

Short Communication

## Culture and Art of the Kushan Kingdom

Akhmedova Gulchehra Uskinovna<sup>1</sup>, Annaeva Zarifa Musurmonkulovna<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Teacher Chairs world history, Termez State University, Uzbekistan

\*Corresponding Author

Akhmedova Gulchehra Uskinovna

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the history of the emergence of the Kushan Empire in the territory of Central Asia.

**Keywords:** Kushan kingdom, Buddhism, empire, sources, period, century, chronicle.

### Vital activity of the peoples of the Kushan Empire

The Kushan kingdom is an ancient state on the territory of present-day Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Northern India, the heyday of 105–250 AD. e. According to one theory, the Kushan kingdom was founded by the Yuezhi people, who came from the territory in which the Chinese Autonomous Region of Xinjiang is now located. The state had diplomatic ties with Rome, Persia, and China. The ethnically diverse population of the Kushan kingdom communicated in various Eastern Iranian languages, such as the Kushan language itself, the Bactrian language, and other languages.

In the Kushan kingdom developed the so-called. Greek Buddhism. Kushan civilization has left a noticeable mark in the history of world culture, combining the achievements of many nations. The very fact of the existence of a huge Kushan empire was realized by historians in the middle of the XIX century. Information preserved about the Kushan Empire is episodic, heterogeneous and contradictory. The chronology and history have been restored primarily on preserved coins, Chinese annals (in particular, “Hou Han Shu” - History of the Late Han Dynasty) and selected Indian and Greek testimonies. Disputes continue over the names of the kings and the chronology.

The history of the Kushans is very poorly covered in the sources. The Kushan kingdom arose as a result of the unification (apparently, by conquest) of the Tocharian and Saka principalities established on the territory of Bactria and Sogdiana under the rule of one of the princes belonging to the Kushan tribe (or clan).

The original location of the Kushan principality is not precisely known. With regard to the formation of the Kushan kingdom, a coherent story about this event gives the "History of the Younger Han Dynasty." Chinese news is confirmed and explained by the data of the coins. The inscriptions on the coins of the first Kushan kings were made by Greek letters, since the Kushans considered themselves to be the successors of the Greek-Bactrian kings and in part imitated them in minting coins. For the coins and Chinese sources, the name of the founder of the Kushan state, Kudzula Cadphis, is known, otherwise Cadphis I (Kiojuku in Chinese sources). He subdued the power of the Kabul valley, Pudu (the Chinese name Parapamisad) south of the Hindu Kush, and possibly also Khorezm. The latter, however, retained a certain independence as part of the Kushan union: special kings continued to rule there, judging by their coins, which were dynastically associated with the Kushans.

In general, the Kushan kingdom was not centralized: in a number of conquered areas, local kings also remained, dependent on the sovereign. The successor of Cadphis I was Cadphis II, who ruled in the middle of I century. n e. Cadphis II conquers India to Benares. The last Greek-Indian kings, the descendants of Evidema and Evkratida, either lose their kingdoms or recognize themselves as subjects of Cadphis. Indo-Parthian princes retain until the end of I century. only remnants of their possessions on the Lower Indus. By the end of the reign of Cadphis II, the Kushan kingdom covered a vast territory, from the Aral Sea to the Ganges.

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During the period of the formation of the Kushan kingdom, its center continued to remain in the territory of Central Asia, in Sogdiana (in Kushania on Zarafshan). However, during the third Kushan king, Kanishka, the political center of the state moved to India. Kanishka expanded the possessions of the Kushans in India and successfully fought with Parthia; The most important of the external events of his reign was the longstanding struggle with China. During this struggle, the Kushan army invaded East Turkestan. However, it was defeated by the Chinese governor of the Western Territory, Ban Chao, who subordinated Ferghana and Khorezm to China and even forced Kanishka to recognize (probably only nominally) the sovereign power of the Chinese emperor. However, soon after the death of Ban Chao, China began to lose one by one its possessions in the west. Khorezm again submits to Kanishka (in the second century, coins of Kushai coinage were completely dominated here). It passes under the authority of the Kushans and Fergana. The emissaries of Kanishka are driving the rulers of the city-states of Eastern Turkestan against China, and in 105, the armed struggle against China begins here. The Chinese governor of the Western Territory was besieged by rebels in his residence. By the end of Kanishka's reign, the most important city-states of Eastern Turkestan — Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan — became part of the Kushan Empire. Only in the far east of East Turkestan, which was closer to China than to the state of the Kushans, did a small Chinese garrison of 300 people remain. The Kushan state has achieved the greatest territorial expansion.

Little is known about the socio-economic structure of the Kushan kingdom. The power of the Kushans was one of the great empires of this period. It covered a large number of countries with different social systems: it included rich trading cities with developed slaveholding relations, fertile agricultural areas, free community members who kept numerous remnants of the primitive communal system in their lives, and steppes inhabited by nomads.

The formation of the Kushan Empire promoted the development of the slave system throughout its territory. The Kushans themselves, who were a comparatively few nomadic tribe in the century with a small number of Cadphis I and who had long retained many features of their life after settling in Bactria, now becoming at the head of a huge power, apparently underwent significant changes in their social structure.

The result of the Kushan conquest was the unification of almost the whole of Central Asia in the system of a single empire, founded by one of the Central Asian peoples. The Kushan power had gone far from those primitive principalities that had arisen in Bactria after the conquest of its Yuezhi. When the Kushans expand the irrigation network: in Khorezm, in Sogdiana, in Bactria, and in Ferghana traces of the largest canals belong specifically to the Kushan time.

Constant wars probably gave a large number of slaves. New cities are being built, especially in India. One of these cities, Canispor, still bears the name of Kanishka. Trade is growing, money economy is developing. If for the period of the existence of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, the silver tetradrachm was especially characteristic, associated with large foreign trade turnover, now it is replaced by smaller bronze nominal values, indicating a significant penetration of monetary relations into the sphere of retail turnover. All this should have contributed to the development of slaveholding relations, which, however, on the territory of the Kushan kingdom was not accompanied by the systematic pauperisation of small producers; here continued to exist huge masses of the peasantry not driven out of the land, the communal organization, etc.

Apparently, this further facilitated the formation of elements of feudalism in the territory of Central Asia. The unification of vast territories within a single state contributed to cultural mixing. This cultural confusion was facilitated by the fact that the peoples of Central Asia spoke very similar Iranian dialects. Nevertheless, the individual tribes and nationalities that were part of the Kushan Empire had a peculiar culture, and therefore the management tasks required the presence of an official general imperial language with a developed script. At that time, the Aramaic language had international significance in Central Asia, the writing of which formed the basis for various systems of Iranian writing, including Sogdian and Khorezmian (from the end of the 2nd - the beginning of the 3rd century AD), and also Greek, which was used on the coins of the first Kushans.

Later, on the basis of the Greek alphabet formed a special Kushan letter. Finally, in connection with the growing Indian influence, Indian writing systems also appear (the letter of Devanagari is found next to the Kushan writing on coins). Nowhere has syncretism manifested itself so vividly as in the field of religion. This can be judged mainly by coins. On the territory of Central Asia, a variety of deities were worshiped: local (Mitra, Anahita, Siyavush), Zoroastrian (Ahura Mazda), Greek (Zeus, Helios, Selena), Indian (Shiva). A syncretic fusion of images of deities of different nationalities occurs, as a result of which images of local deities are modified: for example, Iranian and Central Asian Anahita merges with the Greek Aphrodite. From the time of Kanishka, the influence of Buddhism has become especially strong. Kanishka transfers its capital from Sogdiana to Peshawar (Purushapura).

In India, the Kushans, like the Greeks and Macedonians before them, had to inevitably take the side of Buddhism. For them, "barbarians" and conquerors, there was no place in the varnas of Brahmanian India. On the contrary, a doctrine that appealed to all people regardless of their origin should

be found in the Kushans of their followers. Buddhism in the times of the Kushans was no longer what it was at first, a teaching that grew up on the basis of the protest of the broad masses of the Indian population against the estate inequality and religion of the Brahmins; merging with the ancient cults, he became one of the world religions of the time and as such corresponded to the character of the multi-tribal and vast Kushan empire. Buddhist symbols appear on Kushan coins (as already earlier - on coins of some Greek-Bactrian kings), in particular, images of Buddha, accompanied by Greek inscriptions. It is this syncretic Buddhism mixed with local beliefs that later became popular in Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Japan.

Trade relations with India and the patronage of Kushans to Buddhism contributed to its spread in Central Asia. Buddhism had the strongest influence on Bactria: by order of Kanishka at the beginning of the 2nd century. a large Buddhist temple was built in Baktrach.

In general, Buddhism has spread quite widely in Central Asia, but it has not deeply rooted anywhere, affecting, in contrast to India, mostly only the dominant segments of the population.

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