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TOKHARISTAN AND GANDHARA UNDER WESTERN TÜRK RULE (650–750)*

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Part One

HISTORY OF THE REGIONS

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Trade, and above all the silk trade, played a major role in the economic life of the states of Central Asia in the sixth and seventh centuries. Political and military events, for both the sedentary and the nomadic peoples of the time, were largely determined by the struggle for control of the Silk Route. About the middle of the sixth century, the Hephthalite kingdom controlled (and derived considerable economic benefit from) the most important sections of the route, which led across Central Asia together with its branches from the Tarim basin to the Aral Sea in the west and to Barygaza-Broach in the south.

At that very time, however, a powerful rival appeared in Central Asia, the Türk tribal confederation (see [Chapter 14](#)). The Türks first came to the Chinese frontier fortresses to barter their products for silk in *c.* 545 but they were refused. After their military victory over the T'ieh-le and the Juan-juan, however, they received great quantities of silk from the Chinese states. From 569 the Chou court supplied the Türks with 100,000 bales of silk a year.¹ As the Türks accumulated great stores of the precious material, their efforts to develop the silk trade and to gain control over the Silk Route became ever more aggressive. As a consequence of their economic interests, and in alliance with the Sasanians (who shared these interests in many respects), the Türks overthrew the Hephthalite kingdom, but could only take possession of the territory of Sogdiana. The Sasanians secured Chaganiyan, Sind, Bust, Rukhkhaj, Zabulistan, Tokharistan, Turistan and Balistan as vassal kingdoms and principalities.²

Thus, the Türks took possession of great sections of the Silk Route in Central Asia. In spite of their military success, the Türks and their Sogdian merchants could only sell their silk stocks to the Sasanians, who refused, however, to establish trading relations with them. At first, the Türks tried to establish trading relations with the Byzantines and to

¹ Ecsedy, 1968, pp. 131–80.

² Harmatta, 1969, p. 401 and note 71.

sell their silk stocks directly to them. But the steppe route – starting from Sogdiana and crossing the deserts to the north of the Caspian Sea and the Volga to reach Byzantine territory on the south-eastern shores of the Black Sea, and thence by ship to Constantinople – proved too difficult for the nomads. It was also unsafe because, from their fortresses on the *limes Sasanicus* in the Caucasus, the Sasanians controlled the land to the north up to the Kuban valley. Thus the Türks soon reverted to military force. In 569–570 they launched a great military expedition against Sasanian Iran in which they conquered the territory of the former Hephthalite kingdom belonging to Iran in the form of vassal kingdoms and principalities. (The Sasanians were powerless to resist because they were also engaged in war against Byzantium.) Although there is no source that gives the details of the war waged by the Türks against Iran in 569–570, it is clear from the phrase ‘*Turkun wa Kābulu*’ (The Türks and [the people of] Kabul), in a poem written between 575 and 580 by the Arab poet al-^cAsha, that the Türk army was operating in the Kabul–Gandhara area in 570.³

Later historical events show that the successor principalities of the Hephthalite kingdom, formerly annexed to Iran, accepted Türk supremacy and became vassals of the Western Türk *kaghan*. Thus, the southern section of the Silk Route was opened to the Türks and the Sogdian silk merchants, who were able to transport their merchandise to the harbours on the western shores of India. The taking of the city of Bosphorus by the Türk army in the Crimea in these years was also designed to ensure control of the steppe Silk Route up to the Black Sea.

The former Hephthalite territories were probably not yet under permanent military occupation at this time. Since the Türk army consisted of tribal military forces, the permanent garrisoning of troops would only have been possible through the transfer of entire tribal groups and their livestock, providing them with an economic base. Thus, the Hephthalite principalities continued to exist as vassals of the Western Türk *kaghans*, while the Xingil dynasty ruled in Kabul and Gandhara.

However, the Sasanians did not renounce their claim to eastern Iran nor did the Hephthalites abandon their aspirations for independence. According to the *Pei-shih* (Chapter XLIV, p. 4), both the Sasanians and the Hephthalites revolted against Tardu (Ta-t’ou) *kaghan* in 581 or 582.⁴ Some years later, in 588–589, in a further war with the Hephthalites, the Sasanian army, under their commander-in-chief Bahram Chobin, took Balkh and crossed the Amu Darya. In the battle against the Türk army coming to the aid of the

³ Harmatta, 1962, p. 133, note 5.

⁴ Chavannes, 1903, p. 50.

Hephthalites, Bahram Chobin killed Ch'u-lo (**Čor*), the Türk *kaghan*, with an arrow and obtained great booty.⁵

Bahram Chobin's military successes were to have no lasting consequences, however, because shortly after his victory he revolted against the Sasanian emperor, Hormizd IV (579–590). Nevertheless, Vistahm, who was appointed governor of Khurasan by Khusrau II (590–628) after Bahram Chobin had been defeated, compelled the Hephthalite rulers Shaug and Pariowk to acknowledge his supremacy. Later, in 595 or 596, however, Vistahm was treacherously murdered by Pariowk.

The troubled years between 591 and 596 led to the Western Türk *kaghans'* decision to change the system of vassal Hephthalite principalities in eastern Iran and to submit the territory of the former Hephthalite kingdom to direct Türk rule. The realization of this plan was delayed, however, because of internecine wars between the Northern and the Western Türks. The accession of Jig (Shih-kuei) *kaghan* in 611 stabilized the internal situation of the Western Türk Empire. When war broke out between the Sasanians and the Hephthalites in 616–617, the Türk *kaghan* sent an army to the aid of the Hephthalites, won a great victory over the Sasanians and advanced as far as Ray and Isfahan.⁶

Two interesting material relics connected with the Türk invasion of Iran have recently become known. The Foroughi Collection of Sasanian seals includes a remarkable specimen with Middle Persian and Türk runic inscriptions. The Middle Persian legend runs as follows: (1) *zyk*, (2) *h̄hn*, (3) *GDH* (*Zig kaghan*, glory!), while the Turkic text runs: (1) *b(a)q (e)š eb*, (2) *qiy (ü)g (o) ηkü* (Take care for companions, house, settlement; make a good name for yourself!). This is clearly a seal of Jig *kaghan*, destined for the administration of the conquered territories. The Middle Persian legend was probably prepared with the help of Sogdian scribes because the spelling *h̄hn* of the word '*kaghan*' reflects Sogdian orthography (Sogdian *γ' γ'n* versus Middle Persian *h'k'n*). The runic text gives the norms of royal behaviour for the Türk *kaghans* in concise form. The other noteworthy material relic of the Türk invasion of Iran is a medal representing Jig *kaghan* in profile with the legend: (1) *GDH 'pzwn zyk*, (2) *MLK' 'n MLK'* (Glory, growth! Zig King of Kings),⁷ which was probably minted to commemorate his victory.

It is clear from the inscriptions that the Western Türk *kaghans* intended to annex the eastern Iranian territories to their realm. In spite of their military success, however, they failed to realize their plans. For unknown reasons, the Türk army was recalled by Jig

⁵ Marquart, 1901, p. 65; Markwart, 1938, pp. 138 et seq., 141 et seq., 153 et seq.; Czeglédy, 1958, p. 24.

⁶ Nöldeke, Tabari, 1973, pp. 435, 478 et seq.

⁷ It was published by Göbl, 1987, pp. 276 et seq., Pl. 39, Fig. 2, who could not, however, read the name of the king and erroneously dated the medal (anonymous in his opinion) from Islamic times.

kaghan. Thus Smbat Bagratuni, the Persian commander of Armenian origin, was again able to defeat the Hephthalites, killing their king in single combat.

The definitive annexation of Tokharistan and Gandhara to the Western Türk Empire was to take place some years later, in *c.* 625, when Sasanian Iran became involved in the war against Byzantium that ultimately led to its eclipse.⁸ The Western Türk army of T'ung Yabghukaghan advanced to the River Indus, took possession of the most important cities and replaced the Hephthalite dynasties with Türk rulers. This event was commemorated by a medal minted probably by Tardushad, the new Türk ruler of Tokharistan, in honour of T'ung Yabghu *kaghan*, with the legend *GDH 'pzw't' yyp MLK' 'n MLK'* (The glory increased, jeb (=Yabghu) King of Kings!)⁹

Of the territories annexed in *c.* 625 by the Western Türk Empire, Khuttal and Kapisa–Gandhara were independent kingdoms after the disintegration of the Hephthalite kingdom. The Hephthalite kings bearing the title *xingil* of Kapisa–Gandhara continued the coinage of the Hephthalite kings of Tokharistan. The names of the kings Khingila II, Purvaditya, Triloka, Narana, Narendra I and Narendra II are attested by the legends of their coins. All the coin legends are written in the Brāhmī alphabet and all kings (with the exception of Khingila) bear Indian names. This is clear evidence of the slow Indianization of the Hephthalite royal dynasty during the sixth century. The same is true of the Hephthalite princes of Khuttal, who also minted coins with Indian legends: *jayatu Baysāra Khotalaka* (Be victorious Baysara, [Lord] of Khuttal!), *jayatu Baysāra* (Be victorious Baysara!) and *śri Vasyāra* (His Highness Vasyara!).¹⁰

The last Hephthalite king of Kapisa–Gandhara, Narendra II, bears on his coin (Cabinet des Médailles 1974.443) a crown decorated with a bull's head. Since the bull's head also appears on the coins of the Türk *yabghus* of Tokharistan, this symbol clearly implies the recognition of Türk sovereignty. The appearance of the bull's head among the royal symbols of the Western Türk *kaghans* probably goes back to the title *buqa* (bull) adopted by Tardu *kaghan* after becoming the sole ruler of the entire Türk Empire in 599.¹¹

Tokharistan

Compared with Kapisa–Gandhara, Tokharistan (with its capital, Balkh) lost much of its former importance. Although the Hephthalite ruler of Balkh bore the Bactrian title *šāva*

⁸ For the connection of this war with the struggle for the Silk Route and the events in Central Asia, see Harmatta, 1974, pp. 95–106.

⁹ Harmatta, 1982, pp. 167–80.

¹⁰ Humbach, 1966, pp. 31, 58.

¹¹ Chavannes, 1903, p. 51.

(king), the name of his son, Pariowk (in Armenian, clerical error for *Parmowk) or Barmuda, Parmuda (in Arabic and Persian, clerical error for *Barmuka, **Parmuka*) which goes back to the Buddhist title *pramukha*, shows that he was the lord and head of the great Buddhist centre Naubahar at Balkh. His dignity and power were thus more of an ecclesiastic than a secular nature. The famous Barmakid family of Islamic times were apparently the descendants of the Hephthalite *pramukhas* of the Naubahar at Balkh.

After the Türk conquest, all the principalities of the former Hephthalite kingdom came under the rule of the Türk *yabghu* of Tokharistan residing in Qunduz. The Chinese encyclopedia the *Chih-fu-yüan-kuei*¹² lists the kingdoms subject to the Türk *yabghu* of Tokharistan: Hsieh-yü (Zabulistan), Chipin (Kapisa–Gandhara), Ku-t’u (Khuttal), Shih-han-na (Chaganiyan), Chiesu (Shuman), Shih-ni (Shignan), I-ta (Badghis), Hu-mi (Wakhan), Hushih-chien (Gozgan), Fan-yen (Bamiyan), Chiu-yüeh-to-chien (Kobadian) and Pu-t’o-shan (Badakhshan). The Chinese pilgrim Huei-ch’ao, who travelled in these lands between 723 and 729, asserts that in Gandhara, Kapisa and Zabulistan the kings and military forces were T’u-chüeh (Türks).¹³ This evidence clearly shows the immigration of a Turkic population into these territories. The settlement of the Karluks is attested by the Chinese sources and the immigration of both the Karluks and the Kalach is shown by the Arabic and Persian sources.¹⁴

The first Türk ruler of Tokharistan and the subjugated petty kingdoms was Tardushad, the son of the Western Türk T’ung Yabghu *kaghan*. When Tardu was poisoned by his wife a few years later, he was succeeded by his son Ishbara *yabghu*, who, as first among the Türk rulers, began to mint coins. His coin effigy represents him bearing a crown decorated with two wings and a bull’s head. The legend on one of his coins (Cabinet des Médailles 1970/755) runs as follows: obverse: *šb’lk’ yyp MLK’ (Išbara Ĵeb [= yabghu] šāh)*; reverse: *pnčdḥ ḥwsp’* ([minted in his] 15th [regnal year at] Khusp). If Ishbara *yabghu* ascended the throne in *c.* 630, the coin would have been minted in 645 at Khusp, a town in Kuhistan. Another issue¹⁵ was struck in the 13th year of Ishbara at Herat (Harē) and a third one in his 20th year at Shuburgan. This shows that Ishbara’s reign lasted to 650 and that at least three mints (at Khusp, Herat and Shuburgan) were working in the western part of Tokharistan during this period. In *c.* 650, however, Western Türk power declined and its fragmented parts became, at least nominally, vassal kingdoms and principalities of the T’ang Empire.

The first Türk *yabghu* (king) of Tokharistan, confirmed by the Chinese emperor, was Wu-shih-po of the A-shih-na dynasty. By this time, however (653), the Arab advance

¹² Chavannes, 1903, pp. 250 et seq.

¹³ Fuchs, 1938, pp. 444, 447, 448.

¹⁴ Minorsky, 1937, pp. 347 et seq.; Czeglédy, 1984, p. 216.

¹⁵ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 3, issues 265/2, 265/1.

towards Central Asia had already begun. In 652–653 al-Dahhak b. Qais (al-Ahnaf), the commander of the advance guard of Amir °Abdallah b. °Amir, took Merv-i rud, conquered the whole of Tokharistan and agreed with the inhabitants of Balkh on the terms of their capitulation. Under the rule of the Umayyad caliph °Ali (656–661), however, the Arabs were driven from eastern Iran (even from Nishapur) and the rule of Peroz III, son of Yazd-gird III, was reestablished by the *yabghu* of Tokharistan in Seistan.¹⁶ Under the reign of the caliph Mu°awiya (661–680), Balkh and Kabul were retaken by °Abd al-Rahman b. Samura, but Arab rule did not last long.

As a consequence of the Arab invasions, the power of the Türk *yabghu* of Tokharistan was considerably weakened. After Ishbara *yabghu*, relations with China also seem to have been interrupted because of the Tibetan conquest of the Tarim basin (see [Chapter 15](#)). It was not until 705, under P'an-tu-ni-li, the *yabghu* of Tokharistan, that another mission was sent to the Chinese court. By that time, the *yabghu* had moved to Badakhshan because his capital, Balkh, and the central territories of his kingdom were occupied by the Arabs. Thus, Shuburgan, Khusp and Herat (where the mints had worked for the *yabghus* of Tokharistan) were lost and their coinage ceased to exist at the beginning of the eighth century.

Accordingly, the two issues known besides that of Ishbara *yabghu* can only be dated to the second half of the seventh century. One of them (Cabinet des Médailles 1965.1915), which bears the legend *sym yyp MLK'* (*Sēm Ĵeb* [= *yabghu*] *šāh*) on the obverse and *hpt špwlg'n'* ([minted in his] 7th [regnal year at] Shuburgan) on the reverse, is evidence that Shuburgan was still among the possessions of the *yabghu* of Tokharistan. Another specimen of the same issue¹⁷ indicates *hwsp'* (Khusp) as the minting place on the reverse. Sem *yabghu* may be identified with Wu-shih-po, the first Türk king of Tokharistan. The Chinese spelling (taking the Chinese character *po* as a clerical error for *mu*) and its North-Western T'ang form .^u*o-ši(β)-m(u γ)* may well reflect a foreign prototype **Āsēm* ~ **Āsīm*. Counting the reign of Sem Wu-shih-mu as starting in 653, his 7th regnal year would be 659–660, i.e. a year before the repeated Arab invasions under Mu°awiya.

The third issue (Cabinet des Médailles 1970.749),¹⁸ which bears the legend *gwn špr' yyb MLK'* (*Gün Išpara Ĵeb* [= *yabghu*] *šāh*) on the obverse, does not indicate either the regnal years or the mint. This striking phenomenon can probably be explained by historical events, in the course of which (as mentioned previously), the *yabghu* of Tokharistan withdrew to Badakhshan, while his central territories and mints came under Arab rule. After Gün Ishpara *yabghu*, whose reign may be dated to the last decades of the seventh century,

¹⁶ Marquart, 1901, pp. 67 et seq.; Harmatta, 1971, pp. 140 et seq.; Daffina, 1983, p. 133.

¹⁷ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 3, issue 266.

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. 3, issues 267–71.

the coinage of the *yabghus* of Tokharistan came to an end and the region lost its political and military importance.

It appears that even the rule of the Türk A-shih-na dynasty ceased at that time. P'an-tu-ni-li was succeeded as *yabghu* of Tokharistan by Ti-shê, king of Chaganiyan, in 719. The later *yabghus* are only mentioned by the Chinese sources on the occasion of their missions to the T'ang court: in 729 Ku-tu-lu Tun Ta-tu (*Qutluy Ton Tardu*) asked for aid against the Arabs; 20 years later, Shih-li-mang-kia-lo asked for and received military aid against the Tibetans; and in 758 Wu-na-to came personally to the T'ang court and took part in the fight against the rebel An Lu-shan.¹⁹

Kapisa– Gandhara

As mentioned above, the Hephthalite kingdom of Kapisa–Gandhara managed to preserve its independence even after the annexation of the western territories of the Hephthalite kingdom, first by the Sasanians and subsequently by the Western Türks. At the time of the Western Türk conquest in c. 625, the last ruler of the Xingil dynasty in Gandhara, Narendra II, recognized the supremacy of T'ung *yabghu kaghan* and thus maintained his throne.

According to the report of Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, the royal dynasty of Gandhara was extinct by the time of his visit in 630 and the land had come under the rule of Kapisa.²⁰ From Hsüan-tsang's account it becomes clear that prior to his arrival, the authority of the Xingil dynasty had been confined to Gandhara, while in Kapisa another prince, probably of Western Türk origin, was ruling and only united the two kingdoms under his rule after the death of Narendra II. There is no other evidence for the separation of Kapisa from Gandhara prior to the Western Türk conquest. At the time that the Western Türks advanced to the Indus, in c. 625, Kapisa was probably separated from Gandhara and entrusted to a Western Türk prince who also became ruler of Gandhara after the extinction of the Xingil dynasty.

According to the *T'ang shu*, the king of Kapisa and Gandhara in 658 was Ho-hsieh-chih,²¹ whose name (North-Western T'ang *xâi- γιι-tsí* < Türk **Qar γilaci*) clearly points to Turkic origin. At first, he may have been appointed king of Kapisa, then, after some years (but before 630) he succeeded Narendra II even in Gandhara, where his accession may have been facilitated by a marriage alliance. The new Türk dynasty adopted the Hephthalite royal title *xingil* and regarded themselves as the heirs to the Xingil dynasty.²²

¹⁹ Chavannes, 1903, pp. 155–8; Chavannes, n.d., p. 95.

²⁰ Chavannes, 1903, p. 130.

²¹ Ibid., p. 131 and note 4.

²² Harmatta, 1969, pp. 404–5.

In spite of the emphasis on continuity, the new Türk dynasty of Kapisa– Gandhara began to strike a new coin type²³ on which the king is represented with a crown similar to that of Ishbara *yabghu* but decorated with only one moon sickle instead of two; the Brāhmī legend is replaced by a Pahlavi one, running as follows: *nyčky MLK'* (King Niza/i/uk). The minting of this coin type lasted for almost a century (c. 630 – c. 720). The same effigy was maintained by the subsequent issues although minor modifications in the form of the crown and the ear-pendant can be observed and the legend gradually became deformed.²⁴ In view of the long period of minting and the fact that the first ruler of the Türk dynasty of Gandhara bore the name **Qaryilaci*, the legend *nyčky MLK'* cannot represent a proper name; it can only be interpreted as a title or a dynastic name. The reading *nyčky MLK'*²⁵ is firmly supported by the report of the *Chih-fu-yüan-kuei* according to which Na-sai, king of Ko-p'i-shih, sent a delegate to the Chinese court.²⁶ Without doubt Ko-p'i-shih (Ancient Chinese *kâ-b'ji-sie*) is the Chinese transcription of Kapisi (the kingdom of Kapisa–Gandhara) while Na-sai (Ancient Chinese *nâ-sək*) may well reflect the Bactrian variant **Nazuk* of the name **Nizük*. The reading *nyčky* had previously been identified with the name of Tarkhan Nizak, the ruler of Badhghis. A thorough revision of the palaeographic and historical evidence, however, has revealed the true form of the latter to be Tirek,²⁷ a name of Türgesh origin.

When the supposed connection between *nyčky MLK'* and Tarkhan Nizak is dropped, the relation of the Nizük dynasty with the tribal aristocracy of the Western Türk tribe A-hsieh Ni-shu Szu-kin (**Äskil Nizük Ĵigin*) becomes evident. The heads and nobles of this tribe bore the name Ni-shu (**Nizük*, cf. *Ni-shu Mo-ho shad*, *Ni-shu kaghan*, *Ni-shu Szŭ-kin*, *Ni-shu ch'o*). At the time of the Western Türk conquest, the royal powers and princely ranks in the successor states of the Hepthalite kingdom appear to have been distributed among the Western Türk tribal heads and nobles. Thus, the kingdom of Kapisa was entrusted to a member of the aristocracy of the Äskil Nizük Ĵigin tribe. The element Nizük (going back to a Saka form **näjsuka-*, meaning 'fighter, warrior', from the Saka *näjs-*, 'to fight') in the tribal name became the dynastic name of the kings of Kapisa–Gandhara, while their family name may have been Ho-hsieh-chih (**Qaryilaci*), which was borne by the first Western Türk *yabghu* of Kapisa–Gandhara.

²³ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 3, issues 198–205, 217–24.

²⁴ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 3, issues 198 (*nyčky MLK'*), 200 (*yčky MLK'*), 219 (*čky MLK'*).

²⁵ Besides, the readings *npky* and *nyvky* are also possible, while *nspky* is impossible from a palaeographic viewpoint.

²⁶ Chavannes, n.d., p. 40.

²⁷ Esin, 1977, pp. 323 et seq.

The Nizük dynasty of Kapisa–Gandhara separated into two branches in *c.* 670. Following a conflict between the king and his brother, the latter escaped to the Arab governor of Seistan, who permitted him to take up residence in the town of Zabul. The Arabs had already conquered Seistan in *c.* 650, but under the caliph °Ali both Seistan and Khurasan were lost. Under Mu°awiya, however, Seistan, Tokharistan and Kabul again came under Arab rule for a decade. After the death of the Arab governor °Abd al-Rahman b. Samura in 670 or 671, the king of Kabul (Kapisa–Gandhara) expelled the Arabs from his territories. At the same time, his brother (by now the ruler of Zabul) conquered Zabulistan and Rukhkhaj. Although he was then defeated by the new Arab governor al-Rabi° b. Ziyad, the Arab sub-governor of Seistan, Yazid b. Ziyad, later suffered a heavy defeat and fell in battle at Ganza (modern Ghazni). This clearly points to the strengthening of the kingdom of Zabul. Its ruler assumed the title *zibil* (earlier misreadings include *zanbil*, *zunbil* and *rut-bil*), going back to the ancient Hephthalite title *zaβolo* which was still borne by the kings of Zabul as late as the ninth century.

The relationship between the two branches of the Western Türk Ho-hsieh-chih (**Qarγilaci*) royal family, ruling in Kapisa and Zabul respectively, was far from peaceful. According to the *T'ang shu*, Zabul (i.e. the branch of the family ruling in Zabul) extended its power over Kapisa–Gandhara after 711. This event is probably the basis of the legend concerning the origin of the Türk Shahi dynasty of Kabul, as told by al-Biruni in his *India* three centuries later. According to this legend, the founder of the dynasty (Barhatakin) hid in a cavern and then unexpectedly appeared before the people as a miraculous being, thus coming to power.

It is clear that the story of Barhatakin, with its cavern motif, represents a late echo of the legend of origin of the Türks (see [Chapter 14 Part One](#)) according to which their ancestors lived in a cavern. The real historical event, however, was quite different. According to the Chinese pilgrim Huei-ch'ao, who visited Gandhara between 723 and 729 (i.e. a decade after the event), when Wu-san T'ê-chin Shai was ruling there:

the father of the T'u-chüeh [Türk] king surrendered to the king of Chi-pin [Kapisa– Gandhara] together with all sections of his people, with his soldiers and his horses. When the military force of the T'u-chüeh strengthened later, he killed the king of Chi-pin and made himself lord of the country.²⁸

Accordingly, power in both Zabul and Kapisa–Gandhara was concentrated in the hands of the same line of the Qarγilaci royal family. Indeed, Huei-ch'ao explicitly states that the

²⁸ Fuchs, 1938, p. 445. Fuchs did not realize that at the time of Huei-ch'ao's visit, it was Wu-san T'ê-chin Shai and not Barhatakin who was king in Kien-to-lo (Gandhara). For the origins of the Türk Shahi dynasty of Kabul, see Stein, Sir Aurel, 1893, pp. 1 et seq.

king of Zabul was the nephew of the ruler of Kapisa– Gandhara. In spite of his legendary garb, the founder of the new dynasty, Barhatakin, must have been a real person. His name, Barha, is a hyperSanskritism for **Baha*, going back to Turkic **Baya*, while *takin* represents the Turkic title *tegin*. The name *Baya* is well attested among the Western Türks (in Chinese transcription *Mo-ho*; North-Western T'ang *mbâ γ- γâ* Türk *Baya*) and the title *tegin* (in Chinese transcription *t'ê-ch'in*) was also widely used by them. Thus, the name **Baya tegin* in the legendary tradition may in fact be authentic.

It follows from Huei-ch'ao's report that Barhatakin had two sons: one who ruled after him in Kapisa–Gandhara, and another whose son became king of Zabul. According to the *T'ang shu*, the king of Kapisa–Gandhara between 719 and 739 was Wu-san T'ê-ch'in Shai. It is clear from the historical context that he was the son of Barhatakin. The Chinese transcription (Ancient Chinese *.uo-sân d'ək-g'ien ʃai*) reflects the Iranian title **Horsān tegin šāhi*. The Chinese form of the name follows the Chinese word order, however, and may be interpreted as 'Tegin *šāhi* of Horsan'. The word *Horsān* may be the Hephthalite development of *Xvārāsān* (Khurasan) and the whole title obviously means 'Tegin, king of Khurasan'.

The coming to power of the new dynasty of Barhatakin was reflected in the coinage. The characteristic effigy of the Nizük kings was replaced by a new royal portrait. The king bears a new crown decorated with three moon sickles, or tridents, which indicates a return to Hephthalite traditions²⁹ and is a clear declaration of independence from the Türk *yabghu* of Tokharistan. In the first issues, the meaningless remnants of the legend *nyčky MLK* were retained,³⁰ although they later came to have a purely decorative function.³¹ At last, a new legend written in the Bactrian alphabet appears on the coins: *σ ρ ι ο ρ α υ ο* (His Highness the King).³² Seemingly, the name of the king does not appear in the legend. According to al-Biruni, Barhatakin assumed the title '*šāhiya* of Kabul' on coming to power. He could therefore be identified simply as 'the *šāhi*' in the coin legend. Perhaps simultaneously, he also minted coins with the Brāhmī legend *śri ʃāhi* (His Highness the *šāhi* [King]).³³

Barhatakin was followed by his son Tegin *shah*, who was ruler of Kapisa– Gandhara from 719. On his accession, Tegin assumed the high-ranking title *Khurāsān shah* (king of Khurasan): this was a return to Hephthalite traditions because the two most important Hephthalite kings, Lakhana and Jabula, had both borne this title. Tegin *shah* continued the coinage of his father in so far as he retained the crown decorated with moon sickles to

²⁹ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 155.

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. 3, issues 225–31.

³¹ Ibid., Vol. 3, issues 232–4.

³² Ibid., Vol. 3, issues 236–7.

³³ Ibid., Vol. 3, issue 252.

which he added two wings (the symbol of the *farn*, or royal splendour). He also took into account the various ethnic elements of his kingdom in the coin legends. His earliest issue (which can be dated to 721) has an exclusively Pahlavi legend to be read in the following way: obverse (10 h) *GDH* ‘*pzwt* (2 h) 1. *tkyn’ bgy* 2. *ḥwtyp* 3. *ḥwl’s’n MLK*’; reverse (9 h) *TLYN* (2 h) *z’wlst’n* (The royal splendour is increased! Tegin, the Majestic Lord, King of Khurasan, [minted in his] second [regnal year in] Zāvulistān). The remarkable fact that the issue was minted in Zabulistan points to cordial relations between the kingdoms of Kapisa– Gandhara and Zabul.

The next issue was again struck in Gandhara. Its legend is written partly in Bactrian, partly in Pahlavi and partly in Brāhmī alphabets and in Bactrian (or Hephthalite), Middle Persian and Sanskrit languages. It runs as follows: obverse (2 h) *σρι ταγίνο ραυο*; reverse (3 h) *w’y* (9 h) *TLT*’, on both sides of the fire altar 1. *śrīla devī* 2. *Pīnaśrī* (His Highness Tegin, the King, [minted at] Way (hind) [in his] 3rd [regnal year]. The beautiful Queen Pīnaśrī). The peculiarity of this issue lies in its mentioning the name of the queen. This was obviously a gesture towards the Indian population of Gandhara since the queen was of Indian origin and she enjoyed high status in Indian society. This is clearly shown by the Gilgit birch-bark manuscripts, which mention the name of the queen besides that of the king. Another interesting feature of this issue is that it was minted in Way (hind) (ancient Udabhandapura, and subsequently Hund), the capital of the *śāhi* kings of Kabul. Its name occurs in its Middle Indian form here for the first time.

The third coin type of Tegin *shah* was also minted in Gandhara. The style of the king’s crown differs from those of the former issues. The legend is written exclusively in the Bactrian script and language: obverse (2 h) *ταγίνο υωρσανο ραυο*; reverse (2 h) *χρονο υøδ*, (10 h) *πορραοορο* (Tegin, king of Hōrsāno [Khurasan], [minted in] era-year 494, [at] Purṣavur [Purushapura]). The development *Purṣavur* of Purushapura almost exactly coincides with the medieval form of the name in Arabic literature, viz. *Purṣāwar* and *Purṣor*.³⁴ No less noteworthy is the dating of the issue. The date is given in the Late Kushan era, which began in 231–232.³⁵ Accordingly, the issue was minted in 725–726.

The fourth coin type of Tegin *shah* represents the king again bearing a new crown decorated with three moon sickles, two wings and an animal head. The legend on the obverse is written partly in Bactrian and partly in Brāhmī; the reverse is in Pahlavi script. It runs as follows: obverse, in Bactrian: *σςι ραυο* (His Highness the King); in Brāhmī: *śrī hiḍibira kharalaca paramēśvara śrī śahi tigina devākāritaṃ* (His Highness, the *hiḍibira*, the *Kharalaca*, the Supreme Lord, His Highness the *śahi* Tegin, the Majesty has [the coin] minted);

³⁴ Markwart, 1938, p. 109.

³⁵ Harmatta, 1969M, p. 425.

reverse, in Pahlavi: (a) *tkyn' hwl's'n MLK'* (b) *ḥpt' ḥpt't'* (Tegin, king of Khurasan, [minted in the era-year] 77).

This coin legend presents some interesting problems. As concerns the date, the year 77 is apparently reckoned in the post-Yazdgird era,³⁶ which began in 652. Thus, the year 77 corresponds to 729. Another question is raised by the word *hiḍibira*. This may be the same term as the Turkic title *ilteber* or *elteber*, which also has the variants *iltber*, *ilber*, attested among others by the Chinese transcription *hsieh-li-fa* (North-Western T'ang *Xi(ɿ)-lji-pfvy.ɿ*), reflecting a foreign prototype: **ilber*.³⁷ The second problematic word of the coin legend is *kharalaca*, which must surely be a name or a title. It can be identified with the family name **Qaryilaci* of the dynasty if we assume a development $r \gamma > r$ and $i > a$ (**Qaryilaci* > **Qaralača*) in it, which is abundantly attested in Old Turkic.³⁸

This recognition may dispel the confusion in both the Chinese sources and the scholarly literature about the Chinese name Ko-ta-lo-chih or Ko-lo-ta-chih for Zabulistan. According to the *T'ang shu*, the original name of Zabulistan was Ts'ao-chü-cha (**Jaguda* < *Javula*); between 656 and 660 it was named Ho-ta-lo-chih; and then the empress Wu changed this name to Hsiehyü (North-Western T'ang *Zi-ṽvy.ɿ* < **Zi βil*). It is a notorious mistake of early scholarly research that, on the basis of a superficial phonetic resemblance, the quoted Chinese spellings were identified with the name Rukhkhaj, used in Arabic geographic literature to denote ancient Arachosia (Middle Persian *Raxvad*). However, this identification is impossible for several reasons.

First, Ho-ta-lo-chih was only used officially by the T'ang court from 656 to 660. It is, therefore, impossible for it to have been used instead of the official name Hsieh-yü in a document written in the imperial chancellery in 718–719. Second, the Arabic form Rukhkhaj is not attested before the tenth century. It developed as a guttural assimilation from Middle Iranian *Raxvad* < **Raxvag*, but simultaneously the original form Rakhwadh was still used by Ibn Rusta and Maqdisi as late as the tenth century. Moreover, the phonetic change $g < ḷ$ had not yet taken place in Arabic in the seventh century, as is clearly proved by the Middle Persian transcriptions of Arabic names. Consequently, a form **Rukhkhaj* could not have existed in Arabic in the seventh century when the Chinese name Ko-ta-lo-chih came into being.

The Chinese initial *ko/ho* (Ancient Chinese *kât/ γât*) clearly points to a foreign initial **q*. The North-Western T'ang form of the name was *kâɿ-d'â(ɿ)-lâ-tṣi* and counting on $q - \gamma < q - d$ dissimilation, or on the confusion of the sign *hsia* with *ta* (which are very

³⁶ Göbl, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 144.

³⁷ The resemblance of the form *hitivira* to the Turkic title *elteber* had already been noted by Humbach, 1966, p. 60.

³⁸ Cf., for example, *qar γuy* (sparrow hawk) > *qaruy*, *baliq* (fish) > *balaq*, Gabain, 1950, p. 49.

similar), one can regard the Chinese form *Kâi-d'â(1)-lâ-tsi* or *kâ.1- γa-lâ-tsi* as an exact transcription of the Türk royal family name *Qaryïlacï*, which became the name of the country. The case of Zabulistan shows the Chinese practice of naming a country after the name or title of its ruler. This may date back to nomadic usage and is attested up to the time of the Mongols. The first Chinese name for Zabulistan was *Ts'ao-chü-cha* < **Jaguda* ~ *Jagula*, the Hephthalite form of the royal title and name *Javula*. After the accession of the *Qaryïlacï*, the name of the country became **Ko-ho-lo-chih* (**Qaryïlacï*). Finally, after the separation of the two branches of the *Qaryïlacï* dynasty and the establishment of the *Zibil* kingdom at Ghazni, the Chinese named the country *Hsieh-yü-kuo*, or 'the country of the *Hsieh-yü* [**Zivil*']'. This name was retained during the eighth century because all kings of Zabulistan bore the royal title *zibil*. Consequently, in the coin legend of *Tegin shah*, the terms *hidibira Kharalaca* (just as the Chinese phrases *Ko-ta-lo-chih hsieh-li-fa* and *Ko-ta-lo-chih t'ê-ch'in*) do not mean 'the *elteber* of Arachosia' and 'the *tegin* of Arachosia', but simply indicate the family name (*Qar γïlacï* ~ *Qaralaca*) and the titles (*elteber* and *tegin* respectively) of the kings.

The characteristic features of the coinage of *Tegin shah* can be seen as reflecting the historical situation, the rich cultural tradition and the ethnic composition of Kapisa–Gandhara at that time. The coin legends are written in all the important languages (Bactrian, Middle Persian, Sanskrit) and scripts (Pahlavi, Bactrian, Brāhmī) of the country and their contents refer equally to Persian, Hephthalite, Turkic and Indian traditions of royal ideology. The same syncretism is seen in *Tegin shah*'s dating of coins – in regnal years to stress his independence, in the Late Kushan era referring to local traditions, and in the post-Yazdgird era to indicate his distance from the Sasanian dynasty.

Zabulistan

As a contemporary of *Tegin shah*, his nephew *Zibil* ruled in Zabulistan from 720 to c. 738. His name was registered in the T'ang court in two different forms, *Shih-yü* and *Shih-k'ü*, but both spellings represent variants of the same title and name. *Zibil Shih-yü* (North-Western T'ang, **Zi-ivy.1*) reflects the form *Zibil* ~ *Zivil*, also attested by the Arabic sources, while *Shih-k'ü* (North-Western T'ang *Zi-kivy.1*) represents a form **Zigil*, being the Hephthalite development of *Zivil*.

The independence, importance and power of Zabulistan are well illustrated by its coinage at that time. In this respect too, *Zibil* was independent from his uncle, *Tegin shah*. He created an effigy based on Sasanian traditions and on the coinage of the Arab governors, a phenomenon which reflects the fact that his interests lay towards the west, while his Indian

links are only represented by a short legend in Brāhmī. The legend of his coins runs as follows: obverse (1 h) *yypwlhwtyp'* (11 h) *GDH* (9 h) *'pzwt*; on the rim around (1 h) *PWN ŠM Y yzt'* (3 h) *yypwl bgyhwtyp'* (6 h) *wḥm'n'n mlt'n* (9 h) *MLK'*; reverse (11 h) *śrī vākhudevaḥ* (1 h) *pncdh z'wlst'n* (3 h) *'pl plm'n yzd'n* (King Ĵibul, [his] glory increased! In the name of god, Ĵibul, the Majestic Lord [is] King of brave men – His Highness the Majestic Lord – [minted in his] 15th [regnal year in] Zāvulistān, by the order of the gods).

Coin issues of Ĵibul ~ Zibil are so far known from his 2nd, 9th, 10th and 15th regnal years. It is very likely that he died shortly after his 15th regnal year (corresponding to 735) because his son Ju-mo-fu-ta ascended the throne in 738.³⁹ In spite of the apparently entirely different form of his name in Chinese spelling, the new king of Zabulistan again bore the name or title Jibul. The North-Western T'ang form of Ju-mo-fu-ta was *Ji-mbui pfvyr-d'âi*, which clearly reflects a foreign prototype **ĵibul Pīrdar* (Elder Ĵibul), probably to be distinguished from a 'Junior Jibul'.

The fight for independence

One year later, in 739, Tegin *shah* abdicated the throne of Gandhara in favour of his son, Fu-lin-chi-p'o (also known as Fromo Kesaro, the Bactrian form of his name).⁴⁰ In this name, there is a confusion between the sign *p'o* and *so*; accordingly, the correct form is Fu-lin-chi-so (North-Western T'ang *pfvyr-ĥumkiē- sâ*) in which it is easy to recognize the Iranian name **Frōm Kēsar* (emperor of Rome [=Byzantium]). This name implies an anti-Arab programme and propaganda at the time, which might be explained by Fromo Kesaro's having entered into manhood as an *er at* (meaning 'man's name') in 719, the year in which a Byzantine delegation travelled through Tokharistan on their way to the Chinese emperor and informed the kingdoms of Central Asia of the great victory they had won over the Arabs the previous year.⁴¹

The coinage of Fromo Kesaro (Fig. 1)⁴² is more closely connected with that of the Late Sasanians and of the Arab governors than with that of Tegin *shah*. The legends are written only in Bactrian and Pahlavi scripts and languages. They run as follows: obverse (11 h) (1) *GDH* (2) *'p < zwt >* (2 h) (1) *bg* (2) *hwtyp* (The glory increased! The Majestic Sovereign); on the rim around, *φρομο κησαρο βαγο χαδηο* (Fromo Kesaro, the Majestic Sovereign); reverse (10 h) *ŠT'* (2 h) *hwndy* ([minted in his] 6th [regnal year at] Hund).

³⁹ Chavannes, 1903, p. 210 and note 1. As Chavannes noticed, the death of Shih-yü (**Zivil*) and the accession of Ju-mo-fu-ta could also have taken place two to three years earlier.

⁴⁰ Chavannes, 1903, p. 132.

⁴¹ Harmatta, 1969, p. 412.

⁴² Mochiri, 1987, Pl. XXI, 125.



FIG. 1. Coin of Fromo Kesaro (obverse and reverse). (Courtesy of M. I. Mochiri.)

This is the latest issue of Fromo Kesaro known so far to have been minted in Hund (ancient Udabhandapura).

The coinage of the kings of Zabulistan and Kapisa–Gandhara bears witness to the economic and political force and importance of both countries. They were able to preserve their ethnic and cultural identity and successfully fought for independence against the Arab conquerors. Arab rule was firmly established in Seistan, Badghis, Gozgan, Tokharistan and Transoxania and even in Sind by the beginning of the eighth century. Nevertheless, and in spite of Qutaiba b. Muslim's tax-collecting expedition against Zabulistan in 710–711, both Zabulistan and Kapisa–Gandhara stood as islands in the sea of Arab predatory raids. It was only towards the end of the eighth century that both lands formally acknowledged

the supremacy of the Umayyad caliph al-Mahdi and the true conquest of Kabul did not take place until the end of the ninth century.

An important recent discovery has provided a surprising insight into the events of this epoch. On the coins of some Arab governors, a Bactrian text overstruck on the rim has been discovered.⁴³ The reading of the text is as follows: *φρομο κησαρο βαγο χοαδηο κιδο βο ταζικανο χοργο οδο σαιο βο σαβαγο ατο ιμο βο γαινδο* (Fromo Kesaro, the Majestic Sovereign [is] who defeated the Arabs and laid a tax [on them]. Thus they sent it.). These coins formed part of the tax paid by the Arabs to Fromo Kesaro and were overstruck with a legend telling of his victory over them. Obviously, this event occurred during the reign of Fromo Kesaro (739–746) and may have contributed to his transformation in later historical tradition⁴⁴ into the Tibetan national hero Phrom Ge-sar, whose figure still survives today in the folklore of the territory of ancient Gandhara.

The memory of the taxes paid by the Arabs has also been preserved in the Tibetan historical tradition according to which two Ta-zig (=Arab) kings, La-mer-mu and Hab-gdal, 'having taken kindly to Tibetan command, paid punctually without fail their gems and wealth'.⁴⁵ La-mer-mu may be an abridged form of the name ^cAmr b. Muslim, while Hab-gdal may have preserved the memory of ^cAbdallah b. al-Zubair. The latter evidence may also illustrate the successful resistance of the Gandharan population against the Arab conquest. However, the struggle was not decided here but in the far north at Talas, where the Arabs and Türks won a decisive victory over the Chinese army in 751.

Beside the most important successor states of the former Hephthalite kingdom (that is, Tokharistan, Kapisa–Gandhara and Zabulistan), some minor principalities also played a remarkable historical role during the time of the Arab conquest. Thus, Badghis surrendered to the Arabs at an early date, but its energetic ruler, Tarkhan Tirek, continued the struggle until his death in 709. More successful was the resistance of Khuttal and Bamiyan, which disposed of greater military forces. The kings of Khuttal also struck coins, the land having had a tradition in this respect since the Late Hephthalite epoch. By the time of Huei-ch'ao's visit in the 720s, Khuttal already acknowledged Arab supremacy.

To the north of Gandhara were two small states of great strategic importance: Great Po-lü and Little Po-lü according to the Chinese sources. The routes leading through these countries were equally significant for T'ang China and Tibet, and as a consequence of the Arab conquest of Khurasan, the arduous Silk Route connecting India directly with the Tarim basin became of vital importance. The Chinese name *Polü* (North-Western T'ang

⁴³ The discovery was made by Humbach, 1987, pp. 81 et seq.

⁴⁴ Harmatta, 1969, pp. 409 et seq.

⁴⁵ Thomas, 1935, Vol. 1, p. 273.

Bu-l-ü) reflects the local form, *Bolōr* (noticed later by al-Biruni), which goes back to the form **Bhauttapura* (city of the Bhauttas), the latter being a Sanskrit term used for the Tibetans.⁴⁶ The population of the two Bolor (Po-lü) states consisted, however, of different ethnic elements: Tibetans, Dards and Burushaskis. It is interesting to note that the name Gilgit occurs in the Chinese sources for the first time during this epoch, appearing in the form *Nieh-to* in one text and *Nieh-ho* in another. Since no confusion of the sign *to* with *ho* seems possible, one sign is obviously missing from both spellings here. The correct form is therefore *Niehho-to* (North-Western T'angki- $\gamma^u \hat{a}-t\hat{a}$), which is a rather exact transcription (**Gilgat*) of the name Gilgit.

The conflicting Chinese and Tibetan interests led to China's military intervention in Gilgit in 747. Commanded by Kao Hsien-chih, a Chinese general of Korean origin, the Chinese forces won a decisive victory over the Tibetans and thus secured their routes to Khurasan and Gandhara.⁴⁷

The period from 650 to 750 was a critical epoch in the history of Central Asia. The eclipse of Sasanian Iran, and the Western and Northern Türk empires, the crisis of the Byzantine Empire and the decline of T'ang China on the one hand, and the rise of the Arab caliphate and Tibet on the other hand, clearly indicate major historical changes. On the ruins of the ancient great empires, a new world was in the making. However, several centuries were to elapse before the emergence of significant new cultural achievements.

⁴⁶ Chavannes, 1903, pp. 149 et seq.; Markwart, 1938, pp. 103 et seq.; Fuchs, 1938, pp. 452 et seq.: (Khut-tal), p. 443 (Great Bolor), p. 444 (Little Bolor).

⁴⁷ Stein, Sir Aurel, 1923, pp. 173–7.

Part Two

LANGUAGES, LITERATURE, COINAGE, ARCHITECTURE AND ART

(*B. A. Litvinsky*)

Ethnic groups and languages

The kingdom of the Kabul Shahis was multiracial, inhabited by many different peoples. A considerable part of the population was composed of sedentary speakers of: (i) Middle and New East Iranian languages, Late Bactrian, and the New Iranian phase – the Afghan language; and (ii) West Iranian languages in the Middle Iranian and New Iranian phases – Tajik or Persian. Sanskrit and Prakrit were widespread. A large group of the population used Indo-Iranian Dardic languages as their mother tongues. Of the aboriginal languages of the east of the region, the linguistically isolated Burushaski should be mentioned. Of particular importance are the Türks (see [Chapter 14](#)), who brought their language from the depths of Central Asia. Information is given below about those ethnic groups and languages not discussed in previous chapters.

The origins of the Tajiks and of their language lie in remotest antiquity. According to the eminent Iranologist Lazard:

The language known as New Persian, which may usually be called at this period by the name of *darī* or *parsī-i darī*, can be classified linguistically as a continuation of Middle Persian, the official, religious and literary language of Sasanian Iran. . .

New Persian belongs to the West Iranian group. In its phonetic and even its grammatical structure, New Persian had changed little from Middle Persian. Its vocabulary had changed, however, because New Persian drew heavily on the East Iranian languages, especially Sogdian, and also on the Turkic languages and Arabic.⁴⁸ Middle Persian was widespread in Khurasan and some parts of Middle Asia, partly promoted by the Manichaean movement. At the time of the Arab conquest, New Persian had already appeared in

⁴⁸ Lazard, 1971; 1975, pp. 595–7.

Tokharistan. According to Huei-ch'ao (writing in 726), the language of Khuttal – one of the most important domains of Tokharistan, located in the south of modern Tajikistan – was partly Tokharian, partly Turkic and partly indigenous.⁴⁹

In connection with the events of the first third of the eighth century, the Arab historian al-Tabari relates that the inhabitants of Balkh used to sing in the New Persian (Tajik) language. It is quite possible, therefore, that a third ('indigenous', according to Huei-ch'ao) language was current in Tokharistan in addition to Tokharian and Turkic. If that is the case, Parsi-i Dari would appear to have been in use in Tokharistan as early as the sixth and seventh centuries. After the Arab conquest, the Dari language also spread to other parts of Middle Asia and Afghanistan. Much later it divided into separate Persian and Tajik branches, and a third branch is sometimes identified too – the Dari that is the contemporary New Persian language of Afghanistan. Some 30 million people speak these languages today. Like its close relatives Persian and Dari, Tajik has a rich history documented by literary sources. The wealth of literary and scientific writings created in the Middle Ages in Parsi, the literary language that is common to both the Tajiks and the Persians, is a cultural asset of the peoples of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.⁵⁰

The Tajiks emerged as a people in the ninth and tenth (or perhaps the tenth and eleventh) centuries, but it was not until the first third of the eleventh century that the term 'Tajik' began to be applied to them. That too was when Tajik (Persian) literature was founded, and its first great representatives lived and worked in Middle Asia.

Although the origins of the Afghans lie in very ancient times,⁵¹ the first mentions of the Afghan people appear only in the sixth and seventh centuries. The *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* (XVI, 38 and XI, 61) speaks of the *pahlava* (Pahlavis), the *svetahūṇa* (White Huns or Hephthalites), the *avagāṇa* (Afghans) and other peoples. On his return journey from India, the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang travelled from Varnu (possibly modern Wana) to Jaguda in Ghazni, crossing the land of A-p'o-k'ien,⁵² a word derived from *Avakān* or *Avagān*, meaning Afghans. In Islamic sources, the first reliable mention of the Afghans is found in the *Hudūd al-Ālam*, which says of a settlement on the borders of India and the Ghazni district that 'there are Afghans there too'. Mention is also made of a local ruler some of whose wives were Afghan women.⁵³ The Afghan language, or Pashto, is one of the East Iranian groups. Among its characteristics, it contains a stratum of Indian words and its phonetic system has been influenced by Indian phonetic systems, which is not the case of other

⁴⁹ Fuchs, 1938, p. 452.

⁵⁰ Oransky, 1988, p. 298.

⁵¹ Morgenstierne, 1940; Grantovskiy, 1963.

⁵² Hui-li, 1959, p. 188.

⁵³ *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 1930, p. 16-a.

Iranian languages. There are approximately 23 million Pashto-speakers in Afghanistan and Pakistan today.⁵⁴

The mountains in the east of modern Afghanistan and the north of modern Pakistan were settled by Dards. They were known to the ancient Greek authors, who used several distorted names for them: Derbioi, Durbaioi, Daidala, Dadikai and Derdaios.⁵⁵ In their descriptions of India, the *Purāṇas* speak of the Darada in the same breath as the inhabitants of Kashmir and Gandhara. They are repeatedly mentioned in the *Rāmāyana* and the *Saddharmaśmṛtyupasthāna*, together with the Odra (the Uddiyana). In Tibetan sources, the Darada are known as the Darta.⁵⁶

There are two groups of languages that are now generally known as Dardic. The first are the languages of Nuristan (a region of Afghanistan): they form an ‘individual branch of the Indo-Iranian family belonging neither to the Indo-Aryan, nor to the Iranian group’. The second group of languages (particularly the Dardic) are ‘part of the Indo-Aryan [group], though far departed in their development from the latter’. The two groups, however, have much in common in their ‘structural and material features [phonetical, grammatical and lexical]’.⁵⁷ The Nuristani languages include Kati, Waigali, Ashkun and Prasun (or Paruni) and are chiefly spoken in Nuristan. The Dardic languages proper include Dameli, which is the link between the Nuristani languages and the Central Dardic. According to one classification, the Central Dardic languages comprise Pashai, Shumashti, Glangali, Kalarkalai, Gawar, Tirahi, Kalasha and Khowar. The Eastern Dardic group is divided into three sub-groups containing the Bashkarik, Torwali, Maiyan, Shina, Phalura and Kashmiri languages. In the early 1980s Dardic languages were spoken by 3.5 million people in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, of whom 2.8 million spoke Kashmiri, some 165,000 spoke Khowar and some 120,000 spoke Pashai. The Nuristani languages were spoken by around 120,000 people.⁵⁸

Burushaski is a completely distinct language: it stands at the confluence of three great families – the Indo-European, the Sino-Tibetan and the Altaic – but belongs to none of them. Its speakers live in northern Pakistan, in the region of the Hunza and Verchikum rivers, and number around 40,000. The language’s morphological structure is very rich and the verb has a particularly extensive system of accident. Burushaski is one of the oldest tongues, but its place in the system of ancient and modern languages remains obscure. Although a literary tradition may well have existed in the early Middle Ages, when

⁵⁴ Morgenstierne, 1942; Gryunberg, 1987.

⁵⁵ Francfort, 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 397–8.

⁵⁶ Tucci, 1977, pp. 11–12.

⁵⁷ Edelman, 1983, pp. 14–15, 35–6.

⁵⁸ Morgenstierne, 1944; 1967; 1973; Fussman, 1972; Gryunberg, 1980; Edelman, 1983.

Buddhism was widespread, no literary records have been found, which hampers attempts to reconstruct the language's past. There have been repeated attempts to trace its affiliations, and links with the Caucasian, Dravidian, Munda, Basque and other languages have been suggested, but from the standpoint of contemporary linguistics the case is not conclusive. Burushaski was unquestionably more current in ancient times and occupied a number of regions where Dardic languages are now spoken and where Burushaski acted as a substratal or adstratal foundation. Grierson has even postulated that speakers of Burushaski or related languages once inhabited all or almost all the lands now held by Dardic-speaking tribes.⁵⁹

Writing systems and literature

We have considerable information about the literature and writing systems of the period. Hsüan-tsang reports of the writing system of Tokharistan:

In the composition of its language [Tokharistan] differs somewhat from the remaining realms. The number of letters in its script is 25, they combine to form various combinations and with their help all may be reproduced. The script is read horizontally, from left to right. Literary works are composed in great quantity and exceed the Sogdian in volume.⁶⁰

This refers to the Late Bactrian writing system (for its development and writing, see [Chapter 6](#)), which persisted in some parts of Tokharistan as late as the twelfth century. With time, changes obviously occurred in the Bactrian language and its various written records may reflect different dialects.⁶¹ The script became increasingly cursive, some characters were identical in shape and some had several meanings (this is particularly true of the ligatures), making the script difficult to decipher.

Among the more famous written records of Late Bactrian (sometimes called Hephthalite) writing, mention should be made of two cursive inscriptions carved on rocks in Uruzgan (north-west of Kandahar in Afghanistan). According to Bivar, who published them, one speaks of a king of Zabul called Mihira(kula) and dates from around 500,⁶² although other scholars (Henning and Livshits) suggest a far later date in the eighth or ninth century. The Bactrian inscriptions in the Tochi valley of north-western Pakistan are very badly preserved. The Tochi valley also has Arabic and Sanskrit inscriptions from the first half of the ninth century. The text of the Bactrian inscription, which is very cursive,

⁵⁹ Grierson, 1919; Zarubin, 1927; Lorimer, 1935, Vol. 1; 1938, Vol. 2; Klimov and Edelman, 1970.

⁶⁰ Pelliot, 1934, p. 50.

⁶¹ Gershevitch, 1985, p. 113.

⁶² Bivar, 1954.

cannot be read with confidence: Humbach's proposed reading is completely rejected by other scholars.⁶³

Inscriptions have also been found on sherds and walls in Middle Asia (at Afrasiab, Zang-tepe and Kafyr-kala among others). Hsüan-tsang's account suggests that many more manuscripts existed than have yet been discovered. Nevertheless some have been preserved in East Turkestan, in the Turfan oasis.

Brāhmī manuscripts are known from Sir Aurel Stein's discovery of the Gilgit birch-bark manuscripts, which were immured in a stupa some time between the fifth and the seventh century. They include a *Prātimokṣa-sūtra*, a *Prajñāpāramitā* and others. A mathematical manuscript found near Peshawar, the Bakhshali manuscript (see below), may date from the end of this period.⁶⁴ Other birch-bark manuscripts have been found in Zang-tepe, 30 km north of Termez, where fragments of at least 12 manuscripts have been found. One of them bears a Buddhist text from the *Vinaya-vibhanga*. A fragment of birchbark manuscript bearing a text of apparently Buddhist content has been found at Kafyr-kala in the Vakhsh valley. Mention should also be made of the Buddhist birch-bark manuscripts found at Merv and nearby at Bairam-Ali. The latter find consists of 150 sheets, both sides of which bear a synopsis of various Buddhist works, written in Indian ink. It was compiled for his own use by a Buddhist priest of the Sarvastivada school.⁶⁵ Sanskrit manuscripts of varied content, including medical materials, and dating from different periods have been found in the Bamiyan valley (see also [Chapter 18](#)).⁶⁶

It was during the late eighth and early ninth centuries that the Śāradā script was developed on the basis of Brāhmī. In Afghanistan, two marble sculptures have been found with inscriptions which 'represent transition scripts from Brāhmī to Śāradā'⁶⁷ and which date from the eighth century. The origin and chronology of the 'proto-Śāradā script [are] far from being certain and [are] still open to speculation'.⁶⁸ In this regard, some materials from Bamiyan are of interest.

The Bakhshali manuscript is written in Śāradā script and was copied by five scribes, the chief of whom was Ganakaraja. It appears to have been a commentary on an earlier mathematical work and contains rules and techniques for solving problems, chiefly in arithmetic but also in geometry and algebra. The standard of knowledge in this field is indicated by the fact that the work treats square roots, geometric and arithmetic progressions and so on.

⁶³ Humbach, 1966, pp. 110–17; see Gershevitch, 1985, p. 93; Harmatta, 1969, p. 345.

⁶⁴ Kaye, 1927; *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*, 1959–60, Parts 1–2; and others.

⁶⁵ Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, 1983, pp. 63–8.

⁶⁶ Levi, 1932; Pauly, 1967.

⁶⁷ *The Archaeology of Afghanistan*, 1978, p. 244.

⁶⁸ Sander, 1989, pp. 108–12.

Grammars are also known. 'The oldest work of this school of grammar known to us is by Durga Siṃha who flourished in about 800 A.D. and has written a commentary entitled *Durgavṛitti* and a *Tīkā* of it.'⁶⁹

The provinces and their rule

According to Hsüan-tsang, in the year 629 Tokharistan (Tou-ho-lo) measured approximately 1,000 *li* from south to north and some 3,000 *li* from east to west. He reports:

For many centuries past the royal race has been extinct. The several chieftains have by force depended for the security of their possessions upon the natural divisions of the country, and each held their own independently, only relying upon the natural divisions of the country. Thus they have constituted twenty-seven states divided by natural boundaries, yet as a whole dependent on the T'u-chüeh tribes [Türks].⁷⁰

Later reports paint a somewhat different picture. From the year 718 we have another Chinese report (see page 371 above). The *yabghu*'s younger brother ruled over Po-lü (probably Baltistan but possibly Gilgit). The capital of the 'dominion of the *yabghu* of Tou-ho-lo [Tokharistan]' was in the vicinity of modern Qunduz.⁷¹ T'ang chronicles report that the state of Tokharistan had a 'select host of 100,000, all expert in battle'.⁷² In Khuttal alone, there were reportedly 50,000 troops.⁷³ The rulers (*mulūk*, pl. of *mālik*, in Arabic sources) of some provinces bore specific titles. In the state of Uddiyana (valley of Swat), 'by custom people are not killed. Serious crimes are punished by exile, while trivial offences are pardoned. There are no tributes or taxes.'⁷⁴ There were reportedly 5 cities in this state and the ruler lived in the city of Chu-meng-yeh-li.⁷⁵ Use was made of trial by ordeal. The ruler took decisions only after consulting the priests.⁷⁶ In 745 the ruler of Kapisa was also the ruler of Uddiyana.⁷⁷ Earlier, in 726, a kinsman of the ruler of Kapisa was the ruler of Zabulistan.⁷⁸ Earlier still, in the time of Hsüan-tsang, 10 provinces were under his rule.⁷⁹ Thus, in the seventh century, Kapisa was a very powerful state.

In the state of Bamiyan, 'the literature, customary rules and money used in commerce are the same as those of the Tukhāra country [Tokharistan]. Their language is a little

⁶⁹ Pandey, 1973, p. 240.

⁷⁰ Beal, 1969, pp. 37–8.

⁷¹ Enoki, 1977, p. 88.

⁷² Malyavkin, 1989, p. 68.

⁷³ Chavannes, 1903, p. 200.

⁷⁴ Malyavkin, 1989, p. 70.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁷⁶ Bichurin, 1950, Vol. 2, p. 270; Chavannes, 1903, pp. 128–9.

⁷⁷ Enoki, 1977, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Fuchs, 1938, p. 448.

⁷⁹ Hui-li, 1959, p. 55.

different.’⁸⁰ The ruler of Bamiyan had a large and powerful army⁸¹ and bore the title ‘*sheri* Bamiyan’, while the ruler of Kabul province bore that of *ratbil shah*.⁸² The capital of the state, or so al-Biruni bluntly asserts, was Kabul. Against this must be set the account of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Wu-k’ung, who visited these parts in the 750s and reported that ‘Kāpiśī country had its eastern capital in Gandhara. [The] king resided in winter here and in summer in Kāpiśī.’⁸³

Coinage

The coinage not only differed considerably from region to region, but was different in each of the provinces of Tokharistan. In what is now southern Tajikistan three variations of cast copper coins with central holes circulated: (i) coins of Tokharistan with legends in late cursive Bactrian (Hephthalite) script; (ii) coins with Sogdian legends; and (iii) coins without legends. Particularly noteworthy are the local imitations of Peroz drachms, some countermarked with Sogdian legends, which remained current as late as the mid-eighth century.⁸⁴

In the part of northern Tokharistan that is now the Surkhan Darya region of Uzbekistan, different varieties of coins circulated. In Chaganiyan, silver coins of the Sasanian *shahan-shah* Khusrau I (531–579) were common because Khusrau’s conquests had extended to this region. Subsequently, imitations began to be struck. Interestingly, both genuine coins and imitations were countermarked, some with a cursive Bactrian legend of the ruler’s name, others with a miniature portrait and others again with a symbol (*tamgha*). Sometimes the same coin was countermarked several times, with one impression on top of the other. Later, copper coins of the local *Chaghān khudāt* dynasty began to be issued. On the obverse was a portrait copying Khusrau I, in the margin three portraits of the *Chaghān khudāt* and on the reverse a fire altar. On some coins the obverse bore a Bactrian legend; sometimes it merely carried the title *khidev* (ruler) or ‘Khnar (or Enar) the *khidev*’. There were also copper coins bearing the likeness of the ruler and his consort. These are the characteristic coins of the Sogdian and Turkic states. Unlike similar coins from Chach (modern Tashkent) and Sogdiana, they bore a non-Sogdian inscription and another symbol.

⁸⁰ Beal, 1969, p. 50.

⁸¹ Fuchs, 1938, p. 448.

⁸² There is also a view that ‘ratbil is the result of the corrupt scribe of the word Zabul’ (Pandey, 1973, pp. 73–4). In the edition of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, the editor reports that the manuscript gives the word *ZNBYL*, supporting the reading *Zunbil*. See also Ibn Khordadbeh, 1889, p. 39; Kohzad, 1950.

⁸³ Levi and Chavannes, 1895, pp. 349–57.

⁸⁴ Davidovich and Zeimal, 1980, p. 74.

In Termez, copper coins were struck bearing a portrait of the ruler on the obverse, and a symbol of a different shape from that used in Chaganiyan on the reverse. This coinage was probably issued by the local dynasty of Termez*shahs*.⁸⁵

Although the coinage of Afghanistan and Pakistan has not been studied in such detail, issues of Vrahitigin (or Vahitigina) should be noted. These were silver coins (probably struck in the late seventh century) bearing the bust of the ruler and inscriptions in Bactrian and proto-Śāradā, the meaning of which was: ‘Caused to be made by Śrī Hitivira Kharalāva, the Supreme Lord Śrī Vahitigīna the God’. On the reverse is a divinity crowned with a flame and a Pahlavi inscription. The ruler’s crown comprises a wolf’s head, indicating Turkic affiliations, while the divinity replicates the images on coinage of Khusrau II (590–628). Coins of this kind are found in the Indus valley, in northern Pakistan and in Afghanistan, including Kabul. Humbach⁸⁶ has suggested that Vahitigina is the same as Barhatakin, the founder of the Kabul Türk dynasty, of which al-Biruni reports, ‘The Hindus had kings residing in Kabul, Türks who were said to be of Tibetan origin.’ Sachau⁸⁷ suggested that this name derived from the Hindu Brhatkina or Brhatketu (for linguistics, see pages 375–6 above).

Cities, architecture and art

The capital of the state of Kapisa–Gandhara (possibly, its winter capital) was Udabhandapura, now the settlement of Hund, situated on the right bank of the Kabul river. Most of the city was surrounded by a defensive rampart. Later, in the Islamic period, it formed a square and its total length measured 1.3 km. Each side had a central gate fortified with bastions. Traces of older fortifications have been discovered and there is also a well-preserved section of the old wall some 20 m long. Around the fortified portion, the remains of buildings have been found, indicating the great extent of the town.⁸⁸

Although Balkh remained the capital of Tokharistan, there were many other large towns that acted as provincial centres. One of them, the Vakhsh valley centre now known as Kafyr-kala, has already been described (see [Chapter 6](#)). In this period, the city was characterized by a radical restructuring of the palace and residential quarters.

Individual structures, including palaces (Kafyr-kala), castles (Balalyktepe, Zang-tepe, etc.), houses (Kala-i Kafirnigan) and, of course, Buddhist buildings, have been studied in considerable detail. Here we shall concentrate on Ajina-tepe ([Fig. 2](#)). This fully excavated

⁸⁵ Rtveladze, 1987, pp. 120–9.

⁸⁶ Humbach, 1966.

⁸⁷ Sachau, 1888.

⁸⁸ Another identification is possible: see Caroe, 1962, pp. 97–8.

Buddhist monastery consists of two halves that made up a single complex of religious and residential buildings, each half occupying an area of 50 × 100 m. The south-eastern half, which formed the monastery proper, consists of a quadrangle of buildings around a square courtyard. In the centre of each side is an *aiwān* (hall) and behind it a cella. The cella on the south-eastern side contained sculptures, including a 4-m-high statue of the Buddha, placed on figured pedestals. The other cellas were large halls, which served both as assembly rooms for the *saṅgha* (monastic community) and as refectories. The *aiwāns* were linked by winding, vaulted corridors from which passages led off into tiny cells. Some or all of the complex was two-storied.

The second part could be called the temple. Its overall layout was identical, but there were no cells for the monks. In the central shrine there was a vast quantity of Buddhist sculptures on pedestals, or on the floor between. In each wall of the long, winding corridors there were three or four deep-set niches (Fig. 3), in which large statues of the Buddha sat in varied poses. At the end of the final corridor was a gigantic pedestal taking up almost an entire section, on which was a 12-m-high statue of a recumbent Buddha in Nirvana (Fig. 4). The vaulted ceilings of the corridors, and their walls, were covered in paintings and there were also paintings in the shrines (Fig. 5).

The entire centre of the courtyard was occupied by the main stupa, which was star-shaped in plan and accessed by four staircases, one in the centre of each side. In the corners of the yard were miniature stupas of the same type, some ornamented with reliefs depicting small human figures (Figs. 6–10).⁸⁹ Buddhist temples have also been found in Kala-i Kafirnigan (where some excellent paintings and sculptures have been preserved) and in the palace complex at Kafyr-kala. Overall, there are grounds for speaking of a Tokharistan school of art, related to, but not identical with, the art of central Afghanistan.⁹⁰

Bamiyan has already been described in Chapter 6. Here we shall say a few words about the Fundukistan complex, which has been ascribed to the seventh century.⁹¹ The part that has been excavated includes a shrine and, linked to it by a vaulted passageway, another area consisting of several monastic cells, an assembly hall and other communal rooms. The shrine is in the form of a square hall with three deep vaulted niches along each side: it appears that there were originally just two on the entrance side. Between the niches are pilasters with Corinthian-style capitals. In the centre of the shrine there was a slender stupa with an arcade on each side of its pedestal. The building material consisted of large-sized blocks of *pakhsa*. Clay statues stood in the niches, whose surface was lined with murals.

⁸⁹ Litvinsky and Zeimal, 1971.

⁹⁰ Litvinsky, 1981.

⁹¹ Carl and Hackin, 1959.

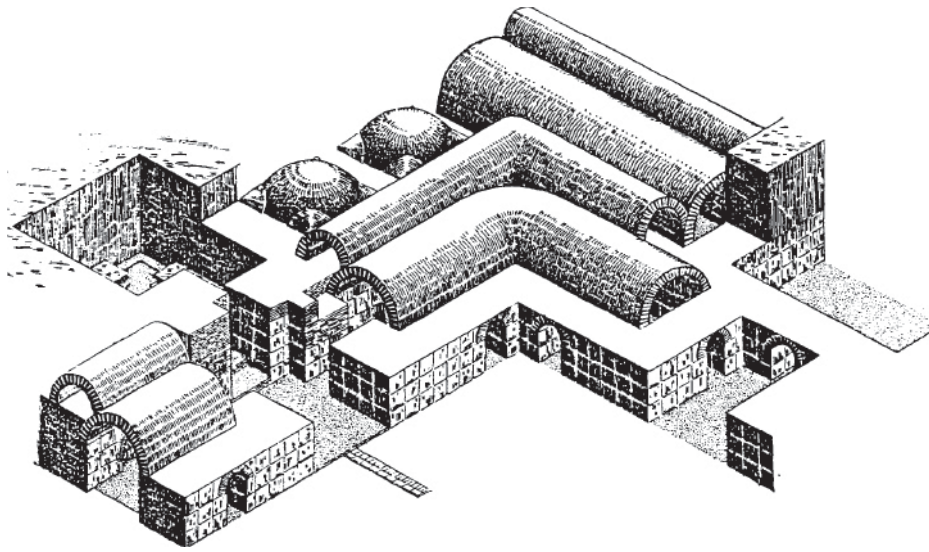


FIG. 2. Ajina-tepe. Reconstruction of the south-eastern part of the complex.

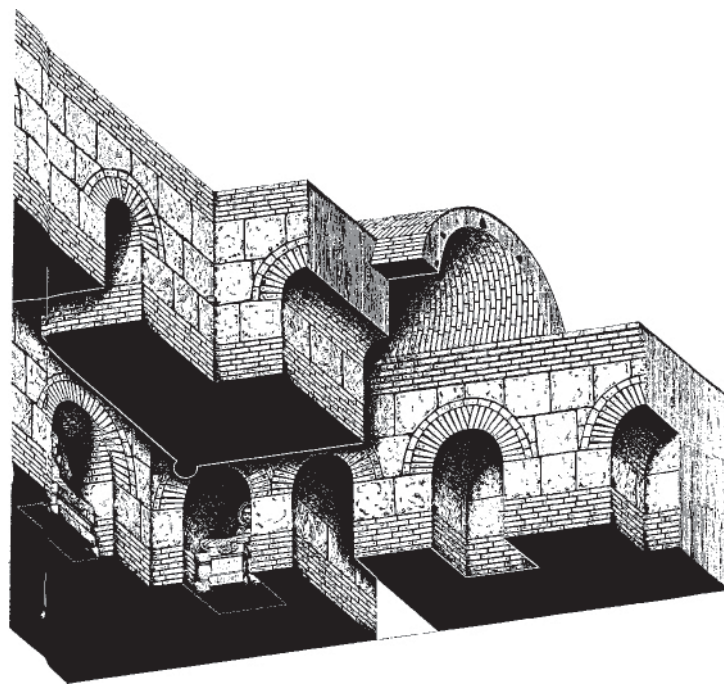


FIG. 3. Ajina-tepe. Axonometric projection of locations XXIV and XXV. Reconstruction.



FIG. 4. Ajina-tepe. Hand of the 12-m statue of the Buddha in Nirvana. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)



FIG. 5. Ajina-tepe. Mural painting. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)



FIG. 6. Ajina-tepe. Torso of a Bodhisattva. Painted clay. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

The art of Fundukistan is characterized by vivid colours, bold foreshortening and elegance: although it betrays a powerful Indian influence, there is also a certain similarity with the art of Ajina-tepe and Kala-i Kafirnigan (Figs. 11 and 12).

Buildings of the late period at Tepe Sardar, near Ghazni, are of similar date. In this large Buddhist monastery complex, the main stupa is surrounded by many miniature stupas and shrines, ornamented with clay bas-reliefs. There were several colossal statues of the Buddha, including one seated and one of the Buddha in Nirvana. In one shrine, which is in the Hindu style, a clay sculpture of Mahishasuramardini (a form of the Hindu goddess Durga) was found. Thus a Hindu element was inserted within the Buddhist context. It is



FIG. 7. Ajina-tepe. Head of a Buddha. Painted clay. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)



FIG. 8. Ajina-tepe. Head of a brahman. Painted clay. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)



FIG. 9. Ajina-tepe. Head of a noblewoman. Painted clay. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

thought that this shrine is linked with the upper classes of society.⁹² The remains of a Hindu shrine have also been found in Chigha Saray (or Chaghan Sarai) in the Kunar valley, dating from the eighth or ninth century.⁹³

Hindu art is also represented by finds of marble sculpture such as a Shiva and Parvati (Umamaheshvara) from Tepe Skandar 30: 'It is carved from one block of white marble and represents the four-armed, three-eyed Shiva seated on Nandi, flanked by his consort Parvati

⁹² Taddei, 1972; 1973; 1974.

⁹³ Van Lohuizen, 1959.



FIG. 10. Ajina-tepe. Head of a monk. Painted clay. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)



FIG. 11. Fundukistan. Two *naga* kings (seventh century). Musée Guimet, Paris. (Photo: © UNESCO/Lore Hammerschmid.)

and Skanda standing at the left side of his mother.’⁹⁴ The group stands on a pedestal with two steps. On the upper step there is a three-line inscription in a transitional script between Brāhmī and Śāradā. It cites Shiva as Maheshvara.⁹⁵ Another fine example of Hindu art is a marble statue of Surya from Khair Khanah:

The piece can be divided into upper, middle and lower parts. In the centre of the upper part is Sūrya, flanked by Danda and Pingala. In the middle part is the driver Aruna holding the reins of two horses whose backs are shown as they veer upwards to the right and left. The lower part is the pedestal.⁹⁶

A whole series of other marble Hindu sculptures dating from this period has been discovered.⁹⁷ Taken together, they indicate a powerful Indian influence and the spread of non-Buddhist Indian religions.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Kuwayama, 1976.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 381–3.

⁹⁶ Hackin and Carl, 1936; Kuwayama, 1976, pp. 375–6.

⁹⁷ For the latest analytical review, see Kuwayama, 1976, pp. 375–407.

⁹⁸ *The Archaeology of Afghanistan*, 1978, pp. 291–2.



FIG. 12. Fundukistan. Dressed Buddha (seventh century).
Musée Guimet, Paris. (Photo: © UNESCO/Lore Hammerschmid.)