

Introduction

The term “history of the Kushans” implies that *kuṣāṇa* was used to define a dynasty. However, initially, it was just the title of its founder, Kujula Kadphises, derived from the particular and comparatively limited rule he exercised in a certain part of northern Bactria. A “lineage of the Kuṣāna(s)” is mentioned rarely, once in a Buddhist text, misspelled (*kuṣānavamśa*, § 090, note), and also at Māṇikiāla (CKI 149), where a general calls himself a “promoter of the Kushan lineage” (*guṣaṇavaśasaṃvardhaka*), around AD 245, in troubled times. The same lineage is presupposed for the “years of the Koṣānas passed” (*koṣāṇagatābda-*) spoken of in the *Yavanajātaka* (§ 095), again in the third century AD. On coinage, Kujula uses *kuṣaṇa*, *oṣaṇa*, *khoṣaṇa*, KOPCNO, XOPANCY (the half-circle in P not yet lowered to Ð) and variants, obviously in need of, and searching for, an adequate spelling. His son Vema Takhtu is called *kuṣāṇaputra* at Māt (§ 088) and *vhema kuśa* at Dasht-e Nawur (§ 090), while Vima Kadphises never uses the term, and from Kaniška onwards it regularly occurs indicating the land from where the founder hailed, accompanied by *PAONANO PAO*, “King of Kings”, to show that there were more regions under his sway than just the homeland.

In classical sources, *ουσαν* is found once (§ 062) in the *Periplus* in the first century AD, and *cusenos* (§ 127) once in the fourth. However, both cases can be disputed.

In contrast to the use of *kuṣāṇa* as a self-designation, the term *tocharoi* is common in Greek sources, while the Sanskrit texts use *tuṣāra*, *tukhāra* or, mistakenly, *туруşkaka* (§ 130). Kaniška calls the country Tokhwarstan in Bactrian language (p. 257, 261) where he retreats after his conquests in India. The Chinese chronicles use the characters *yuezhi* 月氏 to indicate the Kushan state. The ancient pronunciation of this term was something like /nguti/, a term which seems to derive from a people that shifted from the Middle East to the fringes of China long ago (§ 034).

In what follows it is assumed that the Yuezhi are genetically related to the *tocharoi*/*tukhāra*, and that the prehistory preserved by the Chinese chronicles continues into what is commonly called the Kushan era. In fact, the term Kushan is meant to encompass the Yuezhi and their offshoots in Bactria and India, and the Chinese, Bactrian and Indian terms are used to refer more specifically to them in their respective habitats.

The earliest known home of the Kushans so defined was in the Gansu Corridor at the eastern end of the Taklamakan desert, at the entrance to ‘China Proper’. Thanks to Chinese sources we can describe their movements over 3000 km from Ningxia and Gansu west to Bactria, north and south of the Amu Darya. With the opening of the trade routes as far as Bactria by the Chinese emperors, the Kushans were in a very favourable

position to guide and tax the caravans on their way further west or south. As a result they acquired great riches and installed themselves as rulers of an empire of their own, regulating commerce from the lands around the Pamir mountains across the Hindu Kush and along the Ganges almost to the Bay of Bengal.

Their story is an example of the rise and fall of many regions in antiquity through military and political success and failure. In addition, their influence on the art and religion of India cannot be underestimated. This influence arose from the incorporation of a number of cultural traits from the bordering empires, such as China, Iran and the not so distant Roman territories in Mesopotamia. As foreigners they were unhindered by Indian traditional values and habits and tried to link all parts of their dominion within a common culture under their guidance. The full picture needs the political background, which itself can be understood only through a comprehensive view which includes the literature. The latest attempt in this respect was by John Rosenfield in 1967, in an amazingly insightful work, which, however, demonstrates how much new material has come to light since its publication half a century ago.

This present collection of relevant texts is based on the common understanding that documents referring to the political history of the Kushans are written in a variety of languages, so many that no one scholar is likely to master all of them. Much of the competence needed is now under threat because many universities are abolishing studies in the languages concerned. At Berlin, with the closure of the sole remaining department of Indology at the Freie Universität, the study and research of documents held in Sanskrit at an academic level has ended in the whole of the German capital. The situation at other centres is not much different, in Germany as well as in other countries. The Japanese government even plans to eliminate all the Humanities in state-run universities. If this neglect of ancient languages and cultures continues to dominate the policies of our academic centres, in the not too distant future, there will be no scholars left to work on the original sources and to guide interested readers as to which sources are trustworthy, those which are not, and which alleged sources do not even exist. History writing will then become a matter of belief, “strong conviction”, guesswork and preconceived notions, in short, a caricature of science, regarded nonetheless as the peak of science once all participants in the unavoidable “discourse” have become caricatures of scientists.

Fortunately, this final stage has not yet been reached and so it was possible to invite a number of renowned specialists to a symposium in Berlin in December 2013, held at the Seminaris Hotel across the road from the once famous *Museum für Indische Kunst*, also an icon of the past, now merged for financial reasons with other departments to the *Museum für Asiatische Kunst*.

A series of lectures in the frame of a standard conference with topics left to the choice of the speakers would not have covered all points of relevance. To avoid duplication and omissions it occurred to me that a preliminary list of texts could be assembled in an order

following the chronology of the events dealt with and then these could be discussed in public with the specialists presiding on stage. Not knowing what awaited me, a first collection of texts was prepared over some months and sent to the specialists for corrections and further material requested. For the Chinese material which outweighs all other corpora by mass and importance, I had the help of my good friend Chris Dorn'cich, who had already prepared numerous collections of Chinese sources along with their translations in major European languages. YE Shaoyong, Beijing, then a guest scholar at the Freie Universität, provided indispensable help, later supplemented by meticulous notes from CHING Chao-jung. Further corrections and clarifications were furnished by YANG Jiuping along with comments and additional material. Texts from the Sogdian region were provided by Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, and Bactrian materials by Nicholas Sims-Williams. Recently discovered texts in Gāndhārī were assembled by Richard Salomon. Frantz Grenet and Étienne de la Vaissière looked after all texts around the Sogdian-Chinese interplay, the latter also provided references to Babylonian sources. Comments on various matters came from Craig Benjamin, Joe Cribb, Gérard Fussman, John Hill and Nakao ODANI.

To provide short-term relief from philological intricacies two lecturers were invited each day to present a survey of recent or ongoing research. These speakers were Gérard Fussman with his opening lecture on the spread of Buddhist monasteries from Gandhara to Uzbekistan, followed by papers from Pierre Leriche on Termez, Étienne de la Vaissière on a hitherto undocumented compound north of Bactra, Nakao ODANI on Tilya Tepe, Nicholas Sims-Williams on new Bactrian documents, CHAO Huashan on Chinese sources, Frantz Grenet on his model of Yabghu realms, and Jangar Ilyasov and Aleksey Gorin on archaeological projects in Uzbekistan.

The present publication consists of two parts. The first is the presentation of the source texts and their relevant passages pertinent to the political history of the Kushans in an attempted chronological order. It was thought to be advisable not to deal with the question of the "date of Kaniška". The majority of the participants were ready to work with a chronology based on the year AD 127 for the Kushan era year 1 under Kaniška I. To escape further discussions, which could have led us beyond the time at our disposal, all dates which depend on a start in AD 127 were prefixed with a "±" in the list of texts distributed. The same procedure is followed in all these proceedings. That means that it is necessary for the reader to add a certain number of years in case a personally preferred starting point lies later than AD 127, or to subtract the difference if starting to count earlier. The arrangement of the diverse texts with their differing chronological background has not suffered from this preference and in some cases it seems as if the model around AD 127 is even supported by the flow of events as they become apparent in this collection.

The purpose of the collection is, first, to provide a corpus of relevant texts on the political history of the Kushans in a chronological order, to introduce scholars new to the field to the wide range of material, and to help others to find further and relevant

literature outside their own special field. The notes show where there was dissent among the participants, but not all points of dissent are indicated this way. A certain degree of completeness was envisaged, but it soon became clear that an absolute coverage would require much more time, labour and expertise than was at my disposal. My lack of expertise in almost all languages outside the Indian ones is another shortcoming which cannot be overcome in a short time.

Neither the collection as a whole, nor the individual entries should be regarded as research, although it is hoped that they will facilitate research. There is one exception which concerns the number of “attacks” the Yuezhi had to bear before they ended up in Bactria. Some specialists see four to five (e.g. Thierry 2005: 449-452, Hill 2015,II: 121-132). Sorting the texts according to these earlier theories constantly produced contradictions regarding dates and places. In the present arrangement there are only three attacks, based on my own reasoning. This way the texts could be grouped, to my mind, in a logical way, but the re-arrangement also necessitated a reworked chronology for these events. Some other cases show that more research is desperately needed. If such research is taken up, the purpose of the symposium will have been fulfilled.

The number of attacks is one reason for the title *Kushan Histories*, in the plural, as there will always be dissent over the questions how, why, and when the Yuezhi moved westward. Since the sources disagree, every model may be based on some particular variants which are preferred over others for the reconstruction.

The second part of these proceedings includes five papers, the first of which was the opening lecture by G. Fussman (below pp. 153-202). Most of the other papers read reiterated earlier research; however, two papers dealt with material so far unpublished. One presented a military fortified camp north of Bactra, found and interpreted by É. de la Vaissière and his colleagues (pp. 241-254). An incense container in silver with the name and depiction of Vāsudeva was presented by N. Sims-Williams and will be published in a Memorial Volume dedicated to Werner Sundermann. In addition, the same speaker showed a silver plate from the time of Kanīška I, with an inscription recalling the one from Rabatak. This piece is presented here in paper no. 4 (pp. 255-264). F. Grenet offered an essay surveying the deities of the Kushans (pp. 203-229). Finally, reflections on the deity Nana come from my pen and are meant to supplement the overview of F. Grenet (pp. 265-299).

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My family deserves particular mention as the time around the conference was overshadowed by the dark sides of fate. And so this book is dedicated to the memory of Ada.