



HUVIŠKA

HUVIŠKA, ruler of the Great Kushan lineage, successor of Kaniška I the Great, known chiefly from inscriptions, and from a prolific coinage, who reigned from at least the year 28 to 60 of the Kaniška Era, equivalent to 154-86 C.E. The first date derives from the Chaurasi Jaina temple Brāhmī inscription at Mathurā (cf. S. Konow, 1931-32, p. 55; Agrawala, IV, no. 1913). The final date comes from the Kaṅkāli Tilla Jaina image at Mathurā (Bühler, 1898; Lüders, 1912a, no. 56). It is indeed chiefly from inscriptions found at Mathurā that Huviška's dates are recorded; and according to an inscription of the Year 77 (equivalent to 204 C.E.), after his demise, he is credited with the foundation of a Buddhist monastery situated on the Jamālpūr mound near Mathurā (Lüders, 1961, p. 68, § 31). However, his authority is also attested in the northwest by the Wardak (Afghanistan) Vase Kharoṣṭhi inscription of Kaniška Era Year 51/177 C.E. (S. Konow, 1929, II, p. 165). Huviška is mentioned in the *Rājataranṅī*, Book I, Sloka 168, as "Hushka," together with "Djushka" (= Vaješka) and Kaniška, as ruling over Kashmir, and is claimed, Bk. IV, Sl. 188, as founder of a city named Hushkapura. The Kushan dynasty employed a system of almost heraldic "devices," often (anachronistically) designated by the Mongol term *tamgha*, and apparently employing a notation for cadency similar to that of European heraldry. These devices probably originated as cattle brands; but they came to be featured on coins, seals, and many other artifacts. That characteristic of the coins of Huviška has the form shown in [Figure 1](#), which on account of the additional crossbar suggests that he might not have been the direct heir of Kaniška but a collateral, possibly a younger brother.



Huviška is above all known from his copious and spectacular coin series, appearing prominently in gold, bearing on the obverses a royal portrait in various presentations and his royal titles, ŠAONANOŠAO OOHŠKI KOŠANO “Of the King of Kings, Huviška the Kushan” (with several different orthographies); and on the reverses an extensive repertoire of divinities, Iranian, Indian, and even classical, each labeled with a name in Greco-Bactrian script. Among the most numerous are renderings of Mithra/Mehr (MIIPO or MIOPO), Nana, Vēš—an Iranian wind-god given the iconographic form of the Indian Śiva (see Figure 2)—and even Heracles (HPAKILO). The obverse royal portraits are of two main varieties: the first with a rounded, cap-like headdress often decorated either with a crescent or with a solar disk; the second with a heavily jeweled and pointed tiara. It is generally agreed that the second of these is chronologically the later, though the accompanying portrait appears more youthful than the first, a circumstance which has led some critics to suggest that there were two Huviškas. For this hypothesis there is, however, no decisive evidence. The earliest issues in his name carry the “device” of Kaniška, explained by Göbl as from dies prepared in advance and used with the new obverses after the earlier ruler’s death. The first headdress variety shows the bust either to the right or, far more frequently, to the left; and there are variants representing the king mounted on an elephant, seated cross-legged, or reclining on a bench. Such variants are even more prominent on the copper issues. It is altogether a coinage of remarkable complexity and variety, of which the most comprehensive analysis is certainly that of R. Göbl. Unfortunately, however, this work must be used with much caution, as the general chronology is erroneous, making Huviška incongruously the contemporary of the Sasanians Šāpur I (241-72 C.E.) and his successors in Iran. Although the detailed sequences offered may be useable, their oracular presentation often makes the arguments difficult to verify.

Two mints are specified, designated A and B and provisionally identified with Peshawar and Taxila, though the second is debatable, since this Indo-Parthian capital may have been altogether abandoned after its capture by the Kushans. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the northern regions of the Kushan empire, around Kapisa, Balkh, and beyond, should all have been supplied with currency transported overland from Peshawar. Göbl’s analysis makes use of die-links, usually a reliable means to identify coins from the same mint. He concludes, moreover, that each of these mints was operating with four workshops or *officinae*, in the manner of the earlier Roman Imperial coinage. Göbl also reproduces a coin with a Brāhmī inscription (Pl. 103, Emission 984)



naming “Kaṇika, son of Huviška,” which, if the reading is confirmed, would suggest that Huviška had a son named after his predecessor. The accession year of Huviška’s successor Vasudeva is not exactly known, but as an inscription of Vasudeva is recorded dated to either Year 64 or 67 (equivalent to 190 or 193 C.E.); it is clear that Huviška reigned for at least 33 years and perhaps longer, no improbable figure for a dynasty of notably long-lived rulers.

Although he is not mentioned in the inscriptions there, it appears that the temple of Surkh Kotal was restored in his time; and, among the sculptures found, a headless figure wearing a cloak with fur-lined reverses (Schlumberger, Pl. VI, facing p. 442) seems identical with the rendering on one of the coin portraits, and so identifiable as Huviška. Apart from the passing references in the Kashmir history *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, the numismatic and epigraphic evidence is the only source for Huviška, and nothing is known of the political history of his time. However, the sumptuous gold coinage indicates a period of spectacular prosperity, based no doubt on trade of the Silk Route, which could have continued until the outbreak of the smallpox epidemic that spread to the Roman empire with the “plague of Marcus Aurelius” in 166 C.E.

PLATE I.

a. Gold stater of Huviška, 19 mm, 7.74 gm. Obverse: royal portrait (earlier version) and Bactrian inscription. Reverse: the god OHŠO (= Śiva) and tamgha device. Courtesy Peter A. Linenthal Collection.

b. Gold stater of Huviška, 21 mm, 7.91 gm. Obverse: royal portrait (later version) and Bactrian inscription. Reverse: the goddess APDOXŠO and tamgha device. Courtesy Peter A. Linenthal Collection.

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