



HORMOZD KUŠĀNŠĀH

HORMOZD KUŠĀNŠĀH, Sasanian prince governor of Kušān. There may have been two rulers of this name, but the emphasis here is on the one whom we now follow Herzfeld and Bivar in identifying as a son of Bahrām I (q.v.) thereby retracting our objection in *EIr.* II, p. 516. He is known from his coins minted in eastern Iran and references in three Latin sources (see below). His coins are gold scyphate (cup-shaped) and light bronze issues; rare heavy copper and silver coins also occur. They were minted at Kabul, Balk, Herat, and Marv, proving that Hormozd controlled the eastern portion of the Sasanian Empire. Several types are known. One imitates the conventional Kušān coinage; on the obverse the king is shown nimbate, with a conical helmet and Kušān military dress, standing and sacrificing at an altar; the reverse depicts the nimbate deity Oēšo (who is equated with Śiva); he is transformed into a bearded figure with a tunic and pantaloons. Another type shows the king standing in full Sasanian royal attire, wearing a lion-headed crown surmounted by an artichoke-like element; the reverse is the same as on the first type. A third type depicts the bust of the king exactly in the style of royal Sasanian coin portraits, and shows him on the reverse standing either before a seated deity (Figure 2) or with a deity, flanking a fire altar in the convention of the “royal Sasanian” style (Figure 1). The legends vary from *Ōxromozdo aozorko košano šao* (or *šauano šao*) “Hormozd, Great King (or King of Kings) of Kušān” in Greco-Bactrian, to *mzdysn bgy ’wḥrmzdy RB’ kwš’n MLK’N MLK’* “Mazda-worshipping Majesty Hormozd Great King of Kings of Kušān.” The expanded title and the issue imitating “royal Sasanian” type clearly show that Hormozd had become an independent sovereign of the



Kušān empire.

The Kušān chronology is not based on firm, unequivocal evidence. One school, advocated by Cunningham, Göbl, Lukonin and others, associates the Kušāno-Sasanian kings with the reigns of Hormozd II (q.v.) and Shapur (Šāpur) II, primarily on numismatic observations. Another school developed by Herzfeld, Bataille, and Bivar and their followers link those kings to the early Sasanian rules. As Joe Cribb has demonstrated, the latter view is based on more acceptable numismatic and historical indications. Firstly, the lion-head crown of Hormozd Kušānšāh is very similar to that worn by a Sasanian prince represented on the “family” relief of Bahrām II at Naqš-e Rostam. Secondly, the *Panegyrici Latini* (shortly after the third century) refers (2.17) to a recent rebellion of a certain Ormis (Ormisdas) against his brother Bahrām (II) adding that Ormias was supported by the Saccis (Sakastānians), Ruffis (read Cussis “Kušāns”), and the Gellis (Gēls; Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 36, where the date 279 is a misprint for 291). Thirdly, Vopiscus (*Vita Cari* 8 in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*) reports that when the emperor Carus invaded Persia in 283, the Persian kingdom was threatened by “domestic” war, which made it easy for Carus to march on Ctesiphon and capture it, whereupon he died a mysterious death. This report is further confirmed by Eutropius (9.18), who states that Carus undertook his expedition when he heard of an insurrection among the Persians (see also Winter, pp. 130-33; Felix, pp. 98-104). From these notices, Herzfeld and Bivar argued, correctly, that this Ormias/Ormisdas, son of Bahrām I, was the same as Hormozd Great Kušānšāhānšāh, who is accordingly to be dated about 270-83 C.E.

That Bahrām II crushed the rebellion of Hormozd is proved by his own reign until 293. Agathias (4.27) also reports that Bahrām subjugated the Sakastānians and appointed his own son as *Sagansaa* (Sakānšāh, see Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 36). A double register rock-relief of Bahrām II at Naqš-e Rostam in Fārs depicts the king overcoming two enemies; in the top panel the adversary wears Roman plumed helmet, in the lower panel the foe wears a headgear shaped as an animal’s head. Bivar (1972, pp. 279-80) has convincingly argued that the double scenes symbolizes Bahrām’s claim of victory over both Carus and Hormozd Great Kušānšāhānšāh. By about 300, at any rate, Balk had been regained by the Sasanians and a “satrap of Balk” installed here (Frye, pp. 66-67).

There are also certain Kušāno-Sasanian coins bearing the name Hormozd, but the king on them wears an eagle crown, similar to that worn by the Sasanian



king Hormozd II (q.v.). This may suggest a second Hormozd Kušānšāh, whose date must accordingly be about 295-300. The well-documented numismatic study by Cribb supports the chronology adopted here.

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