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Kushāṇas in the Yamuno–Gangetic Region Chronology and Date

A nomadic tribe, known to the Chinese sources as Yueh–chi, had left their homeland on the Chinese border early in *circa* second century B. C. and arrived in the Oxus region and settled at Bactria. After having dwelt there for about a century, a prince of the Kue–Shang branch of the Yueh–chi invaded Parthia or the parts of the Indo–Parthian realm in Afghanistan, occupied Central Afghanistan, Gandhāra and the lower Swat Valley. His successors came to be known as the Kushāṇas. They spread their kingdom upto the Yamuno–Gangetic region into Northern India; and had thus built a great empire that extended upto Varanasi in the east.

Much has been said about the history of these Kushāṇas, mostly based on the Chinese sources and the archaeological remains found in the western part of their empire – Afghanistan and Central Asia. The basic Indian sources, particularly from the Yamuno–Gangetic region have remained mostly neglected.

An attempt is made here to assess the history of the Kushāṇas, as gleaned from the inscriptions and coins, found in this region, particularly those that have come to light in the recent years.

Leaving aside the few rulers that existed at the very beginning and were confined to the western region in and around Bactria, the Kushāṇas are generally identified into two distinct groups. One group, the earlier one, consisted of only two rulers – Kuzula Kadphises and Wima Kadphises. The second group is said to have its beginning with the king named Kanishka. The rulers of this latter group existed for several generations; and their history is the main history of the Kushāṇas.

Wima Kadphises in the East

We have neither any inscription nor coins of the first ruler of the first group – Kuzula Kadphises from any where in the eastern part of the

Kushāṇa empire i.e. Yamuno–Gangetic region. It is very well apparent that he did not come into this area. It is only the second ruler, Wima Kadphises, whose coins are found in this area to suggest his existence; but no inscription was so far known for him. Recently, a Brāhmī inscription, engraved on a Śiva–liṅga have come to light from a place called Reh in the Fatehpur district of Uttar Pradesh, situated on the bank of the Yamuna (Plate I, 1), which may be related to him.

The lower portion of this inscription is broken and missing. Only three lines are preserved; they have been read by G. R. Sharma, the discoverer, as follows:

1. *Maharajasa Rajatirajasa*
2. *Mahaṁtasa tratarasa dhammi–*
3. *kasa jayaṁtasa cha apra*

There are also the remnants of the fourth line below, which has been conjecturally restored by Sharma as [*jitasa*] *Minanda* (*de*?)*rasa*. With this restoration, he has attributed this inscription to the Indo–Greek ruler Menander. In this inscription, he has found a corroborative evidence for the 'valliantly wicked Yavanas marching along Mathura to Pataliputra' [1].

In restoring the line Sharma has not considered the palaeography with any seriousness. His conjecture about the fourth line, as having the name of Menander, is based merely on the assumption that the titles, mentioned in the first three lines, given to the king, are the Prakrit translation of the Greek *Basileos basileon megalou soteros dikaiou kai aniketou Menandrou*. Placing this interesting interpretation, Sharma has failed to realise the basic fact that Basileos Basileon was never used by any Indo–Greek king, either on their coins or inscriptions. This title came into vogue in India only during the time of the Śaka–Pahlava rulers. They had used this title on their coins. Of the other titles, mentioned in the inscription, only *tratara* and *dhraṁika* are the two, known on Menander's coins; and there too, they were never used together. The other titles were individually used by other Indo–Greek rulers on their coins. They are not known at one place, anywhere used for any Indo–Greek king. On the other hand, as has been pointed out by T. P. Varma [2], all the Prakrit titles, used in the inscription, were used together, in this very form, on an inscription found at Kamra in North–western Afghanistan for a Ku-

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[1] G. R. Sharma, *Reh Inscription of Menander and the Indo–Greek Invasion of Ganga Valley*, Allahabad, 1980, pp. 8–10.

[2] T. P. Varma, A Note on the Reh Inscription. *Rangavalli, Recent Researches in Indology*, Bombay, 1981, pp. 77–80.

shāṇa ruler [3]. These facts make it absolutely clear that the Reh Inscription does not relate in any way to Menander. His name cannot be made out in the remnants of the latter part of the fourth line of the inscription by any flight of imagination. The inscription can only be related to an early Kushāṇa ruler; and he would only be Wima Kadphises, whose coins are found in this region. A clay sealing, bearing his name, has recently been found at Piprahwa in Basti district, Uttar Pradesh [4]. His expedition to the east is testified by the Hathigumpha Inscription [5].

Huvishka I – Father of Kanishka

It is a common belief that Wima Kadphises was succeeded by Kanishka, the first ruler of the second group. In what way this Kanishka was related to Wima Kadphises; or whether Kanishka occupied the Yamuno–Gangetic region immediately after Wima or there was any gap between the two, are a few questions in the Kushāṇa history, which remain still unanswered.

At this point, a copper coin (Plate II, 2) attracts our attention. This coin was found at Sonkh in Mathura district during an archaeological expedition led by Herbert Härtel. It was found en the surface in the area of a Naga apsidal temple, immediately under which lay the early Kushāṇa structures. The coin bears Brāhmī legend on both the faces. On one face the legend is clear *Huvishkasya* in one line; on the other face the legend is in two lines and may reasonably be read as *putra ka / nika*[*sya*]. The legend on two sides, when put together, would be read as *Huvishkasya putra Kanikasya* and would mean that Kanika was the issuer of the coin and he was the son of Huvishka.

Since we do not know so far any Kanishka, who was the son of Huvishka and the only Huvishka, whom we know, was the successor of Kanishka, it may *prima facie* be assumed, on the basis of this coin, that Huvishka, the successor of Kanishka, had a son, who was known as Ka-

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[3] B. N. Mukherjee, *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 114; K. W. Dobbins, *East and West*, Rome, 25, 1975, pp. 105–109.

[4] *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, VII (1980), pp. 98–100.

[5] The Hathigumpha inscription refers in line 8 to a *yavana–rāja*, who fled to Mathura, when he realized the might of Kharavela. The name of the *yavana–rāja* bears 3 letters, of which, the second letter may be fairly read as *ma* or *mi*. It has been doubtfully restored as *Dimita*, meaning Demetrius, the Indo–Greek king. But as early as 1951, I thought it to be *Vimaka*, meaning Wima Kadphises. The Patna Museum has a plaster cast of this inscription, which I personally examined when I was there as Curator. It confirms my suggestion.

nishka (Kanika). But a careful examination rules out this possibility. The coin bears no device which could be called Kushanian. The human figure, though it wears a foreign dress, is unlike the effigies of any king or deity, seen on the Kushāṇa coins. He is more close to the figures seen on the early indigenous coins. In fabric and execution also, the coin is un–Kushanian. The square incuse, which is here on the obverse was the feature of the early Indian numismatics. It is known late on the coins of the Pañchāla series, which ended almost with the advent of the Kushāṇas in the Gangetic plains. Moreover, no regal title, which is known on the Kushāṇa coins, is used here for either Huvishka or Kanishka. These peculiarities indicate that the coin belonged to a very early state of the Kushāṇa emergence in the Yamuno–Gangetic region. It followed the local numismatic traditions that was current in this area. From the point of palaeography also, the coin does not seem to be of any later date than Kanishka I; and Kanishka I is the only king, who is known in the literary traditions as Kanika. This coin was, most likely, issued earlier, before the coins of Kanishka I of the usual type were introduced here with the Graeco–Bactrian script. This coin thus, adds to our knowledge that Kanika (Kanishka I) was the son of Huvishka, who may be designated as Huvishka I to distinguish him from the later Huvishka, the successor of Kanishka I. This coin also makes it clear that Wima Kadphises might not have been immediately succeeded by Kanishka I; or at least that Kanishka I was not the immediate descendant of Wima Kadphises.

This fact that Kanishka I was the son of Huvishka I, finds support in the pedestal inscription, found at Māṭ (Mathura) [6]. This inscription is mutilated and occasionally obscure; but the form in which it is restored, shows that a *devakula* (shrine of ancestors) was established by one or for one, who is called *satyadharmasthita*; but his name is mutilated. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was not Kuzula Kadphises, who is known by this title, as this title here is preceded by the letters *mārasya*, which may be restored as *kumārasya*. It further adds to our knowledge that an image of *mahārāja rajatirāja Huvishka pitāmaha*, along with a tank was established there. The *devakula* was depleted; so, for the *āyur–balavṛiddhi* of *Mahārāja rajatirāja devaputra* Huvishka, some *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* got it repaired. Here *Huvishka pitāmaha* is generally interpreted as 'the grand–father of Huvishka'. With this interpretation, the name of the grand–father is found missing; so, it is suggested that it meant Wima Kadphises, who

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[6] Mathura Museum, No. 215A. *JRAS*, 1924, p. 401; V. S. Agrawala, *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, pp. 40–41.

is identified with Wematakshama – a name, which is found on another pedestal inscription found at this very site of Māṭ [7].

Unfortunately, in interpreting the line in this way, the basic fact is not realised that the two inscriptions belonged to two different statues, on whose pedestals they are engraved. Both the statues would not have been of the same person. It is not expected to have more than one statue of any ancestor in any *devakula*. *Huvishka pitāmaha* would never be Wematakshama, even if he be identified with Wima Kadphises [8].

It is quite evident, thus, that *Huvishka pitāmaha* in the Māṭ Inscription would not have meant in any way Wima Kadphises. Actually the term, as has been pointed out by F. W. Thomas [9] and supported by Bussagli [10], never meant 'grand–father of Huvishka'; its simple and natural interpretation would be 'Huvishka the elder (or the grandfather)'. The epithet *pitāmaha* (the elder) is used here to distinguish Huvishka, whose statue was installed on the pedestal from Huvishka, the reigning monarch. His inscription clearly brings out the fact that there was one Huvishka, earlier than that Huvishka, with whom we all are familiar.

Apart from this inscription, we have the testimony of th *Rājataraṁ giṇī* of Kalhaṇa. He has mentioned three rulers named Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka, who are said to have founded three cities after their own names [11]. Since the historicity of Kalhaṇa's statement cannot be denied, it undoubtedly means that two rulers, named Hushka and Jushka had preceded Kanishka. While we do not know anything about Jushka as yet, Hushka may conviniently be identified as Huvishka. It need not say that Hushka was a short form of the name Huvishka, as appears from an inscription from Mathura [12]. This means that a Huvishka had preceded Kanishka.

That one Huvishka had succeeded Wima Kadphises is also indicated by some gold coins. On the basis of the gold coins, that bear the name Hu-

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[7] *ASIAR*, 1911–12, pp. 122 ff.; *EI*, XXI, p. 59; *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, pp. 40–41.

[8] That Wematakshama was quite different from Wima Kadphises is clear from the fact that *takshama* can in no way be equated with Kadphises either philologically or phonetically. Moreover, Wematakshama bears the title *Mahārāja rajatirāja devaputra Kushāṇaputra Shāhi*. Wima Kadphises or any other Kushāṇa ruler is not called *Kushāṇaputra*. This epithet is exclusive to Wematakshama. Then the title *Shāhi* was used only in the later period of Vasudeva, as we shall see a little later in this paper; and was used only by the post–Vasudeva rulers. Thus Wema Takshama may be placed only in the later Kushāṇa period and not earlier.

[9] *JRAS*, 1932, p. 116, Notes on the Scythic Period.

[10] *Papers on the Date of Kanishka*, p. 46.

[11] A. Stein (trans.), *Rājataraṁgiṇī*, I, 168–173.

[12] Kankali Tila Jain Image, Lucknow Museum: *EI*, II, p. 205; *JRAS*, 1903, p. 352; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 38.

vishka, the existence of two Huvishkas has already been suggested by W. W. Thomas [13], A. L. Basham [14], A. K. Narain [15], and S. K. Maity [16] but in a different context. What is relevant here is that A. K. Narain has pointed out to two different spellings of the name Huvishka; it is *Oeshko* on some coins and *Oeshki* on others. He drew attention to the fact that the name of Kanishka I is always spelt as *Kaneshki* on his coins, as it is spelt as *Kaneshko* on the coins that are attributed to a later Kanishka – Kanishka III. If the two different spellings of the name Kanishka meant to differentiate between the two rulers of the same name, the difference in the spelling of the name Huvishka on the coins would also have the same connotation. What is true in the case of the former, should also be true in the case of the latter.

Narain's argument is perfectly sound; but he has missed to realise the most important fact, which is very much significant and relevant in the present context. It is that the spelling *Oeshko* is seen on only two types of the gold coins of Huvishka: (i) the elephant–rider (Plate II, 3) and (ii) king seated cross–legged (Plate II, 4). On all the other coins of Huvishka, that are uniformly of the bust type, the spelling is *Oeshki*. The coins of the types bearing the name *Oeshko*, are equally known of Wima Kasphises (Plate II, 5–6). But both these types are conspicuously absent in the coin series of Kanishka I who intervened between Wima Kadphises and Huvishka (Huvishka II). This would not simply be an accident. The monogram on the reverse of the coins of these two types of Huvishka is the same as seen on the coins of Wima Kadphises and Kanishka (Plate II, 7). Thus not only the spelling of the name but also the types of the coins and their monogram isolate the coins of Huvishka into two groups and show that they belong to two Huvishkas. It may convincingly be said that the elephant–rider and cross–legged types of coins were issued by Huvishka (Huvishka I), who was close to Wima Kadphises and was earlier than Kanishka I; and he was different from Huvishka, who succeeded Kanishka I and issued bust type coins.

This conclusion, deduced from the gold coins, is supported also by the copper coins attributed to Huvishka. D. W. MacDowall has analysed them and detected in them two distinct chronological groups based on the striking decrease in the weight standard and in the change of the reverse monogram [17]. According to his analysis, the first group of Huvishka's

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[13] *JRAS*, 1915, pp. 108–116.
[14] *BSOAS*, XX 1950, p. 77–88.
[15] *JNSI*, XXII, p. 99.
[16] *JNSI*, XX, pp. 162–171.
[17] *JNSI*, XXII, pp. 71–73.

copper coins is that that has on the obverse the legend commencing at 1 o'clock and have the well made form of the reverse monogram, which is the same as used by Wima Kadphises and Kanishka (𐨩) (Plate II, 7). These coins show the king riding on elephant, sitting cross-legged and seated on couch. They show a clear point of concentration at 15–16 grammes, representing the tetradrachm denomination of Wima Kadphises and Kanishka. The second group of Huvishka's copper coins is characterised by the use of a quite distinct monogram (𐨩) (Plate II, 8). The legend on these coins does not commence at 1 o'clock and the letters are larger and less well formed. These coins range between 8 and 13 grammes and were struck to a standard of 10 to 12 grammes. These two divisions of the copper coins, represent the coins of two different periods, was the conclusion of MacDowall [18]. All these evidences, put together, show that there were two Huvishkas, one was close to Wima Kadphises and the other was that who succeded Kanishka I. And to this the Sonkh copper coin adds to our knowledge that Huvishka I was the father of Kanishka I.

Huvishka II and III

A large number of Brahmi inscriptions, bearing the names of the Kushāṇa rulers are known from Mathura and the surroundings. They are dated from the year 2 to 98 of an unspecified era, which has been assumed to be the Kanishka or Kushāṇa era. They disclose the reign of Kanishka I from the year 2 [21] to 23 [20] and of Huvishka from the year 25 [21] to 60 [22]. The earliest date for the next ruler Vasudeva is known from the inscription as 64 or 67 [23]. This would mean that Huvishka's rule began some time between the years 23 and 25 and ended some time after the year 60 but before the year 64. Thus the reign period for Huvishka, as known from these inscriptions, comes to approximately 40 years. Such a long period for a ruler, though not improbable, yet is not usual. As such, it has been the suspicion of many scholars that there might have been two rulers

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[19] Kausambi Bodhisattva image, Allahabad Museum No. 2948: *EI*, XXIV, p. 211.

[20] Sonkh Buddhist image, Mathura Museum No. 1602: *JRAS*, 1924, p. 400; *JUPHS*, XXI, 1948, pp. 45–46.

[21] Govindnagar Buddha image inscription, now in Mathura Museum.

[22] Kankali Tila Jain image, Lucknow Museum No. J26: *EI*, I, p. 346; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 105.

[23] Buddhist pedestal inscription, Mathura Museum No. 2906: *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1941, pp. 163–64; *EI*, XXX, pp. 181–84.

of the same name Huvishka during this long period of 40 years. To support the existence of two Huvishkas, during this period, Thomas, Basham and others [24] have placed their own arguments; and many of them are valid and sound in their own way. But none of them prove it positively. However, the coins, bearing the name Huvishka, are demonstratively clear on this point, but unfortunately, to them, no serious attention has been given so far.

Excluding the two types of the gold coins, showing the king riding on the elephant and sitting cross–legged, which have just been shown above as belonging to Huvishka I, the father of Kanishka I, there is only one type of gold coins of Huvishka, which shows his bust in profile. The coins of this type uniformly show the king holding a mace or club in his right hand; but the object held by him in his left hand is not the same on all coins. It distinguishes the coins into two clear varieties. On some coins the king holds an *aṅkuśa* (goad) (Plate III, 9) and on others, he has a spear or sceptre, resting on his left shoulder (Plate III, 10). No historical interpretation of the coins of these two distinct varieties have so far been put forward. Here I venture to suggest that they relate to two different kings of the same name, Huvishka (Huvishka II and III), who were close to each other and were successive rulers.

We have a parallel instance in the Indo–Śaka coin series that bears the name Azes. All the coins uniformly show the king riding on horse to right; but on some of them, the king is seen holding a spear (Plate III, 11) and on others, he holds a whip (Plate III, 12). G. K. Jenkins has discussed these coins and has attributed them to Azes – Azes I and II on the basis of the object held by the horse–rider in his hand [25]. Azes I had spear in his hand and Azes II had the whip. If such distinction was true in the case of the Śaka rulers, it should also be true in the case of Huvishka. One Huvishka held the *aṅkuśa* (goad) in his left hand and the other had the spear.

The suggestion of two Azes – I and II, based on the distinction of attributes in the hand of the king on the coins, has a conclusive support from the finds of the coins in two distinct layers in the excavations at Taxila. Unfortunately, no such excavational support is available to distinguish two Huvishkas as suggested above. As a matter of fact it is extremely difficult to get gold coins as stray in any layer of an excavation, so one will have to depend on the evidence of coin–hoards, which are as valid and dependable as the evidences of coins found in excavational layers.

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[24] *Supra*, fn 13–16.

[25] *JNSI*, XVII, pp. 1 ff.; *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress*, 1957, pp. 123 ff.

Here in a hoard, found in 1965 in the district of Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, there were 13 gold coins; and all of them were of Huvishka. On every one of them, the king is seen holding *aṅkuśa* (goad) in his left hand [26]. The hoard has none where the king holds spears or sceptre. Similarly, there is another hoard, which was discovered in 1971 in the district of Garhwal, Uttar Pradesh. It included 45 gold coins; 44 of them belonged to Huvishka and the remaining one to Vāsudeva [27]. Here all the 44 coins of Huvishka were of the type where the king holds spear or sceptre; on no coin in this hoard the king is noticed holding *aṅkuśa* (goad). The two hoards are so exclusive in their contents that they unmistakenly show that the two types of the coins of Huvishka were issued distinctly in two different periods. They, thus, support the assumption that the coins relate to two different kings of the same name.

The association of the single coin of Vāsudeva in the Garhwal hoard, indicates that the spear (sceptre) type coins of Huvishka were later, close to the time of Vāsudeva. This conclusion is confirmed from another hoard found in Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh [28]. Here the hoard included only one coin of Huvishka and that of the spear (sceptre) type as the earliest; and all the other coins belonged to Vāsudeva and his successors. In the light of these two hoards, it may easily be concluded that the *aṅkuśa* (goad) type coins of Huvishka would have been earlier. This conclusion is supported by the Ahin Posh hoard of gold coins [29]. This hoard included along with the coins of Kanishka, a single coin of Huvishka of the *aṅkuśa* (goad) type. These hoard evidences are enough to show that the *aṅkuśa* (goad) type coins were issued by Huvishka II and the spear (sceptre) type by Huvishka III.

Reference to MacDowall's observations about the weights of Huvishka's copper coins [30] may again be made here. He has distinguished the second group of copper coins of Huvishka into two classes, based on their weights. According to him, they represent the standards (i) 10 to 12 grammes and (ii) 7 to 9 grammes; and they belong to two distinct chronological phases, though he does not explicitly say that they belong to two kings. But in the light of what is discussed above, the copper coins of two different weight standards may well be attributed to two rulers – Huvishka II and III, who succeeded one after the other.

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26 *JNSI*, XXXI, p. 15.

27 *JNSI*, XXXVI, pp. 72 ff.

28 Unpublished; in State Museum, Lucknow. Examined by me.

29 *ProcASB*, 1897, pp. 122 ff.; 205.

30 *JNSI*, XXII, p. 72.

THEORY OF CONJOINT RULE – A FALLACY

Before we move to the post–Huvishka period of the Kushāṇa history, it would be convenient to refer first to the theory of the conjoint rule of two rulers during the period of Huvishka and his successor Vāsudeva, propounded by a number of scholars. This theory is based on the following inscriptions:

1. A Kharoshthi inscription was found at Ara, near Atak in Pakistan; it bears a line as *Maharajasa rajadirajasa devaputrasa kaisarasa Vajheshka-putrasa Kanishkasya samvatsaraye 41* [31]. This shows that there was a Kanishka, who was reigning in the year 41 (of the Kanishka or Kushana era) and he was the son of Vajheshka. This Kanishka is called by the scholars as Kanishka II.

2. A *yūpa* pillar was discovered at Īsāpur in Mathura district with the inscription *Mahārājasya Rajatirājasya Devaputrasya Shāhe Vashiskasya rājye saṁvatsara chaturviṁśa* [32]. This inscription discloses that a king named Vasishka was ruling in the year 24 (of the Kanishka or Kushana era).

3. Two inscribed Buddhist pedestals were discovered at Sanchi. They bear the name of Vasishka with the dates 22 [33] and 28 [34].

Since the years 22 to 41, covered by all these inscriptions, are known also as the periods of Kanishka and Huvishka, they appear overlapping them. So, the scholars have formulated a theory of co–rulership and have suggested that during the years 22 and 23 Vasishka was co–ruler with Kanishka and thereafter with Huvishka. And in the same vein, Kanishka of Ara inscription is suggested to be the co–ruler with Huvishka in the year 41.

To this theory, scholars of the Kushāṇa history have occasionally found some thing to add. For instance, a scholar has noticed an inscription on a pedestal of a Buddha image in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. There he has read the name of Kanishka and the date 34 [35]. Since Kanishka I's reign was limited to the year 22 and Vasishka was known as a co–ruler in the year 28, he has identified Kanishka of this inscription with

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[31] S. Konow, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, I, pp. 165 ff.

[32] Mathura Museum No. Q13: *JRAS*, 1910, p. 1311; *ASIAR*, 1910–11, pp. 40–48; *JUPHS*, XXIV, 1951, p. 136.

[33] Sanchi Museum No. A. 83; Marshall, *Monuments of Sanchi*, p. 386, Pl. 105c.

[34] Sanchi Museum No. A. 82; Marshall, *ibid.*, p. 385, Pl. 124b.

[35] *Mathura Inscriptions*, pp. 199–200; *EI*, XIX, p. 65–66.

Kanishka II; and thus he has narrowed down the co-rulership of Vasishka along with Huvishka to only a few years. Another scholar has tried to read the date 54 on another Mathura inscription bearing the name of Kanishka [36]. Being this date close to the Ara inscription, he thought that Kanishka of both the inscriptions were identical. Another scholar has read the date of this very inscription as 94 [37]. Since the period 34 to 94 for a ruler was a quite long one, he invented another Kanishka – Kanishka III as the co-ruler with Vāsudeva.

Conjoint rule of two rulers was quite prevalent amongst the Śaka rulers of Afghanistan. They placed the names of the two rulers on the two sides of their coins. Co-rulership is also suggested amongst the Kshatrapas of Western India. Both the rulers in this dynasty issued their coins simultaneously; but one of them always used a lower title. None of these two practices is noticed on the coins of the Kushāṇa family. Since there is no other evidence to testify any system of conjoint rule, the suggestion of the conjoint rule amongst the Kushāṇas is merely assumptive. The hollowness of this fanciful theory was amply demonstrated by van Lohuizen in her *Scythian Period* as early as 1949; yet surprisingly enough, scholars are still clinched to it and repeat it on and off.

During the reign of the Kushāṇa rulers, between the years 2 and 98 large number of stone images were carved out at Mathura. A number of them bear inscriptions and mention dates. On the basis of the dates on these Mathura sculptures, van Lohuizen tried to reconstruct the relative chronology of the Mathura School of Art and focussed attention to their stylistic characteristics. In course of her studies, several sculptures seemed to her anamolous from the artistic point. They showed elements which were much later than the dates mentioned on them. She clarified her point by referring to two Jain inscribed sculptures. One is dated in the 15th year of Kanishka and the other is dated in the year 86 in the reign of Vāsudeva. Both these sculptures refer in identical terms that they were erected at the instance of a Jain nun named Vasulā, who was the female disciple of another nun Sanghamikā. It is unconceivable that the same lady occupied the same exalted position for more than 71 years. So, van Lohuizen carefully examined the stylistic charateristics of these two sculptures and arrived at the conclusion that the sculpture dated in the year 15 of Kanishka was later. She then suggested that the dating of these sculptures after the year 100 was renewed with 1; and 100 was omitted as was the

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[36] *EI*, XXVI, pp. 293–297.

[37] B. N. Mukherjee, *The Kushana Genealogy*, pp. 71–72; D. C. Sircar, *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference*, XII, 1943–44, p. 521.

practice in the Laukika era of Kashmir. She suggested that in the date 15, the figure of 100 was missing; and maintained that Kanishka of the sculpture bearing the date 15 was different from Kanishka I, whose dates are known from the year 2 to 22. She found support for the existence of this Kanishka in the post-Vāsudeva period from coins. Then she isolated some other sculptures bearing the name of Kanishka ranging in date from 3 to 17 and attributed them to a later Kanishka, whom she called Kanishka III. This discovery was a great break through the Kushāṇa researches; but most unfortunate, it did not find due attention at the hands of the historians.

Recently another lady scholar, who basicly does not belong to the field of history and numismatics, has made a startling discovery in the iscriptions of the Kushāṇas to which no attention was ever paid earlier [38]. She has pointed out that all the inscriptions of Kanishka I, Huvishka and Vāsudeva upto the year 83 bear for them simply the title *Maharaja rajatiraja Devaputra* [39]; but from the year 84 an additional title *Shāhi* is added to these titles for Vāsudeva [40]. This additional title is also seen along with the usual titles for Kanishka on the sculptures that van Lohuizen has attributed to the post–Vāsudeva period on the basis of their artistic peculiarities [41]. In the Allahabad pillar inscription, the Kushāṇas that existed

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[38] Paper submitted by Sarojini Kulashreshtha to the Colloquium on the Later Kushanas, organised by the Oriental Numismatic Society at London in 1982. The paper is so far unpublished. But she has generously permitted me to use her findings in this paper freely.

[39] KANISHKA. Mat portrait sculpture, Mathura Museum No. 213, *ASIAR*, 1911–12, p. 122 ff.; *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, pp. 39–40. Sravasti Bodhisattva, Indian Museum: *EI*, XIII, p. 180; IX, p. 291. Inscription dated 10, British Museum, 1888, 7–15.53: *EI*, IX, pp. 239–241. HUVISHKA. Chaubara Buddhist Image, Lucknow Musem No. B. 2: *IA*, VI, p. 217; XXXIII, p. 39. Kankali Tila Jain image, Lucknow Museum: *EI*, II, p. 206; *JRAS*, 1903, p. 262. Lakhanu Bodhisattva, Mathura Museum No. A63: *JUPHS*, XXI, 1948, p. 47. Kankali Tila Elephant Capital: Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, II, p. 32; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 40. Mat Portrait Pedestal, Mathura Museum No. 215A: *JRAS*, 1929, p. 401; *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, p. 132. Buddhist Image, Bombay University: *JBBRAS*, XX, p. 289. Buddhist Image dated 50, Mathura Museum No. B79: *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, p. 3. Jamalpur Buddhist Image, Lucknow Museum No. B3: *JASB*, XLVIII, p. 130; *EI*, X, p. 12. Naroli Buddhist Pedestal, Mathura Museum No. 3622: *Siksha*, April 1955, pp. 136–137. Kankali Tila Jain Image, Lucknow Museum No. J26: *EI*, I, p. 381; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 105. VASUDEVA. Jamalpur Stone Slab dated 74, Indian Museum: *EI*, I, p. 373; IX, p. 241; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 106.

[40] Balbhadra Kund Jain Image dated 84, Mathura Museum No. B4: *JUPHS*, XXIII, 1950, p. 6. Kankali Tila Jain image dated 87: Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, III, p. 35; *IA* XXXIII, p. 108.

[41] Kankali Tila Jain Image dated year 7, Lucknow Museum No. J6: *EI*, I, p. 391. Nagaraja Relief dated year 8, Mathura Museum No. 211: *EI*, XVII, p. 10; *JUPHS*,

at that time are called *Daivaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi* [42]. Here also exists the additional title *Shāhi*. These inscriptions clearly indicate that an additional title *Shāhi* was added to the usual title *Mahārāja rajatirāja devaputra* for the Kushāṇas in the later part of Vāsudeva; and since then it became an integral part of the titles of the post-Vāsudeva rulers. The Kushāṇas were now recognised well by these titles by the time of Samudragupta.

In effect, this discovery brings out the historical fact that no inscription that has the additional title *Shāhi* for any Kushana ruler, along with the usual titles, would or could be, in any way, earlier than the time of Vāsudeva. And this would ultimately mean that the Īsāpur *Yūpa* inscription and the Sanchi Buddhist Pedestal inscription, which bear the titles *Mahārāja rajatirāja Devaputra Shāhi* for Vasishka, do not belong to the period of Kanishka I or Huvishka and are of the post-Vāsudeva period and they are dated in the second Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era with 100 missing, to which van Lohuizen had drawn our attention. The existence of Vasishka in the pre-Kushāṇa era thus vanishes like vapour in the air and the theory of conjoint rule crumbles into pieces. With this realization, Vajheshka of the Ara inscription would also be this Vasishka and the date 41 as reckoned in the second Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era. At that time existed his son Kanishka.

Vāsudeva – More than One

Now we come back to chronology. That Huvishka III was succeeded by Vāsudeva is clear from the Garhwal and Meerut district hoards (discussed above). The Mathura inscriptions also testify the same. The latest inscription bearing the name of Huvishka is dated 60 [43] and the earliest of Vāsudeva is dated 64 or 67 [44]. The iscriptions of the latter extend the date for him upto the year 98 [45]. But as has been pointed out earlier, his inscriptions belonging to the period before the year 83 have for him only the

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XXIII, 1950, p. 103. Kankali Tila Jain Image dated 17, Mathura Museum No. 3383: Unpublished.

[42] Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, IV, p. 14, L. 8.

[43] Kankali Tila Jain Image, Lucknow Museum J. 26: *EI*, I, p. 386; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 105.

[44] Buddhist Pedestal Inscription, Mathura Museum No. 2907: *EI*, XXX, pp. 181-184.

[45] Kankali Tila Jain Image: Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, III, p. 35; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 108.

titles *Mahārāja rajatirāja Devaputra*; and those that belong to the period later than 83 bear an additional title *Shāhi* for him. This distinctive appellation suggests the possibility of there being two rulers of the same name, who ruled one after the other.

This possibility gets support from the coins bearing the name Vāsudeva. They are distinguishable into two distinct types: (i) similar in fabric and contents as the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka. They display the type – standing king at altar on the obverse and Śiva standing in front of *nandi* (bull) on the reverse (Plate IV, 13). These coins are well struck and neatly engraved. (ii) Similar to type (i) but a little different in style with an additional feature of trident–standard placed on the obverse in the left field (Plate IV, 14). The introduction of this feature would not have been meaningless. So, on the basis of these two distinct types, Bachhofer had long back isolated two Vāsudevas, existing successively one after the other [46].

The use of the title *Shāhi* in inscriptions and the introduction of trident–standard in the field on the coins, are two such distinctive features that, taken together, leave no doubt that there were two Vāsudevas – Vāsudeva I, whose inscriptions are known upto the year 83 without the *Shāhi* epithet for the ruler and who issued coins without the trident in the field; Vāsudeva II was he, who issued coins with trident–standard in the field and the inscriptions of his period had the title *Shāhi* for him. This Vāsudeva II existed from the year 84 to the year 98 (Kanishka or Kushāṇa era).

There is another type of coins bearing the name Vāsudeva. They are similar to the coins of Vāsudeva II in their motifs and contents; but are quite distinct from them in their fabric and execution. These coins are broad and thin and scyphate in their module. Moreover they have a *nandipada* symbol on the obverse in the right field (Plate IV, 15). The use of the *nandipada* symbol here is a revival of the use, which is seen earlier for the last time on the coins of Wima Kadphises. On the reverse the deity *Oesho* (Śiva) has a lunar crescent at his forehead and frequently a halo. The legend of the obverse is frequently found blundered and the letters have begun to loose their legibility. The distinction between the letters A and O, E and N seems to be disappearing. These coins appear to be local, as they have mostly been found in Badakhshan, the region north of Hindu Kush and Seistan. Only a few coins are known from the Kabul region and Gandhara. Whether these coins were issued by Vāsudeva II himself for the western part (west of Gandhara) of his kingdom or his coins were imitated by someone else, needs probe, but it is not the subject of this paper. However, it may be added that similar

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[46] *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LVI, 1936, pp. 429–439.

coins were issued by the Sassanian governors, when they occupied this territory and called themselves *Kushānashāh*.

There is also a fourth type bearing the name Vāsudeva. They are in continuation, in respect of their fabric, to the coins of Vāsudeva II and have like them the trident-standard on the obverse in the left field; yet they are quite distinct from them. On them two new innovations are perceptible. Here the circular legend begins at 1 o'clock while on the other coins it has its beginning from the time of Kanishka I at 7 o'clock. The second peculiarity here is the presence of a Brāhmī letter on the obverse in the right field and on the reverse close to the name of the deity (Plate IV, 16). These peculiarities suggest the possibility of the existence of a third Vāsudeva within this period.

Post-Vāsudeva Kushāṇa Rulers

The territories west of Gandhara were lost to the Sassanids, most likely, only in the time of Vāsudeva II; but the eastern Kushana dominion, particularly the Yamuno-Gangetic region, was not affected in any way. It remained with them till the advent of the Gupta kings there. Of this period, the earliest are the three rulers, who are known from the inscriptions found on the Mathura sculptures, that are stylistically later and suggest their dates as reckoned in the second Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era:

Kanishka II year 5 [47] to 17 [48]
Vasishka year 22 [49] to 28 [50]
Kanishka III year 3x or 32 [51] to 41 [52]

The existence of these three rulers is also attested from coins. Certain coins of the type of Vāsudeva II, having the standing king at the altar and a trident-standard in the left field on the obverse and Śiva with bull on the reverse, bear the circular inscription SHAO NANO SHAO KANESHKO KOSHANO (Plate IV, 17). Here it is notable that the name of the king is spelt as *Kaneshko* and not *Kaneshki*, which is used on the

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[47] Kankali Tila Jain Image, Lucknow Museum No. J3: *EI*, II, p. 201; *IA*, XXXIII, p. 264.

[48] Kankali Tila Jain Image, Mathura Museum No. 3385: Unpublished.

[49] Sanchi Buddhist Pedestal, Sanchi Museum No. A83: Marshall, *Monuments of Sanchi*, p. 356.

[50] Sanchi Buddhist image, Sanchi Museum No. A82: Marshall, *ibid.*, p. 385.

[51] B. N. Mukherjee, *The Kushana Genealogy*, pp. 77–78.

[52] Ara Inscription: *CII*, I, p. 165.

coins of Kanishka I. Besides this distinction, these coins are very close to the coins, tentatively attributed here to Vāsudeva III. Like those coins, the circular legend here too begins at 1 and also have the single Brahmi letter on the obverse and reverse. The issuer of these coins may well be taken as the successor of Vāsudeva III, if he existed, otherwise of Vāsudeva II. He may now be called Kanishka II, as there is no more hypothetical Kanishka II, who was so far being placed in the period of Huvishka.

The coins of Vasishka have come to our knowledge only a few years back. They have been isolated by Göbl from amongst the coins that were so far been attributed to Vāsudeva. That who was taken to be *Bozadeo* proved actually to be *Bazeshko*. He noticed one such coin in the Peshawar Museum, another in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and two others in the British Museum, London [53]. But on all of them, the word *Bazeshko* is truncated. The name *Bazeshko*, in its full form and clear, is seen on a coin found in a hoard discovered in Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh: it is now deposited in the Lucknow Museum. Like the other coins, this coin too was originally attributed to Vāsudeva [54]. Later, B. M. Mukherjee drew attention to its correct identification [55]. These coins are very close to the coins of Kanishka II in their fabric and execution; and the obverse circular legend similarly begins on them at 1 o'clock. But on the reverse the motif is entirely different. Here is seen the goddess Ardoksho seated on a high backed throne holding a cornucopia in the left hand and a *pasa* (noose) in the right hand (Plate IV, 18). Ardoksho is a well known deity on the coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka; but there she is seen invariably standing to right or left. In the present form, she is unknown on any earlier coin. Ardoksho seated on throne appears to have been introduced first only on these coins of Vasishka; and from now onwards it is constantly seen on the coins of his successors. From them the Gupta kings borrowed this motif for their early coins. Vasishka of these coins may conveniently be identified with Vasishka of Īsāpur *yūpa* and Sanchi pedestal inscriptions, where his name is associated with the title *Shāhi* along with the usual titles of the early Kushāṇas. He may also be identified with Vajheshka of the Ara inscription.

With the identification of Vajheshka with Vasishka, it is naturally evident that his son Kanishka, whose date is known as 41, would be Kanishka III; and to him may be attributed all those Mathura inscriptions that are dated in the fourth decade of the Second Kanishka (Kushāṇa)

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[53] *Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranische Hunnen in Baktrien und Indien*, Vol. II, pp. 308; 312–13.

[54] *Bulletin of Museums & Archaeology in U. P.*, No. 4, Dec. 1969, p. 28, fig. 12.

[55] *JNSI*, XXXIV, pp. 31 ff.

era. He issued his coins on the pattern of the coins of his father Vasishka, showing on the obverse the king at the altar, trident-standard on the left field and the circular legend beginning at 1 and on the reverse, the seated Ardoksho (Plate V, 19).

Then there is a series of coins, which are close to the coins of Kanishka III. They have Ardoksho on the reverse seated on high backed throne; and on the obverse they retain the costume system of Kanishka III. But they are well distinguishable from the coins of Kanishka III. They have more exaggerated curve of hem of the tunic and a cruder and more conventionalised type of king effigy. The bun of the hair of Kanishka III is absent on these coins. The circular legend on most of these coins is found missing. If it is ever noticed, it is found very much truncated to the extent of illegibility. In some rare cases, the first part of the legend may be made out as *Shao Nano Shao*; and that too very much blundered. Scholars have conjectured that the tail part of the legend of these coins would have been *Kaneshko* (or *Bazodeo*) *Koshano*. But it is difficult to subscribe to these conjectures. The most striking feature, which goes so far unnoticed, is that the circular legend on the obverse does not begin either at 7 o'clock, as was the case with the coins upto the time of Vāsudeva II, or at 1 o'clock, that is noticed on the coins of Vāsudeva III and his successors Kanishka II, Vasishka and Kanishka III. Here the legend begins near about 11 o'clock and runs anti-clockwise. It may be read only from outside. On these coins a word in Brāhmī letters is found under the left arm of the king. This word, so far noticed is *Vasu* on most coins (Plate V, 20); on some it is *Chhara* (Plate V, 21) and only in a few *Maśra* (Plate V, 22). This very peculiarity is also noticed on the Gupta gold coins, which are of a little later period. There too exists a word or a letter under the left arm of the king. Most likely the Guptas had borrowed this idea from these very Kushāṇa coins, when they adopted the entire pattern of the later Kushāṇa coins for their early coinage. On the Gupta coins this word or letter may easily be identified as representing the initial part of the name of the king, who issued them. In the light of the Gupta coins, it may be well surmised that the words on the Kushāṇa coins too were the initials of the Kushāṇa rulers, who issued them. These coins thus disclose that there existed at least three other Kushāṇa kings after Kanishka III, about whom the other sources are silent. The coins indicate that Maśra was the last amongst them; we are not sure of the order of succession of the other two Vasu and Chhara.

On the coins having the name Vasu, some scholars have tried to see the name *Bazdeo* in the circular legend; and they attribute the coins to Vāsudeva, whom they identify as Vāsudeva II or III. These scholars have failed to realise that there is no medial sign for *ā* over *va* in the Brahmi

inscription to take it as any initial part of the name Vāsudeva. If *deva* was suffixed to it, it would only be Vasudeva and not Vāsudeva. Any Indian layman knows well that the names Vasudeva and Vāsudeva do not mean the same. The two names represent two different personalities. Vasudeva was the name of the father of Kṛishṇa; and Kṛishṇa was called Vāsudeva after the name of his father. Had the coins been issued by any Vāsudeva, the die-engraver would have not ignored the medial sign for *ā* over the letter *va*. So, these coins cannot be attributed to any Vāsudeva, inspite of the spelling BAZDEO (if it exists at all) in the circular Graeco-Bactrian script. In this script there was nothing to differentiate *va* from *vā*. As such this coin belongs to one whose name began with *Vasu*; the full name might be anything like Vasudeva, Vasumitra, Vasusena or it might be complete in itself.

The coins bearing the name Maśra are quite new to the scholars of Kushāṇa history and numismatics. They have come to light only recently with the discovery of the Jhunjhunu hoard of Later Kushāṇa gold coins [56]. Besides the coin found in this hoard, I have located two other specimens; one is in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, the Art and Archaeology Museum of the Banaras Hindu University and the other in the State Museum, Lucknow. Both of them are still unpublished. These coins are exclusively distinct from all the Kushāṇa coins so far mentioned. Here a *chakra* (wheel)-topped standard is noticed in the left hand of the king in place of the usual trident-standard (Plate V, 21). *Chakra*-topped standard in the hand of the Kushāṇa king reminds us of the well-known *Chakradhvaja* type coins of Kāchagupta of the Gupta dynasty (Plate V, 23). There too, the king holds a *chakra* (wheel)-topped standard in his left hand in the same way as we notice of these coins. This striking similarity between the coins of two rulers, belonging to two different dynasties, unmistakenly indicate that the two rulers existed quite close to each other; and Kāchagupta borrowed this standard from the coins of Maśra. This would ultimately mean to the history that Maśra was perhaps the last Kushāṇa ruler, who existed quite close in time to Kāchagupta, who was an early ruler of the Gupta dynasty.

Decline of the Kushāṇas

The decline of the Kushāṇas in the Yamuno-Gangetic region is vaguely suggested at the hands of the Yaudheyas or the Nāgas [57]. But

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[56] *Numismatic Digest*, vol. V, p. 34.

[57] Altekar & Majumdar, *Gupta-Vakataka Age*, pp. 28, 37-38.

hardly any vestiges of the Yaudheyas are known in this area. No Yaudheya coin has so far been found here. Nāga coins are known only a few, scattered here and there; they afford no evidence of their existence in this region. In any case, there had been a great vacuum of more than a century in the history of this region between the decline of the Kushāṇas and the rise of the Guptas. Historians have skipped over this period; no attempt has so far been made on their part either to explain this vacuum or to fill up this gap.

Keeping in view all that is discussed above, the study of the finds of coin–hoards in this region throws an illuminating light over this part of the neglected history. A close scrutiny of the hoard–finds reveals that they are distinguishable into two clear groups. One group of the finds are known from all parts of the eastern Kushāṇa dominion. They include the coins only of the earlier Kushāṇa rulers – Wima Kadphises, Kanishka I and Huvishka II and III. In most of them, the coins of Vāsudeva are found absent; only in a few cases, his coins are known in them. The other group of finds have exclusively the coins of Vāsudeva and his successors. In a few rare cases, the coins of Huvishka are seen with them. The finds of the latter group are mostly confined to Mathura and its surroundings. These finds indicate that by the time of Vāsudeva, the eastern part of the Kushāṇa empire had considerably shrank; but they continued their hold in Mathura and its surroundings from the time of Vāsudeva till the rise of the Guptas. They were never wiped out at any time earlier, as is generally believed.

A big hoard of 86 gold coins was discovered as early as 1915 in the village Mithathal in the district of Hisar (Haryana State). The coins were kept in an earthen vessel, which was found while ploughing a field. Of them 26 were melted before the Government machinery could get hold of the find under the Treasure Trove Laws. Only 60 came into the hands of the officials. Of these 35 coins related to Samudragupta (according to the identification of that time; actually only 29 related to Samudragupta and 4 belonged to Kāchagupta). The remaining 27 were identified as the issues of the Later Kushāṇas [58]. The only other information regarding this hoard, that was available till recently, was that it included a coin of Battle–axe Type of Samudragupta of a rare variety, showing him facing right. This rare coin was published in an exclusive note [59]. Later it found mention by Altekar [60]. Recently, while going through the *Annual Reports* of the Central Museum, Lahore, I came to know from the *Report*

[58] *ASIAR*, 1915–16, p. 19.

[59] *Ibid.*, 1916–17, pp. 233–34.

[60] *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 309.

for the year 1915–16 that the hoard was examined by R. B. Whitehead and he prepared a brief note on it. According to his note, some notable coins in the hoard were: (a) a very fine piece of Samudragupta's Battle-axe Type, belonging to a variety of which only one specimen was previously known (the same coin, which finds mention in the note referred to above); (b) a coin of Samudragupta of *Aśvamedha* type; and (c) four coins of Kācha. Whitehead did not say anything about the other coins of Samudragupta and the coins that he identified as the coins of the Later Kushāṇas. The Museum's *Report* for the subsequent year, i.e. 1916–17, disclosed that 20 coins of the said hoard were acquired by the Museum. Amongst the 20 coins acquired by the Lahore Museum, 11 belonged to the Guptas and the other 9 were those that were attributed to the Later Kushāṇas. Of these, 7 coins of Samudragupta and all the 9 coins attributed to the Later Kushāṇas are illustrated on two plates in the *Report* but without any description or detail. However, the plates help in knowing the coins acquired by the Museum. The illustrations of the nine coins, attributed to the Later Kushāṇas in the Museum's *Report* disclose that the hoard included the coins of Vāsudeva II, Kanishka II and III, Vasu and Chhara. Along with them were also the coins of Shāka. In the obverse and reverse motifs, the Shāka coins are very much the same as the coins of Kanishka III showing Ardoksho on the reverse; but the circular Graeco-Bactrian legend is replaced by cursive Kushano-Bactrian script, similar to that, which is seen on the Kushano-Sassanian coins. It apparently looks like the repetition of 0000; and for this reason, it has been declared by Cunningham as illegible [61]. Here on these coins, on the obverse, outside the trident-standard held by the king is found the word *Shāka*, which is considered to be a tribal name. In the central field, i.e. below the arm of the king is the name like *Sita*. The coins of Shāka, along with the coins of the Guptas, are known, besides the Mithathal hoard, in two other small hoards discovered in Uttar Pradesh [62]. They show that the Shākas were contemporary to the Guptas and were existing somewhere on the borders of the Gupta empire, most likely in Haryana and Punjab. To my mind these Shākas are the same that are mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar inscription along with the Kushāṇas (*Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi*) as *Shaka-muruṇḍa*.

Another hoard of gold coins of the Later Kushāṇas was discovered in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan in 1973. The exact content of this hoard is not known; but it included the coins of all the rulers represented

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[61] *Later Indo Scythians*, repr. 1962, p. 28.

[62] A. K. Srivastava, *Coin-hoards of Uttar Pradesh*, Entries 7 and 1130.

in the Mithathal hoard along with the coins of Shāka. It also brought to light an unknown Later Kushāṇa king called Maśra. This hoard had no coins of the Guptas; but as had already been pointed out earlier, the coin of Maśra is very close to the coins of Kāchagupta of the Gupta dynasty.

The Mithathal and Jhunjhunu hoards, taken together, make it amply clear that the Later Kushāṇa rulers were closely linked with the Guptas and there was no hiatus at any time in the history of Mathura and its surroundings between the rule of the Kushāṇas and the Guptas. The hoards have the coins of Vāsudeva at one end, of Samudragupta and Kāchagupta at the other. In between there was an unbroken chain of seven or eight rulers – Vāsudeva II (and Vāsudeva III), Kanishka II, Vasishka, Kanishka III, Vasu, Chhara andMaśra.

The Epoch of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) Era

The above findings, based on coins and inscriptions, present a new shape to the history of the Kushāṇas. This also provides an occasion to look afresh into the vexed problem of the beginning of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era.

The most common belief from the very beginning of the studies of the Kushāṇa history, had been that Kanishka was the founder of the Śaka era of A. D. 78. This era was used earliest by the Kshatrapas of Western India from the second through the fourth century A. D. But the earliest epigraphic records, where the name of the era itself is used, are the inscriptions of the Chalukyas found round about Badami. This era had been popular only in South India. In North India, its use in the inscriptions is rare; and those that are there, are very late. As such, there is no cogent reason to associate this era with a dynasty, which reigned only in North India. Moreover, the Kushāṇas by their race, were never Śakas, which could have been the one reason to associate Kanishka with this era. Had the Kushāṇas any kind of hegemony over the Western Kshatrapas, that could also have been a reason to associate Kanishka with the era. But we have no evidence to this effect too. In absence of any of these reasons, the only argument that is always placed to associate the era of A. D. 78 with the Kushāṇas is that Kanishka was the only foreign ruler, who is known to have actually begun an era. Whatever arguments are placed in favour of this date, the basic fact is always ignored that this date leaves a big gap of more than one and a half centuries between the Kushāṇas and the Guptas in the Yamuno–Gangetic region; and this gap remains unaccounted. This was certainly not the period of any anarchy; and it is unimaginable

that there was no administrative authority during this period. Apart from the political vacuum, this date creates problem with the palaeographists and the art connoisseurs also. The palaeographists do not see any considerable distinction between the Brāhmī letters of the inscriptions of the Later Kushāṇa and the Early Gupta periods. The same is the case with the sculptures of Mathura of this period. Sculptures, relating to the period of both the dynasties have been found together at Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathura town. These sculptures of the two periods have many common stylistic features, that put them side by side. In the cases of palaeography and art, both, it is unthinkable that they remained inactive for more than a century and there was no development, particularly when we find the sign of activities in both the fields in the Early Kushāṇa as well as in the late Gupta periods. The closeness between the late Kushāṇa and early Gupta palaeography and art, makes it almost certain that there was not any considerable gap of time between the Kushāṇas and the Guptas. This fact should be enough to counter all the arguments that might be placed in favour of A. D. 78 as the beginning of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era.

In recent years, some scholars have sensed the absurdity in the theory of A. D. 78 as the epoch of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era. They have suggested some new dates for it in the second century A. D. A. D. 128 is suggested by Sten Konow [63] and W. K. van Wijk [64] for it. Roman Ghirshman has theorised that Kanishka acceded to power in about A. D. 144 [65]. A. K. Narain [66] assigns the period of reign between 103 and 125 A. D. and John M. Rosenfield [67] thinks that Kanishka came to throne sometime between A. D. 110 and 115. Some of the arguments that these scholars have put forward in favour of their dates, do have merits and they deserve consideration; but they lead us nowhere. None of them have any firm peg, from which one could move forward or backward to arrive at the final solution.

Here we would like to fix our peg with A. D. 319, the date of the beginning of the Gupta era. This is a firm point from which we may move backward to fix the beginning of the reign of Kanishka. First, we should look to the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta, an earlier ruler of the Gupta dynasty. It bears a phrase *Daivaputra Shāhi Shāhānu-*

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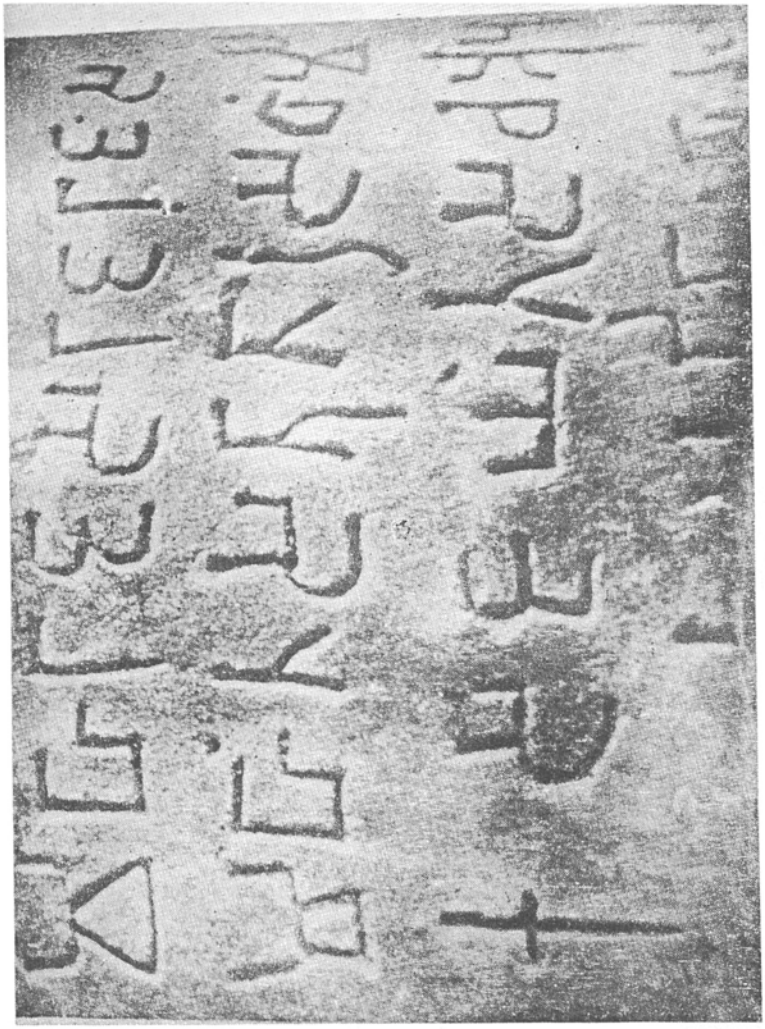
[63] *Acta Orientalia*, III, 1924, pp. 52–91.

[64] *Ibid.*, V, 1927, pp. 168–170.

[65] *JA*, 1943–45, pp. 59–71; *Begram*, Mémoires de la Delégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan, Vol. 12, Cairo, 1946; *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, III, 1957, pp. 689–721.

[66] *Papers on the Date of Kanishka*, p. 221.

[67] *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1967, pp. 257–58.



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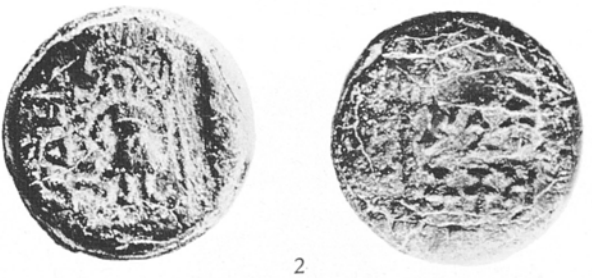

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2. Coin from Sonkh (obv. and rev.). – 3. Coin of Huvishka, elephant rider (only obv.) – 4. Coin of Huvishka, seated cross-legged (only obv.). – 5. Coin of Wima Kadphises, elephant rider (only obv.). – 6. Coin of Wima Kadphises, seated cross-legged (only obv.). – 7. Rev. of Huvishka's coin showing monogram. – 8. Rev. of Huvishka's coin showing monogram.

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9. Obv. of Huvishka's bust-type coin showing ankush in hand. – 10. Obv. of Huvishka's bust-type coin showing spear in hand. – 11. Obv. of Azes's coin showing king holding spear. – 12. Obv. of Azes's coin showing king holding whip. – 13. Obv. and rev. of Vāsudeva I's coin.

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14. Obv. and rev. of Vāsudeva's coin with trident in field. – 15. Scyphate coin of Vāsudeva (obv. and rev). – Fig. 16. Coin of Vāsudeva with letter in field (obv. and rev.). – 17. Coin of Kanishka II, Oesho type (obv. and rev.). – 18. Obv and rev. of a coin of Vasishka.

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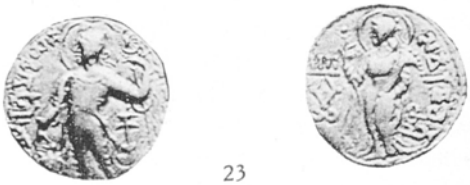

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19. Coin of Kanishka III with Ardoksho (rev.). – 20. Coin of Later Kushāṇa king Vasu (obv. and rev.). – 21. Coin of Later Kushāṇa king Chhara (obv. and rev.). – 22. Coin of Later Kushāṇa king Maśra (obv. and rev.). – 23. Coin of Gupta king Kāchagupta (obv. and rev.).

shāhi, in the context of a neighbouring friendly state. This phrase is exactly the same as the *Mahārāja rajatirāja Devaputra Shāhi*, that we find in the inscriptions of Vāsudeva II and his successors. This leaves no doubt that the phrase in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription meant the Later Kushāṇa contemporary ruler, who existed then at Mathura. The numismatic and the epigraphic evidences, taken together, make it clear that the Kushāṇas existed in the Mathura region as a friendly neighbour till the time of Samudragupta.

Next, we have an inscription of Chandragupta II at Mathura, which is dated in the Gupta year 61 and the regnal year 5 of the King. This is the earliest Gupta inscription at Mathura and thus it indicates, in unambiguous terms, the occupation of Mathura by the Guptas by A. D. 380.

From these two inscriptions, taken together, it may well be deduced that the termination of the Kushāṇa rule at Mathura would have taken place only a little earlier than A. D. 380, the date of Mathura inscription. It would not be much to the side of error, if it is presumed that it might have taken place in *circa* A. D. 370. This date would be a fixed point in the history of the Kushāṇas. If the beginning of the reign of Kanishka is worked out backward from this point, it would be much more near the accuracy than any of the suggestions that have so far been made.

The termination of the reign of Vāsudeva II in about the year 100 of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era is almost certain. During these 100 years existed five rulers – Kanishka I, Huvishka II and III and Vāsudeva I and II. This provides broadly a figure of twenty years as the reign period for each of these rulers. Relying on this average reign period, which is on the high side of the average reign period of the rulers of the Indian dynasties, if the reign period for the post–Vāsudeva II rulers is calculated, it would cover 120 years. This calculation would place the termination of the Kushāṇa rule in the east in *circa* 220 Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era. And this would be the same as *circa* A. D. 370, calculated earlier, based on the Gupta inscriptions. This would thus fix *circa* 150 the date for the beginning of the reign of Kanishka.

The date A. D. 150 is quite close to the date A. D. 144, that was proposed by me earlier at the Conference that was held in 1960 at London on the date of Kanishka [68]. On that occasion, I had based my conclusion on the basis of the study of the coinage of the local rulers of Northern India that existed in between the post–Mauryan and pre–Kushāṇa periods. This date was reviewed again by me some three years ago at the Conference on Mathura organised by the American Institute of Indian Studies at

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[68] *Papers on the Date of Kanishka*, pp. 119.

Delhi [69]. The basis was the same material but it was dealt here a little differently. The result was the same.

Both these dates A. D. 144 and 150, proposed by me, are by no means precise or absolute. Nevertheless they hold firm ground and are less hypothetical than any of the dates suggested earlier. If there is any error in these dates, it would be minimal. Moreover, the dates for the epoch of the Kanishka (Kushāṇa) era, suggested earlier, are not at any long distance from these dates. Most of the arguments, that have been adduced in favour of those dates might, if properly reassessed, fit well with the dates suggested here.

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[69] Proceedings under publication.