

Yuanchu period ran from 114-116 CE was first made by Sten Konow in his work of 1929, and was repeated by a number of writers. In fact, the Yuanchu period ran from 15th Dec., 114 CE to 16th Feb., 120 CE.” [Cf. Thierry 2005: 520, fn. 197. ed.]

Events in the time of Kaniṣka I

094 – Years AD ±129-±150: Dates for Kaniṣka I in inscriptions: 2-23

as *mahārāja kaniṣka*: years 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 16, [?]19, 20, 23 (SS #19, 13-14, Kimbell, 19, 28, Russek, 43, [?]Singapore, 52, 57)

as *mahārāja devaputra kaniṣka*: years 10, [?]20, (SS #35, [?]London)

as *maharaya rayatiraya devaputra kaniṣka*: year 20 (CKI 246)

as *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputra kaniṣka*: undated statue from Māt (cf. § 088).

Note ed.: To keep the references brief, the years given here and for the succeeding kings refer to the numbered editions in the most comprehensive collection of dated Brāhmī epigraphs so far, by Satya Shrava 1993 (“SS”). Misallocations and misreadings are numerous, but not relevant to our chronological overviews. Pieces not contained in SS are indicated by terms commonly used by epigraphists. CKI 246 is the only text written in Kharoṣṭhī script. A superscript question mark refers to inscribed pieces of art with debated authenticity.

095 – Year AD ±127: Year 1 of a Kuṣāṇa century

Yavanaajātaka 79,15; Falk 2001: 126, 127:

*gatena sādhyardhaśatena yuktyā vyekena koṣāṇagatābdasaṃkhyā
kālaḥ śakānāṃ pariśodhya tasmad atītam anyadyugavarsayātaṃ.*

“The elapsed years of the Kuṣāṇas in combination with 149 (change into) the time of the Śakas.

Subtracting from this (Śaka time [plus 56]) the elapsed (*yuga*, i.e. 165 years) (produces) the elapsed years of the second *yuga*.”

Note ed.: The text was arbitrarily altered by Pingree (1978) for his edition which resulted in a nonsensical formula. The text as given here follows the single old manuscript seen by Pingree and is supported by the readings relegated by Pingree into the critical apparatus. Only the first line is important for defining the starting point. For the intricacies of the second line, dealing with the particular system of the *yuga*, cf. Falk 2001. In contrast to the published reconstruction I now see a compound starting with *anyad*^o, related to the “elapsed” (*atītam*) number of years. The meaning is not affected. The first line produces a year AD 227 for year 1 of the Kuṣāṇas. I combined this with the “dropped hundred theory”, not first but most thoroughly justified by Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw in 1949, and the result is AD 127. The paper Falk 2004 shows that year numbers based on a start in AD 127 or 227 with omitted hundreds were kept in use in Mathura even after AD 327 and 427.

The era is not only important because of its starting point, but also as it shows the determination to become independent from earlier rulers and their time-keeping systems.

096 – Year AD ±128: Rabatak – Dynastic succession and conquests documented

Content: This inscription provided for the first time a clear list of ancestors of Kanishka, all treated on a par as rulers, with Vima Takhtu in a place which earlier was allotted to Sōtēr megas. It shows a number of deities venerated by the ruling family. The best topographical map is found in Besenval, Bernard & Jarrige 2002: 1419. Cf. also Sims-Williams in Sims-Williams & Cribb 1995/96: 77-81; Sims-Williams 2012: 77f.

Rabatak Bactrian inscription, Sims-Williams 2008: 55-57:

1: [•••] αγ•ο••••βο βωγο στοργο κανηβκε ι κοβρανο
(...) the great salvation, Kanishka the Kushan,

ραβτρογο λαδειγο χοαζαιοαργο βαχ[ο]
the righteous, the just, the autocrat, the god

2: [η]ζνογο κιδι ασο νανα
worthy of worship, who has obtained the kingship from Nana

οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο ι βαοδανι αβορδο κιδι ιωγο χβονο
and from all the gods, who has inaugurated the year one

3: νοβαστο σαγωνδι βαγανο σινδαδο οτηια
as the gods pleased. And he

ι ιωναγγο οασο οζοαστο ταδηια αριαο ωσ-
*issued a Greek *edict (and) then he put it into Aryan.

4: ταδο αβο ιωγο χβονο αβο ι υγδο φροαγδαζο
In the year one there was *proclaimed to India,

αβο βατριαγγε βαορε αγιτα ι [•••]-
to the cities of the *ksatriyas/*ksatrapas, the *capture (of)

5: αδραγο οδο ι ωζοπο οδ(ο) ι σαγηδο οδο ι
. . . , and . . . , and Sāketa, and

κωζαμβο οδο ι παλαβοτρο οιδρα αδα αβο ι ζιριτ[ι]-
Kauśāmbī, and Pāṭaliputra, as far as Śrī-Campā;

6: αμβο σιδηιανο προβδο οδο μανδαρσι [•]αορανο
whatever (cities) he and the other *generals *reached,

αβο ι σινδο ωσταδο οτη[ι]α αρουχ[ο]
(he) submitted (them) to (his) will, and he submitted all

7: ι υνδο α(β)ο ι σινδο ωσταδο ταδι βαι κληηβκε
India to (his) will. Then King Kanishka

αβο βαφαρο καραλραγγο φρομαδο
ordered Shafar the lord of the marches

8: αβεινα οιαγο βαγολαγγο κηρδι σιδι
to make in this place the temple which

βαγεαβο ριζδι αβο μα κασιγε ραγα φαρειμοανο β-
called Bage-ab, in the Kasig plains, for these gods

9: αγαγο κιδι μαρο κηρδι ανδιμαγι (ο)φαρρο
who have come hither into the presence of the glorious

ομμα ορηλδι ια αμγα νανα οδο ια αμ-
Umma, *that (is), the above-mentioned Nana and the

10: γα ομμα αορομοζδο μοζδοανο
above-mentioned Umma, Aurmuzd, Muzhduwan,

σροβαρδο ζ(κ)ιδι υγδοοαο μαασηνο ριζδι
Sroshard—who in Indian is called Mahāsena

οδο βιζαγο ριζδι ναρασαο μιρο οτηια ουδοα-
is called Visākha—Narasa, (and) Mihir. And he

11: νο πιδηγρβο φρομαδο κηρδ[ι] εμμοανο
gave orders to make images of the same, (namely) of these

βαγανο κιδι μασκα νιβιχιγενδι οτ-
gods who are inscribed hereupon, and

12: ηια φρομαδο αβειμοανο βαοναγο κηρδι
he gave orders to make (images of) these kings:

αβο κοζουλο καδφισο βαο αβο ι φρ-
King Kujula Kadphises (his) great

13: ονιαγ(ο ο)δο αβο ορημο τακτοο βαο αβ(ο) ι
grandfather, and King Vima Taktu (his)

νιαγο οδο αβο ορημο καδφισε βαο αβο
grandfather, and King Vima Kadphises

14: (ι) πιδα οδο αβο ι χοβισαρο κληηβκε βαο
(his) father, and himself, King Kanishka.

τασαγωνδι βαονανο βαο ι βαγεποο-
Then, as the king of kings, the son of the gods

097 – Year AD ±129: Kaniṣka sends ambassadors to Hadrian

Content: Early in his reign, Kaniṣka may have sought contact with Hadrian, his contemporary in Rome.

Historia Augusta, speaking of Emperor Hadrian (r. AD 117-138); Magie p. 66, transl. p. 67:

Reges Bactrianorum legatos ad eum, amicitiae petendae causa, supplices miserunt.

“The kings of the Bactrians sent envoys to him to beg humbly for his friendship.”

Note Grenet: According to Birley (1997: 225), this episode took place in northern Syria in AD 129. If this is true, the year is surely relevant, as Birley did not fail to notice: “This may refer to the great Kushan ruler Kanishka, whose reign in the distant Oxus region had just begun (according to a still disputed chronology).”

098 – Years between AD ±127 and ±136: Kaniṣka attacks western Xinjiang

Content: Kaniṣka subdues some of the city states in Xinjiang.

Xuanzang *Datang Xiyuji* 《大唐西域記》卷1, CBETA T51, no. 2087: 873, c24-26; Beal 1884, I: 56f., Zürcher 1968: 376:

聞諸先志曰：昔健馱邏國迦膩色迦王威被隣國，化洽遠方，治兵廣地，至葱嶺東，河西蕃維畏威送質。

“From the earlier memoirs I have learned that anciently King Chia-ni-se-chia 迦膩色迦 (Kaniṣka) of the country of Ch’ien-t’o-lo 健馱邏 (Gandhāra), whose majesty spread over the neighbouring kingdoms and whose transforming (influence) penetrated the far-away regions, led his troops to enlarge his territory (even) to the east of the Ts’ung-ling (Pamirs). (The rulers of) the frontier tribes in the region ‘West of the (Yellow) River’ (Ho-hsi) stood in awe of him and sent (their sons as) hostages to him.”

099 – Year AD 130: Kaniṣka invades Sāketa

Contents: The kings of Khotan and Kucha assisted Kaniṣka in the conquest of Sāketa. This was possible when after the Yangjia period (AD 132-136) the Chinese hold on the cities in Xinjiang slackened. Under emperor Huan (AD 147-167) Khotan was little afraid of the Chinese (Hill 2009+2015, I: 19).

• *Li yul lun-bstan-pa*, “History of the Buddhist kings and queens of Khotan”, C.D. 182 a 1; Tibetan translation from original Khotanese. Petech 1968: 244, Hill 2009: 370+2015, I: 381, Emmerick 1967: 46f.:

དེནས་དེའི་འོག་ཏུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་བོ་ཇ་ཡ་གྲུ་རྟིས་(...)སུ་ཉེའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་བརྟེན་ཏེ།

ཐོག་མ་ཀ་ནི་ཀའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་། བུ་ཟན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་།

ལི་རྩེ་རྒྱལ་པོ་བོ་ཇ་ཡ་ཀུརླི་ལ་སོགས་པས་རྒྱ་གར་ཡུལ་དུ་དམག་དངས་ནས་སོ་གཏེན་ཅེས་བགྲི་བའི་གོང་ཁྲེར་ཕབ་པའི་ཚེ།

རྒྱལ་པོ་བོ་ཇ་ཡ་ཀུརླིས་ཤ་རི་རམ་མང་པོ་ཞིག་རྟེན་པ་ཡང་སུ་ཉོའི་མཚོན་རྟེན་དེའི་ནང་དུ་སྦྱུལ།

“Afterwards King Vijaya Kīrti (...) built the *vihāra* of Sru-ño.

Originally, King Kanika and the king of Gu-zan [= Kucha ed.] and the Li [= Khotan ed.] ruler, King Vijaya Kīrti, and others led an army into India, and when they captured the city called So-ked, king Vijaya Kīrti obtained many relics and put them in the *stūpa* of Sru-ño.”

Note ed.: The Tibetan term So-ked shows that Shaqi 沙奇 in HHS (below) can be taken to refer to the sack of Sāketa/Ayodhyā with confidence. The literature is quoted extensively in Hill 2015,I: 380-382, § 16.2 on Shaqi.

• HHS 88/118.10b (2922), 《後漢書·列傳·西域傳·35》; Chavannes 1905b: 551, fn. 1, 1907: 194; Thierry 2005: 524, texte 36, Hill 2009+2015,I: 33, Zürcher 1968: 368:

東離國居沙奇城，

在天竺東南三千餘里，大國也。其土氣、物類與天竺同。列城數十，皆稱王。

大月氏伐之，遂臣服焉。男女皆長八尺，而怯弱。

乘象、駱駝，往來鄰國。

有寇、乘象以戰。

“The main centre of the kingdom of Dongli [‘Eastern Division’] is the town of Shaqi [Sāketa].

It is more than 3,000 *li* [1,247 km] southeast of Tianzhu [Northwest India].

It is a big kingdom. Its products are similar to those of Tianzhu [Northwest India].

There are several tens of major towns whose rulers take the title of king. The Da Yuezhi attacked and subdued it. The men and women are all eight *chi* [about 1.85 m or 6 ft] tall, but are cowardly. They ride elephants and camels when travelling to neighbouring kingdoms.

When invaded, they ride elephants to wage war.”

Note Fussman: There is no name of a king and it is ed.’s chronology. It seems to refer to events of a far past. Shaqi [Sāketa] is a pure and improbable guess. Sāketa, if Sialkot, was a tiny town, never a country.

Note Bakker: Sāketa is the present Ayodhyā.

Notes ed.: With “more than 3000 *li*”, or 1300 km, the text describes the distance between Peshawar or Taxila to Sāketa pretty exactly. – There is a lengthy parallel to this passage in the Weilue 《魏略·西戎傳》 of the Sanguozhi 《三國志·魏書三十·倭人傳·12》, cf. Thierry 2005: 524, texte 37. It names the country 車離, *juli*, and the

distance, 3000 *li*, but not the name of the city. In its place one reads 一名禮惟特, “one name is Liweite”, and 一名沛隸王“ (another) name is Peiliwang”. Zürcher (1968: 372) suspects 東離 Dongli to be a mistake for 車離 Juli (“Chü-li”) and Thierry (as above, fn. 214) consents and dismisses Hill’s insisting on the “Eastern Division”. Hill (2015,I: 380) points at 東天竺 “eastern India” in Buddhist literature, without showing that *li* 離 can replace 天竺 in such contexts.

100 – Conquest of eastern India through *caṇḍa* Kaniṣka

Sūtrālamkāra (Da zhuangyan lun jing 大莊嚴論經), Taisho 201, p. 287a22-24, story no. 31; = Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā of Aśvaghōṣa; Huber 1908: 158ff., Zürcher 1968: 385:

拘沙種中有王名真檀迦膩吒。討東天竺。既平定已威勢赫振福利具足。

“Formerly I have heard that among the Chü-sha (Kushan?) race there was a king named Chen-t’an Chia-ni-cha who (once) made a punitive expedition against eastern India (T’ien-chu). When (that country) had been pacified, his majestic power made (the world) tremble and his success was complete, and he returned to his native country.”

Note ed.: Zürcher’s (Wade-Giles) Chü-sha (Pinyin *jusha*) is less confusing in the Kantonese rendering *keuisa*, yet another variant for *kuṣāṇa*. On the *candra* or *caṇḍa* Kaniṣka cf. Bailey 1949. Brough (1970: 87f.) combines *candra* “Moon” with the literal meaning of *yue* 月 in *yuezhi* 月氏 to the idea of a “moon-dynasty”. More on this in Rosenfield 1967: 281a, no. 3.

101 – Kaniṣka attacks the Parthians

Fufazang Yinyuanzhuān 《付法藏因緣傳·卷5》, 316b16-18; Zürcher 1968: 386f.:

時安息王性甚頑暴，將統四兵伐罽呢吒。罽呢吒王亦即嚴誠，兩陣交戰刀劍繼起，罽呢吒王尋便獲勝，殺安息人凡有九億。

“At that time the king of An-hsi (Parthia) was cruel and obstinate, and having marshalled his four (classes of) soldiers he attacked Kaniṣka. King Kaniṣka immediately chastised him severely. The two armies joined battle, and the daggers and swords were raised incessantly. Thereupon King Kaniṣka gained the victory, and he killed altogether 900,000 Parthians.”

102 – Year ca. AD 150: The end of Kaniṣka

Fufazang Yinyuanzhuān 《付法藏因緣傳·卷5》, Taisho Tipiṭaka 50, no. 2058, 317a4-18; Lévi 1896b: 482f., Zürcher 1968: 387; translation by YE Shaoyong:

復有一臣名摩倬羅。智慧超倫才藝希世。白罽呢吒。大王若能隨順臣教。必當令王威伏四海。一切宗仰八表歸德。宜察

臣言無令彰露。王曰：“甚善！當如卿言。”爾時大臣廣集勇將嚴四種兵。所向皆伏如雹摧草。三海人民咸來臣屬。罽呢吒王所乘之馬。於路遊行足自摧屈。王語之言：“我征三海悉已歸化。唯有北海未來降伏。若得之者不復相乘。吾事未辦如何便爾？”爾時群臣聞王此語。咸共議曰：“罽呢吒王貪虐無道。數出征伐勞役人民。不知厭足欲王四海。戍備邊遠親戚分離。若斯之苦何時寧息？宜可同心共屏除之。然後我等乃當快樂。”因王病瘡以被鎮之。人坐其上須臾氣絕。

“There is also a minister named Mo-Chuo-luo, who has superior intellect and accomplishments. He speaks to Kaniška, ‘If you, the great king, follow my suggestion, your power will conquer the four seas (or regions); you will be admired by all (people) and be submitted to by all eight far regions. You should consider my words and should not reveal them (to others)’. The king says, ‘Great! As you said.’ Then the minister convened brave generals and made ready four armies. All their opponents are defeated like the grass is destroyed by the hail. People from three seas (or regions) submit. During a patrol Kaniška’s horse breaks its leg. The king says to it, ‘I have conquered the three seas (or regions). All submit to me except the north sea. If I acquire it (the north sea) I will no more ride on you. Now my career is not yet fulfilled; why do you behave like this?’ At the time (Kaniška’s) ministers hear this and talk to each other, ‘The king Kaniška is cruel and immoral. He makes war so frequently and fatigues the people. He is insatiable and wants to conquer all four seas. (Then we would have to) serve in the remote frontiers apart from our family members and relatives. When will such suffering cease? We should cooperate to get rid of him. Then we will be happy.’ When the king was sick, they covered him with a quilt and a man sat on top of it; and the king was dead in no time.”

Note Grenet: Compare the way Turkish, Khazar and Mongol royals were executed (cf. below p. 216, fn. 46).

103 – Year ca. AD 150: Can Ptolemy be used to link the *tocharoi* from the East with Tocharistan?

The *Geography* of Ptolemy, assembled around AD 150 from a number of itineraries of different ages and quality, includes a people called τοχαιοι, “Tocharians”, from which the country “Tokharistan” received its name, a certain part of Bactria whereto Kaniška retired from his campaign in northern India in his tenth regnal year (cf. below p. 257, τοχουαρστανου). According to Ptolemy (6.11.6), these people are located in Baktriana south of the Oxus, where we find Τόχαιοι μέγα ἔθνος “the mighty people of the

Tocharians”, ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦς Ζαριάσπας “below the Zariaspai” (Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss 2002,I: 158f; II: fig. 28). The “mighty” is a reference to the fact that the Yuezhi have taken over and incorporated the docile Bactrian merchants into their new and aggressive political entity – nothing surprising in the 2nd century AD.

According to the geo-referential system of Ptolemy, these same people are mentioned again as Ταχοροί (sic) further north in Sogdiana as living in between three unnamed rivers running north from the Sogdian mountains to the Yaxartes (Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss 2002,I: 168f; II: fig. 30). There, they are living close to the Drybaktai. De la Vaissière (2009: 530) takes this situation north of the mountains as a reference to an earlier location, which Ptolemy could present only because he was using an itinerary from the middle of the second century BC. The same view is referred to by Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss (2002,I: 87), who seem to devalue it by pointing at an apparent south-north shift of the people called Marukaioi living south of the Oxus with their capital Maruka on the northern side, and assume that Ptolemy occasionally mixes his sources, links the itineraries upside-down and places references to one and the same people in different directions. A comparable bilocation for the Ταχοροί is apparent when we see a similar set of three “nameless rivers” running south from the same Sogdian mountains down to the Oxus under the data collection called “Sogdianoī East” (Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss 2002,I: 168f; II: fig. 29) and here we find the town of Trybakta. Once we have the Tachoroi and the Drybaktai north of the mountreains, and a town of Trybakta south of the same mountains exactly where we expect the Yuezhi or Tocharoi to have settled, then the suspicion arises that this is yet another doublet and only one of the two can be trusted. Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss (2002,I: 90f.) point out the many doublets in the Sogdian lists; Humbach & Faiss (2012: 40) equate Trybakta and Drybaktai and likewise assume an error in transmission for one of the two. Regarding the variant spellings, Humbach & Faiss (2012: 21) maintain the idea of unity: “The Tachoroi are the same as the Tocharoi Τόχαροι mighty people in Ptolemy Baktrianē 6,11,6 and the Tachoroi in Sogdianoī [*sic ed.*] 6,12,4 with Thogara city in Sērīkē 6,16,8.” Further, there are the people called Ἰθαγόρουσι (Ithagouroi) in Ptolemy 6.16.5, who in 6.16.8 seem to live in a town called Θογάρα (Thogara) below a mountain Θαγούρον (Thagouron) or Ἰθαγούρον (Ithagouron) (Humbach, Ziegler & Faiss 2002,II: fig. 37).

Notes CHING: The first scholar looking for mount Thaguron near Dunhuang (Gansu) seems to be Pelliot (1936: 261). De la Vaissière (2009) provided a new solution but it is still open to discussion, see § 022 B). Previously, O. Franke located the earlier habitation area of Tokharoi in Endere by referring to Xuanzang’s mention of *duhuoluo guguo* 觀貨邏故國 in the section about *Nirang* (Niya-Pkt. Nina, approx. today’s Niya sites) in Xiyuji when arguing Marquart’s (1901: 204) equation 大夏 = 吐火羅 [Ta-hia = Tochari ed.]. See for example F.W.K. Müller, “Toγri und Kūšān [Kūšān]”, SPAW, 1918, p. 576; O. Franke, “Das alte Ta-hia der Chinesen, ein Beitrag zur Tocharer Frage”, *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 8.1919/20: 126. However, Stein (*Serindia*, pp. 286–288) is quite sceptical about Franke’s identification. My view is close to Stein’s in the

sense that Endere is a fortified site of later periods rather than traces of prehistorical tribe(s). However, while Stein preferred to link Endere with “Tukhāra (i.e. Hephthalite)”, I think Xuanzang’s mention of *duhuoluo guguo* in the east of Niya is more likely the ruins of a colony (administrative center, immigrants’ settlement or even the residence of some Kushan hostage/consulate) since the Kushan period (CHING 2015: 13). After all, it is known that the Sogdians built their colonies on their trade routes to China and people from the historical Tocharistan (Bactria) was also active in international politics and commerce, so it is reasonable to suppose that the Kushans once established settlement(s) in Chinese Turkestan, too.

104 – The Tocharians subject to the Bactrians?

Context: The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. AD 330-400) has a long passage on Bactria in 23.6:55-58, in many points simply based on Ptolemy’s map. Participating in the Roman campaigns against the Sasanians he seems to have added some hear-say from his encounter with Bactrians, concerning the difference between “Bactrians” and Tocharians.

Ammianus Marcellinus *Rerum Gestarum* 23.6:55-57; Seyfarth 1970,III: 100f.:

[55] *Proximos his limites possident Bactriani, natio antehac bellatrix et potentissima Persisque semper infesta antequam circumscitos populos omnes ad dicionem gentilitatemque traheret nominis sui, (...)*

“Die nächsten Gebiete besitzen die Baktrianer, früher ein kriegerisches und sehr mächtiges, den Persern stets feindlich gesinntes Volk, bevor es alle Nachbarvölker unterworfen zur Annahme seines eigenen Namens gezwungen hatte.” (...)

[57] *Gentes isdem Bactrianis oboediunt plures, quas exsuperant Tochari,*

“Viele Stämme sind diesen Bactriern untertan, darunter vor allem die Tocharer.”

Note ed.: The dominant tribe, the “Bactrians”, must be the Kushans. They are said to have others made to run under their name, cf. § 126.

Events in the time of Huviṣka

105 – Years AD ±153-±187: Dates for Huviṣka in inscriptions: 26 to 60

as *huviṣka*: year 31 (SS #71, 73)

as *devaputra śāhi huviṣka*: year 28 (SS #64)

as *mahārāja huviṣka*: years 26, 28, 29, 34, 48, 58 (SS #65, 68, 69, 190, 108, 123)

as *mahārāja devaputra huviṣka*: years 33, 35, 37, 38, 39, 45, 51, 53 (SS #76, 82, unpubl., 84, 85, 89, 117, 120)

as *mahārāja rājātirāja huviṣka*: years 40 (SS #87), 51 (CKI 159)

as *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputra huviṣka*: years 47, 60 (SS #94, 124)