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HUVIṢKA'S GAMBIT:

On the Ganesho-type Coin and Kuṣāṇa Cultural-Numismatic Complexities

*Arindam Chaturvedi**

Abstract

Kuṣāṇa Numismatics is a subject with more contestations than resolutions. Extensity of coinage production, and their integral linkage with Kings and Polity makes Kuṣāṇa coins significant. While some of the more mystique issues have been provisioned with a satisfactory attribution, others await this feat. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analytically comprehend and tentatively purpose a novel identity of the deity-figure on some extremely rare Ganesho-type copper coins issued by Huviṣka, and utilize this attributive measure to comment further on the Cultural-numismatic complexities that distinguish the political context and numismatic issues of Huviṣka from those of his predecessors.

Keywords: *Ganesho-type coin, Yodhavade, Tishtrya, Apollo, Gaṇeśa-Vināyaka, Cultural-numismatic complexities.*

Introduction: Kuṣāṇas, Coins and Methods

Huviṣkainherited a culturally enveloped polity, which had undergone a transformation from being an endangered clan-based federation to a multicultural empire¹. Buthe also inherited a highly fragmented state with unsatisfied subjects and excessive reliance upon Central Asian administrators, forcing the Indic populace to not only revolt against Kuṣāṇa hegemonic governance (Jayaswal 1933: 79), but also demolisha *Deva-kula* (ancestral shrine) of Kuṣāṇas (Ghosh 2011: 25). From Hermaios to Kaṇiṣka I, the Kuṣāṇas had followed a static administrative arrangement, which (due to its formative context), relied heavily on select Central Asian courtiers. String of secessions necessitated a change in outlook, and make it more adaptive/ representative (Jongeward 2020: 81). While an elaborate depiction of Nanā and Tishtrya somewhat satisfied Sogdian subjects, a calculated step was needed for satiating Indian population. This turn of attentionnisevident in the production of Phase-II coins of Huviṣka, which show a marked preference for Indian iconographical conventions, and transform purely Avestan deities into semi-Indian ones. These transformations occurred on prized gold-coins, a phenomenon that exhibits imperial attention with ministerial sanction. Later, to increase monetary liquidity, Huviṣka also started minting copper/bronze coins carrying

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similar devices (Bopearachchi 2016: 89). Amongst these, there is one case that has often troubled historians, and which shall form the primary consideration of this paper.

The coin (see fig.01) was first described by V. A. Smith (1897, Pt.1, pp.2-3). In the sub-section of Kuṣāṇas, this coin was placed as No.4 (second for Huviṣka). The provenance was unknown, but die-arrangement and fabric betrayed Indian touches. The coin created astir even back then. Smith (1897, p.3, pl. I, no.06) gave the following description-

Obv: King riding an Elephant walking (proper) rightwards, with right lower limb of the King dangling, wearing elaborate armor, holding Pāśa (noose) and scepter, dressed in Crown (Type-II of Tandon), right-hand slightly raised. Beaded rim with marginal legend- OESHKO KOSHANO (Huviṣka the Kuṣāṇa)

Rev: A tall, male deity-figure standing in left-field facing right, left-hand elbow resting on a stand (club?), trident-like shape visible on extreme left (though severely effaced), holding an inward-curve arrow, equal in height to the Archer (/figure), slightly legible legend (in Brāhmi)- GANESHO on right (replaced in some issues with Kharoṣṭhī script reading *Yodhavade*).



Figure 01: The mysterious deity-figure on copper coin of Huviṣka (Source-Bopearachchi 2016: 102; Cribb & Bracey 2011E.C2-ii 1uMuseum Reg. No.1922, 0213.46).

With the aforesaid information, we now proceed to outline a basic methodological set-up-*Firstly*, we shall critically examine identifications furthered by veteran scholars. We would highlight glaring inconsistencies, and glean valuable lessons from them. *Secondly*, we will all facets of consideration relevant to this coin, to establish its context. Simultaneously, processes that structured the intercultural interactions amongst Gaṇeśa, Tishtrya and Apollo would be illustrated. *Thirdly*, we shall review mythological position and iconographical iterations of Gaṇeśa upto the Kuṣāṇa period; this would be our argumentative fulcrum. *Fourthly*, through generalization, we shall highlight cultural-numismatic

feature of Huviṣka coins featuring Śaivite deities, which would shed revelatory light over our mysterious deity-figure also. It is important to state upfront that we do not suggest that our proposition is the final word on this topic. Our prime imperative is to make the best possible use of data to provision a working hypothesis that satisfactorily meets all relevant standards.

Previous Propositions: Śiva, Rāma and Heracles

Smith identified the reverse as Heracles (though with a?), describing the arrow held by figure as club. He also published a second specimen in the Indian Museum of Calcutta, without identifying the supposed archer (p. 81, no. 46, pl. XIII, no. 4). Göbl (1984: 93; type 894) republished both coins and identified the figure as Heracles, but did not read the legend. Cribb read the legend *Ganesho*, but identified the god as Apollo (1992: 78, no. 67 in *The Crossroads of Asia*), but later identified it as Rāma (2010:152, cat. No. 97).

Nain (2023: 143-144) described the deity-figure as Śiva, based on muffled conviction of Smith (1897: 81; pl.13.4) and ancient texts, where Rudra-Śiva is described as holding bow and arrow (*RV* II.33.10; *Atharva-veda* 28.1; 27.6-7; *Taittreya Saṃhitā* IV.5,6). The latest text narrates his Śarva form, an aspect popular in northwestern India, which probably OESHO form of Rudra-Śiva on Kuṣāṇa coins, as a mythologically reversed version of Śarva was a demonic figure in Avesta, and signaled an evil and raucous Daeva, attributes suitable for Śiva (Carter1984: 156). However, accepting this deity-figure as Śiva would be an exercise in fallacy-

1. Śiva was known to Kuṣāṇas as OESO, which was a cleverly contrived amalgamation of Sogdian deity Vāyu and Śiva (Humbach 1978). Except Nanā, who was allotted three differing but linguistically proximate names- NANA, NANASAO, NANAIYA, no other deity was given additional names on coins. Names were only *nativized* (with Iranian sub-stratum) during Kaṇiṣka I's introduction of Bactrian language. On copper coins, names of deity-figures remained unaltered. GANESHO in place of OESHO, without any reiteration in later series (which would have rendered this piece a mistake, but *vide infra*) makes the present identification untenable. It is doubtful whether Huviṣka knew a sparingly used title of Śiva.
2. Every deity on Kuṣāṇa coinage had a fixed posture of dispersing benedictions upon the King (Pal1988). Iconographical conventions are somewhat variegated, but based on sculptural rendition (Mann2012: 78). Phase-II of Huviṣka's coinage-production introduced many novelties in depicting Śiva, but the base-figurine (rigid affront with $\frac{3}{4}$ tilt towards right/left) remained unchanged. Difference in number of arms, attributes, etc. were minor alterations in detail,

not *form*. On the concerned coin, however, resting of arms, bow and arrow, and rightward frontal pose are new, which rather weaken the identification of this figure as Śiva.

3. Copper coins received very less attention of Kuṣāṇa royal numismatic policy-making (Shrava1985). Till Kaṇiṣka I, we witness a host of deities on the reverse, while the numerical strength gets progressively reduced, reaching to two during reign of Vāsudeva I (c. 191-216 CE). However, less attention does not mean absence, and the numismatic mechanics involved herein (*infra*.) render it much probable that this specimen was more of an innovation, an attempt to craft a new deity-figure. Absence of any sculptures of Śiva with bow and arrow also makes our contention probable.
4. Consistency of deity depiction is often taken to exhibit legal sanction and processual authentication by operational mint, which thereby showed backing of State, consequently lending trust to minted currency in market (Grierson1975: 52). For gold-coins, Kuṣāṇas maintained a regulated and vigilant watch over production, indicated by uniformity of style and execution (Jongeward 2020: 98). The State, however, maintained only a marginal regulatory premises for copper coins, a deliberate ploy to maintain steady liquidity-flow amongst high-intensity, but low-value economic transactions, e.g. quotidian purchase of necessary items by masses (Mahajan 2010: 357; Jhingan 2002: 89). An abrupt change in numismatic reverse, even by a minor mint-master could have created a circulatory shock. Hence, it could be regarded that these coins were a part and parcel of a new copper-coin series initiated under the supervision of Huviṣka.

Bopearachhi (2016: 98) and Smagur (2015: 6), following the lead given by Cribb (2015) have re-assessed this portraiture as that of Rāma. In a similar vein, Handa (2010: 11, *vide* Bopearachhi 2016: 93) had compared this coin with a die found on some rare punch-marked coins that show a female figure flanked on both sides by males carrying quiver and holding bow on their right. Bopearachhi asserted that the long bow represented Indian model, which often reached upto height of the archer (*Herodotus' Histories* V.56). Smagur claimed that the figure could be part of series launched by Huviṣka, with *Yodhavade* suffix, which also included icons related to Vaiṣṇavism. Identifying this figure as Rāma poses following challenges-

- 1- Rāma reached political stardom in c. 10th-11th Century CE, and that too in a socio-political environment delineated by 'hostility for alien social-groups', 'asserting dominance' in us vs them spectrum conditionality (Pollock1993: 55). Fitting the depiction of Rama by Kuṣāṇas in such a context would be fallacious. Even in Gupta period, Rāma was considered an *Ideal-*

King, but not a God-King, which he became later after getting stimulatory elevations in royal-circles (Singh2011: 112), and thence could not be considered as an inspiration for Kuṣāṇasⁱⁱportraying themselves as ‘divine mortals’ (Puri 1965: 53).

- 2- No sculpture of Rāma with a bow and arrow has been found from Mathurā during sculptural Kuṣāṇa efflorescence, where Brāhmaṇic and Vaiṣṇavite statuary abounds (Agrawala1965: 212). The iconographical conventions regarding construction of an image of Rāma are also, quite curiously, also not found in *Bṛhat Saṃhitā*, a text placed in c. 6th Century CE (Shastri 1969). Even in later-era depictions, statues of Rāma are often intertwined narratively with Sitā and Lakṣmaṇa. The cult of Rāma had not reached sufficient maturity in c. 2nd Century CE to have acquired undoubted Kuṣāṇa propitiation.

Bopearachhi (2016: 58) asserts that the title *Yodhavade*, translated by Falk (2004: 34) as “*whose warrior traits are praiseworthy* “, cannot stand alone for Rāma due to utilization of this legend in coins featuring different reverse-devices. It might have made sense when this legend was particularly used for this reverse only. But, as Smagur (2015: 4) posits, it was engraved even on coins of Huviṣka probably showing Viṣṇu. Numismatic models carrying bow-arrow were sufficiently present in Kuṣāṇa numismatic pantheon, and were associated with only few deities, especially Tishtrya. Thence, it would be more relevant to draw a comparison upon an *existent* model than a *questionable* one.

Smith (1897) speculatively identified the figure as Hercules. However, this identification too falls flat- 1] Heracles was getting absorbed in the cult of *Vajrapāṇi-Indra*, as the artistic motivation for drawing the protector of Buddha came from his statuary only, and 2] No Indo-Greek coinage ever showed Heracles with bow and arrow; Apollo may be cited in that regard, but the club on left of the mysterious figure renders this untenableⁱⁱⁱ. Now, we succinctly state our proposal- the mysterious deity-figure was Tishtrya^{iv}, but with a way different mythological standing, for here, another Indic deity was lurking in shadows- Gaṇeśa.

A Tripartite Collusion: Gaṇeśa, Tishtrya and Apollo

Dhavalikar (1990: 2) believes that all panels of Mathurā related to Gaṇeśa were not formed in a single instance, but show distinctive temporal differences in execution and context. Brown (1991: 10) asserted that Gaṇeśa could be only regarded so when either alone, or in company of his mythical parents, but not with Lakṣmī, where the Yakṣa motif and Gaja-Lakṣmī scenario reigns supreme, nor with the Mātṛkās, where the demonic, sinister and non-orthodox roots of elephant headed deity-figure predominate. From these contexts, Gaṇeśa emerged gradually, in phases- In *first phase*, we may include all depictions of fearsome and terror-

evoking Mātṛkās sitting together, with usually the last one on left being elephant-headed. Non-theriomorphic depictions are also found, but with a changed disposition. In the *subsequent phase*, elephant headed deity-figure rises and rivals the mytho-cultural significance of Yakṣas that abound in this archaeo-sculptural evidence. In the *latest phase*, the proto-historic roots of Gaṇeśa begin to germinate, and acquire a form most of us are cognizant of. This phase, however, exhibits the fag-end of Kuṣāṇa influence on Mathurā (Sharma 1983: 67) and also suggests a recrudescence of Śaiva traditions, along with inclusion of the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa within Śaivite pantheon, marked by distinctive *Nāga Yājñopavīta* and ithyphallic art-motif surreptitiously implied in these depictions^v, which may have served as an inspiration for c. 5th Century CE sculptures in the Bhaumra Temple.

Numismatic Valuation

Bracey (2017: 98) discussed the devaluation initiated by Huviṣka to meet market-demand by metrologically manipulating copper coins. Devaluation helped in production of more coins with base-stock of noble metal held same (Jhingan 2002: 442). Huviṣka lowered weight and size of his copper coins in eastern provinces, making them less valuable and increasing relative value of gold issues. Kuṣāṇa coins were not token currencies, but contained valuable metals, thence useful in themselves. In regular transactions, weight and not its standardized ‘face-value’ mattered, i.e. a trader envisioning to receive 10g of copper would not care whether individual copper coin is of 1g (10 units) or 5g (2units). But, in order to make the new scheme effective, a certain quantum of copper coinage was linked with pre-meditated quantity of gold-coins.

Through an official sanction, Huviṣka instated same (previous) value of his new copper issues, making them of equal parity with older ones. This increased expenditure potential of State, alongside circulation-velocity, but also caused old currency to be exported in hoards outside Kuṣāṇa realm. Many Huviṣka copper coins are found in eastern India, where they probably arrived through trade. The *Yodhavade* series, the pilot phase of which contained GANESHO coin, was probably minted in eastern confines of Kuṣāṇa territory- Peshawar and Mathurā. The special impetus given by this policy-changer resulted in two unwanted effects- forgery emerged on a large scale, as evident from discovery of unsolicited Kuṣāṇa-era molds (Mukherjee and Lee 1988: 34). Secondly, it resulted in burgeoning market-demand, due to heightened scalability met by the new copper issues, which easily drove away the good old copper currency from domestic to trans-national markets, where these coins were exchanged purely on basis of their metal-content (Bracey 2017: 34). Rather than allowing the Kuṣāṇa State to save supply of precious metals, it rapidly depleted valuable-stock and snatched away State’s hold

over market and currency movements (Falk 2018: 58). It might be tentatively hazarded as a possible cause behind the abrupt, but markedly swift removal of these coins from circulation.

Political Sanctity

Huviṣka experienced a mid-reign revolt in Mathurā, in which the *Devakula* at Mat was brutally damaged. The revolt could have had internal causes, or external counterattack by suppressed republican states (Handa 2007: 44). This also accounts for the considerable gap in inscriptions between Year 44 and 60 (Jongeward 2015: 63). After this, Huviṣka tightened regulations at Mathurā, which included mint-control (Cribb 1997). The attempt to establish order must have led Huviṣka to commence syncretism by aligning Kuṣāṇa deity-figures (with distinct Iranian affiliations) with basic modelling extracted from incipient Indian iconography. Gaṇeśa remained elusive in this regard, for he was connected to both Śiva/OESHO and horrendous Mātṛkās. Huviṣka was faced with the problem of depicting deities hailing from Indian cultural ethos to meet minds of Iranian populace, since they formed the core of Kuṣāṇa empire (Jongeward 2020: 91). Huviṣka had to give credible artistic rendition to an unshapely deity-figure, and that too within constraints of Iranian cultural-conventions. This was part of a long-drawn programme of raising inclusivity with Indian subjects, who now had more of their divinities as members of Kuṣāṇa pantheon on coinage (Smagur 2015: 18). Possibly, it was a political machination to find favor amongst loyal Indian subjects by giving them more leeway into multicultural Kuṣāṇa State, and progressively seeking legitimation from both Iranian/Avestan and Indian deities, a practice that had commenced from the Rabatak inscription of Kaṇiṣka I itself (Falk 2004: 36). This situation was a natural response to increasing competition on the western frontier, and (temporarily) suppressed political rivals in eastern holdings (Puri 1996: 198).

Religious Musings

The reign of Kaṇiṣka I and Huviṣka culturally abridged two religious cultural-complexes- Iranian and Brāhmaṇic. Rabatak inscription captures intent of creating equivalence between the two divine-groups, possibly to gain numinous legitimation amongst subjects (Sims-Williams 2008: 42; Falk 2001: 56). The phenomenal attention given by Huviṣka to different aspects of Śiva, in depicting him with his consort Umā/Nanā, in dressing up Kārttikeya as Mahāsena, and in including Viṣṇu in numismatic pantheon strongly points towards his Brāhmaṇic inclinations. It is to be noted that by this time, Gaṇeśa had not acquired his characteristic trunk and bodily shape, a process only accomplished in *Baudhāyana Dharma Gr̥hyasūtra* (composed- later half of c. 2nd Century CE). Around the time

of Huviṣka, the most likely Śāstric text possessing information about Gaṇeśa-Vināyaka was *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (c. 3rd Century CE; see Olivelle 2006: 76). Gaṇeśa here was a troublesome deity-figure with popularity among masses but without much cognizance in Brāhmaṇic ritual-order. This was an unlikely factorial coincidence, since it not only made any manipulation in the deity-figure of Gaṇeśa unrelated to core Brāhmaṇical tenets, but helped Huviṣka absorb a semi-Brāhmaṇical deity that was fairly worshipped with much reverence by his Indian subjects (Krishan 1990: 41). Texts such as *Atharva-veda Paṛṣiṣṭa* unveil many ceremonies during which propitiation was offered to Gaṇeśa-Vināyaka for averting troubles and guarding abode against malevolent spirits (Kane 1962: 398).

At this juncture, we must highlight an uncanny fact regarding absorptive tendencies professed by Huviṣka through his coinage. After the fateful revolt in Indian territories, the second phase of Huviṣka's coinage shows marked inclination towards Śaivism. His Mathurā inscription of Year 44 refers to *Chandēśvara*^{vi}, a popular deity of Mathurā (Bisschop 2010: 482). The depiction of OESO-Śiva in Phase-II coins shows marked proclivity towards Indic iconographical conventions (Shrava 1985: 92). Even though the process of crafting intercultural divine equivalence was commenced by Kaṇiṣka I, Huviṣka brought the process to its natural ultimatum, by inducing multicultural metamorphosis in the deity-figure of not just Śiva, but also Pārvatī, Kārttikeya and lastly, Gaṇeśa, even though the latter had a peripheral presence in Śaivite World. At first, it may seem tempting to consider these deities as essentially forming a divine family (*Śiva Purāṇa* 4.8.3). But during Kuṣāṇa Age, this arrangement was at its nascent stage. Huviṣka's attention was not towards Śaivite family proper, per se, but towards all divine elements varyingly connected to the emerging Śaivite worldview.

Utilizing the process earlier deployed in case of Mahāsenā-Skanda-Kumāra, Huviṣka and his celators tried to transform another Indian deity into a 'Kuṣāṇa Divinity', one having empire-wide sanction and cognizance. A likely candidate to resemble Gaṇeśa in Avestan religion was Tishtrya, due to their common ambivalence, fight against demonic female divinities-Duzhyairya/Jyeṣṭhā Alakṣmī, and their late absorption in mythological worlds of Brāhmaṇas and Avesta respectively. This is further evident in their recalcitrance in following commandments of the supreme in pantheon- Śiva/Ahurmazda. Another point of incidence can be cited: both deity-figures are intimately connected to mother-goddess- Gaṇeśa with Umā/OMMO and Tishtrya with Nanā (Shenkar 2014: 96). This was a novel convention, started by the Kuṣāṇas to bring disparate mythocultural realms closer. Inevitably, it may have given them ideas to develop associational principles between Gaṇeśa and Tishtrya. Worship of both deities near harvest season must also not be ignored. Furthermore, Nanā, based on the Rabatak

inscription, had also been clearly associated with pre-sowing season rains, due to her conflation with Anahitā/Venus (Falk 2015: 266), while Umā, consort of OESHO, was modelled on coins and in Kuṣāṇa imagery after Nanā herself (Ghose2006). The connection between Tishtrya and Nanā/Umā is also evidenced in numerous Kuṣāṇa-era panels (Shenkar 2014).

Iconographical Innovations

The process^{vii} of iconographical invention under Kuṣāṇas was amicably explained by Zeymal (1977: 23ff.), one that became a necessity, owing to creation of form for some deities whose characteristic traits were known, but no sculptural mode was available (Puri 1996: 295; Rosenfield 1993: 87). Mann (2012: 112ff.) traced the numismatic base of Kuṣāṇa Mahāsenā in previously circulating currencies of Yaudheyas, combined with Orlagno and Pharro on Kuṣāṇa gold coins, an iconographical alignment that gave Mahāsenā his Scythian armour, rigid frontal pose, his militant dress-up and the cock (Sraosha) in Kuṣāṇa sculptures (see figure.02). It might be postulated that when it came to Gaṇeśā, the deity-figure looked for inspiration was probably Tishtrya, due to reasons cited afore. In borrowing of figurative contours between Mahāsenā and Orlagno, connectivity is extolled by virtue of sameness of pose, dress, attributes and outlining. This suggests a gradual tri-angular meeting of differing prospects, and must therefore be seen in that context. In this case, while Mahāsenā is the deity-figure gleaned from ritual-complex of Indian traditions, Sraosha is the divinity with whom his corpus was linked, syncretically conceived on coins in form based on model-extraction from figure of Orlagno on Kuṣāṇa coinage, which itself was exculpated from the Dioskuri on Indo-Greek coinage.



Figure 02: from left, a-Dioskuri on silver coin of Eucratides I (left), b-Mahāsenā on gold-coin of Huviṣka (middle), and c-Orlagno on a gold-coin of Kaṇiṣka I, Gobl 63 [Source- The British Museum: (a) 1888, 1208.140 (b) 1879, 0501.20; (c) 1890, 0102.1 (all in public domain)].

An objection might be raised regarding absence of elephant head of Gaṇeśā, and presence of selective range of sculptures in Mathurā museum housing therio-

cephalic representations of Gaṇeśa. At this juncture, there was surely some ambiguity regarding actual existential status of Gaṇeśa; it is evident even in Purāṇas and Smṛti texts of this period (Krishan 1994). Agrawala (1978: 28) suggested that Kuṣāṇa-era statuary in Mathurā could be hypothetically categorized in different phases, where terracotta statues of Gaṇeśa (proper) occupy latest portion, while other frieze depictions could be dated earlier, and probably exhibit not Gaṇeśa, but a therio-cephalic Yakṣa accompanying Kubera (Srinivasan 1997: 42). Surely, the Mathurā figures are from a formative and syncretic period, but they too reveal statues of Gaṇeśa not before c. 3rd Century CE (Dhavalikar 1990: 8), while the Rairh figure of Vināyakī^{viii} is tentatively dated to c. 1st Century CE, due to its indigenous style and no Kuṣāṇa influence (Agrawala 1978: 64). We cannot discount the possibility that elephant-headed god that emerged in Mathurā was a product of inspirational nodes arising from Magadha region, Vināyakī modules and figurative ideas about Pilushara, all meeting at Mathurā due to its centrality in terms of trade and cultural transference (Sharma 1983: 58). Moreover, separate mention of Gaṇeśa/Gaṇapati and his later Hastimukha form by Yājñavalkya and authors of *Vāyu Purāṇa (Kāśī-Khanda, XI.03)* in form of *Kṣemaka-Nikumbha* deserves critical attention. Vināyakas were the earliest to become associated with Gaṇeśa, but were emphatically allotted an elephant head only around c. 4th Century CE (Krishan 1990).

Now, it would be pertinent to counter one more possible objection- why did Huviṣka choose copper coins for this unique religio-cultural innovation, even though most of his cultural-numismatic gambits were performed on gold-coins. Firstly, we will try to answer the initial question- copper coins as medium of choice, and speculatively contemplate some answers-

Pilot test- It is possible that since inception, Huviṣka and his celators, unsure of acceptability of this newer device, ordered issuance of only some coins in a singular production-outlay. Even though a part of his gambit, it was radically innovative, since this specific triangulation did not have any antiquarian sanction, i.e. practice of usage in reigns of his predecessors, a principal cause that possibly further contributed to the damaging of this coin's reputation in the market.

Mass circulation- It is possible that Huviṣka may have tried to make this specific issue popular in short-run. The best way to achieve this objective was to constrain resource-stock by degrading metrological features, and tweaking some standards to produce massive output in limited duration. Subsequently, multiple pieces of this coin circulated across eastern provinces of Kuṣāṇa empire. Increased liquidity,

backed by official sanction and king's prompting, was the factorial assemblage needed to increase both appeal and spread-rate of this coin's use.

Metrological Media- The numismatic policy of the Kuṣāṇas seems to have avoided (Göbl 1984: 244) minting of silver-coins, as- 1) Indo-Greeks had intensively utilized this medium, which possibly exhausted availability of this resource (Thakur 1967: 41), 2) Kuṣāṇas primarily dealt with Roman empire, where only gold-coins were utilized for trans-national transactions, making Kuṣāṇa gold-issues stand on an equal commercial footing (Dalrymple 2024: 78), 3) It was not easy to forge gold-coins, while forgeries of silver could have been easily prepared by melting fresher Kuṣāṇa silver issues, extracting pure silver and applying ferrous oxide on debased coins (Mukherjee & Lee 1988: 23), a process that did occur, as known from some forgery units discovered at Rohtak and Mathurā (Jha 1991: xi), and 4) Operation of Gresham's Law would have swiftly wiped out relatively pure Kuṣāṇa silver issues from the market (Grierson 1975: 75), without affecting liquidity, since sub-par, debased Indo-Greek coinage was still heavily used inside Kuṣāṇa territories. Parthians had minted both silver and copper coins bearing Greek and Iranian deity-figures (Rawlinson 1893: 132ff.). Indian territories absorbed by Kuṣāṇa polity, however, used copper coins extensively, and therefore any Indic-focused newer currency could not have ignored this metrological feat. Barring silver, the only available option was copper, whose minting would have also helped meet local coinage-demands.

Cultural Hybridity- It is known that Kuṣāṇa empire encompassed multicultural residents-Greeks, Indians, Iranians and Sogdians etc. Minting of this figure on copper coins would have been palatable to all. Earlier, Indo-Greeks had deployed Apollo on both silver and copper coins^{ix} (Narain 1957: 225f.; Tarn 1951: 353), while Indian subjects were habituated to witness divine figuration mostly on copper issues (*cf.* Handa 2007: 52). For portraying the new syncretic deity Ganesha (Gaṇeśa-Tishtrya-Apollo), the metrological medium of copper thence was the best choice. Any consideration on this subject must necessarily take other related questions to account- a) why it was replaced with another equally mysterious legend- Yodhavade, b) why it is found only in some select regions, and not throughout the Kuṣāṇa empire, even when it was issued for rapid circulation, c) why was it quickly removed, or rather dis-favored later on, and d) in what way did it serve Kuṣāṇa interests?

To answer the initial two questions-a major chunk of these coins were found from Smast valley, Kashmir and Mathurā (Bracey 2012: 12; Boppearachchi 2016: 94). It is more than certain that the impetus of this idea came from India, where it was subsequently actuated, which explains its geo-political provenance. However, with collapse of Kuṣāṇa hold during onslaughts of the Sassanians, local

warlords seized both resource-stock and currency-power, and possibly re-struck most of these coins with the legend- Yodhavade. Falk (2004: 14) translated it as ‘Lord of Wars’ or ‘Lord of Warrior’, which aptly fits the bill. It is possible that imperial mints discontinued production of this coin-type after the initial disaster, while it continued to circulate among small, territorial holdings of regional warlords, as it is known that sovereignty did not control all areas within the empire with equal force (Kaniseti 2025: 42).

The answer to the third question could only be a conjectural, hypothetical reconstruction of possible factorial forces. We list four of them, which stand close to reason-

- 1- **Forgery-** Huviṣka intended his new coinage to serve immediate liquidity in market, but relaxation of procedural norms and technical complexities prompted many to forge this coin (Bracey 2017: 22). While forgery did not initially affect treasury for some years, its effects were felt by Kuṣāṇa administration in two ways- firstly, it lowered repute that currency-users, people and traders placed over sovereign’s authority (Jhingan 2002: 249), as prevalence of forgery was essentially breach of trust over matters of administrative efficiency. Secondly, it increased money-supply beyond reckoning; when people with worn-out coins came back to state-sanctioned mint for re-coinage, they were obviously exposed to inability of royal officers to cope up with the disproportionately burgeoning currency-demand. This probably caused either Huviṣka or his descendants to discontinue this series.
- 2- **Regional embedding-** with right of coinage given to regional mints, this coin-type gradually evolved to assume regional cognizance, and not command an empire-wide circulation, which can be attributed to two factors-
 - a. This coinage was created for local-usage, and meant to be ‘local’ in orientation. However, for low/middle-value transactions, resource-conserving high production-rate would have not only alleviated liquidity crunch across all markets, but also further inter-connected them. This did not happen as older, relatively pure copper Kuṣāṇa coins had already been shipped to territories distant from core of the empire, which devastated possibility of inter-market connectivity,
 - b. Local warlords began to divert production/minting activities for their advantage. Since the currency was relatively new, and the fragmented polity of Kuṣāṇas in India began to unveil structural fault-lines beneath surface, enterprising warlords did not experience much difficulty in manipulating Kuṣāṇa coinage. The discovery of many coins of local rulers in Kuṣāṇa territorial dominions, bearing an uncanny resemblance to this Kuṣāṇa

copper series further lends support to our conjecture (Handa 2007: 43; Bajpai 1976: 39). If true, this defeated the purpose of its conception in first place.

- 3- **Resource-exhaustion-** with disintegration of trans-national trade with Imperial Roman empire (during Huviṣka's reign, in c. 166 CE), steady supply of minted-gold collapsed. While it had suffered a major setback under Nero (*Reign*: c. 54-68 CE), who issued highly debased gold-coins (Beard 2023: 280ff.), at that time Kuṣāṇa empire was in its incipient stage, and relied primarily on debased posthumous Indo-Greek coins (Gardener 1972[1886]: 92). But, the risky gambit of equating newly coined copper currency with its gold counterpart (Bracey 2017:30) amplified the structural problems of bruised Kuṣāṇa economy (Mukherjee 1970:35). Rapid influx of new coinage, coupled with ominous working of Gresham's Law and forgery would have swiftly exhausted local stations of the imperial-mint, leading to an endless vicious cycle of resource-drain.
- 4- **Temporality-** Our historical reconstruction posits that Ganesho-type coins, along with newly coined copper series, were probably initiated after Year 44 (=c. 170-71 CE). However, it is known that Sassanian incursions, along with refractive stance of suppressed Indian polities, began to splinter the empire from within. In such situation, collected revenue was mostly mobilized for calming turmoil, financing warfare, and certainly not for numismatic innovation. To reinstate trust, successors of Huviṣka could not have relied on disastrous new copper coins, which they quickly abandoned/removed from official mint-order, and placed their trust on earlier currency, which commanded faith, both of markets and people. This phenomenon also explains the limited duration and production of this mysterious piece, and its fellow copper brethren, which together comprised Huviṣka's Gambit.

Conclusion: The Kuṣāṇa Divine-Cultural Triangulation

Our study reveals an interesting pattern whose common recurrence is strongly linked with Śaivite divinities (*supra.*). For the sake of analytical alacrity, we tentatively refer to the process described herein as *Kuṣāṇa Divine-Cultural Triangulation*, as it involved interplay of three mutually inclusive variables related to structuration of deity-figures- *Source* (targeted objective, which was to be adopted for numismatic position), *Form* (physical form that could possibly be allotted to the source; taken from circulating Indo-Greek idioms), and *Inspiration* (Iranian deity which was to find expression and entanglement with other two

variables; see figure.03). Some specifics have to be laid down upfront in order to make this process comprehensive-

Figure 03: A diagrammatic representation of our tentatively proposed Kuṣāṇa Triangulation (Courtesy- the author).

1- This arrangement is applicable only for Huviṣka's coinage, which shows



maximal intercultural diversity, and stark changes in appearance and reference of Gods on coins. The idea for this arrangement comes from the linguistic paradigm developed by Bivar (1976: 331ff.) to analyze complexities of Bactrian dialect and language found in Kuṣāṇa epigraphical records in Afghanistan and northwest India.

- 2- Since the process places emphatic focus on India, it only takes into account numismatic issues produced by mints of Huviṣka post the Year 44 of Kuṣāṇa-era, a political phenomenon manifested on numismatic media in the form of Phase-II of coinage of Huviṣka.
- 3- The operational working of this process must not be taken in the sense of allocating differential values to Indian and Iranian/Avestan mytho-cultural realms. The marked reduction of representation of Iranian deities (except Nanā) and complete absorption of OESO-Śiva into Śaivite cults (as seen from starkly different Sassanian and Kuṣāṇa-Śāha renditions of Oeso/Wēš) substantiates strongly our perceived notion of greater Kuṣāṇa inclination towards Indian cultural milieu in their later regnal years (after Year 44[=c. 171], strongly post-c. 216 CE, and explicitly after c. 226 CE; see Rezakhani 2017: 95).
- 4- Avestan deities have been labelled as ‘modes of inspiration’, because Kuṣāṇas initially lived in an Avestan mytho-cultural world, as pointed by their earliest coinage, which prominently featured Parthian symbols and Nanā in her zoomorphic form, straight from Avestan mythology (Srivastava 2019: 72; Mukherjee 1969: 23). Greek gods are labeled ‘modes of form’ as it was their

physical rendition on coins that inspired Kuṣāṇa celators (Stanco 2012: 22), as repeatedly observed on Kuṣāṇa issues, which reused Indo-Greek dies. Earlier, they imitated Indo-Greek numismatic style and portraiture. But, with gradual maturation of technology and stylistic idioms, Greek coin-devices were re-utilized, not directly in production, but in seeking inspiration to portray gods that had not been given an anthropomorphic shape before (Carter 1984: 98). Thence, for a Central Asian monarch raised in an Avestan mytho-cultural belief-system, marked with prevalence of Greek iconographical conventions, Huviṣka's Gambit was an exercise in adaptation, with varying degrees of success.

The logical foundations of this process lie in the realm of Kaṇiṣka I, who introduced both Iranian and Indian iconographical elements in numismatic portraiture of OESO-Śiva. Following Tanabe (1992: 357), we believe that OESO-Śiva was a syncretic deity-figure, possessing affiliations to both Brāhmaṇical (Puri 1965: 295; Jongeward 2020: 71) and Iranian/Avestan mythology (Srivastava 2019: 78; Göbl 1984: 414). Coins are the best source to study triangulation process, but it should not be taken to imply that it occurred only on coinage. An epigraphical parallel of Kaṇiṣka's deliberative intention can be gleaned in line 10 of Rabatak inscription, where Umā and Nanā collide, while inter-lineal gloss posits Sraosha in mytho-cultural equivalence with Mahāsenā and Viśākha^x (Mann 2012: 124ff.).

These incipient processes achieved fruition under Huviṣka. While data is insufficient to consider why this did not occur earlier, Buddhist literary references suggest brutal assassination of Kaṇiṣka I as the definitive cause (Mahajan 2010: 291). It is possible that belligerent stance failed to win hearts in a multicultural polity. Taking heed from his predecessor, Huviṣka invested more attention on consolidating cultural complexity to serve imperial ends (Liu 2012: 86). His initial attempt towards this novel objective is exhibited in fag-end of his Phase-I coinage, which replaces label of Orlagno with Mahāsenā (MAASENO), and links Umā with Nanā. Mature form of Triangulation is seen in Phase-II, where OESO-Śiva is given attributes closer to Śiva than Wes, Mahāsenā is presented with both Viśākha and Skanda Kumāra (Mann 2012: 139), and Umā is linked with OESO-Śiva^{xi}.

Triangulation method could be understood with sufficient ease after this brief induction. In the reign of Huviṣka, Śiva (Indic) was deliberately linked with Wes (Iranian/Avestan), while both were modelled after Poseidon (Tarn 1951: 144; Nain 2023: 57) or Heracles (Zeymal 1977: 31f.; Tanabe 1995: 82). Similarly, Umā (Indian) was colluded with Nanā (Iranian/Sogdian), who was again modelled after Demeter (only for non-martial aspect- Mukherjee 1969: 21). In this pattern, Mahāsenā (Indian), was linked with Orlagno and Sraosha (Avestan), where their physical renditions were extracted/inspired from the portraiture of Dioskuri.

For our case, we can say that source was Gaṇeśa-Vināyaka, who had some faint relation with elephants. With Tishtrya, he shared *Functional* (ritual harvest), *Characteristic* (acts positively only when invoked), *Behavioral* (fickleness, ambiguity and duality of character), *Narration* (fight against evil witches defiling prosperity), *Positional* (incompletely incorporated into pantheon), and *Associational* similarity (relation with Umā/Nanā). Tishtryawas invariably conflated with Pythian Apollo, due to their shared lustre, victory over reptiles, connections to good harvests, and valor in militant contexts. Tishtrya was modelled by Kuṣāṇa die-cutters after Apollo, whose models were available from reign of Zoilus II, which makes Apollo the Model in our framework, and explains colloquially the transference of the bow and arrow from Apollo to Tishtrya to Gaṇeśa (see fig.4).



Figure 04: A Diagrammatic rendition of summary of our core arguments
(Courtesy- the author).

The marked association of Apollo with elephant cults, in a strange way, matches well with that of Gaṇeśa-Vināyaka, who till that time had only experienced *affiliation* with elephantine behavioral traits, but not their *presence* in his iconographical depiction, examples of which are clearly near nullity in the period examined herein, giving the Kuṣāṇa die-cutters brilliant opportunity to experiment and model innovated image of Vināyaka/Gaṇeśa after Apollo, in order to represent Tishtrya to Iranian populace, and *Ganesho* to Indians, who had not till then linked Gaṇeśa with elephant-head, but were on the verge of doing so some centuries later. Linguistic analysis by Tanabe (1992, 1995) has unveiled frequent usage of *īśvara* suffix in the region, especially since Vima Kadphises. The resultant product was Gaṇeśa that we saw on the Huviṣka copper coins- chief Gaṇapati of this period, Vināyaka was given a novel, but simultaneously mysterious reiteration by Kuṣāṇas. This arrangement did not last long due to consequences of the politico-

numismatic policy explained above. The popularity of this numismatic depiction declined afterwards due to failure of numismatic program, and swift absorption of Gaṇeśa properly into Śaivism, where he was given an elephant-head.

With the swiftly emerging popularity of the elephantine god, and his occasional existence in northwest culture-complex (see Dhavalikar 1990), it seems strange that Huviška did not continue with a numismatic motif already present (though only for Pilushara), and gave Gaṇeśa an anthropomorphic form anew. This might be the consequence of- *model-extraction* (elephant-headed coins were severely limited), *uniformity* (triangulation would have been curbed), *narrative-alacrity* (Huviška rides an elephant on obverse, elephant god on reverse an oddity), and *syncreticnegation* (Elephant was regarded in Avestan belief as evil). To create a new deity-figure, die-cutters of Huviška only had an intention, but no model to look to for inspiration, making Gaṇeśa on reverse have an artistic rendition matching Tishtrya. Probably, the occasion to depict Tishtrya arose after issuing the Zahr coinage of gold depicting Nanā. An archer and elephant were exhibited on coins of Zoilus I, who connected Apollo Pythian with elephants, probably to express the symbology formulated by Diodorus during campaigns of Alexander. The triangular connection between Apollo^{xii}, Tishtrya and the divine elephant could have led to the production of this supposed numismatic complexity.

The rarity of this coin is a product of numismatic policy-reversal by Vāsudeva I, who altered of coins to save valuable capital assets, and subsequently made Oesho and Ardochsho the only two deities occurring on his gold/copper coins (Shrava1985: 99). This was coupled with gradual ascendance of Vināyaka in Śaivite legends with an elephant-head. It would not be wrong to aver that it was his previous mythical connection, and his incorporation into Śaivite sects that directionally altered Gaṇeśa's iconographic feats (Brown1991: 28), and distanced his figuration from the complicated yet syncretically innovative Kuṣāṇa design examined herein.

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End Notes

¹The Kuṣāṇas received threat to their existence from Northern Wei, together with Ruan-Ruan and Xiong-nu. This coerced them to break-through the calamitous terrain of Hindu Kush Mountains, and enter the Oxus-Jaxartes Doab region. This brought them in direct cultural contact of the Sogdians, who majorly engaged in cross-border trade. This was also the place where the Yuezhi were visited in 126 BCE by Zhang-Qian, a Han-army general, who acknowledged the immediate necessity of their cavalry's assistance to tackle the Hunnic menace. The Yuezhi negated the opportunity of direct involvement, but wished to develop diplomatic ties with the Han Emperor, Gundi (c. 180-143 BCE). The gradual settled practices brought to the Yuezhi immense socio-cultural capital, which they brilliantly utilized in extending their political hold south of the Jaxartes, which, as Harl (2023: 96) vividly illustrates- made them the master of Indo-Greek residents, Iranian agriculturalists, and Indian subjects, paving the way of their greatest cultural legacy- Religious syncretism and Cultural assimilation."

²It is probable that Rama became a popular Vaiṣṇavite deity-figure after the Kuṣāṇas were dethroned by Indian polities, possibly comprising the Nāgas, Māghas, Maukharis and probably

Guptas also (Trivedi 1957: xxi). Though Kuṣāṇas had tried to become culturally compatible in Indic contexts, their alien attributes (divine kingship, sculptural renditions of living beings, portraiture of divinities on coins etc.) did not comply well with Indian subjects, most of whom decried their differential cultural-complex (Mahajan 2010: 289). As pointed out by Jayaswal (1934: 56), Kuṣāṇas (called Turuṣkas in the early Purāṇas) were occasionally referred to as Śūdras (maligned) and as ‘demonic, barbaric Mlecchas’ (Mahajan 2010: 291; Viṣṇu Purāṇa 130. 8. 2) due to their ‘wicked facial features, pale skin’ and sanguine temperament (Jayaswal 1933: 59). Reading between the lines, we may infer the following- 1) Kuṣāṇas were deeply regarded as un-Indic in Purāṇic literature, and 2) this same element probably inspired the emergent Indic polities to capitalize on the narrative-framework associated with Rāma. We would not be wide off the mark in tentatively asserting that post-Kuṣāṇa age was probably the first wherein Rāma was used as a political deity-figure in geo-political rhetoric, which makes the identification of our concerned figure as Rāma diabolically controverted.

ⁱⁱⁱRosenfeld (1967: 77) gives a description of Hercules as occurring on coins of Huviṣka-Rev: Huviṣka only (Coins 73, 92). Unique example in gold. Nude bearded man standing to I. R. hand holds a large knurled club, which rests on the Ground; holds lion’s pelt over l. arm and apple in I. hand. Figure stocky and muscular. Note that obverse type is also unique in Huviṣka’s gold Coinage. The copper coin illustrated here shows Herakles with club resting against I. shoulder.

^{iv}Tishtrya appears on relatively lesser number of coins. His initial and inaugural appearance was on a gold-coin of Huviṣka, though with the erroneous legends Meiro (Mihir) and Nanā. It was later corrected to Teiro (Srivastava 2014: 82; Falk 2015: 291, see fig. ii). Except these, Tishtrya is a regular accomplice of Nanā in both statuary and Penjikent. At Rabatak, near the find-spot of the renowned eponymous inscription, a statuary portrayed a Goddess astride on a lion (Nanā), accompanied by a male deity-figure holding bow-arrow (Tishtrya), resembling the scenic painting discovered in a noble courtier’s dwelling at Penjikent, which explicitly exhibited Nanā and Tishtrya standing in front of the Gateway of Hell and Heaven (Shenkar 2014: 88; see the Mural painting at Penjikent showing Nanā and Tishtrya (Source- Shenkar 2014: 126; Wikimedia Commons public domain), and the so-called “Hell and Heaven scene” from Penjikent XXV/12 (Marshak and Raspopova 1991, fig.3).

^vGhurye (1962: 42) suggested that elephantine Gaṇeśa possibly depicted non-Vedic roots of the deity-figure, consciously framed to remind of his humble genesis. Two points shall suffice to negate this argument- 1] Śiva was himself a deity with only marginal Vedic influence, regarded by most scholars as either initially non-Āryan mountain-dwelling Hunter God (Chakravarti 1998: 12) or a frontier man, belonging to both and to neither world simultaneously (Goyal 1984: 58). Thus, bowdlered metamorphosis of Gaṇeśa could not have occurred in Śaivite pantheon. 2] The same process did not occur with other deities who eventually entered Śaivism- Manasā, Bhairava, Nīllohita etc., which squarely makes Gaṇeśa’s peculiarity dependent upon two circumstances- either he had the elephant head since the beginning, or was bestowed with one due to internal clashes or systemic incursions (Brown 1991: 20). Purāṇic narratives unfailingly signal towards later deposit of elephant as head of Gaṇeśa. Some scholars even considered elephant-head a mask (Grimes 2010: 12), while others asserted that it was installed either to connect absorbed/sanctioned Vināyaka cult with a deity of popular appeal, or show similarity to what happened with Dakṣa- The decapitation of Dakṣa, followed by his bearing the head of a goat, quite clearly parallels the legends of Gaṇeśa, as mentioned in Śiva Purāṇa. O’Flaherty (1981: 128), based on the complicated and controverted incestual rivalry between Śiva and Brahmā, asserts that the positioning of ram on the head of Dakṣa can possibly signify two aspects- excessive insistence on procreativity and theriomorphic symbolization of an age-old ritual sacrificial custom. The former enjoys less possibility, as it is chiefly related to Naigameśa (Starzcyk 2002: 122). The former, on the other hand, can open novel venues, for it can then be similarly projected that the inclusion of Vināyaka in Śaivism was done by the sanctification of the leading Gaṇeśa into an elephantine deity-figure, which

was possibly done to make the non-Vedic Vināyaka sever their Yakṣa roots, adopt a fairly common deity-depiction, and then enter the Śiva pantheon.

^{vi} Mat/Girdharapur Inscription of Huviṣka- (Lueders 1961: 138-140; Shrava 1993: 99, no. 38)-Line 1-) of the...maker, who is steadfast in the true Law, on whom, on account of his devotion, the kingdom was conferred by Sarva and Scandavira (Candavira), Line 2-) the temple, the jātirāja devaputra Huviṣka of the grandfather of mahārāja rā. Line 3-) and a tank was given. And later on, having seen that the temple was broken, fallen down and in a ruinous state.

^{vii}The processes involved: Structuration (developing schemes to create a basic form), Attribution (assigning specific attributes to deity-figures), Identification (consistently depicting deity with attribute), Basic-comparative assessment (comparing deity-figure crafted with parallel models in related contexts) and Accretion (modifying deity-figures to expand reach and familiarity). Cribb (1995: 320) believed that the image of Śiva was a combination of Heracles' physique, trident of Poseidon, and tricephalic state of Vāyu.

^{viii}Only Agrawala (1978: 22) refers to it as Vināyakī, possibly on the sole basis of its therio-cephalic and feminine structuration. However, based on the fact that Śākta manifestations of chief sectarian goddesses had not evolved before c. 5th Century CE (Bhattacharya 1964: 53), and Vedic ritual-order was heavily embedded in the socio-cultural milieu of Rajasthan tracts in c. 1st Century CE, a phenomena prompted by foreign incursions and subsequent crystallization of orthodox identity (Hooja 2015: 278), and the minimal attention and downgraded positional stance of the much eroded figurine, it is more than probable that this figure is not Vināyakī at all, but a first ever physical rendition of Jyeṣṭhā Alakṣmī.

^{ix}Apollo appears on the coins of roughly about ten Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers: in the case of Euthydemus II, only his head, but when considering coinage of Apollodotus I, Eucratides II, Apollodotus I, Eucratides II., Apollodotus II, Strato II, Hippostratus, Dionysius II and Zoilos II, we see Apollo as a standing god, and on the coins of Strato I as both a bust and a standing figure. In the case of Apollodotus II he also appears sitting (Bopearachchi 1991: 377). As if coveting completeness, Eucratides' coins show the head of Apollo facing right, as is the case with the bust on Strato I's coins. The type showing Apollo's head in profile, with long hair falling down his neck behind, can be found on many coins issued in cities in Asia Minor such as Xanthos, Colophon and Milet, as well as those of rulers such as Prusias I in Bithynia. However, a true model for Euthydemus II's coins can be found in the Seleucid coins from the headquarters of Seleucia on the Tigris. They are coins minted by Antiochus II, Seleucus II and Antiochus III from c. 255–210 BCE. Apollo was appearing on coins as early as the first half of the c. 2nd century BCE, both throughout Bactria (Euthydemus II, c. 190–185 BCE), and slightly later in Parapamisadae, Gandhāra, Arachosia and the Punjab (Apollodotus I, 180–160 BCE) At the very close of Greek rule in Bactria, we come across Apollo on the coins of Eucratides II (c. 145–140 BCE). His contemporary, Menander I, minted coins with a tripod on the reverse in all the areas to the south of the Hindu Kush (c. 145–130 BCE). Strato I then briefly minted coins featuring Apollo in his territorial holdings in Gandhāra and Punjab (c. 125–110 BCE). Apollo appeared on the coins of almost all the late Indo-Greeks, who by now ruled only the Punjab area (Apollodotus II, Hippostratus, Dionysius and Zoilos II, Strato II, i.e. c. 80 BCE–10 CE). Coins depicting Apollo are also unique in that the reverse of the coin is also devoted to the god, since they feature a tri-pod, Apollo's symbol. It is only rarely found on coins that do not have Apollo on the obverse; this happens in the case of Menander I, where there is a bull on the obverse, while in the case of Zoilos II there is an elephant.

^xFrom Rabatak Inscription (Sims-Williams 2008: 16):8.at this . . . to make the sanctuary which is called B . . . ab, in the *plain of Ka . . . , for these.9.gods, (of) whom the . . . *glorious Umā leads the *service here, (namely the *lady Nana and the.10.lady Umā, Aurmuzd, the gracious one, Srosha, Narasa, (and) Mihr. [interlinear text: . . . and he is called Maaseno (Mahāsena), and he is called Bizago (Viśākha)] And he likewise,11.gave orders to make images of these gods who are written above, and,12.he gave orders to make (them) for these kings:

^{xi}Initially, Umā was modelled exactly after Nanā. However, to differentiate between the two, celators of Huviṣka performed two actions- 1) replaced the cornucopia shown in the hands of Nanā with lotus-flower (Srivastava 2014: 76), and changed the vertical label Inscription from Nanā to OMMO. Recently, Falk (2018: 26) has tried to show that this OMMO stood for Vima Kadphises, and not for Umā (p.27), based on the somewhat misshaped nose and semi-transparent apparel, a distinctive feature of common royalty. These arguments, however, can be easily negated- Vima was transliterated in Bactrian dialect as OEMO, not OMMO (Sims-Williams 2008: 91; Dani 1996: 38). The Semi-transparent apparel was worn mostly by women, a fact gleaned from the evocative complaint of Pliny the Elder (Dalrymple 2024: 56ff.). It was a common custom among the Kuṣāṇas to show their deity-figures as dressed in royal attire, in order to underline the intimacy between Kings and Gods (Lohuizen 1949: 156).

^{xii}Apollo was a revered deity-figure in the Seleucid Empire. After Seleucus Nikator (c. 306-282 BCE) successfully re-established Hellenic hegemony in Syria and adjoining regions, he ordered the construction of an Apollo statue made of chryselephantine (Stanco 2012: 41). This was an ode to an important moment during the Battle of Corpu diem (c. 281 BCE), where at the beginning of the sanguine struggle, some elephants stationed at the front raised their trunks (proboscis) upwards, which most Greek soldiers believed was a pointed indication towards Apollo (Lord of Archery and Sun). It is certain that the elephantine action was associated with Apollo later, possibly due to the fact that Apollo was considered a patron-deity of the Seleucid Dynasty (Tarn 1951: 112). This cultural-belief in Apollo was later also applied by Indo-Greeks at Kapiśā in the worship of Pilushara, a local god connected to elephants (Dhavalikar 1990: 12), who was, however, curiously linked to Apollo by many Greek historians (Apollodotus XI.20).

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