

# Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art

Edited by  
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# Numismatic evidence and the date of Kaniṣka I

Joe Cribb

The dating of sculpture from Gandhāra and its related regions is a difficult thing. As there are only a handful of sculptures bearing dates, all in unspecified eras, any attempts at dating have to rely on a series of understandings, based on archaeological context, material and stylistic analysis, and iconographic development. What is often presumed without comment is the underlying chronological structure which gives such dating a relationship with the eras in use today. This structure has largely been constructed from four sources of evidence: dated inscriptions, numismatic sequences, the scarce references in historical texts, and attempts to match the era used by the Kushans with other Indian eras. Unfortunately the underlying chronological structure built from these has been in a state of flux since it was first attempted. The proposal made in 2001 by Harry Falk that Kaniṣka I's first year was in AD 127, based on the information about the relationship between the Kushan and Śaka eras in an astrological text, the *Yavanajātaka* by Sphujiddhvaja (Falk 2001), was the first to call on a relatively contemporary source with concrete evidence. This proposal has become widely accepted, even though its implications have not yet been fully assimilated into the discourse on Gandhāran art. This date has also not yet been applied to the broader chronological structure, as it comes from a different form of evidence. So parts of the chronological structures are still attached to earlier solutions, based on different resolutions of the evidence. This paper attempts to show that the solution reached by Falk from the astrological text can also be demonstrated by recourse to the use of numismatic and inscriptional evidence, thereby suggesting that Falk's proposal has important implications for solving the problem of Gandhāran chronology and accordingly that of Gandhāran art too.

## A key date in Gandhāran chronology: the accession date of Kaniṣka I

It is now widely accepted that the proposal made in 2001 by Harry Falk dating Kaniṣka I's year 1 to AD 127 provides a satisfactory basis to underpin the chronology of Gandhāra and establishes a framework for dating Gandhāran sculpture and its relationship with Buddhist art created elsewhere in the subcontinent. Falk's proposal for dating Kaniṣka I's era was based on his interpretation of a passage in the relatively contemporary Indian astrological text, the *Yavanajātaka* which describes the relationship between the Śaka era and a Kushan era beginning in AD 227 (Falk 2001; 2004; 2007; see also Mak 2013: 96–98).<sup>1</sup> Falk interpreted the Kushan era as the second century of the era begun by Kaniṣka I a century earlier, i.e. in AD 127.<sup>2</sup> There are, however, still some scholars who prefer to stick to the former linking of Kaniṣka I's year 1 with the Śaka era (e.g. Chakravarty 2014: 47, 51–52; Singh 2009: 376–377), making its year 1 equal to AD 78, even though the text refers to a Kushan era which is different to the Śaka era. Mukherjee (1982; 2004: 395–405) was the first to bring the *Yavanajātaka* to the attention of Kushan studies, but vehemently adhered to the dating of Kaniṣka I's first year to AD 78. There is also a minority

<sup>1</sup> Pingree (1959: 282; 1961) dated the text to year 191 of the Śaka era, i.e. AD 269, and Falk initially concurred with this dating (Falk 2001: 121–122), but later questioned it (2007: 143). Mak (2013: 68–71) has since demonstrated this to be a mistaken reading of the manuscripts. The early date of the text which the manuscripts preserve, however, seems assured on the basis that it makes reference to a third century AD usage of a Kushan era.

<sup>2</sup> Falk's rereading of the *Yavanajātaka* showed that the ancient astrologer used the Śaka era, beginning in AD 78, to calculate the beginning of a heavenly cycle and as an afterthought added that the same calculation could be done using the Kushan era if one reckoned on the basis that the Kushan era began 149 years after the Śaka era (Falk 2001: 127), i.e. the Kushan era began in AD  $78 + 149 = \text{AD } 227$ . Falk then reasoned that this was not the date of year 1 of Kaniṣka I's era, but year 1 of a second century with the hundreds dropped, therefore Kaniṣka I's year 1 was a hundred years earlier, i.e. AD 127 (Falk 2001: 130).

view (Schindel 2009; 2011; 2012; 2014) which accepts Falk's reading of the text of the *Yavanajātaka*, but identifies the Kushan era as Kaniṣka I's era without any adjustment for allowing for a second century.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate from other data, particularly numismatic and epigraphic, that Falk's proposal that Kaniṣka I's era began in AD 127 is sufficiently sound to accept it as the basis for constructing Gandhāran chronology. Various recent discoveries and insights have added to our understanding of the chronology of the Kushan era used by Kaniṣka I and his successors. The first of these is the Rabatak inscription, discovered in 1993 (Sims-Williams & Cribb 1995/6; Sims-Williams 2004), which gives explicit confirmation that the Kushan era was introduced by Kaniṣka I and lists the first four Kushan kings, Kujūla Kadphises, Wima Takto, Wima Kadphises and Kaniṣka I, in a direct line of descent. The second is Rukhuṇa's reliquary inscription which documents a synchronism between two eras used by the Kushans before Kaniṣka I, the year 73 of the Azes era, introduced by an Indo-Scythian king Azes, and year 201 of a Greek era, of uncertain origin (Salomon 2005<sup>3</sup>). This shows that Azes era year 1 = Greek era year 129. The others are the less obvious, but equally significant, series of coin overstrikes<sup>4</sup> which create external chronological links for the beginning and end of the Kushan period.

The chronology presented here differs radically from previous suggestions about Kushan chronology as it seeks to create a framework into which all evidence, early and late, can be fitted. The majority of earlier proposals focus on just one aspect of the problem, such as linking Kaniṣka I's era to the Śaka era, or trying to explain the limited references in Chinese sources to such a dating or any other, without taking account of the fact that, whatever date for the first year of Kaniṣka I's era is selected, the beginning and the end of the dynasty also need to link into contemporary events. What the AD 127 date proposed by Falk offers is a precision in constructing the framework.

### The Kushan era

Falk's view that the Kushan era mentioned in the *Yavanajātaka* is a second century of the era commenced by Kaniṣka I is based on his view that, in the light of other evidence, AD 227 is too late for Kaniṣka I. He accepted the views of Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (1949: 235; 1986) and Rosenfield (1967: 106) that the surviving inscriptional dates can be divided into two separate centuries, one following the other.<sup>5</sup> The second century was suggested on the basis of their analysis of the artistic style of dated sculptures. It can also be demonstrated by the coins of Vasiṣka, as first identified by Robert Göbl (1965). Vasiṣka's dated inscriptions cover years 20–30 and until the coins were identified he was identified as a co-ruler with Kaniṣka I, years 1–23, and Huviṣka, years 25–60. His coins, however, make it clear that he ruled after Vāsudeva I whose inscriptions cover the years 68–98, so his dates are in the Kushan era starting c. AD 227 as used in the *Yavanajātaka*, i.e. the second century of the era initiated by Kaniṣka I in AD 127.

As well as locating the reign of Vasiṣka, analysis of the designs, style and control marks of the coinage, has also positioned two other kings mentioned in inscriptions dated in the second century. Kaniṣka II has inscriptions dated years 4–18 and Kaniṣka III, son of Vasiṣka, has an inscription dated year 41. Later

<sup>3</sup> <[https://www.Gāndhārī.org/a\\_inscription.php?catid=CKI0405](https://www.Gāndhārī.org/a_inscription.php?catid=CKI0405)> (accessed 1 January 2018).

<sup>4</sup> An overstrike occurs when a pre-existing coin is reused as the blank for making a new coin and overstruck with new dies with new designs. An overstrike can be recognized by having evidence of its original designs alongside its new ones. Its value is in indicating the sequence of production between the old understruck and the new overstruck designs. Overstrikes normally take place through the reuse of current coins, but can take place after a long gap between production of the old and new coins. When several examples of overstrikes of one design on the same under type have been found it suggest that the understruck coins were in circulation when the overstriking was done.

<sup>5</sup> Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (1949: 235) suggested that the second century was an extension of the first century of Kaniṣka I's era with a missing hundred; Rosenfield (1967: 106) suggested a second era was commenced about 100 years after the start of Kaniṣka I's era. See also Bracey 2017: 33.

Kushan rulers known from coins, but not from inscriptions follow Vasiṣka: Vāsudeva II, Mahi, Ṣaka and Kipunadha (Oddy & Cribb 1998).

The *Yavanajātaka* offers contemporary evidence of the use of the Kushan era, even though Mak (2013: 68–71) has dismissed the interpretations of the text which suggested internal evidence for the date of its composition in AD 269. The citing of a Kushan era of AD 227, however, suggests that the composition of the text took place in the period AD 227–326, because if written later its author would be prompted to refer to a Kushan era in a later century, i.e. in AD 327, 427, 527 and so on.<sup>6</sup>

### The Kushan king list

The Rabatak inscription, discovered in Afghanistan in 1993 and translated by Nicholas Sims-Williams (Sims-Williams & Cribb, 1995/6; Sims-Williams 1998 and 2004), provides a list of the first four Kushan kings, describing them as in direct succession, from father to son: Kujūla Kadphises, Wima Takto, Wima Kadphises and Kaniṣka I.<sup>7</sup> Change and continuity in the designs used on Kushan coins enable a sequence of issues to be established from the beginning to the end of the dynasty. The coins of the first three Kushan kings can be ordered by their gradual movement from diversity to uniformity of design, by denomination systems and their script styles (Cribb 2014: 94; 100–101). The order in which they were issued corresponds with the sequence presented by the Rabatak inscription. The final issue of gold coins by Wima Kadphises uses the same exceptional script style for its Greek inscriptions as the first issue of Kaniṣka I (Göbl 1984: types 18 and 19 linked with types 25–28; Bracey 2009: 41).

The coin sequence is based on a number of factors relating to the denomination system, metal quality, weight standards, design content and style, inscription language, script and style. For example (Table 1) an approximate sequence for the Kushan kings can be determined through the inscriptions on the coins. The first three kings use Greek and Gāndhārī (Kharoṣṭhī script) inscriptions with some coins using only Greek. The fourth king starts with Greek inscriptions but then replaces them with Bactrian inscriptions (Greek script). The fifth and sixth king use Bactrian, but during the sixth king's reign Brāhmī control marks are introduced. Bactrian inscriptions and Brāhmī control marks continue to be used by the seventh to tenth kings. The tenth king also added the first part of his name in Brāhmī in place of one of the control marks. By the end of his reign the Bactrian inscriptions had become illegible. The eleventh and twelfth kings' coins continued to feature the king's name in Brāhmī together with illegible Bactrian inscriptions. The late coins of the twelfth king and those of the thirteenth king no longer included an illegible Bactrian inscription.

According to the coin sequence, the direct successor of Kaniṣka I is Huviṣka, confirmed by an overlapping of the use of a coin die between these reigns (Göbl 1984: types 80 and 314). Likewise there is an overlapping coin die between Huviṣka and his successor Vāsudeva I (Cribb & Bracey in preparation; cf. Göbl 1984, types 277 and 510). The sequence of the king list created by the coins from Kaniṣka I to Vāsudeva II is confirmed by the Kaniṣka I era dates found in the inscriptions naming them: years 1–23 for Kaniṣka I, 25–60 for Huviṣka and 64–98 for Vāsudeva I.

<sup>6</sup> The practice of using an era which restarts a new century every hundred years is similar to another era still known of as the *Laukika* in modern India. There is such a close relationship between the *Laukika* as used today and the Kushan era, with a gap between them of just 3 to 4 years that it seems very likely that they are the same era which has shifted its century start date since its inception (Bracey 2017: 44). This attribution of the Kushan era convincingly argued by Bracey is not new as it was already proposed in a previous century by Smith (1903: 7): 'This long-standing problem I propose to solve by referring this series of [Kushan] dates to the *Laukika* or popular era...'

<sup>7</sup> Mukherjee's (1998) attempt to reread and retranslate the Rabatak inscription (in a language and script in which he had little expertise) sought to reflect his views on the chronology of the Kushans rather than the realities of the text as read and translated by Sims-Williams, who was able to confirm and extend his readings by direct examination of the inscription in Kabul (Sims-Williams 2004).

Table 1. Example of sequence of coin issues – according to use of languages/scripts.

	King	Greek and Gāndhārī	Greek	Bactrian	Bactrian/ Brāhmī control marks	Bactrian and Brāhmī name and control marks	Brāhmī name and control marks but illegible Bactrian	Brāhmī name and control marks
1	Kujūla Kadphises	x	x					
2	Wima Takto	x	x					
3	Wima Kadphises	x	x					
4	Kaniṣka I		x	x				
5	Huviṣka			x				
6	Vāsudeva I			x	x			
7	Kaniṣka II				x			
8	Vasiṣka				x			
9	Kaniṣka III				x			
10	Vāsudeva II				x	x	x	
11	Mahi						x	
12	Ṣaka						x	x
13	Kipunadha							x

The coin sequence also creates an order for the kings following Vāsudeva I, through their shared use of control marks and stylistic features. The last issues of Vāsudeva I (Göbl 1984: types 532–536) have a small Brāhmī *ha* control mark also continued on Kaniṣka II’s first issues (Göbl 1984: types 539–546). The last issues of Kaniṣka II (Göbl 1984: types 548, 550, 552, 553 and 554) and the first issues of Vasiṣka (Göbl 1984: types 554 and 556) use the Brāhmī control marks *vi* and *tha* and the Kharoṣṭhī control mark *pa*. The last issues of Vasiṣka (Göbl 1984: types 567, 568) and the first issue of Vāsudeva II (Göbl 1984: type 569) share the Brāhmī control mark *khu*. The position of Kaniṣka III appears to place him as Vāsudeva II’s early contemporary, suggesting a succession dispute which Vāsudeva II won. Kaniṣka III’s coins (Göbl 1984: types 634 and 635) continue the Brāhmī *ga* control mark used by Vasiṣka (Göbl 1984: 563 and 564), but are then replaced by coins in the name of Vāsudeva II with which they share the Brāhmī control mark *gha* (Göbl 1984: types 628,<sup>8</sup> 629, 630, 631, 633, 634 and 635). The inscriptions of Vasiṣka have dates from years 24 to 30, but the sequence of coins shows his reign fell after Vāsudeva I and Kaniṣka II, hence the suggestion that there is a second century of Kushan dates. Although the picture is less clear for the reign of Kaniṣka II, because his dates in a second century correspond with the dates of Kaniṣka I in the first century, there is broad agreement that some inscriptions dated between year 4 and year 18 could

<sup>8</sup> Falk (2015: 127) links some of these coins (Göbl 1984: types 628, 630 and 631) with the inscription dated in the reign of a king *vaskuśānasya*, dated year 22 (i.e. early among the inscriptions of Vasiṣka) because they bear variations of the corrupt inscription  $\text{ḌAONANO ḌAO BAZKOPANO}$ . The earliest (Göbl 1984: type 633, with the same control marks as the last coins of Kaniṣka III, Göbl 635) correctly written coins of these types have the name of Vāsudeva II  $\text{ḌAONANO ḌAO BAZ[O]ḌHO KOPANO}$ , and the progression to the corrupt version can be traced (the die engraver mistook the end of the king’s name for the beginning of  $\text{KOPANO}$  and then filled the resulting space at the end of the inscription with a repeat of  $\text{KOPANO}$ ). These coins were issued after coins in the name of Kaniṣka III, who succeeded Vasiṣka in part of his realm. They should not be anachronistically linked with an inscription from the beginning of the reign of Vasiṣka.

fall in the second century and therefore represent dates in the reign of Kaniṣka II (Falk 2015: 126–127).<sup>9</sup> The reign of Kaniṣka III is represented by one inscription dated year 41, which must fall in the same era as those of Vasiṣka, who is identified in the inscription as his father (the Ara inscription, Konow 1929: 162–165). There are no inscriptions which can be assigned to the reign of Vāsudeva II,<sup>10</sup> but the coin sequence suggests that his reign began, like that of Kaniṣka III, after that of Vasiṣka, so commenced somewhere between the years 30 and 41 of the second century.

The coin sequence after Vāsudeva II is not based on shared monograms, but on stylistic criteria. All the gold coins of the last Kushan kings have identical designs, showing the king standing making an offering at a small fire altar on the obverse and an enthroned goddess Ardochsho on the reverse. The sequence can be demonstrated through minor stylistic adjustments of the design (Cribb and Bracey in preparation) and moves from Vāsudeva II's last issues (Göbl 1984, types 576 and 577) to the issues of Mahi (Göbl 1984, types 582 and 588) and the first issues of Ṣaka (Göbl 1984, types 580 and 589). The late issues of Ṣaka (Göbl 1984, type 593) are followed by the first issue of Kipunadha (Göbl 1984, type 595), whose last issue (Göbl 1984, type 596) is followed by Kidarite issues (Göbl 1984, types 598–601, 603 and 605).

The later Kushan kings are not known from inscriptions, but are reconstructed from their coin inscriptions. On the basis that the coins of Vāsudeva II have his name written on them in Bactrian BAZOΔHO and in Brāhmī *vasu*, the kings who follow are named after their Brāhmī inscriptions: *mahi*, *ṣaka* (or *ṣāka*), *kipunadha*. Ṣaka should be a contemporary of the first Gupta emperor Samudragupta and seems to be referred to in his Allahabad inscription as *daivaputra ṣāhi-ṣāhānuṣāhi-śakamuruṇḍaiḥ*, as one of the tributaries of the Gupta king (Fleet 1888: 8, line 23). The spelling of the king's name as *śaka* in place of *ṣaka* is problematic, but could represent two different transliterations into Sanskrit from the name in the Bactrian language used by the Kushans. The titles used are those of the Kushan kings. The word *murūṇḍa* could represent the second half of the king's name in the same way that Vāsudeva's name was only represented by its first half in the Brāhmī inscription on the coins. The Sanskrit inflection of *murūṇḍaiḥ* giving a plural form has been used to suggest translating the inscription as representing various peoples, but the use of plural here could simply be honorific.

Apart from shared control marks and stylistic features, the coin sequence is also supported by two other factors, the falling gold content of the gold coinages from Wima Kadphises to the end of the dynasty (Oddy and Cribb 1998; Bracey and Oddy 2010) and the falling weight standard of the copper coinage from Kaniṣka I to the end (Jongeward & Cribb 2015: 7–8, 151; Bracey 2017: 30).

## The Greek era

The discovery of Rukhuṇa's reliquary inscription (Salomon 2005; Baums 2012: 212–213) added another feature to the sequencing of the early Kushan kings. The discovery of a Greek era which could be dated in relation to the Azes era (Azes era year 1 = Greek era year 129) suggested the identity of the dates in the inscriptions of the second and third Kushan kings (Cribb 2005: 213–4; 221–3) as representing the Greek era. The first king's inscriptions appear to be dated in the Azes era, so the relationship between their dated inscriptions could be quantified. The inscriptions of Kujūla Kadphises (Panjar inscription of year 122, Konow 1929: 67–70; Taxila inscription of year 136, Konow 1929: 70–77; Baums 2012: 237, no. 30) do not name him directly, but use the appellation Kushan, with which he was identified on coins of the Heraus type (Cribb 1996) and the Sind type (Mitchiner 2004, vol. 1: 619). The attribution of the inscriptions in the name of king (of kings) Kushan to Kujūla Kadphises are reinforced by the inscription

<sup>9</sup> Some caution should, however, be applied to this consensus, as it is based on very thin evidence (Bracey 2017: 35, 52 n. 121).

<sup>10</sup> The inscription dated in the reign of Vāsudeva, read by Mukherjee (1987; 2004b) as year 140 or 170 of the era of Kaniṣka, has now been convincingly reread by Falk (2002/3: 41–45) as dated to year 80 of the Kaniṣka I era.

of year 126 (Priyavamsa's reliquary, Baums 2012: 235–6, no. 28) which lacks a royal name but states that it was inscribed in the reign of the *yaua*, a Kushan title (Kushan *yabgu*) used only by Kujūla Kadphises.<sup>11</sup>

The dated inscriptions of the second and third king Wima Takto and Wima Kadphises are in a different era with dates for both in the 200s. Wima Takto's inscription (Dasht-e Nawar; Sims-Williams and Cribb 1995/6: 95) is dated 279 and Wima Kadphises' inscription (Khalatse; Konow 1929: 79–81, Cribb 1997: 230 n.32) is dated 287.

Among the Kushan period inscriptions at Mathurā there are two further inscriptions which appear to be in the same era and refer to unnamed kings: year 270 (Lüders 1961: 162–4, no. 77A/123) and year 299 (Lüders no 78; Konow 1934). Given the family relationship between Kujūla Kadphises and these two kings these dates cannot be in the Azes era. The most plausible explanation is to identify them as dates in the Greek era (Cribb 2005: 214, 222). Using the relationship expressed in Rukhuṇa's reliquary inscription, there are only six years between the last of Kujūla Kadphises Azes era inscriptions and the earliest Kushan inscription in the Greek era at Mathurā, suggesting that it be attributed to the reign of Wima Takto.<sup>12</sup> The Azes era inscriptions of Kujūla Kadphises and the Greek era inscriptions of his son and grandson can now be calculated within a common system (Table 2).

### The gap between the Azes era and Kaniṣka I's era

In a paper presented in 1992 (not published until 1997; Cribb 1997: 223–226) I suggested that calculation of the chronological framework for Gandhāran history should be based on the relationship between the Azes and Kaniṣka I eras, which together provided a continuous dating system over almost three hundred years. The only uncertainty was how to join the two eras into a single sequence. In 1992, many of the important recent discoveries about the period, such as the Rabatak inscription and the Rukhuṇa reliquary inscription had not yet been made, but what was clear was the gap between the two eras. The proposed identity the dating system used in pre-Kaniṣka I inscriptions of the reigns of Wima Takto and Wima Kadphises as the Greek era allows a more precise definition of that gap, as its length appears to now depend on the length of the reign of Wima Kadphises. In my 2005 article (Cribb 2005: 214), I suggested that the gap between these two sets of dates was probably very small. If Wima Kadphises reign had begun by Greek era year 287 and still continued until year 299, then his reign was at least 13 years long. The closed gap between Wima Kadphises and Kaniṣka I led me to suggest in the same article that the new era started by Kaniṣka I could be a continuation of the Greek era, as his era's year 1 and

<sup>11</sup> The attribution of these inscriptions to Kujūla is further reinforced by the evidence that Kujūla Kadphises was the first Kushan ruler whose coins circulated in Taxila (Khan & Cribb 2012) and that he issued coins simply using the name Kushan in Bactria (Cribb 1996) and in Sind (Mitchiner 2004: no. 1910) and was so named in the inscription on his son Wima Takto's portrait sculpture at Mathurā (*kuṣāṇaputro* son of Kushan).

<sup>12</sup> The palaeographic style and the content of both inscriptions places them early in the Kushan period as such inscriptions only began to appear at Mathurā during the previous period of satrapal rule in the city (Salomon 1998: 143–4) and continued into the Kushan period. There are no royal inscriptions of this kind before the Kushan period so the attribution of the dates in these inscriptions to the Kushans is suggested by the use of royal titles in both inscriptions. The first Kushan king to rule in Mathurā appears from coin finds (Cribb 2014: 98) to be Wima Takto, so the year 270 inscription, dated before his Dasht-e Nawar inscription of 279, should be during his reign. The year 299 inscription, made after Wima Kadphises' year 287 inscription, but before the adoption of the Kaniṣka I era at Mathurā, was most likely inscribed during Wima Kadphises' reign. The Yavananarājya era year 116 inscription (Mukherjee 1992; Fussman 1993: 111–117) found at Mathurā appears to belong to a different Greek era to that of the Rukhuṇa reliquary inscription. Its script style, hybrid Prakrit-Sanskrit language and its content place it among the dedicatory inscriptions which were made at Mathurā during the period of satrapal and early Kushan rule, i.e. during the first to early second century AD (Salomon 1998: 87–88). Fussman (1993: 117) proposed to date the inscription to an era based on the reign of Menander, i.e. 116 = c. 39 BC. Mukherjee (1992) suggested it should be dated in the Azes era, giving a date c. AD 59. The dating of the inscription to the period of the satraps and early Kushans is more in accord with Mukherjee's identification of this Greek era with the Azes era, which would give a date for the inscription c. AD 70 (based on the revised start of the Azes era to c. 46 BC).

Table 2. Coin and epigraphic sequence.

	King	Rabatak king list	dated inscriptions	die links	shared control marks	shared stylistic features
1	Kujūla Kadphises	x	Azes era 122, 126, 136			x
2	Wima Takto	x	Greek era 270 = Azes era 142 Greek era 279 = Azes era 151			x
3	Wima Kadphises	x	Greek era 287 = Azes era 159 Greek era 299 = Azes era 171			x
4	Kaniṣka I	x	Kaniṣka era 1–23	x		x
5	Huviṣka		Kaniṣka era 25–60	x		x
6	Vāsudeva I		Kaniṣka era 64–98	x	x	x
7	Kaniṣka II		Kushan era [4–18]		x	x
8	Vasiṣka		Kushan era 22–30		x	x
9	Kaniṣka III		Kushan era 41		x	x
10	Vāsudeva II				x	x
11	Mahi					x
12	Ṣaka					x
13	Kipunadha					x

the Greek era's year 301 must have coincided or been so close that such a resolution could be used as a working hypothesis.

When this solution is coupled with Falk's proposal that Kaniṣka I's era began in AD 127, as I proposed in 2005, an absolute chronology for about three hundred years can be achieved for the Gandhāra region, starting with the accession of the Indo-Scythian king Azes I in c. 46 BC and reaching through till c. AD 267 in the reign of Kaniṣka III. Subsequently, using different evidence, it has been suggested that the Azes era began in c. 47 BC (Falk & Bennett 2009).

The other widely held dating systems for Kaniṣka I's year 1 and Azes' year 1 cannot create a sensible solution for the gap between the reign of Wima Kadphises and Kaniṣka I as is now indicated by the evidence of the Rukhuṇa reliquary inscription's relationship between the the Azes era year 73 and the Greek era year 201. The most widespread alternative for the start date of Kaniṣka I's era is the identification of it with the Śaka era beginning in AD 78 (Salomon 1998: 182–4; Chakravarti 2014: 46–50; Singh 2009: 376–7). This proposal would make the Azes era begin c. 93 BC (i.e. AD 78 minus 171 years of the Azes era before Kaniṣka year 1), too early for the evidence we have for Azes I from his coins. The Azes era has been widely identified as the Vikrama era beginning in 58 BC (Salomon 1998: 182; Fussman 2015: 16) which points to a date for Kaniṣka era year 1 after AD 113. This dating excludes the possibility of Kaniṣka I's era being identical with the Śaka era, but the Azes era = the Vikrama era of 58 BC remains possible, dating the 171 inscription (Greek era 299) to AD 113, only a 14 year gap before Falk's date of c. AD 127 for year 1 of Kaniṣka I's era. The alternative dating of the Azes era year 1 to c. 47/46 BC closes the gap further to 2 or 3 years. The length of Wima Kadphises' reign would therefore be 25 years if Azes year 1 = 58 BC, or 13 or 14 years if Azes year 1 = 47/46 BC.

Schindel's suggestion that the Kushan era mentioned in the *Yavanaḡātaka*, beginning in AD 227 is the era of Kaniṣka I (Schindel 2011: 6) creates a different form of conflict with the evidence of the Rukhuṇa

reliquary inscription. His suggestion results in an implausible gap of 102/3 (Azes era year 1 = 46/7 BC) or more years between Wima Kadphises and his son Kaniška I (see further below).

**External corroboration – the numismatic context of the early Kushans**

The construction of the Kushan king list using Falk’s dating of the Kaniška I era year 1 = AD 127 and my suggestion of a date of 46 BC for year 1 of the Azes era and the connection between both these eras and the Greek era (Kaniška era year 1 = Greek era year 301 = Azes era 173) produces a coherent account of the progression of the Kushan dynasty to which AD dates can be attached (Table 3). A test of the reliability of this can be made using the numismatic context of the coins of these kings.

The connections between the coins of the first Kushan king and those of the first Indo-Parthian king Gondophares have long been recognized. Kujūla Kadphises’ coins have been reported overstruck on coins of Gondophares (Figures 1a, 1b and 2; Mitchiner 1976, VIII: 681–2, type 1044c; Widemann 1972). Gondophares coins have also been seen overstruck by coins of the Indo-Scythian satrap Zeionises (Mitchiner 1976, VII: 594, type 883d). One series of Kujūla Kadphises (bull and camel type; Jongeward & Cribb 2015: 35–36, no. 114–124) copper coins copied the designs of Zeionises’ coins, including retaining a blundered version of Zeionises’ inscription. This positions Kujūla Kadphises’ reign as starting after the commencement of the reigns of Gondophares and Zeionises.<sup>13</sup> The coins of Gondophares can be dated by comparison with Parthian coins. One issue of Gondophares copper coins (Senior 2001, II: 151, type 215) uses a design (Sellwood 1980: 202, type 63; king on horseback being approached by a standing goddess), featured on silver coins of the Parthian king Artabanus II (AD 10–38), issued in AD 27. The portrait used on Gondophares coins (Senior 2001, II: 149, type 210) has the loop of his diadem ties in triangular form containing a circular loop, which is the variety featured on coins of Artabanus II (Sellwood 1980: 200,

Table 3. Kushan king list.

	King	dated inscriptions	AD
		Azes era year 1 = 46 BC Kaniška era year 1 = AD 127	
1	Kujūla Kadphises	Azes era 122 Azes era 126 Azes era 136	76 80 90
2	Wima Takto	Greek era 270 = Azes era 142 Greek era 279 = Azes era 151	96 105
3	Wima Kadphises	Greek era 287 = Azes era 159 Greek era 299 = Azes era 171	113 125
4	Kaniška I	Kaniška era 1–23	127–149
5	Huviška	Kaniška era 25–60	151–186
6	Vāsudeva I	Kaniška era 64–98	190–224
7	Kaniška II	Kushan era [4–18]	230–244
8	Vasiška	Kushan era 22–30	248–256
9	Kaniška III	Kushan era 41	267
10	Vāsudeva II		
11	Mahi		
12	Ṣaka		
13	Kipunadha		

<sup>13</sup> The inscription of Zeionises found at Taxila has frequently been misunderstood as containing a date, but its context makes it clear that the numerals *ka 191* record the weight in *kārshāpaṇas* of the silver vessel on which they are written (Cribb 1999: 196).



Figure 1a. Copper tetradrachm of Kushan king Kujūla Kadphises imitation Hermaeus Heracles type (Jongeward & Cribb 2015: 30–31, plate 3, nos. 45–56), Taxila Museum 558.01 (Sirkap find), 7.20g, 24mm (Khan & Cribb 2012: 153, 197, no. 1360), overstruck obverse on reverse on copper coin of Indo-Parthian king Gondophares (as Figure 2). (Photograph courtesy of Professor Dr. Gul Rahim Khan.)



Figure 1b. Drawing of Figure 1a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 2. Copper coin of Gondophares, enthroned king/ Nike type (Senior 2001: 150, type 214), British Museum 1859,0220.142, 7.03g, 22mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

type 62), issued in AD 21–22. Likewise the triangular diadem loop, with a single line within, on another of his issues (Senior 2001, II: 149, type 212) resembles that on the coins of Artabanus II's predecessors Phraataces (AD 2 BC – AD 4), dated AD 2 (Sellwood 1980: 189, type 58) and Vonones I (AD 8–12), dated AD 9 and 10, (Sellwood 1980: 194, type 60; 197, type 61). The Nike reverse design of some of Gondophares coins (Senior 2001, II: 149–150 and 158; types 212, 213, 214 and 222) also derives from Parthian silver issues of Vonones I (Sellwood 1980: 194–195, type 60).<sup>14</sup>

The dating of the prototypes of Gondophares' coins places his reign in the first century AD, aligning them with that of two other sources of evidence for dating his reign. Firstly an inscription datable to the Azes era year 103 also records the 26th year of Gondophares' reign (Takht-i-Bāhī inscription; Konow 1929: 57–62). Using the dating for the Azes era discussed above the reign of Gondophares should have begun in AD 32 and he was therefore still ruling in Gandhāra in AD 57. This places his dated inscription of Azes era 103 nineteen years before Kujūla Kadphises inscription dated Azes year 122. Secondly the dating created by the links with Parthian coin designs supports the historical significance of the less reliable reference to a first century AD king Gondophares in the early third century Syriac text *Acts of St Thomas* (Moffett 1998: 25–36).

<sup>14</sup> Senior 1997: 4–8 and 2001, I: 108–110 has argued against dating of Gondophares coins to the first century AD, placing them in the second half of the first century BC, ruling until c. 19 BC on the basis of the similarity of their fabric with Parthian coins of that period, rejecting the links outlined here.



Figure 3a. Base silver tetradrachm of Wima Takto, bilingual king on horseback/ Zeus type (Cribb 2014: 113, 127, figure 27), British Museum 1894,0506.797, 8.89g 21mm, overstruck on base silver tetradrachm of Indo-Parthian king Sasan (as Figure 4). (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 3b. Drawing of figure 3a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 4. Base silver tetradrachm of Sasan, king on horseback/ Zeus type (Senior 2001: 169–171, type 242) British Museum 1990,0515.181, 8.65g, 21mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

The relationship between Gondophares and Kujūla Kadphises is further confirmed by the relationships between the coins of his successors and both later Kushan coins and Parthian coins. Overstrikes by Wima Takto's Soter Megas types on coins of a later Gondopharid king Sasan<sup>15</sup> (Figures 3a, 3b and 4; Sims-Williams and Cribb 1995/6: 120, type 1; fig. 11b; Cribb 2014: 97, figs. 27–28; Cribb 2015: 29; Senior 2009) show the continuing chronological relationship between the first Kushan kings and their Indo-Parthian neighbours.<sup>16</sup> In turn Wima Takto's coins were overstruck by a later Indo-Parthian king Pakores (Senior 2001, II: 184 n. 3). The designs of Indo-Parthian coins also continue to relate to Parthian coins. The silver coins of Pakores (Senior 2001, II: 184), Abdagases II (Senior 2001, II: 166) and Sanabares (Senior 2001, II: 182) all possess a feature (Pahlavi letters in obverse field) first appearing on Parthian coins late in the reign of Vologases I (AD 51–78) (Sellwood 1980: 231, type 71) and continuing into the reign of Vologases II (c. AD 77–80) (Sellwood 1980: 234, type 72). Another late Indo-Parthian king Ubouzanes (Senior 2001, vol. 2: 181) is depicted on his coins wearing the same crown as Vologases II (Sellwood 1980: 234, type 72). Early Kushan and Indo-Parthian coins also circulated together. Silver drachms of several Indo-Parthian kings including Sasan were found in a hoard along with similar coins of Kujūla Kadphises (Marshall 1951, I: 160). Coins of Sasan have been reported overstruck on coins of the Satrapal ruler of western India Nahapāna (Cribb 1992: 133, 144, 145), whose reign is thought to be in the mid first century AD, c. AD 40–78. The numismatic context of the early Kushan kings (Table 4) corroborates the chronological framework (Table 3) suggested by the epigraphic evidence outlined above, and contradicts both the widespread dating of Kaniṣka I's year 1 to AD 78 and Senior's proposal that Gondophares' reign was in the first century BC.

<sup>15</sup> Sasan is also named Gondophares Sasan on most of his coin types (Senior 2001: 167–174).

<sup>16</sup> Senior (2009:19) published this coin as an overstrike by Sasan on a late Soter Megas coin datable to the reign of Wima Takto, but the nature of the overstriking makes the opposite more likely and plausible.

Table 4. Parthian, Indo-Parthian and Kushan coin connections (o/s = overstruck).

Parthian kings	Indo-Parthians Gandhāra coin sequence		Indo-Parthians Arachosia coin sequence	coin sequence	Kushans
Phraataces (2 BC–AD 4)					
Vonones I (AD 8–12) AD 10					
Artabanus II (AD 10–38) AD 27 Vardanes I Gotarzes II Vonones II Vologases I	Gondophares year 1 = Azes era 78 = Greek 206	Gondophares year 26 = Azes era 103 = Greek era 231	Gondophares	Gondophares copying coins of Vonones I and Artabanus II. Zeionises o/s by Gondophares; imitated by Kujūla Kadphises. Gondophares o/s by Kujūla Kadphises.	
Vologases II AD 77–80	Abdagases		Orthagnes Ubouzanēs Sarpedanes	Kujūla Kadphises issues coins based on Sarpedanes issues in Sind.	Kujūla Kadphises o/s on Gondophares Azes era 122, 126 and 136 = Greek 250, 254 and 264]
	Sasan		Sasan	Sasan Gandhāran issues in o/s by and imitated by Wima Takto. Sasan Sind issues o/s on Nahapana, c. AD 40–78.	Wima Takto Azes 142 = Greek 270 Azes 151 = Greek 279
			Satavastres Abdagases II Pakores Sanabares	Satavastres o/s by Nahapana. Pakores o/s on Wima Takto. Indo-Parthian kings imitating coins of Vologases I and II.	Wima Kadphises Azes 159 = Greek 287 Azes 171 = Greek 299

### External corroboration – the numismatic context of the late Kushans

A similar framework can be created from Iranian parallels with the late Kushan period. At the end of the reign of Vāsudeva I the Kushan kingdom came under threat from the newly established Sasanian kingdom in Iran. According to the Persian historian al-Ṭabarī (C.E. Bosworth *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 1999, II: 15, section I. 820), the Kushan king offered submission to the new Sasanian king Ardashir I (224–240), probably in the last decade of Ardashir I's reign. Soon after this the Sasanians took western Bactria, including Balkh, from the Kushans and established their own Kushan king (Kushanshah) there (Cribb 1990). The Sasanian Kushanshahs' coinage is normally referred to in numismatic literature as Kushano-Sasanian. The coin sequence of the Kushanshahs (Table 5) has been established using the same criteria as outlined above for the Kushan sequence. There are various links between the two sequences which give some indication of an absolute chronological framework. Both Sasanian Kushanshahs and the Kushans were succeeded by Kidarite Huns which extends the evidence for the absolute chronology of the Kushan king sequence.

The first indication of a change in the Kushan coinage brought about by the Sasanian intervention into Kushan territory is the cessation of the coinage of gold coins in Bactria during the first years of the reign of Kaniška II. Prior to this the main gold mint of the Kushans had been in continuous operation in Bactria since the time of Wima Kadphises. From the first year of Kaniška II's reign the mint, which had previously been a subsidiary gold mint located south of the Hindu Kush, took over as the main centre for the production of Kushan gold coins. The last gold issue attributable to the Kushan mint in Bactria is known only from two coins (Göbl 1984: type 538; Göbl 1993: pl. 16, types 538 and 538A, pl. 56, no. 596). The copper coins of Kaniška II continued to circulate into Bactria. This suggests that early in the reign of Kaniška II western Bactria, including the capital Balkh, fell into the hands of the Sasanians. The main Kushan mint at Balkh however continued to issue gold coins imitating the designs of Vāsudeva I and in the name of the Kushan kings Vāsudeva I (Göbl 1984: types 644–659 and 666–699) or Kaniška II (Göbl 1984: types 661–665 and 700), apparently under Sasanian control. Alongside these the Sasanian authority also issued copper coins copying the obverse design of Kaniška II and the reverse design of Vāsudeva I (Göbl 1984: types 1008–1010; these coins are commonly referred to as 'Vāsudeva imitations'). There are also three coin types issued by the Sasanians for Kushan territory during the same period. The first is issued by a king, wearing a fish-tailed eagle crown, whose name is not yet read, but who appears to have the titles Marvshah and Kushanshah (Göbl 1984: type 1029). The Sasanian emperor Ardashir I appointed one of his sons also named Ardashir to be Marvshah (*'rthštr mrgw MLKA*) to rule in the territory he had captured around the ancient city of Merv (Ka'ba-ye Zardošt inscription line 41: Huyse 1999: 54). The name on this coin type was read by Göbl (1984: 114) as Ardashir, but, although the context suggests he was correct, I have been unable to find a legible specimen among more than twenty examples examined. The second and third types (Göbl 1984: types 1028 and 1114) are inscribed with the name Ardashir Kushanshah, but with a different crown, with three floral projections, surmounted by a hair ball. It is unclear whether the unidentified king and the king named Ardashir represent the same ruler.

The third series of Kushanshah coins were issued in the name of a king called Peroz Kushanshah. His gold coins in Bactria start using the same designs as the imitation Vāsudeva gold coins, showing the king in Kushan crown and armour, with a change of inscription (Göbl 1984: gold type 702, copper types 1101–1103), giving his name and title in Bactrian. Later issues adopt a new lion-head crown design and Sasanian style armour (Göbl 1984: gold type 703–706, copper types 1105–1110). South of the Hindu Kush his coins used a different flat crown (Göbl 1984: gold type 555, copper types 1115–1119 and 1123), giving his name, and on the gold his title, in Bactrian. A rare Bactrian type (Göbl 1984: type 1112) uses the same crown, but with a Pahlavi inscription. A copper coin of Peroz's southern series has been reported overstruck on a copper coin of the imitation Vāsudeva series (Figures 5a, 5b and 6; British Museum 1981,0735.2; Cribb 1985: 314) and another overstruck on a Merv mint coin of Shapur I (Figures 7a, 7b and 8; BM 1996,0608.1; Cribb and Bracey in preparation). An example of Peroz's early Bactrian copper coins with Kushan crown and armour has also been recorded overstruck on a coin of Shapur I's Merv mint (Figures 9a, 9b and 10; Loeschner 2007).<sup>17</sup> In turn Peroz's southern copper coins were also overstruck by Kushan coins issued early in the reign of Vāsudeva II (Figures 11a, 11b and 12; British Museum 1981,0735.1; Cribb 1985: 309, 314).

Peroz I's gold coins issued south of the Hindu Kush (Göbl 1984: type 555) represented the king in Sasanian flat crown and dress, but in the same posture as Kushan kings. On the reverse of these coins the Kushan goddess Ardochsho offers a Kushan crown. The treatment of her drapery and her throne suggest the design was copied from coins of Kaniška II (see particularly Göbl 1984: type 539).

<sup>17</sup> Loeschner did not recognize the undertype of this overstruck coin and interpreted the visible features differently.



Figure 5a. Copper coin of Kushanshah Peroz I, Gandhāran mint, bust/ god on fire altar-throne type (Göbl 1984: type 1118), British Museum 1981 0703 52, 5.49g, 20mm, overstruck on copper coin of Kushanshahs (as Figure 6). (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 5b. Drawing of figure 5a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 6. Copper coin of Kushanshahs, standing king/ Oesho and bull type (Göbl 1984: type 1010), imitating coins of Kaniška II (obverse) and Vāsudeva I (reverse), British Museum 1992,0119.387, 3.36g, 18mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 7a. Copper coin of Kushanshah Peroz I, Gandhāran mint, bust/ god on fire altar-throne type (Göbl 1984: type 1118), British Museum 1996,0608.1, 3.44g, 19mm, overstruck on copper coin of Shapur I, Merv mint (as Figure 8). (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 7b. Drawing of figure 7a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 8. Copper coin of Shapur I, Merv mint, bust/ fire altar with attendants type (Loginov & Nikitin 1993: 227-229, fig. 2, 61-86, fig. 3, 94-120), British Museum 1995,0507.1, 2.95g, 20mm (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 9a. Copper coin of Kushanshah Peroz I, Bactrian mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type (Göbl 1984: type 1101), private collection (Loeschner 2007), 2.70g, 21mm, overstruck on copper coin of Shapur I, Merv mint (Fig. 10). (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Hans Loeschner.)



Figure 9b. Drawing of figure 9a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 10. As Figure 8.

The situation suggested by the designs of Peroz I's coins, and the related overstrikes, links him with the Sasanian kings Ardashir I (fire altar/throne) and Shapur I (overstrikes), and the Kushan kings Kaniška II (Ardochsho design, Vāsudeva imitation overstrike) and Vāsudeva II (overstrike). The initiation of coinage south of the Hindu Kush under Peroz I can also be linked with the claim by Shapur I that he ruled the Kushan kingdom up to Peshawar (kwšnhštr HN prhš OL pškbwr, Ka'ba-ye Zardošt inscription line 3; Huyse 1999: 24 and 36). The links with the Kushanshahs and their Sasanian overlords for the period of Kushan rule from Kaniška II to Vāsudeva II place it in the period c. AD 224-270, matching closely the dating of this period, c. 230-270 calculated from the dating of Kaniška



Figure 11a. Copper coin of Kushan king Vāsudeva II, standing king/ enthroned goddess type (Göbl 1984: type 1021), British Museum 1981,0735.1, 2.80g, 16mm, overstruck on copper coin of Kushanshah Peroz I (as Figure 12) (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

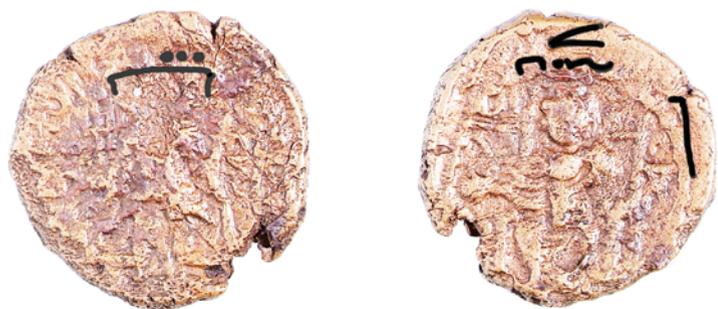


Figure 11b. Drawing of figure 11a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 12. Copper coin of Kushanshah Peroz I, Gandhāran mint, bust/ god on fire altar-throne type (Göbl 1984: type 1118), British Museum 1980,1003.1, 4.60g, 17mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

I year 1 in AD 127. The conquest of territory south of the Hindu Kush during the reign of Shapur I is also corroborated by the Rag-i Bibi relief discovered in Afghanistan in 2002 (Grenet et al. 2007). The relief shows a horse-rider, whose surviving details suggest a ruler of the period of Shapur I, if not Shapur I himself, hunting Indian rhinoceroses. He is accompanied by various figures including one in Kushan dress. If this relief is read as a statement of Shapur I's rule 'up to Peshawar' (Grenet et al. 2007: 259), then it would correspond with the extension of Kushanshah rule under Peroz I south of the Hindu Kush.<sup>18</sup>

The close link with the chronology of the Kushan kings continues into the reign of the next Kushanshah Hormizd I, whose early copper coins from south of the Hindu Kush were overstruck by Vāsudeva II's later coins in large quantities (Figures 13a, 13b and 14; Cribb 1981: 106; Cribb 1985: 311–315; Jongeward & Cribb 2015: 172–173). A late coin of Hormizd I has also been reported overstruck on a coin of Vāsudeva II (Cribb 1985: 311–315). The synchronism of the Sasanian, Kushanshah and Kushan kings also supports Bivar's (1979: 324–327) argument that the Kushanshah Hormizd I was the brother of the Sasanian emperor Varahran II who led a revolt against his brother c. AD 283 reported in Latin

<sup>18</sup> The existence of coins issued by the Sasanian emperor Varahran I (AD 273–276) with the mint name Balkh (Afram & Gyselen 2012: 458–459, types A55–A57) has been invoked (Grenet et al. 2007: 258–260) as a reason to contradict the proposal that Kushanshahs ruled in Bactria from the time of the Sasanian king Ardashir I. Their existence does not prevent Kushanshah coins being issued in Balkh at an earlier date as no consideration has been given to the possibility that these coins represent a brief intrusion into Kushanshah territory, rather than a period of continuous direct Sasanian rule before Sasanian Varahran I, in the same way that Hormizd I Kushanshah's coins interrupt production of Sasanian coins at Merv.



Figure 13a. Copper coin of Kushan king Vāsudeva II, enthroned king/ enthroned goddess type (Göbl 1984: types 1022–1024), British Museum, 1992,0119.23, 4.42g, 19mm, overstruck on copper coin of Kushanshah Hormizd I (as Figure 14). (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 13b. Drawing of figure 13a showing traces of undertype.



Figure 14. Copper coin of Hormizd I, Kavad, Gandhāran mint, bust/ god on fire altar-throne type (Göbl 1984: type 1124), British Museum, 1990,0921.98, 3.76g, 15mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

sources.<sup>19</sup> During Hormizd I's reign he issued gold coins with the title 'king of kings' in Pahlavi and the mint name Merv (Göbl 1984: type 1026), suggesting a usurpation of the Sasanian king's title. Some of his coins issued in Bactria had the same title in Bactrian or Pahlavi.

The next Kushanshah ruled briefly as he is only known from a single gold coin and a limited number of copper coins from both Bactria and south of the Hindu Kush. His crown is identical to that of Sasanian Varahran II and very similar to that of Sasanian Hormizd II. It has been suggested (Bivar 1979: 320) that Sasanian Hormizd II may have previously ruled as Hormizd II Kushanshah because of this similarity. Hormizd II's link with the Kushanshahs is also suggested by his being the first Sasanian ruler to adopt a coin design feature, the placing of a divine bust in the flames of the fire altar on the reverse, which had already been used by the Kushanshahs Peroz I, and Hormizd I and II. This practice seems to have been developed in the Kushanshahs' mint as a means of combining the Sasanian fire altar/throne design with the Kushan reverse design of a god or goddess (in the same way that Sasanian Ardashir I's coinage combined Parthian throne with Persis fire altar in a unified throne/fire altar design). The first issue of Peroz I presented such a design with two different deities: Oesho labelled 'exalted god' in Bactrian (BAFO BOPZOOANΔO) and Nana labelled 'goddess Nana' (BAFO NANA) (Cribb 1985: 309, 311 and 319–320). Initially the Sasanian version followed the Kushano-Sasanian coinage in presenting the deity frontally, but by the end of Hormizd II's reign in the Sasanian version the divine image was represented in profile.

<sup>19</sup> *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Carus 8*: 'Nullo sibi occurrente Mesopotamiam Carus cepit et Ctesiphontem usque pervenit occupatisque Persis domestica seditione imperatoris Persici nomen emeruit.' *XII Panegyrici Latini*, III.17: 'Ipsos Persas ipsumque regem adscitis Sacis et Rufiis et Gelis petit frater Ormies nec respicit vel pro maiestate quasi regem vel pro pietate quasi fratrem.'

The next Kushanshah Peroz II was the last ruler to issue coins in both Bactria and south of the Hindu Kush. His successor in the southern territory was the Sasanian emperor Shapur II (AD 309–379), but in Bactria the Kushano-Sasanian state continued under Varahran Kushanshah. South of the Hindu Kush the Sasanians also established a mint to strike regular Sasanian silver drachms (the ‘Kabul’ mint, Schindel 2004) which continued through into the reigns of Ardashir II (379–383) and Shapur III (383–388) and also issued Kushano-Sasanian style copper coins in the name of Shapur II. The coinage of Varahran Kushanshah went through several phases, apparently under the authority of the Kidarite Huns, whose *tamga* featured on his coins from its second phase. The Kidarites also issued silver coins in Gandhāra in the name of Varahran Kushanshah until his name was replaced by that of the Kidarite king Kidara who took over from Varahran the title Kushanshah. Kidara also replaced the name of Varahran on the coins issued in Bactria. The intervention of the Kidarites also took place in Kushan territory as the coins of the last Kushan king Kipunadha were copied by the first Kidarite king Kirada. Kirada’s coins were followed by issues of the Kidarite king Peroz, the immediate predecessor of Kidara (Cribb 2010).

The Kidarite incursions into Bactria and Gandhāra can be seen as a possible cause of the direct Sasanian involvement south of the Hindu Kush. The Sasanians were in their turn also replaced presumably before 388 by Huns, the so-called Alkhano (Alchon) Huns who issued coins in imitation of the issues of Shapur II and Shapur III (Vondrovec 2014, I: 170, types 36A and 36 B; Pfisterer 2013: 32, types 36A and 36B). The cessation of the ‘Kabul’ mint before the reign of Varahran IV (388–399) suggests a *terminus ante quem* for the Alkhano takeover during the reign of Shapur III.

The end of the reign of Shapur III also provides a *terminus ante quem* for the reign of Kidara as his coins (Figure 15) were found alongside ‘Kabul’ mint coins of Shapur II, Ardashir II and Shapur III in the Tepe Maranjan hoard found near Kabul (Curiel 1953). The reign of Kidara had probably ended by the end of the reign of Shapur III as the hoard also includes a coin with the same design, but the name of his successor in Bactria, Orolano (Figures 16 and 17; ΒΑΓΟ ΟΡΩΛΑΝΟ ΚΟΨΑΝΟ Π[Α]ΥΟ; Göbl 1984: type 738.1). Orolano was followed by three other coin issuing Kidarite kings in Bactria: Pidoko (Figure 18; ΒΑΓΟ ΠΙΔΟΚΟ ΚΟΨΑΝΟ ΠΑ[ΥΟ]; Vondrovec 2014: 149, types 84-6 and 84-8), Tobazino (Figure 19; ΒΑΓΟ ΤΟΒΑΖΙΝΟ ΚΟΨΑΝΟ ΠΑΥΟ; Vondrovec 2014: 149, type 84-7) and Okilano ΒΑΓΟ ΟΚΙΛΑΝΟ ΚΟΨΑΝΟ [ΠΑΥΟ]; (Figure 20; provisional reading of name; Göbl 1984: type 740.1; Vondrovec 2014: 149, type 84-5). The reign of Tobazino can be approximately dated c. 420 as his coins copy issues of the Sasanian king Varahran IV and were overstruck on coins of Varahran IV and his successor Yazdgerd I (399–420) (Vondrovec 2014:392–396). The reign of Okilano(?) can also be dated as his coinage was imitated and replaced by issues in the name of the Sasanian king Peroz who captured Balkh from the Kidarites in AD 467 (Figure 21; Chen, Doo & Wang 2006: nos. 838 and 839; see also the other type of Peroz, wearing his Sasanian crown, Vondrovec 2014: 152, type Peroz-1).

The evidence of the Tepe Maranjan hoard is also supported by the Kidarite coppers from Bactria found among the material collected by Charles Masson from the ancient site at Begram. The large number of small copper coins attributable to the period of Kidara found at Begram strongly suggests that it was during his reign that the Huns were driving the Sasanians out of the Kabul region (Khan, Errington & Cribb 2008: 68–70).

The framework created for the end of the Kushans through their Sasanian, Kushanshah and Kidarite Hun connections matches the framework created by the application of the dating of year one of Kaniška I in AD 127 to the numismatic sequence and epigraphic evidence. An alternative framework has been proposed by Schindel (2004; 2005; 2012; 2009), based on aspects of the iconographic details of Kushano-Sasanian, Sasanian and Kushan coins, earrings, diadem ribbons, crowns and firealtars. His main arguments for dating the relationship between Kushano-Sasanian, Sasanian and Kushan coinage was that the earrings depicted on the royal portraits of the Kushanshahs on their coins could only appear



Figure 15. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Kidara, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO KIDAPA OO OAZA[P]KO KOΦANO ΔA[YO] (Lord Kidara Great Kushan King), British Museum 1847,1201.265, 7.69g, 34mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 16. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Orōlano, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO OPΩΛA - NO KOΦANO Δ[A]YO (Lord Orōlano Kushan King), British Museum 1989,0625.4, 7.59g, 34mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 17. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Orōlano, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO OPΩΛA - NO KOΦANO Δ[A]YO (Lord Orōlano Kushan King), Tepe Maranjan hoard, 7.48g, 35mm, Curiel 1953: 109 ('Ormizd'), plates XV, no. 5 and XVI, no. 12. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 18. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Pidoko, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO ΠΙΔΟΚΟ - OO KOΦANO [ΔA]YO (Lord Pidoko Kushan King), British Museum 1982,0626.6, 7.41g, 33mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

after c. AD 271–273, when they first appeared on Sasanian coins and secondly, that the use of ribbed diadems by Huviška could only take place after they had been introduced in Sasanian coin portraits during the reign of the first Sasanian emperor Ardashir I (AD 224–240). He further identified the Kushan crown being bestowed by the goddess on the first Kushanshah (name uncertain) as the crown of Huviška (Schindel 2009). He has also identified the fire altar without projections on the coins of the Kushanshah Ardashir as a feature of Kushan coinage before the reign of Vāsudeva I (Schindel 2014),<sup>20</sup> arguing that

<sup>20</sup> Schindel based his argument on the side projections on the top of the fire altar which he mistook for flames (Ingholt & Lyons 1957: 166, fig. 432 which shows a relief from the Kalawan site, Taxila, featuring a fire altar with such corner projections and flames, attended by a Brahman).



Figure 19. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Tobozino, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO TOBOZINO - KOΦANO ΠAYO (Lord Tobozino Kushan King), Aman ur Rahman collection (Vondrovec 2014, type 84-7), 7.41g, 34mm. (Photograph courtesy of Aman ur Rahman.)



Figure 20. Gold dinara of Kidarite Hun king Ōkilano, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type, Bactrian inscription: BAΓO ΩKIIA - NO KOΦAONO ΠA[YO] (Lord Ōkilano Kushan King), British Museum archive file, 7.35g, 35mm. (Photo: courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)



Figure 21. Gold dinara of Sasanian emperor Peroz, Balkh mint, standing king/ exalted god and bull type (illegible), Bactrian inscription: ΠIΠOZO - ΠAONANO ΠAO (Peroz King of Kings), British Museum 1991,0640.17, 7.42g, 35mm.

the Kushanshah coin must therefore date to the period of Vāsudeva I or later as such projections appear on Kushan coins from this period onwards. He added that the representation of Ardashir Kushanshah wearing Sasanian dress also pointed to a date before Vāsudeva I. In both presentations on the coins of the earliest Kushanshahs he attributed them to the period of Huviška to argue that Kaniška I's year one was in AD 227. His logic was that the Kushanshah coins featuring portraits wearing earrings were issued after 271, therefore Huviška's reign was current in the 270s, a chronology only possible if the Kushan era starting in AD 227 was that of Kaniška I.

The main problem with Schindel's dating of the Kushans is the gap created between the rulers with inscriptions dated in Azes and Greek eras and those using the first and second centuries of the era of Kaniška I. Taking the later date for Azes era year 1, c. 46 BC as proposed above, the latest date in the reign of Wima Kadphises is c. AD 113 (Greek era 287) or if the anonymous Mathurā inscription is his c. AD 125 (Greek era 299). This creates a gap of a hundred years between Wima Kadphises and his son Kaniška I. In order to justify the third-century date for Kaniška I a new chronology would be needed for the early Kushan kings, drawing the first three kings forward into the late second to early third century. Such a late dating for their links with the Indo-Parthians and their Parthian contemporaries would be unreasonable. The fundamental argument that the dating of artistic details should rely only on coin designs seems improbable. Other sources of iconography are equally possible. Earrings, for example were already a feature in Iranian art before the Sasanian period.

Schindel also offers no rationale for suggesting that Kushanshahs were minting coins in Bactria, or that there was an issue of Balkh mint coins by Sasanian Varahran I during the reign of Huviška, as Huviška’s gold coins were struck throughout his reign in Bactria and his gold and copper coins circulated there. The hoarding together of Kushanshah coins of the fourth Kushanshah Hormizd I and coins of Kushan king Vāsudeva II (Cribb 1981; 1985) clearly suggest that the Kushanshah coins were issued from the reign of Kaniška II and no earlier. The currency of the imitation Vāsudeva copper coins, which I have attributed to the early Kushanshahs, during the reigns of Kaniška II and Vasiška has also been reaffirmed by a hoard recently discovered in the Peshawar region (Cribb, Khan & Amanullah 2012).

The solution proposed by Schindel of dating Kaniška I’s year one to AD 227 is also overturned by the overstrikes reported above. The direct links between the southern coins of the third and fourth Kushanshahs Peroz I and Hormizd I and the Kushan king Vāsudeva II, ruling from c. 141 years after Kaniška I year one, places their coins in the fourth century if Kaniška I’s year one were c. AD 227, implausibly contemporary with both the Merv mint coins of Shapur I (240–270) (overstruck by Peroz I) and the last southern Kushano-Sasanian style coins in the name of Shapur II (309–379) (issued after the coins of the fifth and sixth Kushanshahs). Falk’s assertion that ‘hardly anyone would accept AD 227 as the date for the accession of Kaniška I to the throne’ (Falk 2001:130) seems acceptable in the face of such implausible solutions for the chronology of the Kushano-Sasanian and Kushan kings.

Table 5. Kushan, Kushanshah and Sasanian links.

Kushan kings	K1 = AD 127	Sasanian Kushanshahs and Kidarite Hun successors	Sasanian Emperors	Numismatic links
Kaniška	K 1 = AD 127			
Huviška	K 25 = AD 151			
Vāsudeva I	K 64 = AD 190		Ardashir I 224–240	Vāsudeva sends embassy to China in AD 230
Kaniška II	K [1]05 = AD 231	Unknown king Ardashir		Issue of Kushan gold coins in Bactria stops. Sasanian imitations of Vāsudeva I gold and Kaniška II coppers. Copper coins issued by unidentified Kushanshah showing goddess Anahita offering king Kushan crown. Copper coins issued by Ardashir Kushanshah inscribed in Bactrian, copying Kushan coins of Kaniška II.
Vasiška	K [1]20 = AD 246	Peroz I	Shapur I 240–270 Record of conquest ‘as far as Peshawar’	Peroz I Kushanshah issues coins copying the imitation Kushan coins and with new coin design based on Ardashir’s throne/altar type. Examples of both types overstruck on copper coins of Shapur I from Merv mint. Gold coin shows Peroz being offered Kushan king by Kushan goddess Ardochsho in style of Kaniška II coins.

Kaniṣka III Vāsudeva II	K [1]41 = AD 268	Hormizd I	Bahram II 276–293 Brother of Hormizd I?	Early Vāsudeva II copper coin overstruck on Peroz I’s copper coin. Late Vāsudeva II copper coins overstruck on Hormizd I’s early coinages.
		Hormizd II	Narseh 293–303 Hormizd II 303–309	Hormizd II Sasanian emperor (wearing similar winged headdress to his Kushanshah predecessor) adopts bust on altar type from Kushanshahs’ copper coinage.
Ṣaka		Peroz II	Shapur II 309–379	Shapur II takes direct control of part of Kushanshah domain, issuing Kushanshah style copper coins and Sasanian silver coins in Kabul region.
Kipunadha		Varahran		
		Kirada Peroz Kidara		End of Kushan coinage in Gandhāra. Kirada imitates Kipunadha coins in Gandhāra.
			Ardashir II 379–383	Peroz issues coins with ram horns in Gandhāra and with same crown in name of Varahran in Balkh. Kidara issued coins in Gandhāra and Balkh, replacing Varahran’s name with his own and giving himself title Kushanshah. Coins issued in Gandhāra in the Kushan style with image of Kidara, but acknowledging Samudra[gupta] (c. AD 330–380). Kidara coins from Bactria in Tepe Maranjan hoard with coins of Shapur II, Ardashir II and Shapur III. Silver coins of Ardashir II issued in Kabul area.
		Orolano	Shapur III 383–388	Silver coins of Shapur III issued in Kabul area. Orolano coin from Bactria in Tepe Maranjan hoard with coins of Kidara and Shapur II, Ardashir II and Shapur III.
		Pidoko	Varahran IV 388–399	Alkhano silver coinage begins in Kabul region. Pidoko issuing gold coins in Bactria.
			Yazdgard I 399–420	
		Tobozino	Varahran V 420–438	Tobozino issuing gold coins in Bactria and imitating silver coins of Varahran IV and overstriking coins of Varahran IV and Yazdgard I.
		Okilano(?)	Yazdgard II 438–457	Okilano(?) issuing gold coins in Bactria.
			Peroz 457–484	Peroz imitating gold coins in Kidarite style of Okilano at Balkh 467–484.

### A chronological framework for Gandhāran sculpture

The Kushan king list constructed around numismatic and epigraphic evidence combined with the rare references to the Kushan state in literary sources creates a framework for the chronology of Gandhāra within which Gandhāran sculpture can be examined. The framework positions the Kushans and the rulers who preceded and succeeded them in control of Gandhāra during the period of greatest activity in the creation of Buddhist sculpture in the region (Table 6). The few examples of Gandhāran art with dated inscriptions can then be positioned within this framework. The inscriptions in the three hundreds can be associated with the Greek era and dated accordingly. The inscriptions dated year 89 appear to be in the first century of Kaniṣka I era ( $127 + 88 = \text{AD } 215$ ) and 5 ( $227 + 4 = \text{AD } 231$ ) in the second century, but it cannot be ruled out that they could be moved a hundred years later in line with the recognized use for this era of a cycle of centuries (e.g.  $227 + 88 = \text{AD } 315$  and  $327 + 4 = \text{AD } 331$ ). It remains highly unlikely that the year 5 sculpture was made in the reign of Kaniṣka I (as Fussman 1974: 57; Fussman 1987: 72–75) as its marked difference from the Kaniṣka Buddha coins and the Kaniṣka casket and its stylistic similarity to the year 89 inscription sculpture both suggest a later date.

Although without specific dates there are three other representative examples of Gandhāran art which can be added to the framework as they can now be dated approximately in relation to the Kushan king list. The clarification of the date of the coins associated with the Bīmarān casket, as issues of the late first to early second century AD (Cribb 2015; 2018) suggests that the casket should be dated *c.* 100 or slightly later. The identification by Errington (2002) of a copper coin (or a clay copy of a coin) of Huviṣka among the finds associated with the Kaniṣka reliquary placed its deposit in the second half of Huviṣka’s reign. There is now clear evidence from coins that the royal image represented on the casket is Kaniṣka I, as coins issued early in his reign (e.g. Göbl 1984: types 798, 803, 807, 814 and 818) show him with two of the features of the casket image, i.e. beardless with sideburns and with his left hand covered with

Table 6. Approximate framework for rulers of Gandhāra and adjacent regions.

BC/AD	Bactria	Begram/Kabul	Gandhāra	Taxila	Dated and datable Gandhāran images
AD10	<b>Da Yuezhi</b>	<b>Indo-Scythians</b>	<b>Indo-Scythian</b>	<b>Indo-Scythians</b>	
20			<b>Indo-Parthian</b>		
30			Gondophares	Satrap	
40	<b>Kushans</b>	<b>Kushans</b>			
50	Kujūla Kadphises				
60			Abdagases	<b>Kushans</b>	
70					
80			Sasan <sup>1</sup>		
90	Wima Takto			<b>Indo-Parthians</b>	
100			Kushans	Kushans	Bīmarān Casket (Cribb 2015)
110	Wima Kadphises				
120	Kaniṣka I				
130					
140					year 318 (Konow 1929: 106–107)
150	Huviṣka				Kaniṣka coins (Cribb 1999) and reliquary Errington

160					
170					
180					
190	Vāsudeva I				
200					
210					year 384 (Konow 1929: 117–119) year 89 (Konow 1929: 171–172)
220					year 399 (Konow 1929: 124–127)
230	<b>Kushanshahs</b>	Kaniṣka II			year 5 (Fussman 1974: 54–58; Harle 1974: 128)
240	?/ Ardashir	Vasiṣka			
250	Peroz I				
260		<b>Kushanshahs</b>	disputed by Kushans and Kushanshahs	Kaniṣka III/ VD II	
270	Hormizd I			Vāsudeva II	
280					
290					
300	Hormizd II			Mahi	
310	Peroz II			Ṣaka	[year 89]
320	Varahrān				
330	<b>Kidarite Huns</b> <sup>2</sup>			Kipunadha	[year 5]
340	Kirada/ Peroz/ Kidara <sup>3</sup>	<b>Sasanian</b>	<b>Kidarite Huns</b>	<b>Kidarite Huns</b>	
350		Shapur II			
360					
370					
380		Ardashir II/ Shapur III			
390	Orolano	<b>Alchano Huns</b>	<b>Alchano Huns</b>	<b>Alchano Huns</b>	
400	Pidoko				
410					
420	Tobazino				
430					
440	Okilano(?)				
450					
460	<b>Sasanian</b>				
470	Peroz				
480	<b>Hephthalites</b>				

<sup>1</sup> Allied with the Apracarajas.

<sup>2</sup> Initially with Kushanshah as puppet.

<sup>3</sup> After initial period adopting title Kushanshah.

his sleeve. This suggests that the casket could have been created during Kanīṣka I’s reign and deposited after a period of use. The gold and copper coins of Kanīṣka I showing the Buddha in the same style as the Buddha images on the Bīmarān casket can also be dated to the last years of his reign (Cribb 1999/2000).

The dating of Gandhāran art has long depended upon the broad frameworks created for the region through coins and inscriptions. The approximate dates used in books, exhibitions and museum websites make use of such frameworks. The shift by art historians and curators from using AD 78 to a later date of 100 or 127 (128, 129) for year one of Kanīṣka I is evident in the way that they date sculpture (Table 7). The broad tendency has been to date architectural features and toilet trays without obvious Buddhist content to the first century BC–first century AD, Buddhist stone sculpture to the first-fourth centuries AD and stucco sculpture to the fourth-fifth centuries AD. The framework outlined here can now be used to readdress these assumptions, particularly in relation to pieces bearing dates or found from excavated sites with numismatic dating material.

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Table 7. The impact of dating Kanīṣka I’s year 1 on dating Gandhāran sculpture.

Publications/ websites featuring Gandhāran sculpture	Date used for Kanīṣka era year 1	Dating and number of examples of Gandhāran sculpture in each publication/website									
		1 BC	1 AD	1–2 AD	2 AD	2–3 AD	3 AD	3–4 AD	4 AD	4–5 AD	5 AD
Pal 1987	78		4	2	4	3	2				
Czuma 1986	78		16	2	16	4	6	3	2	6	
vam.ac.uk	78		2	2	10	5	7	15	4	3	
Errington & Cribb 1992	100	2	7	6	4	9	3		1	1	
Stančo 2001	100	1		1	14	16	4	2	1		
Mohatta 2009	100	2	11	2	6	28	1	13	2	11	1
britishmuseum.org	100		2	27	4	614		7		71	2
Jongeward 2003	127		1	2	12	3	13	1		13	
Berhendt 2007	129	5	7		5	3	4	2	1	12	6
Ali & Qazi 2008	128					321					
Luczanits 2008	128	1	13	17	27	53	20	24	7	10	1

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