

## HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED GOLD COIN OF KANIŠKA-I DEPICTING OADO

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### ABSTRACT

*This article deals with hitherto unreported gold coin issued by Kaniška I, the greatest king of the Kušāṇ dynasty bearing the Bactrian legend "Oado". It depicts the Wind God (Oado) running to the left, holding up cloak blown in the wind. This Zoroastrian Wind god 'Oado' had hitherto been known to us only from several series of bronze coins issued by Kaniška I and Huviška. The Greek version of the Iranian Oado is known to us thanks to a unique gold coin conserved in the Hirayama Ikuo Art Museum. The Greek god(s) corresponding to the Zoroastrian Oado (or Vāta, Wind god) are known as the Anemoi (Greek: Ἄνεμοι, Latin Venti). The fundamental difference between the reverse iconography of the two gold coins is that the two large wings of the Greek Anemos are not represented on the coin showing the Oado of Zoroastrian origin.*

**Keywords:** Anemoi, Apeliotes, Boreas, Greek, Helios, Huviška, Kaikias, Kaniška, Kanjur, Kušānas, Lips, Notus, Oado, Rabatak, Skiron, Sūrya, Uđi-Šāhi, Venti, Vima Taktu, Wind god, Zephyrus, Zoroastrian.

The aim of this short paper is to introduce a hitherto unpublished gold coin bearing the Bactrian legend 'Oado' issued by Kaniška I, the greatest king of the Kušāṇ dynasty. It was supposedly found in Ghazni in Afghanistan. We give below a short description of the coin:



Fig. 1. Wind god (Oado)

Gold dinar of the Kušāṇ king Kaniška I (ca. 127-150 CE).

**Obv.** A crowned and bearded Kaniška I armed with a sword, standing facing left, clad in a heavy coat and high boots, flames emanating from the right shoulder; holding a long sceptre in his left hand, and making an oblation over an altar with extended right hand holding *anañkūṣa* (elephant goad). Legend in Bactrian: Ω ρΑΟΝΑΝΟρΑΟ ΚΑ / ΝΗϐΚΙΚΟϐΑΝΟ.

**Rev.** Wind god (Oado) running to the left, holding up cloak blown in the wind. To the left, *atamga*: ☸. Legend in Bactrian to the right: ΟΑΔΟ.

20.5 mm; 7.92 g - Private collection.

The importance of this gold coin can be understood in the historical context of the Kuṣāṇ dynasty. The Rabatak inscription is the most informative source on the genealogy of the ancestors of Kaniška I, the expansion of his kingdom, and the importance of Iranian and Indian divinities for his dynastic claims.<sup>1</sup> Kaniška claims that “he obtained the kingship from Nana and from all the gods ...”<sup>2</sup> It is also said that “It was he who laid out (i.e. discontinued the use of) the Ionian (“ἰωνά”, Yona, Greek) speech and then placed the Arya (“αρία”, Aryan) speech.”

The Kuṣāṇ Empire reached its apogee around 127 CE with Kaniška I, the grandson of VimaTaktu.<sup>3</sup> Kaniška I extended his empire into what is modern-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and north India as far as the middle Gangetic Valley. He favored multireligious cults by honoring Zoroastrian, Greek, Buddhist and Brahmanical deities.

Among them, the Zoroastrian Wind god ‘Oado’ had hitherto been known to us only from several series of bronze coins issued by Kaniška I and Huviška. The Wind god on these coins is depicted with upraised dishevelled hair, holding a blowing cape.<sup>4</sup> We have selected a bronze coin of Kaniška I to compare with the iconography of the unpublished gold coin (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Wind god (Oado)

Bronze coins of the Kuṣāṇ king Kaniška I (ca. 127-150 CE).

**Obv.** A crowned and bearded King facing left, clad in a heavy coat and high boots, holding a long sceptre in his left hand, and making an oblation over an altar with his extended right hand. Legend in Bactrian: 𑀘𑀓𑀭𑀯𑀭𑀮𑀲𑀲𑀮𑀲 / 𑀮𑀲𑀲𑀮𑀲.

**Rev.** Wind god (Oado) running to the left, holding up cloak blown in the wind, and blowing wind from a half-opened mouth. To the left, *atamga*: 𑀘𑀓𑀭𑀯𑀭𑀮𑀲𑀲𑀮𑀲. Legend in Bactrian to the right: OAAO.

28 mm; 17 g - Private collection. - Bibliography: R. Göbl, 1984, type 783.

Photograph from <https://www.cointalk.com/threads/oado-the-wind-god.298255/>

The Greek god(s) corresponding to the Zoroastrian Oado (or Vāta, Wind god) are known as the Anemoi (Greek: Ἄνεμοι, Latin Venti). According to Greek mythology, there were eight wind gods known as the *Anemoi*. Each deity was given a cardinal direction from which their wind blew. The four major *Anemoi* are *Boreas* (the north wind who brings the cold winter air), *Notus* (the south wind who brings the storms of late summer and autumn), *Zephyrus* (the west wind who brings the light spring and early summer breezes) and *Eurus* (the east wind). The four minor *Anemoi* are *Kaikias* (the north east wind), *Apeliotes* (the south east wind), *Skiron*, (the north-west wind) and *Lips* (the south west wind).<sup>5</sup>



**Fig. 3.** The Anemoi on the Tower of the Winds, Athens. Photograph O.B.



**Fig. 4.** From left to right: Lips holding a stern of a ship; Notus pouring water from a vase; Eurus looks ahead wrapped in heavy garments. Photograph O.B.



**Fig. 5.** From left to right: Kaikias holding a shield; Boreas holding conch shell; Skiron holding upturned urn. Photograph O.B.

Among many ancient Greek iconographies of the eight Wind gods, the Tower of the Winds in Athens, built around 50 BCE by Andronicus of Cyrrhus, a Macedonian astronomer, holds a special place, because it depicts all the eight Wind gods (Figs 3-5).<sup>6</sup>


The Greek version of the Iranian Oado is known to us by a unique gold coin published by Katsumi Tanabe; it is conserved in the *Hirayama Ikuo Museum of Art* (see fig. 6). According to a reliable source, the coin was found in the vicinity of the Amb Sharif area in the Salt Range in Pakistan. Amb Sharif is known thanks to its Hindu temple complex with some of the small kanjur temples built in the 6th and 7th centuries in its first phase.<sup>7</sup> Although no archaeological excavation was conducted to clarify the stratigraphy of the earlier periods, Michel Meister pointed out that coins of the Kuşānas and Uđi-Šāhi periods were brought to light by a recently road cut.<sup>8</sup> A hoard composed of silver drachms of Apollodotos II, Zoilos II and Strato II was also found in the same site.<sup>9</sup>



**Fig. 6.** Wind god Anemos.

Gold dinar of the Kuṣāṇ king Kaniška I (ca. 127-150 CE).

**Obv.** A crowned and bearded King facing left, clad in a heavy coat and high boots, holding a long sceptre in his left hand, and making an oblation over an altar with the extended right hand Legend in Greek: ὈΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΒΑCΙ / ΛΕΩΝ ΚΑΝΗΡΚΟΥ.

**Rev.** Winged Wind god (Anemos) running to the left, holding up cloak blown with the wind. To the left, *atamga*: . Legend in Greek below in exergue: ANEMOC.

20.1 mm; 7.88 g - Private collection.

Bibliography: K. Tanabe, 1990, figs. 6 & 7; 1992, p. 174, fig. 174, p. 176, no. 174.

Photograph courtesy of the Ikuo Hirayama Foundation.

When publishing this gold dinar Katsumi Tanabe correctly pointed out, giving credit to Robert Göbl, that the coins with the Greek legend were issued before the ones with the Bactrian legend, *e.g.* Greek Wind god Anemos v/s Iranian Wind god Oado.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, when publishing this gold dinar, Tanabe drew attention to the following iconographical details: 1; pair of wings; 2. A unique stance; 3. Upraised arms and a large cape or mantle; 4. Hair standing on end and a beard. Tanabe correctly assumes that the image depicted on the dinar with the Greek legend had originated from the Hellenistic models. However, the first observation I wish to make regarding the Greek legend on the reverse ‘ANEMOC’ is that though it may refer to one of the Anemoi (Ἄνεμοι [Wind gods]) we do not know which Anemos (Ἄνεμος) is depicted on the coin. The absence of any attribute does not allow us to define the precise directional wind god. The legend as well as the neutral iconography may refer to a generic Wind god.

Without repeating the observations made by Tanabe, I wish draw the attention of the reader to the similarities and dissimilarities between the iconographies of the two gods: one Greek and the other Zoroastrian. Apart from two distinct differences, the iconography of the king at the altar on the two obverses are identical. On the obverse of the gold coin with the Bactrian legend Oado (fig. 1) the king makes an oblation over an

altar with his extended right hand holding an *aṅkūṣa* (elephant goad). This attribute is not shown on the coin with the Greek legend (fig. 6). The second characteristic is the two types of crowns each king wears. On the gold coin with the Greek legend (fig. 6) the king wears a crown with a horn-like element jutting from the headdress corresponding to the *kronen* type 1 in Robert Göbl's classification of crowns.<sup>11</sup> On the gold coin with the Bactrian legend (fig. 1) the king wears a pointed crown with brims corresponding to the type 2 in Göbl's classification.<sup>12</sup>

The fundamental difference between the reverse iconographies of the two gold coins is that the two large wings of the Greek Anemos are not depicted on the coin showing Oado of Zoroastrian origin (compare figs. 1 and 6). The gold coin depicting Oado (fig. 1) may have served as a prototype for various series of bronze coins of Kaniška I (fig. 2) and Huviška.<sup>13</sup> The Anemoi (Wind gods) depicted on the octagonal tower of the winds (figs. 3-5) are represented with large and long wings, so it goes without saying that in a Greek context Wind gods are generally winged.<sup>14</sup> Both the gods run in the same stance with legs apart in a long stride. This energetic stride is lost on the bronze coins of Kaniška I and Huviška showing the Iranian Oado; in many series he is shown walking rather than running (fig. 2).<sup>15</sup> The upraised arms of Anemos and Oado holding the cape blown in the wind are almost symmetrical (figs. 1 and 6), but the Zoroastrian Oado's left arm is held inward while that of Anemos is held backward. Apart from minor differences, the rendering the mantle fluttering behind the back is almost the same. The hair of the Greek Anemos is shown with four straight lines;<sup>16</sup> while the Zoroastrian Oado has six (if not seven) fluttering strands (compare fig. 1 with fig. 6). In many bronze series depicting Oado, the way of showing the hair like pikes is lost, favouring rather more dishevelled hair (see fig. 2).

On both gold coins the mouths of the wind gods are almost closed, but on certain bronze coins he is shown blowing wind from a half-opened mouth (fig. 2). The blown-up cheeks and pointed lips are caused by the pressure from the air pushed from lungs. I will be discussing the association of Wind god(s) with the Greek god Helios and the Indian deity Sūrya in one of my forthcoming publications.<sup>17</sup> Further to the contribution made by Katsumi Tanabe, Tianshu Zhu has proposed an exhaustive study on the sun god and wind god and the diffusion of their iconography from India to China.<sup>18</sup> This is not the end of unforeseen numismatic discoveries from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> For the most developed reading of this inscription, see Sims-Williams, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Sims-Williams, 2004, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the first year of Kaniška's reign or the date of Kaniška, see Falk, 2001 and recently in 2015 where a complete and critical overview is given.

<sup>4</sup>Göbl, 1984, series 783, 816-9; 852-4, 885, 905, Tanabe, 1990, nos. 185-6.

<sup>5</sup>Roman and Roman, 2010, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>Neuser, 1982. The Tower of the Winds is 12.8 meters in height and 7.9 meters in diameter, and has an octagonal shape.

<sup>7</sup>Following the pioneering investigations of Alexander Cunningham and Aurel Stein, Michael Meister and Abdur Rehman conducted numerous explorations and brought to light Hindu temples built in the sixth to tenth centuries in the Salt Range and along the Indus River; see M.W. Meister, 2005, 2010; M.W. Meister and A. Rehman, 2005.

<sup>8</sup>M.W. Meister, 2010, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup>See Bopearachchi & Basu Majumdar, 2020.

<sup>10</sup>Tanabe, 1990, p. 53; Tanabe refers to the monumental catalogue of Kuṣāṇ coins by Göbl, 1984.

<sup>11</sup>Göbl, 1984, pl. IV, K1.

<sup>12</sup>Göbl, 1984, pl. IV, K2.

<sup>13</sup>See Göbl, 1984, series 783, 816-9; 852-4, 885, 905.

<sup>14</sup>For Greek parallels see Tanabe, 1990, pp. 56-8.

<sup>15</sup>See Göbl, 1984, series 783, nos. 1, 3, 11, 14; series 784, nos. 1-6 ; series 816, nos. 1-3.

<sup>16</sup>Tanabe, 1990, pp. 59-60.

<sup>17</sup>Bopearachchi, 2021.

<sup>18</sup>Zhu, 2006.