hypothetical and thus such a proposition for Bactria is entirely speculative.

<sup>815</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 79-80.

<sup>816</sup> *Op. cit.*, 196; cf. also Humbach/Feiss 2010, 66 and Farridnejad 2018, 317-18.

<sup>817</sup> *Op. cit.*, 163-65.



Fig. 15: *Manaobago on a gold coin of Kaniška I*      Fig. 16: *Manaobago on a gold coin of Huviška*

interpretation of Göbl he holds a sceptre in his upper left hand, in his lower left a *chakra* in the issues of Kaniška and a torque in those of Huviška.<sup>818</sup> In his upper right he holds a diadem ribbon<sup>819</sup> and in his lower right an investiture ring. Falk 2019 describes the attributes as “Two of his four hands hold the plough of Balarāma-Saṃkarṣaṇa and the wheel-of-time of Vāsudeva. The other two hold a Greek-style royal fillet and an Iranian-style diadem.”<sup>820</sup>

The multiple arms with the attributes speak for an Indian, the Graeco-Bactrian helmet for a Bactrian iconography. Shenkar 2014 is undecided whether Manaobago is to be interpreted as an Iranian or Indian deity.<sup>821</sup> The use of multiple limbs is unimaginable in an orthodox Zoroastrian context.<sup>822</sup> Falk 2019 asks, “Does this refer to a totality including Indian; Indo-Greek, that is, Bactrian; and Iranian royal rights?” and, based on an inscription on a bowl dedicated to  $\mu\alpha\nu\alpha\omicron \iota \beta\alpha\gamma\omicron$  from the Kušāno-Sāsānian period,

<sup>818</sup> The lower left attribute in the issue of Huviška is virtually indistinguishable on the photo provided in Göbl 1984, pl. 66 (Manaobago 2), but clear on that in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 286.

<sup>819</sup> Or a money bag in the issue of Kaniška I according to Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 286.

<sup>820</sup> *Op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>821</sup> *Op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>822</sup> Farridnejad 2018, 317.

further suggests that the god may be related to the year's cycle with harvest and warfare periods.<sup>823</sup>

Shenkar 2014 remarks, Manaobago is the only Iranian deity on Kušān coins portrayed seated;<sup>824</sup> this is not entirely correct, as Ardoxšo is also depicted seated. Farridnejad 2018 points out that Vohu Manah is described in Zoroastrian scripture as seated on a throne.<sup>825</sup> Although Vima Takto is represented as sitting on a “lion throne” at Māṭ and fragments of a similar such sculpture have been found at Rabatak, the execution is quite different. Rather than having the feet of the throne end in lion's paws, the throne itself is flanked by lions.<sup>826</sup> The possibility should not be excluded that the throne of Manaobago represents an artistic compromise, because the small lion statuettes would have been difficult to adequately render on the coins. However, the level of detail commonly found on Kušān gold coins makes this questionable. The shapes of the thrones are also very different. Vima Kadphises is seen sitting on a throne on one coin issue, but the shape of the legs is different and is probably not meant to represent lion's paws. The shape of the lion's paws, bent outward, is reminiscent of those found on the depictions of Achaemenid thrones, although here they always rest on lotus pedestals, of which there is no hint on the Manaobago coins. It is likely that no specific model existed for the throne on the coins and that it was merely a variant of the “lion throne” idea. The throne would therefore represent a royal throne as an idea, not as a specific object.

Manaobago's depiction as an enthroned deity does have one parallel in Kušān coinage, namely an issue of Huviška showing an enthroned Sarapo.<sup>827</sup> The throne is different

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<sup>823</sup> *Op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>824</sup> *Op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>825</sup> *Op. cit.*, 318.

<sup>826</sup> On the Kušān lion throne cf. Rosenfield 1967, 183-86.

<sup>827</sup> Some late Kušān coins also show Ardoxšo in this pose, but this iconography is so far developed from the coins of Kaniška I and Huviška that they must be put aside here.

from that of Manaobago, although it does seem to have similar outwardly curved lion's paws for feet. Rosenfield 1967 has briefly commented on this, pointing out that unlike Manaobago, whose head is turned to the right, Sarapo is fully frontal. He also remarks that both are apparently investiture deities.<sup>828</sup> The iconographic parallel indicates that Manaobago does share some of the regal aspects of Sarapo/Sarapis.

Of further interest is the presence of a lunar nimbus, otherwise an attribute of Mao. As noted above, Mao plays an important role in the early coinage of Kaniška I, but his significance does seem to fade slightly. It is possible that the presence of Manaobago as a lunar deity has something to do with this. In this respect, it is worth noting that the lunar nimbus has been related to the Anatolian moon god Mēn,<sup>829</sup> although any connection of Mēn and Manaobago can only be speculative at present.<sup>830</sup> Furthermore, it is of interest that the lunar nimbus appears as an attribute of Narkas the *καραλαργγο* on the Vāsudeva silver pyxis and on depictions of the *καραλαργγο* Homoyog on his coins.<sup>831</sup> This seems to link the nimbus to Kušān imperial power, appearing together with the throne on the Manaobago coinage and what seems to be the highest rank in the Kušān imperial hierarchy after the emperor himself. Manaobago could thus be seen as representing Kušān authority in its different aspects.

#### **6.1.3.5.5. Mozdoano**

The only attestations at all for Mozdoano are a coin type of Kaniška I, his mention in the Rabatak Inscription and a clay sealing with the name in the legend written in the

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<sup>828</sup> *Op. cit.*, 98-99.

<sup>829</sup> Shenkar 2014, 98.

<sup>830</sup> cf. chapter 7.2.3.2.1.1.1..

<sup>831</sup> Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 125-26 and 135-36. In *ibid* 126, the crescent is described as the sign of Nana, which would require explanation in the face of the same author's analysis of Nana's iconography (Falk 2015b).





Fig. 17: Mozdoano on a gold coin of Kaniška I

monumental Bactrian script of the Kušān period.<sup>832</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that he was a specifically Kušān deity. On the coins, he is depicted as a prince with a beard and a diadem on what might be an elongated skull riding a two-headed horse and holding a trident in his right hand (Fig. 17). The iconography is highly problematic, as two-headed horses are not otherwise known,<sup>833</sup> and many suggestions have been brought forth concerning the nature of the god.

What is now clear is that his identification with Ahura Mazdā can be put to rest because both gods are named in the Rabatak Inscription.<sup>834</sup> Before that, he was taken as a form of Ahura Mazdā, and the name was interpreted as a composite *\*mazdā-wana-*, thus meaning “Mazda the Victorious”.<sup>835</sup> Sims-Williams 1997 however suggested that the name is to be read as deriving from OIr. *\*miždwāh-*, and suggested the translation “the

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<sup>832</sup> The iconography on the mentioned sealing seems to depict Oēšo, however. According to ur Rahman/Falk 2011, 95 (no. 07.01.03), “it is not clear whether [Mozdoano] is used as a personal name or whether it names the deity (Wēš) portrayed on the seal”.

<sup>833</sup> A remarkable exception however is a wooden sculpture of a rider on a two-headed horse from Nuristan in Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich. I thank Stefan Baums for bringing this to my attention. This would suggest that the iconography and religious traditions of pre-Islamic Nuristan may offer further parallels for Kušān religion, as has already been suggested by F. Grenet for the Nuristani god Imro and Kušān Iamšo, cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.7.

<sup>834</sup> This interpretation was advanced e.g. by Rosenfield 1967, 82-83.

<sup>835</sup> Or “Winner of Wisdom” as suggested by H. Humbach, cf. Sims-Williams 1997, 336.

Gracious one”. A reference point to this name can be found in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, where a sacrifice to a deity Mižduši is recorded.<sup>836</sup> Wright 1997 has followed on this and interpreted the deity as a “Bactrian Rudra”, finding connections to Vedic \**Mīdhvān* in Sanskrit literature. The connection to Rudra-Śiva is emphasised by way of the mention of Omma in the Rabatak Inscription, who as Umā Haimavatī is the consort of Rudra Mīdhuṣṭama: “The Bactrians may have retained a reminiscence of the Old Iranian divine epithet \*Miždušī, encouraging them to associate Umā Haimavatī, the benign spouse of Mīdhvān, the Gṛhyasūtras' Mīdhuṣī, with Iranian Omma. From that could stem the adoption of the correlated Bhāgavata concept of Mīdhvān.”<sup>837</sup>

The interpretation of Mozdoano as belonging to the Śaiva complex derives from the identification of Oēšo with Śiva and the belief that his absence in the Rabatak Inscription is a “problem”.<sup>838</sup> Wright 1997 indicates that the use of *mīdhvān* as an attribute of Rudra is obscure.<sup>839</sup> However, the argumentation rests on other problematic issues. The identification of Oēšo with Śiva is uncertain as discussed above. The identification of the Omma of the Rabatak Inscription and the rare coin issues of Huviška with Umā, the consort of Rudra/Śiva is no longer upheld, although there is no agreement on an alternative.<sup>840</sup> The trident held by Mozdoano is not the *paṭṭiśa* of Rudra,<sup>841</sup> but possesses three parallel points as the *triśūla* or the trident held by Poseidon on the coins of Antimachos I, although it has a unique round shape.

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<sup>836</sup> On the name, cf Sims-Williams 1997. This is discussed most recently (and affirmatively) by Henkelman 2008, 373, fn. 871 with literature.

<sup>837</sup> *Op. cit.*, 343

<sup>838</sup> Gnoli 2009, 146.

<sup>839</sup> *Op. cit.*, 339.

<sup>840</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.2.

<sup>841</sup> Falk 2019, 20-21.

A link to Poseidon on Kušān coinage has been suggested above by way of Lrooaspō's role as patron of horses. Mozdooano is also depicted on a horse and is in fact the only mounted deity known on Kušān coinage. However, the fact that it has two heads has nothing to do with any known iconography. Shenkar 2014 has stated that “this attribute should be viewed as reflecting a mythological tradition (perhaps Scythian or local Bactrian) regarding Mozdooano, which is regrettably a complete mystery to us (...)”.<sup>842</sup> This is extended to the entirety of the deity and an approach is suggested following F. Grenet, “that Mozdooano was a deity inherited from the Scythian past of the Kushans whom they attempted to integrate into the Śivaite cult.”<sup>843</sup>

The name of Mozdooano finds an interesting parallel not only in the above-mentioned Achaemenid Mižduši but also in NSP 4, where Nokonzok narrates that Kaniška returned from his Indian campaign to Bactria (Τοχοαρστανο) with the οανιντα[μ]οζδο. Sims-Williams 2015 translates this as the “spoils(?) of victory(?)”, remarking that μοζδο, derived from \*mižda-, “reward”, “is probably attested as a component of Bactrian personal names, but this would be its first occurrence as an independent word.”<sup>844</sup> Since the appearance of this phrase pertains to the same time and context as the mention of Mozdooano in the Rabatak Inscription, this would at least open the possibility that Mozdooano is a deified personification of the concept of οανιντα μοζδο, and the close association of Mozdooano with Kaniška's Indian campaign may indicate that the god's very existence was tied to this conquest, or to conquest in general.

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<sup>842</sup> *Op. cit.*, 116.

<sup>843</sup> *Op. cit.*, 115. Similar assessments are made e.g. by Humbach/Feiss 2010, 62 (“Originally he may have been a Scythian rival of Ahura Mazda”, although the interpretation of him being degraded in Rab is unconvincing in light of the analysis of the cult of Rabatak in chapter 6.3.1.). Cf. also Farridnejad 2018, 320.

<sup>844</sup> *Op. cit.*, 261.

#### 6.1.3.5.6. Orlagno



Fig. 18: Orlagno on a gold coin of Kaniška I

There is only one known Kušān type, issued by Kaniška I, showing Orlagno on the reverse (Fig. 18). The god is shown standing frontally but with his head facing right. He wears a headdress in shape of a bird with a ribboned diadem. He holds a ribboned lance in his right hand while his left is at the curved hilt of a sword. His costume and pose are strongly reminiscent of the depiction of Kušān emperors and nobles from Māt and Surkh Kotal and he has been described as taking the guise of a Kušān noble.<sup>845</sup>

Orlagno is a form related to Avestan *Vərəθraγna*. His depiction on Kušān coins is an oddity, because it is attested elsewhere that *Vərəθraγna* was identified with *Heraklēs* and would adopt the latter's iconography.<sup>846</sup> *Heraklēs* depictions in Central and South Asia from the Hellenistic period are numerous and he appears as *HPAKIAO* on coins of *Huviška*. The iconography for Orlagno however is “an original Kushan creation based on the image of the Kushan prince with some alterations (...)”.<sup>847</sup> The implication is that unlike in Kommagene or the Arsakid Empire, *Vərəθraγna* and *Hēraklēs* were not

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<sup>845</sup> Shenkar 2014, 161.

<sup>846</sup> Shenkar 2014, 159.

<sup>847</sup> Shenkar 2014, 161.

assimilated with each other in Kušān Bactria.<sup>848</sup> There is no indication for any *interpretatio* in Bactria,<sup>849</sup> but in India, Hēraklēs was identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Nevertheless, the *interpretatio Graeca* of Vərəθraγna as Hēraklēs is important because it points out that Vərəθraγna was not an exclusively martial deity. The syncretistic Artagnēs-Hēraklēs-Arēs of the Nemrud Dağı makes it clear that the martial aspect was important, but no more than another element best represented by Hēraklēs, as one would otherwise expect Vərəθraγna to be identified with Ares only.<sup>850</sup> The Hēraklēs statue of Mesene on the other hand equates Vərəθraγna with Hēraklēs only,<sup>851</sup> suggesting the Hēraklēs aspect of Vərəθraγna was stronger than the Arēs aspect. For the Kušān, this does not mean an equation of Vərəθraγna and Hēraklēs was essential, but it does mean that Orlagno may not simply have been a war god, but embodied more general, heroic traits that were significant for successful kingship. The Kušān iconography makes it clear that Orlagno was a regal, not a purely martial deity. The fact that he is the most warlike figure in Kaniška's coinage means nothing in this respect because it cannot be certain that the entirety of Kaniška's pantheon is known. Under Huviška, Šaorēoro could be taken as far more combative, in line with the Minerva figure of Rišto, not to mention the armour-clad portraits of Vāsudeva I and Kaniška III.<sup>852</sup>

The bird headdress has been the subject of some commentary and interpretations range from it representing the *varəγna* bird as a manifestation of Vərəθraγna to a Saka

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<sup>848</sup> Shenkar 2014, 162.

<sup>849</sup> Rather, Heraklēs himself remained popular, cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.11.

<sup>850</sup> As is the case with Zeus-Oromasdes. An indicator of the extent to which the Nemrud Dağı pantheon can be compared to the Kušān interpretations of Greek and Iranian deities is Apollon-Mithras-Hēlios-Hermes which equates to an extent Miθra and Hēlios just as the Kušān coinage does. Apollo most likely does not feature in any shape or form on Kušān coinage unless the Teiro (Tir) coin of Huviška is interpreted in this way (cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.8.). Hermes is iconographically linked to Pharro on Kušān coins. Neither Tištriya (Teiro) nor X'arənah (Pharro) are present at the Nemrud Dağı.

<sup>851</sup> QGP/2, 461-62 and 569-71.

<sup>852</sup> This was seen by Shenkar 2014, 162 where it is judged that Orlagno "definitely does not possess the most warlike appearance among the Kushan gods".

tradition.<sup>853</sup> It is certainly not of Hellenistic origin. Its significance should probably be interpreted with regards to the diadem it is attached to, just as the lance is not simply a lance but possesses regal significance due to the diadem ribbons flowing from it. Both are marked as regal attributes and are likely to be taken as symbols of kingship. The lance is an almost indispensable attribute of numismatic portraits of the Kušān emperors beginning with Kaniška I, only the early portrait types of Huviška omit it, although it is not always ribboned.<sup>854</sup> All this can leave little doubt that Kušān Orlagno is a regal, not exclusively martial god.

#### 6.1.3.5.7. Pharro

Kušān coins of Kaniška I and Huviška provide the only known positively identified anthropomorphic portrayal linked to the Iranian concept of *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*.<sup>855</sup> Under Kaniška I, ΦAPPO is represented as a beardless man wearing a winged diadem and holding a staff in one hand and what is variously considered a bowl or a purse in the other.<sup>856</sup> Under Huviška, the array of attributes is expanded, including a sword, a caduceus, a

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<sup>853</sup> Carter 1995, 123-125; Shenkar 2014, 161-62. Farridnejad 2018, 315 and 328 suggests a common attribute with Pharro in both cases indicating *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*- without discussing the very different nature of the two headdresses and the other Mercurian attributes of Pharro.

<sup>854</sup> Especially noticeable under Kaniška II and Vāsiška. It sometimes seems to turn into a trident, e.g. in Göbl: 548. The ribboned lance is also found as an attribute of some other deities, clearly Iamšo, although it is otherwise not always clear if the object is a lance or a staff or long sceptre.

<sup>855</sup> Shenkar 2014, 140. A seal attributed to a certain Sena can safely be identified as depicting Pharro based on the iconography (Callieri 1997, 105-06) but does not have an inscription identifying the god.

<sup>856</sup> Bowl: Shenkar 2014, 135, Carter 1986, 90. Purse: Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 281. Göbl 1984, 45 does not identify an object in the right hand of the god at all and describes it as resting on the belt (the overviews on pp. 45-6 and pl. 171 do not distinguish between issues of Kaniška I and Huviška, but the only ΦAPPO coins listed under Kaniška (68, 74 and 74A) correspond to his type 1). Neither Shenkar 2014 nor Jongeward/Cribb 2015 provide images for the Kaniška type and the photographs in Göbl 1984 are inconclusive. Type 69 appears to correspond to his description, but types 74/74A are too small to be certain. The magnified image on pl. 171 is of a Huviška type and the coin appears to be too worn to be certain about Pharro's right hand. Göbl 1984 never identifies a bowl in the hand of the god. Carter 1986, 91 provides a line drawing (type 1), but no photograph. The photograph of coin 381 (Göbl:74, cf. Göbl 1984, 103) from the collection of L. White King (Pl. III) is not clear but allows the possibility of a bowl held by the god. The judgement of Carter 1986 and Shenkar 2014 prevails here, especially as the item is definitely not a purse. A coin in the British Museum (1860,1220.203) shows Pharro on a Kaniška type possibly holding a bowl, corresponding to M.L. Carter's type 1, but is listed as a forgery (as is the specimen 1893,0506.14, which is less clear).



Fig. 19: Pharro on a gold coin of Kaniška I

fire and an investiture ring. The purse is retained, the bowl disappears or is enhanced with flames. It is not clear if the bowl with flames intends to be the same as the bowl in the Kaniška types. As Carter 1986 notes, “[t]he fourth attribute of the bowl is held guardedly and not actually seen to be given”.<sup>857</sup> The fire bowl however is in the god's extended hand. His diadem tends to be replaced by a winged hat. On some types, he has flaming shoulders.

The iconography borrows heavily from Roman Mercurius,<sup>858</sup> but it adds the Iranian element of the fire. Fire is one of the manifestations of *x'arənah*,<sup>859</sup> and the flaming shoulders are found on numismatic depictions of Kušān emperors, Buddhist and Sogdian depictions and for the Sāsānian emperor Balāš.<sup>860</sup> Shenkar 2014 however argues that, while they are common in East Iran, their rarity in the Sāsānian Empire suggests that the flaming shoulders were not meant to express the concept of *x'arənah*

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<sup>857</sup> *Op. cit.*, 91-92.

<sup>858</sup> Mercurius as the model for the iconography should be preferred over Hermes because the purse is an attribute of the former but not the latter (cf. C.R. Phillips, *Mercurius D. Ikonographie*. DNP VIII (2000), 4.) and Hermes, unlike Mercurius, is not a god of material wealth (see below). cf also Stančo 2012, 158 who states that “Hermes in the east did not even live to see the height of Kushan power”, although the Pharro coins are not mentioned.

<sup>859</sup> Shenkar 2014, 132.

<sup>860</sup> Shenkar 2014, 135.

because otherwise “one would expect this motif to have been exploited much more intensively by late Sasanian kings”.<sup>861</sup> The only other deity with flaming shoulders on Kušān coinage is ΗΦΑΙCΤΟC/AΘΡΟ on the coinage of Kaniška I. It is questionable however whether the same iconographic statement was intended because Aθšo - albeit with a very different iconography - appears surrounded by a nimbus of flames on coins of Huviška. The flaming shoulders are not found on the Pharro issues of Kaniška I, so it seems intuitive that the Huviška coins adopt the older image to express a different idea from what was represented on Kaniška's Aθšo coins. The problem with this interpretation is that the flaming shoulders on the portraits of the emperors are in continuous use from Vima Kadphises to Huviška and beyond. Perhaps it is more likely that the flames on the Aθšo coins were developed further because they were mistaken to represent the flaming shoulders imagery when that was not the idea. If this is the case, the flaming shoulders provide a unique link between Pharro and the Kušān emperors even if their use is inconsistent. The flaming shoulders only appear on two types in which the god is holding a bowl of fire while facing left. On the third flaming bowl type, the god faces right and has no flaming shoulders.

The purse is a borrowing of the iconography of Mercurius indicating him as a god of material wealth. The caduceus is his ensign as a messenger of the gods. It cannot be said for certain if the purse and the caduceus refer to other roles of Mercurius or if they are just a generic indicator of the god. The caduceus type also shows Pharro standing on a round platform or a wheel, something that has defied conclusive interpretation.<sup>862</sup> The Mercurian elements in the iconography of Pharro suggest that he embodies the role of the Roman god as a god of trade and material wealth, but the addition of the Iranian

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<sup>861</sup> *Op. cit.*, 135.

<sup>862</sup> For some suggestions see Carter 1986, 97.



fire element displays that he embodied a larger scope that could not be satisfactorily represented by an analogy with Mercurius.<sup>863</sup> This would indicate that Pharro embodied *x<sup>v</sup>arənah* as an idea of fortune, perhaps even in the material sense. However, Pharro does not appear to be the only manifestation of *x<sup>v</sup>arənah* in the Kušan sphere. While the bird-shaped headdress of Orlagno need not essentially be interpreted as representing *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*,<sup>864</sup> the case seems to be quite different with the depiction of a bird together with the god Iamšo under Huviška discussed below.

#### 6.1.3.5.8. Boddo

There are three types of Buddhist imagery on the coins of Kaniška I. On two gold issues, Boddo is seen standing in the garb of a Buddhist monk, his hair in *uṣnīṣa* and his head surrounded by a double halo, his right hand raised in *abhayamudrā* gesture and holding his cloak in his left.<sup>865</sup> The same depiction is found on copper coins with the legend CAKAMANO BOYΔO, but apparently with only a single halo.<sup>866</sup> A third type shows him seated with *uṣnīṣa* on his head, his right hand in *abhayamudrā* and holding a water pot in his left hand.<sup>867</sup> Cribb 1999/2000 describes him as dressed in princely robes and jewellery.<sup>868</sup> The legend identifies him as ΜΗΤΡΑΓΟ ΒΟΥΔΟ.<sup>869</sup>

Cribb 1999/2000 has argued that these coins were issued very late in the reign of Kaniška I, perhaps in his last year, but were part of a regular coin production.<sup>870</sup> The

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<sup>863</sup> cf. also Farridnejad 2018, 316.

<sup>864</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.5.6. Farridnejad 2018, 315 remarks the winged headdress of Pharro is “wie *Οραλαγνο*” (sic) but does not discuss the differences.

<sup>865</sup> Göbl: 66 and 73, cf. also Cribb 1999/2000, 165-189 for a detailed catalogue of all types.

<sup>866</sup> Göbl: 785-788.

<sup>867</sup> Göbl: 790-793.

<sup>868</sup> *Op. cit.*, 177.

<sup>869</sup> On the misreading ΜΗΤΡΑΥΟ ΒΟΥΔΟ found in Göbl 1984 see Cribb 1999/2000, 152.

<sup>870</sup> *Op. cit.*, 158-59.

copper coins are poorly preserved and some of the iconographical details have been discussed controversially.<sup>871</sup>

The historical connection between the reign and person of Kaniška I with Buddhism is well-known and much commented on.<sup>872</sup> However, the appearance of Buddhist imagery on the coins of Kaniška I poses a problem. It is of significant iconographic and conceptual difference to the rest of the pantheon. Not only is the Buddha shown frontally, which is highly unusual, but he is also identified in two different forms referring to different Buddhist conceptions.<sup>873</sup> While this way, “Kaniška has equated [the Buddha's] position with that of deities, and thereby implied for him a divine role”,<sup>874</sup> this was not picked up under Huviška, even though some of Kaniška's coin reverses appear to have been used early in Huviška's reign.<sup>875</sup> It is tempting to associate the coins with the Buddhist council in Kashmir reported by Hsüan-tsang, although it is highly doubtful if this report is historical.<sup>876</sup> If the personal devotion of Kaniška I to Buddhism is unlikely however, the Kušān patronage of Buddhism that allowed Buddhist monks to establish *stūpas* and *vihāras* throughout the empire and spread their faith to Central Asia is unquestionable. Kaniška clearly saw it in his interest to make reference to the Buddha as a figure on his coinage, but the extraordinary nature of this coinage should warn against seeing Boddo as part of the regular pantheon.

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<sup>871</sup> For an overview with literature cf. Cribb 1999/2000, 152-57.

<sup>872</sup> cf. chapter 2.2.14.

<sup>873</sup> For details cf. Cribb 1982.

<sup>874</sup> Cribb 1982, 45.

<sup>875</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.2.

<sup>876</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 31-32

### 6.1.3.6. Deities from the pantheon of Kaniška I reappearing on the coins of Huviška

#### 6.1.3.6.1. Nana

The overwhelming number of depictions of Nana on gold under Huviška represent the same iconographic type found under Kaniška I. The sword is missing on some of the Huviškan types.<sup>877</sup> There is no apparent distributional pattern relating to the obverse types, meaning that coins with this Nana type were issued throughout Huviška's reign. The only notable divergence is that coins with the legend NANAPAO were issued only at the beginning of Huviška's reign both on coins with the *tamgha* of Kaniška I and that of Huviška. They may therefore continue a coin reverse issue begun by Kaniška. A rare case is the appearance of a coin with the common iconographic depiction of Nana with sword and the legend PAONANA.<sup>878</sup> Its obverse is of the late Huviška type from what Jongeward/Cribb 2015 consider the Gandhāra mint.<sup>879</sup> It is most likely explicable as an attempt at a late reissue of the Nanašao type with a blundered legend.

There are three exceptional Nana types in gold, all three of which are quite rare. The first is a depiction of Nana in a short dress with a bow in her left hand, drawing an arrow from a quiver on her back with her right and missing her usual attributes save for the crescent diadem and the nimbus. There is only one type, with an obverse from the late phase.<sup>880</sup> The legend is spelled NANO. The second type shows Nana with her usual attributes, the diadem, the felid sceptre, the bowl and the nimbus, but seated frontally

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<sup>877</sup> The depiction without the sword is classified by Göbl 1984, 43 as Type 3.

<sup>878</sup> Göbl: 283. Göbl 1984, 105 lists two specimens of this coin.

<sup>879</sup> *Op. cit.* 257.

<sup>880</sup> Göbl: 260; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1893-0506-17](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1893-0506-17) The attribution of Göbl: 232 is based on a misinterpretation of the legend TEIPO as MEIPO and based on this the belief of a hybrid legend. Although the pose of the deity on both coins is identical, the dress is quite different, as TEIPO wears a long robe and has neither a diadem nor a nimbus.

on a lion with her face turned right. The lion is standing with his front left paw raised. The obverse again is of the late Huviška phase.<sup>881</sup> The third type shows a very crudely engraved Nana with her sceptre and halo just recognisable, standing facing the god Oēšo whose four arms and attributes are barely distinguishable, but according to Göbl 1984 include a *vajra*, a bottle, a trident and a buck. This type has the obverse of the early phase.<sup>882</sup>

The copper issues largely correspond to the standard Nana type, but there are a few significant iconographic differences. She is sometimes seen extending her right hand in a gesture of blessing,<sup>883</sup> at other times holding an investiture ring.<sup>884</sup> The former seems to be an earlier conception as some of the coins match the heavy weight standard of the beginning of Huviška's reign, although others are lighter. The latter seems to be from late in Huviška's reign when the debased coinage became somewhat heavier again. The standard type with the felid sceptre and the bowl is also found, apparently from early in Huviška's reign, as they are rather heavy.<sup>885</sup> There is also a heavy Nanašao type.<sup>886</sup> The most exceptional depiction of Nana under Huviška shows her in her standard depiction facing a kneeling emperor, whom Göbl 1984 identifies as Huviška himself based on the shape of the crown.<sup>887</sup> This type is very heavy (16.8 g) and thus is likely from early in Huviška's reign, as the shape of the crown also suggests.

At first glance, it appears that the regal aspect of Nana was strongly emphasised at the beginning of Huviška's reign. She was still the chief deity of investiture as the Nana-Huviška copper type shows, although she was also closely associated with Oēšo in the

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<sup>881</sup> Göbl: 359.

<sup>882</sup> Göbl: 167. Göbl 1984, 43 identifies the Nana type 1 and Oēšo type 4 on this coin. *Ibid*, 104 lists four specimens of this type. The two coins in the British Museum (1865,0803.17 and 1894,0506.60) differ greatly in the quality of the engraving, although both are quite crude both in the obverse and the reverse.

<sup>883</sup> Göbl: 896-898.

<sup>884</sup> Göbl: 899.

<sup>885</sup> Göbl: 839-843.

<sup>886</sup> Göbl: 919.

<sup>887</sup> Göbl: 844-846.

same way in which Mao and Miuro were associated, as this pair also appears on coins of Huviška. The relationship between the goddess and the emperor was not forgotten in later issues. Her iconography seated on the lion seems to directly link her to the Kušan emperors, as they sat on a lion throne.<sup>888</sup> This iconography was developed further on a coin of Kaniška II, one of the few numismatic representations of the goddess after Huviška.<sup>889</sup> A late coin issue seems to try to revive the Nanašao types of Huviška's early reign, and she is shown with an investiture ring in the later copper coinage. It is possible that, in the light of the Huviškan Crisis, the emperor needed to reaffirm his legitimacy or that after overcoming the crisis, he received a second investiture of sorts.

While the lion type of Nana is easily explicable in relationship with Kušan kingship, the archer type is more problematic. The iconography has nothing to do with what is seen before and even her dress is significantly different. She takes the iconography of Artemis/Diana, but her depiction holding the bow and drawing an arrow differs greatly from all depictions of Artemis on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coinage and any other known depiction of hers from Central Asia.<sup>890</sup> Göbl 1960b derives this type from a coin type of Hadrian, although he does not distinguish between the Nana and the Teiro types.<sup>891</sup> Although an *interpretatio Graeca* of Nana and Artemis is known from ancient sources,<sup>892</sup> this sudden and unique occurrence in the Kušan Empire is hardly explicable by an inherited Artemis cult. If so, it would rather be expected that Artemis be projected into a different deity than the already established Nana. This of course is the case with

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<sup>888</sup> cf. the discussion in chapter 6.1.3.5.4.

<sup>889</sup> Göbl: 660.

<sup>890</sup> Stančo 2012, 41-44. Some Indo-Greek coins of Peukolaos (Bopearachchi Série 2) depict Artemis drawing an arrow from her quiver, but notably, she is depicted frontally. Some types of Artemidōros (Bopearachchi Série 7-9) also have this depiction. Here, it is almost certain that she is depicted frontally as well, but a few specimens (depicted in Bopearachchi 1991, pl. 50) are so poorly preserved that it is not entirely certain.

<sup>891</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>892</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.4.1.

the coinage of TEIPO, in which the god is identical in pose to Nana but has a different dress and no regal attributes.

#### **6.1.3.6.2. Miiro and Mao**

The iconographies of Miiro and Mao under Huviška are largely identical, as is their distribution. The only significant difference is the halo, which is rayed with Miiro and takes the shape of a lunar crescent with Mao. Their association is emphasised by a coin type with an obverse of the early type that depicts Mao and Miiro facing each other on the reverse. Mao does not directly correspond to any other iconographic type, but Miiro seems to represent Göbl type 2.<sup>893</sup>

In the early issues, Huviška uses the same Miiro and Mao types found under Kaniška I, depicting the god with his right arm outstretched and the hand with two raised fingers in a gesture of blessing and both with and without a staff in his left hand. Further types show the god with a staff in his hand but his right hand on his hip,<sup>894</sup> and sometimes on his sword.<sup>895</sup> A type combining the gesture of blessing, the sword and the staff was also issued on some later coins.<sup>896</sup> The most significant deviation is a depiction found only with the same obverses as the two Kaniška in which the god holds a torque in his right hand and has a sword with a theriomorphic hilt hanging from his left side.

This sword is a common attribute of Huviška on his early coinage, although it is replaced by a lance on the later obverse types. Kaniška I also seems to have such a sword hanging down his side on his standing portraits while also holding a lance. The

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<sup>893</sup> Mao's only attribute is a sword hanging from his hip, whereas all other types of Miiro with a sword have the god hold either a staff, a torque or an investiture ring. The lack of the staff may simply be a technical necessity, as its presence would not have allowed enough space for the legend identifying the god because the lunar crescent extends very far, cf. Göbl 1984, pl. 22 (Göbl: 295) and pl. 166.

<sup>894</sup> Göbl: 140A, 170-72.

<sup>895</sup> Göbl: 200, 251.

<sup>896</sup> Göbl portrait type VIII, found on Göbl: 199 and 276.

torque, however, is not found on any of the portraits of Huviška, although it is commonly worn by Kaniška I and sometimes by Vima Kadphises.<sup>897</sup> Huviška instead wears a round, richly ornamented collar that is on the later types often covered by a kaftan (on coins from the Bactrian mint) or a mantle (on coins from the Gandhāra mint). These torque types are found only on very early coins of Huviška's reign, so they can be connected to the coronation of the emperor. The torque is likely to represent the office of Huviška's predecessors that is now being handed to him, albeit by Miuro and Mao, not, as might be expected, by Nana. As a symbol of kingship, it also appears as an attribute of Manaobago on the Huviška types.<sup>898</sup> Huviška chooses to have it represented on his coins but does not adopt the ornament in his own portrait. This seems to agree with Huviška's general attitude towards earlier royal symbolism: An acceptance of some earlier traditions, such as the diadem, the sword, the dynastic wart and the flaming shoulders, but an overall preference to introduce new elements of his own, including the object, the ornamented clothes or his individual facial hair with the sideburns but without the beard.

The most common depictions of the two deities on the later coinage show the god holding an investiture ring in his right hand. His left hand is holding either a staff or is resting on the hilt of a sword. The sword is seen hanging down on the types with the staff.<sup>899</sup> A single coin is known showing Miuro with his right hand extended in a gesture of blessing with a blundered legend interpreted by Göbl 1984 as OY(?)PBOΔ.<sup>900</sup> The legend seems to take a cursive form with unusual dots inside the Omikra, which

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<sup>897</sup> Clearly on Göbl portrait types IX and X (Göbl 1984, pl. 157).

<sup>898</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.6.8.

<sup>899</sup> Both Göbl 1984, pl. 167 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 271 (types 10 and 11) show Miuro's halo without rays and the ring with and without ribbons flying from it, but this is merely an unfortunate coincidence in the selection of type pieces. Most coins of these types have both the rayed halo and the ribboned ring (Göbl: 340 even has the rays *inside* the halo), so that these can be considered variations on the engraver's part without any iconographic significance.

<sup>900</sup> Göbl: 321.

resemble the Brahmī letter *th-*. The tamgha is that of Kaniška I. Göbl 1984 consistently lists it as a separate deity although Göbl 1983 admits it might be a blundered Miiro type.<sup>901</sup> Since the name does not end in a vowel, it is hard to accept it as Bactrian, although there are some cases of abbreviated divine names, e.g. Göbl: 333 with the legend WPOM for Ōromozdo. The coin legend is a problem, but since the god depicted is clearly Miiro, it should not be taken too seriously.

Miiro and Mao appear abundantly on copper throughout Huviška's reign. It is noteworthy that a number of coppers that Göbl 1984 has grouped as "Gruppe 10" depict almost exclusively these two gods on their reverses, only Oēšo is also found occasionally, and the coins are often very light, some examples even weighing less than one gram. This suggests they were issued at the height of the Huviškan Crisis and may mean these two gods were of particular importance at that time.<sup>902</sup>

#### **6.1.3.6.3. Aθšo**

Aθšo does not appear on the early gold coinage of Huviška although there is a fair abundance later, specifically in what Jongeward/Cribb 2015 consider the Bactrian mint, although some Aθšo types with “Gandhāran” obverses are also known. On the copper coinage, the situation seems to be the reverse. Aθšo types are somewhat common on early, heavy copper coins of Huviška of the elephant and reclining types, but seem to disappear later. A few cases show the god with a wrong legend identifying him as Mao or with a completely blundered legend.<sup>903</sup> In one case, a coin of Miiro may be mislabeled as Aθšo.<sup>904</sup>

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<sup>901</sup> *Op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>902</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 100-03; at Butkara I, the only Huviška coins found showed Miiro, Mao and Oēšo on the reverses (so far as they can be identified), cf. Göbl 1976, 26-29. The coinage of Kaniška I is slightly more diverse, although Mao dominates (*ibid.*, 25-26).

<sup>903</sup> Mao: Göbl: 867 and 946; Blundered: Göbl: 867A and 868

<sup>904</sup> Göbl: 946.



Under Kaniška I, Aθšo was depicted with tongs, a sword and flaming shoulders. Under Huviška, he now appears with tongs and a hammer, the tools of a blacksmith, and surrounded entirely by fire.<sup>905</sup> On the copper coins, Aθšo is seen holding an investiture ring in his right hand and seemingly tongs in his left. His shoulders are flaming. This depiction is identical to that found on the gold coins of Kaniška I.

#### **6.1.3.6.4. Oado**

Until the discovery of the unique ANEMOC type, Oado was considered the only Kušan deity to be found exclusively in copper. As noted above,<sup>906</sup> a gold coin of Kaniška I depicting Oado was recently discovered as well. He still remains exclusive in copper under Huviška. The iconography is the same as under Kaniška, but it is worth pointing out that the Oado types are typically very heavy, indicating they were issued at the beginning of Huviška's reign.<sup>907</sup> Some lighter issues are found with a different reverse type that probably date to late in Huviška's reign.<sup>908</sup> It appears as though no Oado copper types were issued during the Huviškan Crisis.

#### **6.1.3.6.5. Oěšo**

On coins with early obverse types of Huviška, Oěšo appears identical to the depictions of Kaniška I,<sup>909</sup> although in a crude variation, Göbl 1984 identifies the flask as recut to an investiture wreath.<sup>910</sup> This type is known only with the *tamgha* of Kaniška I, while the “regular” type is only rarely found with the *tamgha* of Kaniška and more frequently

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<sup>905</sup> These differences are discussed in chapter 6.1.3.4.4.

<sup>906</sup> Chapter 6.1.3.4.5.

<sup>907</sup> Göbl: 852-854.

<sup>908</sup> Göbl: 885, 905.

<sup>909</sup> Göbl: 155, 308

<sup>910</sup> Göbl: 309.



Fig. 20: Oēšo on a “late” gold coin of Huviška

with that of Huviška.<sup>911</sup> The coins associating Oēšo with Nana and OMMO/OHMO have already been mentioned.<sup>912</sup> The former is a quarter dinar so the depictions are very small and necessarily crude, but there is no indication that Oēšo holds any different attributes.<sup>913</sup> On the latter, Oēšo clearly holds the same attributes. A combination unknown to Göbl 1984 or 1993 shows the same Oēšo type combined with the elephant rider obverse of Huviška, also an early obverse type.<sup>914</sup> It is not entirely clear if the *tamgha* has a crossbar or not, thus if it belongs to Kaniška I or Huviška.

A different depiction of Oēšo is connected to the late Huviška obverse types (Fig. 20). Here, the god is shown frontally with four arms and tricephalic. There are two variants of this depiction of Oēšo. On one the left and centre heads seem to be those of humans, the right head is that of a goat. He is ithyphallic, holding a *cakra* in his upper right, a goat in his lower right, a *trisūla* in his upper left and a *vajra* in his lower left hand.<sup>915</sup> A

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<sup>911</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 13 shows only one specimen with the tamga of Kaniška I for Göbl: 155 and five with that of Huviška. pl. 23 again shows only one specimen with the tamga of Kaniška I for Göbl: 308 and seven with that of Huviška.

<sup>912</sup> Göbl: 167 and 310 respectively.

<sup>913</sup> Göbl 1984, 43 identifies it as the same Oēšo types as on the aforementioned coins.

<sup>914</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015 no. 753, also pl. 22.

<sup>915</sup> Göbl: 235.

variation shows the god with only one head surrounded by flames.<sup>916</sup> The other type shows the god wearing a robe, the heads all human with a *kalathos*,<sup>917</sup> holding a thunderbolt in his upper right hand,<sup>918</sup> a flask in the lower right, a *triśūla* in the upper left and a *gada* in the lower left.<sup>919</sup> Falk 2019 interprets the latter as combining Agni, Balarāma and Saṃkarṣaṇa and Śaivite elements, the former as closer to the Rudra-Agni-Skanda type of Vima Kadphises due to it being ithyphallic.<sup>920</sup>

Interestingly, the late Oēšo types seem to be quite rare, Göbl 1984 counts a total of 6 specimens for all three types identified by him. The copper coinage is at first the same as that of Kaniška I although at least sometimes a goat in the lower left hand is added.<sup>921</sup> These depictions are all found on the early, heavy copper coins of Huviška.<sup>922</sup> A new Oēšo type is found on the light types of the Huviškan Crisis. Here, the god is seen with one head and two arms, holding a trident in his right and a robe in his left hand. He is dressed in a long robe. With some minor variations this type is kept for the rest of Huviška's reign.<sup>923</sup> The depiction of a four-armed Oēšo may be found on some rare copper coins, but they are in very poor condition.<sup>924</sup>

Overall, Oēšo types are common only at the beginning of the reign of Huviška and become very rare subsequently both in gold and copper.<sup>925</sup> This is in stark contrast to the popularity of Oēšo on the coinage of Kaniška I, not to mention on that of Huviška's successor Vāsudeva. The concept of Oēšo developed by Kaniška I does not seem to

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<sup>916</sup> Falk 2019, 35. Not seen by Göbl 1984.

<sup>917</sup> So Falk 2019, 35. Göbl 1984, 44 sees an *uṣṇiṣa*.

<sup>918</sup> Not a *vajra*, according to Falk 2019, 35.

<sup>919</sup> Göbl: 366, 367.

<sup>920</sup> *Op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>921</sup> esp. Göbl: 847-48.

<sup>922</sup> Göbl: 847-854. Type 848 seems to have some lighter specimens as well.

<sup>923</sup> Göbl: 855, 901-904, 923, 981.

<sup>924</sup> Göbl: 982, 983. Falk 2019, 35 on the other hand claims copper coins corresponding to the gold types are completely absent. Both these types are known from one specimen only (Göbl: 1984, 131) so they cannot provide any reliable information.

<sup>925</sup> This is particularly striking when comparing the specimen lists for Göbl: 847-854 (a combined total of 45) with those of Göbl: 901-904 (a combined total of 6), cf. Göbl 1984, 127-129.

have been favourable in the Huviškan Crisis and the introduction of new types appears to have been unsuccessful. Under Vāsudeva, Oēšo is developed in a different direction.

#### **6.1.3.6.6. Ardoxšo**

The standard iconography of Ardoxšo introduced under Kaniška I, depicting the goddess standing with a cornucopia in both hands, is found throughout Huviška's gold coinage without any apparent increase or decrease of frequency, although she seems to be far more popular under Huviška than under his predecessor. For Kaniška I, Göbl 1984 counts one gold and no copper types. For Huviška, 32 gold and 13 copper types are listed. A total of 9 iconographic variations are found, albeit with minute differences, including the type already known from Kaniška I. Although this speaks for an elevated position in the pantheon of Huviška, Ardoxšo is here by no means the dominant goddess she would become under Kaniška II. Despite the variety of types, her iconography is rather conservative, and under Huviška, she is always identified by her cornucopia. There are only two types that add further attributes. In one depiction, she holds the cornucopia in her left hand and an investiture ring in her right hand. This depiction is found on an early type of Huviška. Another type is listed by Göbl 1984 as identical to Göbl: 330, but the depiction is different, as Ardoxšo here seems to hold only a looped ribbon in her hand.<sup>926</sup> This is on a late type of which only one specimen is known, so it is impossible to say for certain if this is really a case of the goddess holding a ribbon on its own, or if it is just a misshapen investiture ring. While the quality of the engraving suggests the shape is deliberate, misshapen rings do occur occasionally on the

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<sup>926</sup> Göbl: 379. This is used as the type piece on pl. 164. The description on p. 40 (type 3) nevertheless speaks of an investiture ring.

coinage.<sup>927</sup> Mao and Miuro are also seen holding a ribbon or ring in similar fashion.<sup>928</sup> If the object were an investiture ring, the deities would be grabbing it by the ribbons, a rather odd way of holding it. It is however a plausible way of holding a looped ribbon, suggesting that this is what the object is. This is confirmed by the later Oēšo types beginning with Vāsudeva depicting him frontally, where the object he is holding in his right hand is clearly a looped ribbon. The significance of the ribbon may therefore be the same as the ring, but it seems that the ring was disposed of and only the ribbon was retained.

Another type with an obverse of the late Gandhāran phase shows Ardoxšo with a cornucopia in her right hand and holding a twig or tree branch in her left.<sup>929</sup> This attribute never reappears and Göbl 1984 lists only a single known specimen known from an auction catalogue.<sup>930</sup> Neither Göbl 1984 nor Shenkar 2014 attempt to explain the branch. While there is no exact correspondence to the shape or upright positioning of the branch in Roman coinage, the iconography of the goddess with a cornucopia in her right hand and a branch in her left matches depictions of Pax Augusti on Roman imperial coins. The coin obverse seems to be quite late, so it is possible that this image was meant to mark the end of the Huviškan Crisis and the restoration of imperial peace.<sup>931</sup> A similar representation of a twig can be found on late coins of Vima Kadphises.<sup>932</sup>

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<sup>927</sup> e.g. Göbl:145 and Göbl: 170; however the quality of these engravings is much cruder than on Göbl: 379.

<sup>928</sup> Mao: Göbl: 350, 352 and 353; Miuro: Göbl: 340-41.

<sup>929</sup> Göbl: 284.

<sup>930</sup> *Op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>931</sup> Interestingly, other Ardoxšo types with the same obverse are abundant. Göbl: 285 combines the obverse with Ardoxšo type 2, for which Göbl 1984 lists 15 specimens. Göbl: 286 has Ardoxšo type 1, with 33 specimens. Göbl: 284 is an anomaly with only one specimen (cf. Göbl 1984, 105-06). Other deities with this obverse include Pharro (Göbl: 280), Nana (Göbl: 281-82), Šaonana (Göbl: 283), Rišto (Göbl: 288) and Oanindo (Göbl: 280/A, not known to Göbl 1984, cf. Göbl 1993, 134, no. 261). None are as frequent as Ardoxšo and none contain any iconographic anomalies.

<sup>932</sup> For this interpretation cf. Falk 2019, 29-30.

#### 6.1.3.6.7. Lrooaspo

There is one gold type of Huviška with a late obverse that shows Lrooaspo.<sup>933</sup> The god does not wear a ribboned diadem, nor does he hold an investiture ring. His pose seems to be frontal with the head looking to his left and he is to be resting his right hand on the horse while feeding it with his left. Rather than presenting it as a mere attribute as under Kaniška I, Lrooaspo is interacting with the horse here and appears as its benefactor,<sup>934</sup> corresponding more closely to the role of Drvāspā.

#### 6.1.3.6.8. Manaobago

An issue with an early Huviška obverse shows Manaobago in much the same way as under Kaniška I but with different attributes in his hands.<sup>935</sup> These include according to Göbl 1984 a winged staff, a torque of the type held by Mao and Miuro and a looped ribbon. The depiction is most likely related to the coronation of Huviška as the torque suggests, but the other two attributes cannot be safely identified.

#### 6.1.3.6.9. Pharro

Huviška's Pharro types continue the iconography of those of Kaniška I in his early issues. None of them however have the tamgha of Kaniška. Early on, Huviška introduces a new type with the god holding a staff in his left hand and an investiture ring in his right.<sup>936</sup> The only distinct iconographic element on this type is the winged helmet. This type also seems to appear on copper coins.<sup>937</sup> A late type from the Bactrian

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<sup>933</sup> Göbl: 268. Two specimens are known, cf. *ibid*, 105;

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1893-0506-12](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1893-0506-12)

<sup>934</sup> Shenkar 2014, 96-97 and Farridnejad 2018, 317 do not remark on these details; Rosenfield 1967, 78 records the differences without further comment.

<sup>935</sup> Göbl: 151.

<sup>936</sup> Göbl: 145, 177. A copper variant with a legend reading MAO is mentioned by Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 281 as no. 1000, but the catalogue lists a different coin with this number (pp. 123-24).

<sup>937</sup> Göbl: 911-12. The weight of these coins suggests these are of the late phase of Huviška's reign.

mint also shows the god with an investiture ring but without a staff.<sup>938</sup> It is not possible to discern if the god wears a winged helmet, but there do seem to be flames on the shoulders. The wide robe of the god on this coin seems to resemble a Kušān kaftan as worn by Kaniška I.<sup>939</sup>

New attributes introduced by Huviška are the bowl of fire and the money bag, found on both early and late types. The god repeatedly appears with a Kušān kaftan without any apparent correlation to the attributes. One type however is unique, showing the god in the kaftan and boots with a staff in his right hand and a sword with a theriomorphic hilt hanging from his hip.<sup>940</sup> The depiction is similar to that of Orlagno under Kaniška I, of whom no coins are known from Huviška. The main difference, apart from the lance turned staff, is the headwear. Pharro does not wear the bird cap but a winged diadem.<sup>941</sup> He is also unbearded. If Pharro is intended to represent similar aspects to Orlagno, care was still taken to distinguish the two iconographically.

### **6.1.3.7. Deities of the pantheon of Huviška not on the coins of Kaniška I**

#### **6.1.3.7.1. Sarapo**

Although Sarapo is known exclusively from coins of Huviška, the first depiction appears early on coins with Kaniška's *tamgha* (Fig. 21).<sup>942</sup> If it is permissible to conclude that the presence of this *tamgha* means the reverse was conceived under

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<sup>938</sup> Göbl: 205. The coin is known only from one specimen in an auction catalogue.

<sup>939</sup> Göbl 1984, 46 describes it as "Kušāngewand mit Glockenrock".

<sup>940</sup> Göbl: 207; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1894-0506-83](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1894-0506-83)

<sup>941</sup> Göbl 1984, 46 (type 9). This is apparent on the magnified photograph on pl. 171, as well as in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 281 (type 3) and on the specimen in the British Museum (1894,0506.83).

<sup>942</sup> Göbl: 164. cf. the magnified photograph in Göbl 1984, pl. 170 and better images in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 289 and on the website of the British Museum (no. 1893,0506.19).



Fig. 21: Sarapo on an “early” gold coin of Huviška

Kaniška I, then it should be expected that Sarapo was already part of the pantheon late in this emperor's rule. This early Sarapo reverse, which is also known from a coin with Huviška's tamgha,<sup>943</sup> shows the god enthroned, frontally, on an elaborate throne with four posts and feet resembling lion's paws, with the god's feet resting on a footstool. He holds a staff in his left and an object that is either an investiture ring or a torque in his right. On his nimbate head he wears a *kalathos*, his long hair is falling down.

A feature that appears here for the first time is that the face of the god is also depicted frontally. Under Huviška, the only other occurrences of frontal faces are those of the tricephalic Oēšo and of Maasēno. The only previous exceptions are the Boddo coins of Kaniška I. All these depictions belong to the Indian sphere, although the tricephalic Oēšo may merely be for lack of a different way of depicting his three heads. On the later coinage, frontal depictions of Oēšo and enthroned Ardoxšo become commonplace. Notably, the depiction of enthroned Manaobago, despite some iconographic similarities, shows the god's body frontally but his head turned sideways. This is particularly interesting because Manaobago features the Indian element of four arms,

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<sup>943</sup> Göbl 1993, 130 (no. 230); also note Göbl 1987, 203-216



but his head, adorned with a Graeco-Bactrian helmet, is in the Bactrian tradition. If anything could be gathered from this distribution of frontality, it is that on Kušān coins, it seems to be a feature indicating the Indian sphere. It is, however, hard to imagine that Sarapo was considered an Indian god by the Kušān.<sup>944</sup>

Although it would be tempting to consider the full frontality as a symbol for the god being foreign to Bactria, this cannot be an adequate explanation. Sarapis is shown sideways on two later types of Huviška. There are indications that a Sarapis cult existed in Central Asia before the Kušān period, so that it is reasonable to assume that a local cult was referred to here.<sup>945</sup> Perhaps the depiction was meant to put a clear distinction between Sarapis and Manaobago, both of whom are depicted seated.

On a second type,<sup>946</sup> with early Huviška obverses, Sarapo is seen standing with his right hand in a gesture of blessing and holding a staff in his left. The headdress is hard to determine but it does not seem to be a *kalathos*. The god loses all his distinct attributes here. A third type shows the god standing in profile with a *kalathos* on his head and holding an investiture ring in his right hand.<sup>947</sup> The attribute in his left hand is unclear. The coin, known from only one specimen, has a late Huviška obverse. Its most interesting feature is that it shows Sarapo bearded, while he is clean shaven on the other two types. It is not the long, free-flowing beard of the emperors or of deities with a Kušān guise such as Lroaspo and Mozdoano, or that of Aθšo. It is a trimmed, curly beard belonging to the Greek tradition and found for certain with only one other god on Kušān coinage, Ōromozdo. On his coins, the latter wears a distinct headdress that

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<sup>944</sup> This does not exclude the possibility of depictions of Sarapis or his attributes (most importantly the *kalathos*) being adopted in the art of the Kušān period, cf. Carter 1997, 575.

<sup>945</sup> cf. chapter 7.2.3.2.1.4.

<sup>946</sup> Göbl: 185; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_IOC-335](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_IOC-335)

<sup>947</sup> Göbl: 370; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1956-0710-48](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1956-0710-48)

resembles the *kalathos* but is wider.<sup>948</sup> On a type with a late Huviška reverse, he appears with an investiture ring in his right hand and a staff in his left, similar to Sarapo but not identical, especially not in the dress.<sup>949</sup>

Despite the iconographic similarities, it is doubtful if there is any close association between Sarapis and Ōromozdo. The former is primarily a fertility god, and this may be a factor in the iconographic link to later Ardoxšo images, who is also seen enthroned. As such, Sarapis will also have had a regal aspect, something virtually all deities on Kušān coins had, but there are no details of the Sarapis cult in Central Asia, so that the role in which he was worshipped here cannot be discerned with certainty.

#### **6.1.3.7.2. Maasēno, Skando Komaro and Bizago**

The triad of Maasēno, Skando Komaro and Bizago appears in three different variations on coins of Huviška: Maasēno alone (Fig. 22), Skando Komaro and Bizago together facing each other (Fig. 23), and all three gods with Maasēno in the centre and flanked by Skando Komaro to his right and Bizago to his left (Fig. 24). All these coins except for the full triad are known from specimens both with the *tamgha* of Kaniška I and that of Huviška. Almost all appear exclusively with the same, early obverse type of Huviška. There is one exception of the triad, which appears with a late Huviška obverse.<sup>950</sup>

The depiction of Maaseno is an anomaly in the Kušān coinage, as it shows the god standing frontally, which is unusual and may indicate his Indian nature. He has a halo and his curly hair seems to be tied up to a bun at the top. He wears a *dhoti* and boots, and holds a staff in his right hand that is topped by the image of a cock. Two ribbons

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<sup>948</sup> Göbl 1984, 46 describes it as “wie modius”, *modius* being the interpretation he gives to the headdress of Sarapo (p. 45).

<sup>949</sup> Göbl: 240.

<sup>950</sup> Göbl: 227A, cf. Göbl 1993, 132 no. 251 and pl. 46.



*Fig. 22: Maaseno on a gold coin of Huviška*



*Fig. 23: Skando Komaro and Bizago on a gold coin of Huviška*

*Fig. 24: Maaseno, Skando Komaro and Bizago on a gold coin of Huviška*

are flowing from it. His left hand is stemmed to his hip, and it appears as if a sword is hanging from it.

Apart from the frontal depiction, which may be an attribute in itself, the staff with the cock has attracted some attention. The cock is a frequent attribute of Kārtikeya which

is usually held in his hand.<sup>951</sup> Mann 2012 has suggested it may be a Parthian iconographic influence, the bird emblem originating from the idea of the *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*. This interpretation conflates the depiction of a cock and the *vārəṅna* bird, not respecting the fact that such a depiction of the *vārəṅna* bird, clearly not a cock, is found on the Iamšo coin of Huviška.<sup>952</sup> A link between the Maasēno-Skando Komaro-Bizago triad and an Iranian deity is found in the Rabatak Inscription, where the gloss 10a identifies Maasēno and Bizago with Srošardo.<sup>953</sup> A common attribute of Sraoša is indeed the cock,<sup>954</sup> and a strong martial aspect is shared by Sraoša, Mahāsena, Viśākha and Skanda-Kumāra. The image of the cock is most likely to be seen in this context. It may be a foreign import, but there is no reason to assume it being Parthian.<sup>955</sup> In fact, the coins of Sophytos from Bactria in the late 4th century BCE show a cock on the reverse. This depiction of a cock has been left unexplained,<sup>956</sup> but it may represent a Bactrian tradition that would influence the iconography of Mahāsena.

It is clear that the Kušān promoted the existence of three manifest deities, Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsena.<sup>957</sup> These were however not entirely separate entities

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<sup>951</sup> Śrinivasan 1997/98, 252.

<sup>952</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.7.

<sup>953</sup> Falk 2019, 37 argues that “[The] letters for this insertion start above the sigma of *narasao* and end over the *delta* of *oudoano*. That means neither is *srošardo* touched in any way and *narasao* is involved only with its last syllable. The only name which is fully covered is *miro*, Mihir. This is why I cannot follow the editor when he inserts the explanation in this translation after “Sroshard”, turning Sroshard into the Indian Mahāsena and Viśākha. Instead, following the spacial arrangement, we must understand the insertion as “The Indians call Mihir ‘Mahāsena’ and they call him ‘Viśākha’” (*Op. cit.*, 37). However, the tracing of Rab in Sims-Williams 2008, 54 and the photograph on p. 60 clearly show that the insertion begins exactly over the beginning of the Nu of *Narasao*, leaving the most plausible suggestion that the statement of the gloss is intended to follow after the name of Srošardo and before *Narasao*.

<sup>954</sup> Shenkar 2014, 145.

<sup>955</sup> Apart from misinterpreting the cock as relating to the *vārəṅna* bird, Mann 2012, 125-26 also goes on to claim Orlagno and Pharro are “Parthian deities”. *Orlagno* is clearly the Bactrian form of *Vərəθraṅna*, the Parthian *wrtgrn* is attested in BHM 9.

<sup>956</sup> cf. Plischke 2014, 177: „So muss zunächst die Vermutung genügen, dass der Hahn ein lokales, baktrisches Symbol darstellt, zu dessen weiterer Interpretation zum heutigen Zeitpunkt noch die Möglichkeiten bzw. Quellen fehlen.“ Shenkar 2014 does not mention the coin in his discussion of Sraoša (pp. 145-148). On a possible interpretation of the iconography cf. Härtel 2023.

<sup>957</sup> There is rarely a proper differentiation between the various names and epithets of the deity of the Skanda cult in literature, cf. Mann 2012, 1, fn. 1.

but linked to each other. Mahāsenā was the centrepiece of this cult.<sup>958</sup> He is the only of the deities to appear by himself on coins and in the depictions of the triad, he is clearly the centrepiece. Viśākha and Skanda-Kumāra appear together on coins without Mahāsenā, but never by themselves. Maasēno is depicted with a large nimbus on the triad coins. The other two deities have a markedly smaller one, also on the types where they are seen without Maasēno where it is unusually tight around their heads. On the single coins of Maasēno, the god sometimes has a regular halo, but on some specimens, he seems to have a double halo. On one specimen of the triad type, Maasēno has a radiant nimbus while the other two have none at all. This coin in the British Museum was not recorded in Göbl 1984.<sup>959</sup> The *tamgha* is an unusual hybrid of the round tamgha of Kaniška I but with a shortened version of the crossbar of Huviška. This form is recorded neither by Göbl 1984<sup>960</sup> nor Chattopadhyay 1967,<sup>961</sup> but is by Jongeward/Cribb 2015.<sup>962</sup> The singularity of the coin makes the iconography of Maaseno difficult to interpret, and it should also be taken into account that this is the only coin showing any element of the triad with a late Huviška obverse. Maasēno coins are generally rare, so it is difficult to determine what the “standard” idea of his nimbus was.<sup>963</sup> The rays, an attribute of Hēlios/Miuro, are found on the problematic coins of Ourbod and Ašaeixšo, which hardly help to bring further clarity to the matter.

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<sup>958</sup> cf. Mann 2012, 139.

<sup>959</sup> Museum number 1865,0803.16. It resembles Göbl: 227A, but the specimen in Göbl 1993, pl. 46 (no. 251) does not have rays on the halo, the other two gods may be nimbate and the roof of the structure the gods are placed in has a somewhat different shape. The obverse on the British Museum coin is of the early Huviška type, while the one in Göbl 1993 is of the late type.

<sup>960</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl. VIII.

<sup>961</sup> *Op. cit.*, chart following p. 264.

<sup>962</sup> *Op. cit.*, 305; also the enlargement of coin 766 on pl. 77. The execution of the tamgha is different than on the British Museum coin, but such a variation is not unusual. Other specimens with similar tamghas include Jongeward/Cribb: 722, 763 (?), 764 (?), 765 and 771. There is no apparent correlation with early or late obverse types.

<sup>963</sup> Falk 2019, 37 does not mention the singularity of this depiction when it is used as a further argument of a Maasēno-Miuro link.

The triad coins are unusual not only in that they depict three divine figures, but also that they are placed on a sort of plinth or pedestal with a superstructure surrounding them. This structure is interpreted by Göbl 1984 as an *aedicula*.<sup>964</sup> The depiction has been interpreted as citing Indian sculpture, maybe even showing a shrine with cult statues rather than the gods themselves.<sup>965</sup>

The triad is unusual in every way and its depiction may be a reflection of an attempt to integrate a Brahman cult with a strong martial overtone into the Kušān pantheon. Its identity as Indian seems to play a role, as Rab 10a indicates. The use of the *tamgha* of Kaniška I on the early types of Huviška implies the issues may have been conceived late in Kaniška's reign and the early disappearance of these coins in Huviška's reign, with a problematic exception, indicates that the Skanda cult was of little concern to the new emperor. Even during the Huviškan Crisis there seems to have been little interest to include these martial gods in the numismatic pantheon.<sup>966</sup>

#### 6.1.3.7.3. Rišto

The coins of Huviška provide the earliest known depictions of Arštāt (Aštād).<sup>967</sup> The goddess is shown wearing a helmet and body armour with a robe flowing underneath, holding a lance in her right hand and her left hand resting on a shield like Šaoreoro. The shield is evidently adorned with a *Gorgoneion*. Similar to Šaoreoro, Rišto is shown in variants with a crested helmet and what appears to be a Macedonian type linen

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<sup>964</sup> *Op. cit.*, 45. cf. also Göbl 1967, 87, where a model from the coinage of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius is suggested.

<sup>965</sup> Mann 2012 139.

<sup>966</sup> Skanda's primary role in Hindu mythology, despite his non-Vedic origin, is that of the lord and commander of the divine army, see Rana 1995, 41 and Mann 2012, 25. According to Mann 2012 *passim* (but especially 139 ff), the martial Mahāsenā aspect of Skanda began dominating the Skanda cult in the Kušān era in elite worship.

<sup>967</sup> Shenkar 2014, 88-90.

armour,<sup>968</sup> and with a Graeco-Bactrian helmet and muscle cuirass.<sup>969</sup> In this case, the Bactrian helmet is connected with the muscle cuirass, as opposed to the combination found with Šaoreoro. The Graeco-Bactrian helmet/muscle cuirass type is found linked to an early Huviška obverse and is only known from specimens with the *tamgha* of Kaniška I.<sup>970</sup> The other two types, with both styles of armour, are found with late obverses, although Göbl: 369 may have the *tamgha* of Kaniška I.<sup>971</sup>

The iconography is that of Athena/Minerva also shared by Roma, which has led to misidentification of the goddess in the past.<sup>972</sup> Depictions of Athena are very different on Graeco-Bactrian coins, where she is almost invariably shown charging as Athena *alkidemos*,<sup>973</sup> and much closer to Roman types from the time of Antoninus Pius.<sup>974</sup> It is tempting to see this martial depiction of Rišto in connection with the very similar Šaoreoro types, but the chronological distribution is different. Shenkar 2014 argues the depiction of Athena is due to the joint trait of Areštat and Athena as goddess of justice.<sup>975</sup>

#### 6.1.3.7.4. Ōromozdo

A type of Ōromozdo as a bearded man holding an investiture ring in his right and a staff in his left hand is found on coins with late Huviška obverses. The other known coins

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<sup>968</sup> Göbl: 288.

<sup>969</sup> Göbl: 332 and 369. Göbl 1984, Shenkar 2014 and Farridnejad 2018, 329 do not see these differences. For the coin cf. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1894-0506-75](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1894-0506-75)

<sup>970</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 24 (no. 332) shows two coins but p. 107 lists three specimens, the missing one being in Torino.

<sup>971</sup> It is unclear from Göbl 1984, pl. 27 if the *tamgha* has a crossbar or not. No other images of this coin (of which one specimen is listed for London, another for the Vatican) seem to be available.

<sup>972</sup> Especially based on a formerly common reading of the legend as PIOM for Roma. The reading PIPTO (also *contra* PIPTNO as suggested by Rosenfield 1967) is extensively discussed in R. Göbl, Rišto was sonst? Ein Beitrag zum Thema Rom und der Orient. LNV 3 (1987), 169-183.

<sup>973</sup> Exceptions include Diodotos (Bopearachchi: Série 18), which is iconographically similar but far from identical to the Rišto types and Amyntas (Bopearachchi: Série 14,15) where Athena carries the shield on her back (there are more, but all different). cf. also Stančo 2012, 45-62.

<sup>974</sup> Göbl 1960b, 87.

<sup>975</sup> *Op. cit.*, 89.

show the god standing wearing the same wide *kalathos*-type headdress and holding a staff in his left while the right arm is extended but without an attribute. The obverses are all of the early Huviška type, the legends are blundered as WPOM and (I)OZΔO.<sup>976</sup> Göbl 1983 suggests that the latter may rather be an appellation *iozdo* (from *yazata*-), referring to Kušāno-Sāsānian depictions of Oēšo with the legend BOPZAOANΔO IAZAΔO.<sup>977</sup>

As discussed in chapter 6.1.3.7.1., the iconography of Ōromozdo resembles that of Sarapis to an extent.<sup>978</sup> This may however be coincidence, as Grenet 1991 has shown that the *kalathos* could also connect Ōromozdo to the cult of Zeus-Bēlos in Seleukeia/Tigris.<sup>979</sup> The interpretation of Ahura Mazdā as Zeus is common in antiquity, and it would be expected in the Kušān realm as well. However, images of Zeus are abundant especially on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins and while there is some iconographical bandwidth, there is no depiction of him with a similar headdress.<sup>980</sup>

Ōromozdo's appearance on Huviška's coinage is ephemeral. It does not match the importance of Zeus or Ahura Mazdā in their respective religious backgrounds. He does not appear as the creator or the chief bestower of royalty as in the Achaemenian and Sāsānian empires. His iconography does not suggest any particular role of his own in the Kušān Empire other than that of a generic investiture god.

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<sup>976</sup> Göbl: 333 and 334 respectively. On Göbl: 335 cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.5..

<sup>977</sup> *Op. cit.*, 91. For the reading of the Kušāno-Sāsānian coins cf. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 299.

<sup>978</sup> Farridnejad 2018, 325-28 does see the link with Serapis but prefers to view the iconographic model as Zeus, although there is no explanation why the typical attributes of Zeus such as the lightning bolt and the eagle are missing.

<sup>979</sup> *Op. cit.*, 148. A temple of Bēl is attested in late Achaemenian Bactria, cf. Tavernier 2017, 103-04.

<sup>980</sup> Stančo 2012, 203-11.



### 6.1.3.7.5. Oaxšo

The depiction of Oaxšo, the deified river Oxos, on a coin with a late obverse of Huviška is unique in many aspects.<sup>981</sup> It is the only clear case of a Bactrian deity appearing on Kušan coinage that can be identified as purely local. His distinct attribute is a fish which he holds in his right hand, while the other features are generic: A staff in his right hand, a halo, and a ribboned diadem. There is only one known specimen of this coin and while it seems that the figure is bearded, it is not clear if the beard is of the same trimmed variety as that of Sarapo and Ōromozdo. If so, it would provide a link between these gods, something that may be reinforced by his designation βαγανο βανο, king of the gods, which he receives in some Bactrian Documents.<sup>982</sup> However, these documents are very late, the earliest in this group ('O') dates to 440 and some earlier and later documents do not give him this epithet. Furthermore, he shares it with the otherwise unknown god καμρδο,<sup>983</sup> albeit in a different context.

There may be another link with these two gods, this being a coin type with an early Huviška obverse. The reverse shows a god with identical iconography to the Ōromozdo types Göbl: 333 and 334, although it could be argued his right arm is not extended in the same fashion as the others. This may be due to the unusually large *tamgha*, however. The *tamgha* is that of Kaniška I, placing this coin at the very beginning of Huviška's reign. The legend reads OXPŌ, which Göbl 1983 dismisses as a hybrid legend.<sup>984</sup> If this coin was conceived under Kaniška I, it would be the only known depiction of

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<sup>981</sup> Göbl: 241. Rosenfield 1967 compares it with a reverse of Maues depicting Poseidon (Whitehead 1914: 20 (pl. X), corresponding to Senior: 28), but it is not clear what prompts this comparison. Poseidon is bending over, resting his right arm on his right foot, which is standing on something, whereas Oaxšo is standing upright. For the coin cf. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1893-0506-21](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1893-0506-21)

<sup>982</sup> 'O'3-4, 'Tt'3-4, 'Uu'2-3.

<sup>983</sup> 'T'3-4. He also shares the attributes as λαδοιανο λαδοαγαλγο οαρσοχοανδο with καμρδο and ραμοσητο, cf. e.g. Q3-4. On the name of καμρδο cf. BD2, 220b and Sims-Williams 2011, 75 no. 200. In document T, the god is associated with the place Asp in Kadagstan. The land granted to him is by a Turkish princess, but the name of the god is Iranian.

<sup>984</sup> *Op. cit.*, 90; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1893-0506-20](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1893-0506-20)

Ōromozdo from his reign. The iconography would therefore probably be novel in any case,<sup>985</sup> and if the headdress of the god is to be interpreted as a *kalathos*, it may as well be an early attempt at expressing a fertility aspect of Oaxšo. The image would almost immediately have been reinterpreted as Ōromozdo, something that would be possible if both deities had shared aspects.<sup>986</sup> However, with only a single coin specimen of this iconography with Kaniška's *tamgha*, it is impossible to say for certain.

With the tentative links between Oaxšo, Ōromozdo and Sarapo, it would seem possible to interpret the depiction of Oaxšo, as rare as it is, not merely as a reference to a local cult, but as the incorporation of a regal deity into the numismatic pantheon, although it is hard to dismiss the idea that this was done specifically with Bactria as a dynastic homeland in mind.<sup>987</sup>

#### 6.1.3.7.6. Šaorēoro

No depiction of Šaorēoro with an early obverse of Huviška is known. The only exception may be Göbl: 263, which has a rare and unusual obverse of Huviška on which he is holding his object in his right hand and a felid sceptre in his left.<sup>988</sup> He does not wear any of the usual crowns or helmets, but a turban.<sup>989</sup> With this unusual iconography, it is impossible to determine if it is an “early” or a “late” obverse.<sup>990</sup>

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<sup>985</sup> The item most commonly discussed in terms of an iconography for Oxos is the famous statuette from Takht-i Sangin showing the river god Marsyas with a dedicatory inscription identifying him as Oxos, cf. Rougemont 2012, 196-198 (§ 95). Shenkar 2014, 128 notes a finger ring showing a winged bull with the Aramaic inscription "Vaxšu" from the Oxos Treasure but does not attempt an interpretation.

<sup>986</sup> Göbl 1983, 90 remarks: "Oxšo ist nicht (wie man schon wieder konstruieren wollte) eine Variante für Oaxšo, den Oxus, sondern ganz einfach der Rest einer Ardoxšo-Legende, also hybrid."

<sup>987</sup> Humbach 2002, 417 suggested that Oaxšo may have been a generic river god, an idea that as far as can be determined is based on the misinterpretation of the GN γανδαρο as Gandhāra.

<sup>988</sup> So Göbl 1984, 36 (type XXI). The form of the object in his left hand is impossible to determine on any of the photographs provided (pl. 19 types 256 and 263 and pl. 158, type XXI).

<sup>989</sup> The same obverse is also found with Pharro on the reverse, Göbl: 256.

<sup>990</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015 do not list this obverse at all as there are no specimens in the ANS collection. However, Göbl 1984, pl. 19 (type 256) suggests a die link with a late Huviška obverse.



Fig. 25: Šaorēoro on a gold coin of Huviška

The most common depiction of Šaorēoro (*xšaθra vairiia*/Šahrēwar) shows the god with a muscle cuirass, boots, a crested helmet, a lance, and a shield.<sup>991</sup> His iconography is that of Mars without any local Bactrian variation. Even the helmet with the crest does not correspond to the Graeco-Bactrian helmet types. A “native” interpretation of the image with what seems to be a Bactrian helmet and a scale armour, rather than a muscle cuirass, is found on a different type known only from a single specimen.<sup>992</sup> This armour distribution resembles that of Rišto discussed in chapter 6.1.3.7.3.

There are two further types with a different iconography. On one type, the god is seen with a sword rather than a shield and a nimbus around his head.<sup>993</sup> On the other, he is again seen in the muscle cuirass and crested helmet type and with a lance, but with his shield lifted (Fig. 25). His pose is nevertheless static.<sup>994</sup> A very crude variant of this

<sup>991</sup> Göbl: 224, 226, 227, 263, 265-67, 368, 381, 382.

<sup>992</sup> Göbl: 383.

<sup>993</sup> Göbl: 225. There are two specimens for this type, cf. Göbl 1984, 105.

<sup>994</sup> Göbl: 239. It could be argued that the very depiction of movement is an attribute of Oado, cf. chapter 6.1.3.4.5.

type sees him holding his shield lower, but that is probably due to the positioning of the *tamgha*.<sup>995</sup>

Šaorēoro is evidently a martial deity, even literally so as he takes the iconography of Mars.<sup>996</sup> It should not come as a surprise that he appears on the later Huviška coins in which the emperor himself takes a martial pose. What is perhaps less expected is the high popularity of the god on this later coinage. Göbl 1984 counts a total of 17 individual types. While he is certainly not as dominant as deities such as Mao, Miuro, Nana or Oēšo, it is noteworthy that his depictions appear linked to almost every one of Huviška's late obverse types, suggesting that most, or maybe even all, of Huviška's later issues included Šaoreoro as a standard god. The implication seems to be clear: Huviška was facing a military crisis late in his reign that demanded the invocation of a martial god on his gold coins, although the reasons for the choice of Šaoreoro are elusive.<sup>997</sup>

#### 6.1.3.7.7. **Iamšo**

The discovery of a singular coin depicting a god with the legend IAMPO was first mentioned by Göbl 1983.<sup>998</sup> Göbl 1984 could therefore only discuss it as an *addendum*, although a description of the reverse is still found in the typology chapter.<sup>999</sup> The obverse is of the late Huviška type from the Bactrian mint. The reverse shows the god standing with a high conic cap with diadem ribbons. He does not seem to be bearded and there is no halo. He is wearing kaftan and trousers of the Kušan type, holding a

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<sup>995</sup> Göbl: 239A.

<sup>996</sup> Farridnejad 2018, 329 fn. 415 makes the important observation that Šaorēoro is dressed like Roman Mars but unlike Greek Ares.

<sup>997</sup> Cf. Shenkar 2014, 144: “(...) Šaoreoro appears to be the most “warlike” deity in the Kushan numismatic pantheon. This does not seem to correspond to his role in Zoroastrian written sources.”

<sup>998</sup> *Op. cit.*, 82 with credit to H. Härtel.

<sup>999</sup> *Op. cit.*, 41. The type number listed in Göbl 1984 is inconsistent. On p. 41 and pl. 171, the reverse is referred to as Göbl: 230A. However, on pl. 127, the coin has the number Göbl: 230B, while Göbl: 230A on pl. 122 is an Aθšo type. p. 105 also seems to list the Iamšo coin as Göbl: 230B. This inconsistency was also noted by Grenet 1984, 253, n. 1. Göbl 1993, 34 does not mention the type number. The coin will here be referred to as Göbl: 230B.

lance in his left hand and with his right arm outstretched and a bird perched on the hand. The usual sword with theriomorphic hilt is hanging from his hip.

Grenet 1984 has studied the coin and identifies the god as Yama with the epithet *šao* (OIr. \**xšāwan*) become part of the name.<sup>1000</sup> The name is explained by reference to the Nuristani god Imrō < \**Yama-rāja-*, a clear indicator that Yama developed to a god in some religious contexts.<sup>1001</sup> He proposes the bird to take the shape of a falcon thus representing the *vārəyna* bird, and thus the concept of *xʷarənah*.<sup>1002</sup> It is suggested that the god may in fact be wearing an armour as Vāsudeva later does, although the piece is too worn to be certain.<sup>1003</sup> The right sleeve certainly shows ripples as seen on the coins of the armoured Vāsudeva, but while such ripples are not seen on the depictions of Kaniška I, they are found on both the early and late busts of Huviška. They do not seem to stand in direct connection to the armour. The fact that the god holds a lance needn't mean he was also wearing an armour. Huviška is seen on his late obverses with a lance but without armour and the same is of course true for Kaniška I. As Shenkar 2014 notes, “[of] all the divinities shown on Kushan coins, Yima resembles the Kushan king most closely”.<sup>1004</sup> It is therefore a relevant question if the god is bearded, as Huviška is the first Kušān emperor without a full beard. A beardless *Iamšo* may be interpreted as representing the conception of kingship under Huviška, not one pertaining to dynastic ancestry. The coin is too worn to be certain. The god's cheek seems rather prominent, but the chin, albeit pointy, is too small to suggest the presence of a beard. The cheek may be covered by flaps from the hat; the shape does not suggest the sideburns of Huviška's early coins.

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<sup>1000</sup> *Op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1002</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-56.

<sup>1003</sup> *Op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>1004</sup> *Op. cit.*, 166.

Gnoli 1989 critically discussed the interpretation of Grenet 1984 and argued that Iamšo should perhaps not be taken as a god at all, because this would be difficult to reconcile with the pantheon which he describes as appearing “largely to concur reasonably well with what must have been the Zoroastrianism at the time”.<sup>1005</sup> This argument is not particularly convincing, as it relies on the assumption that not all deities on Kušān coins are deities on equal level and, moreover, “that the use of anthropomorphic figures, probably deriving from Greek or Hellenistic influence, seems to level out different subjects and elements which must be in fact interpreted within their different contexts”.<sup>1006</sup> While this at first appears like a reasonable approach, it must be considered that these “different contexts” are largely unavailable in Kušān sources, and any connection to Avestan scripture, plausible though it might be in individual cases, is not observable. Gnoli further ignores the mention of cult statues in SK4 that are explicitly named βαγανο. On the other hand, the evidence from Rab, which, despite the problems relating to the numismatic pantheon discussed below, would support the interpretation of all these figures as deities, was not yet available.<sup>1007</sup>

Humbach 2004 briefly discusses the coin and disagrees with Grenet 1984 on some points. Notably, he rejects the interpretation as *Iamo-šao* on basis that *šao* is itself never abbreviated to *šo* “except perhaps in some corrupt inscriptions”.<sup>1008</sup> This point is indirectly refuted by Sims-Williams 1999, who argued that “the reduction to -Ḷo [-š] at the end of a compound would not be unexpected, since final \*-š seems to survive only in monosyllables”.<sup>1009</sup> More importantly, the alternative offered by Humbach 2004 as

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<sup>1005</sup> *Op. cit.*, 922.

<sup>1006</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1007</sup> After briefly referring to his critics including Gnoli 1989, Grenet 2012, 88 reiterates his interpretation as “le dieu prototype de la royauté sous l'aspect guerrier que les souverains kouchans ont mis particulièrement en avant à partir de Huviška”.

<sup>1008</sup> *Op. cit.*, 57, fn. 26.

<sup>1009</sup> *Op. cit.*, 196-97. Humbach 2004 was evidently not aware of the argument presented here.

“an abbreviation of *Iamš<ēd>o*, the Bactrian form of the name of Jamšēd”<sup>1010</sup> is at least equally as problematic, given that such abbreviations are otherwise not found on Kušān coins or if, such as in the case of Ōrom for Ōromozdo, also dispose of the final -o.<sup>1011</sup> Humbach 2004 concludes that *Iamšo* “is perhaps to be explained by assuming that the primeval king was understood as an immortalized human being, as a demigod such as the Greek Herakles (...)”.<sup>1012</sup> As with Gnoli 1989, Humbach 2004 cannot provide any evidence from Kušān contexts that such a distinction existed. Such an interpretation is only required if one assumes an expression of Zoroastrian orthodoxy on Kušān coins, something which the evidence simply does not support. There is no reason to assume that in the context of the numismatic pantheon, *Iamšo* was anything but a god, likely a god of kingship with the falcon as his attribute representing something like the royal *x<sup>v</sup>arənah* that is distinct from the concept of *Pharro* represented by a distinct god.<sup>1013</sup>

#### 6.1.3.7.8. Teiro

As mentioned in chapter 6.1.3.6.1., a coin with a legend misread by Göbl 1984 as MEIPO and explained as a hybrid Nana type is more likely to represent TEIPO,<sup>1014</sup> Avestan *Tištriya*. The coin shows a deity wearing a long robe with a bow in the left hand and drawing an arrow from a quiver with the left.<sup>1015</sup> The depiction resembles to an extent the unique Nana type Göbl: 260, although the goddess wears a short dress there. The gender of the deity on Göbl: 234 seems to be male. The chest is exposed on the god's right side and no indication of a female breast is seen. The engraving much

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<sup>1010</sup> *Op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>1011</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.4..

<sup>1012</sup> *Op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>1013</sup> For a similar assessment cf. Shenkar 2014, 166-67, where the evidence of theophoric Bactrian personal names relating to *Iamšo* is added to the arguments of Grenet 1984.

<sup>1014</sup> The reading TEIPO has already been proposed by Aurel Stein, cf. Göbl 1983, 89. The reading is now supported by Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 291.

<sup>1015</sup> Göbl: 234; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1879-0501-12](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1879-0501-12)

rather suggests a muscular torso and arms. The god's headdress has been interpreted as the crescent diadem of Nana, but the crescent's position towards the back of the head does not correspond to other Nana images. It looks like it could be a small *kalathos*, but further specimens of the coin would be needed for a certain interpretation. The same goes for the curving of the upper jawline that may indicate a moustache.

In spite of all this, the depiction was considered female even when the legend was still misread as MEIPO, and this identification remains common.<sup>1016</sup> The reason is likely that the coin is always interpreted in association with the Nana type and the general idea that the iconography derives from Artemis/Diana.<sup>1017</sup> The latter may be true, but the Nana and Teiro coins should not be equated because of the very different costume. Apart from the short dress, Nana has a ribboned diadem and a halo, both of which Teiro lacks. It should rather be considered that the iconographic idea was introduced to one deity and then transferred to the other. Since both coins are extremely rare, it is not possible to determine which came first.<sup>1018</sup> As Nana is associated with Artemis outside the Kušān Empire, it seems possible her iconography was adopted for a singular occasion. However, Tištriya is associated with the arrow in the Avesta,<sup>1019</sup> so depicting him as an archer is to be expected. As such, Tištriya was also identified with Apollo,<sup>1020</sup> so the depiction may not originate from Artemis at all. In any case, since the Nana archer type is an anomaly itself in Kušān coinage, there is no reason to assume its influence on the Teiro coin.

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<sup>1016</sup> e.g. Shenkar 2014, 149 and Grenet 2015, 219.

<sup>1017</sup> For this reason and without consideration for the difference in dress on both types, Göbl 1983, 89 rather aggressively rejects the reading Teiro and interpretation as Tīr and dismisses the legend as “paläographisch [wirr]”.

<sup>1018</sup> Göbl 1984, 105 lists only one specimen for the Teiro type Göbl: 234 and two for the Nana type Göbl: 260. All three coins are in the British Museum.

<sup>1019</sup> Shenkar 2014, 149.

<sup>1020</sup> Shenkar 2014, 149.



### 6.1.3.7.9. Oanindo



Fig. 26: Oanindo on a gold coin of Huviška

Oanindo makes a fleeting appearance on coins with the obverses of Huviška's late types (Fig. 26).<sup>1021</sup> The coinage is interesting but unproblematic. Vanant is the god of conquest and victory in the Avesta, and the name was used probably as a translation of Greek νικάτωρ as an epithet for Kaniška for which the sanctuary of Surkh Kotal was named.<sup>1022</sup> The iconography is borrowed entirely from Nikē/Victoria as a winged goddess holding an investiture ring in her left hand and a staff in her right. The sex change from male Vanant to female Oanindo is probably because of the adaptation of the iconography. Alternatively, Farridnejad 2018 suggests seeing in Oanindo the epithet *vanaiñtī* of the goddess Uparatāt,<sup>1023</sup> making the assumption of a sex change unnecessary.

Depictions of Nikē were commonplace in Bactria since the Seleukid period and frequent on coins.<sup>1024</sup> Rather than the palm branch common in Central and South Asian depictions of Nikē, Kušān Oanindo holds a long staff with an elaborate head that Göbl

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<sup>1021</sup> Göbl: 242-246 with the "Bactrian" type, Göbl 280A (new in Göbl 1993, 134 no. 261) with the "Gandhāran" type.

<sup>1022</sup> This is more probable than the explanation of the name Κανησκο Οανινδο referring to a cult to Oanindo, a proposition Shenkar 2014, 152 also considers "possible, albeit unlikely". On the question why οανινδο rather than οανινδογο is used, cf. chapter 5.7.2.

<sup>1023</sup> *Op. cit.*, 322.

<sup>1024</sup> Stančo 2012, 176-184.

1984 has called a "Fruchtkrone". On the type Göbl: 245, the staff is shorter and resembles more the cornucopia that can commonly take the place of the palm branch in depictions of Nikē/Victoria.

#### 6.1.3.7.10. Ašaeixšo

An issue with late obverses of Huviška shows a god labelled as ΑΒΑΕΙΧΒΟ standing with his right arm extended, the hand in a gesture of blessing with two fingers extended, and the left hand stemmed on the hip.<sup>1025</sup> He has a radiant nimbus and wears a diademed cap with ribbons. Ašaeixšo is not discussed in the surveys of Shenkar 2014 or Grenet 2015. The only interpretation put forth is that as Aša Vahišta.<sup>1026</sup> If so, it would move the shift of \*r̥ to š back in time considerably.<sup>1027</sup> The interpretation of -eixšo as stemming from *Vahišta* is inexplicable from Bactrian, as the underlying form \*vah- "good" would be expected to be preserved. A superlative suffix \*-βο, presumably developed from loss of OIr. /\*t/ does not agree with other Middle Iranian parallels, although such a suffix is not attested in Bactrian.<sup>1028</sup> Likewise, it has never been remarked in this discussion that Bactrian ει reflects /ī/, which does not agree with what would be expected from a development of Aša Vahišta. A phonetic reconstruction of the name would be something akin to \*ašaīxš, resulting in an otherwise unattested diphthong /\*aī/.<sup>1029</sup> The only explanation provided thus far of such an odd development is that it is a "phonetic disfiguration".<sup>1030</sup> This seems like too simple an explanation in the face of the otherwise relatively easily explicable Bactrian divine names, but the only

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<sup>1025</sup> Göbl: 342.

<sup>1026</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 75-76; followed by Humbach/Faiss 2010, 65-66, Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 288, Farridnejad 2018, 314 and (more carefully) Bivar 2009.

<sup>1027</sup> Hoffmann/Forssman 1996, 92.

<sup>1028</sup> The only Bactrian superlative is βαγανοδαμο to βαγο, BD2, 200a. On superlatives in other Middle Iranian languages cf. GWMI, 203-05 and GMS, 193-94.

<sup>1029</sup> On /\*aī/ diphthongs cf. Gholami 2014, 61-62.

<sup>1030</sup> Humbach/Faiss 2010, 65.

other option would be to assume a borrowing from an otherwise unknown language or dialect.

It is noteworthy that the iconography is exactly the same as the Miuro type that also appears on the problematic OYOBOD coin (Göbl: 321) discussed above.<sup>1031</sup> Like OYOBOD, APAEIXPO is not explicable as a Bactrian name and both coins are known only from one specimen. This should warn against going too far in interpreting the coin, its meaning, and its significance.

#### 6.1.3.7.11. Ērakilo

As discussed in chapter 6.1.3.5.6., the common western Iranian identification of Vərəθraγna and Hēraklēs cannot be observed in the Kušān Empire. Nevertheless, Hēraklēs was popular in Central Asia long after the end of the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms.<sup>1032</sup> Elements of the iconography of Hēraklēs, such as the lion skin and the club, may have already been influential in the iconography of the god of Vima Kadphises.<sup>1033</sup>

Ērakilo is an odd case of a Greek god not present on the Greek issue of Kaniška I, or in the coinage of Kaniška at all, but appearing later under Huviška.<sup>1034</sup> He is found on a gold type with a late obverse and the familiar iconography of the demigod standing nude with a club in his right hand and a lion skin draped over his left.<sup>1035</sup> The

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<sup>1031</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 75 also points to the unfinished investiture relief from Surkh Kotal (ibid, fig. 123), although mentioning that the gesture with two outstretched figures is also shared with Ēlios/Miuro. Ašaēixšo is unarmed, as also pointed out by Rosenfield, while the figure on the relief seems to have a sword hanging from the hips, so that an interpretation as Miuro seems more likely (also *contra* Farridnejad 2018, 314).

<sup>1032</sup> Stančo 2012, 137.

<sup>1033</sup> Göbl 1960b, 82; Rosenfield 1967, 93.

<sup>1034</sup> Another example is Deineiso, cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.14.

<sup>1035</sup> Göbl: 269. Only one specimen is listed by Göbl 1984, 105.

iconography is common in Central Asia and may be derived from a local tradition,<sup>1036</sup> especially as Göbl 1960b has no suggestion for a Roman model.<sup>1037</sup>

On copper coins however, Ērakilo types are more common. Göbl 1984 counts ten types all of which have the weight of Huviška's late reign. The type from the gold coin is continued in some issues,<sup>1038</sup> but soon replaced by a similar depiction on which the demigod holds the club up rather than down.<sup>1039</sup> A third type shows him with the free hand stemmed on the hip.<sup>1040</sup> A fourth has the club in his left hand and his right arm raised,<sup>1041</sup> A fifth type shows him with a club in his right and a bow in his left hand.<sup>1042</sup> This last type is interpreted by Jongeward/Cribb 2015 as Rāma.<sup>1043</sup>

The variety of types speaks for a large copper issue, although Göbl 1984 counts only a combined total of 30 specimens.<sup>1044</sup> The motivation for the issue, apparently late in Huviška's reign is, difficult to grasp. The popularity of Hēraklēs is undeniable, but as with the Buddha coins of Kaniška I, the relative rarity and fleeting nature of the coinage is puzzling and may indicate a singular event in commemoration of which the coins were issued.

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<sup>1036</sup> cf. Stančo 2012, 149 for some examples.

<sup>1037</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>1038</sup> Göbl: 886, 886A.

<sup>1039</sup> Göbl: 887-888 (?).

<sup>1040</sup> Göbl: 889-891A. Göbl: 890 has yet another variant with the free arm extended but apparently without the lion skin.

<sup>1041</sup> Göbl: 892.

<sup>1042</sup> Göbl: 893-895.

<sup>1043</sup> *Op. cit.*, 292.

<sup>1044</sup> *Op. cit.*, 129. Göbl 1993, 143 adds only two further coins (366 and 367).

#### 6.1.3.7.14. Deineiso

A single coin showing Deineiso (Dionysos) emerged on the market recently.<sup>1045</sup> It is so far unpublished,<sup>1046</sup> but a description without picture is found in Jongeward/Cribb 2015.<sup>1047</sup> The obverse is of the late Huviška type. The reverse shows the god naked with a cloth around the waist, carrying grape clusters over the shoulders and holding a pot in the right hand according to the description of Jongeward/Cribb 2015. The coin has some significant wear so that not all details can be determined. This is especially the case for the headdress, which would be expected to show the typical grapes.

Dionysiac depictions were popular in Bactria, Gandhāra and Central Asia in the Hellenistic and Kušān periods.<sup>1048</sup> Stančo 2012 mentions the statuette of the satyr Marsyas from Takht-i Sangin in this connection,<sup>1049</sup> which the inscription identifies with Oxos. This may point to a connection of Dionysos and Oxos cults in Bactria. While the Deineiso coin has a different obverse from the Oaxšo coin (Göbl: 241), it is possible that both coins specifically addressed local cults to emphasise the ties of the emperor to the homeland. This would explain their presence in an assembly of otherwise rather martial and regal deities.

#### 6.1.3.7.13. Local Indian issues

There are two copper types of Huviška that seem to be more of a local nature. One has been interpreted as showing eight-armed Viṣṇu with the visible attributes of a lotus and

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<sup>1045</sup>

[https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/coinindia/36/product/india\\_kushan\\_huvishka\\_gold\\_dinar\\_dionysus\\_reverse\\_unpublished\\_and\\_important\\_rrrr\\_and\\_choice/1425854/Default.aspx](https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/coinindia/36/product/india_kushan_huvishka_gold_dinar_dionysus_reverse_unpublished_and_important_rrrr_and_choice/1425854/Default.aspx) Accessed 20.06.2021, 13:00. I thank Joe Cribb for bringing this website to my attention.

<sup>1046</sup> The coin description on the website remarks it will be published in the forthcoming British Museum catalogue.

<sup>1047</sup> *Op. cit.*, 291.

<sup>1048</sup> Stančo 2012, 95-109.; cf. also Carter 1970 for a study on Dionysiac imagery in Kušān art.

<sup>1049</sup> *Op. cit.*, 95.

a conch shell.<sup>1050</sup> A second type found in Sonkh has been interpreted as reading “Kaniška, son of Huviška” but this reading has been disputed.<sup>1051</sup> There is a human figure on the obverse that may be the emperor and the reverse seems only to consist of the legend and an ornament. The rarity of all these coins makes it doubtful if they should be discussed in context with the imperial Kušān coinage.<sup>1052</sup>

#### 6.1.4. The Pantheon of Kaniška I and Huviška in summary

Not counting the Greek reverses as separate individuals, the coinage of Kaniška I includes 13 deities. All are found on the gold coins of the emperor. On the copper issues, the pantheon is reduced to 8: Aθšo, Ardoxšo, Boddo, Mao, Miiro/Ēlios, Nana/Nanaia/Nanašao, Oado and Oēšo. Lrooaspo, Manaobago, Mozdooano, Orlagno and Pharro are found on gold only. The Greek variants of Aθšo (Ēphaistos), Mao (Salēnē) and Oado (Anemos) are also known from the gold coinage only.

If one accepts the interpretation of Göbl 1983 of the deities found on the Greek issue as *Stammrückseiten*,<sup>1053</sup> this Greek Pentad would provide a sort of "inner circle" of deities favoured by Kaniška I: Aθšo, Mao, Miiro, Nana and Oado. These deities represent the celestial bodies of the moon (Mao), the sun (Miiro) and Venus (Nana) and the elemental forces fire (Aθšo) and wind (Oado).

These deities can be considered as being grouped together in the following ways:<sup>1054</sup>

The Greek Pentad (**Group 0**) of Anemos (Oado), Helios (Miiro), Hephaistos (Aθšo), Nanaia (Nana) and Salene (Mao); The direct translation of these into a Bactrian Pentad

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<sup>1050</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 292.

<sup>1051</sup> Göbl: 984; cf. Falk 2015a, 123.

<sup>1052</sup> Another coinage of uncertain imperial status is that issued by a *καραλαργγο* discussed in chapter 7.6.2.4.

<sup>1053</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>1054</sup> These groups should not be understood to mean there was a unity or grouping in the coin issues but rather that they are conceptual groups.

(**Group 1a**) and a reduced Bactrian Tetrad in which Aθšo and Oado are replaced by Oēšo (**Group 1b**).

As for the remaining six deities, it will be proposed here to place them in three further groups: **Group 2** consisting of Lrooaspo, Manaobago, Mozdooano and Orlagno, **Group 3** consisting of Ardoxšo and Pharro and **Group 4** consisting of Boddo. These groups seem to agree with typological aspects of the coinage, as Göbl 1984 puts the gods of Group 2 into one and the same “layer” (Schicht), together with one issue each of Miiro, Mao, Nanašao and Oēšo, i.e., Group 1b.<sup>1055</sup> The gods of Group 2 also share the distinction of not appearing in the copper coinage of Kaniška I.

The Boddo coins, despite Cribb 1999/2000 showing that they were issued together with coins of Mao, Miiro, Oēšo and Pharro,<sup>1056</sup> constitute a separate Group 4 because of their singular nature.

Due to the long reign of Huviška and the abundance of coin types and deities represented on them, the pantheon of Huviška is a much more complex phenomenon than that of Kaniška I. The earliest issues can be determined thanks to the use of the *tamgha* of Kaniška I (**Group 5a**). These coins show Ardoxšo, Maasēno, Mao, Miiro, Nana/Nanašao, Oēšo, Sarapo, and Skando Komaro-Bizago. Uncertain deities include Oxšo (Oaxšo?) and Rišti (Rišto), the obverse of which is late so the *tamgha* may be a misengraving. The same may be true for the Oxšo type Göbl: 334, because the *tamgha* is that of Kaniška I but the obverse is one not otherwise linked to this *tamgha*. Leaving aside the latter two, this leaves Maasēno, Sarapo and Skando Komaro-Bizago who are not known from coins of Kaniška I but have his *tamgha* on Huviška reverses.

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<sup>1055</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 7-8.

<sup>1056</sup> *Op. cit.*, 158.

The same early obverse types but with the *tamgha* of Huviška (**Group 5b**) show Ardoxšo, Maasēno, Manaobago, Mao, Miiro, Nana/Nanašao, Pharro, Oēšo, Sarapo, Skando Komaro-Bizago and Skando Komaro-Maasēno-Bizago on the reverses. Of these, Manaobago and Pharro are not found in the Kaniška *tamgha* group, together with the Maasēno triad and the association coins of Mao-Miiro, Nana-Oēšo and Ommo(?)-Oēšo. The association coins are a phenomenon linked entirely to these early obverses. Four further early obverse types exist that are not connected to the Kaniška *tamgha* (**Group 6**). These add Rišto and Ōromozdo to the list while the Maasēno triad and Oēšo are not found among them.

The subsequent issues with the martial "late" obverses of Huviška are large and diverse. In the following, it will be proposed to divide the deities into two further groups: Those appearing frequently connected with the individual obverse types (**Group 7**) and those appearing only once or twice (**Group 8**).

The first group consists of Ardoxšo, Aθšo, Mao, Miiro, Nana, Pharro, Oēšo and Šaoroero. Of these, Aθšo and Šaoroero are new additions in Huviška's pantheon. Šaoroero is entirely new in the Kušān pantheon and Aθšo had not been seen since the early issues of Kaniška I with a different iconography. Oēšo is actually the rarest of these gods, appearing only on three issues. Nana also makes a unique appearance as Šaonana.

The second group includes Ašaeixšo, Deineiso, Ērakilo, Iamšo, Lrooaspo, Oanindo, Rišto, Sarapo, Teiro and Ōromozdo. Of these, Ašaeixšo (if genuine), Ērakilo, Iamšo, Oanindo and Teiro are completely new to the Kušān pantheon. Only Lrooaspo appeared on the coinage of Kaniška I but with a different iconography. Sarapo and Ōromozdo both have a different iconography than in the earlier issues. Only Rišto is, to an extent, unchanged.



The copper coinage may be divided into two main groups, deities found frequently on coinage throughout the reign of Huviška (**Group 9**) and such appearing only sporadically (**Group 10**). Group 9 includes Ardoxšo, Mao, Miuro and Oěšo. Group 10 includes Aθšo, Ēraklio, Nana, Pharro and Oado.

<b>Group 0</b>	<b>Group 1a</b>	<b>Group 1b</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	
Nanaia (Nana)	Nana	Nana/ Nanašao	Lrooaspo	Ardoxšo	Boddo	
Helios (Miiro)	Miiro	Miiro	Manaobago	Pharro		
Salene (Mao)	Mao	Mao	Mozdooano			
Hephaistos (Aθšo)	Aθšo	Oēšo	Orlagno			
Anemos (Oado)	Oado					
<b>Group 5a</b>	<b>Group 5b</b>	<b>Group 6</b>	<b>Group 7</b>	<b>Group 8</b>	<b>Group 9</b>	<b>Group 10</b>
Ardoxšo	Ardoxšo	Ardoxšo	Ardoxšo	Ašaeixšo Deineiso	Ardoxšo	Aθšo
Maaseno	Maaseno	Mao	Aθšo	Ērakilo	Mao	Ērakilo
Mao	Manaobago	Miiro	Mao	Iamšo	Miiro	Nana
Miiro	Mao	Nana	Miiro	Lrooaspo	Oēšo	Pharro
Nana/ Nanašao	Miiro	Pharro	Nana	Oanindo		Oado
Oēšo	Mao-Miiro	Rišto	Pharro	Rišto		
Sarapo	Nana/ Nanašao	Sarapo	Oēšo	Sarapo		
Skando	Pharro	Ōromozdo	Šaoroero	Teiro		
Komaro- Bizago						
Oxšo?	Oēšo			Ōromozdo		
Rišti?	Nana-Oēšo Ommo? - Oēšo Sarapo Skando Komaro- Bizago Skando Komaro- Maaseno- Bizago					

Table 1: Grouping of deities on Kušān coins

#### 6.1.4.1. Groups 0, 1a and 1b

Of the deities in these groups, Aθšo is the only one to hold an investiture ring on the coinage of Kaniška I, while also adorned with the flaming shoulders that are otherwise an attribute of the emperors. This sets Aθšo apart as an investiture deity identified by iconography. Mao and Miiro, moon and sun, are seen flanking the emperor on the so-called Kušān Reliquary from Peshawar, although the emperor's identification with Kaniška I is doubtful.<sup>1057</sup> Nevertheless, the depiction is interesting. Both deities are identified by their lunar and solar haloes respectively. Mao holds an investiture ring and Miiro seems to be acclaiming the emperor with his outstretched right arm.<sup>1058</sup> This role of an investiture deity is further shared by Nana, as is known from Rab and NSP. Her connection to kingship is so strong that she at times appears fused with the very concept of kingship as Nanašao or Šaonana. The Aθšo-Mao-Miiro-Nana tetrad recalls the popularity of the gods Ātar, Māh, Mithra and Ahura Mazdā in the Sāsānian Empire as evidenced by their prevalence in personal names,<sup>1059</sup> with Nana taking the place of Ahura Mazdā. It is tempting to find an even earlier manifestation of this tetrad in the tomb relief of the Achaemenid at Naqš-e Rostam, which may be interpreted as the Achaemenid emperor in contact with fire, sun, moon and Ahura Mazdā.<sup>1060</sup> The strongest counter-point may be that while Nana takes Ahura Mazdā's place as the chief bestower of royalty, she does not replace him entirely, as Ahura Mazdā appears in the Rabatak Inscription and on the coinage of Huviška.

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<sup>1057</sup> Jongeward 2012, 83.

<sup>1058</sup> Magnified photographs of the facsimile in the British Museum can be found in Jongeward 2012, 82-83 (figs 3.32a-b4).

<sup>1059</sup> Shenkar 2014, 91 with Gignoux 2005, 37-38.

<sup>1060</sup> Supposing the disk with the crescent shape in the upper right corner of the main register of the relief is a combined sun-moon shape as in Mesopotamian art, which has been rejected by Schmidt, who nevertheless suggested that "possibly it relates to Mithra" without giving any reasons to believe so; cf. E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III. The royal tombs and other monuments*. Chicago 1970, p. 85.

The presence of Anemos/Oado is unprecedented in this construct. However, both Greek Anemos and Bactrian Oado are known only from a single coin specimen, unlike the other deities from the Greek Pentad. As argued in chapter 6.1.3.4.5., it appears as though Oado was subsequently displaced in his importance by Oēšo,<sup>1061</sup> who had a more general and more powerful atmospheric connotation. Likewise, Aθšo loses his importance and, as Göbl 1983 argues, his place is also taken by Oēšo. This may have occurred later than the disappearance of Anemos/Oado, as gold coins of Aθšo are known. The Greek Pentad, if indeed a pentad, thus turns into a Bactrian Mao-Miironana-Oēšo tetrad in which the individual deities represent celestial forces: Moon (Mao), sun (Miiron), Venus (Nana), atmosphere (Oēšo). The deities now share no iconographical elements with the emperors, but as the evidence discussed above shows, were associates of the emperor in a greater cosmic context.

#### **6.1.4.2. Group 2**

The four deities in this group have no equivalence or iconographic link to any Graeco-Roman deities. Two have certain Avestan counterparts (Lrooaspo and Orlagno), Manaobago may, if he does not represent the Mēn of Asia Minor, and Mozdooano remains unexplained. All four gods are male and have strong iconographic links to Kušān and Bactrian aristocracy. Lrooaspo, Mozdooano and Orlagno take the guise of Kušān princes while the Graeco-Bactrian helmet and throne of Manaobago place him in context with Bactrian aristocracy. Their attributes clarify that they take on distinct roles, although all are linked to power and kingship. Lrooaspo is the patron of horses, which likely refers to the abundance of horses as a base for military power, could possibly allude to the land of Bactria, and may include both. Orlagno takes the pose and

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<sup>1061</sup> Albeit not entirely replaced, as the copper coins of Oado indicate.

dress of a Kušān prince, likely representing Kušān kingship as a general concept in a guise of heroism and power. Manaobago may represent the institution of kingship in Bactria (the Bactrian helmet) and Gandhāra (the four arms), although the meaning of his attributes remains elusive. However, his position on the throne may simply be translated to the present-day meaning of "the throne" as an institution reaching Greek, Iranian and Indian subjects.

Only the meaning of Mozdoano remains unclear, although if, as suggested in chapter 6.1.3.5.5., the connection to the phrase *οανιντα μοζδο* is permitted, he may refer to the spoils of war, that is the positive, beneficial outcome of successful warfare and conquest for the conquering sovereign. If this is the case however, the meaning of the trident and the two-headed horse must be regarded as obscure.

In summary, the deities of Group 2 seem to represent aspects of the foundations, practice, and institutions of a specifically Kušān kingship that might be interpreted as the nomad aristocracy (Lroaspo), the court as an institution (Manaobago), the charisma of the emperor (Orlagno) and perhaps military conquest (Mozdoano). If groups 0 and 1 represent a more cosmic sphere of kingship and the emperor as part of the realms of the gods, Group 2 represents aspects of kingship directly observable to the recipients of the coins and their iconography. This may be the reason why no effort was made to represent these divine personifications on copper coinage that was more accessible to the general populace, because the emperor was not concerned with their judgement of his success.

### 6.1.4.3. Group 3

Ardoxšo and Pharro are not so closely connected in R. Göbl's system and appear alongside coinage of the tetrad and that of Boddo.<sup>1062</sup> However, some evidence allows the two deities to be connected. There is only one Ardoxšo copper type for Kaniška I listed in Göbl 1984 (Göbl: 780) and its iconography does not agree with that of the gold coins. Göbl 1984 mentions only one specimen, a striking anomaly for the copper coinage.<sup>1063</sup> Göbl 1993 lists a newly found specimen of the type Göbl: 780 with a frontally enthroned figure similar to the Ardoxšo type, but with the legend identifying the god as Pharro.<sup>1064</sup> Although both coin types appear to be represented by unique specimens, they suggest a link between the two deities that is further strengthened by the fact that they also form the basis for tutelary couples in Gandhāran sculpture.<sup>1065</sup> The XAPOBAAΓO seal, commonly dated to the reign of Huviška,<sup>1066</sup> shows three anthropomorphic figures. An adult male and an adult female are shown facing each other, with a small figure to the left, behind the male figure, with both arms in the air. The figures are not identified by legends, but the female one is most definitely Ardoxšo, as she holds a cornucopia. The male figure is less clear. Göbl 1967/2 believes the male figure's headdress has wings and he is holding a flaming bowl together with Ardoxšo; neither attribute is identified with certainty though. The male figure also holds a long staff, which Göbl believes to be a sceptre, but which might as well be a lance. Göbl wishes to identify the male figure as Pharro based on the attributes, Callieri 1997 does not reaffirm this identification,<sup>1067</sup> but Quagliotti 2003 places this seal in the tradition

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<sup>1062</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 8-9.

<sup>1063</sup> Göbl 1984, 121. No coin of this type is listed in Jongeward/Cribb 2015 (cf. p. 80).

<sup>1064</sup> *Op. cit.*, 124 (no. 163) w. pl. 43.

<sup>1065</sup> Quagliotti 2003.

<sup>1066</sup> Göbl 1967/II, 223; repeated in Callieri 1997, 193 (Cat U 7.11) and Quagliotti 2003, 254.

<sup>1067</sup> A point of concern may be the crescent above the figures, which has not been explained. If the headdress of the male figure does not display wings but a crescent, this may pertain to Mao, but the iconography would be an unusual one, not to mention that Mao is commonly associated with Miuro, not

of Gandhāran depictions of Pharro-Pāñcika-Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa and Ardoxšo-Śrī-Hārītī-Tyche in Kušān art. The link between Ardoxšo and Pharro is thus a strong one further emphasised by later iconographic links. Both are at some point depicted with money as an attribute, and both are the only ones depicted with a circular shape at their feet, which has been interpreted as a rug for Ardoxšo and given various interpretations for Pharro. The most important link will however be their common association with aspects of fortune, abundance and material wealth. This is less pronounced on the coinage of Kaniška I but becomes quite evident with subsequent iconographic depictions.

#### **6.1.4.4. Group 4**

The phenomenon of the Boddo coinage and the reasons for its isolation as a group have been discussed above.

#### **6.1.4.5. Groups 5a and 5b**

The obverses of both these groups are of the early Huviška types. The reason they are separated is because some of these coins show the *tamgha* of Kaniška I and others that of Huviška. Göbl 1984 has suggested that the use of the Kaniška *tamgha* indicates that a new Kaniška issue was being prepared (i.e., the dies had already been cut) at the time of his death. This is a possibility if Kaniška's death came sudden and unexpected.<sup>1068</sup> It is less likely that Huviška had not yet devised his own *tamgha* when he took the throne, especially because he is already shown with his own distinct crown. Another possibility

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Ardoxšo. The crescent may also represent Nana, although this would form a most unusual triad (or tetrad?).

<sup>1068</sup> The narrative of Kaniška's death is legendary, but nevertheless may echo a historical, violent demise, cf. Falk 2015a, 117-18 (§ 102).

is that Group 5a represents a “transitory” issue marking the passing of the throne from Kaniška I to Huviška.

If the reverse dies were devised under Kaniška, that means he meant to introduce Maasēno, Skando-Komaro, Bizago and Sarapo as new deities. For the Maasēno triad, this is an attractive possibility given that Maasēno and Bizago were added in the Rabatak Inscription after it had been written, but likely still in the reign of Kaniška I.<sup>1069</sup> Sarapo as a new deity is more problematic, as he introduces an entirely new iconography, seated on the throne. It is interesting that all these new deities are depicted frontally either with the Kaniška *tamgha* (Maasēno, Sarapo) or later (Skando-Komaro, Bizago). It is tempting to see them as new, “foreign” additions from a greater cultural background, but if Sarapo already had long had a cult in Bactria, this seems unlikely. Perhaps the new additions are to be viewed as relating to unknown events late in the reign of Kaniška I. The “old” deities from Group 5a correspond entirely to Group 1b, i.e., was the standard pantheon of Kaniška's reign.

Group 5b combines the deities of Group 5a with those of Group 3, but interestingly adds Manaobago with attributes representing royal insignia. An item of special interest is the torque, which is also held by Mao and Miuro, already in Group 5a. This strengthens the idea of a transitory issue because the torque was an insignia of Kaniška I on his coins that could now be imagined as passed on to Huviška (who however does not wear it). Ardoxšo, Nana/Nanašao, Pharro and Oēšo carry over their old iconography to the reign of Huviška, although a rare type of Pharro with an odd obverse shows the god holding an investiture ring. Evidently the ascent of a new emperor was not considered a reason to change the iconography on the gold coins. However, the

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<sup>1069</sup> cf. chapters 6.1.3.7.2. and 6.3.1.5.



iconography was changed significantly on the copper issues. Oēšo holds an investiture ring and Nana is seen with the emperor himself on the early coppers of Huviška.

The most significant innovation in Group 5b is the introduction of association coins that show Mao and Miiro together as well as Nana and Oēšo, i.e., once again the deities of Group 1b, strengthening their identity as the chief deities of Kušān kingship. The coins of Ommo(?) and Oēšo are an oddity. Oēšo being associated with more than one other figure elevates his status in this tetrad, something that is absolutely not reflected by the subsequent coinage of Huviška. If the figure Ommo(?) is indeed Vima Kadphises, Huviška would not only propagate the gods as the patrons of his kingship, but also his ancestors. It may be asked why Oēšo and Vima Kadphises are singled out, but since the coin is known only from two specimens, the existence of other coins combining all four gods with all four of his predecessors is not impossible. However, it should not be completely ignored that, if Omma is a distinct deity of high status in the Rabatak Inscription, she may be honoured with these coins for reasons that are so far elusive.

#### **6.1.4.6. Group 6**

This group, which is also from the early period of Huviška's reign but has no association with the tamgha of Kaniška I, retains Ardoxšo, Mao, Miiro, Nana, Pharro and Sarapo. Interestingly, Oēšo is lost. There is also no reference to the Maasēno triad. Ardoxšo retains her standard iconography for the most part but is also seen holding a ribboned investiture ring. Mao is again seen holding a torque but also with an investiture ring in one type. Miiro has more variation than Mao in this group and he no longer holds the torque, instead making a gesture of blessing, stemming his hand on the hip, or holding an investiture ring. Nana does not change at all. Pharro is seen with an investiture ring

on some coins, while taking generic poses on others. Sarapo is no longer seen on his throne but standing, making a gesture of blessing with his hand.

Two new deities are introduced. These are Rišto and Ōromozdo. Rišto is seen in her martial pose while Ōromozdo is simply stretching out his arm. Both new deities are not unproblematic, as Rišto appears on Göbl: 332 with what could be the Kaniška tamgha, which may be a misengraving, and the image of Ōromozdo is already known from Göbl: 335 with the Kaniška *tamgha* and the legend OXPŌ. Ōromozdo is further misspelled on both known types from this group as WPOM and (I)OZDO.

#### **6.1.4.7. Group 7**

The introduction of the new, martial obverse types marks a return of sorts to the pantheon already established in Group 5b, that is essentially the combination of Groups 1b and 3: Ardoxšo, Mao, Miiro, Nana, Pharro and Oēšo are once again the chief deities. They all keep their standard iconography except for Pharro, who is rather versatile with his attributes, and Oēšo, who is now seen in the tricephalic type. Oēšo is rather rare in this group, with only three types. With the other deities, there are rare cases of modification: Nana is once seen as an archer, Mao and Miiro are occasionally seen with an investiture ring and Ardoxšo holds a twig like Pax Augusti in one issue.

The new gods introduced in this group are Aθšo and Šaoreoro. Aθšo has a significantly modified iconography from the early Kaniška I issue, and his reintroduction probably does not represent a continuation of the earlier tradition. Šaoreoro is wholly novel but becomes very common in this group. He is probably the most significant introduction to Huviška's coinage, and the fact that he is a martial deity connected to martial coin obverses suggests very strongly that he is the expression of a military crisis. The Kušān must have been in defence, as Šaoreoro is seen in a defensive pose with shield and

armour, rather than as an expression of glorious conquest as the deities of Group 2 seem to suggest in their confluence.

#### **6.1.4.8. Group 8**

This group marks the phase of the greatest eclecticism in the Numismatic Pantheon. Rišto, Sarapo and Ōromozdo have all been seen before in Huviška's coinage. Rišto takes her usual pose, although it may be significant that she is now seen with a Bactrian helmet, which may indicate she is seen as defending the homeland. Sarapo and Ōromozdo are now seen with investiture rings and in similar iconography.

Iamšo, Oanindo and Teiro are all completely new while Lrooaspo seems to take a new interpretation in his iconography. If Sarapo is disregarded, all these deities, together with the problematic Ašaeixšo, represent a distinctly Zoroastrian group of deities associated with power, defence, victory, and regality. Rišto as an apparently Bactrian defender is joined by Oaxšo, a markedly Bactrian god, who is probably a new introduction, and may represent the homeland that Huviška seems to be defending. A similar idea may be expressed by the appearance of Deineiso, a god popular in Bactria and Gandhāra. Ērakilo is an oddity, especially given his sudden and fleeting appearance in the copper coinage, but he is explicable as popular in Central Asia as a powerful hero who may come to the aid of the population. He may also be a reference to an element in the Bactrian population still seeing itself in the Hellenistic tradition in order to rally their support. The combination of a rare gold issue with an also rare copper issue resembles the Boddo types of Kaniška I. The appearance of Oanindo is also interesting, as her coins are significantly more common than those of the others, with a total of four types. This issue may indicate that a victory was achieved at some point and celebrated. The fact that Oanindo holds an investiture ring is significant in this respect.

#### **6.1.4.9. Groups 9 and 10**

The usual group Ardoxšo, Mao, Miio, Nana Pharro and Oēšo is found on the copper coinage, although it is interesting that Nana seems to appear in greater number only at the beginning of Huviška's reign. Pharro on the other hand is only found on coins of the medium weight standard from late in Huviška's reign when the crisis was averted. The other four deities are found throughout his reign.

The coins of Aθšo and Oado are heavy and seem to belong to the beginning of Huviška's reign. The Ērakilo coins are an anomaly found in the later phase on coins that seem to attempt to return to the early heavy standard, the weight ranges from 8.6 to 12.2 g. As mentioned above, this may be a case in which the coins were meant to address parts of the population directly.

### **6.2. The divinity of the Kušān emperor**

#### **6.2.1. Iconographic links between the Kušān emperor and the Numismatic Pantheon**

An important factor in the discussion of whether the living Kušān emperor was deified<sup>1070</sup> is the iconography of his depictions. This concerns first and foremost the numismatic depictions of the emperor. The coins provide direct associations between the depictions of the emperors and those of deities. These are not the only associations to have existed, as Rab proves that statues of gods and emperors were set up in the same sanctuary, but they are the best known, most complete and most abundant material available. Statues of emperors and deities are preserved only in very small number and

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<sup>1070</sup> cf. the discussion in chapter 5.4.2.

are only fragmentary. Even the well-preserved statues of Vima Takto and Kaniška I from Māṭ are missing their heads.

#### **6.2.1.1. Vima Kadphises**

Göbl 1984 counts a total of 14 obverse types of Vima Kadphises.<sup>1071</sup> These are of a great iconographic variety, although it should be considered that the issues were probably only very limited. Vima is seen with two types of crowns: a low cap with diadem ribbons (II, IV, VII, VIII, X) and a tall conic hat with a long extension at the front and also with diadem ribbons (I, III, V, VI, IX, XI, XII, XIII).<sup>1072</sup> His most common attribute is a club, which is present in some shape in almost all depictions. It is typically held in his hand but sometimes (IV and XII) also placed next to him when the emperor is associated with different attributes. Only three types (VII, VIII, XIV) are missing the club altogether. Sometimes (I, II, IX, XI, XIII), the emperor has flaming shoulders. He usually wears a tunic covered by a mantle. The mantle is sometimes missing, and a torque is placed around his neck (IX, X, XII). On a unique depiction, showing the emperor standing, he wears a nomad kaftan and boots (IV). On another depiction, he wears a round-collared tunic without a mantle or a torque (VII). A similar depiction shows only the head and perhaps part of the neck, but no indication of costume (VIII).

The most common way of depicting the emperor is as a bust (Fig. 27). The bust is usually shown rising from rocks, although in one case it is positioned on what looks more like a horizontal platform. In all these depictions, he holds a club in his right hand. On three of these types, he is shown facing right (I, II, XIII), on three others facing left

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<sup>1071</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl. 157.

<sup>1072</sup> XIV, cannot be identified with certainty but seems to follow a completely different iconography.



Figs. 27, 28: Gold coins of Vima Kadphises

(VI, IX, X). On the latter coins, his left hand is also seen, perhaps holding the hilt of a sword.<sup>1073</sup> The torque is found exclusively on busts facing left (IX, X).

Some obverse types break out of the pattern. On one (III), the emperor is seen seated on an elephant (not to scale) facing left with the club shouldered. The depiction is known from only one type (Göbl: 3) for which Göbl 1984 lists only a single specimen.<sup>1074</sup> The wear of the coin makes it impossible to determine if Vima is holding an object in his right hand, although something is seen behind the emperor.<sup>1075</sup> He is seated cross-legged on a throne placed on the elephant's back. No details of his dress are preserved, but it will likely correspond to one of the enthroned types (XI or XII).

A different type (IV) shows the emperor standing facing left with the small crown, a nomad kaftan and boots. His club is placed behind him, while before him there is a *pattiṣa* with an axe blade.<sup>1076</sup> Vima is holding neither of these objects. Instead, his right hand is feeding an altar with incense while he seems to be grabbing his kaftan with the

<sup>1073</sup> Most visible on IX.

<sup>1074</sup> *Op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>1075</sup> Göbl 1984, 35 does not mention anything.

<sup>1076</sup> Falk 2019, 20.

left hand. This obverse is found on only one gold type,<sup>1077</sup> but it is the only obverse found on copper coins.

Vima Kadphises is further seen on a chariot pulled by two horses facing right (V) (Fig. 28). He wears the conic crown and holds the club in his right hand. He seems to be dressed in a mantle.<sup>1078</sup> A small figure is seen between Vima and the heads of the horses. This figure is standing frontally and holding a sceptre or staff in his right hand. An umbrella is placed behind the emperor. Göbl 1984 interprets the depiction as Vima's bust in the chariot and the small figure as the chariot driver with a raised whip.<sup>1079</sup> Rosenfield considers the depiction not to scale as a hieratic emphasis.<sup>1080</sup> The interpretation of the small figure as charioteer is also found in Rosenfield 1967.<sup>1081</sup> Göbl 1960b and Rosenfield 1967 agree that the type is linked to the elephant rider coin as an expression of military triumph.<sup>1082</sup> The obverse is also known from only one type (Göbl: 5) but there are several specimens known.<sup>1083</sup>

Two coins show the emperor in what seems to be a box or a window.<sup>1084</sup> On one, he is seen as a full bust facing left with a round collar and holding a twig in place of his usual club (VII) (Fig. 29). On the other, only his head is shown facing right (Fig. 30). The former depiction is found on large double dinar coins (Göbl: 8) while the latter is probably to be understood as a reduction for the much smaller quarter dinar (Göbl: 9). The quarter dinars are relatively abundant.<sup>1085</sup>

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<sup>1077</sup> Göbl: 4. Only one specimen listed in Göbl 1984, 100. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 54 do not mention the gold obverse. The coin was found in Benares according to Rosenfield 1967, 22-23.

<sup>1078</sup> Taking the terminology from Roman numismatics, Göbl 1984, 35 speaks of a *paludamentum* (a military mantle); it is definitely not a kaftan in Kušān style.

<sup>1079</sup> *Op. cit.*, 35. This seems clear on some types in which the figure seems to be more animated, e.g. the photograph in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 56.

<sup>1080</sup> *Op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>1081</sup> *Op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>1082</sup> Göbl 1960b, 81-82; Rosenfield 1967, 23.

<sup>1083</sup> Three listed in Göbl 1984, 100.

<sup>1084</sup> Göbl 1984, 35 interprets it as the window of a litter.

<sup>1085</sup> Göbl 1984, 100-01 lists 3 specimens for type 8 and 11 (or 15) for type 9.



Figs. 29, 30, 31: Gold coins of Vima Kadphises

Finally, two types show the emperor seated. The first (XI) shows him crosslegged on a large cushion on the top of a rocky or mountainous surface (Fig. 31). He is facing right with the club in his right hand, his left hand apparently covered. He has flaming shoulders. On the second type (XII), he is seated on a throne with his feet on a stool. His left hand again seems to be covered and he is holding the same twig as on type VII in his right. The club is resting next to the throne.

There is no discernable pattern considering the connection of the obverse types with the reverse of the god with and without the bull. The only clear obverse/reverse connection is Göbl: 9 with obverse VIII and a reverse showing a combination of attributes. In both cases, the depictions are reductions owing to the small size of the quarter dinar coins. The attributes of emperor and god are also different. Vima is never naked, and the god never has a club or a twig. The appearance of the *paṭṭiśa* on the issue of Vima standing is a problem. The emperor does not hold the object, but he also does not hold the club, his common attribute. It is not clear if the tridents on the obverse and reverse mean the same object; according to Falk 2019, the former would be a *paṭṭiśa*, the latter a *triśūla*.<sup>1086</sup> Göbl: 9 poses a problem, as the trident seems to combine the *paṭṭiśa*, the

<sup>1086</sup> *Op. cit.*, 21.



club and the incense burner all found on the standing Vima obverses. Coin types of the Pipal Mandi hoard show this type of trident covered with attributes in the hand of the god.<sup>1087</sup> Falk proposes to interpret this as a *signum* in Roman style.<sup>1088</sup> Here, the club on the *paṭṭiśa* is interpreted as either a club or a phallus.

The iconographic links between Vima and the god are obscure. If the *signum* type object the god is holding represents the attributes of Vima, these are not only rare on the depictions of the god, but also rare on the obverses of the emperor. The conclusion to be drawn here is that god and emperor are two completely distinct entities existing in distinct spheres in contact, perhaps, only by way of the triumphant insignia of the emperor. It is worthy of note that the obverse showing these insignia as attributes of the emperor is also the one in which he is depicted in the act of sacrifice, i.e., establishing contact with the god.

#### **6.2.1.2. Kaniška I**

On the gold coinage, Kaniška is most commonly seen standing frontally with his head facing left (Fig. 32). He wears a kaftan and felt boots with a torque around his neck and a piece of cloth, perhaps a cape (or a mantle of the type seen on the coins of Vima Kadphises), flying behind him from which flames are rising, visible only on the left. He is holding what appears to be a small *aṅkuśa* over a small altar in his right hand and a lance in his left. A sword, most probably with the familiar eagle hilt, is hanging from his hip to his left. He has a voluminous beard and wears two distinct crowns. In the early issues it is a round cap with a round ornament on its side and a long extension at the front like that of Vima Kadphises. The cap has diadem ribbons, but these are poorly

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<sup>1087</sup> Falk 2019,15.

<sup>1088</sup> *Op. cit.*, 23-24.



*Fig. 32: Gold coin of Kaniška I*

visible as they extend between the head and the top of the lance. In the later issues it appears to be a proper, jewelled crown with diadem ribbons and an overlay on the top of his head. Usually, the emperor is standing on what may be ornamental circles interrupting the legend, although sometimes the space beneath his feet is clear.

On some rare early quarter dinars linked to the deities of groups 0, 1a and 1b, the emperor is seen as a bust rising from a rocky surface. The depiction looks like a closeup of the early standing types with the same crown and a lance in his left hand. He wears a torque and a cape with flames emitting from above his right shoulder. It is not clear if his right hand is visible or what it is holding.

The standing Kaniška is also commonly found on copper coins, with the significant difference that he sometimes has a nimbus around his head, something that is never found in the gold coinage. On some copper types he is also depicted enthroned frontally with his right hand raised although any other details are unclear.

The depictions of Kaniška are a significant departure from his predecessor Vima Kadphises. The closest resemblance is the standing type of Vima on which the emperor also sacrifices at an altar. However, here he wears an open kaftan, and the attributes are

placed next to the figure. The Kaniška types are more naturalistic in their depiction. Kaniška does not share any of the attributes of Vima Kadphises save for the altar and instead introduces the lance and the sword. A detail that is never remarked on is that the flames do not seem to be emitting from Kaniška's shoulders but from the cape flying to the left.<sup>1089</sup> This is clear on a number of specimens including such used for the magnified type pieces in Göbl 1984.<sup>1090</sup> Since the flames are often, though not always, very close to the shoulder, this may be due to the difficulty of adding both the cape and the flames on such confined space, meaning the flames were moved on the cape for better visibility. However, it is noteworthy that the bust types lack the cape completely and, with only a few exceptions, also the flames.<sup>1091</sup> It is also interesting that no effort was ever made to attempt to show flames on both shoulders as on the Vima Kadphises and Huviška types. The difference here is that these are busts with more space to work with. On the standing Vāsudeva types, which lack a cape, a flame is also visible only on one shoulder. It is clear that the space to Kaniška's other shoulder was occupied by the diadem ribbon and limited due to the raised arm holding the lance, but it is also perhaps significant that the iconography was not designed to allow for flames on both shoulders in the first place.

The concept expressed by the flames is undoubtedly the same no matter whether they are placed on the shoulders or the cape. However, on the coinage of Kaniška I, the flying cape seems to be inextricably linked to the same idea. The only available material for comparison is the iconography of the deities on the reverse. The flaming shoulders, as discussed above, are found on the images of Hephaistos/Aθšo and Pharro, and it is

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<sup>1089</sup> Chattopadhyay 1967, 58, Rosenfield 1967, 197, Göbl 1984, 36 and Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 68 invariably describe the flames as emitting from the shoulders. Göbl 1984 is the only one to point out that the flames are visible only on his left shoulder.

<sup>1090</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl. 157. Especially prominent on types II and III.

<sup>1091</sup> The exceptions being Göbl: 41 and coin 374 in the ANS collection (Jongeward/Cribb 2015, pl. 14). The type piece for type IV in Göbl 1984, pl. 157, is thus misleading as it has flames.

likely that only the images of the latter are actually meant to express the same idea. It is therefore commonly believed that the flaming shoulders on the portraits of the Kušān emperors express the idea of royal *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*.<sup>1092</sup> However, this encounters a difficulty when it is considered that *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*, as Pharro, is a distinct god under the Kušān and the flaming shoulders are one of his attributes, albeit not an indispensable one. Indeed, the flames are not found in the few numismatic depictions of Pharro under Kaniška I and are introduced only late in Huviška's reign, despite the relative frequency of his appearances in his reign.<sup>1093</sup> The iconographic link would suggest that there is a shared aspect between the emperor and the god Pharro that goes beyond the shared properties between the emperor and most other gods, but not that Pharro as a whole is an attribute of the emperor. This shared aspect may well be royal glory or fortune, which is one of the aspects, but by no means the only or dominant one of Kušān Pharro. However, it should not be taken as a *x<sup>v</sup>arənah* of the Kušān emperors in the sense later used by the Sāsānians, as this idea would clash with the existence of the god Pharro and the apparent divinity of the Kušān emperors themselves.<sup>1094</sup>

The flying cape is an attribute unique to Kaniška I and it recalls, to an extent, the flying scarf of Anemos/Oado.<sup>1095</sup> However, Kaniška's static pose contrasts with the depictions of Anemos/Oado, hence suggesting again that Kaniška shares an attribute with the god but does not absorb the entirety of the deity. In this case however, the interpretation has problems. Not only is the wind and the flying cloth an inextricable part of the iconography of the god, but Anemos/Oado is the wind itself. Anemos/Oado, unlike the cape of Kaniška, has no connection to fire. Therefore, it would probably be more

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<sup>1092</sup> Discussed extensively but not without scepticism in Rosenfield 1967, 197-201, where a Buddhist connotation is also considered.

<sup>1093</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.6.9.

<sup>1094</sup> So indicated also by Shenkar 2014, 135-36.

<sup>1095</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.4.5.

prudent to regard the flying cape of Kaniška as a more naturalistic depiction of the emperor standing in a windy place or as being exposed to the elements. Falk 2019 has explained Kaniška as being both "a sort of god Fire" and "a sort of god Wind",<sup>1096</sup> but does not see the link of the flames with the cape, instead describing as the flames emitting from the emperor's shoulders.

With the lack of any further iconographic parallels to the flaming shoulder, it cannot be said more than that the flying cape appears to be an iconographic extension of the flaming shoulders motif. The flaming shoulders likely refer to royal glory or fortune, so it should be expected that the flying cape does, too. Perhaps it is significant that both items refer to elements and that the element earth/rock is represented quite abundantly on the numismatic portraits of the emperors. If Falk 2019 is correct in identifying the object in the hand of Huviška, and indeed invariably so, as an aspergillum, it would also provide a link to the element water. However, it would remain an open question why water is the one element absent from the coinage of Vima Kadphises and Kaniška I,<sup>1097</sup> while wind is present on the coins of Kaniška I but absent from those of Vima Kadphises and Huviška. It would indeed be easier to assume that there is no direct link between the depictions of Kaniška I and Huviška at all and to consider them completely distinct iconographic conceptions. If that is the case, then Kaniška I may still be represented as the master of the elements in conjunction with royal glory or fortune, without necessarily having to distinctly depict every element. If the numismatic pantheon is taken into account here, it is also noteworthy that water plays no visible role with any of the gods found under Kaniška I and makes only a fleeting appearance under Huviška with the god Oaxšo.

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<sup>1096</sup> *Op. cit.*, 34.

<sup>1097</sup> Falk 2019, 33-34; 38 believes the elephant represents the monsoon clouds, which would be abbreviated to the *aṅkuśa* on the coins of Kaniška I.

Kaniška's role as master of the elements would also assign him a place in the company of the deities. As noted above, the deities represent the celestial forces, the ideas of fortune and fertility, and the various aspects of kingship. Kaniška himself is not directly a part of this group, as the altar which may represent a medium of communication indicates, but he is more earthbound in his direct association with the elements. His mastery of the elements is the visible representation of his royal glory and fortune. This does not rule out that he is a god himself, but it does provide a necessary iconographic depiction of him as the only observable divine epiphany.

### 6.2.1.3. Huviška

The contrast between the depictions of Huviška and those of Kaniška I is strong. With a few exceptions, the emperor is always depicted as a bust, typically rising from a rocky surface, on the gold coins. These busts are never found on copper coins, here the emperor is usually depicted either riding on an elephant, seated frontally on cushions, or reclining on a throne or couch. The elephant rider depictions are also occasionally found on gold types. They differ from the elephant rider type of Vima Kadphises. The depiction is more naturalistic albeit not to scale and the emperor holds a lance and an *aṅkuṣa*, on one copper type even a trident,<sup>1098</sup> but they are not shouldered like on the Vima Kadphises type.

Huviška entirely avoids any similarity to the Kaniška I coins, evidently trying to define his own iconographic identity. Consequentially, only a few attributes are shared. On early issues, Huviška holds an *aṅkuṣa* on some and a sword on other issues, both of which are found in the issues of Kaniška I. These items are replaced by a lance in the late coinage, also an attribute of Kaniška. The flaming shoulders have been discussed

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<sup>1098</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 159, no XXIVb, cf. also the description on p. 36.

extensively above. Huviška's crowns and attire differ significantly from that of Kaniška I. Even when he wears a kaftan it is of an ornate, open type more closely resembling that of Vima Kadphises than that of Kaniška I. He typically has a nimbus especially on his later coins, something not found on the gold coinage of his predecessors, albeit occasionally on the copper coins.

His most characteristic, and also most problematic, attribute is an object he holds in his right hand on almost all of his gold coins, although it seems to be missing on the copper depictions. This item is a rod with an elaborate top. It is commonly described as a club or a mace, as it has some structural similarity to the traditional form of the Indian *gada*.<sup>1099</sup> However, it does not resemble in any way the club found on the coinage of Vima Kadphises or Huviška's own Herakles coins. Falk 2019 correctly points out that it is difficult to accept this description and suggests the interpretation of an aspergillum. This suggestion is based on the assumption that the elements are represented on the coins of Huviška and the aspergillum represents water, together with the elephant, which according to Falk is “the allegory of monsoon clouds”.<sup>1100</sup>

Falk 2019 argues that the object represents “a construction of parallel fibres tied to a central handle. These are then fastened by rings of thread or wire; occasionally, some of the fibres stick out at the upper end, more or less identical in shape with aspergilla still in use in the Orthodox churches”.<sup>1101</sup>

What is usually not considered by observers is that the object Huviška holds comes in three distinct shapes. Göbl 1984 catalogues them but does not offer any further remarks.

Falk 2019 recognises a variation in shape but seems to consider them mere graphic

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<sup>1099</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 60 ff. speaks of a mace without further discussion. Göbl 1984, 34-35 does not mention it at all in his discussion of insignia, but refers to the object as a “Kolbenzepter” in his subsequent description of Huviška’s obverse types.

<sup>1100</sup> *Op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>1101</sup> *Op. cit.*, 39.

variations. However, there is a clear pattern of distribution independent of the quality of engravings or attention to detail. In its first form the handle is topped by a regular cluster of small circular shapes. The rings pointed out by Falk are missing here, although sometimes a sort of base structure is seen supporting the cluster. This shape of the object appears exclusively on the earliest types of Huviška's Bactrian coinage, including types which show the *tamgha* of Kaniška I. Some of the coins are very crude and no details of the object can be observed, but in other cases the engravings are of superb quality.

The early coins of the Gandhara mint change the object to the way Falk describes it, with rings surrounding the circular objects, which are what Falk apparently considers the parallel fibres and the pointed extensions at the top. It is possible that these may be fibres sticking out that are represented earlier by the circular shapes, but close examination of some finely engraved specimens suggest that the extensions are meant to be on top of a top layer of the circular shapes, and thus physically distinct. The quality of the engravings and state of preservation of the coins only very rarely allows this level of detail to be observed, but it appears as though this was the effect aimed for.<sup>1102</sup> In some cases, the top of the object even seems to resemble flames, making the entire object appear like a torch.<sup>1103</sup>

The third variation of the object is found on all later coins of Huviška on which he also has a lance and a helmet. Here, the top of the object is tall and thin, resembling a series of rings stacked on top of each other or a rope wrapped around the rod. The circular shapes and extensions on the top never appear. Whatever the intention of this change is, it seems to be related to the martial guise the emperor takes.

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<sup>1102</sup> This is well-visible on the magnified image of coin 757 in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 255 and also seems to be apparent e.g. on coin 1888,1208.557 (Göbl: 310, the OMMO coin) in the British Museum.

<sup>1103</sup> Very much so e.g. on coin 1894,0506.66 in the British Museum.



The variation of the shape of the object is also reflected in the way it is held by Huviška. The earlier shapes tend to be held at an angle leaning into the emperor's face. On the early coins showing him facing to the right, it is held so close to his nose that it could be imagined that he is sniffing at it. The later shape however is always held rather at a distance, with the tendency of an angle leaning away from the face. This correlates with the appearance of a halo surrounding his head. However, it does not suffice to explain this as a graphic convention to move the object away from the halo, as it often touches either the halo or the coin legend, sometimes even both, indicating that such considerations would have been secondary, at best. A further difference can be seen in the way the object is held in Huviška's hand. In the earlier type, it is grabbed by the entire hand topped by the thumb, which is sometimes grotesquely elongated, as if to emphasise that it tops the hand here. On the later types, the thumb is still visible, but the index finger is extended. Again, sometimes the length and shape of the finger is grotesquely exaggerated. It either extends before the rod or appears to touch it with its tip. The positioning apparently has no meaning, but the finger is evidently meant to be represented as bent. This gesture is one of adoration towards a higher entity found commonly in western Iran.<sup>1104</sup> Choksy 1990 concludes that “[the] bent forefinger was employed in Iran exclusively as a gesture of worship of divine beings until the Sasanian era. Thereafter the gesture was also used by subjects in the presence of kings as a sign of submission.”<sup>1105</sup>

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<sup>1104</sup> Choksy 1990, 204 claims it was also present on “Indo-Bactrian” (sic!) coins of Hippostratos and Indo-Parthian coins of Abdagases. Examples of the coins in question are depicted on p. 203 (figs 3, 4). However, the depictions are not “busts” as Choksy claims. The depiction on fig. 3 instead shows what Bopearachchi 1991, 356 describes as a “déesse poliade” standing, as also becomes abundantly clear from the coins of Hippostratos in Bopearachchi série 1, showing the goddess on the reverse and a bust of Hippostratos on the obverse. The figure on the Abdagases coin is clearly Nikē, as is apparent from the wings. Moreover, the better preserved specimens of Hippostratos make it highly questionable if the gesture is that of a single extended index finger, as some shown in Bopearachchi 1991, pl. 64 seem to extend two fingers similar to the depictions of Mao, Miirō and Pharro on Kušān coins.

<sup>1105</sup> *Op. cit.*, 205, but note the reservations on Choksy 1990 expressed in the previous footnote.

There are only few objects that would indeed be expected to be found in the hand of Huviška based on iconographic analogy. In the close context of Kušān numismatics, this would be either a club, as found in the hand of Vima Kadphises, or an *ankuṣa* as with Kaniška I. It is clearly neither. The closest piece of iconography available outside the coinage is the depiction of the Kušān emperor on the so-called Kaniška reliquary.<sup>1106</sup> The emperor in question is most likely Huviška. He is flanked by Mao and Miuro, has his left hand draped and holds what appear to be two flowers in his right hand. The flowers are most likely lotus, as analogy suggests. They take a similar shape to the early Bactrian version of the object of Huviška, with the blossom depicted as filled with circular shapes. The entire depiction is frontal, unlike the coins of Huviška, so some iconographic variation might be expected. Falk 2019 relates this depiction with a rare early type of Huviška coin portraits in which the emperor wears what Göbl 1984 has interpreted as a turban, Falk considers "two thick fillets".<sup>1107</sup> The object in his hand is of the early Bactrian type. Falk depicts both portraits side-by-side but refers to the object in the reliquary as lotus stalks and in the coin as an aspergillum.<sup>1108</sup> In a wider Iranian context, a lotus flower would also be expected. It is often seen in the hand of the Achaemenid emperor and held by dignitaries on the relief of the Apadana stairway in Persepolis.<sup>1109</sup> Sometimes, the dignitaries are clearly seen sniffing the flower. On the Achaemenid reliefs, the lotus is held in a similar way to the object of Huviška, with the entire hand enclosing the stem. Lotus flowers are also sometimes seen in the hands of Sāsānian emperors and princes on silver plates. However, it is hard to deny that the shape of the lotus flower is significantly different from that of the object in Huviška's hand. The closest resemblance is between the Kaniška Reliquary and the early Bactrian

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<sup>1106</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 259-62.

<sup>1107</sup> *Op. cit.* 40.

<sup>1108</sup> *Op. cit.*, 40, fig. 29.

<sup>1109</sup> E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I. Structures, reliefs, inscriptions*. Chicago 1953, pl. 52.

type, but even here, the flower is much wider and more circular than on the coins. The early Gandhāran version with the extensions on the top is closer to a flowery shape given that it also generally has a shorter rod. If a flower is intended to be portrayed, it would be one with a closed blossom, not unlike some of the Achaemenid lotus flowers, or even one with the blossom kept shut by rings, although this would probably be too much of a stretch.

The hand gesture is only rarely found with figures actually holding an object in this hand. A notable exception is a series of donor reliefs on railing pillars from Bhūteśvar from the Kuśān period. Again, the figures are frontal, some wear distinctly Kuśān clothing.<sup>1110</sup> They all hold flowers in their right hand with the index finger raised or extended. Sharma 1994 refers to “a bunch of flowers”.<sup>1111</sup> However, it is possible that it is indeed one item with a number of large buds or closed blossoms attached.<sup>1112</sup> It should be noted however that this gesture resembles that found on Huviška's later coins, on which the object definitely does not resemble a flower.

The Vasudeva Silver Pyxis presented by Falk/Sims-Williams 2017 shows Vāsudeva holding what is described as “a globular fumigator bowl on a long straight handle, as known from Gandhara”.<sup>1113</sup> The proximity to Buddha depictions on the pyxis suggests a cultic use of this object. It is by no means identical to the object of Huviška but given the variation in shape even on the Huviška coinage, it would at least be reasonable to suggest it may be of the same nature.

The item that the object of Huviška effectively replaces is the small altar to which the standing emperor sacrifices on coins of Vima Kadphises, Kaniška I and later all of Huviška's successors. This would suggest that the object of Huviška has the same

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<sup>1110</sup> Rosenfield 1967, figs 22-24, 26-27. On an interpretation cf. Sharma 1994, 128.

<sup>1111</sup> *Op. cit.*, 128.

<sup>1112</sup> This is especially apparent in Rosenfield 1967, fig. 22.

<sup>1113</sup> *Op. cit.*, 129.

function as the altar, especially because Huviška initially retains the *aṅkuśa* which is in the right hand of Kaniška I which he uses to sacrifice. The *aṅkuśa* is among the attributes of Oēšo on some earlier depictions found especially in the coinage of Kaniška I but also occasionally under Huviška.<sup>1114</sup> On these coins, the *aṅkuśa* appears in the same hand as a tilted flask. Falk has taken this to indicate that the *aṅkuśa*, and by extension the elephant, is connected to water. The flask would represent the distribution of water, whereas the *aṅkuśa*/elephant would represent the monsoon waters.<sup>1115</sup>

Whether this is the case, or the *aṅkuśa* stands as a shorthand for the elephant as an attribute of an Indian monarch, it is interesting that it is found in direct association with the flask on the Oēšo coins, and with the altar on the depictions of Kaniška I. It would make an association of the altar with water possible, and that would in turn speak for Falk's interpretation of the object of a Huviška as an aspergillum, as it replaces the altar. In other words, the iconographic link flask-altar-aspergillum, reinforced by the omnipresence of the *aṅkuśa*, would revolve around water.

The difficulties with this chain are profound. First of all, the *aṅkuśa* disappears soon into the reign of Huviška and is replaced by a sword with a theriomorphic hilt as already used by Kaniška I. To be sure, Falk's theory does not rely on the *aṅkuśa*, but its disappearance weakens the conceptual link, especially because it never appears together with the late form of the object of Huviška. Second, there is no proof that the object is an aspergillum. It does not in any way resemble the aspergillum in Roman art as presented by Falk, especially on the coinage.<sup>1116</sup> There are also no objects identifiable elsewhere as aspergilla in Kušān art. Third, the altar on the Kušān coins appears to be a fire altar, as coins of the successors of Huviška show it with flames on top. It must be

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<sup>1114</sup> Oēšo type 4, in Göbl 1984, 43 and types 7 and 10 in Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 283.

<sup>1115</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33-34.

<sup>1116</sup> *Op. cit.*, fig. 28.

admitted however that it is not clear if there are flames on the coins of Vima Kadphises or Kaniška I. These later coins lack the *añkuša* in the sacrificing hand, but so do the coins of Vima Kadphises. The attributes of the emperors change in the coinage, but that does not mean the altar is not the same.

What can be said with some degree of certainty is that there was no place for the altar when the coin design was changed to depict a bust on the obverse. In its place, a new attribute is found together with the *añkuša* and the sword as old attributes of Kaniška I. Whether this new object functionally takes the place of the altar cannot be said with certainty, but the fact that it is unique to Huviška just as the lack of the altar is unique to him suggests as much. If so, it is to be interpreted as a medium for contact with the divine sphere. It is held close to the emperor's face as if he is in close contact with it, such as sniffing or preparing to kiss it. As the object changes appearance so does the way of holding it, which now goes together with a gesture of adoration. The object may functionally remain the same, but takes on a different shape, one that is less elaborate and is held away from the emperor's face. Despite a much more elaborate attire and the introduction of a halo around his head, Huviška now seems to humble himself before the gods with his gestures. This coincides with the introduction of a martial depiction of the emperor, suggesting all this is the expression of a military crisis in which the gods represented on the coin reverses, who now represent war and defence, need to be flattered to give their support. The more ornate attire of the emperor may also allude to that, as he now appears more worthy to be in divine company, whereas in his early coins he might be considered underdressed.

### 6.2.2. The emperor rising from the mountains

An iconographic element frequently found in the coinage of Vima Kadphises and Huviška is the depiction of the emperor on top of a rocky surface. Vima Kadphises may either rise from it with only the upper portion of his body visible, thus representing a bust, or he may be seated on it crosslegged. Huviška uses the same two variants. It should be noted however that both emperors also have similar depictions without the rocky surface. With Kaniška, this element is only present in the one obverse type depicting the emperor as a bust.<sup>1117</sup> However, some of the other obverses show the emperor standing on a dotted surface. This surface resembles the dotted border encircling most of the coin reverses, but it does not encircle the obverse, instead providing a sort of pedestal for the emperor. This may be purely decorative, but as it is a shared element between Kaniška and the deities, it may not be entirely devoid of significance.

The rocky surface was initially interpreted as representing clouds but is now more commonly understood to depict mountain tops.<sup>1118</sup> The interpretation of these mountains varies. R. Göbl at first believed it to represent the emperor as a successful conqueror,<sup>1119</sup> while later avoiding anything other than a descriptive discussion.<sup>1120</sup>

Falk 2019 proposes to view the depiction of the emperor rising from the mountains in connection with the Roman *Mithras petrogenitus* who, according to Falk, is not born from the rock but rather splits it to liberate the waters contained within.<sup>1121</sup> To reinforce the link to Miθra, Falk discusses a seal from the Sāsānian period depicting a figure in a rayed nimbus on top of what appears to be a pyramid of rocks and accompanied by a

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<sup>1117</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 157, type IV; cf. also the description on p. 36. The type is found only on quarter dinars, although some quarter dinars also depict the standing emperor.

<sup>1118</sup> As discussed in Göbl 1957, 181-82.

<sup>1119</sup> Göbl 1957, 181-82.

<sup>1120</sup> Göbl 1984 simply refers to it as "Bergsymbolik".

<sup>1121</sup> *Op. cit.*, 4-5.

worshipper. The figure in the nimbus has conclusively been interpreted as Miθra. The sunrays, either emitting from a nimbus or from the god's head himself, are undoubtedly a marker of Miθra in Iranian iconography, borrowed from Greek depictions of Hēlios. The rocks probably represent Mount Harā, which is the place where the Avesta describes Miθra as surveying the material world.<sup>1122</sup> Falk, despite citing both Callieri 1990 and Shenkar 2014, does not refer to this interpretation but rather states that “apart from the imperial Kushan coinage this is the only eastern evidence for the *petrogenitur* of Mithra breaking through the mountains.”

Generally, the iconographic material for Miθra is wanting. Outside of Kommagene, the Kušān coins provide the earliest positively identifiable depictions of Miθra in the Iranian world.<sup>1123</sup> This severely limits the possibilities of comparison. There is no doubt that the figure on the seal is to be interpreted as Miθra, but with the available evidence it seems more prudent to take the Avestan evidence for this image rather than the Roman, especially in areas so distant from the Roman Empire as Bactria and Gandhāra. There is no evidence that the idea of *Mithras petrogenitus* is Iranian in origin, just as there is little clarity over which elements of Roman Mithraism are inherited from Iran and which were adopted from other sources.<sup>1124</sup>

The seal in question is provenanced to the North-West-Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) and most likely dates to the 4th or 5th century CE, so to the late Kušāno-Sāsānian period or shortly afterwards.<sup>1125</sup> These are good reasons to interpret the seal in a generally Kušān context, and thus it seems likely that the depiction of Miθra on the mountaintop and the Kušān emperor on the mountaintop refer to the same idea. The

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<sup>1122</sup> First so interpreted by Callieri 1990, 84; reinforced by Shenkar 2014, 108 and Adrych et al 2017, 96.

<sup>1123</sup> Shenkar 2014, 113.

<sup>1124</sup> For a recent (albeit brief) discussion of this topic, cf. M. Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras. The God and his Mysteries*. Berlin 2022, 3-8.

<sup>1125</sup> Callieri 1990, 80.

Kušān emperor appears in the same function as Miθra on the seal, which, if the Avestan context is considered, may be as the surveyor of the world. It is plausible that this is indeed the role which the Kušān emperors saw for themselves.

In this context, it may also be worth considering that the Kušān emperor may not be rising from *inside* the mountain as *Mithras petrogenitus*, but from *behind* the mountain as Miθra in shape of the sun does.<sup>1126</sup> The importance of this motif for the Kušān should not be underestimated. The layout of the βαγολαγγο of Surkh Kotal is such that when standing in the shrine looking in the direction of the staircase, one looks straight east and would in the morning look directly at the sun rising behind the peaks of the mountains beyond the Pul-i Khumri plain. The situation of the sanctuary on an east-west axis is so perfect that it is impossible to consider this as anything but deliberate.

It should not be overlooked that the direct iconographic links between the Kušān emperor and Miiro are sparse. Miiro never appears as rising from a rocky surface. The attributes he shares with the emperor are the lance and the sword, attributes which are also found with Mao. Both Miiro and Mao are seen flanking the emperor on the Kaniška Reliquary. An elevated link between Miiro and the emperor can thus only be observed in conjunction with Mao.

With all this, it appears that Falk 2019 is correct in pointing out the iconographic relation between the Kušān emperor and Miθra, although the interpretation as *Mithras petrogenitus* is difficult to maintain and represents an unnecessary complication. The emperor appears to take the role of Miθra as surveyor of the world, although it would

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<sup>1126</sup> Falk 2019 is absolutely correct in pointing out that the Roman tauroctony reliefs indicate that Mithras was not identical to the sun. The same can be said for Avestan Miθra who is not identical to Xwaršēd, the sun. However, there is ample evidence that Miθra and the sun were considered identical in late antique Iran, cf. Shenkar 2014, 102. This is especially clear when it is considered that Kušān Miiro was equated with Greek Hēlios (cf. chapter 6.1.3.4.2.). It is too risky to take Roman Mithraism as an explanatory model if Iranian material is available for comparison, especially when the interpretation of the Roman material remains problematic.



probably go too far to consider the emperor as identical to him or as an epiphany of the god. The iconographies of Miuro and the Kušan emperors on the coins have some common elements, such as the lance and the sword, but these are also shared with Mao. This speaks for a close association of the emperor with both these gods, as is also apparent on the Kaniška Reliquary, but they were apparently distinct entities nonetheless. The radiant nimbus, the most distinctive attribute of Miuro, is found on some depictions of Huviška on copper obverses, usually surrounding the entire body while seated or reclining on a throne, but also around his head when he is riding an elephant.<sup>1127</sup> Notably, the mountain tops are missing here. Miuro is depicted on the reverse of many of these types, and despite the nimbus, it is hard to mistake one for the other, as the depictions generally are too different. It looks as though the shared attribute is meant to link them, but this is hardly enough to assume the two are considered identical. Perhaps the rayed nimbus is another way of indicating that Huviška takes the role of Miθra, one that is more compatible with the iconography on the copper coins. Undoubtedly, it was desirable for the Kušan emperors to be perceived as linked to Miθra. The many theophoric names in Bactria, including such in the Kušan period, indicate the god was very popular there.<sup>1128</sup> The evidence discussed above suggests that the emperor appeared as the representative of Miθra and taking the regal aspects of his role. However, there are no reasons to assume that Miθra/Miuro was singled out in this way. The emperors share attributes with other gods, most notably the flames, which point to Pharro.

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<sup>1127</sup> e.g. Göbl: 847.

<sup>1128</sup> cf. Sims-Williams 2010.

### 6.2.3. The Kušān emperor as a god

The depictions of the Kušān emperors on the coin obverses do not appear to attempt to continue the portraiture of Hellenistic monarchs on the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins. These Greek portraits are often of remarkable quality, representing finely crafted busts of the kings that are in every sense products of Hellenistic art. With the exception of the so-called Heraios coins, the Kušān do not seem to aim for naturalistic depictions of the monarchs. As is evident especially from the gold coins, the aim was to emphasise particular facial features to a virtually expressionist extent. The result looks more like a caricature to the modern viewer if the large nose of Vima Kadphises,<sup>1129</sup> the voluminous beard of Kaniška I or the large sideburns of Huviška are considered. These features seem to be iconographic codes for the identification of the emperor. The dynastic linkage is represented by a large wart on the cheek of each figure.<sup>1130</sup> Unlike the Hellenistic coinage, where the person of the king is subject to the portrait for his own sake, in the Kušān depictions the iconographic context seems to play a larger role than the person of the emperor himself. This recalls the Achaemenid reliefs in which the emperor is also not portrayed but represented as a royal archetype.<sup>1131</sup> The Kušān emperors are clearly identified, but not portrayed. This is not due to a lack of artistic skill on part of the engravers, as the quality of the engravings both on the obverses and the reverses can be very high. It is also not due to a general lack of interest in naturalistic art, as the high quality of reliefs of the Mathurā school from the Kušān period indicates. The donor reliefs from Buner indicate that there was also an interest in naturalistic portraiture in Kušān Gandhāra.<sup>1132</sup> However, it is also clear that the few identifiable sculptures representing Kušān emperors, such as the

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<sup>1129</sup> So pointed out by Falk 2019, 30.

<sup>1130</sup> cf. A. Invernizzi, *Facial Marks in the Parthian World*. SRAA I (1990), 35-50 (here 42-43).

<sup>1131</sup> cf. Cool Root 1979, 305.

<sup>1132</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 216-18.

statues from Māt and Surkh Kotal, are of limited stylistic sophistication, but rather aim for a monumental impression. It is likely that the heads would not have looked much different than the known “Indo-Scythian” portrait heads from Mathurā.<sup>1133</sup>

All this suggests that the Kušān emperor was not meant to be seen primarily with regards to his human nature. His divine attributes, including the flaming shoulders and cape, his positioning on top of or rising from behind mountains and the halo that occasionally surrounds him elevate him into a superhuman sphere. He is nevertheless an earthly ruler, as the typical attributes such as the crown, the throne, the club, the sword, the lance and the *aṅkuṣa* and elephant denote. He even requires a medium such as an altar or the object of Huviška to contact the divine sphere. However, his unique connection to the divine sphere suggests he is a representative of the deities or perhaps even their epiphany. This relationship is also expressed in some of his titles, including *devatputra*/βαγεπτορο and βαγο ηζνογο and the idea that he receives his office from Nana and the other deities.<sup>1134</sup> However, his primary role is that of an earthly ruler. He is king of kings and *autokrator*. The dichotomy is also clear in the cult of Rabatak: The Kušān emperors were part of the cult just as the gods were, but they formed a separate group from them. They are also not βαγανο but βαονανο in Rab 12. If in SK4 1, Kaniška is βαγο παο, this may well be because he is dead.<sup>1135</sup> The idea clearly is that the Kušān emperors were on one level with the gods and were themselves manifest deities, but still represented a different category than the deities of the divine sphere.

The statues of the Kušān emperors indicate that there was an ancestral cult, although Rab 12-13 suggests that Kaniška I himself was directly part of the same cult as the living emperor. There are indications for dynastic ancestral cults throughout ancient

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<sup>1133</sup> Rosenfield 1967, pl. 4, 15-16.

<sup>1134</sup> cf. chapter 5.

<sup>1135</sup> But cf. chapter 5.4.2.

Iranian history, although the living monarch is generally not a part of this. In the Achaemenid Empire, there is evidence for a cult surrounding Cyrus as the founder of the empire.<sup>1136</sup> An ancestral cult including a gallery of statues of the emperors has repeatedly been postulated for the Arsakids, although the evidence is wanting.<sup>1137</sup>

The only parallel that safely attests an ancestral cult in conjunction with the deification of the living monarch in the Iranian world comes from the *hierothesion* of Antiochos I on the Nemrud Dağı in Kommagene. Antiochos mentions in an inscription that the stone slabs depicting the reliefs of his ancestors were subject to cult activities.<sup>1138</sup> However, since there is no comparable archaeological context from Rabatak, it is impossible to know how similar or different the divine and ancestral cults were in a material sense.<sup>1139</sup>

It should also not be overlooked that there is a difference between the living king and his ancestors. A monumental statue of Antiochos is situated in context with the gods, and the Kommagenean kings are often depicted on reliefs interacting with the gods in a handshake signifying *concordia*. This does not equate him with the gods, as there is no such depiction of the gods interacting with each other, but it clearly separates him from his royal ancestors, as they are depicted on their own in the ancestral gallery.

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<sup>1136</sup> Arrian, *Anab.* VI, 29. This has been brought up in relation to the Kušān in Panaino 2009, 334, fn. 20 although here, the ideas of a dynastic cult and an ancestral cult are not distinguished. The sacrifice attested to the tomb of Cyrus is conceptually equated with the worship of the living emperor in the Kušān Empire, for which Panaino however cannot provide any direct evidence, as the details for both the cult of Cyrus and that of the living Kušān emperor remain obscure.

<sup>1137</sup> The question revolves primarily around the function of the round hall in Nisa, where statue fragments have been found and which has been variously interpreted as a *heroon*, a mausoleum or an audience hall, cf. B. Jacobs in QGP/1, 78-79 w. lit. The group of statues is unique in the Arsakid archaeological context and finds its closest parallels in Bactrian sites such as Ai Khanoum, Khalchayan and Dalverzin Tepe, which makes the interpretation even more difficult in the Kušān context cf. Invernizzi/Lippolis, *Nisa Partica. Ricerche nel complesso monumentale arsacide 1990-2006*. Firenze 2008, 191-94. Note also that for the Achaemenid Empire, the Old Persian inscription of Ariaramnes was initially suggested to be a label for a statue in such a context, cf. E. Herzfeld, *Äriyāramna, König der Könige*. AMI 2 (1930), 119-20 and H.H. Schaeder, *Über die Inschrift des Ariaramnes*. SPAW 1931, 642. Herzfeld had made this assumption based on the missing *adam* at the beginning of the inscription, which otherwise only occurs on inscriptions labelling images of the kings. Schaeder initially agreed with this reasoning, but the idea was dropped in later publications on the inscription.

<sup>1138</sup> N 24 ff, Waldmann 1973, 63-67.

<sup>1139</sup> Statues were found in Surkh Kotal and Māt, but the former are too poorly preserved and the latter are without any usable context, so that there is no statement to be made with them.

The same sort of interaction between monarch and deity may be alluded to on the Kušān coins in which the emperor is depicted as interacting with the gods through a medium. However, Rab 12-14 suggests that the living emperor was part of the cult of the emperors and not of the gods. This is a clear difference to Kommagene. It is still likely that the living emperor was detached from his deceased ancestors. One indicator is that the ancestral gallery in Rab 12-14 is described from the perspective of Kaniška I, detailing how the ancestors were related to him.<sup>1140</sup> Another possible indicator is the nature of the statues from Māt. Two are known that are attributed to emperors by inscriptions: One of Vima Takto and one of Kaniška I. The statue of Vima Takto is seated on a lion throne, that of Kaniška is standing. Falk 2019 has pointed out that the attributes of the Kaniška statue resemble those of Vima Kadphises on the coins and has suggested that the statue originally depicted Vima Kadphises before being rededicated to Kaniška after violent turmoils in the reign of Huviška.<sup>1141</sup> Be that as it may, the standing and seated depictions of emperors may point out that, at least originally, the standing statue may have been meant to represent the living emperor and the seated one his deceased ancestor. The Rabatak Inscription was found together with statue fragments closely resembling the throne of the Vima Takto statue, indicating that seated statues were also present here.<sup>1142</sup> In Surkh Kotal, most statue fragments known seem to depict standing emperors. However, the archaeological context between Surkh Kotal, Māt and Rabatak cannot be easily compared and the statues from Surkh Kotal were not round sculptures but attached to the walls. The statues from Māt were freestanding. Despite the close stylistic similarity, it is therefore an open question if the statues were of the same intent. Fussman 1983 has argued that, since the Surkh Kotal statues were

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<sup>1140</sup> That this is Kaniška's own perspective is also emphasised that his statue is referred to using the personal pronoun *χοβσιαρο* (Rab 14).

<sup>1141</sup> *Op. cit.*, 48-49, fn. 65.

<sup>1142</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 137.

not located in the *cella*, they were no cult statues.<sup>1143</sup> If cult statues of the emperors existed in Surkh Kotal, they may well have been brought to safety when the sanctuary was attacked in the Sāsānian period. SK4M 4-5 suggests this was common practice, although the same passage only speaks of gods and not of emperors. This would nevertheless explain why no cult statues of the Kušān emperors were found in Surkh Kotal, but it does not explain why such fragments were found in Rabatak. It would also not help in identifying the known statue fragments from Surkh Kotal, which are dressed in the ornamented nomad costume known from depictions of the Kušān emperors.

### 6.3. The βαγολαγγο and cult of Surkh Kotal

There are two known structures in Bactria which are epigraphically referred to as βαγολαγγο, a term that is also found in the Indian translation *devakula*. These are located in Rabatak and Surkh Kotal. Of these only Surkh Kotal is excavated. The *devakula* of Māt in the Mathurā district provides a counterpart in India, although it has been excavated in a way that led to the destruction of much archaeological context and information.

Although the term βαγολαγγο is later known to denote any type of temple in Bactrian,<sup>1144</sup> there are reasons to believe that the structures of Rabatak, Surkh Kotal and Māt were of a similar conceptual type, that of a monumental sanctuary dedicated to a dynastic cult.<sup>1145</sup> Therefore it will be noted in the following when features from Surkh Kotal can be observed in the other sites and information from other sites can help explain Surkh Kotal.

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<sup>1143</sup> *Op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>1144</sup> cf. references in BD2, 200b.

<sup>1145</sup> The similarities between Māt and Surkh Kotal are discussed in Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 150-52 and, adding Rabatak, Huyse 2003.

The site of Surkh Kotal was designed to give the outward appearance of a large mountain fortress.<sup>1146</sup> The outer wall may have had a height of up to 7m and featured guard towers in irregular intervals.<sup>1147</sup> The sanctuary itself was surrounded by a peribolos which also had towers. The shrine was visible from afar as it was located on the mountain top and accessed by a long stairway from the east. The impression of a fortress was deliberate as SK4M 1 indicates, where the entire monument is first introduced as a “fortress” (λιζο) and only then specified to be a βαγολαγγο. Rab 22 also refers to the structure otherwise called a βαγολαγγο as a “fortress”, using an earlier Bactrian form λιζγα. Ayr has also been interpreted to use both words to refer to the complex.<sup>1148</sup>

The complex was however not a functional military structure. The wall was adorned with arrow slits that were however far too narrow to be usable and sometimes did not even break through the entire wall. The stairs to the battlement were too limited in size to have been properly functional in case of military defence.<sup>1149</sup> The overall impression is that Surkh Kotal was a pseudo-fortress that had an imposing presence but was not designed to withstand military attack. The inscription SK4 confirms this by indicating that at first, the βαγολαγγο did not have an internal water supply, something that was clearly detrimental for a siege. Since the cult statues had to be removed in time of crisis, it is even admitted that the fortress failed to protect its primary occupants, that is, the gods. This was later rectified by the well built by Nokonzok within the walls, but it is striking that this apparent fortress was initially constructed without the most elementary supplies in mind.

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<sup>1146</sup> On the description cf. Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 17-20.

<sup>1147</sup> The figure of 7m is an estimation found in Fussman 1983, 13, but not in the corresponding part in Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 17-18.

<sup>1148</sup> Turunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981, 46. Note that the word is read as βαγα λαγγο and that λιζο is erroneously reproduced as μαλιξα. cf. Appendix I.5

<sup>1149</sup> Fussman 1983, 13-20.

The design of the sanctuary as a fortress makes sense if it is taken to be a dynastic temple meant to glorify the Kušān dynasty and be a visible marker of Kušān power. The military strength of the Kušān, real or imagined, was presented in a structure widely visible in the Pul-i Khumri plain, which appears to have been a densely populated area in the Kušān period. If it is allowed to assume that the Rabatak βαγολαγγο followed a similar design, its strategic location meant it would have been visible to anyone travelling between Balkh and Pul-i Khumri. Whether the sanctuary of Māt was similarly surrounded by fortifications is not clear although like that of Surkh Kotal, it was isolated from an urban context.<sup>1150</sup>

The plan of the shrine itself has very little similarity to any known temple architecture and has been interpreted as derived from Graeco-Bactrian monumental architecture. Its combination with fortification walls however is unique.<sup>1151</sup> The Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο was built on virgin soil, suggesting that there were no limitations in the architectural design and the sanctuary represents the ideal of a Kušān design. Fussman 1983 believes that the Greek elements, including the plan, technique and decoration, are a deliberate reference to the cultural heritage left by the Greeks in Bactria but that the sanctuary in general is Iranian in intent and purpose.<sup>1152</sup> The Iranian elements include its situation on a mountain peak, the Bactrian inscriptions and its nature as a dynastic sanctuary.

The sanctuary was staffed by attendants whom Rab 21 calls ρηδγε, related to MP *rēdag*.<sup>1153</sup> The title suggests a palatial office such as a page. There is only one term known in Bactrian suggesting the meaning of a priest, this being κηδο which appears in document ‘T’ dated to 700 CE. Rab 22 further suggests that the audience at whom the cult was directed were the αζαδανο. It is likely that these constituted the aristocracy

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<sup>1150</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 140.

<sup>1151</sup> Fussman 1983, 64.

<sup>1152</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>1153</sup> Sims-Williams 1998, 88.



or social élite of Kušān Bactria in analogy to the Sāsānian *āzādān*, especially as the Bactrian documents indicate that they had the privilege to bear seals.

Details of the precise cult practice, which may be referred to with the Bactrian word *παρηνα* in Rab 21,<sup>1154</sup> are elusive. The cella of the Surkh Kotal shrine contained a platform surrounded by four columns in the centre of which there may have been a monumental altar. D. Schlumberger believed the building was a fire temple with a fire altar in the centre, while M. Le Berre and others believed the shrine housed a cult statue.<sup>1155</sup> A likely conclusion based on Kušān coins would be that the central platform held an altar similar to the one the emperors are seen sacrificing at, probably larger than the coin images suggest. Unfortunately, it is unclear where the cult statues were located. The statue fragments from Surkh Kotal were found in the courtyard outside the shrine.<sup>1156</sup> However, they were probably not directly linked to the cult. In fact, the cult statues were likely permanently removed from the sanctuary at some point. SK4 indicates that it was practice to remove the statues in time of crisis. The shrine was abandoned in the Kušāno-Sāsānian period, which might be reason enough for such a removal. While it was repaired later, it is unknown what kind of cult took place here afterwards. It is unlikely that it would have been the same Kušān dynastic cult, as the new Kušāno-Sāsānian rulers were members of the Sāsānian house. In this period of abandonment, two further shrines, temples B and D, were constructed adjacent to the old shrine (temple A). Temple B was evidently a fire temple of Sāsānian fashion. The nature of temple D is uncertain. All three structures were later destroyed in a great fire, after which temple D was abandoned, temple B seemed to have been partly repaired and temple A was reconstructed.<sup>1157</sup> What sort of cult took place here now is unclear,

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<sup>1154</sup> Sims-Williams 1998, 88.

<sup>1155</sup> Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 144.

<sup>1156</sup> Fussman 1983, 33.

<sup>1157</sup> Fussman 1983, 24-50.

as are the time and political circumstances when this took place. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that this long period of instability that apparently went along with religious re-dedication of the sanctuary, would have seen the permanent removal of the earlier cult statues at some point, for whatever reason. In other words, it is indeterminable where they were located and what their spatial association with the cult looked like.

Rab 7-8, 15-17 and SK4M 1 leave no doubt that the sanctuaries were imperial endowments and that likely the land on which they were located was in the possession of the emperor.<sup>1158</sup> This fact is worth pointing out because private donorship was common practice in Kušān India and is also indicated in later Bactrian sources.<sup>1159</sup> As Fussman 1983 remarks, the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο was not an expression of local religious practice.<sup>1160</sup> Rab 21 indicates it was accessible to the élites. The common populace will have seen the monument as a widely visible expression of Kušān presence. Their connection to it was likely not religious, but it is likely they were nevertheless involved in its construction and maintenance. Fussman 1983 has made some estimations on the workforce and time required to build the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο,<sup>1161</sup> and similar estimations may hold true for the other known sanctuaries. In document 'ca 6' the word βαργο, which commonly denotes dues or rent, is used in a context that suggests it is a service owed by a free person to his superiors. The document makes it clear that it is a service involving the command of horsemen, thus likely military in nature. N. Sims-Williams opts to translate the word as "corvée" in this

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<sup>1158</sup> Perhaps the GN Kadagstan (for the area around the Pul-i Khumri plain?) is a late echo of this, with the Bactrian *καδαγο* "house" referring to an imperial domain (cf. BD2, 220a). The fact that the local rulers are referred to as *καδαγοβιδο* „steward" may be explicable this way.

<sup>1159</sup> On private donations in India cf. e.g. Falk 2009. In Bactria, the Ayrtaṃ inscription may attest to this (cf. Appendix I.5).

<sup>1160</sup> *Op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>1161</sup> *Op. cit.*, 59-60.

document.<sup>1162</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it may also suggest a possible framework in which workforce was recruited in Bactria for such a grand project as the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο.

A note should also be made on the location of the sanctuaries. Surkh Kotal, Māt and Rabatak are not in an urban context. The location on a mountain top may be significant with regards to the imagery of a Kušān emperor on a mountain surface as discussed in chapter 6.2.2. It is interesting in this context that the location of the sanctuary on a mountain top and its appearance as a fortress are neither essential for a dynastic sanctuary, nor even exclusive privileges to such an institution. The temple of Dilberdžin which may be compared to the sanctuary of Surkh Kotal, was within an urban site, although it was very close to the city walls.<sup>1163</sup> Conversely, Beckwith 2020 has pointed out that the early Buddhist *vihāra* typically took the appearance of a military fortress in an elevated location, if possible on a hill or mountain top near a settlement.<sup>1164</sup> This of course sounds like a perfect description of the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο, although there are no indications of a Buddhist use of the sanctuary.<sup>1165</sup> Beckwith suggests that the *vihāra* “was invented in the late 1st century CE, give or take a few decades, and then spread around the Kushan Empire into neighboring regions”.<sup>1166</sup> It is of course difficult to decide what this means with regards to Surkh Kotal, but it suggests the possibility that such fortress-type *vihāras* were already established in Bactria when the dynastic cult of Surkh Kotal was still in practice. This would, in turn, suggest that the appearance and location of the βαγολαγγο was not a privilege of the dynastic cult, but that at least

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<sup>1162</sup> BD2, 272a.

<sup>1163</sup> Staviskij 1986, 270. Note that the structure is labelled a *temple dynastique* with enthroned statues.

<sup>1164</sup> *Op. cit.*, 161-62.

<sup>1165</sup> A Buddhist site discussed in connection with Surkh Kotal is a platform on the plains to the east of the βαγολαγγο. However, this is a late Kušān or even Kušāno-Sāsānian foundation, cf. Fussman 1983, 54-55.

<sup>1166</sup> *Op. cit.*, 159.

the location was chosen with specific regard to the cult practice. This however may hold true even if it turns out that the location of the *vihāra* was something that became possible only when Kušān authority in this matter waned.

The topography of the site of Surkh Kotal suggests that the cult involved a procession up the grand staircase towards the *cella* of the shrine. The starting point of this procession seems to have been a water source. Originally it may have been the canal at the foot of the staircase, later the well of Nokonzok was dug at this location with a dromos aligned with the staircase. As mentioned in chapter 6.2.2., the staircase and shrine are built on a near perfect east-west axis allowing to view the sunrise from the top of the staircase and in the *cella*. It is tempting to imagine the cult procession taking place while the sun rises from behind the mountains beyond the Pul-i Khumri plain.

### 6.3.1. The Rabatak Pantheon

Rab 9-10 lists a number of deities to whom the βαρολαγγο is dedicated. These are Nana, Omma, Aoromozdo, Mozdoano, Srošardo, Narasao and Miuro. A gloss between the two lines that starts above the Nu of Narasao,<sup>1167</sup> thus indicating it was intended to follow the name of Srošardo, mentions that the god is known in Indian as Maasēno and Bizago. It is likely that the entire gloss refers to Srošardo alone, as there are no graphic markers suggesting that Narasao or Miuro are involved here.

Of these deities, Nana, Mozdoano and Miuro are known from the coinage of Kaniška I, who gave the orders for the sanctuary to be constructed. Aoromozdo, in the form Ōromozdo, is known from coins of Huviška, although some bear the *tamgha* of Kaniška I and thus may have been conceived under his rule. Whether Omma is present on Kušān

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<sup>1167</sup> Not, as Falk 2019 claims, the Sigma of Narasao. This is easily visible on the tracing of Rab in Sims-Williams 2008, 54 and on the photograph on p. 60.

coins has been discussed in chapter 6.1.2. with the result that she likely is not. Srošardo and Narasao are not found on any Kušān coins, but Maasēno and Bizago are. Maasēno is found alone on coins and in association with Bizago and Skando-Komaro. Bizago and Skando-Komaro are also found paired on coins, but neither is ever seen alone. All these coins are found exclusively under Huviška, although some have the *tamgha* of Kaniška I. The composition of this pantheon is thus not explicable from the coinage, and it should be treated as a distinct religious entity.

### 6.3.1.1. Nana

The role of Nana is made clear in Rab 2: She is the chief bestower of kingship, as Kaniška I obtained it from her. A similar formulation is found in NSP 1, although two different words are used. In Rab 2, the term βαοδανι, “kingship” is found, while NSP 1 uses χοαδηοδανι, which literally translates to “lordship”.<sup>1168</sup>

A different situation is found in DN1 5-7, where Vima Takto is said to have gained the kingship according to his own will, something that is still reflected in the title χοαζαοαργο held by Kaniška I in Rab 1. The wording is also a different one, as Rab 1 uses the construction ασο...αβορδο “obtained from” while DN1 6-7 uses the verb λφαχτο which Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 translate as “gained”.<sup>1169</sup> This does not pose much of a problem, as there is no trace of Nana worship on the coins of Vima Takto, although it raises the question why Kaniška I introduced Nana as his chief tutelary deity. It should be noted also that Kaniška does not receive kingship exclusively from Nana, but also from all other gods, but Nana evidently is singled out.

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<sup>1168</sup> The title χοαδηο is discussed in chapter 5.6.2.1.

<sup>1169</sup> The word is unexplained here and in all other publications despite diverting from the reading and interpretation of Davary/Humbach 1976, who read φαχτο, interpreted as derived from \*frašta- “to be asked”, cf also Davary 1982, 187-88. G. Fussman instead reads ?]ρκφαρ ?]ο,

Nana is mentioned twice in the inscription, but the mere number of mentions is less significant than the context. The initial mention is part of Kaniška's titulature. The second mention places her in the group of deities worshipped in the sanctuary. These mentions are thus initially unrelated, especially because Nana appears in the same role in NSP. She is however hierarchically superior to all other deities in this cult as she is the first to be mentioned in the group.

### **6.3.1.2. Omma**

As discussed in chapter 6.1.2., Falk 2019 argues that Omma is not a singular goddess but a community of deities. This suggestion can currently not be disproven, but the lack of evidence for such a concept in Iranian religion warrants caution. Omma is most likely not present on any known Kušān coins, but the same can be said of Srošardo and Narasao. Mozdoano is also known only from few specimens. The lack of an Omma coin thus is of little significance, even if Srošardo and Narasao are known to be Avestan deities. Since so little is known of the religion the Yuezhi brought to Bactria, it remains possible that she was a Kušān goddess. This could also explain her adornment with the epithet  $\sigma\phi\alpha\rho\rho\sigma$ . Omma is the only name with an epithet, and it only appears the first time she is mentioned, not within the list of deities. Rab 9 could be read to mean that she was the host of the cult, which would also explain the singular use of the epithet. However, it cannot be denied that in this case, the idea of Omma coming into her own presence is hard to explain. In this regard, perhaps the wording  $\iota\alpha\ \alpha\mu\gamma\alpha\ \nu\alpha\ \nu\alpha\ \sigma\delta\sigma\ \iota\alpha\ \alpha\mu\gamma\alpha\ \sigma\mu\mu\alpha$ , lit. “the same Nana and the same Omma” can help to understand the meaning. Sims-Williams 2008 opts to translate as “the above-mentioned Nana and the above-mentioned Omma” in reference to the fact that both names had already been

mentioned in the inscription.<sup>1170</sup> This formulation may be a way of working with a necessary redundancy, namely that it is required to include both Nana and Omma in the list of deities while still acknowledging the fact that they had already been mentioned, thus making it clear that they are the same deities. There can however be no denying that any explanation of Omma must remain problematic as long as no further sources are known.

### 6.3.1.3. Aoromozdo

The presence of Ahura Mazdā is a strong link to the Achaemenid, Sāsānian and Kommagenean religions. There is no doubt that in these dynasties, he is the supreme god and chief bestower of royalty. Under Kaniška I, this role is taken by Nana, which makes it surprising that Ahura Mazdā is present here. He appears on coins under Huviška, with an iconographic similarity to Sarapo and possibly Oaxšo, indicating a regal role befitting a supreme god in principle.

An aspect that has garnered little attention is that different forms of the name are encountered.<sup>1171</sup> Αορομοζδο is still close to the Old Iranian form, although it is unclear if a /h/ should be expected between the initial α and ο.<sup>1172</sup> The form found on the coins is Ωρομοζδο, exhibiting the regular Bactrian development of either OIr. /\*au/ or /\*awa/ to ω.<sup>1173</sup> This suggests that Αορομοζδο did not contain a /h/, but it also indicates that Αορομοζδο is an older form of the name that was no longer current in Bactrian. The implication from this may be that the Aoromozdo worship found in Rabatak refers to an old, long-established cult in Bactria and was not an *ad hoc* creation for the Rabatak

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<sup>1170</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64. Gnoli 2009, 144 on the other hand suggests that both deities were equated with each other, a point that the author reinforces with the association coins with Oēšo.

<sup>1171</sup> Although it is pointed out in Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 90.

<sup>1172</sup> cf. chapter 4.1.2.19.

<sup>1173</sup> Gholami 2014, 61-62.

βαγολαγγο. If this is the case, it would also open the possibility that the inclusion of Ōromozdo in the numismatic pantheon was not a reference to an established tradition. The appearance of Aoromozdo could be genuinely Zoroastrian and provide a parallel to the triad of Srošardo, Narasao and Miiro.<sup>1174</sup> However, the circumstances do not indicate Zoroastrian orthodoxy. The presence of non-Zoroastrian deities such as Nana and Mozdooano, the *interpretatio Indica* of a Zoroastrian god in Rab 10a and the generally non-Zoroastrian nature of the Surkh Kotal βαγολαγγο, which likely also holds true for Rabatak, are factors that forbid an exclusively Zoroastrian interpretation of the cult. Ahura Mazdā was himself never a popular god. His cult has evidently always belonged to the royal elite, while the Zoroastrian or Iranian population seems to have held deities such as Miθra or Anāhita in much higher esteem even in Western Iran.<sup>1175</sup> The motivation behind including a regal, elitist god in the cult is clear, but it seems questionable that Aoromozdo was adopted from local Zoroastrian practice. The use of an older form of the name in contrast to the typical Bactrian forms of other gods, later involving even Ōromozdo himself, suggests the survival of an older cult. This would likely be the A.uramazdā cult of the Achaemenids, which may have been kept alive in the Hellenistic period. This may be the basis for the possible Zeus cult in Aī Khanoum,<sup>1176</sup> but it is conceivable in many other forms of which no archaeological traces have yet been found. The inheritance from the Achaemenid period is also suggested by the form of Αορομοζδο/Ωρομοζδο which loses the /h/ in *ahura-* as does Old Persian.<sup>1177</sup> OIr. intervocalic /h/ would be expected to be preserved in Bactrian,<sup>1178</sup> while the development to ω indicates that the initial αο- in Αορομοζδο was spoken as a

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<sup>1174</sup> Gnoli 2009, 150.

<sup>1175</sup> Cf. Boyce 1982, 219-21.

<sup>1176</sup> Cf. Mairs 2014, 86-7.

<sup>1177</sup> Note however Schmitt 2016, 6, fn. 1, where it is characterised as a "heterosyllabische[r] 'unechte[r]' [Diphthong]".

<sup>1178</sup> e.g. οαυαγο- < \*wahā-kā-, BD2, 242b.



diphthong /\*au/ or /\*aw/. The form Ωρομοζδο is also found in Bactrian documents as the first name of the month and as a part of numerous personal names. A form Ωυρομοζδο, suggesting a pronunciation similar to MP Ōhrmuzd, is found in the documents ‘xp’ and ‘xq’. In the case of ‘xp’, it has been suggested that the reference in question is actually to the god and that a temple of Ōhrmuzd is alluded to.<sup>1179</sup> In document ‘xq’, a certain Ōhrmuzd is the addressee of the letter, who seems to be a figure of authority abusing his power. Document ‘xp’ belongs to the late Kušāno-Sāsānian period.<sup>1180</sup> Document ‘xq’ is much later, apparently after Bactria was lost for good to the Hephthalites.<sup>1181</sup> Furthermore, a palimpsest in Document ‘ci’ contains the name ωλωουρομοζδο, although no context is discernible. However, ωλω is clearly a Bactrian form.<sup>1182</sup> It should also be noted that this palimpsest is likely very old, predating 370 CE, i.e. in the Kušāno-Sāsānian period.<sup>1183</sup> The names of the Kušāno-Sāsānian kings Hormizd 1 and 2 are usually written on coin legends as OYPOMOZΔO or WYPOMOZΔO, although some spelling variations exist, such as WOPOMOZΔO and, albeit rarely, WPOMOZΔO.<sup>1184</sup> The god never appears on Kušāno-Sāsānian coins. The evidence indicates that Ωυρομοζδο is the Middle Persian and Ωρομοζδο is the Bactrian form, i.e. that Bactrian did not preserve a /h/ in the name. This suggests that the Bactrian form may be influenced by the Old Persian A.uramazdā while Middle Persian Ōhrmuzd was occasionally used by Persians in Bactria but did not replace the Bactrian form. Only the PN ωλωουρομοζδο suggests that it may have been adopted by Bactrians in the Sāsānian period.

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<sup>1179</sup> BD2, 282a. This suggestion is reasonable because the wording πισο (ουρομοζδο) is found in connection with gods in other documents, suggesting they were written in temples or at least in the presence of a priest.

<sup>1180</sup> Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 78.

<sup>1181</sup> Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 78.

<sup>1182</sup> BD2, 219.

<sup>1183</sup> Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 69.

<sup>1184</sup> Göbl 1984, pl. 61.

The implication from this is that the Bactrian Ahura Mazdā cult observable in Rabatak was an Achaemenid inheritance. As such, presupposing that this cult did not radically change between the end of the Achaemenid and the beginning of the Kušān period, Aoromozdo is likely to appear as a god of investiture in Rabatak. He lost the principal position he held in the Achaemenid and possibly in the Greek periods to Nana, but his legacy was still so strong that his presence in Rabatak was desirable.

#### **6.3.1.4. Mozdoano**

Without better knowledge of this god, it is not possible to know what function exactly he had and what the motivation behind including him in the Rabatak pantheon was. However, considering the discussion in chapter 6.1.3.5.4., it is worth pointing out that the phrase  $\sigma\alpha\nu\iota\nu\tau\alpha \mu\omicron\zeta\delta\omicron$  in NSP 4 refers to the Indian campaign of Kaniška I, the same event that caused the foundation of the Rabatak  $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\omicron$ . It is therefore possible that Mozdoano was worshipped in Rabatak specifically as a god of victory and the fortunes of war.

#### **6.3.1.5. Srošardo, Narasao and Miiro**

The entirely Zoroastrian nature of the last three deities listed has long been noted both in their individuality and in their association with each other.<sup>1185</sup> It is not particularly difficult to explain them. Srošardo and Narasao are associated in the Avesta, as the trinity Sraoša, Aši and Nairyō.sarha.<sup>1186</sup> The association of Sraoša and Aši is particularly strong, and an exclusive epithet of Sraoša in the Avesta is *ašivant-*.<sup>1187</sup>

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<sup>1185</sup> Carter 2006, 354, Gnoli 2009, 150.

<sup>1186</sup> Y 57.3 (Yt 11.8), cf. Gershevitch 1967c, 193-4 and Kreyenbroek 1985, 176-7.

<sup>1187</sup> Gershevitch 1967c, 194.

Srošard is thus best explained as “Sraoša accompanied by Aši“. Srošardo and Narasao could thus be taken to represent this Avestan triad.

The addition of Miiro as an associate of Srošardo also has an Avestan basis. Sraoša, Miθra and Rašnu form an important triad that “remains throughout the development of Zoroastrianism in charge of prosecuting the wicked”,<sup>1188</sup> as in Y 10.41.<sup>1189</sup> The association of Sraoša and Miθra in the Avesta is so close that the two share the same or very similar epithets,<sup>1190</sup> leading Kreyenbroek 1985 to argue that the militant epithets of Sraoša seem to have been directly borrowed from Miθra.<sup>1191</sup>

This fits with the identification of Srošardo with Maaseno and Bizago as discussed above. The Mahāsenā and Viśākha aspects of Skanda in particular emphasise the martial nature of this god,<sup>1192</sup> something that also deserves to be pointed out with respect to the coinage. Here, Skando-Komaro is on the same level as Bizago, but he is missing in Rabatak, which indicates that the specific cult here is not identical to the general idea of the Skanda triad on the coins.

If the Avestan connections are considered here and the Rabatak pantheon is dissociated from the other religious sources of the Kušān period, the role of Miiro also becomes apparent. It has been discussed above that Miiro almost always appears in close association with Mao, as seen in the coinage and on the Kaniška Reliquary. Mao however is absent from Rabatak. This suggests that the concept of Miiro in this cult is

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<sup>1188</sup> Gershevitch 1967c, 193 with citation.

<sup>1189</sup> Here, Sraoša, as part of the trinity, also receives the epithet *ašyō*, “friend of Aši”, see Gershevitch 1967c, 94-5. Rašnu however is not present in Kušān sources.

<sup>1190</sup> Especially in Y 57.13 (Sraoša) and Yt 10.98 (Miθra), see Kreyenbroek 1985, 166, including the list of epithets. Both Sraoša (Y 57.15-16) and Miθra (Y 10.103) are described as *yō harətača aiwyāxštača vīspay*, “inspector and supervisor of the whole world” (Gershevitch 1967c, 124-5; also Kreyenbroek 1985, 44-5), a role that the Kušān emperor seems to also have claimed for himself, cf. chapter 6.2.2.

<sup>1191</sup> *Op. cit.*, 175.

<sup>1192</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.2.

different from that of the other sources. Miuro, in the above-mentioned Avestan context, has a martial character and this fits with most of the other deities in this list.

#### **6.3.1.6. The nature of the Rabatak pantheon**

In summary, the pantheon of Rabatak, with the limitations imposed by the lack of other sources discussed above, gives the impression of being a predominantly martial assembly of deities. This is consistent with the occasion of the foundation of the sanctuary, which was a successful military campaign. Nana and Aoromozdō apparently were present as investiture deities, confirming Kaniška's claim to kingship on basis of his military exploits and expansion of the empire. The role of Omma, if a goddess at all, is elusive, but would be expected to be in line with this.

The religious diversity of the pantheon poses a problem that is not easy to solve. The array of deities is predominantly Iranian, but not exclusively so. As there is no archaeological context, it cannot be said for sure that the shrine belonging to the sanctuary took the shape of a fire temple, was comparable to that of Surkh Kotal, or was of an entirely different nature. It is likely that the pantheon was assembled specifically for the cult of Rabatak and it would seem that each βαρολαγγο had its own assembly of deities. However, this does not explain the criteria by which the deities were chosen and why Rabatak specifically included four Avestan deities together with one or two non-Avestan ones. It also does not explain the gloss Rab 10a which refers to Indian worship. The intuitive explanation would be that Bactria was a predominantly Iranian territory and the Rabatak cult was designed with this in mind but also included specifically Kušān deities. It is also possible that Nana, Omma and Mozdoōano were genuinely part of Bactrian religious practice at the time.

#### 6.4. Kušān religion in summary

The imperial or dynastic religion of the Kušān that is reflected on the coins, the dynastic sanctuaries and votive objects does not intend to comprehensively reflect the popular beliefs and cults in the Kušān Empire. Occasional attempts were made to address singular religious communities such as the Buddhists or adherents of Heraklēs with specific coin issues, but in general, what is reflected is a political ideology. The Kušān devised a polytheistic system in which the individual aspects of kingship were deified in shape of deities that, at least for the most part, were worshipped in Kušān Bactria. These deities were selected for their features, not for their representation of the populace. Emphasis could be shifted in cult and promotion to respond to events that included both military triumph and crisis. Individual deities could embody different aspects at different times depending on what kind of divine protection was required. For this reason, the appearance of a god on Kušān coinage can vary in its meaning as indicated by changing iconography, and for this reason too, the presence of a deity in a βαγολαγγο can be for entirely different reasons than their presence on the coins.

The Kušān emperor was at the centre of a religious-martial conception. He was in contact with the deities and his action determined the presence and role of the deities that were to be worshipped. The Kušān emperor was of divine nature himself, but he was not the epiphany of any one god or goddess. His role was to take control of the world, to survey it and to bring order to it according to the will of the gods. As such, he was invested by the gods and received their support when required. In consequence, the βαγολαγγο was dedicated to the gods and the emperors, which also required the dynastic ancestors of the emperor to be part of the worship. The βαγολαγγο was addressed to the Kušān élite who took part in the cult and were responsible for the construction of the sanctuary. This role was so important that it was perpetuated in

building and dedicatory inscriptions in the sanctuaries. The élites also had the right to make splendid votive offerings to the gods in their own name, as the Nokonzok Silver Plate proves. The ordinary populace had no active part in this cult but was recipient to the grandeur of the structures which represent the ultimate and limitless power of the Kušān emperor. They also saw the gods with whom the emperors were in contact on the coins, and sometimes found that the emperors were in correspondence with deities in popular worship.

This religious conception was in place in the reigns of Kaniška I and Huviška. It was not created *ex nihilo* by Kaniška but was probably influenced by the convergence of Iranian, Indian, Greek, and Roman religious ideas in Bactria. The idea to include a diverse pantheon on the coin reverses was not new, but its streamlining into individual groups of deities for specific political purposes probably was, although it may have been influenced specifically by Roman coinage. What exactly influenced the establishment of specific cults with selected pantheons as in Rabatak is uncertain, although the *hierothesion* of Antiochos I in Kommagene suggests it was not a novel Kušān invention. The source of this idea is however obscure.

Vāsudeva I apparently lost interest in this kind of political religion. He still presented himself as invested by Nana on his initial coin issue, but otherwise reduced the numismatic pantheon drastically. Under the Vāsudevas, only Oēšo and Ardoxšo are found, Kaniška II and Vāsiška prefer Ardoxšo alone. These deities receive more abundant attributes many of which have been seen with other deities before, thus extending their roles to be more encompassing. Again, why the Kušān religion took this development under Vāsudeva I is uncertain, although the Huviškan Crisis may still have lasted into his reign and a change in the approach to the gods must have seemed feasible.

## 7. Kušān Imperial Strategy

### 7.1. Kušān Expansion

#### 7.1.1. Kujula Kadphises

According to Chinese sources, the Kušān Empire originated as one of five local principalities ruled by Yuezhi clans under petty rulers known as *yabghus* (*xihou* in the Chinese texts). These principalities were founded by the Yuezhi after they conquered the kingdom of Daxia and divided it up between themselves. The principalities are called Xiumi with the capital Hemo, Shuangmi with a homonymous capital, Guishuang with the capital Huazo, Xidun with the capital Bomao and Dumis with the capitals Gaofu and Dumis.<sup>1193</sup>

Daxia is identified with Bactria and the Yuezhi conquest is commonly believed to be reflected in Strabo XI.8.2, who notes that the Ἄσιοι, Πασσιανοὶ, Τόχαροι and Σακαραῶκαι conquered Bactria from the Greeks and Trogus-Justin XLI, where it is said that the Scythian tribes of the Saraucae and Asiani occupied Bactria and Sogdiana. Later, the Arsakids under Artabanos I are mentioned to have been at war with the Scythians and Tocharii. Bactria is later described to be under Tokharian rule and from the Kušān period onwards was known as Tokharistan. The Chinese Daxia may be a transcription of *\*Toga(ra)*, although it may also be understood as 'Da Xia', 'Great Xia'.<sup>1194</sup> Hill 2009 states that the implication of the former interpretation may be that Bactria was conquered by the Tokharians before the Yuezhi arrived.<sup>1195</sup> This is hard to follow because in that case, Tokharian rule must have been rather short, but important

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<sup>1193</sup> HHS 88/118.9a-9b (2921), cf. Falk 2015a, 70-74 (§§ 045-047) and Hill 2009, 28-29.

<sup>1194</sup> Hill 2009, 319.

<sup>1195</sup> *Ibid.*

enough for their name to become associated with Bactria over that of the Yuezhi for many centuries to come.

The locations of the Yuezhi principalities are difficult to establish because of the problems involving the identification of the Chinese geographical names.<sup>1196</sup> Grenet 2006 proposes to locate Xiumi in Karategin in the Vakhsh valley,<sup>1197</sup> Shuangmi in Hisar west of Dushanbe,<sup>1198</sup> Guishuang in the lower Vakhsh valley,<sup>1199</sup> Xidun in the Kafirnigan valley,<sup>1200</sup> and Dumi beyond the lower Surkhan-Darya,<sup>1201</sup> the town of Dumi being identical with Termez, but rejecting the identification of Gaofu with Kabul.<sup>1202</sup>

Falk 2018 does not follow this in locating the principalities in the narrow geographical margin of northern Bactria, but instead considers a much bigger territory. Based on a critical examination of the Chinese toponyms, it is tentatively proposed to locate the *yabghu* of Xiumi in Roshan, Shuangmi in Chitral, Guishuang further to the north in Sogdiana, the *yabghu* of Xidun in Balkh or Bamiyan and Dumi further to the west. It is believed that such a wider geographical distribution along the trade routes linking South Asia and China is a more satisfactory explanation for the apparent wealth and power that allowed Kujula Kadphises to later sustain a long war of conquest and build the foundations of a great empire while also being able to support the Han emperor in his military campaigns in Xinjiang.

The *Hou Han Shu* narrates that more than a century after the establishment of these principalities, the *xihou* (prince; i.e. the *yabghu*) of Guishuang, Qiujiuque conquered

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<sup>1196</sup> The contributions trying to identify the principalities before Grenet 2006 are collected in Hill 2009, 320-50- Grenet 2006 is briefly summarised with critical remarks in Falk 2015a, 75-78 (§ 049).

<sup>1197</sup> *Op. cit.*, 334-35.

<sup>1198</sup> *Op. cit.*, 335.

<sup>1199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1200</sup> *Op. cit.*, 335-36.

<sup>1201</sup> *Op. cit.*, 335.

<sup>1202</sup> *Op. cit.*, 332.



his counterparts, made himself king and founded the Guishuang dynasty. Qiujiuque has long been identified with Kujula Kadphises and the Guishuang with the Kušān. Rab 12-14 indicates that Kaniška I saw Kujula as his dynastic ancestor. On the “Heraios” coinage, the Kušān ruler who may be Kujula assumes the title of tyrant and calls himself a Kušān but retains the Chinese title of *xihou* (spelled HIAOY). This has been interpreted by Falk 2018 as a foreign political message aimed at the Arsakids, India and the Chinese. The title of tyrant seems to claim equality towards the Arsakids.<sup>1203</sup> The title of *xihou* “signals that the one Han emperor has to deal with just one *yabghu* and not with many”,<sup>1204</sup> whereas naming himself after his homeland (i.e. appearing as Kušān rather than Kujula Kadphises) is an Indian tradition and a message aimed at his future Indian subjects. It is also pointed out that the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares seems to answer to his new rival in the coinage by reversing the image of a horseman on his reverse and adding a Nikē figure that was first introduced by Kujula.<sup>1205</sup>

There is no doubt that Gondophares was Kujula's rival in his expansion south of the Hindukush and towards India.<sup>1206</sup> The archaeological finds show close geographical proximity. Taxila was under the rule of Kujula Kadphises. The number of coins found in the Sirkap mound is immense, second only to Azes II.<sup>1207</sup> The Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription of the year 136 of the Azes Era (c. 79 CE) naming a *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputra Khuṣāṇa* again most likely refers to Kujula Kadphises.<sup>1208</sup> The adjacent Peshawar Valley however seems to have been defended by the Indo-Parthians for the time being, as no coins of Kujula Kadphises have been found here and inscriptions from

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<sup>1203</sup> *Op. cit.*, 5.

<sup>1204</sup> *Op. cit.*, 5-6.

<sup>1205</sup> *Op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>1206</sup> Senior 2000/1, 210.

<sup>1207</sup> Allchin 1968, 10-11. The arguments raised by Senior 2000 and 2008 for the existence of only one king named Azes are quite strong, but this issue cannot be discussed here.

<sup>1208</sup> Konow 1929, 70; Falk 2015a, 97. Again, the objection of G. Fussman here is in defence of 78 CE as year 1 of the Kaniška Era.

Takht-i Bāhī attest Gondopharid suzerainty in ca. 50 CE.<sup>1209</sup> Falk 2018 explains this by proposing that Kujula held the Swāt Valley north of Peshawar and the Gilgit-Babusar-Mansehra route east of the Indus.<sup>1210</sup> The rule of Kujula north of Taxila is attested in the Senavarma Inscription (8g) from Oḍi, probably located in the Swāt Valley.<sup>1211</sup> Further evidence from the Swāt Valley comes from some 73 coins of Kujula found in Butkara I, together with coins of all other Kuṣān emperors up to Vāsudeva I and preceding and succeeding dynasties.<sup>1212</sup> The Panjtār inscription, found in Salīmpūr near Panjtār in the Swāt Valley,<sup>1213</sup> refers to a *mahārāja Guṣāṇa* who may be identified with Kujula Kadphises,<sup>1214</sup> in the year 122 of the Azes Era (c. 75 CE).

The expansion of Kujula at the expense of the Indo-Parthians is also mentioned in the *Hou Han Shu*, which narrates that after taking control of the other Yuezhi principalities, Kujula went on to conquer Gaofu, Puda and Jibin, all of which were under the control of the Anxi. As noted above, Gaofu was traditionally identified with Kabul, but this has been put into question recently and it has been located north of the Hindukush near Termez. Hill 2009 has identified Puda with Patktyike, the modern Afghan province of Paktiyā and the Kurram Valley,<sup>1215</sup> and Jibin with Kapiśa (Begram) and Gandhāra including Swāt, Chitral and Hunza.<sup>1216</sup> Taken together with Falk 2018, this would indicate that at least part of the Shuangmi principality would have been under the control of the Anxi.

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<sup>1209</sup> J. Cribb *apud* Falk 2015a, 88 and *ibid*, 89-90.

<sup>1210</sup> *Op. cit.*, 34.

<sup>1211</sup> von Hinüber 2003, 7.

<sup>1212</sup> Göbl 1976, 42. The coins from Barikot have recently been catalogued by E. Shavarebi.

<sup>1213</sup> Konow 1929, 67.

<sup>1214</sup> Falk 2015a, 94. The objection of G. Fussman is based on his identification of the Kaniška Era with the Śaka Era of 78 CE.

<sup>1215</sup> *Op. cit.*, 506-16.

<sup>1216</sup> *Op. cit.*, 489-505.

As for the Anxi, there can be no doubt that they refer to the Indo-Parthians.<sup>1217</sup> This name is commonly given to the Arsakid Empire,<sup>1218</sup> but seeing how the PME (§38) indicates that the Romans did not seem to dynastically distinguish between the Parthians of the Arsakid Empire and those ruling in Minnagar in Scythia (Sindh), it should not be surprising that the Chinese did not do so either.<sup>1219</sup>

The realm of Kujula Kadphises therefore included the five principalities of the *yabghus* which may have been limited to northern Bactria or may have spanned as far as the Pamirs heading for Xinjiang in the east and Sogdiana in the west, as well as the upper Indus territory and Taxila to the south but not including the Peshawar Valley. Bactria south of the Oxus was under Kujula's rule also, as numismatic evidence shows. South of the Hindukush, the realm included the Kabul Valley around Kapiśa (Begram)<sup>1220</sup> and the province of Paktiyā towards the Indus Valley.<sup>1221</sup> As the Peshawar Valley was not part of Kujula's realm, it seems questionable if the Kušān controlled the Khyber Pass at this time. The link between the Kabul Valley and Gandhāra in this period seems rather to have been the more northern Karappah Pass route, which does not directly lead to Peshawar.<sup>1222</sup> The Khyber Pass seems to have been of relatively little importance until Peshawar became a centre of Kušān rule under Kaniška I.<sup>1223</sup>

In this state, the empire was described in the Hou Han Shu, which notes that the capital was the town of Lanshi.<sup>1224</sup> Once again, the identification of this place has posed a problem to scholars, but as it is located in Daxia, there seems to be no question that it

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<sup>1217</sup> Hill 2009, 244-45, 351 and 354-56.

<sup>1218</sup> Posch 1998, 355.

<sup>1219</sup> Hill 2009, 355 also remarks on this passage from the PME.

<sup>1220</sup> The transfer of power in Begram from the Indo-Parthians to Kujula Kadphises is indicated by numismatic finds, cf. Errington 2001, 363.

<sup>1221</sup> Kušān presence in Gardēz, Paktiyā, is attested according to Ball 2008, 189 and 2019, 129 (w. lit.); the former states that "it might have been a provincial capital" in the Indo-Greek period.

<sup>1222</sup> Dar 2007, 36-41.

<sup>1223</sup> Dar 2007, 41.

<sup>1224</sup> Falk 2015a, 90-92 (§061).

must be sought in Bactria south of the Oxus. Consequently, it has been identified with most major towns there, including Balkh, Kunduz, Khulm and Baghlan.<sup>1225</sup> If the Kušān are assumed to have adopted the traditional local structures of Bactria, then the city of Balkh (Bactra) should be expected to have served as their capital. It certainly had an elevated position in the Sāsānian period, as the fact that it was the location of a mint alone shows.<sup>1226</sup> Hill 2009/1 makes a case for Baghlan based on its strategic location,<sup>1227</sup> and the establishment of two dynastic sanctuaries in its vicinity under Kaniška I might serve as a further argument in its favour. However, with the current state of knowledge, only further archaeological research will be able to settle this question.

A Kušān structure has been excavated in Khalchayan in the Surkhan-Darya Valley.<sup>1228</sup> It is generally interpreted as a palace and has attracted attention thanks to a sculptural relief showing horsemen and members of a royal court. The heads of the princes depicted display a great similarity to the portraits on the "Heraios" coinage so that the dating of the structure is linked to the dating of the coinage. If both are to be attributed to Kujula Kadphises, the Khalchayan structure would be connected, in whatever particular function, to the kingship of Kujula.<sup>1229</sup> According to Grenet 2006, it would have been located in the principality of Shuangmi,<sup>1230</sup> although the reinterpretation of Falk 2018 makes Guishuang, i.e., the homeland of Kujula, a possibility.

Chinese sources further attest military activity in Xinjiang in support of the Han emperor that seems to extend to the reign of Vima Takto.<sup>1231</sup>

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<sup>1225</sup> Hill 2009/1, 328.

<sup>1226</sup> Cribb 1990, 155.

<sup>1227</sup> *Op. cit.*, 328.

<sup>1228</sup> A brief overview with the most important literature is found in Staviskij 1986, 278.

<sup>1229</sup> cf. most recently Mode 2013.

<sup>1230</sup> *Op. cit.*, 335.

<sup>1231</sup> cf. chapter 2.2.11.

### 7.1.2. Vima Takto

Kujula Kadphises died at an advanced age of over 79 and was succeeded by his son Vima Takto.<sup>1232</sup> The *Hou Han Shu* seems to refer to him as the conqueror of Tianzhu, i.e., north-western India.<sup>1233</sup> The extent of this conquest seems to have gone as far as the Mathurā district. The inscription on the base of a statue depicting the emperor (as Vema Takṣu) was found in the Māt sanctuary.<sup>1234</sup> It refers to him as the founder of the sanctuary. A coin from Kashmir may refer to the emperor's rule there, executed by a Mahākṣatrapa, who may be the “general” referred to in the *Hou Han Shu* who was installed by the emperor as the governor of Tianzhu.<sup>1235</sup> In the west, the inscriptions DN1 and SK2 date to the year 279 of a Greek era. DN1 most likely named Vima Takto as the reigning emperor. The Almosi Gorge inscriptions also name Vima Takto.

Vima Takto has been identified as the emperor issuing the anonymous Sōtēr Megas coinage which has been found in “southern Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, north and south of the Hindu Kush (Bactria and the Kabul valley), northwestern Pakistan (Gandhara and the Taxila region) and northern India (Punjab and the Mathura region)”.<sup>1236</sup> Recently, the beginning of the coinage has been attributed to Kujula

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<sup>1232</sup> Falk 2015a, 97 (§072).

<sup>1233</sup> Falk 2015a, 100 (§077).

<sup>1234</sup> Shrava 1993, 2-3; Falk 2015, 107-08.

<sup>1235</sup> Falk 2015a, 102.

<sup>1236</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 44; disputed by Boppearachchi 2008.

Kadphises, although the bulk of the issues are still believed to come from the reign of Vima Takto.<sup>1237</sup>

This evidence suggests that Vima Takto pushed south towards Arachosia and east to Mathurā and possibly Kashmir. It appears that Kujula stopped the expansion of his rule at some point although it is impossible to determine whether it happened by choice or by force. If this is the case, it is well possible that Vima Takto felt compelled to enforce his legitimacy to the throne by adding conquests of his own.<sup>1238</sup>

Under Vima Takto and his son Vima Kadphises, the Kušān remained active in Xinjiang although it does not seem that the region was part of their empire.

### **7.1.3. Vima Kadphises**

The reign of Vima Taktos successor Vima Kadphises is poorly attested. Apart from coins, which are however important because they constitute the first Kušān gold coinage, there is only one inscription in his name, in Khalatseh, Ladakh, attesting Kušān rule in Kashmir and dated to the year 287 (CKI 62). The dating is in the same Greek era as DN1 and SK2, attesting the year c. 112 CE for Vima Kadphises. This means that regarding the beginning of the Kaniška Era in c. 127 CE, the reign of Vima Kadphises can be calculated to have lasted for a minimum of 15 years. Whether Vima Kadphises continued the expansive policy of his predecessors cannot be said, although it is possible that this means that Kušān rule in the Indian subcontinent was eroding, making Kaniška's Indian campaign necessary.

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<sup>1237</sup> cf. J. Cribb, *The Soter Megas coins of the first and second Kushan kings, Kujula Kadphises and Wima Takto*. *Gandhāran Studies* 8 (2015), 79-122.

<sup>1238</sup> As a parallel, one may think of the Achaemenids from Cyrus II to Xerxes, who all lost no time to prove their worth in battle and conquest upon their accession to the throne. Kaniška I also launched his Indian campaign in the year of his accession to the throne according to the Rabatak Inscription.

#### 7.1.4. Kaniška I.

The reign of Kaniška I is attested for a minimum of 23 years, beginning in the year one of a new era. This may be the continuation of the Greek era used by his predecessors but resetting to the year 1 rather than 301 after the third century elapsed.<sup>1239</sup> Kaniška launched an Indian campaign in the first year of his reign which was proclaimed victorious in the year 6 but nevertheless seemed to have lasted until the year 10. In the year one, Kaniška gave orders to found the sanctuary of Rabatak in celebration of his conquest, and in the year 10 he returned to Bactria with the spoils of victory. This campaign is documented in Rab 4-7 and 19, and in NSP 3-4. It is also referred to in the *Li yul lun-bstan-pa*, a Tibetan translation of a Khotanese history,<sup>1240</sup> and the Chinese *Sūtrālaṃkāra*.<sup>1241</sup> As discussed below, there is also some archaeological evidence.

In Rab 5-7, it is claimed that Kaniška conquered the cities of ἀδραγο, ὠζοπο, σαγηδο, κωζαμβο, παλαβοτρο and ζιριτιαμβο. This is the most detailed account of the campaign and its itinerary and allows the Kušān expansion in India to be traced.

##### 7.1.4.1. ἀδραγο

This city has not been positively identified, although it is perhaps possible to read here a reflection of the Oxydracae people (Ὀξωδράκαι, Συδράκαι, Sydraci or Sudracae).<sup>1242</sup> They were encountered by Alexander in the area of present-day Lahore during the march along the Indus in 326/5 BCE after the mutiny at the Hyphasis.<sup>1243</sup> Strabo calls them a “large tribe”.<sup>1244</sup> The casual mention of the people in Lucian, *Quomodo historia*

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<sup>1239</sup> Falk/Bennett 2009, 208.

<sup>1240</sup> Falk 2015a, 115-17 (§099).

<sup>1241</sup> Falk 2015a, 117 (§100).

<sup>1242</sup> I do not take credit for this interpretation, but I was unable to locate the original source, which must be an article postdating the publication of Sims-Williams 2008, where the reading ἀδραγο was established.

<sup>1243</sup> Arrian, *anab.* V, 22,1; VI 4, 11 and 14; *Ind.* 4. On the location see Tarn 1997, 240 and Hahn 2000, 186.

<sup>1244</sup> Strab. XV, 1, 33.

*conscribenda sit*, 31, 43 further attests to their prominence. Closer to the Kušān period, Ptolemy mentions a *polis* further to the south named Ξοδράκη/Zοδράκη.<sup>1245</sup>

#### 7.1.4.2. ωζοπο

There have been several attempts to identify ωζοπο with Ujjain<sup>1246</sup> although this is rejected by Sims-Williams 2008 on basis of the vocalisation and the fact that the fourth letter is clearly π, not ν. Ptolemy mentions a city called Όζοαβίς (Όζοαμίς), a *polis* of the Ράμναι by the Narmada,<sup>1247</sup> although this would be very far to the south. What exact Indian vocalisation is reflected here remains unclear and thus also how it would have been rendered in Bactrian.

#### 7.1.4.3. σαγηδο

The third city is Sāketa, present-day Ayodhyā. The conquest is described in the *Li yul lun-bstan-pa*, a Tibetan translation of a Khotanese history which also mentions that Kaniška was aided by troops from Kucha and Khotan.<sup>1248</sup> The town is also mentioned in the *Hou Han Shu* as Shaqi in a passage that could be taken to mean that it was defended against Kaniška's invasion using elephants.<sup>1249</sup> Ptolemy describes Σάγηδα as a μητρόπολις.<sup>1250</sup>

#### 7.1.4.4. κωζαμβο

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<sup>1245</sup> Ptol. Geogr. 7,1,60. Note that Tam 1997, 240 considers the possibility that the Oxydracae moved further to the south after Alexander's campaign.

<sup>1246</sup> Όζηνη in Ptol. Geogr. 7,1,63. cf. Stückelberger/Graßhoff 2006/II, 709 for the identification, also involving the identity of Tiastanes with Caṣṭana, whose seat the city is according to Ptolemy.

<sup>1247</sup> Ptol. Geogr. 7,1,65.

<sup>1248</sup> Falk 2015a, 115-16 (§099).

<sup>1249</sup> Falk 2015a, 116-17 (§099).

<sup>1250</sup> Ptol. Geogr. 7,1,71.



Evidently, κωζαμβο is Kauśāmbī, the ancient capital of the Mahājanapada of Vatsa.<sup>1251</sup> Oddly, neither Strabo nor Ptolemy seem to know it.<sup>1252</sup> Systematic excavations have taken place here that have shown that the city did not experience any interruption in the continuity of its development, although some neglect was observed in the maintenance of the excavated road for which “the political eclipse of Kauśāmbī after the Kuṣāṇa invasion” is considered as an explanation.<sup>1253</sup> Kuṣāṇ presence beginning with Kaniška I is well-attested archaeologically,<sup>1254</sup> and a number of inscriptions dated to his reign have been found, the earliest from the year 2.<sup>1255</sup>

#### 7.1.4.5. παλαβοτρο

The Bactrian παλαβοτρο reflects a Prakrit form of Skt. Pāṭaliputra- also found in Greek Παλι(μ)βόθρα in Strabo and Ptolemy.<sup>1256</sup> The latter calls it a βασίλειον which is hardly surprising, as the town, previously the capital of the Mahājanapada of Magadha, became the imperial capital of the Maurya and the Śuṅga and after the Kuṣāṇ that of the Gupta. There can hardly be any doubt that it had an elevated political status when Kaniška conquered it and its capture must have been of some symbolic importance.<sup>1257</sup> No systematic excavations have taken place that shed any light on the circumstances of Kuṣāṇ conquest or the nature or duration of its occupation or the position of the city in the Kuṣāṇ Empire.

#### 7.1.4.6. ζιριτιαμβο

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<sup>1251</sup> Sharma 1960, 25.

<sup>1252</sup> A Κῶσα is mentioned in Ptol. Geogr. 7,1,65 and a Κώσαμβα in 7,1,17. While the latter is relatively close to Kauśāmbī's actual location, it seems to be a coastal city as the context indicates.

<sup>1253</sup> Sharma 1969, 25.

<sup>1254</sup> Sharma 1969, 84.

<sup>1255</sup> Satya Shrava 10.

<sup>1256</sup> Ptol. Geogr. VII.1.73; Strabo XV.1.21 among other mentions.

<sup>1257</sup> Strabo XI,11,1 records a historical tradition that the Indo-Greeks under Menander came as far as Pāṭaliputra but failed at taking it. He himself is rather skeptical about this.

ζιριτιαμβο is identified with Śrī-Campā near modern Bhagalpur, where Kušān coins have previously been found.<sup>1258</sup> It seems to be described as an outermost point of the campaign, as the phrase οιδρα αδα αβο ι ζιριτ[ι]αμβο (Rab 5-6) indicates.<sup>1259</sup> If this is the case, then it may primarily be a boast that the Kušān not only took Pāṭaliputra but also went beyond. Abundant Kušān material has been found even beyond Bhagalpur in Kolkata,<sup>1260</sup> although this may be explicable by close economic and cultural ties with neighbouring political entities.

#### 7.1.4.7. Mathurā

The list of cities in Rab 4-7 seems to follow a geographical order from west to east. However, the interpretation is made difficult by the fact that the two westernmost places cannot be securely identified. If αδραγο is to be sought in the Indus Valley, this poses a difficulty to explain how Mathurā fits into the picture. If it was conquered by Kaniška on the same campaign, it would be expected to be mentioned in Rab, as it was of high prominence before and during the Kušān period. Sōtēr Megas coinage has been found here to such an extent that it was long believed that there was a mint in Mathurā.<sup>1261</sup> There is an abundance of copper coins of Vima Kadphises from Mathurā, although only with local circulation.<sup>1262</sup> The aforementioned inscription of Vima Takto from the *devakula* (sanctuary) in Māt in the Mathurā district and one from the time of Huviška seem to indicate that it was founded under his rule.<sup>1263</sup> However, the excavations here have not been conducted in a scientific manner and most of the archaeological context

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<sup>1258</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 107.

<sup>1259</sup> cf. chapter 4.3.7.

<sup>1260</sup> e.g., IAAR 1956/57, 30.

<sup>1261</sup> MacDowall 1968, 30.

<sup>1262</sup> MacDowall 1968, 30.

<sup>1263</sup> SS #2, #66.

has been lost.<sup>1264</sup> On the other hand, systematic excavations with attention to stratigraphy have been conducted in Sonkh, also in the Mathurā district. Here, the earliest evidence for Kuśān presence were two coins, one of Vima Kadphises and one of Kaniška I sandwiched together, which seems to be good evidence that the town came under Kuśān occupation early in Kaniška's reign.<sup>1265</sup> Hence, the evidence for the status of Mathurā at the outset of Kaniška's Indian Campaign is inconclusive. If it was under Kuśān control, it may well have been the starting point of the campaign, and ἀδραγο and ὠζοπο would have to be located somewhere between Mathurā and Sāketa. If it was not under Kuśān control, it would be a likely scenario that it was lost under Vima Kadphises, although it raises the question why Kaniška would not have mentioned its re-conquest, and why earlier Kuśān control is not visible in Sonkh.

#### **7.1.4.8. The Campaign**

The path the Kuśān conquerors under Kaniška I took is not linear. While it seems they generally followed the Great Trunk Road towards Pāṭaliputra as Menander did three centuries prior,<sup>1266</sup> detours would have been made for Sāketa and Kauśāmbī. If Pāṭaliputra was still as heavily fortified as described by Megasthenes,<sup>1267</sup> it is likely that the Kuśān would have been prepared for a siege at least here. The proclamation to the βατριάγγε mentioned in Rab 4 (see below) seems to indicate that Kaniška had defined these cities as objectives for his conquest and that the Kuśān invasion was not a path of least resistance. This would indicate that Kaniška was certain of the availability of supplies for his army for the duration of the campaign and had access to heavy

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<sup>1264</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 140.

<sup>1265</sup> Härtel 2007, 339.

<sup>1266</sup> But cf. chapter 2.2.3.

<sup>1267</sup> cf. Jacobs 2016, 74: "Unter den bei Ausgrabungen im Gebiet der antiken Stadt Palibothra/Pāṭaliputra gemachten Befunden hat sich insbesondere ein Abschnitt der Festungsanlage mit den Angaben aus der nur in Auszügen erhaltenen Stadtbeschreibung des Megasthenes verbinden lassen."

weaponry, perhaps even siege engines.<sup>1268</sup> The backbone of the Kušān army would nevertheless have been the cavalry. The Indian defenders are attested to have used war elephants,<sup>1269</sup> and it is likely that the Kušān did so as well. The use of elephants is well-attested in Gandhāra in the battle of the Hydaspes and Bactria was a source of war elephants in the Seleukid period,<sup>1270</sup> meaning that they would have been available in northwestern India. Vima Kadphises is depicted riding an elephant on some of his gold coins, adopting Indian royal iconography.<sup>1271</sup> He also rides a chariot on others,<sup>1272</sup> although it may be questioned whether war chariots were still used in India at this time or if they were merely a royal vehicle. There are cases from a Kušān context of the depiction of infantrymen with Macedonian armour. These include a gold buckle from Tilya Tepe and depictions on Kušān coins. The figure from Tilya Tepe wears a diadem and the helmet matches those worn by Graeco-Bactrian kings on their coins.<sup>1273</sup> Graeco-Bactrian armour is also found on some depictions of the deities Šaorēoro and Rišto on coins of Huviška.<sup>1274</sup> Clearly these are not depictions of regular soldiers, but it shows that Macedonian weaponry, and probably by extension, tactics, were still known to the Kušān. Whether it was still employed or considered is a different question.

#### 7.1.4.9. The βατρίαγγε

Rab 4-7 mentions that the conquest of India was proclaimed by Kaniška to the cities of the βατρίαγγε. The term βαορε can mean “realm” as much as “city”,<sup>1275</sup> although even in the former case it would be expected to be a relatively small territory, centred around

<sup>1268</sup> The presence of siege weaponry has been suggested for the fall of Ai Khanoum (cf. Mairs 2014, 91) so the existence of siege technology in Bactria at the time is likely.

<sup>1269</sup> Falk 2015a, 115-16 (§099).

<sup>1270</sup> Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993, 30.

<sup>1271</sup> Göbl: 3.

<sup>1272</sup> Göbl: 5.

<sup>1273</sup> Pfrommer 1996, 109 and 119.

<sup>1274</sup> cf. chapters 6.1.3.7.3. and 6.1.3.7.6.

<sup>1275</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 60.

a city. The βατρίαγγε pose a greater problem. The word is definitely an Indian loanword and may either mean *kṣatriyas*, i.e., “warriors” “warrior caste”,<sup>1276</sup> or a Bactrianised form of Gandhāran *kṣatrapas*, “satraps”.<sup>1277</sup> This difference is significant, because it reflects different political realities. If the word is to be read *kṣatriya*, the cities addressed could be considered as being ruled by an oligarchic group as is attested in various phases during ancient Indian history.

It seems less likely for phonetical reasons that the word is to be read as *kṣatrapa*. This reasoning has been brought forth predominantly in reference to the Northern Kṣatrapa rulers who in many places immediately predate the Kuṣān dominion. It would then be considered a proclamation informing the Kṣatrapas that they are now under Kuṣān control. In Kauśāmbī, the coins of the Kuṣān directly follow those of the last local Mitra rulers,<sup>1278</sup> while in Mathurā and Sonkh, the Mitras were followed by the Dattas and then the Kṣatrapas before the advent of the Kuṣān.<sup>1279</sup>

On the other hand, if βατρίαγγε should indeed be understood as *kṣatrapas*, the text could also mean the Western Kṣatrapas who remained independent, perhaps as Kuṣān vassals, and were hereby informed that Kaniška had conquered the rest of India. This is an interesting possibility, because the Western Kṣatrapas controlled a part of India that was on the south-western outreaches of the Gagnetic Plain, but apparently, at least for the most part, outside of the Kuṣān realm.<sup>1280</sup> If these Western Kṣatrapas are therefore to be considered Kuṣān vassals, they were clearly subjugated to Kaniška’s will, but were not part of the Kuṣān Empire proper.

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<sup>1276</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 60.

<sup>1277</sup> Fussman 1998, 603.

<sup>1278</sup> Sharma 1969, 19.

<sup>1279</sup> Härtel 2007, 324-29.

<sup>1280</sup> Senior 2001, 129-33.

If βατριάγγε is to be taken to mean “satrap”, a reading that is very unlikely due to the orthography, it may also simply be a Gandhāran loanword in Bactrian, referring to any kind of satrap or governor in the Kušān Empire. The passage should then be taken to mean that Kaniška proclaimed the capture of India to his own governors.

#### 7.1.4.10. αρουγο ι υνδο

A concept of India as a geographic whole is known from classical literature, including Strabo, the PME and Ptolemy.<sup>1281</sup> The indication is always that it encompasses the entirety of the subcontinent. This does not match the claim of Kaniška to have conquered “all of India” (αρουγο ι υνδο) while mentioning only a relatively small geographical extent of his conquest. The claim to have conquered a territory in its entirety is a propagandistic one that also appears in BHM: ὅλης τῆς Μεσσηνίας/ἡμκ myšn Ἰνδω.<sup>1282</sup> The phrase is standard; it also appears in PME §41 as τῆς ὅλης Ἰνδικῆς. In terms of military conquest, it is reminiscent of *omnia Gallia* as described by Caesar.<sup>1283</sup> Caesar set out to conquer a territory that was only vaguely defined by his contemporaries, and he had the luxury of being able to define the borders of the country himself, thus being able to declare the war finished at a convenient point and present to his countrymen a fully conquered province. It would appear that Kaniška did something similar, and it is not unreasonable to assume that his Kušān and Bactrian countrymen had but a vague concept of India. The frontiers of the Gangetic plains are as convenient a limit to an Indian province as the Alps, Rhine and English Channel are to Gaul.

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<sup>1281</sup> Strabo XV.1.11-13; PME 41; Ptol. Geogr. VII.1.1.

<sup>1282</sup> cf. chapter 4.3.6.

<sup>1283</sup> Perhaps reflected in Greek as τῆς Γαλατίας πάσης in Cassius Dio 41,55,2.

Απουγο ι υνδο could therefore be considered a political construct born out of military necessity in a similar way to *Omnia Gallia*.<sup>1284</sup>

Kaniška, it would seem, meant to style himself king of India. A corresponding title υνδογανο βαου “king of the Indians” appears on the sealing Callieri App. S 5, which dates from the late Kušān period as the cursive variant of the script shows.<sup>1285</sup> It is attributed to either Kaniška II or III. Kaniška II is attested as the last Kušān ruler in Bactria,<sup>1286</sup> while the realm of Kaniška III was reduced entirely to Indian territories. This and the heavy influence of Indian loan forms suggests that the seal should be attributed to the latter's reign, but it cannot be said if the title is a result of this or if had been used by previous Kušān rulers. No similar title appears in any other Kušān inscription.

The same title is used by Trogus-Iustin to describe Demetrius (*Demetrii, regis Indorum*).<sup>1287</sup> Tarn 1997 compares this use of "India" to that of "Asia" to refer to the Achaemenid and Seleukid empires and argues that it would in this sense have been used to describe the Maurya Empire.<sup>1288</sup> Demetrius then would have been king of the same empire as the Maurya. It is possible that this terminology of political geography was continued to the Kušān period. If Kaniška conquered Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital of the Maurya and the Śuṅga, even if these empires no longer existed in a political sense, he may have claimed succession for the Kušān to these empires and made them the new dynasty to rule “India” in a political sense. This may not have been the view of the general population of India, as they would hardly have identified themselves with Maurya, Śuṅga or other suzerainty. It is, however, very fitting for an outside view such

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<sup>1284</sup> See Lafond 1998, 763.

<sup>1285</sup> Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005, 588.

<sup>1286</sup> cf. chapter 3.2.10.

<sup>1287</sup> XLI.6.4-5.

<sup>1288</sup> *Op. cit.*, 153-54.

as the Kušān had and would have discussed with their Bactrian subjects. It is precisely in the Bactrian context of Rab, NSP and the officials of the Kušān élite such as Nukunzuk in which the term ἀρουγο ἰνδο appears. What meaning it would have to the people of India, if any, would not have been of concern here.

### 7.1.5. Limits of Kušān Expansion

It is noteworthy that no source mentions a harbour or any stretch of a coast to be under Kušān control.<sup>1289</sup> Although a large amount of Kušān coins and small finds from the period have been made in Kolkata, there is no evidence of direct Kušān power here. None of the important commercial harbours mentioned in Greek and Roman literature ever seem to have been part of the Kušān Empire. This raises the question of the objectives of Kaniška's Indian Campaign and the Kušān rule over India.

The place of the Kušān Empire in world history has been interpreted in close connection with the emergence of transcontinental trade routes known collectively as the Silk Roads.<sup>1290</sup> The Kušān Empire, in this sense, would be a commercial empire because its wealth and power would derive from its control over major roads along the trade routes and important commercial hubs. Recently, Falk 2018 has argued that the very foundation of the Kušān Empire was made possible by the control of the *yabghus* of important stretches of trade routes connecting South, Central and East Asia. In the light of this, the fact that the Kušān stopped short of conquering the great ports of India could be interpreted as a decision to keep the commercial infrastructures intact and simply

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<sup>1289</sup> Despite this, many recent maps of the Kušān Empire such as that found in Benjamin 2018, 178, include Sindh without any explanation.

<sup>1290</sup> Recent attempts to involve the Kušān in this aspect of global history include Frankopan 2016, 19 and Benjamin 2018, 176-203 and *passim*. cf. chapter 2.2.10.



benefit from the wealth transported to the hinterland. The commerce that reached these ports came mainly from one source, the Roman Empire.

## **7.2. Roman-Kušān Contacts**

### **7.2.1. Preliminaries**

Scholars have long assumed strong commercial contacts between Rome and the Kušān based on the remarkable parallels between their coinage.<sup>1291</sup> It was noticed very early on that Kušān gold coins were issued on the Imperial Roman standard.<sup>1292</sup> A number of discoveries in the Indian subcontinent of Roman coin hoards and other Roman traces have led to an increasingly enthusiastic study of Roman commercial relations with India that often, though not always included the Kušān.<sup>1293</sup>

The Kušān Empire had many points of contact with ancient Mediterranean culture. The script used to write Bactrian was Greek, the Kušān worshipped many gods that were either of Greek origin or were depicted using Graeco-Roman iconography, the royal titlature of the Kušān is mostly Hellenistic in origin and early Kušān documents were written in Greek language. The art of the Kušān period, especially of the Gandhāra

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<sup>1291</sup> As discussed already by Warmington 1974, 297-300 and Wheeler 1954, 156-57.

<sup>1292</sup> Cunningham 1892, 70.

<sup>1293</sup> The literature on this topic is vast and has increased significantly in recent years. Next to the literature referred to in the following chapter, two important landmarks should be noted specifically, namely Raschke 1978, where the scholarship and discussion to the time of writing is analysed exhaustively, and Cobb 2018 which will presumably be the standard reference going forward.

school, has long been analysed concerning its evident stylistic relationship with art from the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>1294</sup>

This has led to occasional interpretations of the Kušān Empire as being in some ways dependent on the Roman Empire. Kušān history coincides with the peak of the Roman Empire. The Kušān emperors from Kujula Kadphises to Vāsudeva (I) are contemporaries to the Roman emperors of the late Julio-Claudian, Flavian, Antonine and Severan period. Even the greatest disaster that befell the Roman Empire in this period, the Antonine Plague, is now often explained as resulting from the Kušān-Roman commercial relations.<sup>1295</sup>

One of the greatest obstacles in studying the Roman influence on the Kušān Empire is that the Kušān had a second, native source of western influence. Bactria was long part of the Hellenistic world, and the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom has shown a remarkable vigour in maintaining cultural traditions imported with Alexander and the Seleukids. It is not always possible to easily distinguish which elements in Kušān culture were external influence from Rome and which were inherited from the Hellenistic period in Bactria.

In the following, the sources and evidence for contact between the Roman and Kušān Empires will be analysed. It will be attempted to determine how much the Romans knew of the Kušān Empire and what role it played in their foreign and commercial policy. It will further be attempted to analyse wherever possible which visible pieces of western influence in Kušān culture can be traced to external Roman influence and which are Bactrian inheritance.

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<sup>1294</sup> Recent work on this subject is published in W. Rienjang, P. Stewart (eds), *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art. Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project*, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March, 2019. Oxford 2020.

<sup>1295</sup> First suggested by Bivar 1970, 20-21 and repeated by the same author in Bivar 2009.

### 7.2.2. The Kušān in classical sources

The name of the Kušān is found only twice in Classical literature. In the PME (§47), the Bactrians are mentioned under their king (βασιλεύς) ὄντων. The word ὄντων is unclear and controversial,<sup>1296</sup> but an emendation οὔσαν has variously been suggested and recently been related to the Kharoṣṭhī variant *oṣana* found on silver coins of Kujula Kadphises from Taxila.<sup>1297</sup> Since *Kušān* seems to be used as a personal name of Kujula in some sources from his reign,<sup>1298</sup> he may be the king referred to in the PME.

The only other reference is in Ammian, where Šābuhr II is mentioned as being in camp in the territories of the Chionites and *Cusenos*.<sup>1299</sup> According to Falk 2015a, “*Cusenos* is an emendation from *Eusenos* by Marquart (1901: 36, fn. 5) and generally accepted.”<sup>1300</sup>

In both cases, the manuscripts are unclear, indicating that the name of the Kušān was long forgotten when they were produced. Roman sources more frequently refer to *Bactrians* and *Indians*.<sup>1301</sup> Probably the most detailed account of the Kušān Empire in a classical source is found in Ammian (XXIII.6.55-60), where a *regnum* ruled by the Bactrians is described.<sup>1302</sup>

The Romans evidently thought of these Bactrians as a formidable force. The PME considers them a μαχιμώτατον ἔθνος (warlike people). Quintus Curtius Rufus (IV.6.3) characterises the Bactrians as *inter illas gentes promptissimi, horridis ingeniis multumque a Persarum luxu abhorrentibus* (of all those peoples the Bactrians are the

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<sup>1296</sup> For references to various emendations suggested, cf. Casson 1989, 262. *Ibid*, 204 claims that “no convincing restoration has been offered”, referring to the entirety of the sentence in which the word appears. However, the identity of the Bactrians with the Kušān is accepted here.

<sup>1297</sup> Falk 2015a, 92-93 (§062).

<sup>1298</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1299</sup> Ammian XVI.10. This is prior to the siege of Amida (359 CE).

<sup>1300</sup> *Op. cit.*, 134 (§127).

<sup>1301</sup> Bardaišan, writing in the reign of Elagabal (218-222 CE), directly equates the Bactrians with the Kušān, cf. Falk 2015a, 123-24 (§111).

<sup>1302</sup> cf. Falk 2015a, 133-34 (§126). But cf. chapter 2.2.9.

those of the worst temper and most repulsed by Persian luxury). Curtius uses the present tense here (*sunt*), indicating that this is held true for his own time,<sup>1303</sup> which is most likely contemporaneous to the *Periplus*.<sup>1304</sup> He generally uses *Bactriani* as a blanket term for all eastern peoples that were under the control of Bessus, whom he constructs as an (eastern) antagonist for Darius. Nevertheless, Curtius seems to engage with contemporary preconceptions of the Bactrians for dramatic purpose.<sup>1305</sup>

Ammian (XXIII.6.55) states that the Bactrians were a *natio antehac bellatrix et potentissima* (a previously warlike and strong nation), referring to the period before they were subdued by the (Sāsānian) Persians, i.e., the Kušān period. Ptolemy (VI.11.3.7) paints a slightly different picture by distinguishing between the Τόχαροι and the Ζαριάσπας, calling the former a μέγα ἔθνος.<sup>1306</sup> The latter are probably the Bactrians proper, as Ζαριάσπα is a byname of the city of Bactra.<sup>1307</sup> Notably, Ptolemy uses Βακτριανή as a purely geographical term, whereas other regions in Central Asia are given an ethnicon.<sup>1308</sup>

Cassius Dio (LXVIII.15) reports that when Traian returned to Rome from Dacia in 107 CE, he received a large number of embassies including one from India. As will become

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<sup>1303</sup> However, he then goes on to state that they *semper in armis erant* (imperfect) because they were neighbours to the Scythians, a *belicosissima gente et rapto vivere adsueta* (perfect). Curtius seems to state that the Bactrians were no longer neighbouring the Scythians at his time, although this may be stretching the interpretation.

<sup>1304</sup> The *Periplus* is now generally accepted to date to 40-70 CE based on the mention of the Nabataean king Malichus II in §19, cf. Casson 1989, 6-7. The dating of Curtius is still controversial, although a date under Claudius (41-54 CE) or Vespasian (69-79 CE) is “am wahrscheinlichsten” (Koch 2007, ix) and most frequently discussed (cf. Atkinson, ANRW 34.3, 3451 ff). This corresponds to the *Periplus* neatly enough.

<sup>1305</sup> His famous description of Bactria (VII.4.25-31) suggests that he did some research of his own on the topic, cf. Rutz, ANRW II 32.4, 2342.

<sup>1306</sup> Ptolemy wrote his *Geographikē hyphegesis* shortly after 150 CE (Stückelberger/Graßhoff 2006/I, 11).

<sup>1307</sup> Strabo XI.517.

<sup>1308</sup> e.g., Σογδιανοί (VI.12.1.), Σάκαι (VI.13.1.), etc., but note Μαργιανή (VI.10.1.). Strabo uses Βακτριανή as a geographical term and Βακτριανοί designating the people (Βακτριών appears once in a geographical sense, but only paired with Σογδιών in XI.517). Like Ptolemy (Geogr. VI.11.6), he is aware of foreign rule in Bactria (XI.8.2). He does not remark on the Bactrians as being aggressive or warlike, although he mentions that they (and the Sogdians) are “a bit more civilised” (μικρὸν ἡμερώτερα) than the nomads (XI.11.3). However, Strabo wrote in the Augustaeon period, so this passage is not of the same relevance here as Ptolemy or the PME.

clear, the emphasis of an embassy from India is probably meant to illustrate the fame and glory of the emperor that prompted even the furthest regions to send envoys. This of course does not mean that such a delegation was not sent. However, there is nothing to indicate whether this was a Kušān delegation, or whether the Kušān were represented among the other βαρβάροι mentioned here.<sup>1309</sup>

The *Vita Hadriani* (XXI.14) in the *Historia Augusta* mentions that the *reges Bactrianorum* sent *legati* to Hadrian asking for *amicitas*. Despite the much-discussed problems with this source,<sup>1310</sup> this particular note has been interpreted as relatively plausible, although these envoys may have merely been merchants.<sup>1311</sup> The *reges* have been identified with just one king, Kaniška I.<sup>1312</sup> As Fündling 2006 remarks, a diplomatic contact, however vague, between Kaniška and Hadrian is well possible if both are considered “Hauptfeinde” of the Arsakids, even if a coordinated Arsakid policy is unlikely.<sup>1313</sup> The *Epitome de Caesaribus* (XV.4) mention embassies sent by the *Indi*, *Bactri* and *Hyr cani* to Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius. Again, despite the generic listing of peoples, such an embassy is considered plausible.<sup>1314</sup>

Despite the general plausibility of Kušān-Roman diplomacy in the course of the second century CE, the reception of envoys by the Roman emperor from faraway places such as India and Bactria is a generic *topos* already found with Augustus which is mentioned

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<sup>1309</sup> By contrast, Thorley 1979, 184 is “almost certain” of this.

<sup>1310</sup> cf. Fündling 2006, 21-87 for an overview specifically for the *Vita Hadriani*.

<sup>1311</sup> Fündling 2006, 969. Here it is remarked however that, „[a]ndererseits ist eine förmliche Gesandtschaft (nur sicher nicht *supplex*) aus Baktrien gerade in der 1. Hälfte des 2. Jh. völlig im Bereich des Möglichen.” The adjective *supplex* (humbly) would then simply be a panegyric addition in the *Historia Augusta*.

<sup>1312</sup> Birley 1997, 225; Fündling 2006, 969-70; Falk 2015a, 115.

<sup>1313</sup> *Op. cit.*, 970.

<sup>1314</sup> Schlumberger 1974, 95, n. 81. Aumann 2019, 93-94 however regards the list of peoples as fictitious, arguing that no such embassies are mentioned in other sources and the author of the *Historia Augusta* lived in ca. 400 CE. Schottky 1998, 453 calls the use of the term Bactrian “historisierend”. It is further argued that the envoys of the Bactrians and Indians are “Gesandte desselben Staates” because the Kušān also controlled north-western India. This leads to the conclusion that the Hyrcanian envoys would be part of the same embassy and that the Hyrcanians “anscheinend um die Mitte des 2. Jhs. unter die Oberherrschaft der Kushan gerieten”. Apart from this brief (and generic) notice in the *Epitome*, no evidence is presented, and it is not explained how this would have been possible.

for propaganda purposes only and does not provide any further historical information.<sup>1315</sup> The best conclusion that can be drawn is that the imperial Roman administration was aware of the Kušān (or rather, *Bactrian*) kingdom, but how this knowledge played into foreign political strategy cannot be determined.<sup>1316</sup>

Apart from this, Roman authors do not pay much attention to the political conditions in Bactria and India. In his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny is interested in the natural phenomena of the region and the commerce between Rome and India, but not the rulers. Perhaps surprisingly, Arrian does not discuss the contemporary situation of Bactria or India at all either in his *Anabasis* or in his *Indikē*.<sup>1317</sup> It is hard to determine how high the interest of the Romans in contemporary Bactria or India actually was. In his *Liber Memorialis*, which collects the wealth of knowledge expected from a member of the Roman élite, Lucius Ampelius mentions that the Indians (though not the Bactrians) are among the most famous peoples (*clarissimae gentes*) of Asia (VI.3). He mentions Bactra in his brief list of the most important cities (*nobilissimas urbes*) of Asia which Alexander conquered and emphasises that he defeated the king of India (XVI.2). He also mentions the Scythians and Indians among the few tribes that Augustus did not pacify and were

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<sup>1315</sup> Augustus notes in his *res gestae* (§31) that *Ad me ex In[di]a regum legationes saepe missae sunt non visae ante id t[em]p[us]* (Embassies from the kings of India have often been sent to me, unseen until this time). Indian embassies or acts of submission to Augustus are mentioned repeatedly in Roman literature (Strab. XV 1.73; Hor. od. 1.12, 3.24; Suet. Aug. 21; Prop. 2.10). Aurelius Victor (1,7) mentions that *Indi, Scythae, Garamantes* and *Bactri* sent envoys to Augustus. It is always emphasised that those sending the embassies did so on their own accord (e.g., Suet. 21), any reciprocity of these relations is never mentioned with Augustus or any other emperor. The “Roman” coin type of Kujula Kadphises does imply however that missions from Rome reached the Kušān (cf. chapter 3.4.2.1.).

<sup>1316</sup> Thorley 1979, 189 discusses the famous story reported by Cassius Dio (LXVIII.29) in which Traian, when he saw a ship departing from Charakene to India, wistfully remarked that had he been younger, he would have sailed to India like Alexander, and asks: “But was he perhaps rather expressing a desire to meet the Kushan monarch with whom he had had communication through ambassadors, Vima Kadphises, now ageing like himself?” Since Dio’s narration here is a clear criticism of Traian’s *imitatio Alexandri* (cf. the critical discussion in Strobel 2019, 419-20), this will most likely have to be negated.

<sup>1317</sup> Arrian wrote under Hadrian (117-138 CE) and Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE), i.e., during the reigns of Kaniška I and Huviška, cf. Stadter 1980, 17. *Ibid*, 117 remarks that the Kušān are absent from Arrian’s work and that “[t]he *Indike* is in no sense an account of India in Roman times.” This is echoed in von Hinüber 1985, 1077 who states that Arrian’s *Indikē* is based on three early Hellenistic sources, Eratosthenes, Megasthenes and Nearchos, and that he transmits “das zu seiner eigenen Zeit bereits überholte Indienbild des Alexanderzuges.”

reserved for the triumph of Trajan (XLVII.7). He furthermore considers the geography of India part of basic knowledge, but Central Asia is conspicuously absent from the geographic part of his work. While the Indus, Hydaspes and Ganges are mentioned among the most important rivers (VI.8), the Oxus, for instance, is missing. The Caucasus in Scythia (VI.6) is probably the modern-day Caucasus, not the Hindukush. All this shows that some facts about India were considered basic knowledge by Ampelius, but the politics and history of the region of the Kušān Empire were not.<sup>1318</sup> If the book was written in the time of the Kušān, this would mean that political interest in the Kušān Empire was not particularly high. If it postdates the Kušān Empire, it would mean that the Kušān were not considered particularly remarkable in the historical memory of the Romans.<sup>1319</sup> This is supported by the fact that the memory of the Kušān Empire in Roman historical literature is virtually reduced to a footnote in the work of Ammian.<sup>1320</sup> In either case, it speaks against an involvement of the Kušān in the greater Roman strategy. It also puts into question the occasional speculation that the securing or control of trade routes with India was one of the main objectives of Trajan's Parthian war of 114-117.<sup>1321</sup>

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<sup>1318</sup> However, cf. the remarks about the quality of the work in König 2011, 12-13.

<sup>1319</sup> On the dating of the work, cf. König 2011, 10-13. The two commonly discussed hypotheses are a date in the second half of the 2nd century CE (i.e. contemporaneous with the Kušān) or possibly the time of Diocletian (284-305) or much later.

<sup>1320</sup> If the passage in question is even talking about the Kušān in the first place, cf. chapter 2.2.9.

<sup>1321</sup> This was already discussed and rejected by Lepper 1948, 158-163. It is necessary to point out in this context that such interpretations of “economic” (and especially “macroeconomic”) strategy in antiquity owe more to colonialist and globalist modern thought than to an honest evaluation of the sources. cf. generally M. Austin/P. Vidal-Naquet, *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft im alten Griechenland*, München 1984 (esp. 12-13 on “economic causes” of war) and H.-J. Drexhage, H. Konen, K. Ruffing, *Die Wirtschaft des Römischen Reiches (1.-3. Jahrhundert). Eine Einführung*. Berlin 2002 (esp. 27-37, where the term “Wirtschaftspolitik” is accepted, but the limitations of applying modern terminology to antiquity are critically discussed).

## 7.2.3. Numismatic Evidence

### 7.2.3.1. Material and Weight Standards

Beginning with the *Sotēr Megas* issues,<sup>1322</sup> the Kušān introduced a new monetary system to their realm. Kušān coin issues gradually replaced the silver denominations that had been in use since the Seleukid period. At first, the new coinage still approximated to Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian silver drachms but was exclusively in copper.<sup>1323</sup> The previous reigns in the territory conquered by the Kušān had produced a chaos in currency with different denominations and an increasing debasement of silver.<sup>1324</sup> The intention of the Kušān was evidently to unify the coinage under their control.<sup>1325</sup>

Vima Kadphises took further steps to unify the copper coinage, which had now completely replaced the old silver coinage,<sup>1326</sup> and introduced gold coins. The gold issues of Vima Kadphises only gained economic significance at the end of his reign, being a mere prestige issue at first.<sup>1327</sup> It gained significance under Kaniška I and

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<sup>1322</sup> Cribb 2015, 79-122 has argued for placing the beginning of the *Sotēr Megas* coinage late in the reign of Kujula Kadphises and extending to the reign of Vima Takto, cf. chapter 3.2.4.

<sup>1323</sup> The *Sotēr Megas* coinage of Vima Takto retained 3% silver to "[take] account of the previous system (Indo Parthian) (...)", Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 7.

<sup>1324</sup> Perhaps this also explains the statement in the PME (§47) that coins of the Indo-Greek kings Apollodotos and Menander were still current in Barygaza at the time of its writing, as they may have been considered more reliable silver currency than that issued at the time.

<sup>1325</sup> Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 7.

<sup>1326</sup> Bracey 2009, 25.

<sup>1327</sup> R. Bracey, Kushan Dynasty iv. Coinage of the Kushans, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kushan-dynasty-04> (accessed on 25.05.2023).



Huviška. While the copper issues remained based on the Attic standard,<sup>1328</sup> Kušān gold coins were based on the Roman gold *denarius*.<sup>1329</sup> This fact has been the basis of much interpretation and speculation on the nature and intent of the Kušān gold issues. Cunningham 1892 first remarked on this, saying “In fact, I look upon these Indo-Scythian *Dinārs* as a simple reissue of the Roman *Denarii* after recoinment.”<sup>1330</sup> This assessment proved to be highly influential, especially after Tarn stated that “Bactria-Sogdiana did not produce any” gold<sup>1331</sup> and the origin of Kušān gold as “imported from the Western world”<sup>1332</sup> was “long known”.<sup>1333</sup> Even authors who did not or not exclusively subscribe to the idea that Kušān gold coins were reminted Roman imports, whether as currency or bullion, wrote extensively on the possible origin of Kušān gold.<sup>1334</sup>

This idea was used by many authors to explain the relative lack of Roman gold coins found in north-western India as opposed to the south of the subcontinent.<sup>1335</sup> As mentioned, it was also used as an explanation for the Roman standard of Kušān gold coins in the first place, and that it was minted for convertability purposes.<sup>1336</sup> It is also believed to explain the note in Pliny (*nat. hist.* XII.10.41) about the drain of Roman coins to India.<sup>1337</sup> However, when assessing the material, a number of problems arise. As MacDowall 1960 noted, an exact parity between Roman and Kušān gold coins was

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<sup>1328</sup> However, the weight of the coins was gradually reduced so that this origin eventually “became obscured”, Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 8.

<sup>1329</sup> The gold *δινάρο* is the standard currency in the Bactrian documents.

<sup>1330</sup> *Op cit.*, 70. Cunningham consistently uses the terms “Kushān” and “Indo-Scythian” interchangeably, here a coin of Vima Kadphises is discussed.

<sup>1331</sup> Tarn 1997., 104. Much speculation is offered on the following pages about the origin of gold in Bactrian and Indian finds.

<sup>1332</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1333</sup> *Ibid*, fn 8. The only reference given is “Warmington p. 299.” Warmington 1974 in fact argues that the gold came from Mesene and Charakene (*Ibid*).

<sup>1334</sup> e.g., R. Nanda, *The Early History of Gold in India*, New Delhi 1992, 82 ff; Satya Shraiva 1985, 8; Rosenfield 1967, 115-16 (although favouring Rome as the primary source); S.K. Maity, *Metrological Study of the Gold Coins of Early India*. JNSI 23 (1961), 260.

<sup>1335</sup> e.g., Singh, JNSI 1993, 125; cf. Raschke 1978, 747, n. 444 for much further literature.

<sup>1336</sup> MacDowall 1968, 139 f.

<sup>1337</sup> e.g. Puri 1994, 258.

never achieved.<sup>1338</sup> Recent study has furthermore shown that there are significantly different amounts of platinum in Roman and Kušān gold coins, i.e. that the gold is from different sources.<sup>1339</sup> The lack of Roman silver coins in north-western India is not explained by this.<sup>1340</sup> The Roman coins from southern India date primarily from the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, Vima Kadphises who issued the first gold coins was however a contemporary of Traian.<sup>1341</sup> Coins from the second century are scarcely found in southern India, but predominate in Buddhist stupas from the Kušān realm.<sup>1342</sup> There is, in fact, enough evidence for native Bactrian sources of gold exploited in antiquity. Sumerian sources from Uruk speak of gold from Aratta, indicating a gold source in the general area of modern-day Afghanistan.<sup>1343</sup> The massive gold treasure of Tillya Tepe is also best explained as coming from native sources.<sup>1344</sup> There is much evidence for ancient gold mines in Badakhshan, the Hari Rud and Amu Darya (Oxus) rivers and in Helmand-Arghandab.<sup>1345</sup> So while perhaps some gold bullion reached the Kušān Empire from Rome, and some gold may have been imported from Siberia, there is enough evidence to assume that the Kušān obtained their gold from native sources. The Kušān gold coinage was too large and evidently too important for the rulers to rely on a precarious source such as a foreign currency flow.<sup>1346</sup>

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<sup>1338</sup> *Op. cit.* 67-68. On this, Göbl 1984, 26 remarks: "Da das römische Gold jedenfalls eingeschmolzen wurde, ist auch das Einzelgewicht unwichtig."

<sup>1339</sup> Blet-Lemarquand 2006, 163-65.

<sup>1340</sup> Raschke 1978, 631.

<sup>1341</sup> This issue never seems to concern any authors, not even those who propose a dating of the Kaniška era to the second century or later.

<sup>1342</sup> cf. Raschke 1978, 747 n. 444 for references.

<sup>1343</sup> Y. Majizadeh, Lapis Lazuli and the Great Khorasan Road. *Paléorient* 8 (1982), 62.

<sup>1344</sup> Hickman in J. Aruz (ed), *Afghanistan. Forging Civilizations Along the Silk Road*. New York 2012, is quite positive (with Sarianidi) that the gold was obtained in Bactria, most likely from rivers. The same may be true for the Oxus Treasure, which Dalton 1926, xix-xx explained with gold imported from the Altai region (the same idea is found in Tarn 1997, 104 ff.)

<sup>1345</sup> T. Stech, V.C. Pingott, The metals trade in southwest Asia in the third millennium B.C. *Iraq* 48 (1986), 46. The evidence is for a 3rd millennium BCE context.

<sup>1346</sup> A significant debasement of the gold coinage did not occur before the reign of Kaniška II, cf. Jongeward/Cribb 2015, 8. Between the reign of Vima Kadphises (c. 113-127) and Kaniška II (c. 230-247).

### **7.2.3.2. Iconography**

Göbl 1960b has conducted a study on the influence of Roman iconography on Kušān coins. The primary aim was to demonstrate that such Roman patterns on Kušān coins can help to attach Kušān coinage to the well-established chronology of Roman numismatics. As will be shown, Göbl 1960b has produced a few convincing patterns, but overall, the conviction of Kušān dependency on Roman models was too strong. Göbl, as other authors, postulated the presence of engravers and pattern books from Alexandria in the Kušān empire.<sup>1347</sup> It seems as though the technical skill of local Kušān engravers in copying and developing Roman examples is not deemed possible here.<sup>1348</sup> This idea contrasts with the high degree of innovation found on Kušān coins. To adequately assess the degree of Roman influence represented on Kušān coins, a close look at the evidence is warranted.

#### **7.2.3.2.1. Western deities on Kušān coins**

##### **7.2.3.2.1.1. The Greek Pentad on the coins of Kaniška I**

As discussed in chapter 6.1.3.4., Kaniška I issued coins with Greek legends at the beginning of his reign. On these coins, the Greek deities Hēlios, Sēlēnē (as male Salēnē) and Hephaistos are found together with a singular Anēmos and the originally

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<sup>1347</sup> Göbl 1960b, 77-78.

<sup>1348</sup> Bracey 2009, 25-26 remarks on this element of Orientalist thought in Göbl's work.

Mesopotamian goddess Nanaia. The names of these deities are later “translated” to Bactrian as Miiro, Mao, Aθšo, Oado and Nana.

Greek deities have been depicted on Bactrian and Indian coins since the time of the Seleukids. How the local population interpreted these is hard to say.

#### **7.2.3.2.1.1.1. Ēlios and Salēnē**

Hēlios and Sēlēnē already appear on Indo-Greek coins. Hēlios is the only deity appearing on issues of Platon, although he mostly appears in a quadriga.<sup>1349</sup> Only one issue shows him on foot, as the Kušān coins do.<sup>1350</sup> This depiction is more common on coins of Philoxenes and Telephos,<sup>1351</sup> although the latter only shows him associated with Sēlēnē, incidentally the only depiction of her on Indo-Greek coins.<sup>1352</sup> Standing Hēlios is shown on Indo-Greek coins frontal with a radiant crown, holding a staff in his right hand (or his left when depicted with Sēlēnē) with the left and the right hand in a gesture of blessing. This does not correspond entirely with the Kušān depiction, where the god is facing left, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword, the right in a gesture of blessing. The radiant crown is replaced by a radiant nimbus and a ribboned diadem. The staff reappears on the depiction of Salēnē. Salēnē is now male and almost identical to Ēlios except for the staff and a lunar nimbus. Neither depiction corresponds to the depiction of Sēlēnē on the coins of Telephos, where her only distinct attribute is a lunar crown.

Göbl 1960b does not mention these types, indicating he found no Roman patterns for them. Their inclusion in the numismatic pantheon seems to be motivated by the

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<sup>1349</sup> cf. Stančo 2012, 135-37.

<sup>1350</sup> Boppearachchi: Platon Série 4.

<sup>1351</sup> Boppearachchi: Philoxène Série 12; Télèphe Série 1.

<sup>1352</sup> She is absent from the survey in Stančo 2012, although the Telephos type is depicted and described on p. 136, fig. 197.

importance given to Miuro and Mao by Kaniška I. This is especially clear given the fact that Sālēnē is depicted male, as Mao. This is a strong indicator that these Greek deities were meant to be “read” as the Bactrian ones with which they were eventually identified on the legends. Since depictions of these two particular deities were rare in the Hellenistic Far East, and if they occurred, were very different in nature to those on the Kušān coins, it is hard to argue for the continuation of a local tradition.

If it is hard to derive the iconography of Mao from Sālēnē, or Roman Luna for that matter, there is a striking resemblance to that of the Phrygian moon god Mēn.<sup>1353</sup> The depiction of the god with a lunar crescent behind the shoulders seems to be the most standard form of his iconography. Many Roman coins depicting Mēn recall the depictions of Mao, although there never seems to be an exact correspondence. The generic pose of Mēn holding a long staff in his left hand and varying attributes in his outstretched right is never, in this form, found on Kušān Mao coins.<sup>1354</sup> Likely, as Shenkar 2014 suggests, the iconography of Mēn had an Iranian background.<sup>1355</sup> This would probably also be the source of that of Mao. The similar depiction on the coins would thus be a parallel development, not a mutual influence.<sup>1356</sup>

Interestingly, there are known identifications of Mēn and Sālēnē, leading Lane 1976/3 to argue that “[s]ex thus is reduced to a consideration of secondary importance, to be assigned rather arbitrarily to the divinity as the accidents of name and grammatical

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<sup>1353</sup> On the iconography of Mēn cf. Lane 1976/3, 99-108.

<sup>1354</sup> One Mao type (Göbl: 3) could be seen as imitating the Phrygian cap of Mēn. Similar such caps are seen on some coins from Juliopolis from the reign of Valerian (Lane 1975/2, Pl. II, Juliopolis 16), but this is a stretch.

<sup>1355</sup> *Op. cit.*, 98.

<sup>1356</sup> Mēn may also have influenced (or, although this is unlikely, be identical to) the god Manaobago found on coins of Kaniška I and Huviška, cf. chapters 6.1.3.5.4. and 6.1.3.6.8.

gender happen to dictate”.<sup>1357</sup> This attitude seems to somewhat resemble that of the Kušān.<sup>1358</sup>

A similar situation probably is true for depictions of Hēlios, whose rayed nimbus in this shape does not commonly appear in Graeco-Roman iconography, but has been adopted in western Iranian art by the Arsakid period.<sup>1359</sup> Thus, while Salēnē and Hēlios have Greek names on the early coins of Kaniška I, it cannot be argued that their iconography was derived from Greek or Roman sources, and it is likely that even in this early stage, they were understood to represent Mao and Miuro respectively.

#### **7.2.3.2.1.1.2. Nanaia**

Nanaia first appears in shape of a lion with a crescent on Yuezhi coins. This appearance is very different to that on the coins of Kaniška I. Göbl 1960b has pointed out that her theriomorphic sceptre resembles that of a depiction of Felicitas on Roman coins.<sup>1360</sup> No such sceptre appears anywhere on Indo-Greek coinage. The sceptre is Nana's most frequent attribute on Kušān coinage, although on some coins of Huviška, she is shown as a huntress, the iconography taken from Artemis/Diana.<sup>1361</sup> This type, which is very different from the few huntress Artemis depictions on Indo-Greek coins, was identified by Göbl 1960b to be derived from Alexandrian coins from the reign of Hadrian, albeit with a long dress as on the Nanaia (and Teiro) types.<sup>1362</sup>

#### **7.2.3.2.1.1.3. Ēphaistos**

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<sup>1357</sup> *Op. cit.*, 86.

<sup>1358</sup> It is doubtful if the change of vowel from Sēlēnē to Salēnē has any meaning in this respect as e.g., Göbl 1983, 82 seems to suggest (“das ist Selene, aber männlich gestaltet”).

<sup>1359</sup> Shenkar 2014, 102-03

<sup>1360</sup> *Op. cit.*, 82.

<sup>1361</sup> Göbl: 260; on these problematic coins see above, chapter 6.1.3.6.1.

<sup>1362</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

Hēphaistos is found nowhere on Indo-Greek coinage. The Kušān Ēphaistos coins are in poor condition, but from what can be seen, the iconography is identical to the first Aθšo type.<sup>1363</sup> Here, the god is facing left, holding tongs in his left hand. He holds a ribboned wreath in his right hand. He is bearded and wears a long robe and a ribboned diadem. Small flames rise from his shoulders. All of this has nothing to do with the iconography of Greek Hephaistos or Roman Vulcan. The wreath, a sign of investiture, is a particularly marked element showing that Ēphaistos/Aθšo is here a god associated with kingship, and that Aθšo was the god depicted here, to be identified with Ēphaistos. Later depictions as Aθšo do show the god as a blacksmith with corresponding tools and surrounded by flames.<sup>1364</sup> Rather than derive this iconography directly from Greco-Roman models, Tanabe 1995/96 suggests seeing here an influence from the depiction of Vishvakarman in Gandhāra art.<sup>1365</sup> However, this is untenable for reasons discussed in chapter 6.1.3.4.4., and the influence seems to be the other way around, making a Roman model for the Aθšo type possible.

#### **7.2.3.2.1.4. Sarapo**

Some coin types of Huviška show on the reverse depictions of the god Sarapo. Göbl 1984 has distinguished three types, one frontal seated and two standing, facing left.<sup>1366</sup> Sarapo, Greek Sarapis and later Serapis, is an originally Egyptian deity who rose to great prominence in the Hellenistic period. He played an important role in Ptolemaean kingship as the main god of Alexandria, but his cult spread throughout the Mediterranean.<sup>1367</sup> The spread of the cult between the Hellenistic and Imperial Roman

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<sup>1363</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.4.4.

<sup>1364</sup> Göbl: 209, 867.

<sup>1365</sup> *Op. cit.*, 185-191, cf. also Shenkar 2014, 92.

<sup>1366</sup> *Op. cit.*, 45 and plates 170-71. cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.1.

<sup>1367</sup> S.A. Takacs, Serapis. DNP XI (2001), 446.

periods is often attributed to the dominance of merchants from Alexandria in the Mediterranean, and this is the same reasoning generally given for the presence of the god in Kušān coinage,<sup>1368</sup> and taken as an argument for the involvement of Alexandrines in Kušān gold issues.<sup>1369</sup>

The most natural explanation for the presence of Sarapo/Sarapis on Kušān coins would be the existence a cult for this deity in the Kušān Empire. Göbl 1960b already suggested as much when trying to explain the iconography of the frontally seated Sarapo type, which has no parallel in Alexandrine coinage.<sup>1370</sup> However, although *ibid* does not exclude the possibility of a statue of Sarapo in the Kušān court, the idea of a Sarapis cult in an Alexandrine *emporium* in the Kušān Empire seems to be favoured.

There is however some evidence for native cults of Sarapis in the east. Plutarch mentions a Sarapis temple in Babylon at the time of Alexander's death.<sup>1371</sup> This is generally rejected as anachronistic, although a document from the 4th century BCE mentions Οσεραπις in Egypt.<sup>1372</sup> Tacitus notes a popular belief that the cult of Sarapis was adopted in Alexandria under Ptolemy III (246-222 BCE) from Seleukia in Syria.<sup>1373</sup> Most importantly however, an inscription discovered in Gorgān, Iran in 1959 records the manumission of a slave by dedication to Sarapis, who evidently had a sanctuary in the area.<sup>1374</sup> The inscription is dated to the reign of the Seleukid Antiochos I (281-261 BCE), and there is little doubt that it originates in the area of Gorgān, ancient Hyrcania.<sup>1375</sup> In the light of this, it may also be possible that the headdress found on

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<sup>1368</sup> e.g., Rosenfield 1967, 98-99.

<sup>1369</sup> Göbl 1960b, 84-85.

<sup>1370</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>1371</sup> Plut. Alex. 73,9.

<sup>1372</sup> S. Takacs, Serapis I. Ägypten. DNP XI (2001), 445.

<sup>1373</sup> *Hist.* IV.84.

<sup>1374</sup> L. Robert, Inscription Hellénistique d'Iran, *Hellenica* XI-XII, Paris 1960, 85-91. Cf. also Huyse 1995, 113 (for literature) and R. Merkelbach, J. Stauber, *Jenseits des Euphrat. Griechische Inschriften*. München/Leipzig 2005, 63-64; Rougemont 2012, 157-61 (§ 76); also now Melloni 2020.

<sup>1375</sup> As remarked already by R. Ghirshman *apud* Robert 1960, 85. The name of Andragoras, one of the two addressees of the text, is closely associated with Parthia, and it is generally accepted that the



Kušān coins as an attribute of Ōromozdo was borrowed from the iconography of Sarapis,<sup>1376</sup> and hence that the iconography of Sarapis was current in Central Asia.

While none of this is undeniable proof of a native cult of Sarapo in Kušān Bactria or adjacent areas, it does seem to be stronger evidence than that for other deities found on Kušān coins, for whom this has never been put into question. Such a local cult seems in any case to be a less conjectural explanation for the presence of Sarapo on Kušān coins than one involving hypothetical Alexandrine *emporia* and craftsmen.

Mention should be made of an idea advanced by Bivar 1988. Here, the Gorgān Inscription is used as supplemental evidence that the name Sarapis derives from a postulated *Khšathrapati* epithet of Mithra, and is thus of Iranian, and in the mind of Bivar, Median origin. This idea is repeated in Boyce/Grenet 1991.<sup>1377</sup> While it is principally possible that the name Sarapis may be the Greek interpretation of the Early Middle Persian form *šahrbed*, which is later reflected in Sogdian *ʾxšyšpt-*, this explanation completely discards the derivation of the name from Egyptian. Bivar concludes that the Egyptian etymology of the name of Sarapis is unexplained,<sup>1378</sup> which Egyptologists and Classicists do not seem to agree with. Bivar then also suggests interpreting the Kušān Sarapo as derived from the Sogdian *ʾxšyšpt-*, not the Hellenistic deity. This does not agree with Bactrian phonology. The Bactrian form of *Khšathrapati* would be expected to consist of the elements  $\beta\alpha(v)\rho\omicron-$  and  $-\beta\iota\delta\omicron$ , both well-attested in Bactrian. A loan form from another language would have to be proposed, and this is simply too much conjecture.

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Andragoras of this inscription may be the satrap of Parthia, or at least a high-ranking official in this satrapy, cf. Plischke 2014, 226-29.

<sup>1376</sup> cf. Shenkar 2014, 62-63 for the connection of the headdress of Ōromozdo (described as a *polos* on p. 62, a *kalathos* on p. 63) with that of Sarapo.

<sup>1377</sup> *Op. cit.* 476-77.

<sup>1378</sup> *Op. cit.*, 15.

### 7.2.3.2.1.5. Ērakilo

A number of gold and copper issues of Huviška display Ērakilo/Heraklēs on the reverse. He is always standing, but the position of his club attribute shifts. In one issue he also holds a bow.<sup>1379</sup> Göbl 1960b does not find any corresponding issues from the Roman Empire that would come in question as a model on which these coins were minted.<sup>1380</sup> However, Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins show a wide variety of similar depictions of Heraklēs. The iconography of Heraklēs was so popular and influential that it influenced the earliest depictions of Śiva (as Οηβο) on the coins of Vima Kadphises.<sup>1381</sup> The appearance of Ērakilo on the coins of Huviška is by all means a reintroduction to Bactria and adjacent territories, which is all the more striking as it is found mostly on copper coins with only one gold type. This speaks for a broader popularity which is hard to explain by influence of Roman merchants. The iconography is in some cases so similar to Indo-Greek issues that a native tradition of the Heraklēs iconography (and worship) seems likely.<sup>1382</sup>

The presence of Ērakilo is problematic because Heraklēs was subject to an *interpretatio Iranica* in western Iran. He was prominently identified with Vərəθragna on the Nemrud Dağı and on the Heraklēs statuette from Mesene. On a gold type of Kaniška I however, Vərəθragna appears as Orlagno.<sup>1383</sup> The iconography is very different. Orlagno appears in the guise of a Kušān prince with a lance and a sword but no club or bow as Ērakilo does. Orlagno coins were apparently issued along with other unique deities, possibly in a military context.<sup>1384</sup> Göbl 1984 associates the Orlagno coins with those of Lroaspo, Manaobago and Mozdoano as “Sondergottheiten” and contextualises them with a

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<sup>1379</sup> Göbl 1984, 41 and pl. 165.

<sup>1380</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85.

<sup>1381</sup> Banerjea 1974, 135, 257.

<sup>1382</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 78. This is not taken into account in Göbl 1960, 85-86.

<sup>1383</sup> Göbl 63; cf. Göbl 1984, 44 and pl. 170.

<sup>1384</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.5.6.

proposed war between Kaniška I and Šābuhr I in his chronology.<sup>1385</sup> Lrooaspo and Manaobago reappear under Huviška. If Orlagno was identified with Heraklēs, the issue of Ērakilo coins may explain why Orlagno never reappeared, although the lack of a reappearance does not really pose a problem. It would certainly not be unique to Orlagno. It rather seems that Orlagno and Heraklēs were not identified with each other in the Kušān Empire, or that such an identification was not of concern to Kušān authorities. It would be best to regard both deities as distinct entities on the coinage. There is, in any case, no reason to assume Roman influence on these coin issues.

#### **7.2.3.2.1.6. Deineiso**

A unique coin of Huviška with the god Dionysos/Deineiso appeared recently on the market. It is so far unpublished and unanalysed. The depiction does not appear to resemble any Roman coins and the coin most likely refers to a local Dionysos cult, for which there is ample evidence in Bactria and Gandhāra.<sup>1386</sup>

### **7.2.4. Greco-Roman iconography for eastern deities**

#### **7.2.4.1. Ardoxšo**

One of the most important Kušān deities, Ardoxšo is introduced on coins under Kaniška I and retained until the end of the empire. Her iconography changes drastically on later Kušān coins, but in the earliest issues under Kaniška I and Huviška, she is represented as a female deity holding a cornucopia, usually in both hands. One type of Huviška shows her holding a cornucopia in her left and a ribboned ring in her right hand. Göbl

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<sup>1385</sup> *Op. cit.* 63. A different approach is taken in chapter 6.1.4.

<sup>1386</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.14.

1960b has remarked on the unusual depiction of holding the cornucopia with both hands but finds parallels in depictions of Fortuna on *aurei* of Hadrian.<sup>1387</sup> The only Indo-Greek coins showing a goddess holding a cornucopia, probably Tychē, are from a series of Hippostratos.<sup>1388</sup> She holds the cornucopia in her left hand, extending the right. This differs even from a copper type of Huviška, on which Ardoxšo holds the cornucopia in her right, while having her left hand at her hip.<sup>1389</sup> As Göbl 1960b notes,<sup>1390</sup> Tychē/Fortuna was very popular on Roman coinage. Shenkar 2014 is thus more careful in saying, “she is undoubtedly modeled on Tyche-Fortuna as she is portrayed on Hellenistic and Eastern Roman coins”,<sup>1391</sup> without looking for a specific model. As noted in chapter 6.1.3.6.6., one type showing Ardoxšo holding a twig may be derived from Roman coins showing Pax Augusti.

#### 7.2.4.2. Rišto

The iconography of Rišto (Arštāt) on coin types of Huviška is borrowed from that of Athene/Minerva.<sup>1392</sup> Later depictions of the goddess in Central Asia keep this imagery, indicating that the interpretation was genuine. Shenkar 2014 points out that in Dilberjin, the goddess is even depicted with a helmet of the Greco-Bactrian type.<sup>1393</sup> The iconography of the Rišto coins undergoes subtle changes during the reign of Huviška, including types on which the goddess is seen wearing a muscle cuirass and a Graeco-Bactrian helmet, and such on which she wears a crested helmet and a Macedonian-style linen armour.<sup>1394</sup> Göbl 1984 does not note these subtleties, instead listing only one

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<sup>1387</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>1388</sup> Bopearachchi: Hippostrate série 1.

<sup>1389</sup> Göbl: 882.

<sup>1390</sup> *Op. cit.*, 87.

<sup>1391</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>1392</sup> The interpretation as Πιομ/Roma has been put to rest long ago, although Göbl 1984, 45 admits that next to Athena/Minerva, the iconography of Πιτρο does correspond to Roma. cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.3.

<sup>1393</sup> *Op. cit.*, 88.

<sup>1394</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.7.3.

iconographic type.<sup>1395</sup> Consequentially, it is very difficult following Göbl 1960b in his derivation of the Rišto coins from such of Antoninus Pius.<sup>1396</sup> However, the image is also not derived from Indo-Greek coins of Athena, as these are significantly different. Usually, she is shown in a fighting posture with lance and shield raised (*alkidemos*). Only coins of the Diodotids and Demetrios II show her standing holding the lance upright and with the shield at her feet as on Kušan coins.<sup>1397</sup> In these cases however, her depiction is frontal, not facing right. Thus, while the posture may be inspired by Roman types, the armour the goddess is wearing is markedly Bactrian.

#### 7.2.4.3. Šaorēoro

Šaorēoro is commonly seen with a muscle cuirass and a crested helmet, a combination not found on coins of Rišto. This is an argument more in favour of a Roman derivation as Göbl 1960b believes. Here, it is stated that “[t]he type corresponds to the Ares-Mars type of Pius in Alexandria as well as in Rome”.<sup>1398</sup> A similar depiction shows the god with a Bactrian helmet similar to Rišto. This suggests that the images were subject to re-workings in Kušan Bactria. Nevertheless, the Šaorēoro types seem to be among the strongest contenders for direct derivations of Roman imagery on Kušan coins.<sup>1399</sup>

#### 7.2.4.4. Oanindo

There are two Oanindo types, one facing left, the other facing right. Oanindo has wings and is shown holding a ribboned wreath in one hand and a staff or cornucopia in the

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<sup>1395</sup> *Op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>1396</sup> *Op. cit.*, 86-87.

<sup>1397</sup> Bopearachchi: Diodote Série 12-14; Démétrios Série 1-2. cf. also Stančo 2012, 45-62 for further discussion of Athena in Central Asia.

<sup>1398</sup> *Op. cit.*, 87.

<sup>1399</sup> It should be noted that Ares does not appear on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins, nor do there seem to be any known locally produced Bactrian images of Ares, as the only known instances from Central Asia come from the Begram hoard and are thus most likely imports from the Mediterranean area, cf. Stančo 2012, 40.

other.<sup>1400</sup> Her iconography is evidently borrowed from Nikē/Victoria. Depictions of Nikē are very common on Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian coins, so that a borrowing from a Roman example need not be assumed. Göbl 1960b however does so but cannot provide any specific model from which the Kušān type would be derived.<sup>1401</sup> This is especially puzzling given that Nikē even appears, albeit in smaller shape and in association with the mounted king, on the "Heraios" coinage. The long tradition of Nikē in Central Asia speaks against a borrowing from Roman coinage.<sup>1402</sup>

#### 7.2.4.5. Oēšo

Göbl 1960b has discussed two Oēšo types with possible parallels in Roman coinage. The first, a type of Kaniska I showing Oēšo with a goat, is connected to medallions of Hadrian showing Silvanus or Dionysos trailing a goat, and a coin type of Antoninus Pius with a pietas holding a goat.<sup>1403</sup> The similarity is however not very strong, and the goat seems to be the only linking element. Even Göbl 1960b seems to admit this, although he emphasises that “there remains in every case the striking parallel which excludes with maximum certainty a mere chance”.<sup>1404</sup> Perhaps the parallel should rather be seen in the use of the goat as a sacrificial offering turned attribute of the deity than in the coin types as such.

The other parallel brought forth is a tricephalic Oēšo on a type of Huviška. The god is shown frontally with four arms holding a water pot, thunderbolt, trident and club. Göbl 1960b is surprised to note that the depiction is comparable “to a throughout singular

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<sup>1400</sup> Neither Göbl 1984, 43 nor Shenkar 2014, 151 are certain on the identity of this object. It is not a palm leaf, which is a common attribute of Nikē, but there is abundant evidence for other staff-like objects in her hand on Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian coinage.

<sup>1401</sup> *Op. cit.*, 87.

<sup>1402</sup> cf. Stančo 2012, 176-84.

<sup>1403</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83-84.

<sup>1404</sup> *Op. cit.*, 84.

and unrepeatable representation of Janus, seen on an Aureus of Hadrian”.<sup>1405</sup> The similarity is indeed striking, especially in regard to the frontality of both deities. Frontality generally seems to be reserved for Indian deities on Kušān coins. This is the first frontal depiction of Oēšo, and also the first polycephalous one, although he is always shown with four arms. The coin may mark a shift towards Oēšo being considered more as an “Indian” deity. The frontal depiction may simply be a mark of this, as well as a device to better depict the three heads. Even Göbl 1960b notes that the tricephaly of Oēšo should be considered an independent Indian conception.<sup>1406</sup>

### 7.2.5. Chariot coins of Vima Kadphises

Göbl 1960b tries to find a parallel or Roman influence on the gold issue of Vima Kadphises depicting the emperor in a *biga*.<sup>1407</sup> Although it is admitted that it is a “festival issue” linked to coins showing Vima Kadphises on an elephant, Göbl 1960b remains convinced that it is a copy of such festival issues from the Roman Empire.<sup>1408</sup> It is difficult to accept this, especially as no reasoning is brought forth why it *must* be influenced by a Roman type. As Bracey 2009 notes, “[t]he purpose of the Elephant, as well as Chariot, and other aspects, is to portray Wima as a king, a Universal Monarch or Great conqueror.”<sup>1409</sup> Vima Kadphises employs Indian devices on his coins, including the divine figure on the reverses and the elephant. It should suffice to point to the reliefs from Sāñchī to show that the chariot as a vehicle of rulers was established in Indian art before the Kušān.<sup>1410</sup> It is much more plausible to assume, in the general

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<sup>1405</sup> *Op. cit.*, 86.

<sup>1406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1407</sup> *Op. cit.*, 81-82.

<sup>1408</sup> *Op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>1409</sup> *Op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>1410</sup> A prominent example is found in the inner side of the east pillar of the north gate of the Great Stūpa (Marshall/Foucher 1941/2, pl. XXXV b2), further the lowest architrave of the south gateway of the Great Stūpa, where chiefs are shown riding both elephants and chariots (Marshall/Foucher 1941/2, pl. XV 3 and Marshall 1955, 53 w. pl. IV b for interpretation of chiefs). The gates were the last addition to the

context of the numismatic iconography, that Vima Kadphises adopted the image from native ideas than from Roman coins which differ quite significantly in some details.

#### 7.2.6. The “Roman” coins of Kujula Kadphises

An issue of coins of Kujula Kadphises shows a ruler portrait modelled on that of Augustus on the obverse and shows the emperor on a curule chair on the reverse.<sup>1411</sup> This issue has often been discussed as the earliest evidence for Roman influence in the Kušān Empire, and it has been attempted to show that the coins were copied from Roman models. Recently however, it has been argued convincingly that these coins are Kušān creations. Their motivation may have been to propagate the political recognition the Kušān received from Rome.<sup>1412</sup> The curule chair was an artifact given to foreign rulers by the Roman senate to illustrate the recognition of a foreign ruler on equal terms. Perhaps the establishing of diplomatic ties between Rome and the Kušān could be seen in context with the outbreak of hostilities between Rome and the Arsakids under Nero in 57/58 CE or later under Vespasian.

#### 7.2.7. Kušān Titles

The titulature of the Kušān is discussed in chapter 5, and it is remarked that some titles do seem to betray Roman influence. This is especially the case for the problematic title βαγεπορο, which may be influenced by the Roman title *divi filius*. Likewise, βωγο στοργο may be influenced by the panegyric epithet *mundi salvator* of Augustus. The title χοαζαοαργο as a loan translation of αὐτοκράτωρ may also represent Roman

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Great Stūpa (Marshall/Foucher 1941/1, 36-7), but still date prior to the Kušān period in the first century BCE (Marshall 1955, 33).

<sup>1411</sup> cf. chapter 3.4.2.1. for the chronological significance of these coins.

<sup>1412</sup> Mahler 2008, 310.



influence, as *αὐτοκράτωρ* was used by the Roman emperors as the Greek equivalent of *imperator*.

The use of the title *kaisara* (Caesar) on the Ārā Inscription of Kaniška III is a much stronger indicator of Kušan appropriation of Roman titles. It is dated to (1)41 KE, i.e., 268/9 CE.<sup>1413</sup> At this time, the western part of the Kušan Empire had been absorbed by the Sāsānians, with Kušan authority being reduced to Gandhāra and Mathurā. When the Kušan first introduced the title *kaisara* is impossible to say, but it is not found in the Kamra Inscription of Kaniška's predecessor Vasiška of (1)30 KE/257/8 CE,<sup>1414</sup> nor on the Bactrian seal inscription of Kaniška II or III (Callieri App. S 5). It is noteworthy that the time of the Ārā Inscription marks the high point of the crisis of Roman authority in the east. Valerian had been captured by the Sāsānians in 260, Odaenathus campaigned against Ctesiphon in 267 and in 270, Zenobia's armies moved against Egypt. Perhaps it is possible that at some point during the Roman-Sāsānian Wars of Šābuhr I (243/4-260) or later, an alliance was discussed or even crafted between the Romans or Palmyrenes and the remaining part of the Kušan Empire, who would have had an interest in regaining its lost territories in Bactria. To mark the affinity to the Roman Empire and hostility against the Sāsānians, the Kušan emperor may have introduced the Roman title. If such an alliance took place, however, it did not work out in favour of the Kušan, and the Ārā Inscription, the latest known dated Kušan document, would be the only trace of it.

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<sup>1413</sup> Falk 2009, 28.

<sup>1414</sup> Falk 2009, 27.

## 7.2.8. Material Evidence

### 7.2.8.1. The Begram Hoard

The treasure of Begram is perhaps the most spectacular instance of foreign objects found in the territory of the Kušān Empire.<sup>1415</sup> Such pieces include “fragments of Chinese lacquer boxes, Graeco-Roman statuettes in bronze, a collection of Roman glassware of every conceivable variety, Graeco-Roman vessels of porphyry and alabaster, and an extraordinary group of plaster casts apparently taken from classical metalwork” as well as Indian ivory carvings.<sup>1416</sup> Interpretation of the find ranges from a royal treasury in the Kušān summer capital<sup>1417</sup> to objects taxed from caravans by a local official<sup>1418</sup> to an impounded merchant's stock.<sup>1419</sup> Rosen Stone 2008 interprets it as a “Musterkollektion” of types available to Gandhāra artists.<sup>1420</sup> This is a view from an art historical perspective describing the treasure as exhibiting models current in the area at the time, but not interpreting the material nature of the treasure itself.

The exact nature of the hoard and its intention remains an enigma, not least because of its problematic documentation.<sup>1421</sup> It has long been dated to the first or second century

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<sup>1415</sup> The first interpretation of the hoard based on a systematic analysis and presentation of the material is Morris 2021.

<sup>1416</sup> Rowland 1976, 25.

<sup>1417</sup> Indicated by Rosenfield 1967, 47. The identification as “summer capital” which is found repeatedly in literature is based on an identification of Begram with Kapiśa, which Hsüan-tang described as the summer capital of the Da Yuezhi, cf. Rowland 1976, 24.

<sup>1418</sup> Masson 1987, 89.

<sup>1419</sup> Rowland 1976, 28.

<sup>1420</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>1421</sup> Morris 2020, 580-82.

CE on stylistic grounds,<sup>1422</sup> but recently, Morris 2017 could establish *a terminus post quem* of 260 CE based on re-examined numismatic evidence. This is a particularly interesting result because some of the items clearly belong to a much earlier period. Particular attention has been paid to two ivory panels showing Yakṣī figures that have been related to an ivory mirror handle found in Pompeii which therefore cannot be younger than 79 CE.<sup>1423</sup> The piece from Pompeii is important because it is so far the only known crafted object known to have been imported to the Roman Empire from India.<sup>1424</sup> The overall impression has been stated that the finds from Begram are contemporaneous to Pompeii.<sup>1425</sup> As the glassware has been shown to be of Egyptian origin,<sup>1426</sup> it would seem to confirm the dominance of Egypt in the Roman trade with India in the concentering period.

Without returning to the question of the purpose of the hoard, Morris 2020 suggests that it should be seen in connection to “the social memory of Greek rule in Kushan Central Asia”, and thus as an expression of Hellenistic legacy in the identity of the Kuṣān Empire.<sup>1427</sup>

### 7.2.8.2 Seals and gems

A number of seals of Roman origin has been found in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent. This corpus has been discussed in Callieri 1997.<sup>1428</sup> While some of them may be local imitations, others seem to have been imported from the Roman Empire, specifically Egypt.<sup>1429</sup> Some have been engraved in the Roman Empire on gems

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<sup>1422</sup> Cobb 2015, 374-75 w. lit.

<sup>1423</sup> Cobb 2015, 27.

<sup>1424</sup> Cobb 2018, 199.

<sup>1425</sup> Hackin 1954, 145, 150.

<sup>1426</sup> Hackin 1954, 108-09. Not Syrian, as Rosenfield 1967, 47 mentions.

<sup>1427</sup> Morris 2020, 589 and *passim*. Other evidence brought forth for this includes the Rabatak Inscription and other elements of Greek legacy in Bactria that are also discussed in the present work.

<sup>1428</sup> *Op. cit.*, 175-78 for the catalogue and 259-65 for the discussion.

<sup>1429</sup> *Ibid*, 259.

imported from India and reimported to the east.<sup>1430</sup> Numerous such gems with Roman working have also been found throughout northern India, the Punjāb, Bactria and Central Asia in Kušān contexts.<sup>1431</sup> It is possible that some were worked by locals employing techniques from the Greco-Roman world, but an import from the Roman Empire seems more likely. Many such finds have been made in contexts that place them in the Kušān period.<sup>1432</sup>

### 7.2.8.3. Other finds

Roman coins are very rare in Kušān contexts. The excavations of Surkh Kotal, Barikot, Butkara I, Taxila, Sonkh and Kauśambī have yielded none. However, some remarkable finds have been made in the Ahin Posh *stūpa* near Jalalabad and in Begram.<sup>1433</sup> These date from the Neronic, Flavian and early Antonine periods, up to the death of Hadrian's wife Sabina in 128 CE. The nature of possible Roman influence on Gandhāra art is an issue far too complex to discuss here and out of the scope of the present work and must be left aside.

## 7.3. Kušān-Arsakid Contacts

The Yuezhi conquest of Bactria did not leave the Arsakids untouched. Trogus-Justin speak of a conflict that arose between Phraates II (c. 138-127 BCE) after a contingent of Scythian mercenaries were called to support in the war against the Seleukids under Antiochos VII but arrived too late to join the fighting and were left without compensation. Phraates II perished in the ensuing fights and was succeeded by

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<sup>1430</sup> *Ibid*, 260.

<sup>1431</sup> *Ibid*, 260-61 with references. One example: *Ibid* notes that Tepe Zargarān in Balkh "has long been a rich source of Roman gems". Schlumberger 1949, 184 notes that Kušān coins have been found at the same site.

<sup>1432</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1433</sup> For a brief overview with further literature cf. Allchin et al 2019, 453.

Artabanos I, who could apparently do nothing against the Scythian raids but eventually attacked the Tocharians and also died in the course.<sup>1434</sup> A Babylonian astrological diary indicates that his successor, given the dynastic name Arsakes, enacted revenge on the Tocharians who here seem to be called the Guti.<sup>1435</sup> This emperor was Mithradates II, of whom Trogus-Justin report that he successfully fought the Scythians, whereas coin finds seem to confirm that he extended his reign over western Bactria, including Balkh, Kampyrtepe and Termez.<sup>1436</sup> There is no consensus on the precise dating of these events, but they occurred in the mid- to late 120s BCE, i.e. shortly before the time Zhang Qian encountered the Yuezhi in Bactria.

There are indicators that Arsakid Mesopotamia played the role of a mediator in commerce between the Kušān and Roman empires. These indicators include some inscriptions from Palmyra,<sup>1437</sup> some Kušān coins in a hoard from Charakene<sup>1438</sup> and a note about Kušān individuals in Babylon by Bardaišan.<sup>1439</sup> Any existing historiographical evidence for contacts between the two empires is scarce and unreliable. This includes an indication about a dynastic relation between Vehsachan (Vaskušān?) and the Arsakids by Moses Khorenats'i in the 3rd century CE<sup>1440</sup> and a war between Kaniška I and the An-hsi recorded by Fufazang Yinyuanzhuan.<sup>1441</sup>

It is hard to believe that no further contact between both empires would have existed given that they were direct neighbours for the entire duration of Kušān history. However, it needs to be pointed out that the direct geographical contact zone of both

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<sup>1434</sup> Iust. XLII.1-2.

<sup>1435</sup> Falk 2015a, 61-62 (§034).

<sup>1436</sup> Olbrycht 2010, 151.

<sup>1437</sup> QGP III, 398-401 (§§ 16 and 19). cf. also Hartmann 2001, 56-57 and 76-78.

<sup>1438</sup> Schuol 2000, 235 w. lit.

<sup>1439</sup> Falk 2015a, 123-24 (§111).

<sup>1440</sup> Falk 2015a, 128-29 (§119). While H. Falk and F. Grenet (*ibid*) believe that there is a historical core to the narrative, the destructive verdict of Kettenhofen 1998, 338 on the value of Khorenats'i should serve as a warning.

<sup>1441</sup> Falk 2015a, 117 (§101). Note the reservations expressed by Zürcher 1968, 358.

empires was quite limited. It consisted essentially only of the roadway linking Bactria to Margiana and Parthia. While this did more or less directly link the heartlands of both empires, it should not be forgotten that this contact route passed through the Kyzyl Kum desert, a particularly hostile region that constituted one of the bottlenecks of the Silk Road network. A second possible direct contact may have gone through the Herat-Bamiyan-Kabul road, supposing that the Herat oasis was under direct Arsakid control.<sup>1442</sup> Even so, however, this provides two restricted roads linking the empires directly in a hostile territory dominated by deserts and mountains.

A further route led through Indo-Parthian territory via Drangianē (Sistān) and Arachosia to Kabul. Despite being the longest, this connection seems to have been the most frequented in antiquity. It was the one Alexander took when invading Central Asia and it is also the one described by Isidore of Charax in his *Stathmoì Parthikoí*. Both these attestations predate the Kušān Empire, making it difficult to determine if this situation still held true for the Kušān period.<sup>1443</sup>

There is unfortunately little archaeological context to help with this overall situation. Some Arsakid coins have been found in Kampyr Tepe in the Surxondaryo Region of Uzbekistan near the city of Termez. These include coins of Orodes II (57-37 BCE) and Phraates IV (37-32 BCE), although most coins are either Phraates IV imitations or not certainly identifiable.<sup>1444</sup> Further coins of Phraates IV were found in Takht-i Sangin and coins of Phraates III (70-57 BCE) have also been found in Mirzabek-kala, Tillya Tepe

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<sup>1442</sup> Parthian remains along this route exist but have not been systematically investigated. Most information seems to come from a 1952 DAFA survey the report of which was never published, cf. Ball 2019, 279-80 (§794) for Palgird and Guryan Tepe, 284 (§813) for Pir-i Sukh and 323 (§961) for Sabarz.

<sup>1443</sup> It is virtually impossible to trace it archaeologically, as no systematic excavations have taken place between the Dašt-i Nawur and Kandahar. Only surveys exist, which can do no more than date a handful of sites such as Ulan Rabat (Ball 2019, 397-98 (§1211)) and Gazkai (Ball 2019, 130 (§345)) in the period based on ceramic finds; it may be noted that the former is identified as Indo-Parthian and the latter as Kušān despite being in close proximity, but without further investigation this says nothing.

<sup>1444</sup> Rtveladze 2011, 153.

and Hodzha-Gul'suar.<sup>1445</sup> All this suggests an Arsakid presence or influence in western Bactria in the Yuezhi period but this seems to have long faded by the time of the Kušān Empire. According to a remark by Tacitus (*Ann.* XI.8), the Arsakid Vardanes I fled Seleukeia and set up camp in Bactria during a dynastic struggle in 42 CE. He was later able to repel an attack by his brother Gotarzes and made further conquests up to the river Sindes,<sup>1446</sup> which is likely the Harirud. F. Grenet has made much of this Arsakid presence in Bactria, suggesting an alliance between Vardanes and the Kušān, interpreting the Khalchayan monument in this context and suggesting a joint Arsakid-Kušān campaign against the Saka in western Bactria.<sup>1447</sup> While this appearance of Bactria in the sources is interesting, it needs to be pointed out that Tacitus does not make any more of it, not even mentioning any agency on the part of the Bactrians. Tacitus' *campus* of Bactria are likely in the west, and thus may not have been under Kušān control. It must be admitted however that it is very difficult to imagine that the military presence of an Arsakid emperor, especially one that lasted for seven years,<sup>1448</sup> would not have seen any sort of diplomatic contact with the neighbouring Yuezhi/Kušān ruler.

The indication remains that even if all three contact points coming from Herat would have been in use, they would have allowed for only a relatively narrow flow of exchange, which was for the most part through Indo-Parthian mediation. This makes it easy to accept a historical background for the report of the Manichaean missionary Mār Ammō being held up at the border between Abaršahr in Khorasān and the Kušān

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<sup>1445</sup> Rtveldze 2011, 154.

<sup>1446</sup> Tac. *ann.* XI.10.

<sup>1447</sup> F. Grenet, Новая гипотеза о датировке рельефов Халачана, Вестник Дребней Истории 2000.2, 130-135; cf. also Falk 2015a, 88-89 (§059).

<sup>1448</sup> Tac. *ann.* XI.9.

realm.<sup>1449</sup> The inscriptions of Dašt-i Nawur may be seen in connection with a similar border post since Kušān presence is not attested further south.

Since the Kušān Empire likely did not extend into Sogdiana, the Arsakids would have had access to Central and East Asia without having to pass through Kušān territory. Likewise, Arachosia was under Indo-Parthian rule, thus likely a vassal of the Arsakid Empire, and would have allowed to enter the Indian subcontinent via the Boland Pass, again without having to pass through the Kušān Empire. The fact that the Kušān issued gold coins following the Roman standard indicates that they were not struck with Arsakid commerce in mind. Interestingly, the strongest evidence for Kušān-Arsakid contact does not come from any of the land routes but from the naval trade route through the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Kušān coins of Vima Kadphises, Kaniška I and Huviška have been found in Charakene, another Arsakid vassal state at the Mesopotamian coast at the Persian Gulf.<sup>1450</sup> Additionally, inscriptions from Palmyra indicate the use of this route for commercial contact with India, which would likely involve the Kušān Empire.<sup>1451</sup> It must remain questionable however if this contact was direct, as there is no indication that the Kušān Empire ever controlled any of the trade ports on the Indian Ocean, so it is likely there were middlemen in this trade, most probably the Western Kṣatrapas who controlled the great port of Barygaza. There is also no indication if the Kušān ever controlled Sindh, of which the last known message is that it was ruled by warring Parthian princes.<sup>1452</sup>

Direct Kušān-Arsakid contact therefore seems to have been astonishingly limited. Arachosia and Herat seem to have formed buffer zones between the two empires, although both were likely under control of Arsakid vassals. Since four major wars took

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<sup>1449</sup> MKG 400.

<sup>1450</sup> Schuol 2000, 234-35.

<sup>1451</sup> Schuol 2000, 437.

<sup>1452</sup> PME §38.



place between Romans and Arsakids between 115 and 218 CE, it seems reasonable to assume that Romans and Kušān would have explored the possibility of a strategic alliance between the two empires at the expense of the Arsakids. The foreign political strategies of the Kušān and Arsakids may therefore have been marked by hostility or avoidance. All the surviving evidence supports such a thesis, but there is none that forces a conclusion. The nature of Kušān-Arsakid relations and their importance for either empire thus remains an open question.

#### **7.4. The Kušān and Central Asia**

The extent of the Kušān Empire into Central Asia has been a contentious issue for a long time. It was believed by some scholars that it included Sogdiana and Khwarezm, even Hyrcania.<sup>1453</sup> However, there is now enough literary, archaeological, epigraphical and numismatic material available to provide at least a rough outline of the extent and nature of Kušān presence north of Bactria.

The most eloquent indicator of the Kušān frontiers in Central Asia is ŠKZ 3-4. Here, Šabuhr I declares that Kušanšahr is under his control to Paškabur (likely Peshawar) and to the mountains of Kāš (Kashgar),<sup>1454</sup> Sugd (Sogdiana) and Šāšstan (Tashkent). The exact meaning is unclear, as the word translated here as “mountains” is missing in the Middle Persian and Parthian versions and only survives in Greek ὄρων.<sup>1455</sup> It seems to refer to the Pamir, Karakoram and Tian Shan ranges, but also to mark the border towards these territories. If so, this would mean that Kashgar, Sogdiana and Tashkent

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<sup>1453</sup> e.g., Schottky 1998, 453.

<sup>1454</sup> However, cf. Vorderstrasse 2020, 189 w. Rosenfield 1967, 116 for scepticism on this interpretation. Huyse 1999/2, 36-37 discusses both the interpretations as Kashgar and as Kāš in Sogdiana, concluding that „Aufgrund der parthischen Form [k'š] ist demnach unbedingt seine Identifizierung mit Kāšgar den (sic) Vorzug zu geben (die mittelpersische Namensform des Landes ist nach der parthischen rekonstruiert)“.

<sup>1455</sup> Huyse 1999, 37 thus prefers to read the word as ὄρων “Grenzen”.

were not part of the Sāsānian Empire, although this would be counter-intuitive given that these names are part of the list of provinces.<sup>1456</sup> If these territories are to be regarded as outside the Kušānšahr, this would mean Kušān control would have included the Pamir range and Ferghana to the north-west and the Karakoram and its northern foothills including Khotan in the north-east.

Chinese literary sources record military activities of the Da Yuezhi in the western Tarim Basin in response to the campaigns of the Han general Ban Chao. In 90 CE, Kušān (Yuezhi) forces were soundly defeated by Ban Chao west of Kucha. However, after the death of Ban Chao, Kušān (Yuezhi) troops are reported to have supported the king of Kashgar in a dynastic struggle in 114-120 CE.<sup>1457</sup> Under Kaniška I, Kušān expansion is once again mentioned in western Xinjiang.<sup>1458</sup> The details are vague, but it appears that the Tarim Basin was considered by the Kušān to be part of their sphere of influence. Kušān titles such as *maharaja*, *rajatiraja* and *devaputra* appear in Niya Prakrit documents from the reign of Aṃgoka in Shan-shan, whose reign was determined to belong to the mid-3rd century CE. Brough 1965 has suggested based on the inheritance of these titles that Shan-shan had previously been part of the Kušān Empire.<sup>1459</sup> Salomon 1999 has argued that the titles from the Endere Inscription further support this hypothesis.<sup>1460</sup> Vorderstrasse 2020 on the other hand argues that these titles and the use of Kharoṣṭhī in Niya may be the result of Kušān influence but do not indicate Kušān rule.<sup>1461</sup>

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<sup>1456</sup> NPi §93-94 is of no help here because it only mentions the Kušān Šāh, not the territories under his or any other vassal king's rule.

<sup>1457</sup> Falk 2015a, 110-11 (§093).

<sup>1458</sup> Falk 2015a, 115 (§098).

<sup>1459</sup> *Op. cit.*, 596-97.

<sup>1460</sup> *Op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>1461</sup> *Op. cit.*, 187-88.

West of Shan-shan, a Kušān presence has also been suggested for Khotan. Nearby Yarkand was conquered by Ban Chao in 87 CE, but it seems probable that after his withdrawal and death, the Kušān would have returned to this area. Direct Kušān control over Khotan is not attested, but Bhattacharya-Haesner 2012 has suggested that it was a Kušān “outpost” based on the very strong resemblance of Buddhist sculpture from the area with Kušān portraiture from Khalchayan and Kaniška's Buddha coinage.<sup>1462</sup> The case for Kušān presence in Kashgar and Shan-shan seems strong. Both kingdoms were easiest to access from the Kušān realm via the Karakoram Road, which connect Gandhāra directly to the Tarim Basin. While Kashgar may have been accessible without penetrating Khotanese territory, the same would not have been true for Shan-shan, which in no way could have been reached from Kušān territory without passing Khotan. If the Kušān exerted control over Shan-shan, the same would have been required for Khotan. More importantly, control over Khotan would have meant secure Kušān access to the Tarim Basin via the Karakoram Road.

None of this is meant to force the conclusion that the kingdoms in the Tarim Basin were integral parts of the Kušān Empire. It seems more probable that they were vassal states with a high degree of both internal and external autonomy, as the episode concerning Kashgar suggests. However, they seem to have been tied to the Kušān Empire as a sort of buffer zone. Mitchiner 2012 considers Kashgar to have been part of the Kušān economic zone based on the abundance of Kušān copper coins there and suggests that Kashgar would have been a sort of Kušān protectorate.<sup>1463</sup>

Regarding Sogdiana, Mitchiner 2012 has argued that contrary to the Tarim Basin, the relationship was “symbiotic”, pointing out that their relationship was marked by a

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<sup>1462</sup> *Op. cit.*, *passim*. Cf. also Vorderstrasse 2020, 188-89 for discussion of further evidence and literature.

<sup>1463</sup> *Op. cit.*, 114-15.

strong military presence of the Kušān, a commercial expansion of the Sogdians and a marriage alliance between the Kušān and a Sogdian ruling house.<sup>1464</sup> Like Kashgar, the distribution of Kušān copper coins in Bokhara and Samarkand suggests Sogdiana was part of a Kušān economic zone. However, there is no indication of a full political control of the area by the Kušān. Much rather, the border area towards Sogdiana seems to have been heavily militarised.<sup>1465</sup> This was apparently an inheritance from the Hellenistic period, which suggests the military presence was a response to an ongoing nomad threat. As the Kultobe Inscriptions suggest, the Sogdian city-states were themselves subject to such a threat, and it is plausible to assume that they would have accepted the protection of the Kušān Empire. Mitchiner 2012 believes the increase of commercial activities of the Sogdians were the benefit the Kušān received in return.<sup>1466</sup> Although the Sogdians were already known as merchants in China in the late 1st century BCE, de La Vaissière 2005 argues that the Sogdian merchants only came to dominate in the position once held by Bactrian merchants after the Kušān period.<sup>1467</sup> The expansion of Sogdian trade seems to have been an effect of the security offered by Kušān protection, but unless one argues that the Kušān Empire was a “trade empire” whose primary political concern was the expansion and safeguarding of commercial exchange, it seems more likely that Sogdiana was regarded as another buffer zone against the Central Asian nomads and perhaps the Arsakids.

### **7.5. The Kušān and the Indian Subcontinent**

As discussed above, Gandhāra and Mathurā were centres of Kušān power in the Indian subcontinent prior to the accession of Kaniška I. The Indian campaign of Kaniška I

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<sup>1464</sup> *Op. cit.*, 111-12, on the marriage also Falk 2015a, 95 (§068).

<sup>1465</sup> Stančo 2021, 269.

<sup>1466</sup> *Op. cit.*, 111.

<sup>1467</sup> Discussed in detail in *op. cit.*, 71-85.

extended Kušān rule over most of the Gangetic Plain, including Magadha, the former heartland of the Maurya and Śuṅga and later of the Gupta Empires. There are no indications for how strong and lasting Kušān dominance east of Mathurā was. Very little epigraphic material from this area is available. A small number of inscriptions come from Kauśambī and the Varanasi area. The former city is mentioned in Rab 5, and a seal of Kaniška and several Kušān coins have been found here,<sup>1468</sup> indicating Kušān presence.

The narrative as found in Rab and NSP suggests that the Gangetic Plain was conquered by Kaniška I in a military campaign that lasted for ten years. However, the inscriptions seem to betray a problematic course of events. Kaniška seems to have laid claim to India in the first year of his reign, justly or unjustly. He encountered resistance against this claim that led to an invasion. The submission was declared complete after six years, to be commemorated by the βαγολαγγο in Rabatak. However, NSP 4 states that the war lasted for another four years, suggesting that Kaniška faced serious troubles implementing his rule. The scarcity of Kušān inscriptions east of Mathurā may be due to archaeological chance, especially because Kauśambī is the only city mentioned in Rab to have been systematically excavated. However, it may also be possible that after a long and changeful war, Kaniška accepted to leave the east of the Gangetic Plain under the rule of vassals as in the Tarim Basin and Sogdiana. This would have tied in with the rule of the Western Kṣatrapas who were clearly not directly under Kušān control but most likely also vassals to the Kušān Empire and provided a further buffer zone towards the interior of the Indian Subcontinent.

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<sup>1468</sup> Sharma 1969, 10.

## 7.6. Kušān Imperial Administration

### 7.6.1. Administrative Topography

Unlike the Achaemenid and Sāsānian Empires, there is no epigraphic record of a list of provinces under imperial rule. There is thus only very little indication of administrative hierarchy, extent of administrative units or definition of administrative power. The number of toponyms available from Kušān inscriptions is also relatively small, limited in their geographical distribution and only rarely tied to any sort of administrative office. Nevertheless, a systematic analysis may help to extract some information on the administrative topography.

#### 7.6.1.1. Bactria

NSP 4 is the only known record from the Kušān period to mention the name Τοχοαρστανο. It is the territory Kaniška I returned to from his campaign in India and where he presented the spoils of victory.<sup>1469</sup> The name also occurs twice in the Bactrian Documents, in ‘eh4’ and ‘jb2f’. In the former, it is used as part of the title of an official denoted as ηβο]δαλο ιαβγο παροπαζο [σωτ]αγγο αβγανα[νο ...]βιδο τοχοαρστανο οδο γαρσιγοστανο λαδοβαρο, “the *yabghu* of [Heph]thal, the [*sot*]ang(?) of Parpaz, the

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<sup>1469</sup> The verb itself does not survive and was probably in the beginning of NSP 5. The meaning "returned" is a plausible conjecture by Sims-Williams 2015, 257 but by no means certain.

chief... of the Afghans, the judge of Tukharistan and Gharchistan”. In the second it is again part of a title of Sart Khwadebandan φαραχο ηβοδαλο ιαβγο πωβοχαρο ηβοδαλοχοηοαγγο λαβιρο τοχοαραστανο γαρσιγοστανο λαδοβαρο βαγο χοηο, “the glorious *yabghu* of Hephthal, the ruler of Rob, the scribe of the Hephthalite lords, the judge of Tukharistan and Gharchistan, the noble lord”.

Tokharestan was the common name for the region of ancient Bactria in the Islamic period.<sup>1470</sup> Although the exact definitions vary, it seems to be identical to the region known as Βακτριανή/Bactria/Baxtriš in classical and Achaemenid sources. There may thus be a continuity in the administrative definition of the territory from the Hellenistic to the Kušān periods. However, there are indications that Bactria was divided along the Oxus in the Yuezhi period, the north being under Yuezhi control, the south being independent with no central authority.<sup>1471</sup> The north further was split up to a certain degree into the individual *xihou* realms. These realms may well have extended beyond the original boundaries of Bactria and these extentions may have been incorporated into Kušān Τοχοαρστανο.<sup>1472</sup>

Τοχοαρστανο does not appear as an administrative unit in the Sāsānian Empire, so there is no clear picture of its administrative status. In the later Sāsānian period, when there was no longer continuity with the Kušān Empire, it may have been a satrapy, as the title βα(υ)ραβο appears in some Bactrian documents.<sup>1473</sup> The only geographical name it appears together with in Kušān records is υνδο, India, in NSP 4. However, this does not need to have any bearing on administrative geography at all. A comparison with Γαρσιγοστανο, Gharchistan, is also of little help. Although both territories seem to

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<sup>1470</sup> W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*. Translated by Svat Soucek. Princeton 1984, 18.

<sup>1471</sup> As discussed in chapter 7.1.1. cf. also a description in the *Shiji*, Falk 2015a, 64-66 (§037), but against this a remark in the *Han Shu* that the Yuezhi also ruled southern Bactria, cf. Falk 2015a, 67 (§39).

<sup>1472</sup> cf. Falk 2018 for a discussion of this.

<sup>1473</sup> BD2, 283a for references. Many of these postdate the Sāsānian period however, and sometimes the office is clearly that of a local governor, e.g., in Document ‘V’3.

appear on equal footing in the Bactrian Documents, there is no further material for comparison before the Sāmānid period, when unlike Tokharestan, it was ruled by a *šār*.<sup>1474</sup> It therefore remains unclear if Τοχοαρστανο was a province in the Kušān Empire and what kind of administrative hierarchy it possessed.

The only city name attested for certain in Kušān Bactria is that of Λραφο in SK4M 5. It has been identified with the Δράψακα/Drapsaca of classical sources.<sup>1475</sup> It was most likely an urban centre in the vicinity of Surkh Kotal. Nothing can be said about its administration, but the context of the inscription suggests it was a heavily fortified place. This may also be suggested by the term ανδηζδο, for which several interpretations exist. N. Sims-Williams has suggested it is “an appositional “stronghold”, qualifying or supplementing the city of Lraf”.<sup>1476</sup>

The βαγολαγγο of Rabatak is mentioned to be located in the ραγα of Κασινγ[ο] in Rab 8. ραγα is translated as “plain”.<sup>1477</sup> The term occurs once more in a Bactrian context in Document ‘W9’.<sup>1478</sup> Here, a ραγο called Ασκινο is mentioned as the location of a property that is the subject of the purchase contract. In both cases, the plain is named and seems to denote a greater geographical entity. The fact that in both cases the ραγα/ραγο has a name suggests a legal definition of its boundaries, although it is not clear whether it should be defined as an administrative unit in the sense of a district. There does not seem to be an authority connected specifically to the ραγο of Ασκινο in the list of witnesses in ‘W1-6’ and the term ωδαγο (district) that appears here seems to incorporate the towns of Γανδαρο and Ρωβο along with the ραγο of Ασκινο. The term ραγα/ραγο therefore seems to denote a piece of land that may be used for agricultural

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<sup>1474</sup> R.N. Frye, *Ghardjīstān*. The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition II (1965), 1010-11.

<sup>1475</sup> Lazard/Grenet/de Lamberterie 1984, 205-06.

<sup>1476</sup> *apud* Falk 2015a, 122 (§ 107).

<sup>1477</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 63.

<sup>1478</sup> It is also part of a GN ραγοζαμαγανο in the Tang-i Safedak Inscription, cf. Lee/Sims-Williams 2003, 167.



purposes but is outside the jurisdiction of one single urban authority. The context of Rab 8 suggests that in the Kušān period, it was land in which the Kušān emperor could build a βαγολαγγο at his leisure. This sort of authority existed explicitly for privately owned land in the later Bactrian Documents,<sup>1479</sup> which suggests that the the ραγα of Κασιγ[ο] was land owned directly by the Kušān emperor. The land however occupied an important part of an important road connecting two major urban centres of Bactria, meaning it was publicly accessible. On these grounds it would be reasonable to assume that any land in the empire was principally land owned by the emperor, as was the case for the Achaemenids and Seleukids before.<sup>1480</sup> In these empires, it was common to grant land to individual landowners and cities. It would be reasonable to assume by analogy that this also happened in Kušān Bactria, but there is no direct evidence for this. Much later in the Bactrian Documents, there is some evidence for land ownership being granted by royal authorities, most notably in Document ‘T’, which records the dedication of land by a Turkish princess to the god Kamird.<sup>1481</sup> Document ‘bg’ concerns land given by a satrap and Document ‘ci’ also refers to an authority's land grant. Documents ‘J’13, ‘J’14 and ‘U’13 mention “royal roads” (βασιλοπαιδαγο) and there is occasional reference to land owned by the satraps.<sup>1482</sup>

### 7.6.1.2. India

There is no clear indicator what the Kušān considered as belonging to υνδο and what not. This question is particularly important for Gandhāra, which Kaniška I can hardly have claimed to have conquered himself. Whether it belonged to his concept of αρουγο

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<sup>1479</sup> Explicitly so in Documents ‘V’24 and ‘W’21.

<sup>1480</sup> van der Spek 1986, 71.

<sup>1481</sup> Document ‘C’ shows that land could be given from one private individual to another also.

<sup>1482</sup> Document ‘J’14-15. Interestingly, βασιραβαγο here is in plural, which may be an indicator that the property is tied to the office, not the person.

τι υνδο must remain an open question. However, the title υνδογανο βαυο on the sealing Callieri App. S 5 provides some interesting evidence. It is provenanced to Sahrī Babol in the Mardan District in what is now Khyber Pakthunkhwa. There is no doubt that Mardan belongs to Gandhāra. The find spots of the two late Kušān inscriptions of Ārā and Kamra belonging to the period of Vasiška and Kaniška III are not far. This indicates that Gandhāra was a centre of late Kušān power and that if Kaniška II or III called himself υνδογανο βαυο in this seal inscription, these υνδογανο were inhabitants of Gandhāra.

Unfortunately, there is not much of an indication concerning the actual administrative topography of this territory. In Rab 4-6, Kaniška I speaks of Indian βαορε, but this can equally mean cities or realms. Some mentions of locations found in Gandhārī inscriptions however give a glimpse into what Gandhāra looked like under Kušān rule. The long-held opinion that Peshawar was a capital city of the Kušān Empire seems confirmed by the inscription on the so-called “Kaniška Reliquary” from Shāh-jī-kī-Dherī, which seems to identify the find-spot as the city of Kaṇiṣkapura.<sup>1483</sup> If Peshawar was a Kušān residence, it is interesting that even relatively nearby, autonomous kingdoms existed that seemed to have been vassals to the Kušān. An instructive example is the case of the kingdom of Oḍi, which is probably identical to modern-day Odigram in the Swat Valley.<sup>1484</sup> Here a king of Oḍi (*oḍiraya*)<sup>1485</sup> is mentioned contemporaneously to Kujula Kadphises, who receives his usual titles *maharaja rayatiraya devaputra*.<sup>1486</sup> It is impossible to say if this political structure survived into the time of Kaniška I, especially because Peshawar was by all indications not under the

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<sup>1483</sup> Errington/Falk 2002, 61.

<sup>1484</sup> von Hinüber 2003, 7-8 (citing R. Salomon).

<sup>1485</sup> Senavarma Inscription Line 3a, cf. von Hinüber 2003, 20.

<sup>1486</sup> The translation "Oberkönig über Könige" by von Hinüber 2003, 29 is strictly speaking not justified by the text, which would warrant the simple translation "König der Könige", but it seems to transmit the sense of the title as a king ruling over other kings.

control of Kujula Kadphises. There can be little doubt that the Kušān under Kujula Kadphises ended the rule of other local dynasties in Gandhāra such as the Apracarajas,<sup>1487</sup> who succeeded Azes in the Bajaur region.<sup>1488</sup> Likewise, the archaeological context from Sonkh suggests that the Kušān ended the Datta dynasty in the Mathurā District.<sup>1489</sup> The same appears to be the case for Kauśambī, where coins of the Mitra dynasty are succeeded by those of the Kušān.<sup>1490</sup> This is significant because Rab 5 states that the city was conquered by Kaniška I, thus seemingly indicating that there was no place in the Kušān Empire for local dynasties with the authority to issue their own coinage. At least as far as the numismatic evidence shows, India was thus “provincialised” under Kaniška I.

### 7.6.2. Administrative Titles

The Kušān Bactrian material provides a number of official titles for some of which there are further attestations in other sources. A particular stroke of luck is the interplay of Rab, NSP and SK4, all of which mention the same individual, Nokonzoko, who holds a different title in each inscription, suggesting a career in the imperial administration that is also revealing about the hierarchy of the offices he held.

#### 7.6.2.1. αμβουκασ

If a title, it is the earliest and likely the lowest attested rank of Nokonzoko. It appears in NSP 1, where Nokonzoko narrates that he held it in the year of the accession of Kaniška I. The meaning is unclear. It may contain an initial component *\*ham* “with,

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<sup>1487</sup> Senior 2001/I, 89.

<sup>1488</sup> Falk 2002, 86.

<sup>1489</sup> Härtel 2007, 325.

<sup>1490</sup> Sharma 1969, 19-20.

together with”, as suggested by the consonant cluster -μβ-.<sup>1491</sup> ου could stand for /u/ following Greek spelling convention or it could indicate a /h/ following a vowel or marking the beginning of the second part of a compound αμβο-υκαιο,<sup>1492</sup> although the latter is unlikely as a vowel would be required before or after. If ου is a vowel, the following κ is problematic, as in Bactrian, postvocalic \*k generally turns to g/γ except for compounds.<sup>1493</sup> This suggests that αμβουκαιο is not a Bactrian word and perhaps a title inherited from the non-Bactrian Kušān language. This would match with the name of Nokonzoko, which exhibits the same intervocalic κ and is thus unlikely to be a Bactrian name.<sup>1494</sup>

#### 7.6.2.2. φαρδαμγανο

The lowly position of the rank of αμβουκαιο is indicated by Nokonzoko's statement that Kaniška I established him as equal with the servants of Vima Kadphises and Vima Takto upon his accession. This made Nokonzoko equal (αμσασογο) with the group of the φαρδαμγανο. Sims-Williams 2015 translates this as “foremost” pointing to the adv. φορδαμσο “first” in SK4 2.<sup>1495</sup> The meaning as a formal or informal rank is supported by Avestan and Old Persian.<sup>1496</sup> This promotion is attributed to the service Nokonzoko gave to Kaniška's predecessors.

#### 7.6.2.3. αρτοοαλγο

NSP does not mention the office Nokonzoko was promoted to by Kaniška, but in Rab 16-17, Nokonzoko holds the title αρτοοαλγο. The same title is found in the Bactrian

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<sup>1491</sup> cf. αμβαγ(α)δο "to give away, distribute", αμβαγο "partner" and αμβαρο "store" (BD2, 191a).

<sup>1492</sup> cf. chapter 4.1.2.19.

<sup>1493</sup> Gholami 2014, 35; cf. also chapter 4.1.2.10.

<sup>1494</sup> Sims-Williams 2010, 96 (§289).

<sup>1495</sup> *Op. cit.*, 60.

<sup>1496</sup> YAv. *fratama-*, OP *fratama-*, cf. Bartholomae 1904, 979; Schmitt 2014, 177.

Document 'ck2', the seal Callieri Cat U 7.3 and possibly SK3 1.<sup>1497</sup> The meaning of the title is unclear. The initial reading  $\iota\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  "leader of worship" suggested by Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997<sup>1498</sup> is not supported by 'ck2'. N. Sims-Williams suggests that in this document, the word is accompanied by a superscript line which indicates a missing letter, most likely a  $\upsilon$  for /h/.<sup>1499</sup> If so, it might indicate any missing letter, making  $\iota$  a possibility. However, this would be the only occurrence of a superscript line to denote a missing initial letter in any preserved document. A close examination of the document suggests that the superscript line in question may be a continuation of the line denoting a missing  $\upsilon$  in the preceding name  $\text{Κιρδισροοαραvano}$ . Although there is a large gap between the two lines, it seems as though the line over  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  continues the same upward angle as the preceding one as if interrupted in writing by an uneven surface or a lack of ink. The other superscript lines in the same document are similar in length to what this line would be were it considered one and the same.<sup>1500</sup> The bearing this observation has on the reading of the word  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  is that it is unlikely that an initial  $\iota$  is missing, although an initial  $\upsilon$ /h cannot be ruled out. However, as mentioned, a superscript line is otherwise never used to indicate a missing initial  $\upsilon$ .

Although Rab indicates that it was lower than the rank of  $\text{καραλαραγγο}$ , it seems that the  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  was of high imperial prominence. As  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$ , Nokonzoko was one of three men responsible for carrying out the emperor's orders to build the Rabatak  $\beta\alpha\gamma\omicron\lambda\alpha\gamma\omicron$ . Document 'ck' does not offer any details on the responsibilities associated with the rank but suggests that the  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  owned significant agricultural lands. The seal Callieri Cat U 7.3 shows the  $\alpha\beta\tau\omicron\omicron\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron$  in the typical dress of a Central Asian nobleman with a *nišān* on his cap, as is a common feature for aristocrats in Bactria and

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<sup>1497</sup> Suggested in Sims-Williams 2012, 78.

<sup>1498</sup> *Op. cit.*, 308-09.

<sup>1499</sup> BD2, 200a.

<sup>1500</sup> cf. BD3, pl. 149a.

the Sāsānian Empire. The evidence shows that the office of ἀρτοοαλγο survived the fall of the Kušān Empire and the end of the Kušāno-Sāsānian period. Document ‘ck’ is dated by Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018 to c. 465 CE,<sup>1501</sup> i.e., the period of the Hephthalite Wars of Peroz.

It is hard to determine whether ἀρτοοαλγο was a military or civilian administrative office, presupposing such a distinction even existed in the Kušān Empire. The element -οαλγο “leader” is clear, but ἀρτο- is not. An intuitive translation as \**aštā* “eight” must be ruled out because it is attested as αταο in Bactrian.<sup>1502</sup> A possible cognate could be Parthian *hyštn/hyrz-*, MP *hištan/hil-*, attested in Bactrian υιρζ- “to leave, set free, allow”<sup>1503</sup> or more likely Bactrian ναυαφτο < \**ni-šāšta-* “to settle”.<sup>1504</sup> However, none of these offer a conclusive meaning of the title that could help assess the duties of the office.

The connection of the ἀρτοοαλγο with the construction of a βαγολαγγο may be further attested in SK3, where Sims-Williams 2012 proposes to read ἀρτο[οαλγο]. Previous editors read the extant letters as ἀβιο[.]<sup>1505</sup> If the interpretation by N. Sims-Williams is correct, it may suggest that an ἀρτοοαλγο took credit for building the Surkh Kotal sanctuary (κιρδο μι βαγολαγγο) and moreover that he also held the titles ...βιδο and ζηνοβιδο, provided the titles all refer to the same person.<sup>1506</sup>

#### 7.6.2.4. καραλαγγο

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<sup>1501</sup> *Op. cit.*, 70.

<sup>1502</sup> BD2, 198b.

<sup>1503</sup> BD2, 272b.

<sup>1504</sup> BD2, 239a.

<sup>1505</sup> Henning 1956, 367.

<sup>1506</sup> G. Fussman *apud* Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983/I, 135-36 suggests that the part missing here from SK3 is not particularly big (*contra* Harmatta 1965), which probably means the lacunae would not allow for much more than the titles of one individual.

In SK4, dated to 31 KE and thus 25 years after Rab and 21 years after NSP, Nokonzoko holds the title *καραλαργγο*. This is the best-known of the Kušān offices. It is further attested in Rab 15 and 16 and VSP 1. It was recognised as a cognate to MP *kanārang* by Henning 1960,<sup>1507</sup> which in turn is found as *καναραγγο* in the BD ‘G’ and ‘H’ and the sealing of *σασανο μ●●γο καναραγγο*.<sup>1508</sup> The meaning is transparent and has long been recognised as “Lord of the Marches”, i.e., Margrave.

SK4M 7-8 provides some details about how Nokonzoko perceived his own role as *καραλαργγο* in relation to the emperor. He presented himself as *φρειχοαδηγο κιδο φρεισταρο αβο βαο* “the lord's favourite who is most dear to the king” and *λοιχοβοσαρο*, “second in command(?)”. Gershevitch 1979 suggested that these epithets are to be taken as indicating a personal relationship with the emperor.<sup>1509</sup> Neither epithet appears elsewhere in Bactrian, but it needs to be pointed out that these are likely self-aggrandising statements by Nokonzoko, not official titles or positions.

The interpretation of *λοιχοβοσαρο* as “second in command” receives strong support from the other attestations of *καραλαργγο*. In Rab 15, the *καραλαργγο* Šafar received the order to build the Rabatak *βαγολαγγο* directly from the emperor, although he delegated this task not only to the *απτοσαλγο* Nokonzoko but also to a further *καραλαργγο*, Piyaš. There was more than one *καραλαργγο*, but they were perhaps not equal in rank. It appears Šafar was a predecessor of Nokonzok in his position as *λοιχοβοσαρο*.

It is discussed in chapter 4.3.12. that the composition of SK4 and its positioning in the Surkh Kotal *βαγολαγγο* is indicative of the high position of the office in the empire, and this agrees with Nokonzoko's self-designation as *λοιχοβοσαρο*. A recently published

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<sup>1507</sup> *Op. cit.*, 51. Cf. also Henning 1965b, 77-79.

<sup>1508</sup> Lerner/Sims-Williams 2011, 183.

<sup>1509</sup> *Op. cit.*, 61-62.

silver pyxis from the reign of Vāsudeva (VSP) serves to underscore this further.<sup>1510</sup> On this item, Vāsudeva is shown with two other individuals in worship of two Buddha figures. These include a certain Humyug-āgad, the ὠστειγο Rām and the καραραγγο Narkas. At face value, the three individuals seem to be of equal rank relating to Vāsudeva and the Buddha figures, considering they are all named by inscriptions. There are however some iconographic distinctions to be made. Both Narkas and Rām are depicted with sheathed swords unlike Humyug-āgad. Together with this insignium, the former two also have a title, again unlike Humyug-āgad. This will hardly be a coincidence. However, even Narkas and Rām seem to be distinguished in hierarchy. Narkas has a lunar crescent on his shoulders, whereas Rām is devoid of any similar attribute. This crescent resembles those of Mao and Manaobago on the Kušān coins and that of Mao on the Kaniška Reliquary. Since there is no solar iconography as a balance as on the Kaniška Reliquary, it appears as though the crescent should be interpreted with regards to Manaobago, whose iconography has very strong regal aspects.<sup>1511</sup> Narkas in this way also shares the attribute of a nimbus with the emperor and the Buddha figures. Although the precise meaning of this crescent nimbus remains uncertain, this representation clearly puts Narkas the καραραγγο in an exalted position, suggesting he might also have carried the rank of λοιχοβοσαρο.

The strongest piece of evidence pointing to the position of the καραραγγο in the Kušān Empire however consists of a group of copper coins depicting a man kneeling to Nana with a Bactrian legend seemingly designating the issuer as a καραραγγο.<sup>1512</sup> Even if it may only have been a fleeting occurrence, the fact that a καραραγγο could issue coins of his own is remarkable and further indicative of his rank.

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<sup>1510</sup> Falk/Sims-Williams 2017.

<sup>1511</sup> cf. chapter 6.1.3.5.4.

<sup>1512</sup> Read by J. Cribb *apud* Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 136-37.



Some further incidental evidence for the *καραλαργγο* is a silver bowl with a Bactrian donor inscription *αβαροφαρδαρο ικαραλαργγ-χοβο υα κ' ε'* “Property of Abar-fardar the margrave. Weight: 25 [didrachms]”.<sup>1513</sup> The script is early Bactrian cursive with an odd “trailing horizontal tail in place of the expected final -o”.<sup>1514</sup> Sims-Williams 2013 believes that, based on the usage of *καραλαργγο* rather than the Middle Persian form *καναραγγο*, the bowl may well be early Sāsānian or late Kušān.

In the Sāsānian Empire, the title *kanārang* denotes a military commander of equal rank to the *marzpan/marzbān* but located in the east of the empire.<sup>1515</sup> The title seems to have been a formation based on the Bactrian, but not a direct borrowing.<sup>1516</sup> It is interesting therefore that the office is attested in its Middle Persian form in later Bactrian sources.<sup>1517</sup> As a high imperial office, it seems that the title was tied so closely to the Kušān that it was abolished with the end of Kušān or Kušāno-Sāsānian rule and reintroduced by the Sāsānians. As with *απτοοαλγο*, the later attestations of the title *καναραγγο* are dated to the second half of the 5th century CE in the time of the Hephthalite Wars of Peroz.<sup>1518</sup>

In conclusion, the abundance of evidence for the *καραλαργγο* in the Kušān period, often in close connection to the Kušān emperor himself, shows how important this office was in the empire. The inscriptional evidence coming directly from holders of the office is of particular importance here, and it is discussed in chapter 4.3.12. that SK4 implies an elevated status of Nokonzok in the empire. It would be tempting to see the *καραλαργγο*

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<sup>1513</sup> Sims-Williams 2013, 197.

<sup>1514</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1515</sup> Khurshudian 1998, 72-75.

<sup>1516</sup> BD2, 221a.

<sup>1517</sup> *Ibid* for references.

<sup>1518</sup> Documents G and H are dated to 249 and 250 BE respectively, i.e. 472 CE according to Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 45.

as a sort of great vezir, although the fact that Rab mentions two individuals holding the office at the same time should warn against going too far with such an interpretation.<sup>1519</sup>

#### 7.6.2.5. ωστειγο

As discussed in chapter 7.6.2.4., the ωστειγο Rām appears together with the καραραγγο Narkas, Humyug-āgad and the emperor Vāsudeva in the presence of two Buddha figures on VSP. He does not have a nimbus but wears a cap and has a sword. He appears to be an official in higher rank than Humyug-āgad, who is devoid of these attributes or a title, but below the καραραγγο.

The title ωστειγο appears in the form υωστιγο in some Bactrian documents, including one occurrence as υωστιγανο as a family name. The documents are relatively informative towards the role of the υωστιγο in the Sāsānian and Hephthalite periods. The υωστιγο appears as responsible for allotting land (document ‘ci’), collecting payment for important purchases (‘ef’) and for jurisprudence in a case of highway robbery (‘jc’). There is also the indication in document ‘jc’ that the υωστιγο was a local official, as here, Yamsh Homikan introduces himself as ριζμο υωστιγο “hostig of Rizm”. However, this may be a post-Kušān development, as the document is dated to c. 485 CE and thus to the period of the Hephthalite Wars.<sup>1520</sup> Rām may have been an imperial official, as his association with the emperor and a καραραγγο may suggest.

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<sup>1519</sup> Pourshariati 2008, 266-71 discusses the Kanārangīyān as one of the major aristocratic houses of the Sāsānian Empire, considering them as being of Parthian heritage. The discussion is based chiefly on information from Ferdowsī and Prokopios, while entirely ignoring any Bactrian material, even such from the Sāsānian period. It is therefore of no particular help in analysing the Kušān καραραγγο.

<sup>1520</sup> To compare, there are also instances of local officials with the title βαραβο in later Bactrian Documents, e.g., Spandagan the ριζμο βαραβο in document V3 dated to 729 CE (Sims-Williams/de Blois 2018, 46).

Much later, in a document ‘ag’, dated to after 705 CE, a *υωστυγανο* family appears without any further context to their role.

N. Sims-Williams does not explain the meaning of the term.<sup>1521</sup> It seems as though it would be related to Pth *’wstyg(’n)*, MP *hwstyg’n* “firm, stable”.<sup>1522</sup> There are only attestations of these words being used as adjectives, whereas the Bactrian context clearly marks it as a title. It might therefore be regarded a specifically Bactrian office.

#### 7.6.2.6. ζηνοβιδο

This title, attested in SK3 1, has a direct equivalent in MP *zynpt*, Pa *zynpty* found in ŠKZ §43 and rendered ζηνπιτ in the Greek version.<sup>1523</sup> It has a transparent etymology and is rendered “chief of the armoury” or similar.<sup>1524</sup> The equivalence of the Bactrian and the Parthian titles was established by Henning 1960,<sup>1525</sup> and has been followed since.<sup>1526</sup> The title is not attested in any surviving Arsakid sources, but the context in ŠKZ indicates that the *zynpty* was a high-ranking official at the Sāsānian court. SK3 no doubt suggests something similar, although what is left of the inscription also seems to indicate that the title was carried as one of several by one individual who was also *αρθοοαλγο*, whereas the Dirān of ŠKZ §48 has no other title.

#### 7.6.2.7. χαρο

There is no direct attestation of the office of *χαρο* in the Kušān period, but its existence may be deduced from two items. First, it appears as an established office from the earliest Bactrian Documents dating to the Kušāno-Sāsānian period. As a general continuity from the Kušān to the Kušāno-Sāsānian period in Bactria seems to have

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<sup>1521</sup> BD2, 273b; Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 135 where it is described as “a title of unknown meaning”.

<sup>1522</sup> DMMPP, 71a and 194b. I thank D. Durkin-Meisterernst for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>1523</sup> Huyse 1999/1, 55.

<sup>1524</sup> On the explanation of the title cf. Davary 1982, 298-99 and Huyse 1999/2, 145.

<sup>1525</sup> *Op. cit.* 50, fn. 9.

<sup>1526</sup> Benveniste 1961, 150; Davary 1982, 298-99; Sims-Williams 2012, 78.

existed, it may not go too far to assume that such an important local office as the  $\chi\alpha\rho\omicron$  would have been inherited from the Kušān period. Second, the seal Callieri Cat U 7.11 contains the personal name  $\chi\alpha\rho\omicron\beta\alpha\lambda\alpha\gamma\omicron$ . The monumental script and the style of the engraving clearly point to the Kušān period. The name has been interpreted by Sims-Williams as “belonging to the royal family”,<sup>1527</sup> i.e., belonging to the family of the  $\chi\alpha\rho\omicron$ . This would indicate the existence of the title in the Kušān period.

The  $\chi\alpha\rho\omicron$  is well-attested in the Bactrian Documents as the ruler of a local municipality ( $\beta\alpha\rho\omicron$ ). He seems to have corresponded with the Persian satrap in the second half of the 5th century according to Document xk. This suggests a low rank in the imperial hierarchy, and it is unlikely that he would have been able to directly address the emperor in the Kušān period. However, the satrap seems to be a specifically Sāsānian office in the Bactrian Documents, so it is impossible to know what authority would have been in its place in the Kušān period.<sup>1528</sup>

#### 7.6.2.8. [ $\bullet$ ] $\alpha\omicron\rho\alpha\nu\omicron$

Sims-Williams 2008 suggests that  $\alpha\omicron\rho\alpha\nu\omicron$  is most likely a complete word, explained as a possible obl. pl. of  $*\alpha\omicron\rho\omicron$  “lord” <  $*ahura-$ , referring to the archaic spelling  $\alpha\omicron\rho\omicron\mu\omicron\zeta\delta\omicron$  for Ahura Mazdā in Rab 10, although a possible  $(\sigma)\alpha\omicron\rho\alpha\nu\omicron$  “commanders” is also considered.<sup>1529</sup> In any case, *ibid* suggests the title should refer to some sort of military commander or general, and this is supported by the context.

A tempting connection not considered by Sims-Williams 2008 may exist to the Indo-Scythian name  $\acute{S}$ palahores found on coins of the “Vonones Group” and named brother

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<sup>1527</sup> Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 310.

<sup>1528</sup> Note however Strabo, XI.11.2 who remarks that the Greeks divided Bactria into satrapies; it is possible that such an administrative structure would have survived into the Kušān period.

<sup>1529</sup> *Op. cit.*, 62.

of Vonones.<sup>1530</sup> Since the element *Śpala-* is also found in the name Śpalirises in the same Vononid context, it has been considered that it may also be a title, since *śpala-* can easily be explained as a derivative of OIr. *\*spāda-* “army”.<sup>1531</sup> If the element *-hores* is related to Bactrian [•]αορανο with the meaning discussed by Sims-Williams 2008, the name or title would suggest itself as meaning “commander of the army”, perhaps a Saka parallel to *spāhbed* that was however not adopted in Bactria, since there the title σπαλοβιδο is well-attested.

In this context it is also worth pointing out that Falk 2010 suggested that the title *horamurta* attested in an inscription from Māṇikāla from the year 18 of the Kaniška Era would have bearing on the name of Śpalahores,<sup>1532</sup> which means it thus might be related to [•]αορανο.

### 7.6.3. Iranian titles in Indian contexts

#### 7.6.3.1. *hamārakāra* and *gañja-hāmārakara*

Falk 2010 argues that the title *hamārakāra* “can hardly be separated from *hammārapati*, as found in Gilgit colophons”.<sup>1533</sup> von Hinüber 1986 explains this title as *\*hmb’lt* “Speicheraufseher” deriving it from Iranian but not being any more specific.<sup>1534</sup> As pointed out by Falk 2010 *\*hamarakara* is found in an Arsakid context in the Nisa Ostraca as *’hmrkr*.<sup>1535</sup> It is also found as *āmārgar* in Middle Persian material from the Sāsānian and early Islamic periods, and can be traced back to the Achaemenid

<sup>1530</sup> Senior 2001, 39-44.

<sup>1531</sup> cf. Bactrian σπαλοβιδο, BD2, 265a.

<sup>1532</sup> cf. chapter 7.6.3.5.

<sup>1533</sup> Falk 2010, 78.

<sup>1534</sup> *Op. cit.*, 150.

<sup>1535</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78, referring to Chaumont, JA 256 (1968), 23.

period.<sup>1536</sup> D. Weber explains the title as “Zählmeister” or “reckoner” with MacKenzie 1970a.<sup>1537</sup> From this, the combined title *gañja-hāmāarakara*, attested on a statue pedestal from Mathurā, becomes explicable.<sup>1538</sup> *gañja-* is clearly OIr. \**gazna-* “treasury”. What is of particular interest here is that *gañja-* displays the metathesis /zn/ < /nz/ that is characteristic of Western Iranian, though not Parthian,<sup>1539</sup> and can therefore not be a Bactrian loanword.<sup>1540</sup> Since the attestation of *gañja-hāmāarakara* is clearly from the Kušān period,<sup>1541</sup> it cannot be from a Middle Persian context. The title *gañjavara* is already attested in an inscription of the *mahākṣatrapa* Śodāsa, also from Mathurā.<sup>1542</sup> Ciancaglini 2008 suggests it is an Old Persian borrowing, which would suggest the title has an Achaemenid origin, something that is possible not just for *gañja-* but also *hāmāarakara*.<sup>1543</sup> However, such a title is unattested in Achaemenid contexts. The Old Persian title for “treasurer” is \**ganzabara-*<sup>1544</sup>, equivalent to the Arsakid and Sāsānian periods,<sup>1545</sup> and shown in Hebrew sources to be separate from the *hāmāarakara*, although the holders of the individual offices are associated with each other.<sup>1546</sup> In Elamite tablets from the Achaemenid Empire however, the title *kanzabara* stands next to the Elamite title *kapnuškira*, “which often designates a treasurer-general of an entire administrative region”.<sup>1547</sup> If one wants to save the notion that *gañja-hāmāarakara* is an Achaemenid title, perhaps it could be seen as equivalent to *kapnuškira* in non-Elamite administrative records.

<sup>1536</sup> For a discussion, cf. QGP/1, 101-02 and QGP/2, 520 and Khurshudian 1998, 124-32.

<sup>1537</sup> QGP/1, 101.

<sup>1538</sup> Falk 2002/2003, 41-45, esp. 44-45 on the title.

<sup>1539</sup> cf. the attested *gznbr*, QGP/1, 102 and QGP/2, 516.

<sup>1540</sup> cf. Ciancaglini 2008, 142 and BD2, 205b for attestations of Bactrian γαζvo.

<sup>1541</sup> The inscription is dated to the year 80 KE and the emperor Vāsudeva, cf. Falk 2002/2003, 43-44, a date that fits well with the other attestations of Vāsudeva.

<sup>1542</sup> Lüders 1961, 100; also noted by Falk 2002/2003, 44-45.

<sup>1543</sup> J.C. Greenfield, \*Hamarakara > 'Amarkal. In: GS Henning, 180-86.

<sup>1544</sup> Henkelman 2017, 98-99.

<sup>1545</sup> Arsakid: QGP/1, 102 and QGP/2, 516; Sāsānian: ŠKZ §49.

<sup>1546</sup> Greenfield 1970, 183.

<sup>1547</sup> Henkelman 2017, 98-99, fn. 74.

While this is speculative, arguing that the title *gañja-hāmāarakara* came to the Indian subcontinent in some other way is equally difficult. One would have to postulate either a formation from an unknown Saka dialect which displays the same /zn/ > /nz/ metathesis or a new formation from inherited Old Persian forms in the post-Achaemenid period. An Achaemenid inheritance, either in the Iranian or the Indian territories of the Kušān Empire, is at the present state of knowledge the explanation requiring the least amount of hypothetical reasoning.

### 7.6.3.2. *kharūsalerapati*

This title is attested in a Brahmī inscription from Mathurā dated to the year 28 and the emperor Huviška.<sup>1548</sup> Konow 1931/32 considers the title “unexplained”, while Falk 2010 compares it to the Sāsānian title *pāygānsālār*, from MP *payg* “footsoldier” and *sālār* “leader”.<sup>1549</sup> The underlying Iranian title would thus be *\*kārsālār*. The interpretation of *\*kāra-* as army seems to be reliant on OP *kāra-* which is found in inscriptions from the time of Darius I and in ASm.<sup>1550</sup> It does not seem to describe a formal army but rather a “people in arms” as suggested by German *Heerbann*. Sometimes it also simply describes the people in a non-militaristic sense.<sup>1551</sup> However, a title found in the Aramaic document A2 is reads *k[r]tnk*’ and has been interpreted by Naveh/Shaked 2012 as deriving from *\*kāra-tanuka-* “bodyguard”.<sup>1552</sup>

It is no longer used in MP, where the term *‘sp’ḥ* is found for “army”, paralleled by Pth *‘sp’d*. However, Parthian also seems to preserve the meaning of “army” for *q’r*.<sup>1553</sup> In Bactrian, there is only one attestation of *καρο* which clearly means “people” rather than

<sup>1548</sup> SS #64, also Konow 1931/32, 55-61.

<sup>1549</sup> The title is mentioned and described repeatedly in literature, so in Frye 1962, 353 (which is cited in Falk 2010, 78), Christensen 1944, 209 and Nöldeke 1878, 448, but the only attestation in the sources seems to be in a Syriac text as cited by Nöldeke. It does not seem to appear on any seal inscriptions. This indicates that, provided the title was in official use at all, it was rather obscure.

<sup>1550</sup> cf. Schmitt 2014, 97-98 for the attestations.

<sup>1551</sup> cf. Schmitt 2014, 201-02 w. lit.

<sup>1552</sup> *Op. cit.*, 84.

<sup>1553</sup> DMMPP, 202b, but cf. also the many compounds with *k’r/q’r*.

“army”.<sup>1554</sup> The Bactrian equivalent of *sālār* is σαρλαρο which only loses the first ρ in late documents, probably due to Middle Persian influence.<sup>1555</sup> In Parthian, the title *drykn s’rr* is attested in ŠKZ §48, although this might be a borrowing from Middle Persian and cannot be taken as undeniable proof that the title *sālār* was in use in Parthian, because it is otherwise unattested.<sup>1556</sup> Manichaean Parthian attests instead *s’rd’r*.<sup>1557</sup>

What this means for the title *kharāsalerapati*, which Falk 2010 suggests translating as “chief of the army chiefs”,<sup>1558</sup> and proposes to compare to Skt. *senāpatipati*,<sup>1559</sup> is however not entirely clear. The title suggests a sort of “commander in chief” rank which, had it existed in the Arsakid Empire, would most likely be attested somewhere. There is also no indication that such a title existed in the Achaemenid Empire. A borrowing from Bactrian seems unlikely both because of the form of *\*sālār* as discussed above and the use of *-pati*, which is possible in Parthian but not in Bactrian, where it had developed to βιδο by the Kušān period, a problem encountered with several other titles discussed below. This makes a possible alternative explanation of the title involving Bactrian χαρο unlikely as well. Again, a Saka influence that cannot be pinned down with further precision is a possibility, but so is an unattested title from the Achaemenid Empire.

### 7.6.3.3. *haysārpati*

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<sup>1554</sup> BD2, 221b.

<sup>1555</sup> BD2, 263a.

<sup>1556</sup> cf. Khurshudian 1998, 286, fn. 9; the attestations of *s’r’r* in DMMPP, 305b are entirely Middle Persian.

<sup>1557</sup> DMMPP, 305b. The attestation with /δ/ is in Sogdian script, cf. W. Sundermann, *Manichaica Iranica*/2, 683-95. On the problematic case of Parthian /δ/ cf. GWML, 87-90.

<sup>1558</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78.

<sup>1559</sup> The comparison is legit, but there needs to be asked if it is a parallel formation in whatever Iranian language *kharāsalerapati* belongs to or a loan translation. Both alternatives possess problems unless one suggests that *-pati* here is an Indian element added to an otherwise Iranian title.



The title *haysārpātī* is found in a rock inscription from Oshibat near Gilgit.<sup>1560</sup> The chronological context is unclear, but it seems it can be from the late Kušān period at the earliest.<sup>1561</sup> There is no doubt that the title in question is derived from OP *\*hazārapātī-*, a title well-attested throughout Iranian history into the Arsakid and Sāsānian times.<sup>1562</sup> Interestingly, the title *υαζαροχτο* is attested on two Bactrian seals from the post-Kušān period.<sup>1563</sup> It is likely a formation based on *hazāruft*, described as a "Vulgārform" by Henning 1965b.<sup>1564</sup> A form *\*υαζαροβιδο* would be expected in analogy to *hazārbed* but is unattested. In any case, it is clear that *haysārpātī* cannot be a borrowing from Bactrian, whereas Parthian *hđrpt*,<sup>1565</sup> so attested in an inscription from Hatra,<sup>1565</sup> seems possible. However, it appears just as likely if not more so that it was an Achaemenid inheritance. The office itself was not exclusively of military nature and ŠKZ shows that at least in the early Sāsānian period, there was more than one individual with this title at the same time. How this can be interpreted in the Kušān context is unclear, and the *haysārpātī* may have been an official at the court of a local king subject to the Kušān emperor. The likely inheritance of the title from a pre-Kušān period however indicates that the office did exist at least in the Gilgit area in the Kušān period as well.

#### 7.6.3.4. *vakanapātī/bakanapātī*

<sup>1560</sup> Oshibat 18:42 (MANP/1, 58); cf. also the uncertain reading of *hasrarapātīh* in Chilas-Bridge, 36:19 (MANP/6, 53).

<sup>1561</sup> The inscription itself has not received a critical edition although von Hinüber 1986, 159 provides a photo (Abb. 2, Nr. 120) and *ibid*, 149 reproduces a transcribed text. It is from the same context as the inscriptions in von Hinüber 1989, and the author uses the same numbering (cf. von Hinüber 1986, 155, fn. 2). The dating is according to palaeographic analysis by Sander 1989.

<sup>1562</sup> For a detailed discussion of the attestations and relevant literature, including the duality of *hazāruft* and *hazārbed* in Arsakid and Sāsānian times (though not mentioning *haysārpātī*), cf. Schmitt 2007.

<sup>1563</sup> Bivar 1955, 210; Humbach 1966/1, 73-74; Göbl 1967/1, 233, 243; Sims-Williams 2005a, 339; also mentioned in Schmitt 2007, 361.

<sup>1564</sup> Henning 1965b, 81 and Schmitt 2007, 361.

<sup>1565</sup> QGP/1, 101 and QGP/3, 317.

The form *vakanapati* is found in the same inscription and referring to the same individual as *kharāsalerapati* discussed above. The form *bakanapati* is found in the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of Vima Takto at Māt,<sup>1566</sup> referring to the author of the inscription who claims for himself the erection of the statue, what is likely the devakula of Māt where the statue was found, a garden, a water tank, a well and a gateway.

The etymology of the title is transparent, derived from OIr. *\*baga-* “god” with *pati-*, suggesting a meaning “chief of the gods” in the sense of “priest”, and Lüders 1961 already considered it an Iranian title.<sup>1567</sup> Falk 2010 followed in this, referring to Sogdian βγνpt- and Armenian *bagnapet*.<sup>1568</sup> The title is found nowhere in Achaemenid,<sup>1569</sup> Arsakid or Bactrian contexts, and only in Armenian sources for the Sāsānian period.<sup>1570</sup> Interestingly however, it appears fairly frequently in Sogdian texts, the earliest known attestation being in Ancient Letter I.<sup>1571</sup> The meaning “magician” suggested by Falk 2010 is only supported in a Buddhist context in SCE 255, where it should be seen in the meaning of “pagan priest” or “sorcerer” as suggested by MacKenzie 1970a.<sup>1572</sup> Otherwise there is nothing to suggest that it shouldn't be taken as “priest” in Zoroastrian and Manichaean contexts.<sup>1573</sup> It is interesting that the spelling variation in the Indian inscriptions suggests an initial fricative /β/ which agrees with Sogdian and Bactrian. If this is enough to assume a loanword from either language is difficult to say, and despite

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<sup>1566</sup> SS #2; cf. also Lüders 1961, 134-38.

<sup>1567</sup> *Op. cit.*, 137.

<sup>1568</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78. The Sogdian title is erroneously written entirely in Greek script.

<sup>1569</sup> The Achaemenid PN Βαγαπάτης is derived from *\*Baga-pāta-*, “protected by God”, cf. Schmitt 2011, 154 (§114),

<sup>1570</sup> Henning 1965a, 250.

<sup>1571</sup> Sims-Williams 2005b, 187 (line 10).

<sup>1572</sup> *Op. cit.*, 50 and 14 (l. 255).

<sup>1573</sup> cf. the above-mentioned occurrence in Ancient Letter I, in the Manichaean Sermon of the Living Soul (Sundermann 2012, 102, l. 1.19) and the Mugh Documents Nov. 5,5 (Livshits 2015, 152) and 1.1 (Livshits 2015, 88-93). To Henning 1965a, 250, there is no doubt that the title could refer to a Zoroastrian priest, suggesting a reflection of the duality *Mōbed* (which itself also appears in the Mugh documents) and *bšnbyd* in Sāsānian Iran and *mogpet-bagnapet* in Armenia.

the lack of any evidence, an Achaemenid inheritance should not be excluded either for the use in Sogdiana or that in India. The occurrence of *bagnapet* in Armenian and *bšnbyd* in Manichaean Middle Persian should be enough to show that the title is not exclusive to eastern Iran.<sup>1574</sup>

### 7.6.3.5. *horamurta*

The title *horamurta* is attested in an inscription from Mānikāla in the Rāwalpīndī District.<sup>1575</sup> It is dated to the year 18 and to the emperor Kaniška.<sup>1576</sup> It has never been conclusively explained and received various interpretations, including “donation master”,<sup>1577</sup> and “immortal sun” = “Durchlaucht, Exellenz” < \**huwar amrtam*.<sup>1578</sup> All observers agree however that the title must be Iranian. Falk 2010 has added that, if ever understood, the title “should also allow one to explain the name *špalahora* of one of the first kṣatrapas in Gandhara, where at least *špala*, ‘army’, is clearly understood”.<sup>1579</sup> It has already been suggested above that the *hora-* element may be related to Bactrian [•]αορανο. A similar suggestion has earlier been made by F.W. Thomas but rejected by Lüders 1913.<sup>1580</sup> The latter argues with E. Leumann that *hora-* is a “nordarische” reflection of Skt. *dāna*.<sup>1581</sup>

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<sup>1574</sup> cf. F. Grenet, *Bagina, baginapati*. In: *EIr* III (2000), 415-16.

<sup>1575</sup> CKI 149.

<sup>1576</sup> Baums 2012, 240-41. Falk 2015a, 11 and 126 (§ 117) attributes it to the year (1)18 and to Kaniška II without any reasons or citation. This attribution (again without reasons) is already found in Falk 2009, 28. The dating to the first Kušan century is upheld by Baums 2018, 66. Since it is not of great significance at present, the issue will be left undecided here.

<sup>1577</sup> Lüders 1913, 249-50.

<sup>1578</sup> Humbach 1976, 38.

<sup>1579</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78. Similar thoughts were already expressed by F.W. Thomas, *JRAS* 1906, 209.

<sup>1580</sup> *Op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>1581</sup> *Op. cit.*, 250.

The problem can at present not be solved and would only lead to further etymological speculation. It seems unlikely however, that the title is Bactrian, if only because one would expect it to reflect Bactrian /δ/ rather than /t/ as in μαρδο < \**martiya-*.

#### 7.6.3.6. *manapākapati*

This word is found in an inscription from Māṭ dated to the reign of Huviška.<sup>1582</sup> Lüders 1961 discusses it but concludes “[w]e thus arrive at the reading (ma)na[pāka]patina, which may be some title, but it is hardly necessary to add that the reading is extremely doubtful”.<sup>1583</sup> Falk 2010 also describes it as “inexplicable”.<sup>1584</sup> Since both the reading and its nature as a title are uncertain, there can also not be any certainty that it is an Iranian word in the first place, much less what it would mean. Neither the Achaemenid, Arsakid or Sāsānian corpora, nor the Sogdian and Bactrian glossaries offer any material that can elucidate this title without a high degree of speculation.

#### 7.6.3.7. *divīra/divira*

Falk 2010 notes that scribes with the Iranian titles *divīra/divira* and *divirapati* are frequently mentioned in Indian inscriptions beginning with the Sāsānian period.<sup>1585</sup> The title is clearly Middle Persian, as Bactrian λαβιρο/λαβιροβιδο is in no way reflected.<sup>1586</sup> It is also difficult to argue for a tradition of Parthian *dpyrpty* because of the Parthian retention of plosive /p/.<sup>1587</sup> Somewhat frustratingly, scribes are mentioned repeatedly

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<sup>1582</sup> SS #66.

<sup>1583</sup> *Op. cit.*, 139-40, fn. 14.

<sup>1584</sup> Falk 2010, 78.

<sup>1585</sup> The context from the inscriptions in the northern Pakistan pointed out by Falk 2010, 78 is entirely supportive of a later date. The titles *divīra* and *divirapati* occur in Oshibat 4:6, 75:3, Shatial 1:1, Hodar 4:5, 6:1 and 93:10, Gichi Nala 32:1, Thalpan 132:18, 348:9, 562:1 and Hodar South 48:2 and 50:1 and maybe Chilas V 67:12. The earliest inscriptions are Oshibat (c. 350-650 CE, von Hinüber 1994, 21-22), Gichi Nala and Shatial (von Hinüber 2001, 108), whereas Hodar and Thalpan are dated to c. 400-700 CE (von Hinüber 1999, 90 MANP 4 (2007), 114).

<sup>1586</sup> BD2, 225a.

<sup>1587</sup> cf. QGP/2, 517.

in the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions, but the formula used is νοβιχτο αμο “written by” in SK4 and Greek διὰ in SK3, thus leaving the title of the scribe unmentioned. It can therefore not even be said with certainty that the ranks of λαβιρο or λαβιροβιδο existed at the Kušān court, and the fact that the title was imported to India by the Sāsānians rather than the Kušān even constitutes an argument against this.

#### **7.6.3.8. Interpretation**

Falk 2010 writes, “professional titles of Iranian origin pour into India under the Kušānas, proof of a more systematic internal administration”.<sup>1588</sup> This verdict must be modified in light of the above discussion, because in no case can any of the titles listed here be definitively shown to have been introduced to India in the Kušān period. Most seem to derive from Parthian or Old Persian, suggesting an inheritance from the Indo-Parthian or, perhaps more likely, the Achaemenid period. This is in and of itself a situation worth analysing, since it suggests either a particular longevity of Achaemenid institutions through the Maurya, Indo-Greek and Śaka periods, or a particular strength of such from the Indo-Parthians. However, the present study is not the place for this. What is of importance here is that none of these institutions seem to have been introduced by the Kušān, who, had they had “a more systematic internal administration” as Falk states, would be expected to have introduced a Bactrian terminology. This, however, is definitely not the case. The situation rather seems to suggest that the Kušān adopted whatever administrative structures they found in the territories they conquered.

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<sup>1588</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78.

The actual increase is one in epigraphic documents in general during and after the Kušān period in which any titles, including such of Iranian origin, can be found.

### **8. Conclusion: A suggested narrative for Kušān history**

As is often the case with ancient empires, the exact dynamics that led to the emergence of the Kušān Empire remain obscure. It originated in a series of local kingdoms situated in and perhaps around northern Bactria. These were set up in the aftermath of the invasion of a nomad group known in Chinese sources as the Yuezhi and seem by all indications to be identical with the Tokharians, whose name survives in Greek, Latin, Bactrian and Indian sources. They turned Bactria into their homeland, and by the reign of Kaniška I at the latest, the country was known as Tokharestan, a name that survived into the Islamic period.

This invasion took place around in the second half of the second century BCE, when Bactria was still the centre of a kingdom ruled by Greek kings. Chinese sources suggest that the Yuezhi took Bactria directly from the Greeks, but numismatic and literary evidence suggests that the country may have suffered invasions by nomadic Saka groups (who would then found the so-called Indo-Scythian rule in Gandhāra and Kashmir) before that, and perhaps the kingdom was already disintegrating due to civil wars between individual Graeco-Bactrian princes. The unity of Bactria may have been

preserved by the initial Yuezhi rulers, but eventually, Yuezhi rule split into five principalities ruled by leaders carrying the common Eurasian title of *yabghu*, rendered *xihou* in Chinese and probably still preserved as  $\alpha\beta\gamma\theta$  in the Kušān Bactrian inscription Dil4. The realms of these *yabghus* are briefly described in Chinese sources, although the information is not entirely clear. Yuezhi rule may have been limited to the river valleys in the Hissar mountains north of the Oxus and a part of Southern Bactria (according to F. Grenet) or may have extended from Sogdia to Gandhāra (according to H. Falk). The Yuezhi *yabghus* are otherwise elusive, having issued only a small number of coins in their own names and otherwise minted coins imitating those of the last Graeco-Bactrian rulers. There is no certain archaeological evidence for this phase, although the burials of Tillya Tepe with their extensive gold treasures may belong to this context. The city of Aī Khanoum, a Graeco-Bactrian centre, appears to have suffered in the period of invasion and political chaos, and was abandoned by the late second century BCE.

The Rabatak Inscription shows that the Kušān later understood their empire to have been founded by a ruler named Kujula Kadphises. The Chinese *Hou Han Shu* indicates that he was the *yabghu* of the Yuezhi clan of the Kuei-Shuang, i.e., the Kušān. He was able to unite the individual realms of the *yabghus* under his rule and make the Kušān the dominant clan. He then set out to expand his newly founded empire south of the Hindukush and into Gandhāra. The precise process of this expansion is unknown, but the numismatic evidence suggests that it was a military conquest at the cost of the Indo-Parthian kingdom under the rule of king Gondophares, whose coins were overstruck by Kujula Kadphises. The Takht-i Bāhī Inscription has been interpreted to show that the 26<sup>th</sup> year of Gondophares corresponds to 55/56 CE. At this time, the Indo-Parthians still ruled the Pešāwar Valley, which Kujula Kadphises was apparently not able to conquer,

as none of his coins have been found there. Nevertheless, the Kušān expansion in this period led to the incorporation of Kabulistan, Taxila and Kashmir into the empire.

Kujula had turned the Kušān Empire into a power to be reckoned with, and his coins express the confidence of a strong ruler. They follow the established tradition of bilingual Greek and Gandhārī legends, and Kujula adopts the traditional Greek title δίκαιος, translating it to Gandhārī *dhramatida*. This is a new translation that seems to be uninfluenced by the traditional Gandhārī rendering *dhramika* found on Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian coins, which indicates that Kujula emerged from a Bactrian background in which Greek was still spoken, but Gandhārī was a foreign language. Kujula initially shied away from adopting a grander imperial titulature, retaining his title *yabghu* together with its Greek rendering τύραννος. This interpretation is based on the identification of the so-called “Heraios” coinage as early issues of Kujula Kadphises, which is not certain but likely due to the high quality of the coin designs, which would be best explained from the resources available to a newly founded empire. In Kashmir however, Kujula adopted the title “King of Kings” (*rayatiraya*), following in this practice the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian rulers the Kušān had replaced there. Kujula’s scope went beyond his immediate geographical surroundings however, as a coin issue of his copies an obverse type of Augustus with the image of Kujula sitting on a curule chair on the reverse. This may even be a sign of Roman recognition of the new strongman in Bactria and Gandhāra.

The Rabatak Inscription notes that Kujula Kadphises was succeeded by his son, Vima Takto. This new emperor is known from several inscriptions at the frontiers of the Kušān Empire in the Dašt-i Nawur and the Almosi Gorge. In the former inscription, Vima Takto introduces a grand imperial titulature assembling large part old Greek titles that were current among the Graeco-Bactrians, Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians and Indo-



Parthians. Vima Takto has no reservations to call himself “king of kings” and boasts titles such as “great saviour” (this being a new extension to the common Greek title σωτήρ), “righteous and just” and “god worthy of worship”.

Arguably the most remarkable aspect of these inscriptions however is that they are written in Bactrian, the Middle Iranian idiom of the imperial homeland, reduced to writing in Greek script. The attempt to write Bactrian can be observed under Kujula Kadphises already, but the inscriptions of Vima Takto demonstrate that a new orthographic system, developed by scribes who were familiar both with the Greek and Bactrian languages, was established under imperial guidance. These scholars were very conscious of semantic nuances in the translation of Greek titles into Bactrian. Moreover, they developed largely consistent ways to render Bactrian in a script that was in no way capable of accurately reflecting the phonology of the language. This feat is all the more interesting, as the Kušān had both the Aramaic and Kharoṣṭhī scripts at their disposal, which would have been better suited for an Iranian language. Indeed, it appears as though the Imperial Aramaic script, an inheritance from the Achaemenid period, was adapted to write another Middle Iranian language which may have been the native tongue of the Yuezhi/Kušān rulers. In the time of Vima Takto, both languages appear side-by-side on the inscriptions, together with Gandhārī in Dašt-i Nawur, but the subsequent rulers seem to have gradually abandoned the other language.

Vima Takto was only identified as an individual ruler in the Rabatak Inscription. Prior to this discovery, the known inscriptions and coins in his name were attributed to his son, Vima Kadphises. It is now clear however, that Vima Takto was a Kušān emperor of great historical importance. It appears that he was involved in conflict with the Han Empire in the Tarim Basin, and that the Han could check Kušān expansion there. In India however, Vima Takto seems to have been more successful. Pešāwar now

apparently came under Kušān control, and Vima Takto appears to also have at least briefly taken control of Mathurā. He was responsible for the issuing of a large silver coinage with the Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ and the Gandhārī *Maharajasa rajatirajasa mahatasa tratarasa*, “King of Kings the Great Saviour”, but not including the name of the emperor. It is possible that this coinage was initiated by Kujula Kadphises in an effort to reform and unite the highly heterogeneous coin issues current before Kušān expansion. However, Vima Takto is certainly responsible for the issuing of most of this coinage, although there are also interpretations of this issuer being an anonymous usurper.

The inscription of Dašt-i Nawur is dated in the year 279 of an era introduced by the Indo Greeks most likely originating in 174 BCE. It thus places Vima Takto in the year 104 CE. Eight years later, the throne had passed to his son, Vima Kadphises, as an inscription from Khalatse indicates. Vima Kadphises is largely intangible as a historical figure, with the exception of his coinage. He finished the numismatic reforms of his predecessors in a radical way. The silver coinage, by now completely debased, which had been the standard in Bactria since the Seleukid period, was entirely abolished, and in its stead, the first large and systematic gold coinage since the Achaemenid period was introduced. The coins were minted following the standard of the Roman denarius of the Flavian period. The copper coinage on Indo-Greek standard was retained. On the coins, Vima Kadphises showed himself as a triumphant emperor wearing the traditional nomad dress of kaftan, pantaloons, boots and a variety of headdresses as a crown. On his coin reverses he showed an unnamed deity, apparently a composite of mostly Indian iconographic ideas. Although the principal obverse legends were Greek, with the simple title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΧΣ (while the copper coins kept the more boastful ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΧΣ), the reverse

legends were in Gandhārī with a far more elaborate titulature translating to “(of) the great king, king of kings, lord of the world, great lord, Vima Kadphises, saviour”. The aforementioned Khalatse inscription on the other hand includes the title, *devaput(r)a* “son of the gods”, which had already been used on some coins by Kujula Kadphises. This title does not appear in the grand introductory titulatures of Dašt-i Nawur or Rabatak, although it is part of the standard appellation of the Kušān emperors, also found in other passages in the Rabatak Inscription as Bactrian βαγεποοο. This title together with the customary βαονανοβαο (King of Kings) expresses the self-image of the Kušān as a world power on the same level as the Han, the Arsakids and the Romans, who used comparable titles (*tianzī*, θεοπάτωρ and *divi filius* respectively).

By all indications, this boast was justified. The Kušān had taken control of large urban centres such as Balkh, Kabul, Pešāwar, Taxila and Mathurā and controlled the key communication lines between South and Central Asia. The coinage shows that the Kušān controlled and exploited reliable gold sources, which most likely lay somewhere in or around Bactria. Buddhist pilgrims had already begun establishing sanctuaries (*stūpas*) and monasteries (*vihāras*) on the major traffic lines in Gandhāra and Kabulistan, contributing to the safety of the connectivity network of the empire.

With this pretext, it is hardly a surprise that the Kušān Empire was about to reach the peak of its power. The son of Vima Kadphises, Kaniška, ascended the Kušān throne around the end of the third century of the Indo-Greek era. He apparently used this opportunity to dedicate this new century to his own inauguration. Whereas Vima Takto had still claimed to have seized kingship on his own accord, this was no longer sufficient for Kaniška. Although he retained the autocratic element in his titulature by way of the Bactrian title χοαζαοαργο (“self-ruler”), he now followed in his father’s footsteps by attributing his kingship to an act of divine will. While Vima Kadphises had

been content to place the image of one, syncretic divine manifestation of his kingship on his coin reverses, Kaniška opted for a more inclusive method. In the Rabatak Inscription, he proclaims that he had received kingship from the goddess Nana in particular and the entirety of the gods in general. His coin issues follow suit. Initially, the gold and copper coins show a selection of five deities with Greek names on the reverse: Nanaia, Hēlios, Salēnē (a male form of Sēlēne), Hēphaistos and Anēmos (a collective of the *Anemoi* with the iconography of Boreas). Shortly afterwards, and in some cases even utilising the same, re-cut dies, these divine names are “translated” to Bactrian: Nanaia to Nana, Hēlios to Miiro (Miθra), Salēnē to Mao (Māh), Hēphaistos to Aθšo (Ātar) and Anemos to Oado (Vāta). Kaniška thus associates himself with a group of celestial and elemental deities, giving his rule a superhuman connotation which fits with the claim of the Kušān emperors to be a god and a son of the gods. The message is simplified in subsequent issues. Aθšo (fire) and Oado (wind) are displaced (though not entirely replaced) by a god Oēšo who takes an Indian iconography that would go on to influence that of Śiva, but the Iranian name of an atmospheric god (Vaiiu).

Having introduced himself as an associate of the cosmos itself and taking the throne by the will of the gods, and having re-dedicated time itself to his rule, Kaniška lost no time to deliver. In the same year one that he had introduced (which may or may not have been the year of his accession), he announced the most ambitious expansion project in Kušān history: The conquest of all of India. He made a proclamation to the independent rulers of India that they were now under Kaniška’s command. He spent six years subjecting India to enforce this claim before he gave command for victory temples to be built in the Bactrian homeland.

One such temple may already have existed in Māt in the Mathurā district, built by Vima Kadphises, but there are indications that it had taken damage and that Kaniška had to re-conquer Mathurā. With this new focus on action, Kaniška also re-defined his role on the coins. It was no longer enough to invoke the celestial forces as his allies, he needed manifestations of his tangible role as an emperor. Four new gods appeared: Lrooaspo (a male Druvāspā), Manaobago (Vohu Manah?), Mozdoano (an otherwise unknown god) and Orlagno (Vərəθrayna). Their iconographies indicate that these gods were associated with the heroic, warlike and executive qualities of the emperor.

The new temples in Bactria were monuments of dynastic worship. One, in Surkh Kotal, was named for Kaniška himself – Kanēško Oanindo, Kaniška the Victorious (Nikatōr). The other, with the more humble name Bageāb (Divine water), was nearby in Rabatak. Both temples were dedicated to the worship of a selected pantheon, the ancestors of Kaniška, and the living emperor himself. They were venerated on site in form of statues. We only know the selection of deities from Rabatak, including the granter of kingship herself, Nana, the obscure Omma, Ahura Mazdā, Mozdoano, who seems to have been associated with the spoils of war and the beneficial outcome of conquest, Srošardo (Srōšahrai), Narasao (Nairyō.saṅha) and Miīro (Miθra). Srošardo seems to have later been identified with the gods Maaseno (Mahāsenā) and Bizago (Viśakha), both gods of the Skanda complex, something that is also corroborated by the numismatic iconography of Mahāsenā. This pantheon of Rabatak in association is a pantheon of kingship, military exploits and successful warfare.

These temples are referred to with the ordinary Bactrian word βαγολαγγο (lit. “God container” with the Indian analogy devakula) but were also considered fortresses. Surkh Kotal was surrounded by an extensive fortification wall which was, however, of purely decorative nature. The sanctuary was meant to give the impression of being a fortress,

without functionally being one. It was a visualisation of the divine power of the Kušān emperor whose rightful place was at the end of a grand staircase on top of a mountain. The whole building was in a near perfect east-west axis allowing someone who climbed up the staircase to see the sun rising from behind the mountains as he stood with the temple itself to his back. This image also seems to have been immortalised on Kušān coins, most notably of Kaniška's successor Huvivska, showing the emperor rising from behind what seems to be a rocky surface. In this sense, he takes the role of Miθra on top of Mount Harā, surveying the world.

The temple of Rabatak was dedicated in the year six (133 CE), but Kaniška was at the time apparently still in India, his proclamation of having conquered all of India up to Pataliputra and Śri Campa perhaps being premature. Only four years later did he return to Bactria. Although there are indications that there was military activity in the Tarim Basin, it was evidently no longer enough to make forceful demonstrations of power. The empire needed to be governed, and Kaniška had subordinates who demonstrated their loyalty by constructing monumental temples on his command and making sacrifice to the gods to bless the emperor. The highest office, second in command to the emperor, was the margrave (*καραλαργγο*), and one of these men, named Nokonzok, left an epigraphic record that allows us to follow his rise through the ranks. His service to the emperors was rewarded by his subsequent promotion from amboukao to haštwaig to margrave.

Nokonzok expressed himself in the same Bactrian language as the emperors, even giving occasional quotations or paraphrases that allow some of the literary techniques used in imperial proclamations to be glimpsed. The imperial language was however being constantly streamlined, introducing generic word endings and simplifying orthography. It was designated as "Aryan" (*αριαο*) like Achaemenid Old Persian,

indicating that it was intended to be an imperial, Iranian *koinē* rather than a natural, spoken language. This same language also appeared on almost all coin legends beginning with Kaniška, further reinforcing its status as an imperial language. Beyond this however, the Kušān appeared to have accepted a certain heterogeneity in the administration. Below the layer of imperial élites, who were either Bactrian or more likely of the same ethnicity as the Kušān, as some of the personal names indicate, the dignitaries and offices belonged to local traditions. This is ironically most evident in the use of Iranian titles in India. These cannot be etymologised as Bactrian and are more likely Old Persian, suggesting an ongoing legacy from the Achaemenid period which the Kušān did not disrupt. Titles of this origin can still be found in Gandhāra centuries after the end of the Kušān Empire.

Kaniška seemed to have found value in sponsoring Buddhism, the spread of which, as noted, was beneficial for the maintenance of imperial infrastructures. It was in the interest of Buddhist pilgrims to keep roads and travellers safe and comfortable, and thus they helped maintain imperial peace and exchange. The Buddhists kept a fond memory of Kaniška, attributing to him the direction of a Buddhist council, the construction of an enormous stūpa, even his conversion to the faith. How much of this is historically true is uncertain. The most obvious instance of Kaniška's support of Buddhism is the fleeting issue of coins with images of the Buddha on the reverse. However, Kaniška also made a general promise of prosperity to his subjects, as indicated by the appearance of the deities Ardoxšo with the iconography of Fortuna, and Pharro with the iconography of Mercurius on his coins.

We know very little of the foreign relations of the Kušān Empire at this time. There seem to have been hostilities with the two immediate neighbours, the Han and Arsakid Empires. There was an awareness of the Roman Empire in the Kušān realm, as already

seen under Kujula Kadphises, and there is evidence for an ongoing trade between Rome and the Kušān. However, this evidence is minimal compared to the wealth of information on Roman-Indian trade in the first century CE. In fact, at the very moment the Kušān Empire rises, the information diminishes. This seems mostly to be due to the loss of literary sources after the Flavian period, but it is noteworthy that only very few Roman coins of the post-Flavian period have been found in India and the territory of the Kušān Empire. In any case, the typical interpretation of the Kušān Empire as a “middleman” of transcontinental trade does no justice to the imperial strategy of the Kušān. There is no evidence that the maintenance of trade routes was a declared part of the imperial agenda, even though an exchange with China and Rome cannot be denied. Next to the use of Roman iconography for Kušān gods on the coins, this is also demonstrated by the hoard of Bēgrām, a collection of art works of Roman and Chinese provenance that was found in a Kušān context.

Kaniška seems to have died unexpectedly. A series of coin issues introducing new deities to the pantheon appears to have been prepared but not minted, and the dies were used by his successor Huviška. This is indicated by the fact that Huviška’s earliest coins still have Kaniška’s *tamgha* on the reverse even though the obverses of the new emperor already appear fully formed. If so, Kaniška’s promise of prosperity would have been guaranteed by the customary tetrad Nana, Miuro, Mao and Oēšo, together with Ardoxšo, the Indian god Maaseno and his associates Skando-Komaro (Skanda Kumara) and Bizago (Viśakha) as well as Sarapo (Sarapis), a god usually associated with Ptolemaic Egypt and Egypto-Roman merchants, but whose cult in Central Asia is attested since the Seleukid period. Huviška shortly afterwards amended this pantheon with Pharro, Manaobago, Ōromozdo (Ahura Mazdā) and Rišto (Arštat).



The new emperor soon seems to have faced a crisis that shook the very foundations of the empire. No details are known of what exactly caused this “Huviška Crisis”, but in the year 31 (158), less than a decade after his accession, the sanctuary of Surkh Kotal had been besieged and even though the enemies, whoever they were, were driven off, a renewed appearance was expected. For this reason, Nokonzoko ordered an internal water supply to be built in the sanctuary, so that it would not have to be abandoned and the statues of the gods would not have to be evacuated from their place.

The weight standard of Huviška’s copper coinage was also severely reduced, although the gold coins did not undergo such change. However, the iconography of the emperor changed. At the beginning of his reign, Huviška appeared surprisingly humble in a simple tunic, rising from behind the mountains, unarmed and only holding an elephant goad and a strange ritualistic object in his hand. Now, however, the image changed. Huviška donned an elaborately ornamented robe, armed with a lance and turning his crown into a military helmet. New deities were placed next to the ones venerated thus far: Aθšo, the god of fire and Lrooaspo, the god of horses, reappeared, Šaoroero (Šahrivar), taking the guise of Mars, became one of the most frequently depicted gods, and a variety of cults such as Dionysos, Heraklēs, Iamšo (an interpretation of Yima as the god of kingship), the deified river Oxus and Teiro (Tištriya) were all invoked to stand by the side of the emperor, perhaps addressing different elements of the population to show solidarity, together with Oanindo, the goddess of victory, taking the iconography of Victoria. The margraves became so powerful that they issued their own coinage for a while. Eventually, Huviška raised the weight standard of his copper coins again – the crisis was averted.

Huviška was succeeded by an emperor named Vāsudeva. He seems to have ruled the empire in a phase of peace and stability, although he still takes a martial guise on his

coin portraits, wearing battle armour. After an inaugural issue showing the goddess Nana, Vāsudeva exclusively depicts the god Oēšo on his coins. His successor was Kaniška II, who continues the monotheistic coin issues but changes allegiance to Ardoxšo. Kaniška II is the last Kušān king attested in Bactria. His coins were found in Balkh and Surkh Kotal. During his reign or shortly afterwards, most likely in the 240s CE, the western part of the Kušān Empire was conquered by the Sāsānians, who installed a sub-dynasty here. These so-called Kušāno-Sāsānians fused Kušān and Sāsānian elements on their coins while using the title Kušānšāh, a re-interpretation of the title βασιλευσβασις το βασιλεως (Šāhānšāh the Kušān) indicating that the term Kušān had lost its dynastic meaning and now came to designate the realm and its people.

In India, the Kušān are still attested into the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Kaniška II and his son Vasiška were still present in Mathurā. However, the son of Vasiška, Kaniška III, must have lost all hope of ever regaining the former grandeur of the empire. He even dropped the otherwise obligatory designation “Kušān” in his inscriptions (albeit not his coins) and even uses a new title – υνδογανο βασις, King of the Indians. His successors controlled ever diminishing territories and by the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century, what was left of the Kušān Empire in India was absorbed by the Gupta.

## Appendix I: A catalogue of Kušān Bactrian inscriptions

### 1. Dašt-i Nawur (DN1)

#### 1.1. Description

The Bactrian inscription DN1 was part of a volcanic rock measuring 180x270x90 cm containing a total of five inscriptions (DN1-5) in four different scripts and languages. The rock has unfortunately been destroyed in the 1970s.<sup>1589</sup> DN1 is an inscription of 13 lines in Bactrian written in *scriptua continua* preceded by a dating formula in Greek in line 1. Both are written in Greek script. DN2 Is a short inscription in Greek characters of five lines.<sup>1590</sup> DN3 and DN5 are inscriptions in an unknown language and script. According to Fussman 1974, the script is a syllabic derivation of Kharoṣṭhī.<sup>1591</sup> DN4 is in Gandharī language and Kharoṣṭhī script. It is largely illegible but seems to be of the same content as DN1.<sup>1592</sup>

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<sup>1589</sup> Fussman 1974, 7; Davary/Humbach 1976, 5.

<sup>1590</sup> DN2 has never been transcribed or translated. A tracing can be found in Fussman 1974, pl. IV. The shape of the letters is the same as DN1, cf. *ibid*, 19.

<sup>1591</sup> *Op. cit.* 33-34.

<sup>1592</sup> A transcription is found in Fussman 1974, 22.

## 1.2. Location and Discovery

The inscription was located near the 4320m peak of Mt Qarabāy in a location overlooking the Dašt-i Nawur, a plateau some 3000m above sea level that is filled by a seasonal salt lake.<sup>1593</sup> The site seems to be isolated but the rock was next to what might be an artificial depression in the ground capable of holding water.<sup>1594</sup> It was discovered in 1967 during a geological survey by A. Boutière. One of his photographs was first published in 1969 by A. Habibi. In August of the same year, G. Fussman made a first analysis of the rock for the DAFA. The following year however, the same scholar revisited the site and reported the inscription partially destroyed.<sup>1595</sup> This has been doubted recently on a new analysis of the archival materials left by the recently deceased scholar.<sup>1596</sup>

## 1.3. Reading History

A detailed description of the inscription and its discovery was published by Fussman 1974. It is the only edition based on autopsy of the rock.<sup>1597</sup> However, despite input by I. Gershevitch, much of the reading of DN1 remained unclear both because of the poor state of the inscription and the early state of the study of Bactrian at the time. A second edition based on photographs by A. Boutière and P. Bernard and a paper tracing by the latter was made by Davary/Humbach 1976. The reading differs significantly from that of Fussman. Both readings and the line drawing from Davary/Humbach 1976 were reproduced in Davary 1982.<sup>1598</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96 produced a new reading

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<sup>1593</sup> Maps of the site are found in Fussman 1974, pl. I (as a sketch) and Davary/Humbach 1976, 4 (more geographically detailed but of larger scale).

<sup>1594</sup> The site is described in Fussman 1974, 6-7; cf. also Davary/Humbach 1976, 5.

<sup>1595</sup> The history of discovery is narrated in Fussman 1974, 2-3.

<sup>1596</sup> Halfmann et al 2024, 13-14.

<sup>1597</sup> Falk 2015a, 108 (§089).

<sup>1598</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64-66.

and translation of the first seven lines of the inscription based on new information from the Rabatak Inscription.<sup>1599</sup> The reading agrees more with Davary/Humbach 1976 than with Fussman 1974. Sims-Williams 2012 provides the same translation but remarks that lines 7-13 are "largely illegible and/or incomprehensible, apart from the very last word of the inscription".<sup>1600</sup> After Fussman passed away, his archive was investigated and new photographs were found which allowed for new readings by Panučić et al 2023 and Halfmann et al 2024.<sup>1601</sup>

#### 1.4. Text and Translation

Fussman 1974 does not attempt a coherent translation in light of the many uncertainties in his edition. Davary/Humbach 1976 believe the inscription narrates a sacrifice to Miθra made by Vima Kadphises at the site. This translation is left disregarded both in light of the mistaken interpretation of SK4 by H. Humbach and the fact that N. Sims-Williams considers the inscription illegible after line 7. The edition and translation reproduced here is that of Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96,<sup>1602</sup> although line 13 is added per the mention of Sims-Williams 2012.<sup>1603</sup>

- 1 σοθ' γορπιαίου ιε'
- 2 βραοναδε βαι ι βωγο
- 3 ι στοργο οσημο τακτοο
- 4 κοβανο ι ραβτογο ι λαδει-
- 5 γο ι βαγο ι ηζνογο κιδι πιδο ι
- 6 χοβε ιανε βραοδανε λφαχ-

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<sup>1599</sup> *Op. cit.*, 95.

<sup>1600</sup> *Op. cit.*, 76-77.

<sup>1601</sup> cf. also here for a more detailed research history.

<sup>1602</sup> *Op. cit.*, 95.

<sup>1603</sup> *Op. cit.*, 77.

7     το

...

13    χοανδο

1     [Greek:] (Year) 279, (month) Gorpaios, (day) 15.

2     [Bactrian:] Of the king of kings, the

3     great salvation, Vima Taktu

4     the Kushan, the righteous, the just,

5     the god worthy of worship, who according to

6     his own will has gained the kingship

7     ...

...

13    was proclaimed

The new reading of DN1 by Halfman et al 2024 is reproduced here with kind permission by the authors, although it did not have any influence on the present dissertation. The new interpretation of the title βαγο ι ηζνογο as “god-worshipping” in particular would warrant further discussion.

1     Σοθ γορπιαιου ιε

2     βαονανδε βαο ι βωγο

3     ι στοργο οσημο τακτοο

4     κοβανο ι ραβτογο ι λαδει

5     γο ι βαγοιηζνογο κιδι πιδο ι

6     χοβε βανε βαοδανε λφαχ

7     το ... τιδηια ο•[•]ορ[••]ζο••  
 8     ••α•[•]αδε υνοα[°] κοβανιγ••  
 9     ρομο• [•] οαναο... ..... ασο μολε  
 10    (π/σ)αργο λαδο τιδηια πορρι  
 11    γι ιβτο οτηια αβο ι βαγανο  
 12    σπαχτο οτι καρανο αβο μιο  
 13    ασανε οαανο ι μολο χοαρδο  
 1     279 of Gorpiaiios 15  
 2     The king of kings the great  
 3     salvation Whema Takhtu  
 4     the Kushan, the righteous, the law-  
 5     ful, the god-worshipping who by  
 6     his own authority has gained kingship.  
 7     ?  
 8     ... India (?) ... \*Kushanian (?)  
 9     ... [??] of wine(?)  
 10    [was] given. This/then he ful-  
 11    ly (or: to the full moon) sacrificed. And he the gods...  
 12    ... worshipped. And the people/soldiers until sun-  
 13    rise(?) [...] drank the wine.

### 1.5. Significance

DN1 was the first discovery of a lengthy inscription in Bactrian after SK4. It extended the vocabulary of the language, although its unique position in linguistic respect has been reduced by Rab. It is of historical importance for providing attestation of the

Kušān emperor Vima Takto. It is dated in the year 279 of an unknown era, which has been the subject of some discussion by G. Fussman and A.D.H. Bivar. The use of the Macedonian month Gorpaios suggests one originating in Indo-Greek times. As discussed above, Falk/Bennett 2009 argues that it begins in 175/74 BCE and was founded by Antimachos I, which would date DN1 to 105/5 CE. SK2 seems to be dated to the same year. The titlature used here is largely the same as the one in Rab, with differences discussed in chapter 5. The language of DN3 is discussed in chapter 4.1.1. DN1 remains the earliest known certain document of the Bactrian language. Bivar 1976 suggests that it was copied by the scribe from a document in cursive Bactrian, accounting for a number of epigraphic curiosities.<sup>1604</sup> This would indicate an already established scribal tradition for Bactrian.

## **2. Rabatak (Rab)**

### **2.1. Description**

Rab is a monolingual Bactrian inscription engraved in letters originally coloured red on a rectangular grey limestone slab measuring 98x60xc.25 cm. It is written in *scriptua continua* in 23 lines with an interlinear gloss between lines 9 and 10. The inscription is mostly well-legible. There are only some ill-preserved parts resulting in lacunae in the text at the beginning of lines 1, 17, 19, 21 and 22 and at the end of lines 4, 20, 21 and 22. Line 23 is almost completely illegible except for a few letters and what may be the name of the scribe. The inscription itself is not dated but internal evidence suggests it was written in or shortly after the year 6 of the Kaniška Era, i.e. 133/34 CE according to the chronology of H. Falk.

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<sup>1604</sup> *Op. cit.*, 333-34.



## 2.2. Location and Discovery

The inscription was discovered in March 1993 at a hill called Kafir Qal'ā by the village of Rabātak in the Baghlān province (36.09 N, 68.24 E). Rabatak is located about midway on the road leading from Haibak (Samangān) to the Pul-i Khumri plain and is the only permanent settlement on this stretch of the road. There are differing reports on the exact circumstances and context of the discovery,<sup>1605</sup> but it was a chance find, not an archaeological investigation. It was found together with a number of sculptural fragments including a lion's paws and mane, a lotus panel and a pilaster base.<sup>1606</sup> The site had previously been identified as Kušān.<sup>1607</sup> The artefacts were brought to the local warlord Sayyid Jaffar Nadiri, who brought it to the attention of Tim Porter, a British aid worker of the HALO Trust. Porter made photographs of the objects which were sent to J. Cribb in the British Museum in London.<sup>1608</sup> These photographs were published by Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96. The inscription was kept in the residence of Sayyid Jaffar in Pul-i Khumri, where it was seen by J. Lee in 1997, who took new photographs provided to N. Sims-Williams which were published in Sims-Williams 1998.<sup>1609</sup> Sayyid Jafar was ousted after heavy fighting shortly afterwards and the inscription was considered lost. In April 2000 however, J. Lee and R. Kluyver found that it had been stored in a depot of the local Department of Mines in Pul-i Khumri.<sup>1610</sup> In July of that

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<sup>1605</sup> According to Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 75, it was reported by T. Porter that the inscription was found "by an official party sent by the Governor after the local people reported finding ancient bricks and carved stones while they were salvaging stone from the hill to rebuild their homes after returning to the region following the cessation of hostilities". Kluyver 2001, 17 however remarks that it "was unearthed by fighters digging a trench in 1993".

<sup>1606</sup> Photographs in Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 137.

<sup>1607</sup> cf. Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96m 75 w. Ball 1982.

<sup>1608</sup> A film of the site was also made according to N. Sims-Williams (personal communication), whereas Kluyver 2001, 17 reports that T. Porter was requested "to make a video" of the inscription which was then sent to London.

<sup>1609</sup> Kluyver 2001, 17 and Sims-Williams 1998, 79.

<sup>1610</sup> Kluyver 2001, 17.

year, the stone slab was retrieved and brought from Pul-i Khumri to the Kabul National Museum.<sup>1611</sup> It was put on display as the centrepiece of an exhibition in the museum in August for a few days before being put in storage in the Ministry of Information and Culture for safety reasons.<sup>1612</sup> It was once again installed in the exhibition of the Kabul National Museum after the end of Taleban rule and studied there by N. Sims-Williams in May 2003.<sup>1613</sup> The site of Rabatak itself has been described as destroyed.<sup>1614</sup>

### **2.3. Reading History**

The inscription was first published with a reading, translation and linguistic and historical commentary in Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96. The reading was based on the photographs provided by T. Porter. A second reading based on the same photographs but with diverging interpretations was prepared by B.N. Mukherjee at the same time,<sup>1615</sup> which has since been republished by Goyal 2005. The new photographs taken by J. Lee allowed the revised reading Sims-Williams 1998, which however also makes some erroneous changes. After examining the stone slab itself in Kabul in 2003, N. Sims-Williams produced an entirely new reading.<sup>1616</sup> This reading clarifies a large number of uncertainties which led to erroneous interpretations in the historical studies that were published so far. Most importantly, it completely did away with the reading by Mukherjee 1998, which must now be disregarded. The reading and translation from Sims-Williams 2008 has been reproduced in several publications.<sup>1617</sup>

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<sup>1611</sup> Kluver 2001, 17 reports it was brought there by plane via Mazar-i Sharif as the Salang Tunnel was blocked.

<sup>1612</sup> Kluver 2001, 17-18.

<sup>1613</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 53.

<sup>1614</sup> Allchin et al 2019, 379.

<sup>1615</sup> Mukherjee 1998.

<sup>1616</sup> Sims-Williams 2008.

<sup>1617</sup> Notably Sims-Williams 2012, 77-78 (translation only but with a tracing of the inscription) and Falk 2015a, 112-14 (with text and translation but omitting any kind of commentary).

## 2.4. Text and Translation

According to Sims-Williams 2008.<sup>1618</sup>

- 1 [\*\*\*] αν\*ο\*\*\*\*βο βωγο στοργο κανηρκε ι κοβανο ραβτογο λαδειγο  
χοαζαιοαργο βαγ[ο]
- 2 [η]ζνογο κιδι ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι βροδανι αβορδο κιδι  
ιωγο χρονο
- 3 νοβαστο σαγωδι βαγανο σινδαδο οτηια ι ιωναγγο οασο οζοαστο ταδηια αριαο  
ωσ-
- 4 ταδο αβο ιωγο χρονο αβο ι υνδο φροαγαζο αβο βρατριαγγε βρορε αγια ι  
[\*\*\*]-
- 5 αδραγο οδο ι ωζοπο οδ(ο) ι σαγηδο οδο ι κωζαμβο οδο ι παλαβοτρο οιδρα αδα  
αβο ι ζιριτ[ι]-
- 6 αμβο σιδηιανο προβδο οδο μανδαρσι [\*]αορανο αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο οτη[ι]α  
αρουγ[ο]

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<sup>1618</sup> Op. cit., 55-57. Reproduced in Falk 2015a, 112-14 (§096).

- 7 ι υνδο α(β)ο ι σινδο ωσταδο ταδι ηαι κανηηκε αβο ηαφαρο καταλαραγγο  
φρομαδο
- 8 αβεινα οιαγο βαγολαγγο κηρδι σιδι βαγεαβο ριζδι αβο μα κασιγε ραγα  
φαρειμοανο β-
- 9 αγανο κιδι μαρο κηρδι ανδιμανι οφαρρο ομμα οσηλδι ια αμγα νανα οδο ια αμ-
- 10 γα ομμα αορομοζδο μοζδοοανο σροβαρδο < 10a: (κ)ιδι υνδοοαο μαασηνο ριζδι  
οδο βιζαγο ριζδι > ναρασαο μιρο οτηια ουδοα-
- 11 νο πιδηρβο φρομαδο κηρδ[ι] ειμοανο βαγανο κιδι μασκα νιβηχιτιγενδι οτ-
- 12 ηια φρομαδο αβειμοανο ηαονανο κηρδι αβο κοζουλο καδφισο ηαο αβο ι φρ-
- 13 ονιαγ(ο ο)δο αβο οσημο τακτοο ηαο αβ(ο) ι νιαγο οδο αβο οσημο καδφισε ηαο  
αβο
- 14 (ι) πιδα οδο αβο ι χοβισαρο κανηηκε ηαο τασαγωνδι ηαονανο ηαο ι βαγεποο-
- 15 ρα κανηηκε φρομαδο κηρδι ταδι ηαφαρε καταλαραγγε κηρδο ειο βαγολαγγο
- 16 [ο]δο πιαβο καταλαραγγο οδο ηαφαρο καταλαραγγο οδο νοκονζοκο ι αητοο-
- 17 α[λγο \*\*] σιδο ηαι φρομανο ειμιδβα βαγε κιδι μαρο νιβηχιτιγενδι ταδανο αβο  
ηαον-
- 18 αν[ο ηαι] αβο κανηηκε κοηανο αβο ιασηδανι ζορριγι λρουγο αγγαδδιγγο  
οανινδ-
- 19 ογ[ο \*\*\*\*]ινδι οτι ηαο ι βαγεποορο ασο ιωγο χηρονο αβο ι οχο χηρονο ι υνδο  
αρουγο ν-
- 20 ααλη[ι]ο (τ)[α](δ)ι βαγολαγγο αβο ιωγο χηρονο ασπαδο ταδι αβο ι αρημσσο  
χηρονο αγγα[\*\*\*]
- 21 [\*]πα\*\*\* [ ca. 6 π]ιδο ηαε φρομανα αβισσι ι παρηνα λαδο αβισσι ρηδγε λαδο  
αβισσ[ι \*\*]-

22 [\*\* λαδο οτι καν]η[ρκε] ραι μα λιζγα αβο βαγανο λαδο οδο φαρειμοανο  
αζαδανο [κι]δι [α]βο μι βαγεα[βο]

23 [...]λ[...]α\*\*\*\*\*τ\*\*[...]ατιδνοσ

1 ... the great salvation, Kanishka the Kushan, the righteous, the just, the  
autocrat, the god

2 worthy of worship, who has obtained the kingship from Nana and from all the  
gods, who has inaugurated the year one

3 as the gods pleased. And he \*issued a Greek \*edict [and] then he put it into  
Aryan.

4 In the year one there was \*proclaimed to India, to the cities of the  
*\*kṣatriyas/\*kṣatrapas*, the \*capture (of)

5 ..., and ..., and Sāketa, and Kauśambī, and Pāṭaliputra, as far as Śrī-Campā,

6 whatever (cities) he and the other \*generals \*reached, (he) submitted (them) to  
(his) will, and he submitted all

7 India to (his) will. Then King Kanishka ordered Shafar the lord of the marches  
8 to make in this place the temple which is called Bage-ab, in the Kasig plains,  
for these gods

9 who have come hither into the presence of the glorious Umma, \*that (is), the  
above-mentioned Nana and the

10 above-mentioned Umma, Aurmuzd, Muzhduwan, < 10a: who in Indian is called  
Mahāsenā and is called Viśakha > Sroshard, Narasa, (and) Mihir. And he

11 gave orders to make images of the same, (namely) of these gods who are  
inscribed hereupon, and

12 he gave orders to make (images of) these kings: King Kujula Kadphises (his)  
great  
13 grandfather, and King Vima Taktu (his) grandfather, and King Vima  
Kadphises  
14 (his) father, and himself, King Kanishka. Then, as the king of kings, the son of  
the gods  
15 Kanishka had given orders to do, Shafar the lord of the marches made this  
sanctuary,  
16 and Pyash the lord of the marches, and Shafar the lord of the marches, and  
Nukunzuk the *hasht-*  
17 *walg* \*carried out the king's command. May the gods who are inscribed here  
[keep] the  
18 [king] of kings, Kanishka the Kushan, for ever healthy, fortunate (and)  
victorious!  
19 And the king, the son of the gods, was \*pacifying all India from the year one  
to the year \*six.  
20 [So] the temple was \*founded in the year one, then in the \*third year also...  
21 ... according to the king's command, many \*rites were endowed, many  
attendants were endowed, many ... [were]  
22 [endowed. And] King [Kanishka] gave the fortress to the gods, and for these  
freemen [who] ... in Bage-[ab] ...  
23

## 2.5. Significance

The discovery of the inscription was of such importance that J. Cribb noted that it opened "a new era in Kushan studies".<sup>1619</sup> It contains important information on the dynastic sequence of the Kušān, the extent of Kušān conquests in India and on the Kušān dynastic cult. It is also the earliest substantial text in the Bactrian language, following the fragmentary inscription DN1. As such, it is one of the most important sources available for the history of the Kušān Empire.

### **3. Nukunzuk Silver Plate (NSP)**

#### **3.1. Description**

NSP is an inscription on the bottom of a damaged silver plate.<sup>1620</sup> The top of the plate is reported to contain a figural depiction. The location of the plate is unknown and the inscription can only be read from photographs. It is written in Bactrian in *scriptua continua* and runs for six lines. Although significant parts of lines 2, 3 and 5 are illegible from the available photographs, it is, as a whole, readable. The weight of the plate is given in the inscription as 270 of an unknown unit, which is most likely the stater but could also be the drachm or didrachm. The inscription dates to the year 10 of the Kaniška Era or shortly thereafter, i.e. 137/38 CE according to the chronology of H. Falk. The inscription apparently originally only went to line 3, where a part was rubbed

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<sup>1619</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 97.

<sup>1620</sup> All information concerning the object is found in Sims-Williams 2015.

out to allow for an extension of the text, leaving only abbreviations for the description of the weight.

### 3.2. Location and Discovery

The plate is unprovenanced. Sims-Williams 2015 reports that he was shown photographs in 2005 and 2009 from two different sources. The whereabouts of the object are unknown.

### 3.3. Reading History

The inscription was first presented, read and translated by N. Sims-Williams in 2013 and published in Sims-Williams 2015. There are several uncertainties in the reading, but the content seems to be well understood.

### 3.4. Text and Translation

According to Sims-Williams 2015.<sup>1621</sup>

- 1      βραονανδι βραο οαρειγο νανα πιδο ι ιωγα χβρονα αβο βραονανο βραο κανηβκι  
         κοβρανο ι χραοδηοδανι λαδο ταδηο αζο μο νοκονζικο ι πιορο μαρηγο σταδημι  
         αμβουκαο ταδι ι βαγεποο
- 2      ρε πιδο ι χοβι βιζαγε οδο πιδο ι μανο σπαχτε ταδηο αλο ι πιοριβτειγανο οδο  
         αλο ι νιαγοβτηγανο μαρηγανο αμσασογο ωσταδημι αλο ι φαρδαμγανο ταδι ...  
         ..... πιδο ι ιω
- 3      γα χβρονα αβο μο υνδο φροαγδο ταδηο ωσπορδο μο υνδο οτηο αζο αβο ι κηρι  
         μαρηγο αλοοαδγο σταδημε ταδι ειμο κηρι μανο οαρο κηρδο ..... να σ' ο'

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<sup>1621</sup> *Op. cit.*, 257.



4     σιδι αβο μαζδηγγο νιβιχτιγο τακαλδι βραονανο ι βαγεποορο ασο μο υνδα αβο  
       μο τοχοαρστανο πιδο ι λασσο χβονα πιδο οανιντα μοζδο  
 5     .....νοβαρδγο αβο ι οηβο οαρειγο αδγαδο αβο ι βαγο νοβανδανο  
       καλδι κανηβκι βραο αμο οηβο αγαδο πιδο ι λα  
 6     σο χβονα νεισανε μαε λασσο σαχτε υα σ' ο'

1     (AT) the court(?) of the king of kings, [in] the year [one, Nana] gave the  
       lordship to the king of kings, Kanishka the Kushan. I, Nukunzik, his father's  
       servant, was then *amboukao*. Then the son of the gods,  
 2     on account of his own goodness and on account of my service he established  
       me (as) equal(?) with (his) father's and with (his) grandfather's servants, with  
       the foremost (people). Then [in] the  
 3     year one [...] was proclaimed to India: Then he conquered(?) India, and I was a  
       trusted(?) servant in his work We<ight:> 270 <stater>  
 4     which has been written in his records(?). Then the king of kings, the son of the  
       gods, returned from India to Tokhwarstan in the tenth year with the spoils(?)  
       of victory(?),  
 5     he presented(?) this plate(?) at the court(?) of Wesh, (as) an offering(?) to the  
       god when king Kanishka brought it to Wesh (it was) in the  
 6     year ten, the month Nisan, the tenth day. We<ight:> 270 <stater>(?)

### 3.5. Significance

Despite its brevity and lack of provenance, NSP is an important inscription as it mentions the same individual Nokonzoko who also appears in Rab and SK4. The

inscription allows for his career to be reconstructed with some detail. It also contains some formulaic parallels to Rab and adds further evidence to the Indian campaign of Kaniška I narrated in Rab. It is also the earliest known attestation of the name Tokharestan for Bactria.

## **4. The Surkh Kotal Inscriptions**

### **4.1. Grande inscription pariétale (SK1)**

#### **4.1.1. Description**

A total of 29 stone blocks are known, of which 19 are inscribed, that most likely belong to the same inscription. Two inscribed blocks were long unpublished and not placed in context.<sup>1622</sup>

#### **4.1.2. Location and Discovery**

In 1951, D. Schlumberger received notice of blocks inscribed with Greek letters from Surkh Kotal based on which he initiated the excavations.<sup>1623</sup> The first six blocks of the

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<sup>1622</sup> Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 134-35.

<sup>1623</sup> Schlumberger 1952, 435.

inscription (a-f) were found during the first DAFA excavation campaign in Surkh Kotal in spring of 1952.<sup>1624</sup> A seventh block (g) was published in 1954.<sup>1625</sup> Further blocks were discovered during the subsequent campaigns: Block h was found on 24.10.1954, i on 05.07.1955, j on 30.06.1956, block k on 14.6.1956 and l in spring 1957. They were presented by Maricq 1958.<sup>1626</sup> A further ten blocks, of which the last three are uninscribed, were found *in situ* and made known in Benveniste 1961.<sup>1627</sup> The inscription was located on the eastern wall of the Surkh Kotal sanctuary which faces the Pul-i Khumri plain and was visible from the outside of the sanctuary.<sup>1628</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Reading History

The initial publications of the inscribed blocks did not contain any attempts at linguistic explanations. The first reading was attempted by Benveniste 1961 only after SK4 was discovered. This reading includes all the above-mentioned blocks. Humbach 1966 includes a reading of his own that is reproduced with reference to all preceding publications in Davary 1982. A further reading and translation was produced by Sims-Williams 1973.

#### 4.1.4. Text and Translation

According to Sims-Williams 1973.<sup>1629</sup>

νοβιχτο μο μαβτο ουβε μο παγδο ι ωλεσαγωγι

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<sup>1624</sup> Schlumberger 1952, 435-36 with illustrations.

<sup>1625</sup> Curiel 1954, 189-205.

<sup>1626</sup> *Op. cit.*, 414-16.

<sup>1627</sup> *Op. cit.*, 146-47.

<sup>1628</sup> Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman, 53.

<sup>1629</sup> *Op. cit.*, 95, fn. 1.

I Ōlesayōg, inscribed both the stairway and the παγδο.

#### **4.1.5. Significance**

Due to its highly fragmentary nature and the lack of content that can be extracted from it, the inscription is generally disregarded. It is not included in Sims-Williams 2012. However, it is worth pointing out that it was one of the first Bactrian texts that became known outside of the coin legends.<sup>1630</sup>

### **4.2. Inscription inachevée (SK2)**

#### **4.2.1. Description**

Also referred to as the Kaipūr Inscription. It was inscribed on a large stone slab. It is monolingual in Bactrian written in two lines in *scriptua continua*. The inscription was apparently never completed.

#### **4.2.2. Location and Discovery**

The inscription was found during the first excavation campaign in Surkh Kotal in spring of 1952. It is a spolia that was used as a bench cover. It was put in its find spot in the cella of Temple A during reconstruction efforts some time after the reign of Vāsudeva.

#### **4.2.3. Reading History**

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<sup>1630</sup> It was only after the discovery that R. Göbl was able to identify the inscriptions from the Tochi Valley kept in the Peshawar Museum as Bactrian (for references cf. Göbl 1993, 58). Likewise, the language of the Manichaean Fragment in the Berlin Turfan collection was only identified as Bactrian by M. Boyce and W.B. Henning during the latter's work on SK4, cf. Henning 1960, 55, fn. 8.

Curiel 1954 only read one word of the inscription. Subsequent publications add to it.<sup>1631</sup>

The most complete reading is found in Humbach 1966 and reproduced in Davary 1982.<sup>1632</sup> It is not included in Sims-Williams 2012.

#### 4.2.4. Text and Translation

According to Humbach 1966.<sup>1633</sup>

χθονο σοε bzw. σοθ μ(αο) π [αγαδο] νοβ?[ι]χτμο κηπορνο σαρσο αδει ζ(α) χθονο δβο  
υα/[βδο]

Im Jahr 275 bzw. 279, [bei Ankunft des] Monats π geschrieben von mir Kaipūr, dem  
Oberhaupt, dem Deva. Im Jahre zwei-sie[ben-fünf bzw. neun].

#### 4.2.5. Significance

The most interesting aspect of the inscription is that it apparently predates the reign of Kaniška I, thus also likely the foundation of the sanctuary of Surkh Kotal. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know where the stone slab was originally inscribed or located. The

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<sup>1631</sup> Maricq 1958, 416; Bivar 1963, 500; Harmatta 1965, 169.

<sup>1632</sup> Humbach 1966, 100; Davary 1982, 66.

<sup>1633</sup> *Op. cit.*, 100.

text of Humbach 1966 is entirely conjectural. Harmatta 1965 tries to see a royal titulature of Vasudeva, but this reading is impossible.

### **4.3. Palamedes Inscription (SK3)**

#### **4.3.1. Description**

A small stone fragment containing the remains of three lines of text. The first two are Bactrian and the last is in Greek. All are in *scriptua continua*. The remaining parts of the text are for the most part well legible although there is damage to some letters.

#### **4.3.2. Location and Discovery**

The inscription was found at the end of the second excavation campaign in Surkh Kotal in autumn of 1953. It was located in the courtyard of Temple A between the southern portal and the podium of the temple. It was displaced but its original location could not be determined.<sup>1634</sup>

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<sup>1634</sup> Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 135.

### 4.3.3. Reading History

A first reading was provided by Curiel 1954.<sup>1635</sup> Some brilliant remarks were added by Henning 1956 on the reading of the word βαγολαγγο which proved to be correct. Benveniste 1961 made the first attempt at an analysis and translation.<sup>1636</sup> A recent translation which adds the reading of the title αἰτωαλγο is found in Sims-Williams 2012.<sup>1637</sup>

### 4.3.4. Text and Translation

Text according to Benveniste 1961,<sup>1638</sup> translation according to Sims-Williams 2012.<sup>1639</sup>

1 [N. ι ...]βιδο ι ζηνοβιδο ι αἰτω[...

2 κιδο μι βαγολαγγο μι

3 διὰ Παλαμήδου

1 ... the chief [...], the chief of the armoury, the ašto[-walgo(?) ...]

2 made this temple [...].

3 (Written)(?) by Palamedes.

### 4.3.5. Significance

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<sup>1635</sup> *Op. cit.*, 194.

<sup>1636</sup> *Op. cit.*, 150-51.

<sup>1637</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78.

<sup>1638</sup> *Op. cit.*, 150-51.

<sup>1639</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78.

The main significance of the inscription is that it includes a Greek colophon attributed to a scribe Palamedes while the lines just above this Greek section are in Bactrian. The Bactrian text seems to refer to the official responsible for building the Surkh Kotal sanctuary and identifies him with the titles ...βιδο, ζηνοβιδο and αφοοαλγο(?) but unfortunately does not provide a name.

#### **4.4. Nukunzuk Inscription (SK4)**

##### **4.4.1. Description**

The inscription exists in three different versions. The "monolith" version (SKM) is complete and provides the entire text in 25 lines. Two other versions (A and B) contain the same text with some grammatical and palaeographic peculiarities and were found as single blocks. The inscription is monolingual Bactrian and written in *scriptura continua*. SK4 M has 25 lines, SK4 A and B both have 28.

##### **4.4.2. Location and Discovery**

SK4 M was discovered *in situ* at the bottom of the staircase of the Surkh Kotal sanctuary. SK4 A and B were found as separate blocks used as building material in the staircase and well of the sanctuary. SK4 M was the first version to be found, on 06.05.1957. It was presented by J. de Menasce and E. Benveniste on the XXIV



International Orientalist Congress in Munich on 31.8.1957. Fragments of the inscriptions A and B were found in the following years and a first complete edition of all three versions of the inscription was published in Benveniste 1961.<sup>1640</sup>

#### 4.4.3. Reading History

The inscription has a long and complex reading history. The *editio princeps* Maricq 1958 was followed by an extensive and critical philological commentary by Henning 1960. Just afterwards, Humbach 1960 presented a completely different reading that interpreted the inscription as a Mithraic hymn, which was completely refuted by reviewers and not integrated any further in the debate, despite further publications in the direction by the author. Only Mayrhofer 1963 attempted to argue in favour of some of Humbach's point, which Henning 1965b strongly criticised. Benveniste 1961 presented the first complete edition of the text with the two alternate versions. A further edition of the three versions was provided by Göbl 1965. Göbl attempted to offer a reading based on epigraphic scrutiny. Outside of the purely epigraphic work however, this reading is also marred by conjectural and untenable interpretations, as pointed out by the review article of Gershevitch 1966. The same author addressed the publication Humbach 1966 in the following year, in which H. Humbach tried to perpetuate his reading of the inscription. Apart from the article Sims-Williams 1973, little progress was made in the following years, until Gershevitch 1979 published what is now seen as the definitive reading of the inscription. Further philological commentary was provided by Fussman 1983 and Lazard et al 1984. A recent translation without the Bactrian text is found in Sims-Williams 2012.<sup>1641</sup> A number of other articles and publications exist,

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<sup>1640</sup> *Op. cit.*, 113-52.

<sup>1641</sup> An incomplete text and translation by N. Sims-Williams is found in Falk 2015a, 122.

which however do little more than exhibit the difficulties of unravelling a previously completely unknown language by means of a very limited text corpus.

#### 4.4.4. Text and Translation

Text of Version M from Gershevitch 1979.<sup>1642</sup> For the sake of consistency, the reproduction of the Bactrian text here follows the lines of the inscription, not the syntactic formatting that is found in the edition. Translation from Sims-Williams 2012.<sup>1643</sup>

- 1 §1 ειδο μα λιζο μο κανηρκο οανινδο βαγολαγγο σιδο ι βαγο βραο κ
- 2 ανηρκι ναμοβαργο κιρδο §2 ταδιοο κεδο φορδαμσο μα λιζο φρο
- 3 γιρδο ταδηιο μανδαρο αβο νιστο χοτο ασιδο μα λιζο αβαβγ
- 4 ο σταδο §3 οδο καλδο ασο λρουομινανο ιειρο σταδο ταδο ι βαγε
- 5 ασο ι νοβαλμο φροχορτινδο §4 ταδο αβο λραφο οαστινδο
- 6 αβο ανδηζο οτο μα λιζο πιδοριγδο §5 τα καλδο νοκ
- 7 ονζοκο ι καρλαραγγο ι φρειχοαδηογο κιδο φρειστα
- 8 ρο αβο βραο ι βαγοπουρο ι λοιχοβοσαρο ι ριζογαργο ι α
- 9 λοβχαλο κιδο φαρο οισποανο μο οαδοβαργανο ω
- 10 σογδομαγγο πιδο ι ιωγο οδο υιρσο χρονο νεισανο μ
- 11 αο μαλο αγαδο αμο βαγολαγγο §6 ταδηιο μα λιζο πο
- 12 ρογατο ταδηιο ειου σαδο κανδο οτηιο αβο οζοοαστο
- 13 οτηιο πιδο ασαγγε ιθο οιλιρδο ατανο αβο μα λιζο φ

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<sup>1642</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>1643</sup> *Op. cit.*, 78-19.

- 14 αρο καρανο αβο μα γασηιο §7 οδο καλδανο ασο λρο  
 15 νομινανο ιειρο βοσηιο ταδανο ι βαγε ασο ι νοβ  
 16 αλμο μα φροχοαφονδηιο οτανο μα λιζο μα πιδ  
 17 οριχσηιο §8 οτηιο ασασκο μο σαδο αχβτ  
 18 ριγο κιρδο αλβαργο ωσταδο ιθο ατο πιδ  
 19 εινο σαδο πιδεινο αχβτριγο ναρουγο μα λ  
 20 ιζο χουζο ποροοατο §9 οτο ειιο μο σαδο οδο μ  
 21 αφτο χιργομανο κιρδο αμο βορζομιυρο αμο κο  
 22 ζγαβκι πουρο αμο αστιλογανσειγι αμο νοκ  
 23 ονζικι καραλαργγε μαρηγο πιδο ι χοαδηο φ  
 24 ρομανο §10 οτο ειιομανο νοβιχτο αμο μυρα  
 25 μανο αμο βορζομιυρο πουρο Mg1 αμυραμανο Mg2

This citadel (is) the temple of Kanishka the victorious, which was named(?) by the lord king Kanishka. When the citadel was first completed, it did not require(?) (an) internal water (supply), but the citadel was waterless, and when there was an attack(?) by enemies, then the gods were displaced from (their) seat, then they were taken to the stronghold (of) Lraf and the citadel was abandoned. When Nukunzuk the lord of the marches, the lord's favourite, who is most dear to the king, the son of the gods, the second-in-command(?), the beneficent, the compassionate, who is pureminded towards all living creatures, came here to the temple in the year thirty-one, (in) the month Nisan, then he surveyed(?) the citadel, he dug this well, and he brought out the water, and he fitted it with stones so that water should not be lacking to the people in the citadel, and when there might be an attack(?) by enemies the gods might not be displaced from (their) seat and the citadel might not be abandoned. And above the well he made a winch(?) (and) he installed a beam(?), so that by means of this well

(and) by means of this winch(?) the whole citadel fared(?) well.

And this well and *mašto xirgo* were made by me, Burzmihr the son of Kuzgashk, the inhabitant of Astilgan, the servant of Nukunzuk the lord of the marches, according to the lord's command. And this (inscription) was written by me, Mihraman the son of Burzmihr: [monogram 1]. Mihraman: [monogram 2].

#### 4.4.5. Significance

The inscription was the first lengthy document discovered in the Bactrian language, and as such holds an important place in the history of Iranian Studies. Its importance in this respect was only diminished by the discovery of Rab and the publication of the Bactrian Documents. It remains an important Bactrian text, however its historical data is comparatively limited. It does not contain any details about the cult at Surkh Kotal or the historical events it alludes to. However, despite its historical significance being lower than its philological importance, it provides rare details about the Kušān Empire.

#### 4.5. Minor Inscriptions from Surkh Kotal (SK5-10)

Six further inscribed objects were found at the site of Surkh Kotal. Of these, the most substantial is an inscription of a column base (SK5) found in the living quarter north of the peribolos of the sanctuary proper.<sup>1644</sup> The inscription was first published in Maricq 1958, reading  $\alpha\alpha\gamma$ .<sup>1645</sup> Benveniste 1961 reads  $\alpha\delta\alpha\gamma$ , which the excavators note does not match with the traces of the letters.<sup>1646</sup> Other objects include a rubble stone with the two Greek letters CN (SK6),<sup>1647</sup> a painted inscription on a fragment of a block found in

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<sup>1644</sup> Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 117.

<sup>1645</sup> *Op. cit.*, 416-17.

<sup>1646</sup> Benveniste 1961, 151; Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 137. Note also the rejection of Humbach 1966/1, 103 who proposes a dating formula.

<sup>1647</sup> Maricq 1958, 417; Benveniste 1961, 152.

a rubble pile inside the wall (SK7), a monogram on a column base (SK8), two further inscribed fragments of a column base reading ασο (SK9) and a monogram seemingly consisting of two intertwined Alphas on a singular stone found in an oven north of the peribolos wall (SK10).<sup>1648</sup> SK7 is apparently in the same script and language as DN3 and DN5.<sup>1649</sup> Unfortunately, none of the inscriptions SK5-10 provide any information from their content.

## **5. Airtam Inscription (Ayr)**

### **5.1. Description**

Ayr is an inscription on the base of a monumental high relief showing a standing male and female figure. The artefact is made of limestone native to the area and measures 78x23x29-32 cm. The inscription is written in Bactria in *scriptua continua* in six lines. It is in a poor condition and only partly legible.

### **5.2. Location and Discovery**

The monument was found during excavations in 1979 and published with photographs in Turgunov/Livšic/Rtveladze 1981. It was found *in situ* in one of the western rooms of a stupa located in the centre of a walled area in the western part of Airtam.

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<sup>1648</sup> On SK7-SK10 summarily, cf. Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 137-38.

<sup>1649</sup> Fussman 1974, 23; Schlumberger/Le Berre/Fussman 1983, 137-38.

### 5.3. Attempted re-reading<sup>1650</sup>

#### 5.3.1. Material

The Ayr was subject to the preliminary publication Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981 on which the attempted edition Harmatta 1986 is based. The latter correctly points out that the photos reproduced in the former publication are unsatisfactory and that the article is difficult to work with as it does not include "any systematic and coherent reading and interpretation".<sup>1651</sup> An additional reproduction of the photograph of the inscription can be found online on the Pugachenkova Archives website.<sup>1652</sup> It is a photo of the original photo, not a scan of the print or the original negative. As such, it is only of limited use, as it does not seem to add much new information not found in the previous reproductions.

The photographs do not serve to support many of the readings found in Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981, perhaps because of the poor lighting or insufficient resolution. It is clear however that much of the stone is damaged and many parts of the inscription lost irretrievably, so that a new reading based on autopsy would not help to reconstruct the entire text.<sup>1653</sup>

The attempt of Harmatta 1986 is based on these photos only and relies on extensive speculation to fill the gaps, rendering this work largely useless. In the following, some of the interpretations found in both articles and a few observations provided by

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<sup>1650</sup> This re-reading was done before I was able to see the stone in the Berlin Uzbekistan exhibition; I included it in this appendix primarily as an exercise for myself. The stone's display in Berlin has led to other scholars examining it, and the work they have produced and will publish soon will supersede the presentation here.

<sup>1651</sup> Op. cit., 145, fn. 5.

<sup>1652</sup> <https://pugachenkova.net/ru/catalog/getPhoto/839/> accessed 26.07.2021, 16:25.

<sup>1653</sup> Sims-Williams 2008, 63 remarks that the author read the original stone in Tashkent, but Sims-Williams 2012, 76 states that it does "not seem to offer usable historical data".

Harmatta 1986 nevertheless need to be discussed in order to establish at least an approximation of the usefulness of the inscription.

### 5.3.2. Reading and commentary

**Line 1:** Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981 read  $\beta\alpha\omicron$   $\sigma\eta\phi\kappa(o)$ , remarking on an unusual spelling of the name of Huviška.<sup>1654</sup> None of the available photos allow for this reading to be verified. Only a few scattered letters can be identified in this part of the inscription, although this may be due to the quality of the lighting. Harmatta 1986 is correct in pointing out that of the three letters in the middle of line one read  $\beta\alpha\omicron$  by the editors, the first one is more likely  $\phi$ . However, the author's suggestion to read  $]\chi\beta\omicron$   $\phi\alpha\rho\rho[$ , thus the divine names Ardoxšo and Pharro, is completely unsupported by the photos and probably influenced by the presence of two statuary fragments on top of the inscriptions which are likely male and female. There is no trace of  $\chi$ , although  $\beta$  is possible. There seems to be a letter afterwards, but if so, it is absolutely not  $o$ , but rather  $\alpha$ . The letter after  $\phi\alpha$  seems to be an  $o$ , whereas it may be succeeded by an  $\rho$ , although this is far from certain. The rest of line 1 may be partially legible on the stone, but very little can be read on the photos.

**Line 2:** The reading  $\sigma\tau\alpha\delta\omicron$  3 sg. pret. of  $\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron$  seems certain and it is clearly followed by  $\beta\omicron$ , although nothing suggests to read this as a PN  $\zeta\omicron$ odia as done by the previous editors. Importantly, Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981 suggest to read  $\beta\alpha\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma\omicron$  in the later part of the line, a reading supported by Harmatta 1986. What can be read clearly is  $\zeta\omicron$  following. If a complete word, it could be either the 3 sg. pret. of "to

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<sup>1654</sup> Op. cit., 43.

strike" or of "to exact, seize, take by force; penalise, deprive".<sup>1655</sup> The suggestion of Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981 to derive it from \*ā-zai-na, \*ā-zita "adorned" with Khot. *āysān-* should be possible, but it is not even clear if the word is complete.<sup>1656</sup> The letters before this word are only faintly legible on the photos. In theory, βαγαλαγγο is possible. The upper loop of the initial β may be visible, as may be the sequence αλα with very faint traces of γγ and a clear ο, but all this is very uncertain.

**Line 3:** The reading οτια proposed by the editors is tempting but unlikely given that what precedes it seems to be a δ. Likewise, the shape and tilt of the final letter resembles much more a δ. The beginning of this word is obscure. Perhaps the δ is preceded by τι. Following ...δοτιδ is a clear ηα, most likely the 3rd sg. encl. pron. with a final -α as well-attested in Kušān Bactrian. It would seem that ...δο belongs to a preceding word and the word at hand is τιδο/τιδι, demonstr. adj. and pron. "this" + -ηα "this his", an otherwise unattested combination. The following letters are unclear and the photo allows for several possibilities. The editors propose to read μα λιζα. This is tempting as ζα is clearly visible, but there is nothing to suggest μα. Before the -ζα, a tilted shape that could be taken for an λ is seen followed by what might be ι, but there is a large gap afterwards where there may well be an illegible letter. λιζα thus becomes unlikely. This is particularly regrettable as the following word seems to be ωσταδο, which would allow for a meaningful sentence "(he) established this, his fortress". The rest of the line is largely illegible on the photos, although towards the end a sequence of letters ιο●βαρο can be determined, allowing for an unusually small β. The editors read οσβαρο, which would require an unusually tilted σ. The tilt suggests either λ or δ.<sup>1657</sup> Supposing ι is

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<sup>1655</sup> BD2, 212.

<sup>1656</sup> Op. cit., 46 with Emmerick 1968, 10.

<sup>1657</sup> λ is also considered by Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981, 47 and Harmatta 1986, 145, fn. 10.



not part of the word, ολβαρο would recall the uncertain αλβαργο from SK4 and αλ(ο)βαρο "court" from the Bactrian documents.<sup>1658</sup> If δ, the initial letters may represent οδο "and" + βαρο, the latter maybe a noun "load", although it is highly unusual that οδο would be attached as οδ- without a succeeding vowel. There is also no other example of a compounded οδο in Kušān Bactrian.

Alternatively, the ρ could also be considered a γ written slightly lower, thus rendering βαγο, although given that the preceding letter is most likely not a vowel, it would have to be part of a compound.

**Line 4:** This line is on the whole poorly legible from the photos, although a sequence ...αβαβσα τιδι (βοδ●)α (αλ●●●)νο κανδο was read by Sims-Williams 1994 and is verifiable on the photos.<sup>1659</sup> It was translated as "[... was] without water. Then(?) (the?) Sh. dug a canal(?)."

**Line 5:** The middle of this line is well-legible: α(δ?)βογανδα ριζδι οτι οβειμα ζα. ριζδι is 3. sg. pres. "to be called" as found in Rab 8 referring to the name of the sanctuary and twice in the gloss referring to the two Indian gods. It is thus likely that what preceded ριζδι is a proper name or a toponym, perhaps even the name of the temple. οτι is the common conjunction οδο "and" + enclitic particle -δι marking the first word in a new clause. The following is read by Sims-Williams 2008 as οβεινα ζαμνα "at this time".<sup>1660</sup>

**Line 6:** This line offers the most readable material and is the clearest in its content. The legible part reads: ...ο οτι ειμο μιροζαδα νιβιχτο πιδο ι... followed by a sequence that is

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<sup>1658</sup> BD2, 189b. An alternative related to ολο "wife" and οολοβαρο "bride price" (BD2, 248) may be possible if one takes the statue fragments to represent the donor couple.

<sup>1659</sup> *Op. cit.*, 173.

<sup>1660</sup> *Op. cit.*, 63. Here mistakenly attributed to line 4.

possibly ἀπο... or ἀπο... The line is thus a colophon naming a certain Mirozada as the scribe.

### 5.3.3. Conclusions

There is indeed very little information that can securely be gathered from the inscription. A dating to the reign of Huviška is unsupported, at least as far as can be determined from the photos. An official Šodia who makes a repeated appearance in the editions of Turgunov/Livshits/Rtveladze 1981 and Harmatta 1986 is a phantom. It cannot safely be said that Ayrtaṃ was denoted with the terms βαρολαγγο and λιζο common for Kušan dynastic sanctuaries. What seems to be clear however, is that the inscription commemorates the establishment of a water supply for the temple, a rather common occasion for such inscriptions in the Kušan Empire. The statues on the top of the inscription stone remain unidentified, although it would be reasonable to expect that they represent a donor couple who were most likely responsible for the establishment of the water supply.

## 6. Dil'berdžin Inscriptions (Dil 1-4)

A total of nine inscriptions were found in Dil'berdžin in excavations from 1970 to 1973. Of these, four (Dil1-4) are in the monumental script of the Kušan period. Photos and discussion of the fragments can be found in Livšič/Kruglikova 1979, 98-112. Tracings of all with suggested readings are found in Davary 1982.<sup>1661</sup> All are too fragmentary to restore coherent texts, although Dil4 contains some limited material of interest, including the titles χοαδηο and ιαβγο.

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<sup>1661</sup> Op. cit., 129-31.

## 7. Vāsudeva Silver Pyxis (VSP 1-4)

The object was published by Falk/Sims-Williams 2017. It is in a private collection and unprovenanced. Falk/Sims-Williams state "We regard it as a container for incense comparable to the so-called "Kaniška casket" from Shāh-jī Dheri, Peshawar, on which the Kushan king Huviška is depicted." The pyxis has pictorial engravings depicting six figures. Four are identified by inscriptions, the other two are depictions of the Buddha. They are separated by decorative columns. VSP 1 names Narkas the *καραλαγγο*, VSP2 names the king Vāsudeva, VSP3 names Rām the *ωστειγο* and VSP4 names Humyug-āgad.

## 8. Almosi Gorge Inscriptions (AG1-3)

In the summer of 2022, three rock inscriptions were found in Khoja Mafraj in the Almosi Gorge, Hissar Range in Tajikistan. Of these, two were written in the "Unknown Script" known from DN3, DN5 and SK7. The third was written in Bactrian. The initial report suggests labelling the texts in the unknown script as Rocks 1 and 2, that of the Bactrian as Rock 3. A reading of the inscription was presented in Bonmann et al 2023:<sup>1662</sup>

1 ειδηλο υ•ο.../

2 βαονανο βαε οσημο τακτοε

1 this ?

2 This [is the ...] of the king of kings, Vema Takhtu

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<sup>1662</sup> Op. cit., 15.

The text and translation as found in Davary 2022:

- 1 εἰδι η̄αου(ν)ο
- 2 βασηαν[ο] βαε οση
- 3 μο τα[Lücke]κ
- 4 τοε

„Dies ist der Eiwān“ (=Terrasse) des Königs der Könige Vima Taktoe“

Davary also finds a *tamgha* on the right side on the level of line 4 which he believes is identical to a *tamgha* found on some stone slabs on the stairwell of Surkh Kotal.

The editors agree that the inscription names Vima Takto with his title βαονανοβαο. The reading of εἰδι at the beginning of the inscription is also clear and recalls SK4 1. However, the reading of the second word is unclear. Davary proposes to read the second letter as A, although the bar of the Alpha is not visible and the tilt seems to disagree with that of the other Alphas in the inscription. It is also hard to follow the proposition that the penultimate visible letter in that line is a Nu, whereas it appears that the last one is indeed an Omicron.

Davary's proposal to read this unclear word as η̄αουνο related to NP *eyvān* can thus not be substantiated.

It is however clear that the inscriptions are closely related to DN, in the graphical form of the letters, their bilingualism, the supposed author Vima Takto and their location in a mountain range. Future archaeological investigations will be sure to shed more light on these inscriptions and their meaning.

## 9. Inscribed Kušān Bactrian seals and sealings

### 9.1. Callieri Cat U 7.4

An unprovenanced piece apparently first published by Callieri 1997.<sup>1663</sup> It is a bezel ring of cornelian showing a standing male deity in martial attire. The author suggests identifying it with Kārttikeya. The Bactrian inscription reads ΙΩΛΟ|ΟΡΛΑΝΟ, which Sims-Williams 2011 suggests to be a compound PN consisting of ωλο "warrior" and ορλαγνο but does not comment on the missing γ.<sup>1664</sup>

### 9.2. Callieri Cat U 7.11

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<sup>1663</sup> *Op. cit.*, 191.

<sup>1664</sup> *Op. cit.*, 73. The inscription was first read by N. Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 309.

An unprovenanced piece first published in Cunningham 1892 and commented on frequently.<sup>1665</sup> It is a pierced seal pendant showing a male and female deity facing each other. A crescent is seen above them and a small worshipping figure behind the male deity. The pair is most likely to be identified as Pharro and Ardoxšo. The inscription reads ΧΑΡΟΒΑΛΛΑΓΟ.<sup>1666</sup> It is explained as a PN "belonging to the royal family; prince" on basis of χαρο- being the title attested in the Bactrian documents and the second element being formed like Sogdian 'st'wrpδ'k.

### 9.3. Callieri Cat U 7.22

An unprovenanced piece first published in Cunningham 1892. Further discussed in Humbach 1966, Göbl 1967 and Callieri 1997.<sup>1667</sup> It is a bezel ring of garnet showing a bare-breasted female deity holding a cornucopia and interacting with a child. She is frequently identified as Ardoxšo. The inscription reads ΒΟΟΑΓΟ which is explained as a PN or title by Sims-Williams 2010.<sup>1668</sup>

### 9.4. Callieri Cat U 7.23

An unprovenanced piece first published in Cunningham 1892. Further discussed in Maricq 1958, Göbl 1967, Davary 1982 and Callieri 1997.<sup>1669</sup> It is a bezel ring of garnet showing a goddess identified as Nana by her crescent diadem, felid sceptre and position seated on a lion. The inscription reads ΦΡΕΙ|ΧΟΑΔΗΟ which is explained as a PN

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<sup>1665</sup> Cunningham 1892, 111 (no. 60). Cf. Callieri 1997, 193 for a complete list of literature. Notable contributions discussing it in a Kušān context include Rosenfield 1967, 102 (no. 3) and Göbl 1967/2, 223 (no. G 4).

<sup>1666</sup> Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 310.

<sup>1667</sup> *Op. cit.*, 111 (no. 61). Also discussed in Humbach 1966, 70, Göbl 1967/2, 223 and Callieri 1997, 114.

<sup>1668</sup> *Op. cit.*, 158 (559). Also Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 310.

<sup>1669</sup> Cunningham 1892, 116 (no. 81); Maricq 1958, 362-63; Göbl 1967/1, 222-23; Davary 1982, 190; Callieri 1997, 197-98.

"friend of the lord" by Sims-Williams 2010.<sup>1670</sup> The same legend appears on two other seals of which one in the Pearse Collection is apparently a duplicate.

### 9.5. Callieri Cat U 7.29

An unprovenanced piece first published in Rosenfield 1967. Further discussed in Göbl 1967 and Callieri 1997.<sup>1671</sup> It is a bezel ring of heliotrope showing a horserider in Kušān attire flanked by a *nandipāda* and a *tamgha* similar, but not identical to that of Vima Kadphises. The inscription reads ΑΛΔΡΟ. It is probably a PN but remains unexplained etymologically and is probably not Bactrian. Sims-Williams 2010 argues that the ending -šo could be related to βao as in Ιαμβο.<sup>1672</sup> The figure seems to be royal due to the diadem ribbons, the *tamgha* and what appears to be a sceptre similar to that of Nana in his hand.

### 9.6. Callieri App. S 5

A sealing on black wax provenanced to Sahrī Babol, Mardan District, Northwest Frontier Province, Pakistan. First published by Bivar 1955, further discussed in Göbl 1967, Harle 1985, Callieri 1997 and Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005.<sup>1673</sup> The sealing shows a nude male figure facing right struggling with a rearing horse. The scene has been identified as Heraklēs struggling with the horse of Diomēdēs. The inscription is unusually long and written in cursive Bactrian. The interpretation has been controversial but determined by N. Sims-Williams to read μασακαηβκο ι ζαιαδο βαυρο

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<sup>1670</sup> *Op. cit.* 144 (501). Also Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 310.

<sup>1671</sup> Rosenfield 1967, 101-02; Göbl 1967/1, 222; Callieri 1997, 200; also Bivar 1968, Pl. I.4.

<sup>1672</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33 (16), also Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 310. On the other hand, the interpretation of Farridnejad 2018, 315 as Αθβο/Αδβο does not agree with either the reading of the legend or the iconography.

<sup>1673</sup> Göbl 1967/1, 224-26; Harle 1985, 641-52 (on the iconography); Callieri 1997, 345; Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005, 587-95.

διβο|ποτρο ι χουαχο υνδογανο θανο, "Great Kanishka, the *devaputra* whose realm is ζαιαδο the χουαχο, king of the Indians".<sup>1674</sup>

### 9.7. Callieri Cat U 7.3

An unprovenanced piece first published by Cunningham 1893 and discussed frequently afterwards.<sup>1675</sup> It is of post-Kušān date but of particular interest due to its inscription. A bezel ring of white agate with deep ochre engraved top layer. It shows a large four-armed male deity with a small worshipper to the left. The attributes identify the god as Viṣṇu, which also places the piece in the post-Kušān period.<sup>1676</sup> The inscription reads σασορηο ιαθροααλγο.<sup>1677</sup> The seal is a further attestation of the title αθροααλγο.<sup>1678</sup>

## Appendix II: A Glossary of the Kušān Bactrian inscriptions

As there is no complete glossary of all Kušān Bactrian inscriptions, it seemed convenient to compile one here. An etymological part is omitted, as it would contribute little new and otherwise merely copy the work done by previous scholars. Relevant etymological discussions are found in the body of this work. The editions used are mentioned in Appendix I.

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<sup>1674</sup> Sims-Williams/Tucker 2005, 588.

<sup>1675</sup> Cunningham 1893, 126-27, pl. X.2; discussions of note include Göbl 1967/2, 226-27; Mitterwallner 1986, 10 and Callieri 1997, 190-91.

<sup>1676</sup> Härtel 1987, 573-74. The identification as Vāsudeva is found e.g. in Göbl 1967/2, 226-27 and Mitterwallner 1986, 10 to which a misreading of the inscription contributes.

<sup>1677</sup> Sims-Williams *apud* Callieri 1997, 308.

<sup>1678</sup> On the PN σασορηο cf. Sims-Williams 2010, 125 (417).



In case of spelling variants, the lemma is according to the oldest attested form going by the chronology DN1 – Rab – NSP - SK4. As SK4M is the “official” version with SK4A and SK4B being of unknown status, it is the only version taken into account. Spelling variants in other inscriptions are not considered in defining the lemmata, as their chronological position is unknown.

If a verb is attested in more than one form, the stem of the verb constitutes the main lemma. Compound forms are cross-referenced in the entries of the individual parts of the compounds. The order is according to the Greek alphabet with the letter ϐ added after ω.

Names and terms found on coins are included but not individually referenced unless they are not found in Göbl 1984.

**αβαβγο** adj. "waterless"  
Ayr 4(?); SK4A 5; SK4B6; SKM 3-4

**αβειμοανο** dem. adj./pron. "these"  
Rab 12  
qv. ειμο

**αβεινα** dem. pron. "this"  
Ayr 5 (αβεινα); Rab 8

**αβιρ-** v. "obtain, get, find"  
Rab 2 (3 sg. pret. αβορδο)

**αβισσι** adj./adv. "also many"  
Rab 21, 21, 21

<sup>1</sup>**αβο** n. "water"  
SK4A 4, SK4B 5, SK4M 3  
qv. αβαβγο, βαγαεβο

<sup>2</sup>**αβο** prep. "to, for, against, into, in, on, at, etc."

Dil4 4, 9, 12, 13; NSP 1, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5; Rab 4, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 8, 12,12, 13, 13, 13, 13, 14, 18, 18, 19, 20, 20, 22, 22; SK4A 7, 8, 10-11, 18, 20; SK4B 9, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; SK4M 5, 6, 8, 12, 14  
qv. αβειμοανο, αβεινα, <sup>2</sup>αμο

<sup>3</sup>**αβο** adv. „away, away from“  
qv. αβαβγο

**αβορδο**  
qv. αβιρ-

**αγαδο**  
qv. ηρσ-

**αγγα[...]** adv. containing adv. „fortunate“  
Rab 20

**αγγαδδιγγο** adj. "happy"  
Rab 18

**αγιτα** v. (3. sg. pret.) “take hold, get hold of, capture” or n. “capture”  
Rab 4

**αδα** conj. "so long, so far"  
Rab 5

**αδαγ[** from v. ηρσ-?  
SK5

**α(δ?)βογανδα** GN of Ayr tam sanctuary?  
Ayr 5

**αδγαδο** v.intr. 3sg. pret. "to enter" or v.tr. "to bring in"  
NSP 5

**[•]αδραγο** unknown GN  
Rab 5

**αζαδανο** n.pl. "free(men)"  
Rab 22

**αζο** 1 sg. nom. pron. "I"  
NSP 1, 3

**-αζο**  
qv. φροαγδ-

**αλβαργο** n. "beam"?  
SK4A 24; SK4B 22 (...βαργο); SK4M 16

**αλδφο** PN?

App. S 5

**αλο** prep. "with, together with"

Dil4 9; NSP 2, 2, 2

qv. αλοοαδγο, αλοβχαλο

**αλοοαδγο** adj. "trusted"?

NSP 3

**αλοβχαλο** adj. "merciful"

SK4A 12 (αλαβχαλο); SK4B 12, SK4M 8-9

**αμβουκαο** n. unknown title

NSP 1

**αμγα** adj. "same, above-mentioned"

Rab 9, 9-10

<sup>1</sup>**αμο** prep. adv. "likewise, also"

SK4M 21, 21, 22, 22, 24, 25

<sup>2</sup>**αμο** prep. "to"

SK4A 16, 29 (αμυραμανο ); SK4B 15 (αβο μο); SK4M 11, 25 (αμυραμανο); NSP 5

**αμσασογο** adj. "equal (in status)"

NSP 2

**ανδηζο** n. "citadel, stronghold" or GN "Andēz"

SK4A 8; SK4B 9-10; SK4M 6

**ανδιμανι** n. "presence"

Rab 9

<sup>1</sup>-**ανο** 3 pl. encl. pron.

qv. αζαδανο, βαγανο, [•]αορανο, ειμοανο, οισποανο, οτανο, σιδειανο, ταδανο, φαρειμοανο, υνδοοανο, βραονανο

<sup>2</sup>-**ανο** encl. hypothetical particle

qv. ατανο, καλδανο

[•]**αορανο** n.pl. "commanders"?

Rab 6

**αορομοζδο** DN

Rab 10

qv. ωορομοζδο

**αρημισσο** num. "also the third"

Rab 20

**αριο** adv. "in Aryan (language)"  
Rab 3

**αρουγο, υαρουγο** adj. "whole, all"  
Rab 6, 19; SK4 A 26(?) (υαρουγο); SK4B 23 (υαρουγο); SK4M 19 (υαρουγο)

**ασαγγε** n. sg.obl. "stone"  
SK4A 18 (ασαγγ.); SK4B 17; SK4M 13

**ασασκο** prep. "over, upon; by way of, through the agency of, on the part of"  
SK4A 24; SK4B 22; SK4M 17

**ασιδο** conj. "so that"  
Dil4 11 (ασιδι); SK4A 4; SK4B 6 (ασιδι); SK4M 3

**ασο** prep. "from, (out) of, by, against"  
Dil4 8; NSP 4; Rab 2, 2, 19; SK4A 85, 6, 20-21, 22; SK4B 7, 8, 18, 19 (.σο); SK4M 4, 5, 14, 15  
qv. ασασκο

**ασπαδο** v.pret. "founded" (?)  
Rab 20

**αστιλογανσειγι** nisbe "Hastilogānian, Astilgānian"  
SK4B 25-26 (υαστιλογανζειγο); SK4M 22

**ατανο** conj. "that, so that"  
SK4A 19, SK4B 17, SK4M 13

**ιατινδος** PN?  
Rab 23

**ατο** conj. "that"  
SK4A 25; SK4B 22 (ατι); SK4M 16  
qv. αδα

**αχρτριγο** n. "winch" (?)  
SK4A 24, 25-26; SK4B 22, 23 (αχρτοτριγο); SK4M 16, 19

**αρθοα[λγο ••]** n. unknown title  
Rab 16-17; SK3 1(?)

**-βα** particle giving hortative value to the present indicative  
qv. ειμδβα

**βαγεαβο** "God's Water" or "Divinew Spring", GN of Rabatak sanctuary  
Rab 8, 22

**βαγεποορο** n. "son of the gods, *devaputra*"

NSP 1-2 (βαγεποορε), 4; Rab 14 (βαγεποορα), 19; SK4A 11; SK4B 12 (βαγεποορο); SK4M 8 (βαγοπουρο)  
qv. διβοποτρο

**βαγο** n. "god; lord"

Di13 5; DN1 4; NSP 5; Rab 1, 2 (βαγανο), 3 (βαγανο), 8-9 (βαγανο), 11 (βαγανο), 17 (βαγε), 22 (βαγανο); SK4A 2, 6 (βαγε), 22; SK4B 2, 8 (βαγε), 19 (βαγε); SK4M 1, 4 (βαγε), 15 (βαγε)  
qv. βαγεαβο, βαγεποορο, βαγολαγγο

**βαγολαγγο** n. "temple, sanctuary" (lit. "God container")

Ayr 2(?); Rab 8, 15, 20; SK3 2; SK4A 1-2, 16; SK4B 2, 15; SK4M 1, 11

**βιζαγο** DN

Rab 10a; Coins

**ιβιδο** incomplete title

SK3 1

**βοοηιο** v. 3sg. opt. "might be"

SK4A 21; SK4B 19; SK4M 15

**βορζομυρο** PN

SK4B 24-25 (βορζομυρο); SK4M 21, 25

**βοζοδηο** PN and DN Vāsudeva

VSP 2; Coins (note Göbl 1993, 38)

**βωγο** n. "salvation"

DN1 1, Rab 1

**γαιοηιο** v. 3sg. opt. "should be lacking"

SK4A 20; SK4B 18; SK4M 14

**-γο** adjective suffix

qv. αβαβγο, αγγαδδιγγο, ηζνογο, λαδειγο, λρουγο, ναμοβαργο, οανινδογο, ραητογο, στοργο, φρειχοαδηγο, χραζαοαργο, ωσογδομαγγο, ριζογαργο

**διβοποτρο** Indian LW *devaputra* „son of the gods”

App. S 5

qv. βαγεποορο

**-δι/-δο, -δ-** particle marking the first word of a clause

qv. ειμδβα(?), κιδι,οδ[ ]δι, οτι, σαγωνδι, σιδι, ταδι

**ειδο** near-deictic demonstr. adj. and pron. "this"

SK4A1; SK4B 1; SK4M 1

qv. ειυο

**ειο** demonstr. adj. and pron. "this"

Dil4 7; Rab 15; SK4A 17; SK4B 16; SK4M 12, 20 (ειο), 24 (ειο)  
qv. αβειμοανο, ειδο, ειμιδβα, ειμοανο, ταδιοο, ειμο

**ειμιδβα** demonstr. pron. pl. „these“  
Rab 17

**ειμο** demonstr. adj. and pron. "this, these"  
Dil4 9 (ειμοανο), 10; Ayr (pl. ειμι); NSP 3; Rab 11 (pl. obl. ειμοανο)  
qv. φαρειμοανο

**ζιδο** v. 3 sg. pret. „to strike” or “to exact, seize, take by force; penalise, deprive”?  
Ayr 2

**ζαιαδο** unknown  
App. S 5

**ζαμνα** n. „time“  
Ayr 5

**ζηνοβιδο** n. „chief of the armoury”  
SK3 1  
**ζιρι[ι]αμβο** GN Śrī-Campā-  
Rab 5-6

**ζορριγι** n. obl. "time, period, age"  
Rab 18

**[η]ζνογο** adj. "worthy of worship"  
DN1 5, Rab 2

**-ηια** 3 sg. encl. pron. "he, his, its, etc."  
qv. οτηια, σιδηιανο(?), ταδηια, πρηιανο, πιδηια

**ηρσ-** v. „to come, arrive”  
NSP 5 (αγαδο); SK4A 15 (αγαδο); SK4B 14-15 (αγαδο); SK4M 11

**ι** ezafe and article "the"  
Ayr (?x) (+fem. ια); Dil (?x) (+fem. ια); DN1 (7x) (+ obl. ιανε DN1 6); Rab (23x)  
(+fem. ια 9, 9); NSP (15x); SK1; SK3 (2x); SK4A (10x); SK4B (11x); SK4M (11x);  
App. S 5 (2x)

**ιαβγο** n. „yabghu“ (title)  
Dil4 9(?)

**ιασηδανι** adj. obl. "eternal"  
Rab 18

**ιειρο** n. "attack"?  
SK4A 6, 21; SK4B 7, 19; SK4M 4, 15

**-ισο, -σο** particle "also"  
qv. αβισο, χοβσο, αριαμοσο

**ιθο** adv. "thus, so"  
Dil4 7 (ιθα); Dil5 11; SK4A 17 (ιθα), 18-19, 25 (ιθα); SK4B 22; SK4M 13, 18

**ιωγο** num. "one"  
NSP 1 (ιωγα), 2-3 (ιωγα); Rab 2, 4, 19, 20; SK4A 15; SK4B 14; SK4M 10

**ιωλοορλανο** PN  
U 7.4

**ιωναγγο** adj. "Greek"  
Rab 3

**καδφισο** PN  
Rab 12, 13; Coins

**καλδο** conj. "when, if"  
Dil4 12 (καλδι); NSP 4 (τακαλδι), 5 (καλδι); SK4A 5, 9, 20 (καλδανο); SK4B 7, 10 (καλδι), 18 (καλδανο); SK4M 4, 6, 14 (καλδανο)

**κανδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "dug"  
Ayr 4(?); SK4A 13; SK4 B 16; SK4M 12

**κανηρκο** PN  
NSP 1 (obl. κανηρκι), 5 (obl. κανηρκι); Rab 1 (obl. κανηρκε), 7 (obl. κανηρκε), 14, 15 (obl. κανηρκε), 18 (obl. κανηρκε), 21 (obl. κανηρκε); SK4A 1, 2 (obl. κανηρκι); SK4B 1-2, 2 (obl. missp. κανηρηρκι); SK4M 1, 1-2 (obl. κανηρκι); App. S 5; Coins

**καραλραγγο** n. "margrave"  
Rab 7, 16, 16, 15 (obl. караλραγγε); SK4A 9-10; SK4B 11, 26 (obl. каралραγγι); SK4M 7, 23 (obl. каралραγγε); VSP 1; Coins (cf. Falk/Sims-Williams 2017, 136-37)

**καρανο** n. pl. "people"  
SK4A 19-20; SK4B 17-18; SK4M 14

**κασιγε** GN "Kasig"  
Rab 8

**κεδο** rel. adv. „when“  
SK4A 3 (κιδο); SK4B 3 (κεδι); SK4M 2

**κηπορνο** PN  
SK 2

**κηρι** n. "work"  
NSP 3, 3

**κιδο** rel. pron. "who, whom, whose, which, whoever, etc."

Dil4 10; DN1 5; Rab 2, 2, 9, 10a, 11, 17, 22; SK4A 9, 12; SK4B 11 (κ.ι●), 13; SK4M 7, 9

**κῑρδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "to do, act, make, etc."

NSP 3; Rab (κῑρδι only) 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 15; SK3 2; SK4A 2, 24; SK4B 3, 22, 25 (κῑρδι); SK4M 16, 21

**κοζγαρκι** PN obl.

SK4B 25; SK4M 21-22

**κοζουλο** PN

Rab 12; Coins

**κοβανο** adj. "Kušān"

DN1 4; NSP 1; Rab 1, 18; VSP 2; Coins

**κωζαμβο** GN "Kausāmbī"

Rab 5

**λαδειγο** adj. "just"

DN1 4-5; Rab 1

**λαδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "gave"

Dil4 5, 8, 10; NSP 1; Rab 21, 21, 22, 22

**λασσο** num. "ten"

NSP 4, 5-6 (cardinal λασο), 6

**λιζγα** n. f. "fortress"

Ayr 3 (λιζα)?; Rab 22; SK4 in later form λιζο: SK4A 1, 3, 4-5, 8, 16, 19, 23, 26; SK4B 1, 3, 6 (λιζα), 10, 15, 17, 20, 23-24; SK4M 1, 2, 2, 6, 11, 13, 16, 20

**λιζο**

qv. λιζγα

**λοιχοβοσαρο** n. "second in command"?

SK4A 11; SK4B 12(αιχοβοσαρο); SK4M 8

**λραφο** GN

SK4A 7; SK4B 9; SK4M 5

**λρουγο** adj. "healthy"

Rab 18

**λρουομινανο** n. pl. "enemies"?

SK4A 5-6, 21; SK4B 7 (λρουμινανο), 19; SK4M 4, 14-15.

**λφαχτο** v. 3 sg. pret. "gained"

DN1 6-7



**μα** prohib. particle "not"  
SK4A 20, 22, 27; SK4B 18, 20, 21; SK4M 14, 16, 16

**μασηνο** DN  
Rab 10a; Coins

**μαζδηγγο** n. pl. "memorials, records"?  
NSP 4

**μαλο** adv. "here, hither"  
SK4A 15; SK4B 14; SK4M 11

**μανδαρο** adj. "inside, interior"  
SK4A 4; SK4B 5; SK4M 3  
qv. μανδαρσι

**μανδαρσι** adj. "other"  
Rab 6

**μανο** 1 sg. obl. pron. "me, by me, etc."  
Dil4 7, 11; NSP 2, 3; SK4M 24

<sup>1</sup>**μαιο** n. "month"  
NSP 6 (obl. μαε); SK4A 15 (μαιο); SK4B 14; SK4M 10-11

<sup>2</sup>**μαιο** DN „Māh“ (moon)  
Coins, also μαιο

**μαρηγο** n. "servant"  
NSP 1, 2 (pl. μαρηγανο), 3; SK4B 26 (μαρηγι); SK4B 23

**μαρο** adv. "hither, here"  
Rab 9, 17

**μασκα** adv. "above"  
Rab 11

**μαυα** n. Indian LW mahā „great”  
App. S 5

**μαιο** qv. <sup>2</sup>μαιο

**μαητο** unknown noun  
SK 1; SK4M 20-21

**μυρο** DN “Mih(i)r”, Mithrā  
Rab 10; Coins (also μυρο and variations)  
qv. βορζομυρο, μυραμανο, μυροζαδα

**μυραμανο** PN

SK4B 27 (αμιοραμανο); SK4M 24-25, 25 (αμυραμανο)

**μιοζαδα** PN

Ayr 6

**μο** art. and demonstr. adj. "the, this"; also μα, με, μι and αμο (αβο + μο)

Dil4 (4x); NSP (5x); Rab (4x); SK1 (2x) SK3 (1x); SK4A (14x); SK4B (15x); SK4M (16x)

**μοζδο** n. "reward"

NSP 4

**μοζδοοανο** DN

Rab 10; Coins

**νααλη[ι]ο** v. 3.sg. pres. or opt. "to subdue, pacify"

Rab 19-20

**ναμοβαργο** adj. "name-bearing"

SK4A 2; SK4B 2; SK4M 2

**νανα** DN

NSP 1; Rab 2, 9; Coins (also *Ναναια*, *Ναναβαο*, *Ραονανα* and misspellings)

**ναρασαιο** DN

Rab 10

**ναρκασο** PN

VSP 1

**νεισανο** month "Nisān"

NSP 6 (obl. *νεισανε*); SK4A 15; SK4B 14; SK4M 10

**νιαγο** n. "grandfather"

Rab 13

qv. φρονιαγο, νιαγοβτηγανο

**νιαγοβτηγανο** adj. "belonging to the grandfather"

NSP 2

qv. νιαγο

**νιβισ-/νοβισ-** v. "to write"

Ayr 6 (3 sg. pret. *νιβιχτο*); NSP 4 (3 pl. pf. pass. *νιβιχτιγο*); Rab (3 pl. pf.: *νιβιχτιγενδι*) 11, 17 (*ibid*); SK1 (3 sg. pret. *νοβιχτο*); SK2 (*νοβ[ι]χτιμο*); SK4M 24 (3 sg. pret. *νοβιχτο*)

**νιστο** v. 3 sg. pres. neg. "is not"

SK4A 4; SK4B 5-6 (*νειστι*); SK4M 3

**νοβανδανο** n. "established custom", or "offering"

NSP 5

**...νοβαρδγο** unknown

NSP 5

**νοβαστο** v.tr. 3. sg. pret. "to tie down" (lit.), but in the meaning of "inaugurated; completed"

Rab 3

**νοκονζοκο** PN

NSP 1 (νοκονζικο); Rab 16; SK4A 9; SK4B 10-11, 26 (νοκονζικι); SK4M 6-7

**νοβαλμο** n. "seat"

SK4A 6-7, 22; SK4B 8 (νιβαλμο), 20 (νιβαλμο); SK4M 5, 15-16

<sup>1</sup>**οαδο** n. „wind, soul“

qv. αλοοαδγο, οαδοβαργανο

<sup>2</sup>**οαδο** DN

Coins

**οαδοβαργανο** n. "living beings"

SK4A 13; SK4B 13; SK4M 9

<sup>1</sup>**οανινδο** adj. "victorious"

SK4A 1; SK4B 2; SK4M 1

<sup>2</sup>**οανινδο** DN

Coins

**οανινδογο** adj. "victorious, conquering"

Rab 18-19

**οανιντα** n. "victory"

NSP 4

**οαρειγο** n. court?

NSP 1, 5

**οαρο** adv. "there, thereto"?

NSP 3

**οασο** n. "edict"?

Rab 3

**οαστινδο** v. 3 pl. pret. "to lead, take, bring; exert"

SK4A 7-8; SK4B 9; SK4M 5

**οβεινα**

qv. αβεινα

**οδο** conj. "and" repeated οδο ... οδο ... "both... and..."  
NSP (2x); Rab (14x); SK4A (3x); SK4B (3x); SK4M (4x)  
qv. στο

**οζοαστο** v. 3 sg. pret. "brought out, released, issued (an edict)"  
Rab 3; SK4A 18 (αζοοζστο); SK4B 16 (ζοοαστι); SK4M 12 (οζοοαστο)

**οηβο** DN  
NSP 5, 5; Coins

**οιαγο** n. „place, village“  
Rab 8

**οιδρα** adv. "so long" (with αδα αβο "until")  
Rab 5

**οιλιρδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "to construct"  
SK4A 19; SK4B 17; SK4M 13

**οισποανο** pronom. adj. "all"  
Dil3 2 (οισπααν), 3 (οισπο); Dil4 14 (οισποοανο); Rab 2; SK4A 12-13; SK4B 13;  
SK4M 9

**ομμα** DN(?) Omma (uncertain) or Semitic LW *umma* "community"  
Rab 9, 10; Coins(?)

**ομοιογοαγαδο** PN  
VSP 4

**οσηλδι** dem. pron. "that is"  
Rab 9

**οσημο** PN  
DN1 3; Rab 13, 13; Coins

**οτανο** conj. στο + 3 pl. encl. pron.  
SK4A 23 (οτ.νο); SK4B 20; SK4M 16

**οτηια** conj. "and he" (οτο- + 3 sg. encl. pron. -ηια)  
NSP 3 (οτηο); Rab 3, 6, 10, 11-12; SK4A 17-18 (οτηιο), 23 (οτηιο); SK4B 16 (αοτηιο),  
21 (οτηιο); SK4M 12 (οτηιο), 14 (οτηιο)  
qv. στο, -ηια

**οτο** conj. "and"  
Ayr 5 (οτι), 6 (οτι); Dil4 10 (οτι); Rab 19 (οτι), 22 (οτι); SK4A 8; SK4B 10 (οτι), 24  
(οτ), 27 (.τ.); SK4M 6, 20, 24

**ουβε** conj. „both“  
SK 1

**ουδοανο** adv. "likewise"

Rab 10-11

**(ο)φαρρο** poss. comp. "(possessing) good glory" = "glorious"

Rab 9

**οχο** num. „six“

Rab 19

**παλαβοτρο** GN Pāṭaliputra

Rab 5

**παγδο** unknown noun

SK1

**παρηνα** n.f. or old pl. "behaviour, conduct" = "observance, rites"?

Rab 14

**πιαρο** PN

Rab 14

**πιδα** n. "father"

NSP 1 (obl. πιορο); Rab 14

**πιδγυρβο** n. "image"

Rab 11

**πιδεινο** prep. "by means, through"

SK4A 25, 25 (.ιδεινο); SK4B 22 (πιδεινι), 23(πιδεινι); SK4M 18-19

**πιδο** prep. "at, by, according to"

Ayr 6; Dil4 4; DN1 5; NSP 1, 2, 2, 2, 4, 4; Rab 21; SK4A 14, 18; SK4B 14, 16, 27; SK4M 10, 13, 23

qv. πιδοριγδο

**πιδοριγδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "to abandon"

SK4A 8-9, 22 (3.sg. opt. πιδοριχσηο); SK4B 10 (πιδοριγδι), 21 (3.sg. opt. πιδοριχσηο); SK4M 6, 16-17 (3.sg. opt. πιδοριχσηο)

**πιοριπτειγανο** adj. pl. "belonging to the father"

NSP 2

**πιορο**

qv. πιδα

**πορογατο** v. 3 sg. pret "to look at, survey"?

SK4A 12-13; SK4B 15 (πορογα.ο); SK4M 11-12

**ποροοατο** v. 3.sg. pret. "fared"

SK4A 26 (.οροοατο); SK4B 24; SK4M 20

**πουρο** n. "son"

SK4B 25 (π.υρο); SK4M 23, 25

qv. βαγεποορο

**προβδο** n. "ruler, chief" or v. pret. 3. sg. "to reach, attain"

Rab 6

**ραγα** n.f. "plain"

Rab 8

ραμο PN

VSP 3

**ραφτογο** adj. "true, loyal, lawful, just"

DN1 2; Rab 1

**ρηδγε** n. pl. "page-boy, attendant"

Rab 21

**ριζδι** vb. 3 sg. pres. "to be called, be named"

Ayr 5; Rab 8, 10a, 10a

**σαγηδο** GN Sāketa

Rab 5

**σαγωνδι** conj. "as"

Rab 3; Rab 4 (τασαγωνδι)

**σαδο** n. "well"

SK4A 17, 24, 25 (σαδ.); SK4B 16, 21, 23, 24; SK4M 12, 17, 19, 20

**σαχτε** adj. "elapsed"

NSP 6

**σιδηιανο** pron. "whichever"

Rab 6

qv. σιδι

**σιδι** acc. rel. pron. "what, which"

Dil 8; NSP 4; Rab 8; SK4A 2 (σιδο); SK4B 2; SK4M 1 (σιδο)

**σινδαδο** vb 3 sg. subj. "to wish, desire"

Rab 3

**σινδο** verbal n. "wish, pleasure"

Rab 6, 7

**σροβαρδο** DN

Rab 10

**σπαχτε** n. obl. "service"  
NSP 2

**στοργο** adj. "great"  
DN1 3; Rab 1

**τα** temp. conj. "when, then, so"  
SK4A 9; SK4B 10 (τια); SK4M 6

**ταδανο** conj. „then they“  
Rab 17; SK4A 21; SK4B 19 (ταδαν.); SK4M 15  
qv. ταδο, <sup>2</sup>-ανο

**ταδι** conj. "then"  
Ayr 4 (τιδι); Dil4 5, 9, 11; NSP 1, 2, 3; Rab 7, 15, 20, 20; SK4A 6 (ταδο), 7 (ταδο);  
SK4B 8, 9 (ταδο); SK4M 4 (ταδο), 5 (ταδο)  
qv. ταδηια

**ταδηια** conj. "then they"  
NSP 1 (ταδηο), 2 (ταδηο), 3 (ταδηο); Rab 3; SK4: ταδηια SK4A 2-3 (ταδιοο ), 4, 16,  
17; SK4B 3 (ταδιοο) 5, 15, 15, 27 (ταδει); SK4M 2 (ταδιοο ), 3, 11, 12

**τακαλδι**  
qv. καλδο

**τακτοο** PN  
DN1 3; Rab 13; Coins (Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 97-98; Boppearachchi 2008)

**τασαγωνδι**  
qv. σαγωνδι

**τοχοαρστανο** GN "Tokharestan"  
NSP 4

**υα (υαγγο)** n. "weight"  
NSP 3, 6

**υαρουγο**  
qv. αρουγο

**υιρσο** num. "thirty"  
SK4A 14 (υιρσο); SK4B 14 (υιρσο); SK4M 10

**υνδο** GN "India"  
NSP 3, 3, 4 (υνδα); Rab 4, 7, 10a (adj. υνδοοανο); 19; App. S 5  
(pl. adj. υνδογανο)

**φαρδαμγανο** adj. pl. "foremost"

NSP 2

**φαρειμοανο** dem. pron. pl. obl. "for these"

Rab 8, 22

qv. φαρο, ειμο

**φαρο** prep. "to, for"

Dil3 4(?); SK4A 12, 19; SK4B 13, 17; SK4M 9, 13-14

qv. φαρειμοανο

**φρεισταρο** n. superl. "dearest"

SK4A 10; SK4B 11; SK4M 7-8

**φρειχοαδηο** PN

U 7.23

**φρειχοαδηογο** adj. "dear to the king"

SK4A 10; SK4B 11; SK4M 7

**φροαγδ-** v. "to say, proclaim"

NSP 3 (pret. 3. sg. φροαγδο); Rab 4 (impf. 3.sg. φροαγδαζο)

**φρογιρδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "to build"

SK4A 3; SK4B 5; SK4M 2-3

**φορδαμσο** adv. "first"

SK4A 3; SK4B 3; SK4M 2

**φρομαδο** v. pret. "commanded"

Rab 7, 11, 12, 15

**φρομανο** n. "command"

Rab 17, 21 (φρομανα); Sk4B 27; SK4M 23-24

**φρονιαγο:** n. "great-grandfather"

Rab 12-13

**φροχοαρ-** v. "to bring away"

SK4A 6 (v. 3 pl. pret. φρ.χ.ρτινδο), 22 (3 sg. opt. φροχοαφονδηιο); SK4B 8 (v. 3 pl. pret. φροχορτινδι), 20 (3 sg. opt. φροχοαφονδη.ο); SK4M 5 (v. 3 pl. pret. φροχορτινδο), 16 (3 sg. opt. φροχοαφονδηιο)

**χαροβαλαγο** PN

U 7.11

**χοαδηο** n. "lord"

Dil4 10; SK4B 27; SK4M 23

**χοαζαοαργο** adj. "self-powerful, αυτοκράτωρ"

Rab 1



**χοαδηοδανι** n. "lordship, reign"  
NSP 1

**χοανδο** v. 3 sg. pret. „proclaimed“  
DN1 13

**χοβι** refl. pron. "his own"  
DN1 6 (χοβε); NSP 2; Rab 14 (χοβισαρο)

**χιργομανο** PN  
SK4M 21

**χουαχο** unknown title  
App. S 5

**χοτο** adj. "needed"  
SK4A 4; SK4B 6; SK4M 3

**χουζο** adj. and adv. "good, well, rightly, very much, very"  
SK4A 26; SK4B 24; SK4M 20

**χρoνo** n. "(calendar) year, (regnal) year"  
NSP (χρoνα) 1, 3, 4, 6; Rab 2, 4, 19, 19, 20, 20; SK2; SK4A 14-15; SK4B 14; SK4M 10

**ωζοπο** unknown GN  
Rab 5

**ωλεσαγωγι** PN  
SK 1

**ωσογδομαγγο** adj. "pure-minded, purehearted"  
SK4A 13-14; SK4B 13; SK4M 9-10

**ωσπορδο** v. 3 sg. pret. "conquered"  
NSP 3

**ωσταδο** v. "to place, put, impose"  
Ayr 2 (3 sg. subj. σταδο), Ayr 3 (verb 3 sg. pret. ωσταδο); NSP 1 (1. sg. intr. pret. σταδημι), 2 (1 sg. pret.) ωσταδημι, 3 (1 sg. intr. pret. σταδημε); Rab (3 sg. pret. ωσταδο) 3-4, 6, 7; SK4A 5, 6 (3 sg. subj. σταδο), 25 (3 sg. pret. ωσταδο); SK4B 6, 7 (3 sg. subj. σταδο), 22 (3 sg. pret. ωσταδο); SK4M 4, 4 (3 sg. subj. σταδο), 16 (3 sg. pret. ωσταδο)

**ωστειγο** PN  
VSP 3

**ρoο** n. "ruler, king"  
DN1 2, 6 (pl. obl. ρoονανδε); DN1 2 (obl. ρai); NSP 1 (pl. obl. ρoονανδι), 1, 1, 1 (pl. ρoονανο), 4 (pl. ρoονανο), 5; Rab 7 (obl. ρai), 12, 12 (pl. ρoονανο), 13, 13, 14, 14, 17-

18 (pl. βαονανο), 18 (obl. βαι), 19, 21 (obl. βαι); SK4A 2; SK4A 11 (βαοο); SK4B 2, 12; SK4M 1, 8; VSP 2 (pl. βαονανο), VSP 2; App. S 5 (βαοο)

**βαοδαοο** n. "kingdom, kingship"

Rab 2

**βαοοο** n. "kingdom, realm, city"

Rab 4 (dir. pl. βαοοε); App. S 5 (βαοοο)

**βατρίαγγε** adj. obl. "pertaining to the *kṣatriya* class"?

Rab 4

**βαφαοο** PN

Rab 7, 15 (obl. βαφαρε), 16

**βιζαγε** n. obl. "goodness"

NSP 2

qv. βιζογαργο

**βιζογαργο** adj. "beneficent"

SK4A 11-12; SK4B 12 (βιζογαργι); SK4M 8

qv. βιζαγε

**βοδ[•]α** PN?

Αγρ 4

**βοοαγο** PN

U 7.22

**••]ινδι** v. ? 3.pl. pres. indic.(?)

Rab 19

**[•]πα••**

Rab 21

**••]σιδο**

Rab 17

### **Appendix III: Chronological Table of the Kušān Emperors**

The below table compares the three main Kaniška dating attempts discussed in chapter 3. The “Dating” column includes the extreme dates attested epigraphically for the individual emperors. “AE” stands for “Azes Era”, “GE” for “Greek Era” and “KE” for “Kaniška Era”. The Śaka column calculates the dates according to the identification of the Kaniška Era with the Śaka Era commencing in 78 CE. The “Falk” column does the same for the date of 127 CE proposed by H. Falk, the “Göbl” column with R. Göbl’s

date of 232 CE. Göbl’s construction of sequence and relations of later Kušān emperors is not taken into account here. The relative chronology of the Kušān emperors after Kaniška III is taken from Jongeward/Cribb 2015, the dating estimates found there are included in the “Dating” column. Note that Falk/Sims-Williams 2017 argue for only one emperor Vāsudeva.

The dates for the emperors before Kaniška I found in the “Falk” column are strictly the calculations taken from Falk 2015a and do not attempt to reconstruct the entire duration of the reigns.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Dating</b>	<b>Śaka</b>	<b>Falk</b>	<b>Göbl</b>
Kujula Kadphises	122-136 AE		75-89 CE	
Vima Takto	279 GE		90-104 CE	
Vima Kadphises	287 GE		112 CE	
Kaniška I	1-23 KE	78-101 CE	127-150 CE	232-255 CE
Huviška	26-60 KE	104-136 CE	153-187 CE	258-292 CE
Vāsudeva I	68-98 KE	146-176 CE	195-225 CE	300-330 CE
Kaniška II	(10)4-(1)18 KE	182-196 CE	231-245 CE	336-350 CE

Vaskušan	(1)22 KE	200 CE	249 CE	354 CE
Vasiška	(1)24-(1)30 KE	202-208 CE	251-257 CE	356-363 CE
Kaniška III	(1)30-(1)41 KE	208-219 CE	257-268 CE	363-374 CE
Vāsudeva II	c. 267-300 CE			
Mahi	c. 300-305 CE			
Shaka	c. 305-335 CE			
Kipunadha	c. 335-350 CE			

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AchHist	Achaemenid History
AcOr	Acta Orientalia
AirW	Chr. Bartholomae, Altiranisches Wörterbuch. Strassburg 1904.

AMI	Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran
ANRW	H. Temporini, W. Haase (eds), Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt/Rise and Decline of the Roman World. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Berlin 1972-
AÖAW	Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
APAW	Abhandlungen der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
AS	Afghan Studies
BAI	Bulletin of the Asia Institute
BD	N. Sims-Williams, Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan. 3 vols, London et al 2007-2012.
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CAC	M. Alam, D.E. Klimburg-Salter (eds), Coins Art and Chronology. Essays on the pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands. Wien 1999.
DMMPP	D. Durkin-Meisterernst, Dictionary of Manichaean texts. 3,1, Vol. 3 Texts from Central Asia and China; Part 1, Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian. Turnhout 2004.
DMSB	N. Sims-Williams, D. Durkin-Meisterernst, Dictionary of Manichaean texts. Volume 3, Texts from Central Asia and China. Part 2, Dictionary of Manichaean Sogdian and Bactrian. Turnhout 2022 <sup>2</sup> .

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- EI *Epigraphia Indica*
- EIr E. Yarshater (ed), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. London et al 1985-
- E&W *East and West*
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GMS	I. Gershevitch, A Grammar of Manichaean Sogdian. Oxford 1961 <sup>2</sup> .
GWMI	D. Durkin-Meisterernst, Grammatik des Westmitteliranischen (Parthisch und Mittelpersisch). Wien 2014.
IAAR	Indian Archaeology Review
IAZ	Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift
IF	Indogermanische Forschungen
IrAnt	Iranica Antiqua
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JAS	Journal of the Asiatic Society
JHS	The Journal of Hellenic Studies
JIAAA	Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India
KH	H. Falk (ed), Kushan Histories. Literary Sources and Selected Papers from a Symposium at Berlin, December 5 to 7, 2013. Bremen 2015.
LNV	Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonenses
MANP	Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans.
MKG	W. Sundermann, Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts. Berlin 1981.



MÖNG	Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft
NC	Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society
PDK	A.L. Basham (ed), Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka. Submitted to the Conference on the Date of Kaniṣka, London 20-22 April 1960. Leiden 1968.
QGP	U. Hackl, B. Jacobs, D. Weber (eds), Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches. Textsammlung mit Übersetzungen und Kommentaren. 3 vols, Göttingen 2010.
RE	Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg-Wissowa.
SAA	South Asian Archaeology
SAS	South Asian Studies
SCE	D.N. MacKenzie (ed), The "Sūtra of the Causes and Effects of Actions" in Sogdian. London 1970.
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
SRAA	Silk Road Art and Archaeology
StIr	Studia Iranica
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie

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## List of Figures

- Fig. 1 ANS 1944.100.63657. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 2 ANS 1944.100.63661. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 3 ANS 1986.149.1. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 4 ANS 1953.147.1. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 5 ANS 1944.100.30743. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 6 ANS 1944.100.66762. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 7 DE-MUS-814819-18217594. Image courtesy of Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.
- Fig. 8 ANS 1944.100.30739. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 9 ANS 1944.100.30714. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 10 ANS 1944.100.30749. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 11 ANS 1944.100.63548. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 12 ANS 1944.100.30747. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 13 ANS 1944.100.63541. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 14 DE-MUS-814819-18206948. Image courtesy of Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.
- Fig. 15 ANS 1944.100.30712. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 16 ANS 1986.149.10. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 17 ANS 1944.100.15491. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

- Fig. 18 DE-MUS-814819-18203703. Image courtesy of Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.
- Fig. 19 DE-MUS-814819-18202384. Image courtesy of Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.
- Fig. 20 ANS 1986.149.11. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 21 ANS 1944.100.63673. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 22 ANS 1944.100.63657. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 23 ANS 1944.100.48103. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 24 DE-MUS-814819-18206906. Image courtesy of Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.
- Fig. 25 ANS 1986.149.14. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 26 ANS 1944.100.15497. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 27 ANS 1944.100.30162. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 28 ANS 2009.2.1. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 29 ANS 1953.147.1. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 30 ANS 1944.100.30163. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 31 ANS 1944.100.30161. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.
- Fig. 32 ANS 1944.100.30712. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

### **Kurzfassung der Ergebnisse**

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die historischen Zusammenhänge der baktrischen Inschriften der Kušānzeit und versucht anhand einer Kontextualisierung mit verwandtem Quellenmaterial eine Auswertung der historischen Informationen dieses Inschriftenkorpus. Nach einer Einführung in die historischen Hintergründe und die Problematik der Chronologie des Kušānreiches werden vier Hauptthemenbereiche untersucht: (1) Die sprach- und literaturhistorische Einordnung der Texte, (2) Die in den Inschriften vorkommenden Titulaturen der Kušānherrscher, (3) Die religiösen Aspekte der Inschriften und ihre Zusammenhänge und (4) Die Informationen zur

Expansion und Verwaltung des Kušānreiches die als „Imperiale Strategie“ zusammengefasst werden.

Zu (1) ergibt die Arbeit, dass die Verschriftlichung der baktrischen Sprache in der frühen Kušānzeit unternommen wurde um diese als reichsweites Kommunikationsmedium zu verwenden. An der Verschriftlichung wirkten Menschen mit griechischen Sprachkenntnissen und vermutlich griechischen Identitäten mit. Dies zeigen verschiedene Ansätze zur Lösung der Probleme der Wiedergabe des baktrischen in der dafür aus phonetischen Gründen wenig geeigneten griechischen Schrift. Eine epigraphische Analyse des Inschriftencorpus zeigt zudem auf, dass spätestens in der Zeit des Königs Huviška an einer Vereinheitlichung und Vereinfachung der baktrischen Orthographie gearbeitet wurde, die auf Kosten grammatikalischer Komplexitäten ging. Die Inschriften bieten hingegen nur relativ wenig Material für literarische Analysen, doch zeigt sich an manchen Stellen ein Stilbewusstsein, das eine Verwandtschaft zu den Inschriften der Achaimeniden-, Arsakiden- und Sāsānidenzeit nahelegt und die Zugehörigkeit der Baktrischen Inschriften der Kušān zur iranischen Literaturgeschichte belegt.

Zu (2) wird aufgezeigt, dass die Kušān bereits unter ihrem Reichsgründer Kujula Kadphises den Kanon der Herrschaftstitulatur weitgehend festgelegt hatten und in der Folgezeit nur noch geringfügig veränderten. Die Titel stammen überwiegend der Baktrischen Tradition und gehen auf die hellenistische Zeit zurück. Die baktrischen Titel wurden weitgehend direkt aus den sich seit Jahrhunderten im Umlauf befindlichen griechischen Formen übersetzt. Einige kušānische Neuerungen in diesem Titelrepertoire sind vermutlich römischen und chinesischen Einflüssen zuzurechnen.

Zu (3) wurde, um die religiösen Informationen der Inschriften besser zu erklären, auch eine Untersuchung der auf kušānischen Münzen erscheinenden Gottheiten

unternommen. Es wird deutlich, dass die in den epigraphischen, numismatischen und archäologischen Quellen hervortretende kušānische Religion aus verschiedenen religiösen Vorstellungen des Reiches beeinflusst ist, entgegen der lange vorherrschenden Meinung in der Forschung aber nicht beabsichtigt, die religiöse Vielfalt des Reiches abzubilden. Stattdessen stellten sich die Kušānherrscher Kaniška I. und Huviška aus politischen Absichten heraus verschiedene Göttergruppen zusammen denen, wie die Rabatak-Inschrift belegt, auch Sammelkulte gewidmet waren. Die einzige bekannte Parallele zu dieser Praxis in der iranischen Welt ist möglicherweise der Kult des kommagenischen Königs Antiochos I. Dies betrifft auch die Vergöttlichung des lebenden Herrschers und seiner Vorgänger, für deren epigraphische und ikonographische Belege alle Zweifel ausgeräumt wurden. Ein Versuch, die Ursprünge dieser Praxis nachzuvollziehen hätte den Rahmen der Arbeit gesprengt.

Zu (4) wurde zunächst anhand der schriftlichen und archäologischen Belege die Expansion des Kušānreiches nachvollzogen. Als eine Art Exkurs wurde daraufhin die in der Forschung lange vertretene These untersucht, dass die kušānische Expansion von dem Interesse geleitet wurde, die transkontinentalen Fernhandelswege zu kontrollieren. Ferner wurde die damit verbundene These eines besonders durch den Handel vermittelten römischen Einflusses auf den Aufbau des Kušānreiches einer kritischen Prüfung unterzogen. Hier lässt sich als Ergebnis festhalten, dass diese Elemente in der Forschung stark überbewertet wurden und sich in der Strategie der Kušān keine besondere Hinwendung zu kommerziellen Erwägungen finden lässt. Auch ein römischer Einfluss auf das Kušānreich, der sich in der materiellen Kultur offenbart, war allenfalls oberflächlich.

Nach diesen Untersuchungen widmet sich der zweite Teil von (4) dem inneren Aufbau des Reiches und seiner Verwaltung. Dieser lässt sich besonders anhand administrativer Titel in kušänzeitlichen Inschriften analysieren. Es wurde anhand der Titel in baktrischen Texten und anhand iranischer Titel in indischen Inschriften gezeigt, dass abgesehen von der obersten Ebene des Königshofes von einer zentralisierten Reichsverwaltung nicht die Rede sein kann. Es wäre in so einem Fall zu erwarten gewesen, dass mit der Expansion des Reiches auch baktrische Amtsbezeichnungen außerhalb Baktriens gebräuchlich geworden wären. Dies war jedoch nicht der Fall. Stattdessen müssen die iranischen Titel in indischen Inschriften ein Erbe der Achaimenidenzeit sein, da sie sich am ehesten als Altpersisch etymologisieren lassen. Der Arbeit wurde ein Anhang mit einem Katalog der baktrischen Inschriften der Kušänzeit und einem Glossar dieser Inschriften beigegeben.

### **Summary of Results**

The present work studies the historical contexts of the Bactrian inscriptions of the Kušän period and attempts to extract the historical information of this epigraphic corpus by contextualising it with related sources. Following an introduction on the historical backgrounds and the problem of Kušän chronology, four main topics are studied: (1) The linguistic and literary contextualisation of the texts, (2) the titulature of the Kušän emperors in the inscriptions, (3) the religious aspects of the inscriptions and their

contexts and (4) the information on the expansion and administration of the Kušān Empire which are described here as the “Imperial Strategy”.

(1) shows that Bactrian was reduced to writing in the early Kušān period to facilitate its use as an imperial means of communication. This process involved individuals who spoke Greek and probably identified themselves as such. This becomes apparent from various attempts to solve problems arising from writing Bactrian in Greek script, which is phonetically unsuited for this language. An epigraphical analysis of the corpus of inscriptions further shows that by the time of Huviška, the Kušān attempted to standardise and simplify Bactrian orthography at the cost of grammatical complexity. The inscriptions contain only little material for literary analysis, but a sense of style is apparent from several passages that can be related to the inscriptions of the Achaemenid, Arsakid and Sāsānian periods. This proves that the Bactrian inscriptions of the Kušān are part of the literary history of Iran.

(2) shows that the Kušān had already established a canon of imperial titles under their founder Kujula Kadphises that was only subject to marginal change afterwards. The titles are largely taken from the Bactrian tradition and originate in the Hellenistic period. The Bactrian titles were mostly translated from Greek forms current in Bactria for several centuries. A few Kušān novelties in the repository of titles are probably attributable to Chinese and Roman influence.

(3) adds a study of the deities appearing on Kušān coins to explain the religious information from the inscriptions. It becomes clear that the Kušān religion appearing in epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological sources is influenced by various religious ideas in the empire, but contrary to long-standing opinions by researchers, it did not intend to portray the religious diversity of the empire. Rather, the Kušān emperors Kaniška I and Huviška assembled various groups of deities for political ideas. The

Rabatak Inscription shows that such groups were also the subject of collective cults. The only known parallel to this practice in the Iranian world is possibly the cult of the Commagenean king Antiochos I. This also includes the deification of the living emperor and his predecessors, for which the epigraphic and iconographic material provides indicators that can no longer be doubted. The present work cannot, however, trace the origins of this practice.

(4) first examines the expansion of the Kušān Empire from the literary and archaeological sources. An excursus of sorts then examines the long-standing claim that Kušān expansion was primarily motivated by the interest of gaining control of long-distance trade routes. Further, the related idea of a Roman influence exerted mainly through trade on the foundations of the Kušān Empire is evaluated critically. The result is that these elements have been strongly overrated by researchers and the strategy of the Kušān does not display any sort of predominant commercial interests. Roman influence on the Kušān which is mostly observable in the material culture, also seems to have only been superficial.

Following these investigations, the second part of (4) is concerned with the inner structure of the Kušān Empire and its administration. The main group of sources are administrative titles from Kušān inscriptions. Titles in Bactrian inscriptions and Iranian titles in Indian inscriptions show that, apart from the top layer of the imperial court, it is hard to argue for a centralised imperial administration of the empire. It would have been expected in such a case that Bactrian administrative titles would have been spread throughout the empire during its expansion. However, the Iranian titles in Indian inscription rather seem to be part of the Achaemenid legacy there, as they can best be etymologised as Old Persian.



In place of a summary, a new narrative of Kušān history has been proposed. The dissertation also includes an appendix with a catalogue of the Bactrian inscriptions of the Kušān and a glossary of these inscriptions.

### **Selbstständigkeitserklärung**

Name: Härtel

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Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Alle Ausführungen, die wörtlich oder inhaltlich aus anderen Schriften entnommen sind, habe ich als solche kenntlich gemacht. Diese Arbeit hat in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegen und wurde bisher nicht veröffentlicht.

Berlin, 02.09.2024

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### **Declaration of authorship**

Name: Härtel

First name: Stefan

I hereby declare that I have completed the submitted dissertation independently and without the use of sources and aids other than those indicated. I have marked as such all statements that are taken literally or in content from other writings. This dissertation has not yet been presented to any other examination authority in the same or a similar form and has not yet been published.

Berlin, 02.09.2024