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All Greek to Us? The Kušan (Kushans) and Hellenism

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Keywords

Bactria: Historic region located between the Hindu Kush Mountains and the area across the Amu Darya (Oxus River) to the north, in modern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Amu Darya – Amu “River” in Central Asia known, among others, as Oxus in Greek, Vakšu in Sanskrit, and Jihun/Jayhūn in Persian and Arabic.

Transoxiana (Greek) = **Turan** (Persian) = **Maa waraa' an-nahr** (Arabic) – Region across/around the Oxus River

Arədvī Sūrā (Anāhitā) - Avestan divinity of water – later personified as Anahita

Ardoxsho – Kušan goddess of fertility/water

Nana – Patron goddess of the Kušan Empire and the most important deity worshipped by Emperor Kaniška

Takht i-Sangin (Stone Throne) – Archaeological site (6th century BCE – 3rd century CE) located near the confluence of the Vakhsh and Panj rivers in Tajikistan. Sacked (probably) by the Yuezhi around 130 BCE.

Marsyas - In Greek mythology, the satyr Marsyas is associated with music, playing the double oboe that had been abandoned by the goddess Athena and ultimately, with fatal consequences, challenging the god Apollo to a music contest.

Parsanius – 2nd century CE Greek traveler and geographer, famous for his description of ancient Greece from firsthand observations.

Arrian – 1st-2nd century CE Greek historian and military commander who wrote the *Anabasis (March) of Alexander*, the most important source on the life and campaigns of Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BC).

Bessus – The Achaemenid Bessus came to power as a usurper shortly after killing the actual ruler Darius III (r. 336–330 BC), and subsequently sought to maintain control of the eastern part of the empire against Alexander the Great who pursued him across the Oxus River.

Graeco-Bactrian Empire – From the 3rd to the 2nd century BCE, Bactrian state following that of Alexander the Great and his immediate successors the Seleucids.

Kampyr tepe – Site in modern Uzbekistan, possibly founded by Alexander the Great as *Alexandria Oxiana* (Alexandria on the Oxus), important fortified town during the Graeco-Bactrian and Kušan periods.

Ai Khanum – Central city of the Graeco-Bactrian Empire on the left bank of the Amu Darya in modern Afghanistan. Founded around 280 BCE it declined between 145 and 120 BCE as a result of successive waves of nomadic incursions.

Yuezhi (月氏) – Mobile pastoralists described in Chinese sources as roaming the area west of the Gansu who migrated to Fergana and Bactria and, ultimately, overran the Graeco-Bactrian Empire in 125 BCE.

Xiongnu (匈奴) – From the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE, powerful nomad confederacy to the north of Han dynasty China.

Kušān dynasty – Controlled parts of Central Asia and South Asia from the 1st to the 3rd century CE

- Herais – Head (Founder?) of the clan of Kušan, ruled 1 -30 CE (roughly)
- Kujula Kadphises – first king, 30 – 80 CE
- Vima Taktu – son of Kujula, 80 – 95 CE
- Vima Kadphises – son of Vima Takhtu, 95 – 127 CE
- Kaniška (Kanishka) – son of Vima Kadphises, 127 – 150 CE
- Huviška (Huvishka) – 150 -180 CE
- Vāsudeva I – 180 -230 CE (last of the great monarchs)

Khalchayan – 1st century CE Kušan royal/clan temple located in modern Uzbekistan

Surkh Kotal – 2nd century CE Kušan royal temple site in southern Bactria, modern Afghanistan. Also known for two important Kušan era inscriptions written in Bactrian, an eastern Iranian language in Greek script.

Dalverzin tepe - Archaeological site located in historic Bactria, modern Uzbekistan. Together with Termez, one of the most important cities of the northern Kušan Empire.

Termez (Kušan *Tarmita*; Arabic *Tirmidh*) – Large urban site on the Amu Darya in modern Uzbekistan with extensive archaeological remains dating to the Kušan era, among others. Remained a prominent city until the 17th century.

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