
THE HEPHTHALITE NUMISMATICS

Aydogdy Kurbanov

1. Introduction

Central Asia and neighbouring countries have a very old and rich history. A poorly-studied and intricate period of this region is the early medieval period (4th - 6th centuries AD). During this time, “The Great movement of peoples”, the migration of nomadic peoples (Huns) from Asia to Europe, took place. In South and Central Asia, great empires existed, including Sasanian Iran, Gupta and some small states. Across Central Asia, mysterious new peoples appeared: the Hephthalites, the Kidarites and the Chionites, among others. Their origins are still debated. Some scholars suppose that they were part of a Hun confederation, while others suppose they had different origins.

Generally, the early research on the Hephthalites was based only on written sources. They were mentioned for the first time in AD 361 at the siege of Edessa (modern Urfa in south-eastern Turkey) (Altheim 1960-II, 258)¹.

The Hephthalites are mentioned in the sources under different names, depending on one or another issue of their name in different languages:

- Armenian – *Hephthal*, *Hep'tal*, *Tetal* but Armenian sources also identify them with the *Kushans*.
- Greek – *Εφθαλιται* (Hephthalites), *Αβδελαι* (Abdel/Avdel), or *White Huns*.
- Syriac – *Ephthalita*, *Tedal*.
- Middle Persian – *Hephtal* and *Hephtel*; the Zoroastrian source “Bundahišn” calls them - *Hēvtāls*.
- Indian – *Hūna*.
- Bactrian – *ηβοδαλο* (*ebodalo*).
- In Chinese sources the Hephthalites appear as *Ye-da*, *Ye-dien*, *Idi*, *Ye-ta-i-lito*.

- Arabic – *Haital*, *Hetal*, *Heithal*, *Haiethal*, *Heyâthelites*. In Arabic sources the Hephthalites, though they are mentioned as *Haitals*, are sometimes also referred to as *Turks*.

In the 4th - 6th centuries AD the territory of Central Asia included at least four major political entities, among them Kushans, Chionites, Kidarites, and Hephthalites. Discussions about the origins of these peoples still continue. Ideas vary from the Hephthalites considered as part of the Hun confederation to different other origins. It is also uncertain whether the Hephthalites, the Kidarites and the Chionites had a common or different origins – that is, are they three branches of the same ethnic group or are they culturally, linguistically, and genetically distinct from one another?

The Hephthalites are well represented in their coins. In fact the numismatic evidence can be considered as the most important source on their history, or rather the most clearly ethnically identifiable source.

2. General numismatic information

Controlling the Silk Road in its Central Asian part, the Hephthalites took part in world trade, with Iran, Byzantium, India and China. Either as during the previous period, the go-betweens in trade between China and Byzantium were mainly Sogdians in the Hephthalite Empire; but the role of the intermediary to this trade was also pretended to by Sasanian Iran. In that period the Sogdians continued the colonization of Semirechye and Eastern Turkestan which had begun under the Kushans. According to the reports from Byzantine, Syrian and Chinese sources, the main trade goods between China and Byzantium were silk, glass, spices, jewels and paints.

The Hephthalites had several types of the coins (Массон 1974, 154). There were three types of inscriptions on their coins: Bactrian used in the territory of Bactria, Pehlevi in the territory of

¹ Other researchers give another date - AD 384 (Гумилев 1959, 129; Ртвеладзе 1999, 271).

the Kabul valley and Brahmi on coins minted in northern Pakistan (Mitchiner 1975, 157).

The Bactrian inscriptions in script were often added to the coins, either by the Hephthalites for trade with Iran or by the Sasanians for tribute. The Hephthalites especially in Central Asia adopted the Sasanian style on their silver coins, e.g. crown and fire altars.

Also a number of areas that were part of the Hephthalite Empire continued to mint their own coins, so there are no unified coins. Thus, since the end of 5th century until the second half of 7th century AD drachmas of Peroz were widely spread. But it is unknown whether they were minted here or came from other areas (Ртвѣладзе 2002, 21).

In Chaganian, the Termez-imitation coinage of Sasanian kings Peroz and Khusrow I Anushirvan. In Sogd the Chinese type circulated – a round coin with a square hole in the center.

The Sogdian silver imitation coins of Warahran V are of certain interest: profile of the shahinshah with toothed crown and facing a fire altar in the centre, on the edge of which figure the guards of the sacred fire, while on the altar there is also the head of a deity. The main difference is the inscription. On Sogdian coins the Pehlevi inscriptions with the name of the shahinshah was changed to local Sogdian. These coins were given the name “coins of Bukhar-Khudats” and were produced in Bukhara during the second quarter of the 5th century AD up to the 7th century AD. In this territory copper coins with a scene on one of the parts of a Bactrian (two-humped) camel, being the zoomorphic transformation of the Zoroastrian god of the war, Veretragna, were also wide-spread.

In the mintage of the coins from western Sogd and Chach there are many parallels: tamgha, traces of head deforming of the ruler, crescent in front. All are adopted in these areas as composite parts in the state of the Hephthalites (Мусакаева 1994, 46-47). The symbols of moon and sun on the coins of the Hephthalites in the opinion of Solovyov indicated that the kings wish to show he was supported by the gods Mithra and Anahita (Соловьев 1997, 160).

Sometimes, in Sogd, Chach and Chaganian coins were produced after Byzantine type with images of the king and queen. In the second half of the 7th century in Kobadian coins in circula-

tion were made of copper and had a Hephthalite italic text. This type has been conditionally named “Munchak”, after the site Munchak-tepe (Соловьев 1997, 69).

In general, the differences in the composition of the monetary mass indicate the political separateness of holdings during the reign of the Hephthalites and after them (Ртвѣладзе 1983, 75).

In the studying the Hephthalite coinage the following specialists are of outstanding importance: A. Cunningham, V. Smith, H. Junker and M. Alram. A very great role in early medieval Central Asian numismatics is taken by R. Göbl. In 1967 he published the multivolume work “*Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranischen Hunnen in Baktrien und Indien*” which is still basic and where he reconstructed the typological sequences of the coins determining four groups of nomads – Kidarites, Alchons, Hephthalites and Nezaks. In contradistinction to the European Huns he created the term “Iranian Huns”, based on the fact that the Huns in Central Asia adopted the language and cultural habits of the Iranian world, especially in coinage. This system does not include the Chionites because of the lack of numismatic evidence, despite the fact that there is written evidence for their existence from the 4th century AD. Here we would like to show the main points of R. Göbl’s classification².

3. R. Göbl’s classification of “Iranian Huns” coinage

Following Göbl’s classification, based primarily on coins, there were four different migrations of the “Iranian Huns”: the Kidarites, the Alchons, the Nezak (*Nspk*) kings, and the Hephthalites. Göbl has shown that Ghirshman’s readings of the coin inscriptions, on which all the preceding arguments were based, to be incorrect. He has interpreted this word as Bactrian *alxono* and identified it with the Alchons who migrated into Iran at the end of the 4th century AD and invaded India in the middle of 5th century AD (Göbl 1967-I, 56-57, 70-72, 218-219; Göbl 1967-II, 59-66, 149, 165, 237).

He also corrected the reading *HITTLA HIONO* to *XIITILLO OXONO*, referring to the Alchon ruler

² It must be mentioned that after the copper scroll inscription in Schøyen collection (see Melzer 2007, 251-314), which give us a new view to the early medieval history of this region. The classification of Göbl, should be revised in some aspects.

Khingila (ca. 430-490) (Göbl 1967-I, 72) and thus eliminated the grounds for linking the Hephthalites with the Chionites, besides showing that there is no numismatic evidence for the latter.

As Alram notes, studying of the coinage of the “Iranian Huns” has some particular problems: “The relative chronological sequence of the individual coin types within the four coinage groups is established in its broad outlines, but the absolute chronology is far from settled. The same is true of the mints. Although many interrelated ensembles bearing the mark of a common mint can be discerned as being connected, too many links are missing in the chain to give a clear picture. The place names attributed to the mints are to be understood as hypothetical; thus a region or province is cited more often than a specific town... Finally, the legends written in Middle Persian, Bactrian, or Indian are problematic, as their reading and philological interpretations remain controversial” (Alram 2004, 571).

Kidarites: The first wave of the “Iranian Huns”, according to Göbl’s reconstruction, were the Kidarites (in Göbl – emission, further Em. 11-18). They began minting coins following the late Kushan, the Kushano-Sasanian, and the Sasanian examples in the Kapisa-Kabul area and in Gandhara during ca. 385 - ca. 440 (Göbl 1967-I, 24). The Kidarites came into the legacy of the Kushano-Sasanian governors and used their mints. In the area of Kapisa (present-day Begram) and Kabul they struck gold scyphate dinars after the Kushano-Sasanian models. The obverse represents the king sacrificing at an altar accompanied by the Bactrian legend *bago kidoro oazorko košano šao* “Lord Kidāra, great king of the Kushans”. The reverse depicts Shiva in front of his bull Nandi. Finding of the hoard from Tepe-i Marenjan (near Kabul) gives us more information about the Kidarites and their coinage. This hoard contains eleven scyphate dinars of Kidara as well as a number of Sasanian drachms, the latest were of Shapur III (383-388). Due to the hoard it is supposed the beginning of the Kidarite rule was in the AD 380’s (Alram 2004, 572).

The Kidarites in their coins minted in Gandhara, imitated Sasanian type of drachms. Kidara assumed a new crown copied from his Sasanian adversary Yazdegerd II (438-457), with five crenels surmounted by a half-moon. Some coins have legend in Brahmi *kidāra kusāna sāhi* “Kidāra king of

the Kushans” (Grenet 2002, 207). The Kidarites used only elements of Sasanian crowns on their coins and there are no typological links between them and those of the Alchon Huns (Vondrovec 2008, 33).

The Kidarite golden dinars have the late Kushan type with enthroned deity Ardokhsho on the reverse and are localized in Punjab. It is supposed that the name “Kidāra” was originally a personal name and later became as dynastic. The coin legends describe Kidara not as a Kushan but as the ruler over the Kushans (Göbl 1967-II, 52-55; Alram 2004, 572).

The Kidarite rule in Gandhara probably ended before AD 450 according to numismatic data, although the last Kidarite embassy to China was sent after AD 477. Grenet has argued the reading of the Bactrian legends on the golden scyphate dinars from the hoard of Tepe-i Marenjan, and he has interpreted the first part of the legend as *bago kioooooo* “Lord Kay Wahram” rather than as “Lord Kidara”. Thus he attributes the coins to Kay Wahram, one of the last Kushano-Sasanian rulers (Grenet 2002, 206-207).

The Kidarite presence in Sogd is indicated by the existence of seven rare silver coins minted in Samarqand, which continue the portrait/standing archer design of earlier coins from this region, but carry the name Kidara (*κγδτ*) on the reverse (Zeimal 1996, 120, 129).

In general, coin series of Kidara (following Chattopadhyay) can be divided into three groups:

1. Gold coins of Kushan type with an inscription in Brahmi;
2. Silver coins of Sasanian type with an inscription in Brahmi and sometimes in the Pehlevi;
3. Copper coins of Kushan and Sasanian type with an inscription in Brahmi (Chattopadhyay 1967, 115).

Other researchers note the Kidarites after c. AD 370 supplanted the Kushano-Sasanians in Bactria, Kabul, Gandhara and last Kushan in Punjab, they started to mint:

1. gold coins of the Kushano-Sasanian style with names *Kidara* and *Warahran* (last Kushano-Sasanian ruler);
2. silver coins of Sasanian style with names *Peroz*, *Kidara* and *Warahran*;

3. copper Bactrian style coins with name *Warahran* (Errington, Curtis 2007, 86).

J. Cribb writes: “When Kidara is named on the coins he is given the same title as the Kushano-Sasanian kings Kushanshah. This could be understood in three ways: Kidara was a direct successor of the Kushano-Sasanians, he was not Sasanian but borrowed the title they used, or he was a Kushan and had the right to adopt it. There is nothing implicit in the form of inscription on the coins or in the coins themselves to confirm or even point to any of these explanations. The only possible hint at their origin lies in the apparent earlier appearance of the names of these rulers on their coins of the Punjab series” (Cribb 1990, 181).

Alchons: The second wave of “Iranian Huns”, following Göbl, was that of the so-called “Alchon”, Em. 33-176 (Göbl 1967-I, 54-125) and 177-193 (unknown but could be related to the Alchons) (Göbl 1967-I, 126-132). Their name is almost exclusively known from inscriptions on coins, which Göbl interprets as *alxono* (Göbl 1967-I, 56-57, 70-72, 218-219; Göbl 1967-II, 59-66)³, and in which the component *-xon* represents a Hun name. The Alchons pushed out the Kidarites and finally occupied the whole of north-western India. They represented the group of Huns who were called “Hūnas” in the Indian sources. In the anonymous coin group (Em. 33-39), the first personal name appearing on the Alchon coins is Khingila (Em. 40-89, 91-107, 112, 117-118), then Toramana (Em. 90, 108-111, 113-116, 119-133, 146, 146A), Mihirakula (Em. 134-137, 152-165), Em. 139-145 is unclear either related to Mihirakula or his successors and Narana /Narendra (Em. 138, 147-151, 171-176). Their coinage forms a group of more than 150 different types which are related to one another primarily in terms of typological criteria (Göbl 1967-II, 58, 70). But this model Khingila-Toramana-Mihirakula contradicts the copper

³ Although H. Humbach (1966-I, 29) suggested *alxonno* and G. Davary (1982, 46, 154) – *alxanno* where *alxanno* is similar to *rājālakṣhāna* and Lalliyā Sāhi, founder of the Hindu Sāhi dynasty; Alram writes: “It is not clear whether the Bactrian *alxanno* is a personal name that was subsequently used as a dynasty name, or whether it is the name of a tribe or a title. However, certainty exists, that the name Alchon links a whole range of coins. To these can be related to further issues which do not attest the name but show typological criteria attributed to the Alchon group. However, by no means can it be ruled out that Alchons are to be understood as a clan of the Hephthalites”: Alram 2004, 572; According to Vaissière (2005, 16) the reading of some coins should be *alchanno*, and linked with the Indian legend *rājālakṣhāna* (rājā alakhāna).

scroll inscription in the Schøyen collection (Vondrovec 2008, 27).

The earliest type coins of Khingila (according to Göbl ruled in AD 430/440-ca. 490) are related to the anonymous issues Em. 40-43. Em. 44, 66 and 66A are bilingual: the Bactrian *alchonno* and Brahmi *Khingila*. Em. 81 is the latest type bearing Khingila’s name and was issued at the end of the 5th century, although Göbl supposed that Em. 82-89, 91-107, 112, 117-118 were related to this king. The legends are in Bactrian, Indian (Brahmi), or in both languages and mention various titles and sometimes also the name of the king (in Brahmi *Khigi*, *Khigila*, or *Khingila*). There is an influence, which belongs to the Indian religious tradition, but at the same time the Sasanian fire altar remains on the reverse (Göbl 1967-II, 59-66). Alram notes that coins of king Khingila provide the first prototypes for the coins in the Kabul hoard. During Khingila’s reign, the king began to wear a crown which, at first, consisted of a simple crescent placed above the forehead (Alram 1999-2000, 131-132).

The coins with the name of Khingila in Brahmi geographically should be placed in eastern Afghanistan or present north-western Pakistan and temporally they should fit generally into the Hephthalite period of the 6th century AD, probably towards the end rather than the beginning (Frye 1986, 515).

After Göbl Khingila was succeeded by Toramana (490 - ca. 515), called in Brahmi: *Tora*, *Toramāna*. Under his leadership the Alchons in c. AD 500 got Malwa (Central India). Coins with name of Toramana were found in large quantities in Malwa, in Punjab and in Kashmir (Melzer 2006, 260).

Then was Mihirakula (ca. 515-542), called in Brahmi *Jayatu Mihirakula*⁴ or *Shri Mihirakula*. An increasing deterioration of the silver content of the drachms is observed in the coins issued during his reign. After his death, about AD 542, some of the Alchons moved back westwards into the Kapisa-Kabul-Gazni area and clashed there with the Nezak kings (Alram 2004, 571-573).

Toramana and Mihirakula mainly minted silver and copper coins. The silver coins of Toramana

⁴The title (in Brahmi) *jayatu* which had Mihirakula and one of his successors Narendra on coins can be explained as *let him be victorious*: Errington, Curtis 2007, 97.

are known in three versions, those of Mihirakula coins in two (Shankar 1998, 190-191).

On the obverse of Mihirakula's silver coins we see the king's head and on the reverse the legend "*Jayatu Mihirakula*" or "*Mihirakula*" in Brahmi (Banerji 1962, 60). With regard to the copper coins, they were of two types. Mihirakula's coins bear the following inscription "*Shri Mihirakula*" or "*Jayatu Mihirakula*". On the reverse there is usually the image of the bull Nandi, a symbol of the god Shiva, which shows a commitment of Mihirakula to Shivaism (Stein 1905, 83). The large copper coins of Mihirakula show the king riding on a horse with the legend Mihirakula in Indian characters, and on the reverse the goddess Lakshmi. This is an imitation of the Gupta horse rider type of coins. A few coins of Toramana were re-struck by Mihirakula (Banerji 1962, 60).

The three groups of copper coins of Mihirakula are:

1. Small coins which were found in Eastern Punjab and in Rajputana have a Sasanian type. On the obverse we see the king's head with the legend in Indian characters "*Shri Mihirakula*"; on the reverse a humped bull with the Indian legend "*Jayatu Vrisha*";
2. The middle-sized copper coins are copies of Kushan types. The king standing with a spear in left hand and with the right hand held downwards over a small altar. The legend in Brahmi reads "*Shri Mihirakula*"; on the reverse the goddess Lakshmi is seated with cornucopiae;
3. The large copper coins present the Raja on horseback with the legend in Brahmi "*Mihirakula*"; on the reverse we find the goddess Lakshmi (Cunningham 1893, 2)⁵.

During the excavations in Buddhist monastery at Hadda (Jelalabad) was found along with drachma of Kidara, 16 Alchon drachmas, among them 2

coins are imitation of Shapur II's drachmas (Errington, Curtis 2007, 93).

In the Buddhist monasteries of Taxila (Bhamala, Lalchak and Dharmarajika) was found in total 32 silver coins, issues of Khingila and Javukha (Marshall 1960, 176-180; Errington, Curtis 2007, 98, 133).

Small hoard of 16 Alchon coins, earliest type with crescent behind the head, was found during excavation at monastery in Shahji-ki Dheri at Peshawar in 1911 (Errington, Curtis 2007, 99).

Among the coins from Shahji-ki Dheri a good specimen of the very rare silver coinage of the Mihirakula should be noted. The legend in Brahmi reads "*Jayatu Mihirakula*". There are specimens of a silver coin exhibiting the bust of a king in front of which is the sun-standard. Over it in Brahmi "*Jayatu*", and the name of the king which has been read as *Balasara*, *Bagamsara*, or *Bay-sara*, which appears to be a new name (Whitehead 1913, 481-482).

After Mihirakula, only known name from coins is Narana/Narendra, in Brahmi *Na*, *Nara*, *Narana* or *Narendra* (ca. 570/80 - 600 (?)). The leader of the Alchons, assumed the bull's-head crown of the Nezak on his own drachms minted in Gandhara. Further evidence for the Alchons' remigration from India is offered by overstrikes between Alchons and Nezak, found in a hoard near Kabul, dateable to the second half of the 6th century AD. This is supported by the further typological development of the Nezak coinage from the Kabul-Gazni area, which unexpectedly shows elements of the Indian Alchon coinage (Göbl 1967-II, 70-71).

Alram also supports the theory of Göbl that after the defeat of Mihirakula in India (AD 528) the group of Alchons re-emigrated from Gandhara, westward across the Khyber Pass, to the Kapisa-Kabul area where they clashed with the local Nezak kings. This can also be demonstrated by Nezak coinage which was parallel to the Indian Alchon coinage and assigned to Afghanistan south of the Hindukush. The conflict between Alchon and Nezak is also visible in the coinage of the Alchon king Narana/Narendra, who wears a bull's-head crown on some of his Gandharan issues. He was the victorious leader of the Alchon forces who fought against the Nezak in the Kapisa-Kabul re-

⁵ Harmatta (1984, 187) writes: "The type of coins minted by Toramana, Pravarasena, Narendrātīya and Gokarna exactly reproduce the gold coins of Kidara, which again follow the type of coins struck by the Late Kushana kings of north-western India. The Hephthalite kings of Kaśmīr had maintained even the legend "Kidara" on the reverse of their coins. This fact can only be explained by the assumption that the Hephthalite dynasty of Kaśmīr was the immediate successor of the Kidarite Hun kings who ruled there. As it is proved by the legend of their coins, the Hephthalite kings of Kaśmīr wanted to be regarded as the legitimate descendants and heirs of Kidara and this claim is only comprehensible if Kidara also ruled over Kaśmīr".

gion and he issued Em.150 of the Kabul hoard (Alram 1999-2000, 131-134; Alram 2002, 25; Alram 2004, 572-573; Alram 2006, 5)⁶.

This ruler was Pravarasena II, probably the son of Toramana, who ruled for about 60 years in the opinion of other researches. He minted coins with legends in Brahmi reading “*Shri Pravarasena*” on the avers and “*Kidara*” on the reverse (Smith 1907, 93-95; Dani et al. 1996, 169, 176). Different data indicates that he was Khingila or Narendraditya, not Pravarasena II, and perhaps this was his Indian title or the translation of his name from the Hephthalite language (Cunningham 1967, 26). Bihar supposes that Narana can be identified with Narendraditya (Bihar 2005, 320-321)⁷.

Based on numismatic materials, Alram suggests that in the last decade of the 4th century AD the Alchons crossed the western passes of the Hindukush to the Kapisa-Kabul area, and pushed the Kidarites from there. Mint of the first coins has started in the area around Kapisa and Kabul during the last decade of the 4th century (c. AD 390). During the first phase of their coinage the Alchons used the original dies of Shapur II. They re-engraved a Bactrian word *alxanno* instead of the original Pehlevi legend, on these obverse dies. In the second phase a tamga was added in front of the bust, in the third phase of the coinage a crescent appeared behind the crown. The fourth phase of the Alchon coinage has the same two symbols (tamgha and crescent) noted above, but for the first time, the obverse bears the typical bust of a king, which is placed on top of a floral motif. In front of the bust is the same legend in Bactrian and behind the bust, the name *Khingila*, written in Brahmi letters. This is the first bilingual coin type, and the use of Brahmi demonstrates that this type was probably struck in Gandhara. This is supported by the hoard of sixteen drachms of these early types, which was found in Gandhara

⁶ Vondrovec (2003, 160) thinks that the mint of the Nezak Shah, which produced Em. 198, was captured by the Alchons, who immediately started minting their own coins.

⁷ In general, Bihar does not agree with Göbl's classification. Following Bihar Mihirakula was succeeded by Alkhana (or Lakhana) with *biruda* (title of honour) Udayaditya, and then he was followed by Khingila with *biruda* Narendraditya, the last ruler being a person (his name is unknown) who had *biruda* Purvaditya. Bihar suggests that it would be correct to separate the coinage of Narendraditya from that attributed to Khingila, or to ascribe to Khingila coins with the legend *Sahi Purvaditya*, and place them before Mihirakula at the beginning, rather than towards the end of the series: Bihar 2005, 321.

at Shahji-ki Dheri (Alram 1996, 520-524; Alram 1999-2000, 131)⁸.

A recently discovered copper scroll shows that Javukha was a real royal person. In the Göbl's classification Em. 49-51 and 82 have this name but are attributed to Khingila because he supposed that Javukha was title of this king. Em. 117 and 118 have the Bactrian legend ζαβοχο (*Zaboho*) on the obverse together with a horseman, probably a king. Davary suggested that coins with the Bactrian legend *Zaboho* are the same name as the Brahmi *Javukha* (Davary 1982, 296). According to Vondrovec, in the light of typological and numismatic evidence, these rulers had close economic contact with the Guptas, probably in Gandhara, because their coins (coins of Javukha and coins with the name *Zaboho*) show great influence from the Gupta coins (Vondrovec 2008, 28).

The copper scroll inscription suggests that Mehama was one of the Alchon kings in Bactria⁹. To the coins of Mehama in Brahmi are related Em. 71, 73, and 74, and the unpublished Em. 316. A Bactrian version of his name *μηαμοι* (*meiano*) is attested in Bactrian documents and in some seals from the collection of Aman ur Rahman. Em. 62 and 63 display *μηο*, although mostly not clearly legible, probably a short version of his name (Vondrovec 2008, 29).

All coins of Khingila and Javukha were discovered south of the Hindukush, in the area between Sadiqadad (near Begram) and Taxila. There are no any Alchon coin finds north of the Hindukush was reported. But the copper scroll inscription shows that their influence also extended to north (Talaqan). Vondrovec supposes that the Hephthalites possibly belonged to the same tribe (Vondrovec 2008, 30). A branch of the Alchon Huns remained in Bactria and thus must have come under the control of the Hephthalites, either after their first major victory over the Sasanians in AD 474 or after the death of the Peroz in AD 484. This is a major amplification of the theory that the Alchons moved south into Gandhara, whence they were driven out in the late 6th century into the Kabul region, where they mixed their coin types with those of the Nezak kings (Vondrovec 2008, 32).

⁸ Verardi and Paparatti (2004, 101) suppose that the clashes between Nezak (Buddhist) and Alchon (Hinduist) were on religious grounds.

⁹ The area of Talaqan was part of lands where ruled Mehama with title “mahāśāhi”: Melzer 2006, 262.

After the copper scroll inscription we can say about simultaneous reign of Khingila, Toramana, Javukha and Mehama in different region and there was some kind of co-existence between them.

Nezaks: A third group of coins of the “Iranian Huns” can be attributed to the so-called Nezak (Nspk) kings (Em. 198-254, 256-271), who settled in Afghanistan south of the Hindukush in the Gazni and Kabul area from ca. 460 onwards.

According to Göbl this group consists: Nspk from Kabul (Em. 198-199), Nspk from Gazni (Em. 217-222), Šāhi Tigin (Em. 200-216A, 236-246, 252-254, 256-259, 265-271), Phromo Kēsoro (Em. 247-251) to this he adds also Zābulit – viceroy of Šāhi Tigin in Khorasan (Em. 260-264) and Alchons returned from India (Em. 225-235) (Göbl 1967-I, 25).

The Nezak kings minted drachms that are completely unmistakable and follow the Sasanian examples. Like all the other “Iranian Huns,” they became acquainted with money first through Sasanian currency, which they received as payment for military service rendered for Persia; they minted it themselves only when these payments stopped (Alram 2004, 573).

The important characteristic of the Nezak coinage is the bull’s-head crown of the kings, which is unmistakably encountered throughout the series. Coins have the Pehlevi legend *nycky MLK* “Nezak Shah”. On the obverse was placed the Sasanian fire altar with attendants, over whose heads are two small wheels or sun rosettes, a feature which is a typical element of the Nezak coinage.

Legend had formerly been interpreted as *Napki* (*npky*) and which was re-interpreted by Göbl as *Nspk* was the third wave (after AD 450). The correct reading, which was accepted by Göbl, is *Nezak*, which probably represents the title of a ruler (Schottky 2004, 576).

According to Göbl Nezak coinage is divided by style and typological details into two groups. Group I started to mint at the middle of the 5th century with a characteristic feature of the obverse - the bull’s head crown. The legend is written in Pehlevi and was read as *nycky MLK*. The floral motif under the bust has a close parallel among Alchon issues. On the reverse is the Sasanian fire-altar flanked by two standing figures, each of whom holds a long scepter. Above each figure, there is a small rosette or sun wheel, which

is also a characteristic feature of this Nezak coinage (Göbl 1967-II, 72-73).

Group II appears during the later phase of Group I. The two groups are distinguished by stylistic variations, letter forms in their obverse legends and the sun wheels on the reverses of Group II are much larger than in Group I. Probably coins were minted in two different mints: group I in Ghazni and group II in Kabul, as indicated by many single coins purchased in the Kabul bazaar and the Gardez hoard, which appeared on the Kabul market in 1962 and contains only Nezak coins from Group II, when Nezak took it from the Alchon shortly after the death of Toramana in AD 515. The purity of the drachms changed and finally become a pure copper. This phase of inflation runs partly parallel to that of the Indian Alchon coinage of Mihirakula (Göbl 1967-II, 71-89; Alram 1999-2000, 132-133).

The Nezak kings, according to Alram, were presumably local rulers of Kapisa-Kabul-Zabul region, as also proposed by Kuwayama, and not Huns as Göbl thought (Alram 1999-2000, 134-135). Vondrovec thinks that the identification of the Nezak Shahs is still unclear concerning their material culture or their absolute chronology. They are only known from their coins and Chinese stating that they established their hegemony in the area of Ghazni and Kabul-Kapisa in the second part of 5th century AD. The Alchons took Gandhara from their control in the middle of the 5th century AD (Vondrovec 2008, 276).

Hephthalites: The fourth group of coins of the “Iranian Huns” is that of the *proper* or *genuine* Hephthalites (Em. 282-289). According to the coins it is supposed that they did not cross the Hindukush southwards, but kept their main seats in eastern Khorasan. Although Göbl believed that there is no evidence that Bamiyan could mint the Hephthalite coins, it is noted that two coins represented in the catalogue related to the “Iranian Huns” have been found here (Baker, Allchin 1991, 11).

In general, the Hephthalite coinage is placed between AD 476/77, when Peroz was captured and received freedom for a ransom of 30 mule-loads with silver drachmas and AD 563/565 when they were defeated.

The episode of Peroz’s ransom was confirmed by numerous finds of drachmas of this king in northern Tokharistan, where the coins and their

later imitations took precedence over all other Sasanian issues (Zeimal 1994, 253). The multiple discoveries of Hephthalite low-grade drachmas in the 5th century AD in ruins of settlements in Transoxiana speak of the broad circulation in this territory. On the avers these monetary units there is depicted the head of a king with crown (similar to the Sasanian headdress), while on the reverse we find an altar of fire and two protecting guards (Неразик 1963, 422-423). In Tokharistan the Peroz silver drachms circulated with countermarks in Bactrian and with tamghas identifying the local rulers (Cribb 2007, 370). Thereafter, the third coin type of Peroz determined the monetary system of the Hephthalites in Tokharistan, and they eventually minted imitations of it (Göbl 1967-I, 24-26; Göbl 1967-II, 89).

One of the largest imitation groups attributed to the Hephthalites in Göbl's work is Em. 287. On the obverse an imitation of the bust of Peroz is shown with his third crown, on which, over the crown cap, there are outspread wings, perhaps symbolizing the *vārəvna*, the bird of Verethragana (Middle Persian Bahrām), the Iranian god of victory. In front of the bust are written the Bactrian letters *ēb*. Outside the circle four big dots are engraved on the dies. The reverse imitates the third type of Peroz's coinage with the characteristic monogram M-P (*MLK' Peroz* - "King Peroz") in the left field. In the right field the name of the mint *baxlo* "Balkh" is written in Bactrian letters, which confirms that the place of issue was north of the Hindukush. The letters *ēb* were interpreted by Humbach as an abbreviation of *ēbodalo* "Hephthalite" (Humbach 1996, 209-212) and they have since been read on another new Hephthalite issue (287A) that shows the bust of a Hunnish prince holding a drinking cup in his right hand. This type of the Hephthalite coins has a close analogy with the image on "Stroganov" silver bowl from State Hermitage museum in Russia (Aram 2002a, 149-153; Aram 2004, 573).

Several Hephthalite coins were found in Central Asian sites:

1. In Kara-tepe, silver coin with Hephthalite stamp, which has an over-strike, showing an heart with trefoil (Вайнберг, Раевская 1982, 66-67).
2. In Khairabad-tepe, imitation of Peroz's coin dates to the second half of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th centuries AD (Альбаум 1960, 45-46).

3. In excavations of a settlement located on the road Termez-Angor, not far from the Angor a further similar coin was discovered (Альбаум 1960, 57).
4. A silver coin, also Peroz imitation, dated to the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th centuries AD, was found in Dalverzin-tepe (Пугаченкова, Ртвеладзе 1978, 22-23).
5. In Budrach, situated in 10 km to north from Dalverzin-tepe, two coins were found which are imitations of Peroz's coins (Göbl's Em. 287) (Ртвеладзе 1987b, 120-121)¹⁰.

The Hephthalite imitations of Peroz's coins carrying the mint *baxlo* can be distinguished into two groups:

1. The larger group carries the Bactrian letters *ēb* or *ēbo* (for *ēbodalo*, "Hephthal") on the obverse and the king's head in front;
2. This group, instead of the Bactrian legend, shows a crescent in the right field above the diadem ribbon and a star in the left field.

A characteristic feature of both types is four big dots outside the ridged border. A minor typological variation only occurs in group one where between crown cap and crescent either a simple dot is engraved, as is case on the Sasanian prototype, or a triplet (three little dots arranged in a triangle) is depicted (Aram, Lo Muzio 2006, 134). Lerner notes that on some coins of the Hephthalites a lion's head was used on the crowns (Lerner 2009, 222).

According to Kabanov many copper coins found during excavations of Shor-tepe (3 km south from Karshi) can relate to the Hephthalite governor of Nakhshab. The coins show the head of the governor on the front side, without crown, turned left, beardless, with a long straight nose, while on the reverse a man is killing a lion with a sword. On avers, in front of the person's face, there is an Aramaic legend. The picture of a ruler with elongated head is similar to the images on the Hephthalite coins minted in India. The coins are dated between AD 480 and 563/567 during the time when the Hephthalites set up their own authority and became rulers of Nakhshab. The fact that the governor is depicted without crown was explained by Kabanov in the sense that they did

¹⁰ Ртвеладзе 1987b, 120-121; He notes that among the coins imitating Peroz's coins with countermarks there are samples with Bactrian inscription – *αλχονοχδηο*: Ртвеладзе 1987a, 144; Ртвеладзе 1987b, 122.

not belong to the dynasty of the supreme rulers of the Hephthalite state (Кабанов 1961, 137-144)¹¹.

Around the middle of the 6th century AD the first western Turks appear as a new power to the north and the east of the Hephthalites in Khorasan. The Sasanian king Khusrow I Anushirvan (531-579) made an alliance with them against the Hephthalites, and in about AD 563/65 they defeated the latter and divided their kingdom among themselves. Even in this late phase, which continued up to the middle of the 8th century AD, the issuing of drachms according to Sasanian models continued. Above all, the vast quantity of coins minted by Khusrow II Parviz (591-628) was imitated with additional local elements. The legends are often in three languages: Middle Persian, Bactrian, and Indian. From the 6th century AD on, diverse countermarks are used in the Central Asian monetary system, on both locally issued and foreign (Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian) drachms. These were intended to restrict circulation within specific political domains (Alram 2004, 573).

According to Rtveladze, in coins minted in Chaganiyan there are drachmas of Peroz with over coinage of Bactrian or Sogdian legends – $\chi\delta\eta\theta$ and $\chi\omega\beta$ which show a title of ruler and the Bactrian inscription on imitation of the drachmas of Peroz over coinage, which are read as “*Hono*”, “*Hionso*” and “*Alkhon*” (Ртвеладзе 1983, 75).

Images of the ruler’s head, facing to the left, are placed in the ancient period only on coins of the dynasty Urkod (Girkod) (1st century BC - 3rd century AD), and then on coins of Kesh (3rd – 6th centuries AD) and the Hephthalite coins of India, mainly the Hephthalite examples of Sasanian coins of the 5th - 6th centuries AD (Ртвеладзе 2006, 17).

Rtveladze supposes that the Hephthalites terminated the local dynasty in Chach at the end of the 5th century, replacing it with their own, and here produced copper coins with their tamgha (Ртвеладзе 2006, 114).

In the National History Museum in Tashkent there are two copper coins (similar to 5 coins in the collection of the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg), depicting a ruler on the front side and

horses on the back. These coins in the opinion of Rtveladze, found in the region of Bukhara, perhaps belonged to the Hephthalite king Gatfar (Ртвеладзе 2004, 106-109). However, according to M. Fedorov the assignment of these coins to Gatfar is due to a wrong reading of the inscriptions by Rtveladze. These coins, according to his own reading, bear the name Kavad, not Gatfar (Fedorov 2005, 196-197).

Ilyasov, based on an analysis of the tamgha of the ruler of Pendzhikent, Gamaukyuan (or Hamaukyuan), on coins of the second half of the 7th century AD, notes that he was most likely of Chionite-Hephthalite origin (Ilyasov 2003, 141-143; Ильясов 2004а, 54-59).

4. Goboziro / Tobazin(i/o) coins

In the opinion of Vainberg the Sasanian Empire, allied with the Chionite nomads who lived near the eastern borders of the Empire, conducted a military campaign against the Kushans in the late 70’s of 4th century AD. However, in the late 80’s, the situation changed and the Chionites, together with the Kidarites, launched a war against the Sasanians and drove them from the former Kushan lands. As a result, in the south of the Hindukush, the kingdom of Kidara appeared. The Chionites moved into the area of Kabul and later northern India. This group of tribes was part of the Chionites, creating an independent principality in the territory of Tokharistan and beginning to mint coins bearing the inscription *Goboziro* (end of the 4th - first half of the 5th century)¹². At the same time, in eastern Tokharistan and Badakhshan, the Hephthalite state formed. Later, in the 40s of the 5th century, the mint of the Kidarites and the Chionites (*Goboziro*) in Tokharistan broke down as a result of the conquest of the territory by Yazdegerd II (Вайнберг 1972, 136-138).

Ghirshman reads the legend as “*Shaho Zabula*” (Ghirshman 1948, 34-35). Humbach proposes two readings of this name: *Gobozini* and *Gobozoko*, presuming that the latter should be more correct (Хумбах 1975, 61-62). According to Alram a new reading of this name should be *T/Gobazin(i/o)* (Alram 2008, 259), while Rtveladze reads the legend as *Gobozona/Goboz(a)* and translates it as *ruler of Gobzon*. He supposes that *Goboz* was the territory between southern Sogd and the Amudarya (Ртвеладзе 1999, 109).

¹¹ M. Masson opposes this theory. He thinks that these coins do not belong to the Hephthalites, because they have no stylistic similarities. These coins were minted by Parthian rulers from the Arsakid dynasty who survived in different regions of Central Asia after the collapse of their empire in AD 224/226. One of them could establish his power in the Kashkadarya region and minted this type of coins in the 3rd - 4th century AD: Массон 1977, 135-137.

¹² According to Göbl’s classification this type of coins belongs to Em. 32: Göbl, 1967-I, 53-54; Göbl, 1967-II, 56; Göbl 1967-III, Pl. 14.

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Materiale numismatice referitoare la eftaliți

Rezumat

Autorul publică materiale numismatice referitoare la eftaliți, popor nomad care a locuit pe teritoriul Asiei Centrale și în regiunile învecinate în sec. IV-VI a. Chr. Acest popor a reușit în perioada sec. V-VI a. Chr. să cucerească și să-și extindă dominația pe un teritoriu destul de vast. În perioada de vârf a puterii, hotarul statului eftaliților s-a întins în direcția est-vest: de la Hotan (Turkestanul Oriental) până la frontiera cu Iranul, iar pe axa nord-sud: de la stepel actualului Kazahstan până în nord-vestul Indiei, cuprinzând astfel o mare parte a Asiei Centrale, Afganistan, Pakistan, o parte a Indiei și a Chinei (mai multe oaze din Turkestanul Oriental).

Perioada secolelor IV-VI în istoria Asiei Centrale este încă slab cercetată. Aceasta se explică prin faptul că izvoarele scrise din acea perioadă sunt extrem de sărace și fragmentare. Confruntarea lor nu oferă posibilitatea reconstituirii unui tablou complet referitor la istoria regiunii. Și materialele arheologice sunt foarte limitate, iar datarea acestora poartă un caracter aproximativ și neclar. Într-o anumită privință, descoperirile numismatice permit lămurirea unor aspecte istorice ale zonei, îndeosebi ale celor legate de circulația monetară.

Doar coroborarea tuturor izvoarelor menționate ar permite reconstituirea unei imagini mai mult sau mai puțin complete privind viața politică și social-economică a statului eftaliților.

Нумизматические материалы по эфталитам

Резюме

В данной статье исследуются нумизматические материалы, относящиеся к эфталитам, которые проживали на территории Центральной Азии и сопредельных территориях в IV-VI вв. н.э. Именно этот народ сумел в V-VI вв.н.э. установить свое господство на довольно обширной территории. В пик своего могущества границы эфталитского государства простирались с востока на запад: от Хотана (Восточный Туркестан) до границ Ирана, и с севера на юг: от степей нынешнего Казахстана до северо-западной Индии, то есть на большей части территорий Центральной Азии, Афганистана, Пакистана, части Индии и Китая (ряд оазисов Восточного Туркестана).

Период IV-VI вв. н.э. в истории Центральной Азии наиболее слабо изучен. Это объясняется тем, что данные письменных источников, относящихся к этому времени, очень скудны и носят отрывочный характер. Сопоставление их не дает нам полной картины. Археологические материалы также очень ограничены, а датировка их часто носит приблизительный и неточный характер. Нумизматические находки в какой-то мере раскрывают некоторые неизвестные моменты истории, особенно в том, что касается денежного обращения. Но, несмотря на вышесказанное, совокупность имеющихся фактов позволяет в большей или меньшей степени воссоздать картину политической и социально-экономической жизни этого региона.

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Dr. Aydogdy Kurbanov, German Archaeological institute, Eurasian department, Gerda Henkel research fellow, Im Dol 2-6, Haus II, 14195 Berlin, Germany, e-mail: aydogdydk@yahoo.com