



HERAUS

HERAUS, Central Asian clan chief of the Kushans, one of the five constituent tribes of the Yuezhi confederacy in the early first century C.E. He struck tetradrachms and obols in relatively good silver (80 to 87 percent fine) to a reduced Attic weight standard of 15 to 16 gm, instead of the 16.8 gm standard the Greek kings of Bactria had used. His coins circulated principally in Bactria with a specially concentrated group of finds from the Vakhsh valley (of Tajikistan), to the north of the river Oxus. He used legends in Greek script and two of the denominations that many of the Greek kings of Bactria had employed in the 2nd century B.C.E. On the tetradrachms there is a distinctive bust of the chieftain within a reel and pellet border of the type that had been used to frame the heads of several of the later Greek kings. He has thick hair trimmed below the ears and tied with a diadem, a heavy jowl, hooked nose, a jutting chin, and a prominent moustache. His head is elongated, the result apparently of the nomad practice of skull deformation, in which the heads of children were bound tightly in infancy. The reverse type shows the chief wearing tunic and trousers, riding a horse with a large bow hanging from his saddle. Behind the rider's head flies a small winged nike (victory) in Greek dress, holding out a wreath. On the obols there is the same portrait within a dotted border with a standing figure of the chieftain on the reverse. The Greek legend that frames the reverse type varies on different specimens. Davidovich (1983) has analyzed the mistakes and corruptions in letter forms and spelling, and Cribb (1993) has classified them from the 58 tetradrachms and 96 obols which he studied. It now seems clear that the legend on the tetradrachms was intended to be "turannountos Heraou" around the upper part of the reverse,



with “Sanab” or “Sanabou” across the legs of the horse and “Koshanou” in the exergue. On the obols it was intended to be “Heraou” to the right and “Koshanou” to the left of the standing figure. This rules out earlier suggestions that the chief’s name was Miaos or that he was a Saka (Scythian).

Figure 1. Tetradrachm of Heraus. Scale: 1:1 (State Museum, Lucknow).

“Turannountos” is the Greek term for an absolute ruler who has gained power by force or fraud. “Koshanou” in the legend, it has long been recognized, is the same term found in the titulature of the later king Kanishka. It is explained by the Chinese *Annals of the Later Han* 116: “The yabgu of Kuei-shuang (Kushan) attacked and destroyed the other four yabgu and established himself as king.” It has been argued recently that the name of the ruler should be found in the exergue, as on coins of Eucratides I (which were themselves copied by nomad invaders of Bactria). On this view the name of the chief who issued the coins was really Sanab or Kushan (who is also identified with the first Kushan king Kujula Kadphises). However, the Eucratides copies are concentrated in the valley of the Kafirnigan (a tributary of the Oxus). They were not the direct prototypes of the Heraus series, and other Greco-Bactrian tetradrachms put the king’s name in the main legend, not in the exergue.

Mac Dowall and Wilson (1970) suggested that Heraus’s name is concealed in the reference to “the most warlike tribe of the Bactrians under a Kushan king ...” in the *Periplus*, a work now dated to the decade 60-70. This is the context for Heraus argued by Cribb (1993), who suggests that the flying Nike on the reverse of Heraus’s tetradrachms was copied from the coinage of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares. The distinctive facial features of Heraus are also to be seen in the portraits of the later Kushan king Vima Kadphises on his gold dinars. They are echoed in several of the royal Bodhisattva figures in Gandharan sculpture and in the series of stucco figures on the frieze decorating the Kushan palace or dynastic temple excavated at Khalchayan on the Surkhandaria river (of Uzbekistan) in northern Bactria, on the right bank of the Oxus. Perhaps it was an ideal princely type among the Yuezhi/ Kushans or a strong family likeness that persisted through several generations. Although different views of chronology persist, there is no doubt that Heraus was an early ruler of the Kushan tribe of the Yuezhi confederacy in northern Bactria, more than a century after the nomads overthrew the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, shortly before the Kushan kings invaded India.

Figure 2. Obol of Heraus. Scale: 4:1 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. Alram, *Nomina Propria Iranica in Nummis*, Iranisches Personennamenbuch Band IV, Wien, 1986, pp. 294-95.

J. Cribb, "The Heraus Coins; their Attribution to the Kushan King Kujula Kadphises, c. C.E. 30-80," in M. Price et al., eds., *Essays in honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins*, London, 1993, pp. 107-34.

A. Cunningham, "Coins of the Indo-Scythian king Miaus or Heraus," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1888, pp. 47-58.

E. A. Davidovich, "The First hoard of tetradrachms of the Kusana Heraios," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28, 1980, pp. 147-77.

D. W. Mac Dowall and N. G. Wilson, "The References to the Kushanas in the Periplus and further Numismatic Evidence for its Date," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1970, pp. 222-29.

G. A. Pugachenkova, *Khalchayan*, Tashkent, 1966.

Idem, *Skulptura Khalchayan*, Moscow, 1971.

J. M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley, 1967, p. 17.

B. Ja. Staviskij, *La Bactriane sous les Kushans*, Paris, 1986, pp. 255-59.

E. V. Zeïmal, *Drevnie Monety Tadzhikistana* (Ancient coins of Tajikistan), Dushanbe, 1983, pp. 149-59.

A. H. Zograf, *Monety "Heraia"* (The coins of Heraus), Tashkent, 1937, pp. 5-36.