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The Stūpa of the Kushan Emperor Kanishka the Great,
with Comments on the Azes Era and Kushan Chronology

By Hans Loeschner
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Abstract

This paper includes sections of a larger monograph entitled “Kanishka in Context with the Historical Buddha and Kushan Chronology” (Loeschner 2012), and in addition provides evidence that the huge stūpa of Kanishka the Great, as described by Chinese pilgrims who visited the site in the fifth to the eighth centuries CE, is depicted on Gandhāran stone reliefs. Examples of such narratives by Chinese pilgrims are reproduced at length, in addition to the report of the finding of the famous Kanishka relic casket (Spooner 1908/1912). In addition, comments on the Azes era and on Kushan chronology are provided, as is the conclusion they lead to that there is no necessity to shift the era of the Indo-Scythian great king Azes from 58/57 BCE to 48/47 BCE. This shift has been proposed by Joe Cribb (Cribb 2005) and was recently fully supported by Harry Falk and Chris Bennett (Falk & Bennett 2009, Falk 2012). The start of the Azes era in 58/57 BCE may thus be maintained, and this era may continue to be equated with the Vikrama era, still used in present-day India. With this, two possible scenarios are proposed for the Kushan chronology: “Scenario A,” with Year 1 of the era of Kanishka the Great beginning in 78 CE (Fussmann 1974, Senior 2001, Senior 2005/2006), and “Scenario B,” with Year 1 of the Kanishka era beginning in 127/8 CE (Falk 2001). There is a high likelihood that the Kanishka era is the same as the Shaka era, which began April 1, 78 CE (Falk 2012), also an era still used in present-day India.

The stūpa of Kanishka the Great

Chinese pilgrims traveled to India in the fifth to eighth centuries CE to visit holy Buddhist sites and to search for original manuscripts. While on their way, near present-day Peshawar, they saw a huge stūpa¹ (height more than 200 meters), which was said to have been erected by the Kushan emperor Kanishka the Great. From the travel narrative of Faxian/Fa-Hsien (337–422 CE), who visited the site c. 400 CE, we have the following narration concerning the origin of this stūpa:²

When the Buddha was travelling in the country in the past, he told Ānanda, “After my nirvāna, there will be a king, named Kaniška, who will intend to raise a stūpa at this spot.” Afterwards King Kaniška was in the world; and when the king was going on a tour of inspection, Śakra [Indra], who intended that the king’s mind be open to Buddhism, was raising a stūpa on the road, disguising himself as a little cowherd. “What are you making?” the king asked. He answered the king, “I am making a Buddhist stūpa.” The king, saying that was marvellous, immediately built another one right over the boy’s stūpa. The stūpa is more than forty *zhang* (400 *chi*³) in height and decorated with various precious substances. Of all the stūpas and the vihāras that Faxian had seen throughout his travels, nothing was

¹ Mallory & Mair 2000, p. 171: “The stupa was one of the most characteristic remains of the Buddhist world; they are not found in Hinduism at all. In function we may view them as a specialized type of tumulus: they were circular in shape, with a domed top, and they were built to cover the relics of the Buddha, his earlier followers, or some other essential symbol of the Buddhist religion. It might be recalled that the Buddha was Śākyamuni (‘Sage of the Śākyas’, i.e. the Sakas)... To the stupas were carried offerings, often letters, while the devoted performed their rituals, walking around the shrine keeping their right shoulders (pradaksina) toward the stupa. The stupas spread with Buddhism to China and Japan and linguistically, Sanskrit stūpa gave Prākṛit thūpo which the Chinese variously treated as *tabo or *sutab/po, now simplified to tā ‘pagoda.’”

² Kuwayama 1997, p. 62

³ *Chi* might be translated as the Chinese foot, but the length varies from dynasty to dynasty, e.g., it equalled 4.04 cm in the third-century Wei dynasty, but 29.5 cm and 31.1 cm, respectively, in the Sui and Tang dynasties. [Footnote in Kuwayama’s original text.]

comparable with this as to its solemn beauty and majestic grandeur. It had long been said that among the stūpas in the Jambudvīpa this stūpa stood out as by far the best.

In the *Da Tang Xiju ji* (Great Tang Account of the Western Region), there is the following narration:⁴

About eight or nine li to the southeast of the capital is a pippala tree more than one hundred chi high.... Seated under this tree and facing south, the Tathāgata said to Ānanda, "Exactly four hundred years after my departure from the world a king will reign by the name of Kaniška, who to the south of and not far from this place will raise a stūpa where the relics of the flesh and bone belonging to my body will be much collected." To the south of the pippala tree is the stūpa that was raised by Kaniška. In the four hundredth year after the Tathāgata's nirvāna, Kaniška ascended the throne and governed the whole of Jambudvīpa. He had no faith either in crime or religious merit, and he made light of the law of Buddha. When he was out hunting in the wild country, a white hare appeared. The king went after it and came to a place where it suddenly disappeared. Among the trees the king saw a little cowherd making a small stūpa that was three chi high, and asked what he was doing. The boy replied, "Formerly, Śākya Buddha, by his divine wisdom, delivered the prophecy that in this superior land a king would build a stūpa that would contain a great portion of my bodily relics. You exhibited the sacred merits in former births, and your name is a proper one for the fulfilment of the old prophecy. Your Majesty, with your divine merit rooted much earlier, you have encountered this good opportunity. Therefore now I am calling your attention to this matter." As soon as he had spoken, he disappeared. Hearing these words, the king's heart became full of joy, and he flattered himself that he was the one referred to in the prophecy of the great saint. Therefore, developing

⁴ Kuwayama 1997, pp. 68–69

the right belief and paying reverence to the law of Buddha, he further built a stone stūpa encasing the little stūpa, wishing to cover it with his meritorious deed ... the stūpa measured more than four hundred chi high, the circumference at the great foundation being one and a half li and the height of the five tiers being one hundred fifty chi. The king, full of joy, further raised on the top twenty-five rings (parasols) of gilt bronze, through the centers of which a post was standing supporting them, and also placed the śarīras of Tathāgata, one hu in quantity, in the stūpa, and performed the religious ceremony after the Buddhist custom.

From the biography of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang / Hsüan-Tsang (596–664 CE) we are informed about the size and exact height of the Kanishka Stupa:⁵

To the east of the city is a large stupa of King Kani (Kaniška). The foundation measures one li in circuit. In the stūpa are the bone śarīras of Buddha, one hu in quantity. The total height is more than five hundred chi. The rings (parasols) of the finial are twenty-five. The stūpa has three times caught fire, and now repair work is going on. This is what has been called the Qiaoli Stūpa. Empress-Dowager Hu of Northern Wei, with her heart of deep devotion, had the śramana Daosheng and others sent there carrying with them a big banner more than seven hundred chi long, and they hung it on the stūpa; the banner could just reach the ground.

Stimulated by nineteenth-century translations of these Chinese sources, Sir Alexander Cunningham⁶ in 1871 identified mounds called Shāh-jī-kī Dherī lying outside the Lahore Gate of Peshawar as the possible site of the Kanishka stūpa.⁷ The first excavations in 1875 by C. A. Crompton led to the conclusion that "no remains of this great stūpa existed" and that "it certainly

⁵ Kuwayama 1997, p. 71

⁶ Errington & Curtis 2007, pp. 14–16

⁷ Cunningham 1871, p. 80

is not worthwhile continuing the explorations here."⁸ However, after A. Foucher reconfirmed the site in 1901,⁹ fresh excavations were performed from 1908 to 1911 by David Brainerd Spooner¹⁰ and H. Hargreaves.¹¹

The excavations revealed a 54 m square main stūpa with a semi-circular extension at each angle and a 15 m projection on each side making a cross-form, surrounded by other smaller stūpas, fully confirming the descriptions of the Chinese pilgrims. Spooner (1912, pp. 48–49) described the discovery of the famous "Kanishka Casket" (Figure 1) in a "relic chamber" in March 1909 as follows:¹²

A large pit, 24 feet square, was outlined covering the exact centre of the monument, and then taken downwards. A few feet below the present surface of the mound, traces were found of the very massive radiating walls in the heart of the stūpa, and these greatly delayed the progress of the work, for we were anxious not to remove any portion of these walls unnecessarily. Avoiding these, therefore, as much as possible, the pit was taken down by slow degrees to a very low level without result. Indeed, after several days' digging we had got down to what seemed to be free earth, and had almost lost hope of finding any relics at all, when suddenly, and without warning, the remains of the relic chamber were reached at a point which proved to be two feet below the level of the brick pavement surrounding the stūpa as a whole.... [T]he definite "floor" of the chamber was not decorated or dressed anywhere except in the very corner where the relic casket stood. Here a little daub of chuna had been laid on, on which the casket had rested,

⁸ Kuwayama 1997, p. 1, citing Crompton 1875

⁹ Kuwayama 1997, p. 1, citing Foucher 1901

¹⁰ Spooner 1908/1912

¹¹ Hargreaves 1911/1914

¹² Kuwayama 1997, pp. 16 and 17

and wherein its outline was found clearly impressed when the casket itself was removed, but the rest of the floor was the plain unadorned slab.

On the gilded bronze casket Spooner (1912, pp. 55 ff) found the name of Kanishka in dotted Kharoshthi script, but after many attempts it took nearly a century until Harry Falk in 2002 could provide a sound translation of the inscription, confirming that this huge stūpa indeed was established by this great Kushan emperor:

In the town Kanishkapura this perfume box ... is the pious donation of the architects of the fire-hall, viz. of Mahāsenā (and) Samgharakshita, in the monastery (founded by) the (Mahārāja) Kanishka. / May it be for the welfare and happiness of all beings. / In the acceptance of the teachers of the Sarvāstivāda school.¹³

Before this clear identification doubts that the depicted king was Kanishka the Great were raised,^{14,15} as there is a non-bearded emperor with the sun god Miiro and the moon god Mao at his sides, crowning him with wreaths of investiture, Miiro having placed a second wreath (the first implicitly having been placed by the investiture goddess Nana) and Mao still holding a third (Figure 2).

On the other hand, all coins of Kanishka show a fully bearded emperor; in particular, his first emissions, still using Greek language, show an old-looking, fully bearded emperor make an offering at an altar (Figure 3) with Nana, the Kushan goddess of divine investiture¹⁶ on the coin reverse. Later issues of Kanishka use Greek letters for inscriptions in the Bactrian language.

¹³ Falk 2002, p. 113

¹⁴ Rosenfield 1967, pp. 259–262

¹⁵ Errington & Cribb 1992, pp. 193–197

¹⁶ Ghose 2006



a.




b.

Figure 1: The Kanishka Casket. (Sources: a. Wikipedia; b. Hargreaven 1930, Plate 10)



Figure 2: Detail of the Kanishka Casket (replica created 1964 in the British Museum) (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 3: Coin of the fourth Kushan emperor Kanishka I, the Great, issued in the first year of his reign; AE didrachm, 22 mm diameter, 12h, 8.4 g (Göbl #767); obverse: king standing frontally, head with diadem and pointed helmet to left, clad in coat and trousers and cloak, sacrificing at altar to left, holding spear in left hand, Greek legend: BACIAEVC BACIAEΩN KANHDKOV (ϐ is a special letter for “sh”); reverse: Nana right with nimbate and diadem, clad in chiton and himation, radiate disc behind head, right hand advanced holding ankus (?), tamgha  in right field, Greek legend in left field: NANAIA.

The huge stūpa contributed immensely to the glory of Kanishka the Great as is obvious from the Sogdian text:¹⁷

namāču βarām awēn butānak šarīr farn

namāču βarām awēn akanišk astūpa βarxar farn

namāču βarām awēn jētaβand βarxār awēn nau βarxār farn.

We bring homage to the farn (majesty) of Buddha relics;

We bring homage to the farn of Kanishka's stūpa and vihāra;

We bring homage to the vihāra of Jetavana,¹⁸ to the farn of Nava-vihāra.¹⁹

Figure 4 shows a unique type of Kanishka coinage.²⁰ The reverse of this coin also shows the investiture goddess Nana (Göbl 1984, Em. 777) and the tamgha of Kanishka.

¹⁷ Bailey 1960/1968, p. 36

¹⁸ Jetavana near Srāvasti / Sāvathi (Kosala) was one of the most famous Buddhist monasteries in India. Lord Buddha spent 19 (out of 45) rainy seasons there, more than in any other monastery.

¹⁹ The Nava Vihara ("new monastery") was a Buddhist stupa and monastery near Balkh in present day Afghanistan. The Barmakids, powerful under the Abbasid caliphs, are regarded as having their origin in a line of hereditary priests at Nava Vihara, who had converted to Islam.

²⁰ Acquired from Senior Consultants (List Summer 1999, #192)



Figure 4: Unique coin of the fourth Kushan emperor Kanishka I, the Great; AE tetradrachm, 27/27.5 mm diameter, 1h, 13.4 g²¹ (Loeschner 2007); obverse: king standing frontally, head with so far unpublished crown type to left, clad in coat and trousers and cloak, sacrificing at altar to left, holding spear in left hand, trident (?) in left field, Graeco-Bactrian legend: (P̄AO)KA/NHPKI; reverse: Nana right with nimbate and diadem, clad in chiton and himation, right hand holding ankus (?), tamgha ^{uu} in right field, Bactrian legend in left field: NANA.

The novel type obverse with “Kanishka” in Bactrian language shows a relatively young, impressive and dynamic personality, beardless at the chin. The crown on the emperor’s head of the novel coin obverse differs significantly from ones reported so far.²² The headdress shows the peculiar sideburns which are also visible on the Kanishka casket. The cloak fastened at the breast seems not to be fixed there and thus could easily be shifted to the shoulder as is the case on the casket.²³

²¹ Robert Bracey attributed this coin issue to the time of Huvishka who induced a coinage reform with weight reduction (see Bracey 2007). This argument can hardly be followed as the coin has the clear “Shao Kanishka” inscription on the obverse and as the reverse belongs clearly to the other “Nana issues” of Kanishka. Furthermore, there are lower weight tetradrachms of Kanishka I from Kashmir.

²² Göbl 1984, Plate IV and Göbl 1993, Tafel 30

²³ Loeschner 2007

Therefore the findings of this novel coin support the attribution of the king as depicted on the casket to the fourth Kushan emperor Kanishka the Great. Obviously in the common issues of his initial coinage Kanishka showed his father Vima II Kadphises, the third Kushan emperor, offering incense at an altar (Figure 3) in continuation of the previous coinage.

The casket probably was deposited or re-deposited at the time of fifth Kushan emperor Huvishka, the successor of Kanishka, as within the casket a crystal container was found with a "clay seal" which in fact turned out to be a bronze coin of Huvishka showing an elephant rider on the obverse.²⁴ Figure 5 shows such a coin type.



Figure 5: Coin of the fifth Kushan emperor Huvishka; AE tetradrachm, 25 mm diameter, 12h, 10.0 g (Göbl #855); obverse: king right riding on elephant, holding spear and elephant-goad; illegible Graeco-Bactrian legend: ΠΑΟΝΑΝΟΠΑΟ ΟΟΗΡΚΕ ΚΟΠΑΝΟ; reverse: Shiva, ithyphallic, standing, holding trident in upheld right arm, left arm lowered vase and lion's skin (?), tamgha 𑖀 in left field, simplified nandipada symbol 𑖂 in right upper field, Bactrian legend right: ΟΗΠΟ

A thorough re-examination of the excavation reports was performed by Shoshin Kuwayama supported by his on-site visits, starting in 1967 with the collection of pottery on the mounds. The results of his study were published in 1997.²⁵ He found out that a first circular

²⁴ Errington 2002, p. 102 and Figure 3

²⁵ Kuwayama 1997

stūpa with about 52 m diameter was erected early in the first century CE probably by Kujula Kadphises, the first Kushan emperor. The wheel-shaped pattern of this building was a construction device obviously strongly influenced by the mausoleum of Augustus built in 28 BC (there were frequent embassies "from India" in Rome in the subsequent years). This first stūpa was thoroughly destroyed c. mid-first century CE, leaving only a few remains²⁶ of the radial walls.

This destruction must have been the result of heavy fighting between the Indo-Parthian and the Kushan dynasties, ending with a complete victory by the second Kushan emperor Vima Takto.

Under Kanishka the Great a completely new stūpa was erected with a quadratic base of 54 m side length, elevated 1.35 m above a brick floor (which was 0.6 m above natural soil). On each corner of the quadratic base a strong circular tower was placed. The archaeological evidence is fully supported by the report transmitted from the Chinese pilgrim Daoyao.²⁷

[The height was] three *zhang*. The staircase and the cornice [of the king's stūpa] were both made of carved stone. For the upper part of the stūpa a number of timbers were assembled to help complete the thirteen stories in height. On the top was an iron post, three hundred chi high, attached with gold-coloured disks (parasols) in thirteen tiers. The total height was seven hundred chi above ground.... According to the account of Daoyao, the king (Kaniška) raised the stūpa, but did not find anyone able to raise the iron post up when the work was completed. The king then built four high towers, one for each corner, where much gold, silver, and other precious things were placed. Accompanied by his wife and princes all on top of the tower, the king prayed to god with utmost reverence, burning incense and scattering flowers. Thereafter, by winding a rope on a pulley, the iron post was instantly hosted up in one stroke.

²⁶ Later a small room for housing the casket was integrated near central parts of these remnant radial walls.

²⁷ Kuwayama 1997, p. 65

The Chinese pilgrim Song Yun saw a square stūpa in 520 CE. In 630 CE Xuanzang saw a stūpa damaged by fire (lightening); the repair work was still being done during his stay. Probably this repair work resulted in a cross-formed stūpa with 84 m maximum length through 15 m projections onto all four sides of the 54 m square platform. This cross-shaped form was detected at the excavation work in 1908–1911. At the latest stage a stucco frieze was added to the mud-coated lower part of the base in the eighth or ninth century CE. The frieze consisted of seated Buddhas separated by pilasters, in style related to Kashmir. The Chinese Huichao saw this cross-shaped stupa in 725/726 CE.

The last supporters of the Kanishka stūpa were the Śāhis of Ohind. The "Hindu Śāhis," as they are incorrectly named, suffered a series of defeats from the Ghaznavid rulers. The last member of this dynasty was killed in 1026 AD by his own mutinous troops.²⁸ The Arab Al Birūnī referred to a "Kanik Caitya in Purushawar" in the eleventh century but it is not clear if the stupa was still standing at this time.²⁹

The Hindus had kings residing in Kabul, Turks who were said to be of Tibetan origin.... One of this series of kings was Kanik [Kanishka], the same who is said to have built the vihara of Purushawar. It is called after him, Kanik-caitya.³⁰

There has been an attempt by John M. Rosenfield to reconstruct the appearance of the Kanishka Stupa.³¹ Possibly the magnificent Kanishka stūpa is depicted on a Gandhāran stone relief, exhibited 2008/9 in Bonn, Germany (Figure 6). The stūpa is shown on a quadratic pedestal, with pillars at the four corners. There are lion capitals on each pillar. Parasols on top of the main stūpa are indicated. Right of the stūpa is a devotee probably holding, as a symbol, the iron post, which according to the above-mentioned narration of the Chinese pilgrim Daoyao, was to have been lifted up with the help of the four towers.

²⁸ Rahman 2005, p. 418

²⁹ Kuwayama 1997, pp. 47–53 and 61

³⁰ Wilhelm 1960/1968, p. 339

³¹ Rosenfield 1967, pp. 34–37.

Through excavations the foundation of one of these towers at a corner of the 54 m × 54 m pedestal has been found and documented.³² The erection of pillars with lion capitals shows that Kanishka the Great regarded himself as a second Ashoka, the renowned Mauryan emperor who became a Buddhist. Ashoka ruled 272/268–232/1 BCE. Through messages carved on rock or on pillars he spread the Buddhist message (Dharma / Dhamma) in his vast realms covering nearly the whole of present-day India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan. One of the Ashoka pillars with lion capital remained intact to the present day (Figure 7).

³² Kuwayama 1997, Figures 11 and 12.



Figure 6: Stone relief from Butkara III, Swat valley, Gandhāra (second century CE), possibly showing the Kanishka stupa with four towers and lion capitals (Source: Gandhara—Das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans, Philips von Zabern, Mainz, Germany, 2008, Kat.Nr. 144, p. 200. Reproduction with permission of Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland GmbH, Bonn, Germany; photo: Peter Oszvald).



Figure 7: Ashoka pillar with lion capital at Vaiśālī, India (Jayaswal 2004, p. 36).

Recent evidence of another large stūpa at Peshawar

In February 2012 the author visited Osmund Bopearachchi (CNRS, Paris) at the University of California at Berkeley (where he is a visiting professor), discussing with him his November 2011 presentation foils on the Kushan history (Loeschner 2011). Osmund Bopearachchi informed him (1) that due to a recent large flood the remains of a very large stūpa were laid open, (2) that this newly found site is near the center of Peshawar, and (3) that these remains might represent the Kanishka stūpa.

Comments on the Azes Era and Kushan Chronology

In 2009 Harry Falk proposed a new reading of an inscription that Gérard Fussmann had already published in 1985 (Fussmann 1985). This new reading provided evidence that the inscription was dated in the year 172 of an unnamed era, day 8 of an intercalary Gorpaios month, which occur in 19-year cycles; from the Kharoshthi types it was evident that the Azes era is the only one

possible for this inscription (Falk & Bennett 2009). As year 172 represents exactly nine 19-year cycles, the conclusion is that the start of the Azes era must also be in a year with an intercalary Gorpaios month. There are tetradrachm coins of the Parthian emperor Orodes II dated in an intercalary Gorpaios month that can only be attributed to 48/47 BCE. From this, Harry Falk and Chris Bennett concluded that 58/57 BCE is not possible for the start of the Azes era and that the start of this era can only be in 48/47 BCE, as had already been proposed by Joe Cribb in order to justify a start of the Kushan era in the second century CE (Cribb 2005). With this, the start of the Yavana era, which started 128 years prior to the Azes era (Salomon 2005), was shifted from 186/5 to 175/4 BCE.

Inscriptions in the year 299 were dated to the Yavana era and were interpreted as belonging to the last year of the reign of the third Kushan emperor Vima Kadphises in 125/126 CE (Falk & Bennet 2009). In a recent publication on ancient Indian eras, Harry Falk points out the remarkable finding that "the year 1 of the Azes era is nothing but year 201 of the Arsacid era" and that "year 301 of the Yavana era is year 1 of the Kanishka era," and thus a "continuation of the Indo-Greek era" by the fourth Kushan emperor (Falk 2012).

While these findings by Harry Falk are very impressive and seemingly convincing, nevertheless there might be another possibility, if it is the case that the Arsacids in 248/7 BCE started their era using Macedonian months but not adhering to the 19-year cycle of the Seleucid Macedonian Era (SEM), which was started in 312/1 BCE, but instead starting their own new 19-year cycle.

In this case 58/57 BCE is exactly 10 cycles of 19 years after the start of the era and would have an intercalary Gorpaios month. With this the Azes era would have been started in 58/7 BCE and thus can maintain its identification with the Vikrama era still used in present-day India.

Furthermore, there is a difficulty with attributing an unfinished inscription dated to the year 299 to Vima Kadphises, as it has, according to János Harmatta, the following wording:³³

Era-year 299, on the 9th [day] of [month] Dios. King of Kings Ooēmo Takpiso,
the Majesty, the Kushāna, had the canal d[ug here]

³³ Harmatta 1994b, pp. 418–420 and 422–427

In the early 1990s this inscription was attributed to Vima Kadphises (Harmatta 1994). But in 1995/1996 the Rabatak inscription (Sims-Williams 1995/1996, Sims-Williams 2008) provided evidence that between Kujula Kadphises and Vima Kadphises there is another emperor named Vima Takto.³⁴ Thus, it is evident that the above-cited inscription in the year 299 must belong to the last year of the reign of Vima Takto, and definitely not to the last year of the reign Vima Kadphises as put forward by Joe Cribb and followed by Harry Falk.

Consequently, placing the start of the Azes Era in 58/57 is mandatory to justify a start of the Kanishka era either in 78 CE (Scenario A) or in 127/8 CE (Scenario B) as shown below in the Table 1.

In Scenario A the inscription of year 299 is attributed to an era started in 248/7 BCE, whereas in Scenario B this inscription is attributed to the Yavana era started 186/5 BCE. In both cases there is a sufficiently long reign of Vima Kadphises of ca. 23 years for Scenario A and of ca. 11 years for Scenario B.

That Vima Kadphises had a long reign is obvious not only from the known extensive and diverse coinage but also from a so-far unpublished coin showing him at a young age without a beard (Figure 8). This coin is probably cast³⁵ but might be from an ancient mould for gilding.³⁶ Osmund Bopearachch inspected the coin, and he is convinced that it must have been cast from an authentic original.³⁷ A long reign of 23 years for Vima Kadphises would be not at all surprising.

Thus, Scenario A with Year 1 of the Kanishka era in 78 CE should not be discarded as presently is the case throughout nearly the entire scientific community.

³⁴ Osmund Bopearachchi pointed out that "Soter Megas" might have been a usurper, leaving only remote regions (Kashmir) of the Kushan empire to Vima Takto, a son of Kujula Kadphises (Bopearachchi 2007).

³⁵ Michael Alram, private communication, January 17, 2012

³⁶ Harry Falk, private communication, January 17, 2012

³⁷ Osmund Bopearachchi, private communication, February 17, 2012

Table 1

	Scenario A	Scenario B
Arsacid Era*	248/247 BCE	
Yavana Era**	186/185 BCE	
Azes era	58/57 BCE	
Kujula Kadphises	ca. 25 BCE – ca. 25 CE	ca. 40–90 CE
Vima Takto	ca. 25–52/53 CE	Ca. 90 CE – 114/115
Year 299 = last year of Vima Takto	year of Arsacid Era*	year of Yavana Era
Vima Kadphises	53/54–76/77 CE	115/116–126/127 CE
Year 1 of Kanishka Era	78 CE	127/128 CE

* possibly equal to a Bactrian-Greek era (Fussmann 1974)

** Indo-Greek era (Salomon 2005)



Figure 8: So-far unpublished AE two tetradrachm coin of Vima Kadphises, 22/22 mm diameter, 8.55 g, 12h orientation. Obverse: Bust with shoulder flames of unbearded ruler, holding club in right hand on clouds. Trident in left upper field. Greek inscription: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΟΝΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΣΙΣ. Reverse: Shiva holding trident in right upper hand in front of Nandi bull to right. Tamgha of Vima Kadphises in left upper field. Kharoshthi inscription: Maharajasa Savarloga Mahishvarasa Vima Kapiphasa Tradata.³⁸

³⁸ Harry Falk, private communication, January 10, 2012

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