CHAPTER 2

The Kushan Civilization: A brief overview

The Kushan or Kushano of the epigraphical and numismatic sources of India and Central Asia,¹ and Kuei-shauang of the Chinese sources² was the name of a tribe which together with other tribes formed a tribal confederacy of rather mixed origin. This tribal confederacy is known as the Yuch-chih in Chinese sources.³

¹ The name Kushan occurs in several slightly different forms in various Indian and central Asian sources. In Indian Kharoshti inscriptions the name is found as Gushana (Manikiala stone inscription of the year and Panjtar stone inscription of the year 122) and Kushana in Taxila silver scroll inscription of the year 136. these names are also found in the Kharoshti coin legends of Kujula Kadphises P.Gardner; Coins of the Greek and Scythian Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum, pp. 120, 123 pl.xxv, 1, pl.xxv, 5). In the Central Asian Kharoshti inscriptions the name occurs as Kushana (Kharoshti Inscriptions (k1), No. 5 p.2; No. 136, p. 54; No. 198, p. 77; No. 320, p.116; No. 399, p.143; No. 401, p. 144; No. 478, p. 172; stein, M.A. Ancient Khotan (AK), pp. 386, 393, 396, 398, 405, 411-412) and Kurushana (Kharoshti inscriptions (K1), No. 117, p.46; AK, P. 392). The Brahmi inscription found at Mat near Mathura also bears the name Kushana (Archaeological survey of India Reports (ASIR), vol. XI, 1911-12, pp. 120ff, pl.53; El, vol XXI, p.59; Journal of royal Asiatic Society (JRAS), 1914, p. 370).

² The version of the name found in the Chinese texts is “Koei-Choang” or “Kwei-shwang”. (Hou Han Shu, translated by specht, J.A., p. 324; Toung Pov Series II, Vol. VII, 1907, pp. 193-94; Chien Han Shu (CHS) ch. 96A, p.14).

³ There is controversy among the scholars whether or not the Kushans belonged to the Yueh-Chih horde. J. Kennedy (JRAS, 1912 p.670) is of the opinion that the Kushans belonged to the Turkish race. He seeks confirmation for his assumption from the Rajatarangini (Book I, V. 170) which refers to the Turki kings of Gandhara claiming Kanishka as their ancestor; and the other members of his family as Turushkas, i.e. Turks. He also seeks confirmation for his assumption fro the physical features of the Kushan Kings as depicted on coins and various sculptures. It is pertinent to quote J. Kennedy in this regard. “the pointed iranium, the salient cheek bones, the large, long and heavy nose, the thick beard... and his coins represent him as a powerful built barbarian king, clad in loose coat and huge boots which were the common dress of Turkestan. This theory has, however, been rejected by the scholars on the grounds that the physical features described above are characteristics of so called Homo-alpinus, which is largely represented in the population of Chinese Turkestan (stein: serindia p. 1361); and it is also suggested that the Turki element is comparatively late. The other major theory regarding the origin of the
According to the available records the earliest habitat of the Yuch-chih lay to the east of Tun-huang in the modern province of Kansu in Chinese Central Asia. At that time (around 1st millennium B.C) they had the same customs as Hsiung-nu (Huns). It appears from certain pre-Han texts that the Yuch-chi gradually annexed the fertile agriculture zone of Ordos plateau and a region between the Kun-lun range (to the south of the Tarim basin) and the Nan-shan. Lou-lan and Po-yang territories in the Tsaidam swamp area were also within the Yuch-chih kingdom. Thus by 3rd century B.C. Yuch-chih established a fairly big kingdom. The annexation of Ordos was triumph of a nomadic culture over a settled agricultural society. They also began to trade in zade, a greatly prized commodity. They became so strong that “their archers numbered more than a hundred thousand... and treated the Hsiung-nu with contempt.” But ultimately sometime between 174 and 160 B.C, the greater portion of them were driven out of their territory by Hsiung-nu. They migrated towards the west and became known in history as Ta Yuch chih.

Kushans is Saka – Iranian origin theory and is propounded by Sten Konow (Corpus Inscriptionum Indiacaorum vol. II pt. I p.li). He justifies his conclusion from the fact that several terms and designation used by the Kushans find their explanation on an Iranian language.

5 Mukerhee, B.N. Rise and Fall of the Kushan Empire, p.4.
6 JRAS, 1966, pp. 19
7 Ibid
8 Ibid
11 Shih-Chi, ch. 123, p.36; Chien Han Shu, ch. 96A, p.14b.
12 Sse-ki, Chap. 110; JCBRAS, 1906, pp. 40-41.
13 Shih – Chi, ch. 123, p. 3b; CHS, ch. 96A, p.14b.
In course of their westward migration, the Yuch chih passed through Kucha to the region of Wen-su or Aksu and thence to the country of Sai (Sakas) in the vicinity of the Lake Issik-kol. From the Lake Issik-kol area the Ta Yuch-chih migrated again and subjugated the north and south of Oxus. For our immediate purpose, the subjugation of the south of Oxus is important as it comprised the territory called Ta-hsia which was divided among the five his-hou (yabgu) of the tribe called Kuei-shuang (Kushan) around 160 B.C and 130 B.C. The five hisi-hou, which were the five families of Yuch-chih gave their names to five territorial divisions of Ta-hsia, namely Hsiu-mi, Shuang-mi, Kuei-shuang, His-tun and Tu-mi.

J. Marquart identifies Hsiu-mi with Wakhan and Shuang-mi with Chitral. According to B.N. Mukherjee His-tun was in the region of Badakhshan and Kuei-shuang (the territory under the Kushans) was probably somewhere between Badakhshan and Chitral. Thus according to Mukherjee Ta-hsia included Wakhan, Badakhshan, Chitral and probably Kafriistan. He contests Ta-hsia’s identification with Bactria proper, though, according to him, it embraced, among others, eastern parts of Bactria. It is important to mention that the Yuch-chih are also

14 CHS, Ch. 61, p.4a
15 Ibid.
16 CHS, Ch. 96a, p.14b; HHS, Ch, 118, p.9a.
17 Ibid
20 Mukerjee, B.N., The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire, p.11.
21 Ibid, P.11-12
called Tochari in some sources, probably because of the long stay of some powerful Yuch-chih groups in Tocher (Tukheristan) and consequently their close linguistic, ethnographic and topographical association with the region.\textsuperscript{22}

According to \textit{Hou Han-Shu} around 30-29 B.C the \textit{his-hou} of Kuei-shuang, named Chiu-chu-chuch attacked and destroyed the other four \textit{his-hou} and established himself as their king.\textsuperscript{23} The extended kingdom also came to be known as Kuei-shuang. Thus the Chinese treatise gives to Chiu-chiu-chue the credit of founding the Kushan kingdom.\textsuperscript{24} There is unanimity among the scholars to identify him with Kujala Kadphises of numismatic sources. It is intriguing that while mentioning Kujala’s conquest of the other four \textit{his-hou}, the \textit{Hou Han-Shu} is silent about his relations with the Yuch-Chin authority to the north of Oxus. Perhaps either the central authority was already liquidated or it had become too weak to match with the rising power of Kuei-shuang under Kujula Kadphises.

After the foundation of the Kushan kingdom around 30-29 B.C, Kujala Khadphases embarked upon the policy of building an empire. Pursuant to this policy, he, according to the \textit{Hou Han-Shu} conquered and occupied Kabul (Kao-fu),\textsuperscript{25} western Bactria (P’uta),\textsuperscript{26} Kashmir and certain other parts of north-western part of Indian subcontinent

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{HHC}, Ch. 118, Translated by Specht in \textit{JA}, 1883, P- 324.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{HHS}, Ch. 118. P. 9a.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid
collectively called Chi-pin. The written sources are also substantiated by the numismatic evidence that the Kujala Kadphises after establishing his authority over the whole of Ta-hsia, brought under his control Kabul, western Bactria, Gandhara, the Taxila region and Kashmir. Perhaps he also occupied the Yuch-chi possessions to the north of the Oxus. Thus by about 50 A.D Kujala graduated the small Kushan kingdom into an empire.

Having passed away at the age of more than eighty years, Kujala was succeeded by his son — Yen-kao— chen of the Chinese sources. He was previously identified as Vima Kadphises by the modern scholars. However, the recently found Rabtak inscription has opened a new era in Kushan studies. The most startling revelation is the identification of a new ruler, Vima Tak [to], whose position as successor of Kujala Kadphises and predecessor of Vima Kadphises is clearly indicated. To this new king {Vima I Tak [to]} are attributed two other inscriptions, a portrait sculpture and several coins which were previously associated with the king – Vima II Kadphises – identified in this inscription as his son.

In the light of Rabtak inscription the Indian conquest of Kushans can now be attributed to Vima I Tak [to]. Thus during the period of Vima I

27 CHS, Ch. 96A, P.10a; HHS, Ch. 118, P.4; ASSIPH, PP. 192-93, N. 25.
29 HHS, Ch. 118, P.9a.
30 See Appendix I- Raptak Inscription.
31 Ibid
Tak [to], Kushan empire expanded upto Mathura at the expense of the Parthians.33

This is inferred from the inscription which reads as Maharaja Rajadhi-rajo Devaputra Kushanaputro Shahi- (vi) mo, occurring in an epigraph on the pedestal of the enthroned image of a male found in the ruins of a temple founded at Mat, neat Mathura.34 This sculpture is now being attributed to Vima I Tak [to].35 While the epigraph attests to the expansion of the Kushan empire upto Mathura by Vima I Tak [to]36 the Hou Han-Shu also attributes to him the subjugation of Shan-tu (Sindhu) the country to the west of the lower Indus.37

According to the Rabtak inscription Vima I Tak [to] was succeeded by Vima II Khadphises. He is to be identified with Uvima Kavthisa of Khaltse inscription.38 Vima Kadphises was followed by Kanishka I. Although the genealogical relationship between the two was not known, the Rabtak inscription makes it clear that Vima II Kadphises was father of Kanishka I.

He [Kanishka] gave orders to make (them) for these kings; for king Kujala Kadphises (his) great grandfather, and for king Vima Takto (his) grandfather, and for king Vima Kadphises (his) father, and also for himself, king Kanishka.39

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33 Mukherji B.N., op. Cit., P.43-44.
34 Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1911-12, PP. 120, 124,125; Mathura inscriptions, p. 135; kg, pp. 56-60, 99; n. 104.
35 Williams Nicholas Sims and Cribb, Joe., op. cit. p. 100.
36 Ibid., p. 102
37 HHS, Ch. 118, pp.9a and 9b.
38 Williams Nicholas Sims and Cribb, Joe., op. cit. p. 100
39 See Appendix I- Rabtak Inscription.
The passage leaves no doubt about the genealogical relationship between various Kushan kings and refutes the view held by some scholars that there were two different Kushan dynasties. The date of Kanishka’s accession to power is a subject of great controversy. The scholarship in this regard is mainly divided into three groups suggesting three different dates namely A.D. 78, 128 and 144. However most of the scholars are in favour of 144 A.D. The sources allude to further expansion of Kushan empire at the hands of Kanishka I. Inscriptions and seals referring to him have been found in Allahabad and Banaras. A Tibetan work refers to his conquest of Saketa, situated in the locality adjoining Ayodhya. This is also supported by *Hou- Han-Shu*. He is also considered to have invaded Patliaputra. There is however, no evidence of its annexation with the Kushan empire. Perhaps it became a tributary state. The same was the case with the Chasthans of western India. The legend recorded in *Yu yang tsa tsu* composed by Tuan Ch’eng – che in A.D 860, at least, shows the defeat of a Satvahana king in the Deccan. The sources also indicate the capture of Eastern Malwa from the Satvahanas. However, the establishment of Kushan rule over Deccan is not proved by any evidence.

40 See Appendix II – Date of Kanishka.
41 F. W. Tomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkistan*, Pt. 1, 119 and F.n. 2; *KD*, P. 61, n.121.
42 *HHS*, Ch. 118, P.10;
43 Taisho Tripitaka, no 2058, Ch.V, P.315.
44 Mukherji B.N, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, P. 74-76
45 Ibid, P. 76-78
46 Ref. N. 86-87 on P. 111-114 – B.N. Mukherji.
47 EI, Vol VIII, P.60; *KD*, PP.9and 79.

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Alongside expanding their frontiers in the Indian sub-continent, the Kushans under Kanishka I annexed a vast area of Central Asia to their empire. The territory which now calls Afghanistan, and which also included Bactria was already under the Kushans thanks to the leadership of Kujala. The Naqash-i-Rustum inscription of the Sassanian emperor, Shahpur I, makes a mention of *Kushanshahr*, which stretched, *inter alia*, upto the frontiers of Kashgarh (K’sh), Samarqand (Sogdiana/Swgd) and Tashkent (Sh’sh). The numismatic evidence lends further support to this fact as the coins of Kushan rulers including that of Kanishka I have been found in different localities to the north of the Oxus. The Chinese sources also refer to the extension of the Kushan empire to the east of the Pamirs. It may be mentioned that Kushans had special relations with Khotan, Kucha and Kashgarh. We also find friendly relations and exchange of gifts between Kushans and Han rulers. Thus in any case Kushan empire under Kanishka I stretched over a vast area from the Oxus territories to parts of Eastern U.P or even South Bihar. Before concluding the empire building activities of Kanishka, it is in place to mention that the evidence reveals the existence of three Kanishkas – Kanishka I, Kanishka II and Kanishka III during the Kushan Period. Yet, despite much difference of opinion majority of the scholars believe that it was Kanishka I who is known in history for his promotion to Buddhism.

51 Mukherji B.N, opcit. PP. 83-84.
52 Ibid, PP. 84-85
Kanishka I was succeeded by Vasishka and the latter by Havishka. It is believed by some scholars that the two ruled conjointly, at least, for some time.\textsuperscript{53} That of the known Kushan coins — gold and copper — the coins struck by Huvishka constitute a very large portion, alludes to the fact that the Kushan empire reached to its zenith during his rule. This is also indicated by his extensive military exploits and the extension of empire both in India and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{54} Alongside Vasudeva, the numismatic evidence refers to the existence of Kanishka II.\textsuperscript{55} However, details about him are not available.

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudeva I in the 60 year of the Kanishka Era.\textsuperscript{56} It is believed that the Kushan empire began to collapse from the later phase of the Vasudeva I’s rule primarily because of decline in trade between the Indus region and the Roman Orient following the loss of Kushan hegemony over the lower Indus region around A.D. 149-50.\textsuperscript{57} Yet Vasudeva I, continued to rule over a vast territory from Transoxina to Mathura.

After Vasudeva I, we encounter another Kushan ruler, Kanishka by name. The modern scholars call him Kanishka III on the basis of numismatic and palaeographic evidence,\textsuperscript{58} as his coins bear Brahmi


\textsuperscript{54} Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire}, PP. 92-99.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., pp. 92-99. Also see Puri, B. N. \textit{India Under the Kushans}, pp. 70-72.

\textsuperscript{56} Mukherjee, B.N., op.cit. P.155.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, pp. 155-161.

letters along Greek one’s – the feature which we come across for the first time during the region of Vasudev I, and the term maha (great) found on the Shahr-i-Bahlol (in Peshawar region) seal referring to Kanishka king is more developed than the one found on the coins of Huvishka. Kanishka III was succeeded by Vasudeva II. He seems to have been the last known ruler of the house of Kanishka I or at least the last of the known Kushana empires. It appears that he was ruling at a time when Ardhashir I was gradually asserting the supremacy of his Sassanian family over Persia and the neighbouring territories around A.D 224-226. That Kushan empire received death blow when Ardhashir I occupied the Kushanshahr upto Peshawar followed by Vasudeva II’s surrender before him sometime after A.D. 230 and before A.D. 242. Vasudeva II might have still continued to rule for sometime as a vassal or semi-independent ruler from Peshawar to Mathura, but he was unable to check the centrifugal tendencies among his local chiefs and tribes; and with this came to an end the mighty Kushan empire.

60 Ibid. Pl. v, no.2; *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1892 pl. XIII.
63 Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 254.
II. POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION

Divine theory of kingship:

Like the Chinese, Parthians and Romans, the Kushans propagated the concept of divine kingship. They used the title *devaputra* (the son of god). In fact they were officially known as *devaputras* (sons of god). Sometimes, after the Parthian and Roman fashion, they would like to be called 'god living in the form of man'. The representations of the bust of Vima Kadphises on several coins as rising from clouds, or his head set within frames etc., or the nimbus behind the head of the king on Kushan coins – all show the attempts to project the supernatural character of the Kushana kingship. The Kushana royal statues found at a temple at Mat and in the sanctuaries of Swat region and Surkh-Kotal show

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64 The Kushanas used the title *devaputra*, meaning “the son of god”. It appears in the legends on several coins struck officially by Kujula Kara Kapha, identifiable with Kujula Kadphises. The term *devaputra* was used as a title of some other Kushana emperors in inscriptions referring to them. These include not only private records, but also the legend on an official seal of Kanishka (I) unearthed at Kosam, a semi-official (?) inscription found at Mat and also another official or semi-official epigraph discovered at Surkh-Kotal. The last mentioned document ascribes to the emperor concerned the title *Bogopouro* meaning “the son of god”. The *Nan cheu I wuch’e*, composed by Wan Ch’en, explicitly stated, as known from a quotation in Chang Shou – chieh’s eighth century commentary on the *Shi-chi*, that “the king of the country of the Yuech-chih is called “son of Heaven”.

65 Ibid

66 This inference goes against the hypotheses of F.W. Thomas that devaputra was “a complimentary epithet current only among the Indian subjects of the Kushans” (B.C. Law Volume, Pt. II, P.300).

67 The inscription found at Karma (Punjab, Pakistan) describes the Kushana ruler Vasishka as *devaputra* and *devamasnusa*. *(Indian Museum Bulletin, 1973, vol. VIII, P114).* The great Surkh-Kotal epigraph refers to Kanishka (I) as Bago Shao. E. Pulleyblank interprets the expression as meaning “God King”. But Henning takes the term Bago, as it appears here, as a mere honorific, without indicating a defied status for the king.

unmistakably that Kushan kings were worshipped as divinities. Since the concept of divine origin of kingship was propagated by all the contemporary powers of the time, and as the Kushans had relations with all of them, it is not difficult to suggest that their divine origin theory might have been inspired by the reference political culture of the time. Besides the conscious attempts at deifying the king, the Kushans also tried to create the imperial cult by deifying their realm.

As mentioned above, at the time when Kushans rose to power, the whole neighbouring world was saturated with the idea of divine origin theory of kingship. The Kushans imbibed and propagated it to their advantage as an effective instrument of legitimacy. We should not miss

69 The temple at Mat, as indicated by the archaeological materials found there, was erected during the reign of Vima and his image was installed there as the principal object of worship. This shrine was renovated in the days of Huvishka, and so it was in worship for at least some time during his period. Mukherjee, B.N. The Kushana Genealogy, Studies in Kushana Genealogy and Chronology, PP. 56-64 and 101-102, nn. 104 and 110; Mathura Inscriptions, P. 145- A Mathura statue, supposed to be that of Huvishka, might have been worshipped in his lifetime. Thus, it appears that the Kushan kings were worshipped as divinities during their lifetime as well as after their death.

70 The main contemporary empires were Chinese empire and Roman empire and Arsacid empire. In China the emperor was considered to hold his office through a mandate of Heaven. On his death, he was given a “temple title” – Miao Hao (Latourette, K.S., The Chinese, Their History and Culture, pp. 519-520; Moule, A.C., The Rulers of China, 221 B.C. – A.D. 1949, PP. 3f.). A few Arsacid emperors were given the designation “Theos” (God) in their coin legends (Wroth, W., A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Catalogue of the coins of Parthia, pp. 48-61.) it may be mentioned here that the Indo-Parthian ruler Gondophares I (1st Century A.D.) was called Devavarta in one variety of his coin legends. (Roman concept of Kingship).

71 For an excellent information on the growth of the cult of emperor, see Mukherjee, pp. 313-22.

72 The name of Shaorero appearing on Huvishka’s coins is related to later Pahlave Sharevar, originally meaning “Kingdom (which is ) desirable.” (Rosenfield, J.M. The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans P.99.) Shaorero, represented on Kushana coins as holding a spear and a shield or a sword and as clad in Roman military garb of mailed skirt, cuirass and crested helmet, probably personifies the Kushana empire. (Rosenfield J.M., The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans Pl. III, no. 60; Pl. X nos. 188-1911). All these facts testify the creation of an imperial cult.
to remember that they were ruling over an empire which was created by sheer use of force, and it (the empire) was beset with divisive forces. The policy of assuming divine origin for themselves, the Kushan succeeded in producing desired effect as we encounter the people venerating the emperor. In effect, the emperor worship and empire worship promoted by the divine projections of both delivered 'loyalty effect'. That is why it became a stable instrument of legitimacy used in India till late times.

Besides assuming divine position, the Kushans from Vima onwards assumed high standing titles namely, Maharaja, Rajatiraja, Sarvaloga-Iśvara, Mahisvara, Basileus Basileon and Shaonano Shao. Kanishka II was even described as Kaisara after Roman title Caesar. By appropriating these titles, the Kushans clearly conveyed their supreme might to create a ‘favourable’ mass mentality. The scepter held by some

73 That the subjects in the Kushan realm wished well for their rulers is indicated by several inscriptions, found in different parts of the empire, which record that several persons, making religious gifts, wanting their ruling kings to be benefited by the merits of such acts. For example, Taxila silver scroll inscription of the year 136 speaks of a religious act by a Bactrian for the bestowal of health on the Great king, the king of kings, the son of Heaven, the Kushana. (Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. II, Pt. I, .77). A Mathura epigraph of the year 28 records the intention of the maker of two endowments that the merit gained by such acts, should be enjoyed by devaputra Shahi Huvishka and among others by those who are dear to him (Epigraphic Indica Vol. XXI, PP. 60f). Kalwan copper plate inscription, dated in the year 134, refers to the performance of an act of merit after “having venerated or worshipped (Puyaita) rathanigama may mean “country (and) town”, and, therefore, can be interpreted to denote a kingdom or an empire consisting of two parts – countryside and urban area. (Epigraphic Indica, Vol. XXI, 259). Three pillar inscriptions, found in the Jamalpur mound and paleographical datable to the Kushan age, record gifts of the Visvasika Vakamihira and his son Horamurrdaga. Each of these epigraphs states that “by this donation of a pious gift let the sovereignty (aisvarya ) be unshaken” (Mathura Inscriptions, PP-92-94). This statement betrays the anxiety of the donors one of whom was a high official of the status of Vivasika (Mathura Inscriptions P.96), to ensure the continuity of the sovereignty (of the Kushan empire).

74 Gardner, P., A Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum, P.124
75 Ibid., P.129 f.
76 Ibid., P. 136 f.
of their representations on coins may be taken as embodiment of the Indian concept of *danda* which advocated the royal authority and prerogative to punish the subject.\(^{77}\)

The Kushan emperor, like the Han monarch, was the pivot of Central administration on which everything turned. According to a Chinese source even the position of the Prime minister was not more than a servant of the king.\(^{78}\) The Kushan kings are shown on coins as carrying or having by their side weapons like mace, trident-cum-battle axe, spear, sword, trident etc, indicating king's role as a warrior.\(^{79}\) Indeed he was commander-in-chief of his army.\(^{80}\)

The Kushan rulers, who were also given the title *Mahasena* (possessor of great army;\(^{81}\) also the name of a god of war\(^{82}\)), possessed a massive army.\(^{83}\) *Hou Han-shu* speaks of “more than 100,000 excellent soldiers” of the Kushans.\(^{84}\) Though elephants constituted a limb of their army,\(^{85}\) the

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\(^{77}\) Mukherjee B.N., *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, P.326.

\(^{78}\) Chi-Chia-Yeh (translator), *Tra Pao-Tsang Ching*, Ch. VIII; *Taisho Tripitaka*, no. 203, P. 484, If, Vide Mukherjee B.N., *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, P.236.


\(^{80}\) The famous Mat statue of Kanishka I represents him as holding an unseathed sword as well as a club. (Rosenfield, J.M., *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, fig., 2). The representations on coins and inscriptions together with the references in Buddhist literature like Kanishka I leading his army in military campaigns (*Tsa Pao-Tsa Ching*, *Taisho Tripitaka* no. 203, ch. VIII, PP.484f; *Ta Chuang-Yen hun-Ching*, *Taisho Tripitaka*, no. 201, Ch.Iv, P. 287; *His-Yu-Chi*, *Taisho Tripitaka*, no. 2087, III PP. 886f, Vide, Mukherjee, B.N.; *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Civilization* P. 463f. 84; *JRAS*, 1942, P.19) indicate that the Kushan kings were the top most warriors or commanders-in-chief of their armies.


\(^{83}\) *Shi-Chi*, Ch. 123, P.32; *Chien Han Shu*, Ch. 96A, P. 146; Vide Mukherjee, B.N. *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, 463 n.88,89

\(^{84}\) *Hou Han Shu*, Ch 118. P.9a Vide Mukherjee, B.N., *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, p463 n. 88-90.

\(^{85}\) *Tsa Pao-Tsang Ching*, *Taisho Tripitaka*, no. 203, Ch, VIII P. 484 Vide, Mukherjee, B.N., *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, P. 464 No. 92. Numismatic evidence also suggests that Elephant constituted a limb of the Kushan army. Kushan kings have
Kushans were primarily known for their armoured cavalry. In fact, the introduction of heavy armoured cavalry was one of the significant contributions of Kushans and other central Asian powers who preceded them.

The Kushanas at times followed the practice of conjoint rule as we find sometimes the heir-apparent associated with the royal administration. The tradition had precedents in India, and it was also practiced by the Scythians, Parthian and the Romans. The co-ruler was in all probability an adjudant rather than a full partner.

The king and the heir apparent were assisted by a council of ministers and a hierarchical bureaucracy. We come across the high military and civil officials namely Chiang-ling (military general), Mahadandanayaka (Chief Police Officer), Dandnayaka, Horamurta etc.

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86 Shi-Chi, ch. 110, p 6a.; Chang Shou-chich’s eighth century commentary on the Shi chi, ch 123, p, 4b explicitly refers to the “the abundance of horses among the Yuch-Chih”. (See also TP (Toung Pou), 1923, s. II, Vol. XXIII, P. 121-123). A king of Fu-Nan received from a king of Tien-Chu “four horses of the yuch-Chih country” (Ma Tuan-Lin, Wenhsien Pung Kao, Ch, 328, notice on India: Malanges charles de Herlez, PP. 176-177). Vide, Mukherjee, B.N., The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire, P. 464 n. 95;

87 Mukherjee, B.N., The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire, P.366.

88 Ancient Indian authorities including Kautilya (Arthashastra, VIII, 2) condemned in varying degrees the dual ruler ship, this very fact shows that this system was not unknown in India; W. Spellman, Political Theory of Ancient India, P. 64.


91 Ibid.

92 Mukherjee, B.N., The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire, PP. 337-338.

93 Ibid., pp. 54, 87, 98, 174, 337-338.
While the capital of the Kushanas was in Bactria, their empire (Kushanshahr or Kshathra) was divided into satrapies (provinces) ruled by Kshatrapas (protectors of the Realm).94 There were two types of satrapies and consequently the two categories of Kshatrapas. (1) those who were directly under the control of the emperor and (2) those which were under the hereditary rulers enjoying a sort of internal autonomy. For example the Mahakshatrapa Chasthana of Sindhu.95 The same system of varying degree of dependence obtained in Arsacid and Han empires.96 Evidently the Kushan political and administrative structure was an admixture of both bureaucratic and feudal elements headed by a near absolute military monarchy.

b) Currency

Kushanas minted a large number of coins, suggesting a well developed money economy.97 They mainly struck gold and copper coins.98 Silver coins were minted only in the lower Indus area.99 This was evidently because of the acute scarcity of silver in other parts of the empire.100 This is why that the Kushanas allowed the private agencies to struck silver coins and circulate them throughout the empire.101 A noteworthy feature of the currency system of the Kushanas is that their

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94 Ibid., p. 312.
95 Ibid., pp 312-313.
97 Shrava, Satya, Kushana Numismatics, pp 1-30; Chattopadhyay, B. The Age of the Kushanas – A Numismatic Study, pp. 17-18, 36-59.
98 Ibid
99 Mukherjee, B.N., The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire, P. 358.
100 Shrava, Satya, op.cit., pp. 54-61; Chattopadhyay, B. op. cit., pp. 189-204.
101 Ibid., pp. 357-358.
gold and copper coins were meant for the circulation throughout the empire.\textsuperscript{102} Unlike the Indo-Greeks, Scytho-Parthians, early Kushanas and others, they were not essentially local in character.\textsuperscript{103} "From this point of view" says B.N. Mukherjee "the Kushanas were responsible for issuing the first imperial coinage of India."\textsuperscript{104} Even their coins were in circulation outside their empire.\textsuperscript{105} It seems that the Roman gold coinage influenced the Kushan policy of minting in gold as there is striking similarity between their weight standards at least up to the period of Nero.\textsuperscript{106}

c) Trade

We have seen above that the Kushana gold coins were also in circulation outside their empire.\textsuperscript{107} This phenomenon clearly refers to their participation in international trade for which Kushan empire was best suited.\textsuperscript{108} It covered a great part of Sino-Roman and Indo-Roman trade route.\textsuperscript{109} Also the routes from the west Asia to China and to the coast as well as to the interior of India passed through the Kushana empire.\textsuperscript{110} Considering the international trading activities of the Kushanas, it is not surprising to find goods of Kushan empire in different neighbouring countries and vice versa, monetization of Kushana economy, credit and banking system, affluent ruling class and trading

\begin{itemize}
\item 102 Ibid., PP. 55, 87, 97 and 358
\item 103 Ibid., P. 358.
\item 104 Ibid.
\item 105 Ibid., P. 358; JNSI, Vol. XXXVI P. 51.
\item 106 Ibid., P. 359; Periplus, Secs., 6, 9, 27 and 38
\item 107 Ibid., p. 358; JNSI, Vol. XXXVI, p. 51.
\item 108 Ibid., P. 360.
\item 109 Wheeler, M., Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers, P. 193. Vide., Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire}, P. 485, n. 233
\item 110 Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{Economic Factors in the Kushana History}, P. 14.
\end{itemize}
community, extraordinary craft sector and the existence of prosperous
towns and cities.\textsuperscript{111}

d) Canals

The evidence of the construction of big irrigation canals has come
from different areas of Central Asia.\textsuperscript{112} The remains of Kushana canals
have also been found in the Peshawar region.\textsuperscript{113}

a) Religious catholicity

Notwithstanding the fact that the Kushanas emphasized on the cults of
the emperor and the empire,\textsuperscript{114} and the individual emperors bestowed
patronage upon some selected cults,\textsuperscript{115} the fact, however, remains that,
like their contemporaries, namely, Parthians and Huns, tolerance and
syncretism constituted the hallmark of their religious policy.\textsuperscript{116} The
appearance of deities of different pantheons — Hellenistic, Iranian,
Brahmanical, Buddhist etc.— on the coins struck officially by the
Kushana sovereigns like Kanishka I and Huvishka, show in unmistakable

\textsuperscript{111} For details see Mani, B.R., \textit{The Kushan Civilization}; Harmatta, J.,(ed) \textit{History of

\textsuperscript{112} During the Kushan Period a number of canals were built, these include Rudaksa Kasan,
Faizabad, Nasaf-Denau, Kamashi built along lower reaches of the Kashka Darya river.
For details see Harmatta, J. (ed.) op. cit. pp. 266-267.; \textit{TAKE} (Tsentrnaya Aziya V
Kushansku Epokhu) Vol. I PP. 118-122; B.Gafurov and others, Kushan Studies in
USSR, P.9. Archaeological evidence has suggested that a large canal was excavate in
the 1st -3rd centuries A.D. in the Bishkent Valley at the Kushan stratum at Tali-Barzu
(near Samarkand) an iron plough share has been found. This agricultural implement and
similar implements were apparently used for ploughing land irrigated in a some what
systematic way (B.Y. Stavisky and G.M. Bongard-Levin, Central Asia in the Kushan
Period, P. 13).

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{TAKE}, Vol. I, P.102.

\textsuperscript{114} See Mukherjee, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{115} See Chapter ‘Religious Conditions’.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
terms the catholic attitude of the Kushanas towards the different faiths prevailing in the empire.117

We do not simply see the motifs of different faiths inscribed on their coins, there is also clear evidence of patronage being bestowed upon other faiths by many Kushan rulers. For example, Kanishka I, who is famous to have championed the cause of Buddhism, and is known to have constructed Buddhist viharas, is also believed to have constructed a dynastic sanctuary (at Surkh-Kotal) associated with the cult of fire.118

While Kanishka I, Vaishka and Huvishka are known to have had personal gravitation more towards Buddhism, Vima Khadphises, Vasudeva I, Kanishka III and Vasudeva II were more inclined towards Saivism. It should also be mentioned that the above mentioned Kushana rulers with Buddhist leanings were far-reachingely catholic than their successors who clung to Saiva faith.

b) Art and Architecture

The imperial Kushanas fostered a form of art and architecture in which the elements of Bactrian culture (the culture formed out of Greeco-Iranian and local elements) are predominant, but without being rigid to absorbing local influences.119 That they did not impose a specific art or patronize a particular school at the expense of others or refused to assimilate regional influences, is evidenced by the emergence of many schools though the most prominent are mainly three, namely, Mathura, Gandhara and Bactria, each having its own distinctive characteristics.

117 Ibid. Also see the chapter 'Coinage'.
118 For detailed account of Surk Kotal, see BSOAS, 1955, VOL. XVIII, pp. 366-367.
alongside with some commonalities and affinities. In this regard mention may also made of the dynastic sanctuaries at Mat and Surkh Kotal which show the faithful following of the Bactrian art, but the Mat shrine also betrays Indian influences.

The Numismatic art also represents the plural sources of Kushan culture. There is no doubt that the state owned or supported mints played up Bactrian elements, nevertheless the influences of other contemporary schools of art in the empire are also discernible. For example, stylistically the obverse devices of coins of Vima and his successors are based on the art of Bactria; yet the reverse type show the influences of Bactrian and Gandhara and, to some extent, the influences of Mathura school. The origin of a few of the stylistic traits may be traced to the art of the Roman empire. Like the Romans, the Kushanas used numismatic art as a medium of propaganda. Also like the Roman coins we find that the official die-cutters of Kushan empire created new iconic types, personifying ideas and nature. Kushana coins also depict deities belonging to various pantheons – Zoroastrian, Hellenic, Buddhist, brahmanic, various local cults of Bactria and the cults of Roman empire. Like numerous Roman coins, the reverse devices of the coins of Kanishka I and his successors are accompanied by descriptive legends.

121 Mukherjee, B.N., *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, P. 393
123 Ibid., PP. 18f, 21.
124 Ibid., P. 18.
125 Ibid., P. 81.
126 Ibid
127 Ibid

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To sum the art and architecture of Kushana period was underlined by two fundamental characteristics (1) plural sources on account of the movement of goods, ideas and people facilitated by the political unification of a vast area. (2) emergence of regional schools having heterogenous sources of inspiration.

c) Language and Script

The vast Kushana empire was understandably multilingual. However, the Kushanas showed special treatment to Bacterian language.\textsuperscript{128} The numismatic evidence shows that from the time of Kanishka I, it was used for official purposes.\textsuperscript{129} The Bacterian language is the middle Iranian language; linguistically it occupies an intermediary position between Pashto and Yidgha –Munji on the one hand, and Sogdian, Khwarezmian and Parthian on the other.\textsuperscript{130} It is not known whether the Kushanas continued to speak their mother tongue, Tokharian which they spoke in their motherland – Chinese Central Asia.\textsuperscript{131} Yet the influence of its word-fund on the Bacterian language can not be ruled out.

This, however, does not mean that the Kushanas did not use other regional languages for official purposes. For example, inscriptions of the period, recovered from the lower Indus region, Gandhara, Kapisa and the nearby areas are written in ‘North-western’ Prakrit language and in the

\textsuperscript{128} Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire}, pp. 251, 406-407.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., P. 407.
\textsuperscript{130} The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African studies, 1960, Vol. XXIII, P. 47. The language concerned has been named “Bactrian” by W.B. Henning. But a language called Bahlikais mentioned in the \textit{Natyasastra of Bharata} (XVIII, 48-52). Strabo observed that “the name Ariane is again so extended as to include some portions of Persian and Median territory, and even some of the northern parts of the Baktrians and Sogdians (territories), for these nations speak nearly the same language” (XV, 2.8.). Vide, Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire}, PP. 408-409 n. 408.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Journal of Royal Asiatic Society}, 1966, PP. 16f.
Kharoshti script. Prakrit in brahmi script was also used for the same purpose at Mat.\textsuperscript{132} Greek, which was used, \textit{inter alia}, unilingual legend on the coins of Miao and also on some pieces of Kanishka I, must have been a well known language in the northern parts of the empire.\textsuperscript{133} The period also witnessed remarkable development in Sanskrit literature. Kushanas, especially Kanishka I, patronized the great Sanskrit-cum Buddhist scholars namely Asvaghosa, Matricheta, Vasumitra, Dharmmapada, Kumaralata, and Nagarjuna. Cheraka, the famous physician of the time also wrote in Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{134}

While in the north-western parts of the subcontinent Kharoshti was the main script in use, Brahmi was employed for writing Sanskrit and Prakrit in the rest of India.\textsuperscript{135} In Transoxiana they used Sogdian language and Aramic script; and in Bactria Bactrian language and Greek script.\textsuperscript{136}

d) Society

As the Kushan age witnessed considerable movement of people, and they settled in new areas, the Kushan period, besides other things, led to the emergence of new powerful clans and castes in different areas, even forcing in some areas as in India, the legitimizing authorities to create a space for the new element elements in the otherwise fixed division of the society.\textsuperscript{137} Slavery was also a fairly widespread institution during the Kushanas.\textsuperscript{138} We are also told that, like the early Roman women, the

\textsuperscript{132} Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire}, P. 408
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., P. 408.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., P. 409-412.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., P. 406.
\textsuperscript{137} Angavi\textsuperscript{ia} (edited by Punyavijayaji), ch, 9, secs, 40-46, pp. 101-103.
\textsuperscript{138} Mukherjee, B.N., \textit{op. cit}, pp. 378-379.
Kushana women belonging to the upper class did not observe chastity and "the Kushanas regard their wives as mistresses."\textsuperscript{139}

\textbf{Summing up:}

One important feature of the Kushana civilization, that runs like a thread through different aspects of the vast Kushana empire, is the plurality of its sources. Certainly it was essentially a prototype of ‘global civilization’ in that we find it a remarkable synthesis of various civilizations with which the Kushanas encountered right from their emergence on the borders of China through the establishment of a vast Central Asian empire, spreading upto the heart of India. Having lived in the neighbourhood of the China, the influence of Chinese civilization upon them is quite understandable. They also learnt from many cultures which they met during their long sojourn via Central Asia till they ultimately reached Bactria which was the hub of Greeco-Iranian civilization, and which for the reasons of its splendour and fame as a great centre of civilization was made by the Kushanas their permanent capital. Moreover the routes which came under the control of the Kushanas connected China with the West Asia and India, bringing the different civilizations at their doorsteps. It may also be mentioned that the Kushanas had also trade and other relations with the Romans. With the expansion of their empire upto northern India, they tapped the resources of another great ancient civilization. Thus the Kushana civilization emerged from the cross currents of six great civilizations of the time.

\textsuperscript{139} W. Cureton, \textit{Spicilegium Scyriacum, Containing \{Remains of Bardaisn, Meliton, Amgbrose and Mar Bar Serapion\}, PP. III and 30; Journal of Asiatic Society, 1967, Vol. IX PP. 255-256,
namely, Chinese, Central Asian, Iranian, Greek, Roman and Indian. However, while the elements of these civilizations are noticeable in the different parts of the Kushana empire, the emergence of regional cultures with disparate responses to these cultures is also abundantly clear. Yet no regional culture of Kushan times can be explained without keeping into account the global civilizational traits of Kushan culture and their far and wide dissemination in the Kushan empire.
### TABLE II

Sequence of Kushan kings as suggested by Rabtak Inscription

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources: Kings:</th>
<th>Rabatak inscription</th>
<th>Other Inscription</th>
<th>Coins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kujula Kadphises</td>
<td>Kozoulo Kadphiso</td>
<td>Kushan years Azes era 122-136</td>
<td>Kozolo Kadphises (Kujula Kata Kapasa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vima I Tak (to)</td>
<td>Ooemo Taktoo</td>
<td>Vima Tak (to) year 279</td>
<td>Soter Megas/Vema Tak…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vima II Kadphises</td>
<td>Ooemo Kadphiso</td>
<td>Vima Kadphises year 284 or 287</td>
<td>Ooemo Kadphises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanishka I</td>
<td>Kaneshko</td>
<td>Kanishka years 1-23</td>
<td>Kaneshki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huvishka</td>
<td>Huvishka years 26-64</td>
<td>Oeshko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasudeva I</td>
<td>Vasudeva years 64-98</td>
<td>Bazodeo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanishka II</td>
<td>Kanishka years 5-17</td>
<td>Kaneshko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasishka</td>
<td>Vasishka/ Vajheshka years 22-30</td>
<td>Bazeshko</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanishka III</td>
<td>Kanishka year 41</td>
<td>Kaneshko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasudeva II</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bazodeo (Vasu)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaka</td>
<td>Shaka (subject to Samudragupta)</td>
<td>(Shaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kipunada</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kipunanda)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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