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## The Origin of the Kushans

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The Origin of the Kushans  
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The “Guishuang 貴霜” found in the Chinese historical records must have been the “Kuṣāṇa (Kushan)” seen on existing coins and in the inscriptions found in Central Asia and the northwest subcontinent. The origin of the Guishuang 貴霜 is one of the weak links in research on Kushan history. Up to now there seems to be no hypothesis that is internally consistent. Here I will offer my opinions upon this problem.

A

In the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ch. 88 (Memoir on the Western Regions), the origin and rise of the Guishuang 貴霜 are recorded as follows:

Formerly, when the Yuezhi 月氏 had been destroyed by the Xiongnu 匈奴, they moved to Daxia 大夏 and divided the country into the five Xihou 翯侯 of Xiumi 休密, Shuangmi 雙靡, Guishuang 貴霜, Xidun 昞頓, and Dumi 都密. More than a hundred years later, the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜 [named] Qiujiuque 丘就卻 attacked and destroyed the [other] four Xihou 翯侯 and established himself as king; the state was named Guishuang 貴霜. [This] king invaded Anxi 安息, took the country of Gaofu 高附, and, moreover, destroyed Puda 濮達 and Jibin 罽賓 and completely possessed their territory. Qiujiuque 丘就卻 died at the age of more than eighty years, and his son Yangaozhen 閻膏珍 succeeded him as king. He in his turn destroyed Tianzhu 天竺 and placed there a general to control it. Since then the Yuezhi 月氏 have been extremely rich and strong. In the various states [their ruler] is always referred to as “the King of Guishuang 貴霜,” but the Han 漢, basing themselves upon the old appellation, speak about “the Da Yuezhi 大月氏.”

It is generally accepted that Qiujiuque 丘就卻, the founder of the Guishuang 貴霜 Dynasty, is identical with the Kujula Kadphises shown on the coins and inscriptions of the Kushans. Therefore, the predecessor of the Kushan Dynasty is undoubtedly the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜, one of the five Xihou 翯侯 of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏.

Since the memoir claims that the Da Yuezhi “divided the country into the five Xihou 翯侯 of Xiumi 休密, Shuangmi 雙靡, Guishuang 貴霜, Xidun 胘頓 and Dumu 都密” after they had moved to the land of Daxia 大夏, it appears that the five Xihou 翯侯 (including the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜) were the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 people. Moreover, this point seems to be confirmed by the assertion that “the Han 漢, basing themselves upon the old appellation, speak about ‘the Da Yuezhi 大月氏’” after Qiujiuque 丘就卻 had unified the other four Xihou 翯侯 and established the Kushan Dynasty.

In my opinion, the claim that Da Yuezhi 大月氏 established the five Xihou 翯侯 after they had destroyed the state of Daxia 大夏 in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ch. 88, is based on the *Hanshu* 漢書, ch. 96A. In the latter it is recorded:

Originally Daxia 大夏 had no major overlord or chief, and minor chiefs were frequently established in the towns. The inhabitants are weak and afraid of fighting, with the result that when the Yuezhi 月氏 migrated there, they made them all into their subjects. They provide supplies for Han 漢 envoys. There are five Xihou 翯侯. The first is entitled the Xihou 翯侯 of Xiumi 休密, and the seat of government is at the town of Hemo 和墨; it is distant by 2,841 *li* 里 from [the seat of] the Protector General and 7,802 *li* 里 from the Yang 陽 Barrier. The second is entitled the Xihou 翯侯 of Shuangmi 雙靡, and the seat of government is at the town of Shuangmi 雙靡; it is distant by 3,741 *li* 里 from [the seat of] the Protector General and 7,782 *li* 里 from the Yang 陽 Barrier. The third is entitled the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜, and the seat of government is at the town of Huzao 護燥; it is distant by 5,940 *li* 里 from [the seat of] the Protector General and 7,982 *li* 里 from the Yang 陽 Barrier. The fourth is entitled the Xihou 翯侯 of Bidun 胘頓, and the seat of government is at the town of Bomao 薄茅; it is

distant by 5,962 *li* 里 from [the seat of] the Protector General and 8,202 *li* 里 from the Yang 陽 Barrier. The fifth is entitled the Xihou 翺侯 of Gaofu 高附, and the seat of government is at the town of Gaofu 高附; it is distant by 6,041 *li* 里 from [the seat of the] Protector General and 9,238 *li* 里 from the Yang 陽 Barrier. All the five Xihou 翺侯 are subject to the Da Yuezhi 大月氏.

According to this, the five Xihou 翺侯 were in fact not the Yuezhi 月氏 people, but were the people in the state of Daxia 大夏. This is because there was no sovereign who could order the whole country in the state of Daxia 大夏, where each town carried out its affairs in its own way and was ruled by a so-called "minor chief." The Yuezhi 月氏 did not wipe out these "minor chiefs," but "made them all into their subjects" after they had conquered the state of Daxia 大夏. It was a common pattern that nomadic tribes in ancient times ruled occupied areas by means of puppet governments. As to the title of "Xihou 翺侯," it may have been brought to Bactria by the Yuezhi 月氏, or might have been there before. If the latter, it means that the Yuezhi 月氏 calling their puppets "Xihou 翺侯" reflected local custom. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that this title was common to the people of both Yuezhi 月氏 and Daxia 大夏.

If this is true, the statement in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ch. 88, that they "divided their country" and so on mentions only that the division into the five Xihou 翺侯 took place after the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 invaded. There was no indication that all the five Xihou 翺侯 were Da Yuezhi 大月氏 people. Moreover, the five Xihou 翺侯 (or some of them) already existed before the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 conquered Daxia 大夏, and they were "minor chiefs" as described in the *Shiji* 史記, ch. 123. The Da Yuezhi 大月氏 ruled the Daxia 大夏 in conformity with the local circumstance that a great number of "minor chiefs" ruled independently. Even if the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 appointed other people to be the Xihou 翺侯, we should grant that these Xihou 翺侯 possibly were the Daxia 大夏 natives who had close relationships with the Da Yuezhi 大月氏. In addition, the statement "divided their country" and so on does not say that the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 partitioned the whole territory of Daxia 大夏 into the lands of the five Xihou 翺侯, but can be taken only as a move to enfeoff the chief lieutenants. In fact, the lands of the five Xihou 翺侯 were located in the eastern part of the land of Daxia 大夏.<sup>1</sup> It is self-evident that even if the five

Xihou 翯侯 were originally the "minor chiefs" of the state of Daxia 大夏, already located in their own lands, seen through the Da Yuezhi's 大月氏 eyes, they were the new chief lieutenants.<sup>2</sup>

From this, we see that the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ch. 88, repeats exactly the previous historical records in that it mentions the origin of the Guishuang 貴霜, but the formulation is ambiguous due to its ignorance of the facts, and therefore clarification is needed. Of the statement "Fan wu Xihou jie shu Da Yuezhi 凡五翯侯大月氏 (All the five Xihou 翯侯 are subject to the Da Yuezhi 大月氏)" "shu 屬" means to be mastered. The predecessor of the Kushan Dynasty was the Guishuang 貴霜 Xihou 翯侯, one of the "minor chiefs" of the Daxia 大夏 state, who was subject to Da Yuezhi 大月氏.

## B

Since the predecessor of the Kushan Dynasty was the Guishuang 貴霜 Xihou 翯侯 in the original Daxia 大夏 state, the Kushan people can be traced back to the Daxia 大夏. The so-called "state of Daxia 大夏" occurs first in the *Shiji* 史記, ch. 123, in which it is recorded:

Daxia 大夏 is at a distance of more than two thousand *li* 里 southwest of Dayuan 大宛, on the south bank of the Gui 媯 River. The inhabitants are settled on the soil, dwell in walled cities and houses and follow the same way of life as Dayuan 大宛. They have no major overlord or chief, and minor chiefs are frequently established in the towns. The army is weak and afraid of fighting. The people are expert traders. When the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 migrated west, they attacked and defeated Daxia 大夏 and made the Daxia 大夏 all into their subjects. The population of Daxia 大夏 may amount to more than a million. Their capital is called Lanshi 藍市, and it has markets for the sale of all sorts of merchandise. Southeast of this state is the state of Shendu 身毒.

These were the observations of Zhang Qian 張騫 during his first mission to the Western Regions as an envoy of Han 漢 (ca. 130–129 B.C.).<sup>3</sup>

The state of Dayuan 大宛 was located in the present Ferghana. The River Gui 媯 refers to

the present Amu Darya.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the state of Daxia 大夏 must have been located in the southwest of the Ferghana Basin, the southern bank of the River Gui 媯, i.e., Amu Darya. Its so-called capital, the town of Lanshi 藍市, probably refers to Bactra, the largest town in that region, which had been the capital of the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria.<sup>5</sup>

The "state of Daxia 大夏," attacked and vanquished by the Yuezhi 月氏 when they migrated west, was not the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria. It was the Sacae tribes who destroyed this kingdom. It has been suggested that "Daxia 大夏" refers to the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria, but this theory is inadequately substantiated, for the following reasons.<sup>6</sup>

First, the state of Daxia 大夏 as seen in the *Shiji* 史記, ch. 123, in which it is said "they have no major overlord or chief, and minor chiefs are frequently established in the town," did not conform to the situation of the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria. The latter had undoubtedly had an "overlord."

Second, on the basis of a relatively credible theory, the Hellenic kingdom Bactria was destroyed in ca. 140 B.C.<sup>7</sup> The Da Yuezhi's 大月氏 western migration could not have begun earlier than 130 B.C. In other words, at the time the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 migrated west, the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria had already been destroyed.

Third, the theory is unable to explain why Zhang Qian 張騫 called the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria "Daxia 大夏." However, "Daxia 大夏" can be taken as a precise transliteration of "Tochari," one of the four Sacae tribes that destroyed the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria.

The fact that the Sacae tribes destroyed the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria is recorded in Strabo's *Geography*<sup>8</sup>:

Now the greater part of the Scythians, beginning at the Caspian Sea, are called Däae, but those who are situated more to the east than these are named Massagetae and Sacae, whereas all the rest are given the general name of Scythians, though each people is given a separate name of its own. They are all for the most part nomads. But the best known of the nomads are those who took away Bactriana from the Greeks; I mean the Asii, Pasiiani, Tochari and Sacarauri, who originally came from the country on the other side of the Iaxartes River that

adjoins that of the Sacae and the Sogdiani and was occupied by the Sacae. (XI, 8-2)

Since in a later passage Strabo says very definitely that the Sacae "occupied Bactriana" (XI, 8-4), the Asii, Pasiiani, Tochari and Sacarauri "who took away Bactriana from the Greeks" must fall into the Sacae tribes, who were Scythians along with the Däae and Massagetæ. We thus can call the Asii and the others "four tribes of the Sacae."

Furthermore, the *Trogus Prologues* states that, "the Scythian tribes Sacaucae (Sacarauli) and Asiani seized Bactria and Sogdiani." (XLI) It also states ambiguously: "Asiani (Asii) the kings of the Thocari (Tochari), the annihilation of Sacarauca." (XLII).<sup>9</sup> "Scythia" here is equivalent to "Sacae," because, according to Strabo, Sacae also can be called Scythia, and the Saraucæ and Asiani must have been the Sacarauli and Asii noted in Strabo.

That is, in the course of the Sacae tribes' invasion of Bactria, those who captured its capital were the Sacarauli and Asii, and the Asii eventually triumphed over the Sacarauli. As to the statement "Asiani (Asii) the kings of the Thocari (Tochari)," we can take it as meaning that the former was the suzerain of the latter. In other words, it was the Asii who led the Tochari to capture Bactra and Sogdiana, and who triumphed over the Sacarauli.<sup>10</sup> The Pasiiani, another of the four Sacae tribes, was not referred to, probably because of the fragmentary information.

Zhang Qian 張騫 took Bactria to be "Tochari," the name of one of the four Sacae tribes who had invaded and occupied Bactria. This is probably either because the Tochari were the greatest in number or because the Tochari,<sup>11</sup> whose suzerain was the Asii, had triumphed over the Sacarauli and controlled Bactria.

In sum, at around 140 B.C., the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria was destroyed by the Sacae tribes who had invaded. The Chinese historical books call Bactria when occupied by the Sacae tribes, "Daxia 大夏."<sup>12</sup> In fact, the Guishuang 貴霜 (Kushan) can be traced back to the Sacae tribes.<sup>13</sup>



## C

Since the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜 came originally from the Daxia 大夏, one of the four Sacae tribes that destroyed the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria, the Kushans can be further traced back to the Pasiāni of the Sacae tribes.

Except for the above-cited record in the book of Strabo, the Pasiāni do not appear in other records, and there is no evidence to be examined. This seems to show that the tribal name recorded by Strabo is wrong. It has been suggested that Pasiāni (Πασιανί) is a textual corruption for Gasiani (Γασιανί).<sup>14</sup> In my opinion, this is a reasonable suggestion, and "Guishuang 貴霜" [giuət-shiang] or Kuṣāṇa (Kushan) and Gasiani can be understood as different transcriptions of the same name.

That is, the Gasiani who invaded Bactria would have submitted to the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, just as the other Sacae tribes did after the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 had moved west. One chief of the Gasiani was granted recognition and became the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜, as seen in the Chinese historical books.

The fact that the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜 took its name from a Sacae tribe is not unique: the Xihou 翯侯 of Xiumi 休密, another of the five Xihou 翯侯 in the state of Daxia 大夏, also had acted thus. For "Xiumi 休密" [xiu-miet] can be understood as a transcription of "Comediae," and according to Ptolemy's *Geography* (VI, 13) the Comediae were of the Sacae. It is thus clear that those groups recorded by Strabo are only the most conspicuous.

The main reason to understand Guishuang 貴霜 as Gasiani is that "Guishuang 貴霜" and "Yuezhi 月氏" [njiuk-tjie] can be taken as different transcriptions of the same name. The Guishuang 貴霜 and the Yuezhi 月氏 or Da Yuezhi 大月氏 must have come from the same source, but they migrated in different directions. Only when this point is accepted can the relevant records in the Chinese historical books reasonably be explained.

First, according to the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ch. 118, after Qiujiuque 丘就卻 and Yangaozhen 閻膏珍 had established a kingdom, "the state was named Guishuang 貴霜," and "in the various states [their ruler] is always referred to as 'the King of Guishuang 貴霜,'" "but the

Han 漢, basing themselves upon the old appellation, speak about ‘the Da Yuezhi 大月氏.’” It’s true that Qiujiuque 丘就卻 probably flaunted the banner of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, his suzerain, when he “attacked and destroyed the [other] four Xihou 翮侯.” However, obviously, it was not necessary for him to do so when his state had been established. In fact, there is another dynastic title, “Guishuang 貴霜,” that is recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書.<sup>15</sup> For the fact that the Eastern Han 漢 called it “Yuezhi 月氏” or “Da Yuezhi 大月氏” as before the only reasonable explanation is that “Yuezhi 月氏” and “Guishuang 貴霜” are different transcriptions of the same name.

In the “Xirongzhuan 西戎傳” of the *Weilue* 魏略 it is recorded: “there were the states of Jibin 罽賓, Daxia 大夏, Gaofu 高附 and Tianzhu 天竺; these were all annexed and belonged to Da Yuezhi 大月氏.” In Kang Tai’s 康居 *Waiguozhuan* 外國傳 cited in the *Shiji Zhengyi* 史記正義, it is recorded: “A foreigner says that there are three numerous things in the world: Zhongguo 中國 (the Central Kingdom) has numerous people. Da Qin 大秦 has numerous treasures. Yuezhi 月氏 has numerous horses.” Because of the date, the terms, “Da Yuezhi 大月氏” or “Yuezhi 月氏” in the above-cited two books are necessarily referring to “Guishuang 貴霜.” This can be taken as evidence.

Second, in the *Sanguozhi* 三國志, ch. 3, it is recorded that on the date of Guimao 癸卯 of the twelfth month in the third year of Taihe 太和 (i.e., A.D. 229), “The king of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, Bodiao 波調 (Vāsudeva), sent his envoy to present tribute, and his majesty granted [Bo]diao [波]調, the king, the title of King of Da Yuezhi 大月氏 Intimate with Wei 魏.” The only reasonable explanation is that the Guishuang 貴霜 approved of the fact that the Eastern Han 漢 called it “Da Yuezhi 大月氏.” To Bodiao 波調 (Vāsudeva), “the king of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 was not different from “the king of Guishuang 貴霜.” This seems to show not only that “Yuezhi 月氏” and “Guishuang 貴霜” are different transcriptions of the same name, but also that the Yuezhi 月氏 and the Guishuang 貴霜 came from the same source.

Since the Guishuang 貴霜 were not the Yuezhi 月氏, even though they had the same name and origin as the Yuezhi 月氏, they were in all probability the Gasiani, a Sacae tribe who came from the northern bank of the Syr Darya.

A pertinent clarification must be made: “Yuezhi 月氏” and “Gasiani” can be taken as

different transcriptions of the same name, but we cannot, based on this, take it for granted that the destruction of the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria by the Sacae tribes was the event that caused the Da Yuezhi's 大月氏 migration to the valley of the Amu Darya.

- A. As mentioned above, the date when the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 moved west does not tally with the time at which the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria was destroyed.
- B. According to the *Shiji* 史記, ch. 123, and the *Hanshu* 漢書, ch. 96A, the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 moved to the valley of the River Gui 媯 by "passing [Da]yuan [大]宛," i.e., Ferghana. This does not tally with Strabo's record on the Sacae tribes who came from the northern bank of the Syr Darya.
- C. "Yuezhi 月氏" and "Gasiani" can be taken as different transcriptions of the same name. The Yuezhi 月氏 originated as a farraginous tribal association, probably containing the same composition as in the Sacae association recorded by Strabo, but those who controlled Bactria were undoubtedly not the Asii or the Tochari after the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 had moved westward. This fact is also against the records of Strabo and Trogus Prologues.

In sum, the Guishuang 貴霜 (Kushans) can be traced back to the Gasiani, one of the Sacae tribes.

## D

The predecessors of the four tribes of Sacae, i.e., Asii, Gasiani, Tochari and Sacarauli, seem to be respectively the Rong 戎 of the Surname Yun 允, the Yuzhi 禺知, the Daxia 大夏 and the Suoju 莎車 who appear in pre-Qin 秦 records and books.<sup>16</sup>

On the Yuzhi 禺知, the predecessors of the Gasiani, in the *Mutianzizhuan* 穆天子傳, ch. 1, it is recorded that "on the day Jihai 己亥, he arrived in the vast plain of the Yanju 焉居 and the Yuzhi 禺知." "Yuzhi 禺知" [ngio-tie] and "Gasiani" can be taken as different transcriptions of the same name. It is generally believed that "the vast plain of the Yanju 焉居 and the Yuzhi 禺知" probably was located in the northeast of Hetao 河套.<sup>17</sup>

Based on existing data, speculation has arisen that by the end of the seventh century B.C.

the Asii, Gasiani and other tribes already lived in the valleys of the Ili and Chu. In 623 B.C.,<sup>18</sup> Duke Mu 穆 of Qin 秦 dominated the Western Rong 戎 and opened up territories which extended for 1,000 *li* 里, causing the western migration of the Asii, Gasiani and other tribes.<sup>19</sup> Of these, the Yuzhi 禺知 who migrated west may have been a small part of the whole tribe, and those who remained in their former land eventually developed into a powerful and prosperous tribe called the Yuezhi 月氏, the ancestors of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏.<sup>20</sup>

In 177/176 B.C., the Asii, Gasiani and other tribes were expelled from the valleys of the Ili and Chu rivers by the Yuezhi 月氏 who moved west. They migrated west to the northern bank of the Syr Darya. Of course, they could have retreated to the northern bank of the Syr Darya, because the possibility that they had expanded to the northern bank of the Syr Darya before that time cannot be ruled out. About 140 B.C., very possibly due to the pressure from Da Yuezhi 大月氏, their eastern neighbors, the Gasiani invaded south of the valley of the Amu Darya with the other tribes of Sacae.

In the *Hanshu* 漢書, ch. 96A, it is recorded: "When, formerly, the Xiongnu 匈奴 conquered the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, the latter moved west and established themselves as masters of Daxia 大夏; it was in these circumstances that the king of the Sai 塞 moved south and established himself as master of Jibin 罽賓. The Sai 塞 tribes split and separated and repeatedly formed several states. To the northwest of Shule 疏勒, states such as Xiuxun 休循 and Juandu 捐毒 are all of the former Sai 塞 race." This shows that the Sacae tribes not only moved west to the northern bank of the Syr Darya, and from there went down to the valley of the Amu Darya, but also that some of them went down to Jibin 罽賓 (Gandhāra) through Cong Ling 葱嶺 (the Pamir Region). Those who went into the Pamir Region not only scattered and formed several small states to the northwest of Shule 疏勒, but also went into the area surrounding the Tarim Basin and founded small states in some oases. From the names of the states and places and tribes that are preserved in *Hanshu* 漢書, ch. 96, we can see some clues or traces. Of these, those who bear a relationship to the Gasiani are Gushi 姑師 [ka(kia)-shei], Jushi 車師 [kia-shei], Guishan 貴山 [giuət-shean], Xiuxun 休循 [xiu-ziuən], Juyan 居延 [kia-jian], Weixu 危須 [khiai-sio], Gaochang 高昌 [kô-thjiang] and so on, because all these names and "Gasiani" can be taken as different transcriptions of the same name.<sup>21</sup>

As to the problem of where the Yuzhi 禺知 who had lived in Hetao 河套 came from, I have put forward a hypothesis that the Yuzhi 禺知 can be traced back to the Youyu 有虞 whose ancestor was Zhuanxu 顓頊. At first Zhuanxu 顓頊 lived in the valley of the Ruo 若 River in the present Sichuan 四川, then moved east to Qionsang 窮桑, replaced the lord of the Shaohao 少昊 and then again moved to the south of Jin 晉 from Lu 魯, following Shun 舜. After Shun 舜 died, a part of the Youyu 有虞 emigrated, and some of these moved north and developed into the Yuezhi 月氏. Of course, it is also possible that a part reached the valley of the Ili and Chu rivers *via* the Hexi 河西 region as soon as Shun 舜 died, and became a tribe of the Sacae people.<sup>22</sup>

## E

As we continue to trace back these tribes we can speculate that the Zhuanxu 顓頊 in the valley of the Ruo River, who came from the Middle East, may have been the Guti seen in cuneiform records.

It has been suggested that the Guti who came from the mountainous region in Western Persia had defeated Narâm-Sin, the ruler of Babylon, and dominated Babylon for one hundred years (ca. 2100 B.C.). Besides the Guti, there are also records about the Tukri in cuneiform writing, whose land adjoined the Guti's on the east and south. There were close relations between them. About the end of 3000 B.C., the Tukri and Guti departed from the west of Babylon and made a long, arduous journey to China. The Yuezhi 月氏 seen in the Chinese historical records must have been the Guti, and the Tuhuolu 吐火羅 (Tokharians) took their name from the Tukri.<sup>23</sup>

In my opinion, it is easy to identify the Guti and Tukri with the "Yuzhi 禺知" (the predecessor of the Yuezhi 月氏 or Da Yuezhi 大月氏) and "Daxia 大夏" (the predecessor of the Tuhuolu 吐火羅), the latter both appearing in pre-Qin 秦 records and books. The time when the Guti and Tukri moved east may be earlier than that at which they contacted Babylon. It is possible that a branch of the Guti who came from the west reached the valley of the Ruo 若 River and formed the tribe of Zhuanxu 顓頊, the predecessor of the Youyu 有虞.

The bronze statues, golden scepter, golden masks, etc., which were unearthed from the Sanxingdui 三星堆 ruins are in shape, style and function quite different from those belonging the

local culture of the ancient Shu 蜀 state. Nor have any similar bronzes in the contemporaneous Central Plains in China been found. But they are very obviously connected with bronzes belonging to the Mediterranean civilization.<sup>24</sup> Special attention should be paid to the bronze tree, which may be the legendary Ruo 若 tree.<sup>25</sup> The Ruo 若 tree is closely connected with the Ruo 若 River,<sup>26</sup> where Zhuanxu 顓頊 was born. This seems to show that the master of the Sanxingdui 三星堆 ruins was not unrelated to Zhuanxu 顓頊.

Of course, this does not prove that the Sanxingdui 三星堆 ruins are a trace left by the Gutu who moved to Sichuan 四川. However, it does provide support for the probability that the Gutu made a long arduous journey to Sichuan 四川 from Western Asia.

## F

The following is a brief discussion on two problems with reference to the origin of the Kushans, the nationality and language.

### I. On the nationality:

The main foundation on which to discuss this problem is the physical characteristics reflected in portraits of the Kushan kings (Kujula Kadphises, Wima Kadphise, Kanishka and Huviska) in the extant coins and statues. On these characteristics, there are always different views among scholars. Some find Turkic attributes in them, some,<sup>27</sup> the Iranian element,<sup>28</sup> and some find others. In fact, going by the physical characteristics seen in the coins and other art, it is insufficient to judge the nationality of their people or royalty, because the Kushans must have undergone a process of racial mixing during their long migration. Moreover, as is generally known, hybridism can change physical characteristics in only one generation. Therefore, for the purpose of judging nationality, the portraits of the Kushan kings on the extant coins and statues are only suggestive.

The relevant records in the historical books are also ambiguous.

1. In the *Shiji* 史記, ch. 123, it is recorded that "To the west of [Da]yuan [大]宛 and as far as the state of Anxi 安息 there are many different languages spoken, but their customs are in general the same, and the people understand each

other's language. The inhabitants of the area all have deep-set eyes, and many wear moustaches and beards. They are expert traders, haggling over fractions of a *shu* 銖 (a unit of weight)." In my opinion, this situation was one that Zhang Qian 張騫 saw himself, and therefore is credible. It is self-evident that the statement "to the west of [Da]yuan [大]宛 and as far as the state of Anxi 安息" includes both the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 who conquered the Daxia 大夏 and the Daxia 大夏 who were conquered by the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, i.e., the Sacae tribes. However, this shows only the physical characteristics of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 and the Daxia 大夏, including the Gasiani at the time Zhang Qian 張騫 was sent to the Western Regions.

2. In Wan Zhen's 萬震 *Nanzhouzhi* 南州志, cited in the *Shiji Zhengyi* 史記正義, it is recorded: "[Da Yuezhi 大月氏] is located about 7,000 *li* 里 north of Tianzhu 天竺. The place is high, arid, and distant. The king is called 'Son of Heaven.' The number of horses in the kingdom for riding and pulling chariots usually amounts to several hundred thousand. The city walls and palaces are the same as those of Rome. Its people have reddish-white skin and are used to shooting arrows and riding horses." According to the date, "the Da Yuezhi 大月氏" here refers to the Kushans. Since the "reddish-white" people are "used to shooting arrows and riding horses," they seem not to be the natives in Bactria under the Kushans, but the Kushan rulers. Of course, this kind of observation has little value for judging the nationality of the Kushans at the time described by the *Nanzhouzhi* 南州志.

As to religion, custom (dress and personal adornment, etc.) or official titles and other such characteristics, these cannot help to decide nationality, because all of these can be disseminated, changed or borrowed.

Nevertheless, considering the possibility that the predecessor of the Kushans came from Western Persia, there is no harm in considering that they were Europoid, on grounds of the above-cited two classes of data.

## II. On the language of the Kushans.

There are, in fact, two languages to consider: first, the official language used in the Kushan Dynasty; second, the original language of the Kushans. To attest to the former, we have the coins and inscriptions of the Kushan Dynasty. The main languages are the Bactrian language in Greek script, and Sanskrit and Prākṛit in Brāhmī or Kharoṣṭhī script. There is another unknown language in an unknown script, whose letters and language, according to creditable studies, are closely related to those of the Kharoṣṭhī and Khotanese.<sup>29</sup> Since, as mentioned earlier, the Kushans and the Yuezhi 月氏 or Da Yuezhi 大月氏 came from the same source, but migrated in different directions, at first they both must have spoken the same language.

In my opinion, it is very possible that the original language of the Kushans and the Yuezhi 月氏 is Tokharian, as stated by historical linguists,<sup>30</sup> specifically, the second dialect of Tokharian B, i.e., the Qiuci 龜茲 language.

1. The Guti, the predecessors of the Yuezhi 月氏, were in close relation with the Tukri, the predecessors of the Tokharians. They probably spoke a common language. That is to say, they both spoke Tokharian.<sup>31</sup> It is only because they developed differently, each group going its own way, that the different dialects were formed later.
2. Since the people who spoke Tokharian B called their language the kūšan language, and most of the relevant writings were unearthed from Qiuci 龜茲, it is beyond doubt that "kūšan" and "Qiuci 龜茲" are different transcriptions of the same name. Therefore, Tokharian B in fact should be called the Qiuci 龜茲 language. "Qiuci 龜茲," "Guishuang 貴霜," "Yuezhi 月氏" and "Gasiani" can be taken as different transcriptions of the same name. The Qiuci 龜茲 must have been a branch of the Gasiani who went into the Tarim Basin when the Sacae tribes were expelled from the valleys of the Ili and Chu rivers by the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 and went down through Cong Ling 葱嶺 (the Pamir Region).
3. This can provide evidence that some words occurring in connection with the Yuezhi 月氏 or the Kushans can be explained with Tokharian.<sup>32</sup>
4. Doing as the local people did, the Gasiani used the Bactrian language in Greek



script, etc., as the official language (on coins and inscriptions) instead of Tokharian. But considering the relations between the Gasiani, the predecessor of the Kushans and the Sacae tribes, it is easy to understand why the Kushans used a language similar to the one used by the Khotanese. It is not at all surprising that only the Gasiani who settled in some of the oases around the Tarim Basin continued to speak their original language, because of their isolated circumstances there.

Some scholars have explained the words connecting the Yuezhi 月氏 or the Kushans as coming from the Turkic languages, thus concluding that the language of the Kushans was from the Türkic language branch.<sup>33</sup>

In my opinion, this theory is inadequate. In the *Zhoushu* 周書, ch. 50, it is recorded that: "The ancestors [of the Türks] came from the state of Suo 索."<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that "Suo 索" [sheak] is a transcription of "Sacae." In other words, it may be possible that the ancestors of the Türks originally were kin of the Sacae. If this is true, it would not be difficult to understand why some words and titles connected with the Yuezhi 月氏 or the Kushans can be explained by the Türkic languages. In the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (I, 170) there is a reference to the fact that the Türkic ruler in Gandhāra claimed his ancestor was Kaniška, and maybe this is not merely boasting.

Because some words used by the Kushans were the same as those of the Sacae in India, some words especially can be explained with the so-call Khotanese. Some scholars, therefore, have judged that the language of the Kushans was the Iranian language.<sup>35</sup> In my opinion, this theory is inadequate, for the following reasons.

First, the Kushans were a branch of the Sacae, a tribal union composed of at least four tribes, i.e., Asii, Gasiani, Tochari and Sacarauli. Of these there were some tribes who spoke the Iranian language, but also some who spoke Indo-European languages other than the Iranian language, e.g., the Tochari. The Sacae people in ancient India and Khotan were not necessarily the Gasiani.

Second, from the earlier homeland, through the course of the migration of the Asii and others, it can be seen that the groups had close relationships with one another. It is possible that some of their words (especially official titles) were identical. Therefore, we should not judge that

those using these words belonged to the same language branch only through the discovery of some common words.

Third, since the tribes that spoke Tokharian were in close contact with the tribes that spoke the Iranian language, how can we know that the words connected to the Kushans that can be explained with Iranian did originally not come from Tokharian? It is possible that we cannot prove it, only because the extant Tokharian writings are few in number, and are dated to a later time.

## G

The above statement on the origin of the Kushans is only an effort based on existing data. Obviously, the hypothesis being pointed out here is by no means the sole possibility. For example, the Gasiani who moved south from the northern bank of the Syr Darya and participated in destroying the Hellenic kingdom of Bactria are not necessarily the Yuzhi 禺知 who came from the east. The possibility cannot be ruled out that they were those who remained in Central Asia when the Guti moved east. That is why these Guti or Gasiani could not speak Tokharian B from the earlier period. The above possibility, rather than others, is stressed in this paper, only because it has a broad base of historical data to support it.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> On the location of the seats of the five Xihou 翺侯, see Yu 1992, pp. 29–32.
- <sup>2</sup> On the evidence that the five Xihou 翺侯 were the Daxia 大夏 people, see Yu 1992, pp. 32–37.
- <sup>3</sup> On Zhang Qian's 張騫 Mission to the Western Regions, see Yu 1995, pp. 203–220.
- <sup>4</sup> On the location of the state of Dayuan 大宛, see Yu 1992, pp. 70–71.
- <sup>5</sup> On the location of the Lanshi 藍市 city, the capital of the state of Daxia 大夏, see Yu 1992, pp. 20–30.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. Enoki 1959.
- <sup>7</sup> Tarn 1951, pp. 272–273; Narain 1957, p. 141.
- <sup>8</sup> Jones 1916.
- <sup>9</sup> Cited by Tarn 1951, p. 286; Narain 1957, p. 129.
- <sup>10</sup> According to Konow 1929, p. lviii, Trogus Prologues' record that the Asii became the kings of the Tochari confirms the statement that the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 conquered Daxia 大夏 (Tochari) in the Chinese historical books. In my opinion, there is no foundation for identifying Asii with the Yuezhi 月氏. The Da Yuezhi 大月氏 were in the valleys of the Ili and Chu rivers when the Asii (Asiani), as recorded by Strabo and Trogus, went into Bactria. They have different names, and there are no analogous deeds. As to the statement that "Asiani (Asii) are the kings of the Thocari (Tochari)," this only indicates that the Asii were the suzerains of the alliance that they composed with the Tochari. In fact, this alliance also included the Gasiani and Sacarauli (Sarauce). The Sacarauli were defeated and destroyed during their struggle with other tribes, thus there are the records of Tragus cited above. Bactria finally was called "Daxia 大夏," probably because the Tochari were very numerous.
- <sup>11</sup> Ptolemy (Stevenson 1932) records that the Tochari were "a great race" in Bactriana (VI, 11) and also that there were Tochari in Sogdiana (VI, 12), and these statements may complement each other.
- <sup>12</sup> Puri 1965, pp. 5–8, points out that Bactria had possibly been occupied by the Daxia 大夏,

i.e., Tochari, before the Yuezhi 月氏 conquered it. The Tochari must have been the Tushāra or Tushāra as seen in the Puranic sources, e.g. *Matsya*, *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, and *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahabharata* etc. According to these records, they were similar to the Sacae in race, a foreign ethnic group residing in the mountainous region beyond the Himalayas. The Kushans must be one of the Tukhāra tribes (Xihou 翯侯). The Indian people called them Tukhāra. Puri attempts to prove that the Xihou 翯侯 of Guishuang 貴霜 was the Daxia 大夏, based on the Indian sources. His theory is nearly right.

13 Tezcan 2002, tries to prove the relationship between the Kushans and the Sacae from numismatic, epigraphic, linguistic, archaeological, astronomical and historical evidence and this may be read for reference.

14 Marquart 1901, p. 206.

15 The statement that Qiujiuque 丘就卻 “destroyed Puda 濮達” refers to the fact that he overthrew his former suzerain, the Da Yuezhi 大月氏, and unified Bactria. “Puda 濮達” [pôk-dat] was a transcription of “Bactria.”

16 See Yu 2000.

17 See Wang 1994, pp. 22–23.

18 The circumstance that the four tribes of Asii, Gasiani and others occupied the valleys of the Ili and Chu rivers was caused by the migration of nomadic tribes across the entire Eurasian steppes by the end of the seventh century B.C., Herodotus recorded this migration basing his account on various sources. The Issedones defeated the Massagetae. The latter defeated the Scythians and forced them to invade the land of Cimmerians. Cf. Yu 1992, pp. 6–10.

19 Qin’s 秦 attack on Rong 戎 caused the migration of nomadic tribes across the whole Eurasian steppes, as recorded in Herodotus’ *History*, see Ma-Wang 1990.

20 For details, see Yu 2000, pp. 38–45.

21 For details, see Yu 1992, pp. 210–215.

22 Yu 2000.

23 Henning 1978.

24 Duan 1993.

25 Xu 2002, pp. 205–228.

- <sup>26</sup> In the "Haineijing 海內經" chapter of the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 it is recorded that "Beyond the South Sea, between the Black and Green rivers, is a tree called the Ruo 若 tree. This is the source of the Ruo 若 River."
- <sup>27</sup> For example, Bhandarkar 1902, esp. 372–386 (the Imperial Śakas); Kennedy 1912. For the latest discussion on the Türk theory, see Tezcan 2002.
- <sup>28</sup> Konow 1929, pp. 1–li.
- <sup>29</sup> Harmatta 1994, pp. 397–440.
- <sup>30</sup> For details, see Yu 2010.
- <sup>31</sup> Henning 1978.
- <sup>32</sup> Pulleyblank 1966.
- <sup>33</sup> For a summary and discussion on the Türk theory, see Tezcan 2002.
- <sup>34</sup> See Shiratori 1970.
- <sup>35</sup> On the earlier, e.g. Konow 1934; on the later, e.g. Puri 1965, pp. 1–5; Tezcan 2002.

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