Oešo and Śiva: Interconnected Natures and Iconographies

by Doris Meth Srinivasan

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Doris Meth Srinivasan; Research Professor; State University of New York - Stony Brook

ABSTRACT

This paper brings together studies published over the last fifteen years which clarify aspects of the so-called Oešo/Śiva problem. Essentially, the problem revolves around the identification of the figure on Kuśāṇa coins and seals which has some ‘Śiva’ markers but is inscribed ‘Oešo’. The prevailing opinion that the figure is Śiva cannot be maintained in light of the information from the recent findings, discussed below, in the following sequence:

I. 1. A brief comparison of Kuśāṇa śaiva images in Mathura and Gandhāra indicates basic regional differences, thus laying the ground that Gandhāra incorporated outside, non-Indian iconographic elements to fashion its śaiva forms. 2. The Northern śaiva images have more in common with Kuśāṇa coins and seals than with Mathura śaiva icons. It is these coins and seals that carry the ‘Oešo’ inscription. 3. Itemization of the new, recent studies on the subject. 4. Descriptions and analyses of recently published seals, ending with the observation that iconographic ambiguity exists on the Oešo coins and seals inscribed ‘Oešo’.

II. The ambiguity prompts an assessment of those iconographic features ‘Oešo’ seals and coins share with Mathura ‘Śiva’ images. The conclusion of the comparison is that an image labeled ‘Oešo’ is ‘Oešo’ and not the god ‘Śiva’.

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III. Investigation into the nature of Oešo follows: 1. Who is Oešo? 2. Is there a connection between Oešo’s Avestan forerunner and a Vedic god? There is and it is based on the bi-polar nature of each 3. Terminology and iconography which focuses on Oešo’s benevolent side. Discussion on the symbolism of the raised liṅga. 4. The need of the Zoroastrian religion, when formulating divine imagery, to borrow an iconographic language so that the imagery is understood in the regions where the coins and seals circulate. The adopted iconography incorporates, for the most part, multivalent symbolism.

IV. Post-Kuśāṇa imagery conflates elements from both deities when representing Oešo in Northern areas of Central Asia and China, and when depicting Śiva in the Southern areas in the subcontinent.

V. Overall conclusions.

I. 1. A brief survey of Kuśāṇa śaiva images in Mathura and Gandhāra

For over fifteen years I’ve had Śiva on my mind. What I have found so puzzling is the great discrepancy between the way Śiva is represented in Mathura and Gandhāra during the same timeframe. Mathura was the cradle for creating acceptable representations of Brahmanic, that is, early Hindu deities. Śiva is a Hindu deity. He stems out of the earlier Vedic/Brahmanic religious tradition¹. In Mathura this tradition is reflected in the threefold typologies associated with Śiva’s icons. Gandhāran art does not reflect this religious tradition. Śiva has numerous features in Gandhāran art that cannot be explained by recourse to the major religious traditions originating in the subcontinent, although his features in Gandhāran art are often - and surprisingly - not at odds with symbolism found in these religions. I have often wondered why Gandhāran images of Śiva are so atypical. They are, as a group different from Mathura Śiva images. And they tend to be,
individually, quite distinct from each other. Corroborating my impression is Callieri’s finding based on his study of Northwestern seals and sealings. He calls the Śiva seals “the least homogeneous “of all the seal sub-groups in the Northwest.” 2

Śiva’s three typologies made in the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathura reveal the theological belief that the power of Śiva unfolds progressively into the phenomenal world. The liṅga is his most ethereal sign and symbol of his power to effectuate all creation. From this sign (in the shape of a phallus), one or more heads can emerge and begin the manifestation process; the form representing this phase is called a mukhaliṅga (i.e. a sign with one or more faces). Lastly, the entire anthropomorphic figure of Śiva stands fully revealed to his worshippers. This is the mūrti, the pratimā, the Śiva tanū, that is, the body of Śiva, which represents but a fraction of his omnipotence. The mūrtis seen on temple walls and, of course, in museum displays, are thus aspects of Śiva’s total power.

All three typologies - liṅga, mukhaliṅga - mūrti - are present in Mathura and the surrounding Gangetic region as early as the pre-Kuṣāṇa period. They are not present, as a series, during pre- Gupta periods in the Northern regions, that is prior to the 4th - 5th centuries. 3 Different underlying sources and beliefs may account for the divergence between Northern śaiva images and those found at Mathura. 4

Early sculptural mūrtis from Gandhāra may show some śaiva characteristics found on Mathura sculptures but also others unknown there. Illustrative examples are three standing Śiva-s from Gandhāra known for their ample use of iconographic symbols: the four-armed, three headed ithyphallic icons in the Berlin Asian Art Museum (Acc. No. MIK I 5888; Pl. 1) and in Rome’s Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale, and an image formerly in the Sherrrier Collection (Pl. 2). 5 They share the number of extra arms and
heads, the trident and vase held as emblems, the god’s raised phallus and his third eye. Of these only the third eye and raised phallus are found on Mathura śaiva images; the sun disc held by the Rome’s Śiva is once associated with a Mathura Warrior Goddess. Discounting style and minor details, these Kuṣāṇa Gandhāran examples significantly differ also from each other in the shape of the ascetic locks (varying from bun decorated with a crescent, to cone, to quasi-uṣṇīṣa) and in the nature of the side heads (portraying various animals as well as an anthropomorphic shape). Unknown to icons from Kuṣāṇa Mathura are the use of ancillary animal heads, the hand-held trident, a vase (or water-pot) held by the neck and a moustache on the god’s face. 7 Śiva’s Kuṣāṇa mūrtis from Gandhāra, at least those known to date, show variations from each other in addition to distinction from the Mathura assemblage.

I. 2 the Northern śaiva images have more in common with Kuṣāṇa coins and seals than with Mathura śaiva figures

Śiva’s Northern anthropomorphic images correlate more closely with a figure on Kuṣāṇa coins. Kuṣāṇa coins, minted by the rulers, seem to show an iconography that is somewhat more in keeping with the way Śiva is shown on Gandhāran sculptures. 8 The male on Kuṣāṇa coins is usually referred to as Oešo/Śiva since he has some attributes that pertain to Śiva but has the name of an Iranian god, Oešo, inscribed on nearly all the coins. 9 The obverse of the coins usually portrays the ruler and therefore provides a guide for dating. Accordingly, śaiva features can be isolated right from the earliest through the later Kuṣāṇa rulers, that is, from Vīma Khadphises through Vāsudeva I and II 10. From the time of Vīma, Oešo /Śiva has two arms and one as well as three heads, and is associated with the trident (or trident -axe), the vase (often called a water pot ), the thunderbolt (vajra ), a
In a coin from Ršikesh, Uttarakhand, a bull is depicted near the bull. Hardly any of the latter features are evident on a standing Mathura Šiva. Exceptions are a bull occurring on a unique Kušāna relief (GMM 3340). A small roundish vessel is held by an ithyphallic figure assumed to be Šiva. I dated the sculpture to the pre-Kušāna period. Kreisel gave it a Kušāna date. Multiplicity of heads (three) and arms (four) in Gandhāran sculpture occur on Huviška’s coins. But whereas the multiplicity convention stems from the Brahmanic tradition, Mathura sculptures work with a theoretical five-headed, not three-headed, figure. These are but general observations. Comprehensive iconographic comparisons between Kušāna representations of Indian, including Mathura, Šiva icons and Gandhāran Oešo/Šiva images are provided below. At this point, it suffices to note that the disparity between Gandhāran and Mathura Šaiva iconography and the former’s closer connection to Kušāna numismatics strongly suggests that a source other than the Vedic/Brahmanic one accounts for the numerous Northern features associated with Oešo/Šiva. After all, the Kušāṇas were Central Asians and foreign to the traditions and religious beliefs of Brahmanic India.

I. 3 Itemization of New Studies

The identity of Oešo/Šiva on the coins has been vigorously debated from the nineteenth century onwards. The general consensus, until rather recently, has been that the god on the coins is Šiva, or an aspect of Šiva. That assumption received a significant challenge by K. Tanabe who rightfully asserted in his paper of 1991/1992 that thus far the Iranian material had not been sufficiently probed. He did this, and thereby opened up a new frontier: use of Iranian religion and art to comment on the Oešo/Šiva problem in art. Several subsequent finds and studies have, in effect,
strengthened the case for an Iranian connection. The Rabatak Inscription, attributed to a high official of Kaniṣṭha I, and analyzed by N. Sims-Williams in several publications between 1995 - 2004, yields an important finding for the current study, namely that all deities, except one, mentioned (and presumably worshipped by the Kuṣāṇa dynasty) are Iranian gods. In 1997, Joe Cribb tabulated the known Oešo/Śiva images on Kuṣāṇa and post-Kuṣāṇa coins according to chronology and iconography. His tables, plus reproductions of numismatic and statuary images, and commentary distinguishing between normal and rare features provide a useful interpretive guide. Also in 1997, an additional visual corpus became available; Pierfrancesco Callieri published his revised PhD dissertation on ancient seals of the Northwest. A conference presentation by Fabrizio Sinisi, in 2010, demonstrated that Roman coins were ineffective as a model for Oešo on Kuṣāṇa coinage. Rather, foreign features on the coins were probably introduced from Kuṣāṇa Period seals which received Western glyptic influences. More seals from Greater Gandhāra became available for study in 2011. Many of these seals are inscribed, some with the name ‘Oešo’. Most important are the researches at Dunhuang (published in 2009; 2013) which have brought to light in Cave 285 a remarkable visual retention of Oešo’s impact upon Śiva’s northern imagery. Lastly at the end of 2014, a new paper by Helmut Humbach on the Iranian Wind God was published. In light of all this newly available information, the Oešo/Śiva problem is here taken up anew with the aim of advancing a solution.

I.4 Description and analyses of recently published seals

To begin, I shall analyze six seals referring to Oešo/Śiva catalogued in the 2011 publication. The seventh, also in this publication, may allude to Oešo. These seals have not received prior art historical analyses. Reference to
them is given by their number in the Catalogue (see fn. 20) and by the
collector’s Inventory Number. Since the figure on the seals can sometimes
be allied to Kuṣāṇa coin types which can be approximately dated and
occasionally sequentially ordered, my method is to discuss the seals and
their comparative numismatic material first in order to categorize them. I
shall then proceed with an analysis which terminates with a possible
rationale for the presence of śaiva markers on the Iranian deity, Oešo.

The male on the clay token (07.01. 08; Inv. No. Gkc 416; Pl. 3) seems to
be three-headed, but because of the worn condition of the token it is not
clear whether the side heads are human or animal. Perhaps the figure is
nude as may also occur on some Vīma Kadphises series; 22 possibly the
male is without the raised liṅga but the token is not in sufficiently good
condition to be sure. There is no halo or inscription. The figure stands in
front of a humped bull. He holds a trident in his raised right hand; the left
rests on the bull. The prongs of the trident are curved in a manner seen on
the obverse of a bronze tetradrachm of Vīma Kadphises as well as on the
obverse of a gold stater of Vāsudeva I.23 This form is seen later in Mathura
Kuṣāṇa sculpture. 24 The combination of three-headedness, a bull and the
trident has recently been found on Vīma Kadphises’ coppers in the British
Museum and the Masson Collection as well as on a few of his gold coins also
in the collection of the British Museum 25. However, the side heads (one
animal, one human) can compare with only one four-armed Gandhāran
figure, a sculpture of the Kuṣāṇa Period.26 On our token the deity stands
erect and frontal, without bending his body. Iconographic features on
Vāsudeva I, Vāsudeva II and Kaniṣka III coins have some added attributes
or slight variations. 27 Thus there is no seal or coin example having the
constellation of characteristics that can be confirmed on the clay token:
three heads, two arms - one resting on the bull, the other holding a trident
with curved prongs - an erect, frontal posture for body and face, possibly
nude and possibly without the ūrdhvaliṅga. A South Asian hoard found in 2006 may contain the earliest Vīma coins. They include examples of Oešo/Śiva as tricephalic, nude two-armed (right holds trident; left is various), without liṅga frontally positioned and series IV also shows the bull. But a study of some of the early series (I - III) shows that these coins published by Bopearachchi stand outside Vīma Kadphises' routine production and have problematic features. Therefore more work needs to be done to remove the doubt of authenticity from these newly found coins. Our clay token (Pl. 3) is difficult to date; it could be placed anywhere after the first decade of the second century A.D. (Vīma ruled c. 100/105 - 127 A.D.) through the third century A.D. However if indeed the figure is not ithyphallic - a critical determinant - then the token is more likely to relate to early (i.e. Vīma) than later coinage. The 2011 Catalogue calls the figure ‘Weš’, that is how Bactrian Oešo was pronounced.

The next figure, on the garnet ring - bezel seal (07.01.09; Inv. No. GKG xx 19; Pl. 4) is four-armed and clothed in a dhoti. He holds, starting from upper right and going anticlockwise: the trident, a club, a vase, an animal skin over the arm, and the thunderbolt (vajra). The appearance of the sacred thread (yajñopavīta) is uncertain. Many features recall Greek imagery. The club, (possibly lion’s) skin and the nude muscular torso (though awkward legs) are adaptations of Heracles' imagery, already evident in Central Asia by the second century B.C. (Pl. 5). Greeks and the philhellenic population living in northern Afghanistan fled from their homeland in mid-1st century BC. Crossing the Hindu Kush, they continued to live and rule in areas south for another 150 years causing their influence to remain in Gandhāra. The site of Barikot, an Indo-Greeks urban center in Swat (Gandhāra) provides archaeological evidence of the direct Hellenistic tradition in its art. Barikot was excavated by Pierfrancesco Callieri; he has synthesized much of his work in “Barikot: An Indo-Greek Urban Center in
“Gandhāra” in my On the Cusp of an Era. Art in the Pre-Kuśāṇa World. Brill, 2007, pp. 133-164, especially page 161. Callieri, following the late, great Gandhāran art historian Maurizio Taddei, argues for the presence of workshops and craftsmen working in the Hellenistic traditions in Gandhāra and transmitting a Hellenistic style into Gandhāra. In addition, the Indo-Parthians who conquered the Gandhāran region prior to the Kuśāṇas also retained Hellenistic influences there while instilling Iranian ones as well. The garnet ring - bezel seal dates to the Kuśāṇa Period. It exhibits traits similar to a Kaniṣka I seal (cited as S 1 in Callieri’s Seal and Sealings) which is also similar to U.7.1 (in the same book, and possibly a bit later according to comparisons noted by Callieri on page 189). The deity is named Wes in the 2011 Catalogue. With no indication of an inscription, a liṅga, bull or ascetic’s hair, one could wonder why this Hellenized figure, in spite of its multiplicity, would be called ‘Weš’ and would be part of the current discussion. The next two bronze seals address this issue.

Two bronze double-hoop-handled seals (07.01.11; Inv. No. GKM xx 86 and 07.01.12; GKM 805 in Pl. 6) relate closely to Kuśāṇa coin types. Falk maintains that the god on the reverse copies the reverse of a Kaniṣka I gold coin. Joe Cribb shows, via an example, that the “two seals are based on a gold stater of Huviṣka, with reverse die as in Gobbl 1984, type 308.10 and 11”;

Cribb’s Huviṣka example is illustrated in Pl.7. Both seals show a four-armed figure holding three of the same attributes as the figure on the garnet ring - bezel seal, above but Inv. No. GKM xx86 is inscribed with the Bactrian legend ‘Oešo’

That permits bringing the above garnet ring into the orbit of Oešo/Śiva. The figure’s slight dehanchement pose reminds of Heracles’ posture. Oešo/Śiva holds the trident and antelope in his upper and lower left hands and the thunderbolt and tilted vase in his upper and lower right hands. The tilted vase is of a Persian type according to Boyce and not a Brahman’s kamaṇḍalu. She proposes that the tilted vase is a libation
vase since water drops sometimes flow from it. Its association with water, she states, implies that the eastern Iranians continued to see their god Weš (or Bactrian, ‘Oešo’), as bringer of water through rain. Her suggestion goes a long way towards explaining the presence of the trident and the thunderbolt on both the seals and coins. Remembering the continuation of Hellenic influences in Gandhāra, we connect the trident with Poseidon, the Olympian whose domain is water. The trident is the main attribute of the ‘God of the Sea’. His brother is Zeus, God of all the Olympians, who rules the sky and the upper regions. Zeus is armed with the thunderbolt which he can shake to produce storms with lightning, thunder and presumably rains. If therefore Oešo is a bringer of rain, these attributes suit him well. Quite wonderfully, they are also cognizances known in Greater India. An indigenous association exists for the trident, or triśūla. A śūla, a sort of spear or sharp lance was used in the Vedic śūlagava ritual to Śiva’s forerunner, namely Rudra. The śūla was probably used to impale the ox or bull as an offering to Rudra. The interface between śūla and triśūla may have resulted in the sort of staff seen on a clay Gandhāran sealing surrounded by auspicious symbols (15.03.07; Inv.No. GKc 401 Pl. 8). The thunderbolt, or vajra is Vedic Indra’s designated attribute. However, Rudra is the only Vedic deity who can also wield Indra’s vajra. As for the vase, it could remind of the ascetic’s kamaṇḍalalu which, however, is more of a vessel which can be oblong; in some cases it has a handle or a spout. Its symbolic association with asceticism works well with Śiva (as perhaps seen on the Rṣikesh statue, mentioned above).

Though only half of the fifth, a quartz seal, remains its features are those appearing with Oešo/Śiva (07.01.10; Inv. No. GKg 010; Pl. 9). The male, dressed in a dhoti, stands frontally on a base line and faces to his right. His sacred thread is prominent. Two of his four arms remain. He holds the thunderbolt/vajra in his upper left and has an animal skin draped over his lower left arm. That hand may hold a vase.
The finest Oešo/Śiva seal in this Collection with respect to modeling and imagery (07.01.07; Inv.No.GKg 001 PL. 10) is an agate seal with an inscription in the Bactrian ‘monumental script’ which Nicholas Sims-Williams identified and found to be typical of Kušāna coins and inscriptions. A personal name seems to be inscribed on this seal 41. The four-armed male with the ascetic’s topknot is seated on the back of a humped bull, resting on folded legs. The yajñopavīta crosses his bare chest. These attributes, together with the raised liṅga seen through his dhoti, plus the bull bespeak of Śiva 42. However, the attributes blend well with both Śiva and Oešo. A trident (triśūla) is in the upper right; a wheel (cakra?) is in his lower right; the thunderbolt/vajra is in his upper left and an oblong shaped vase (kamaṇḍalu?) is below. The wheel can be found on two exceptional Kušāna gold coins minted during the reign of Huviṣka (2nd half of the second century A.D.). One, showing a three-headed, four-armed ithyphallic god [indicated by the halo], is inscribed with the name ‘Oešo’ (J1); the other is with a single-headed, four-armed ithyphallic figure (I1). 43 Seal Inv. No. GKg 001 and its comparisons are important because they indicate that Kušāna artisans, aware of śaiva iconography, seem to apply it to Oešo (indicated by the inscribed coin J 1), or, are content to allow for an ambivalency. To repeat: the Huviṣka coin (J1) indicates that the wheel, four-arms, three differentiated heads and a raised phallus can be attributes of a deity labeled Oešo; seal Inv. No. GK g 001 likewise depicts a four armed, ithyphallic male with many attributes that can work for both Oešo and Śiva, as will be enlarged upon below. The same tendency towards ambiguity is demonstrated by a six-armed figure both on a Kušāna coin and on a post-Kušāna carving from Akhun Dheri dating to c. 3rd-4th century AD. 44 The three headed, six-armed male with the raised liṅga on the carving certainly holds a preponderance of śaiva - or better multivalent - attributes: vajra, staff of the presumed trident; vase. Standing in front of the bull who licks
his feet as on Vāsudeva I coins, he is seen with the yajñopavīta and ascetic locks, plus the third eye. Yet a good two hundred years earlier, a number of these traits were already featured on a copper of Huviṣka found on a British Museum coin (No. 1990 - 8 -20-2) bearing the Bactrian inscription ‘Oešo’. 45

II. Assessment of Oešo’s and Śiva’s shared iconography in pre - though - Kuṣāṇa times.

Why is there ambivalency? “Why is Oešo attributed śaiva traits?” Or, conversely “Why is a deity with śaiva traits not called ‘Śiva’ when the name ‘Śiva’ (or the epithet ‘śiva’) is attested in Gandhāra from the 1st c. A.D. through Kuṣāṇa times (for example, at Taxila, at Chilas II, and with the Bimaran reliquary)?46 This is especially odd since both Oešo and Śiva are not minor deities whose identities are interchangeable. Could it be that the populace in antiquity understood the meaning of the symbolic language, or is the ambiguity registered by modern scholars more correct? The latter position can be illustrated in the writings of Frantz Grenet. He considers the Iranian name identifies the Hindu god Śiva as early as the Všm coins and throughout the coinage of the Kuṣāṇa rulers. Whereas the iconographic type stems first from the imagery of Heracles, a change occurs from Kaniṣka’s issues onwards with the god exhibiting three heads, four arms, the vajra, a fawn (a possible allusion to a mythic antelope), the water flask (possibly connected with the rājāsuya).47 In brief, this view considers the god depicted on the coins of virtually all the Kuṣāṇa rulers as the Indian Śiva who is named Oešo. 48 A nuanced variant, offered by Cribb, contends that the Śiva-like images on Kuṣāṇa coins are related to both Śiva and Heracles but represent the Zoroastrian god Oešo, a later development from the Avestan wind god. 49 Tanabe goes further. Whereas the god called ‘Oešo’ on the coins may have some features associated with Śiva that does not mean,
according to Tanabe, that this god is Śiva, only that the former shared some iconographic features with the latter. 50

II. 1. Comparison of śaiva attributes from Indian sites with Oešo’s markers on the above described seals.

Just how many features do these two deities share? To get an idea of the actual extent of śaiva iconography on Kuṣāṇa Oešo/Śiva coinage and seals, it is necessary to determine which of the attributes relate to Śiva’s Hindu attributes in the pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa art of the Indian subcontinent. Śiva’s earliest Hindu imagery is found at sites located along a tīrtha network going from Andhra Pradesh to the upper reaches of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā river systems. Located on Hindu pilgrimage routes, some ancient sites, exposed to the circulation of ideas and customs, were able to translate these stimuli into an incipient śaiva iconography wherefrom it blossomed into a foundational corpus. 51 Four studies cover these sites. To the three already cited in fns. 4 and 5, namely by G. Kreisel, N.P. Joshi and my paper also in the Meister volume, we may add the 2013 volume on the Mathura School which contains a few new śaiva fragments. 52 What follows is a list of Oešo/Śiva attributes on the six seals described above and their occurrence in the contemporaneous śaiva art at Indian sites. Although this comparison is limited to the attributes on a few seals, the findings probably would have wider application because the attributes on these seals are prevalent on many Kuṣāṇa coins and seals:

1. Trident - Not evident anywhere except on Ujjain tribal coins (problematic whether depicting Śiva, see Kreisel, pp. 22- 23) and late Kuṣāṇa - pre Gupta 3rd century AD. Saṅkīsa (U.P.) seals showing Śiva with trident, as noted by N.P. Joshi.
2. Thunderbolt - Not evident anywhere.
3. Vase or Water Pot - small pot, not tilted thus no indication of fluid; evident in the Guḍimallan Śiva Liṅga; the Bhita Pañcamukha Liṅga, the Mūsānagar Śiva Relief, the Rṣikeśa Śiva statue, the Philadelphia standing Śiva. The pot is considered a kamaṇḍalu.
4. Pelt - worn or held on body, not evident.
5. Hand-held Horned Animal - Guḍimallan Śiva Liṅga.
6. Club - only occurrence on Ujjain coins where Joshi sees Śiva with daṇḍa and trident. Probably Balarāma, not Śiva.
7. Multiple heads - no true Indian three-headed examples are evident, nor examples of animal and human ancillary heads. Four faces on a Liṅga, or, three faces superimposed by a fourth are both noted, but four faces are not a Gandhāran feature until the 3rd century. The unique example is a fragment in the Linden Museum. Four-headed addorsed standing Śiva with side heads is invented in Mathura.
8. Multiple arms: whereas four arms are common on Kuṣāṇa coins there is but one unique Indian Kuṣāṇa Śiva example, a statue. It comes from Mathura portraying a four-armed Śiva standing in front of his Liṅga (Pl. 11).
9. Ěrdhvaretas: (erect phallus) - rather common attribute, beginning with Śunga Rṣikeśa Śiva statue; standing pillar at Mūsānagar; and continuing on some Kuṣāṇa pieces, especially Ardhanārī examples noted by Kreisel. There is no Ardhanārī, to the best of my knowledge, in Gandhāran art dating to the Kuṣāṇa period.
10. Yajñopavīta - begins on Indian Śiva icons in pre- Kuṣāṇa period and becomes usual in the Kuṣāṇa period. See Kreisel, under upavīta.
11. Bull - begins to be represented as Śiva’s vāhana in Mathura art during Kuṣāṇa times. But it is depicted on a unique example (as stated above - GMM 3340); the connection of the bull to Śaivism on B. C. tribal coins is problematic (Keisel, pp. 93 - 94).
II.2 Conclusion: Śiva’s distinctive attribute which is associated with Oešo is the raised liṅga.

This comparison highlights some important findings:
1) only two features (the ārdhvaretas and the bull,) on the Northern seals (and coins) are used in Kuṣāṇa śaiva iconography in the South, that is, the Indian subcontinent’ s conceptualization of śaiva art and iconography; the humped bull, however, being known also in ancient Iran could have a multivalent function, as do the majority of characteristics; see next;
2) The majority of attributes function on two levels; being multivalent they can be absorbed by both Iranian and Indian religious beliefs which can therefore depict them. The trident connotes the realm of water (associated with Oešo, though initially with Poseidon, whose bust and symbol are already found on the coinage of the Greek kings of Bactria and Indo-Scythian [Saka] coinage). The trident can also evoke the śūla (associated with Rudra although it cannot be cited as an attribute of Śiva until the late Gupta Period). The thunderbolt connoting water/ rain evocative of Zeus and held by Oešo, can also remind of the Indian vajra; the Zoroastrian water vessel can also suggest the Indian kamanḍalu; the Zoroastrian kusti equates with the Vedic sacred thread or yajñopavīta. The bull, though allied later with Śiva in the South, has a long, prior exposure to the west of Gandhāra (see fn. 54 above), and later on Northern coinage. Both Indo-Greeks and Indo-Scythians used the bull on their coinage where possibly it could designate their presence in South Asia;
3) The horn- held animal could reflect influence from Roman coinage according to Göbl (1984. Pl. 176; Group 19;)
4) Perhaps the biggest surprise is the weak correlation between the number of multiple heads and arms in Gandhāran and Indian śaiva forms. These two
attributes are nearly always cited by scholars as śaивite features in the Kuśāṇa imagery of Oešo, but this seems not to be the case. Perhaps because these multiplicity features are a hallmark of post- Kuśāṇa śaiva imagery, scholars have assumed them to be present earlier, thus superimposing them upon Oešo and then identifying him as Śiva.

III. The Nature of Oešo

In view of these results we may now assume that the deity inscribed ‘Oešo’ on Kaniṣka I coinage is Oešo and not Śiva in disguise, and also that Oešo begins to be represented on Vīma’s coins since the deity on his coins is sufficiently similar to the subsequent inscribed ones. This conclusion therefore concurs with the observation of those scholars who do not consider, based on WšmĀ’s numismatic legend, the king to be a devotee of Śiva (see fn. 56). Reformulating therefore the main question, we now ask: “What is there in Oešo’s nature that makes it appropriate to depict him with the ūrdhvaretas, and attributes that conform to both Zoroastrian and śaiva concepts.

III.1 Review of Humbach’s theory of 1975

The place to begin is with Humbach’s theory in print since 1975 ⁵⁸. Humbach’s research concluded that Weš is derived from Avestan Vaiiuš, that is, Vayush, the Wind God in the Zoroastrian religion of Iran. Thus Bactrian Oešo on Kuśāṇa coins and seals, pronounced Weš, (and equivalent to Middle Persian ‘Way’) is called ‘wyšprkr’ in Sogdian, (i.e. Weš-parkar; lit. Vāyu whose activity is above)⁵⁹. This explanation has been widely accepted. The Sogdian version of the Vessantara Jātaka (917) assigns three faces to Weš-parkar and he is depicted as such in an c.8th century Sogdian mural inscribed with his name. It would seem that Oešo’s three faces on Kuśāṇa coins, even on Vīma’s coppers, are reflected in a Sogdian context.⁶⁰
Humbach made other important observations. He noted that Vāyu’s three faces could visibly express the complex nature of the Wind God. The ancient Iranians formulated both a physical and a meta-physical Wind God. They venerated Vata, who personifies “the wind that blows”, thus the physical wind, according to Mary Boyce. This deity seems to correspond to OADO on Kušāṇa coins. As the physical wind, he is shown, both on coins and in one known Gandhāran sculpture, with upraised hair and an inflated mantle which he holds above his head. Quite noteworthy is that later images in Indian art retain a memory of the Wind God on Kušāṇa coinage and sculpture. The other Wind God, Vāyu, is more of a cosmological principle than a phenomenal power. Vāyu is the life-breath which animates living things, but abandons them at death and thereby causes death. As a result, from ancient Indo-Iranian times onward Vāyu has two aspects: “harmful” and in Yašt 15.5 beneficial. Middle Iranian texts attributed Vāyu a good and bad - plus a neutral aspect. Perhaps the three aspects are symbolized by the three heads.

III.2 The Vedic complement to this theory: Vedic Vāyu,

It is well known that there is also a Vedic Wind God called Vāyu. While the commonality between the Vedic and Avestan divinities is recognized, a most important shared attribute has never received sufficient attention in discussing the Oešo/Śiva problem. Vedic Vāyu may also have a good and a bad side. Vedic Vāyu’s bi-polar nature may be deduced since the term śiva is applied to him in the Rig Veda (RV 8.26.23). The RV applies the term adjectivally. Vedic Vāyu is not identified with the deity Śiva whose divinity develops later. Vāyu has a śiva or auspicious nature, inviting the strong possibility that Vedic Vāyu also has an inauspicious nature. Not only is Vedic Vāyu likely to share an ambiguous nature with Avestan Vāyu but also with Rudra, the Vedic forerunner of the god Śiva. Rudra’s formidable side in the
Rig Veda is ūgra etc. and his gracious, auspicious side is also called ŝiva as well as mīdhvas synonymous with ŝiva. 67 Vedic Vāyu and Rudra have additional traits in common. Vāyu, like Rudra can father the Maruts, who are storm gods (RV 1.134.4), and like Rudra (RV 2.33.2), Vedic Vāyu has healing powers, perhaps expressive of the purifying character of the wind. It should not go unnoticed that Rudra’s connection to the Maruts ultimately results in Šiva’s absorbing traits relating to wind, storm, rain - and ambivalency. Indeed, capacity for bi-polar action is a trait shared by high gods in the oldest stratum of the Vedic religion; this trait may reach back into Indo- Iranian times. Indeed the probability of an Indo-Iranian belief in wind having both good and bad traits which crystallized into a wind deity having a bi-polar nature has been already suggested by Jan Gonda.68 Thus, Ŝesō and Šiva - to answer the reformulated question - inherit to some extent, a bi-polar nature, including an atmospheric quality of both beneficial and violent air.

III.3 An example which focuses on Ŝesō’s benevolent side.

A Gandhāran sealing in the ur Rahman Collection may indicate the term designating the benevolent side of Ŝesō. The clay sealing shows a male standing frontally in a slight dehanchement posture (07.01.03; Inv. No. GKc 589; Pl.12).69 The folds of his dhoti are seen around the legs. He holds a spear or lance in his right hand and supports what looks like an inflated bag or pouch on his left arm. 70 The seal’s inscription ‘muzhduwān’, in the older Bactrian ‘monumental script’ provides the Kušāṇa dating. Muzhduwān meaning ‘the gracious One’, is a term virtually synonymous with Šiva 71. Muzhduwān, derived from a form cognate with Vedic mīdhvāmŚ 72 (on mīdhvāmŚ -, see above), may be a proper noun, or epithet of the deity Ŝesō (MPers. ‘Way’) - as discussed by Sims-Williams73, and as considered a
possibility by Falk in connection with sealing no. GKc 589. ‘Muzhduwān’, the Zoroastrian good, or gracious One is mentioned on the Rabatak Inscription describing one of the chief deities in the Kuṣāṇa pantheon. Presumably he was worshipped by the official of the Rabatak inscription, and by Kuṣāṇa rulers. The semantic similarity between the terms ‘muzhduwān’ and ‘śiva’ - and the former being a derivative of a synonym of the latter - require that we take a closer look at the image on the sealing in Pl. 12 in order to understand more about the deity termed as the good or gracious One.

The operative word here is ‘good’. Whereas, in the aggregate, the trident, thunderbolt and water vessel that Oešo holds on seals and coins remind that he brings rain, these attributes refer to the result of his good aspect but they do not per se capture the meaning ‘good’ or ‘gracious’. The concept ‘good’ or ‘gracious’ is however sufficiently important to appear via the term muzhduwān in the Rabatak inscription, and on the seal discussed above. It must be registered that muzhduwān also appears on a rare Kaniṣka I coin type having minimal resemblance to either seal GKc 589 (Pl. 12), or to Oešo’s iconography on other coins or seals inscribed ‘Oešo’, or, to śaiva attributes in the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathura. Since this muzhduwān figure does not show typical śaiva markers, these rare coins do not enter the current discussion whose fundamental aim is to understand why ‘Oešo’ inscribed images are represented with śaiva markers, and multivalent (i.e. Hindu and Zoroastrian) attributes.

The identity of the figure on sealing Inv. No. GKc 589 (Pl. 12) is largely contingent upon the hand-held attributes. The spear or lance recalls both the trident handle and the śūla, thus an emblem probably within the domains of Oešo (via Poseidon) and Rudra/Śiva. The formless object resting on his left arm is more likely to be an inflated pouch than a bird (see fn. 70). A bird
has somewhat greater definition on Gandhāran seals and is not quite as bloated as the object resting on the figure’s left arm. 78 It would be easy to think of an air bag resting on the arm of the muzhduwān Wind God. But Tanabe in a paper on imagery of Wind Gods states that “Classical, Roman and Kushan wind gods have no wind-bag”. 79 He finds no iconographic influence from the Greek myth of Aiolos and his bag of winds upon Central Asian art and beyond (via Kuśāṇa imagery). This finding makes the ‘air bag’ proposal weak unless one could detect this attribute in the imagery of a pre-or-post Kuśāṇa Wind God from the Northwest. To date, a wind bag cannot be found. Another possibility has greater promise. The inflated shape on the arm of Muzhduwān on seal Inv. No. GKc 589 is very much like the shape found in a scene on an embossed silver dish perhaps from the Dehra Ismail Khan district of the Punjab; the dish is dated to the third or fourth century A.D. (Pl. 14). 80 The scene is described as a drinking scene and the shapeless item is identified as a wineskin. But a skin need not only contain wine; today in the Northwest, skins inflated with water can be used to navigate or cross a river. Presumably skins could contain water in antiquity as well. If then Muzhduwān on sealing Inv. No. GKc 589 were holding a pouch or skin filled with water, the notion of ‘good or ‘gracious’ could easily refer to Oešo’s function as bringer of water. It would make perfect sense in a Northwestern context that the Zoroastrian libation vessel held by Oešo on some coins and seals is converted, in this instance, to its Gandhāran equivalent, namely a skin containing water, which ‘the gracious One’ could hold as bringer of (rain) water. I understand muzhduwān in this instance to refer to the good aspect of the Wind God Oešo (or Weš), and propose that Kuśāṇa sealing Inv. No. GKc 589 shows the good aspect of the Wind God holding (possibly) the handle of a trident or a śūla, and a water bag.
If it is accepted that the iconography and inscription on sealing GKc 589 highlights, by way of a term and attribute, the good aspect of Oešo, then it means that the good aspect was sufficiently significant to adherents to warrant representation. One needs to ask how the concept 'good', defining Oešo, could be represented on seals and coins solely in a visual manner - without recourse to a term (an adjective or noun). None of the other seals and sealings discussed above carry a term signifying ‘good’. The only term on most of the Kušāṇa coins and seals described above is ‘Oešo’, the name of the deity. It is also worth remembering that no previous Iranian iconography for Oešo existed. As will be explained below, Oešo’s depiction on Kušāṇa pieces is an invention composed of visual symbols which could be understood in the areas where the pieces circulated. I have concluded that Oešo's liṅga is a visual metaphor, working as a 'text'; that is, it says something without using words. Oešo’s ‘liṅga’ conveys a meaning other than the actual depicted penis. I have concluded that Oešo’s raised liṅga predicates ‘goodness’. Here are the steps leading to my conclusion:

1. The raised phallus (and the bull, to a lesser extent) are the main Kušāṇa iconographic markers on Oešo coming from the domain of Śiva. On the Vedic significance of ‘liṅga’ please see Appendix I, No. 4; it does not apply to seal GKc 589.

2. What is there in the nature of Oešo that makes it appropriate for him to have a raised phallus. First, it is noteworthy that the majority of Oešo’s iconography has meaning in both the Indian and Iranian contexts.

3. Next, on the Iranian (or Avestan) side, the Wind God, Vayush, has a good/bad & a neutral side in Middle Iranian texts.

4a. A particular term is used specifically to describe the good or gracious side of Vayush. That term, 'muzhduwān' is cognate with a Vedic term applied to Rudra - forerunner of Śiva, and importantly, that term is semantically similar to the adjective 'śīva'.
4b. Next, one has to ask if the 'good' side of the Wind God is to be visually represented what symbol could be adopted for this purpose on Kuṣāṇa seals and coins.

5. To continue, if 'muzhduwān' has a similar meaning to 'śīva', and if the god representing the 'śīva' quality is Śiva whose most discreet symbol is his raised phallus, then- I propose - the raised phallus can likewise be the symbol used for Oešo in his 'muzhduwān' nature.

6. The raised phallus on Oešo is a visual metaphor used to refer to the 'muzhduwān' nature of the Zoroastrian Wind God, whose iconography was being formulated during the period under discussion.

7. As to the multiple arms, I indicate below, that this feature is unlikely to come from the śaivite sector.

I am not saying that Oešo with the erect phallus was identified as Śiva. I agree with Humbach who has declared in his EJVS 2014 paper that Oešo with Śiva’s attribute is not meant to be Śiva; he states “it makes sure that the characteristics of Śiva were to a large extent characteristics of the Iranian Vaiiu in non-orthodox traditions of the Iranian religion” 81. The common denominator accounting for their shared characteristics, I propose, is twofold: a similar ambiguous nature - referred to by similar terms, and, a similar connection to atmospheric wind. In consequent these similarities could assist in peeling off iconographic symbols from the śaiva god (which, in the main, mirror meaning in the Zoroastrian religion), and attach them to the other god whose anthropomorphic representations were being newly formulated. The totality of Oešo’s iconography, including the śaiva signs, are a visual compendium emphasizing - with clarity - the goodness and graciousness of an Iranian/ Zoroastrian god having no previous visual record.
III.4 Inventing Oešo’s Iconography

Zoroastrianism, as is well-known, was initially aniconic. Eventually the deities of this religion were depicted by adopting iconographies from the art of other cultures whose symbolism could interface with Zoroastrian beliefs. In our analysis of the seven seals and sealings in the ur Rahman Collection, the arts of the Greek, Roman, Hellenistic and Greater Indian spheres are found to have had a defining influence on the Northwestern imagery of Oešo on Kušāna coins, seals and carvings. Whereas the authoritative work on the chronological and interlinked progression of these sources has yet to be written, a synthesis is building. In the paper Fabrizio Sinisi delivered at the 2010 European Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Vienna, he isolated - drawing and building upon the prior works of Göbl and Callieri - the three major sources for imagery on Kušāna coins and seals and the routes by which the sources entered Greater India. As the paper is still unpublished, details and examples will await its publication, but the sources can be summarized as coming from Rome, from Iran (via the Šakas, Parthians and the Indo-Parthians), and from the subcontinent itself. I would add that the subcontinent offered symbolism and iconography from Brahmanism and also from Hellenism since artisans trained in the Classical tradition were still active in Pre-Kušāna urban centers located in Gandhāra, as for example, at Barikot, Swat. Artistic interplay from these national and international areas of influence had an important affect upon Gandhāran art especially in devising depictions where no prior artistic conventions existed. Another example can be cited in an analysis I did on the iconographic sources impacting a Gandhāran Buddhist relief. I found that influences from Rome and Parthia (especially Palmyrene art) converged to invent the image of grieving Māyā at her son’s Parinirvāṇa, at a time when Indian art had no funerary precedents for representing a mourning Queen. In the volume ‘On the Cusp of an Era’ (see fn. 82) more examples
come to the fore. Multiple arms of Oešo should have come from Brahmanic art of India though the source is unlikely to have been śaiva art. If only one Kuṣāṇa example - from c. 2nd century A.D. Mathura - of a four-armed Śiva sculpture is known to date (Pl. 11), it probably did not stimulate the appearance of four-armed Oešo beginning with Kaniṣṭha I coins and seals. Viṣṇu and other vaiṣṇava deities were more commonly depicted with four arms. Future research may wish to investigate a possible Vaiṣṇava source. Already the above noted Huviṣka gold coin, inscribed ‘Oešo’ has the god holding a wheel which ought to have a connection to Vaiṣṇavism. Another four-armed god, on a Bactrian inscribed seal of the 4th - 5th century, is being worshipped by an Iranian nobleman whose clothing and tiara suggest his Central Asian origin (a Sasanian or Sogdian, perhaps)84. This seal, an agate gem from The British Museum (Acc. No. 1892. 11- 3.98) indicates the need for further exploration into the vaiṣṇava influence. The seal also anticipates the possible role that later Iranians played in continuing earlier iconographic and religious traditions eastward, across Asia (see below) 85.

IV. Post-Kuṣāṇa Conflation of elements pertaining to both deities

The conceptual linkage I am postulating between Oešo and Śiva - foundation for Oešo’s adoption of śaiva attributes - was already noticed by Humbach. He described in his 1975 paper, textual passages in which a series of gods are named 86. Specifically, two Sogdian texts of Buddhist content cite a list of equivalences. In a passage added to the Vessantara Jātaka the god Wešpārker is “paralleled to Mahādeva the current name of Śiva.” 87 In another Sogdian Buddhist text (P 8. 41 - 42 ), their equivalency is corroborated. Soon after Humbach published his groundbreaking philological analyses, visual evidence confirmed his findings. Fragments of Sogdian wall paintings from Panjikent have been recognized as portraying Wešpārker with śaiva characteristics. Now comes exciting new testimony from Dunhuang. It
also takes cognizance of a linkage between the Wind God and Śiva. 88 Whereas Panjikent continues the innovation started in the Kuṣāṇa Period, showing Oešo with some features that relate to Śiva, here in a mid-6th century cave at Dunhuang, Śiva and the Wind God are united into one image.

“Cave 285 of the Mogao Grottoes was completed around 539 CE”, writes Zhang Yuanlin who has published an analysis of murals on the western wall that depict what appear to be Hindu images in a Buddhist cave. 89 He refers to them as three guardian deities, namely Maheśvara, Āditya and Candra, the Sun and Moon deities; these are the subject of his analysis. However, there are other ‘Hindu-like’ representations in this cave that do not receive as full an analysis. Zhang notices Nārāyaṇa and his family - which includes Indra - as well as members of Maheśvara’s family. These other Hindu-like representations need further research.

It is important to dwell on the author’s entire description of Śiva’s portrayal - here at the eastern most terminal of the Silk Road - which reflects knowledge of purāṇic Śiva (Pl. 15 a & b). [Oešo’s śaiva iconography on the Kuṣāṇa coins, seals and sculptures is of course pre- purāṇic]. It is best to quote Mr. Zhang who is (among other appointments) Research Fellow at the Dunhuang Academy and whose description therefore is based on on-site inspection.

The image of six-armed Maheśvara is crowned and is “the only example at Dunhuang from the period of the Northern Dynasties (420 - 589 CE). He wears a hide skirt and sits on a blue bull in lalitāsana (half-lotus position). We can see his three faces: the central one looks dignified like a guardian, the right one looks elegant like a Bodhisattva, while the left one looks very ferocious like a yakṣa. His two upper arms hold the sun and the moon respectively. The right arm in the middle seems to hold a bell and the left
one seems to hold a short arrow. The lower two hands are in front of the chest, with something like a bow in the right one, while an indistinct object is in the left. Below are images of his two sons, Kumāra who looks like a child and Vināyaka, the Hindu god Ganeśa who has an elephant head and a human body. And correspondingly, on the lowest register are...two of the four Guardian Kings".90

The description - mentioning the bull, a hide dhoti, differentiation of the three heads with Aghora to the left side and a peaceful face to the right, plus (as stated elsewhere) three eyes, erect penis 91, and the appearance of the two sons - verifies that it must be Śiva who is depicted. It is thus of considerable interest that the image in the crown is unique and not part of Śiva’s usual iconography. Indeed Zhang states, after having duly registered images of Śiva across Central Asia, “no similar example has been found outside India except in Cave 285”. 92 In 1997 Sasaki Ritsuko identified the figure in Śiva’s crown as a wind god. She determined that the depiction is that of a non-Han male holding in his two arms both sides of an inflated bag (or scarf).93 The non- Chinese features of the male in the crown can still be made out (Pls. 16 & 17). There is precedent in Central Asia for the wind god with both devices, bag and scarf. His inflated overhead scarf can be seen at Kizil Cave 38, at Dunhuang Cave 249 and, as mentioned above, on Kuṣāṇa coins and in one known Gandhāran sculpture where OADO is pictured this way94. An inflated bag full of water as proposed for the Kuṣāṇa Muzhduwān seal (Pl 12; Inv. No. GKc 589), has additional precedents. According to Tanabe’s investigations, a wind-bag or pouch would have much greater validity at a site such as Dunhuang. He states that Chinese wind gods of the sixth century almost always carried a wind - bag in their arms. Tanabe goes on to make a most thought-provoking supposition: the wind-bags depicted in Chinese and Dunhuang art might have been derived from the winebags of
Central Asian wine-sellers visiting China where they would have originated in the late 5th - early 6th century. 95

What is to be deduced from a 6th century wall painting at Dunhuang representing Śiva crowned with the Wind God? To date this is a unique combination which cannot be extrapolated from the purāṇic mythology of Śiva. And yet the sons of Śiva seated below him do demonstrate an awareness of developments in purāṇic lore. One thinks immediately of the progressive linkages between Oešo and Śiva - which I have espoused - achieving here visual fruition. And yet, the image in the crown does not resemble Oešo, nor Muzhdwān on Kuṣāṇa coins and seals, nor the Sogdian Wešpārker, though it does roughly recall the Kuṣāṇa Wind God OADO. The fusion of Wind God and Śiva is remarkable. Somehow the gods’ ancient commonalities based on bi-polarism and atmospheric wind have surfaced here. The iconic blend results from the interplay of numerous modules relating to Hinduism and Zoroastrianism without directly imitating any one. This characteristic - to combine characteristics from several cultures and to assemble them in new ways by artists familiar with Hindu and Zoroastrian traditions - pertains, according to Zhang, to the Sun and Moon Deities as well. He notices that artists blended these foreign traditions with Chinese Buddhist symbols (a merging already apparent in the Wind God’s pouch, discussed above).

Whoever created or patronized these images in Cave 285 should have had some exposure to Hinduism, to Zoroastrianism and to Indian and Chinese Buddhism of the early sixth century. Zhang postulates, with excellent reasoning, that the most likely candidates are the Sogdians who “participated in the construction of other caves at Mogao.” 96 The suggestion invites further investigation, which in the light of the present demonstration, holds considerable promise. Lokesh Chandra likewise sees the presence of Central Asian, thus non-Chinese, artists working in this
Additional research may find evidence that Sogdians not only worshipped Wešpārker but also kept alive an equivalency between him and Śiva which could result in the Dunhuang fused image. Incentive to investigate further comes from the words of the c. 6th century Chinese text, the Liang-ching-hsin-chi. It mentions the “Hu” people, that is, the Sogdians and their beliefs. Mode, quoting Eichhorn, renders the passage as follows: “The Iranian (Hu) god of the sky of the Western Countries is the one called Mo-hsi-shou-lo (Maheśvara) in Buddhist Sutras.” Should we understand here that the Zoroastrian God on High, (i.e. Vāyu), is the one called Śiva in (some?) Buddhist Sūtras? I believe so.

Thus far we have concentrated on evidence demonstrating how Śiva left his mark- or his sign (liṅga ) - on the Wind God and we have followed this engagement from the Kuṣāṇas to the Sogdians’ Central Asian lands and ultimately to the border of China where Sogdian presence can be documented in the vicinity of Dunhuang as early as the 4th century. The reverse, Oešo’s iconography going southward from Gandhāra during the Kuṣāṇa era and influencing Śiva’s depiction, seems also to be happening. Indicative of śaiva iconographic readiness to absorb Oešo’s markers is attested on a relief housed in the Peshawar Museum (Pl. 18; No. 850 ). Oešo’s attributes are held by an ithyphallic male who we know is meant to be Śiva. The figure’s identity is secure because he appears together with other Brahmanic (e.g. Skanda/Kārttikeya, Brahmā or a Brahman) and Buddhist (e.g. a Buddha) deities who are emanating from a Bodhisattva. The trident and vase, attributes of Oešo, (but absent in contemporary Mathura śaiva imagery), are held by the male figure. In this context it is unlikely that the figure is Oešo. Why would the Zoroastrian Wind God be in the company of Hindu and Buddhist deities, and project from a Bodhisattva? This Peshawar relief forecasts the possibility that absorptions of Oešo’s multivalent attributes could affect India’s śaiva iconography. The several
anomalous Gandhāran statues described at the outset of this paper may owe their unusualness to being early Northwestern Śiva icons heavily influenced by Oešo’s iconography. Perhaps the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the standing Śiva-s from Gandhāra (Pl.1 in the Berlin Asian Art Museum, Rome’s Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale, and Pl. 2 formerly in the Sherrier Collection) are to be explained as being in the forefront of absorbing aspects of Oešo’s iconography. But, unlike the small Śiva emanating from a Bodhisattva in the Peshawar Museum relief (Pl. 18), there is no context for these Gandhāran statues so we cannot be absolutely sure that they represent Śiva and not Oešo.

It seems a fallacy to think that Kuṣāṇa Oešo/Śiva imagery was confined strictly to Gandhāra; it travelled southward as well. An example is provided by an impression from the same seal as the one excavated at Sari Dheri (Charsadda, near Peshawar, Pakistan), depicting Oešo/Śiva on a Kuṣāṇa token which was also found at Sanghol (in Punjab, India). Whereas the lack of corroboration between North and South Śaiva imagery in the Kuṣāṇa period has been stated at the outset, post-Kuṣāṇa imagery now needs to be considered. Were post-Kuṣāṇa Śiva icons from Mathura, and other sites above the Vindhyas affected by Gandhāran influence?

In order to explain a few iconographic developments in post-Kuṣāṇa Śaiva art, the trend towards incorporating Oešo’s markers into Śiva imagery is postulated. There are indicators that Oešo’s main attributes affected Śiva’s imagery in the Gāndhāra period (see below) and beyond. To prepare for what follows, the trident and vase regularly seen with Oešo on Kaniṣka I coins and seals, and possibly already on Vima Kadphises’ issues (e.g. 07.01. 08; Inv. No. Gkc 416; Pl. 3) will become a rather common feature in Śiva’s Gupta Hindu iconography.

Gandhāran influences further south do not reverse the pivotal role of the Mathura School in establishing the foundation of Indian iconography. Almost
axiomatic is that the Mathura School gave definition to classical Hindu iconography. Whereas this School certainly invented many forms that developed into the later classical norms, in some cases, the post-Kuṣāṇa developments showed modifications stemming from Gandhāra. The case of Śiva’s anthropomorphic imagery exhibits such modification. Figures of this god begin to adopt attributes regularly seen on the few Kuṣāṇa Gandhāran Śiva images, and on Kuṣāṇa Oešo coins and seals. Foremost are the trident and the vase, important attributes in Oešo’s arsenal. A late 4th century relief of Śiva and Pārvatī from Kausambi shows the ithyphallic god holding the water vessel in one of his two hands. He has the ascetic locks and third eye and wears, according to Härtel, a dhoti or else a lion skin, a possibility not cited by Williams. (Of course, the lion skin could hark back to Heracles’ attribute, but the skin and the lion already appear in pre-Kuṣāṇa Śaivite art, as noted above). From the same site comes another standing four-armed Śiva, with jaṭāmukūṭa, the third eye and ūrdhvaretas; he holds the water pot in one hand and the trident in another. The bull in back of Oešo is found on Kuṣāṇa coins and the seals; he occurs with Śiva in a pre-Gupta statue from Mathura (Mathura Museum No. 3340) and in the previously mentioned Akhun Dheri relief, of c. 3rd-4th century AD. Around the 5th century, the bull is often added in statuary: Mathura has a Śiva standing with Pārvatī before Vṛṣa; at Samalaji, ithyphallic Śiva, with jaṭāmukūṭa, four arms, three eyes, stands before Vṛṣa holding the trident and wearing a lion skin. These same elements (plus others) are seen in a 5th century Rajasthani sculpture; here an animal skin is wrapped around the god’s thighs. The skin is still seen in a giant 6th century Śiva stele from Mandasor Fort where the god holds the trident. The intermittent appearance of the lion skin worn by Śiva is another feature occasionally seen on Kuṣāṇa coins. Whereas the lion is not worn by him
in works related to the Mathura School, the lion does appear by the side of Śiva or at the base of a Śiva liṅga. Lastly, in a relief reputedly from the Idar region of Gujarat where the Śakas of the Northwest settled, Śiva holds the trident.

V. Conclusions

The trend I am outlining needs further, fuller consideration for post-Gupta times. The above survey of trends in Śiva’s iconic development and its relationship to the Oešo/Śiva puzzle on Kuṣāṇa coins and seals does permit several provisional conclusions:

1) According to my analysis, the so-called Oešo/Śiva figure on the reverse of Kuṣāṇa coinage is to be identified as Oešo. The god’s attributes have, for the most part, multivalent significance. The iconographic elements that bespeak of Śiva, particularly the ārdhvaretas (perhaps less so the bull), are likely to call attention to the gracious, aspect of the Wind God (who possesses, like Śiva, the opposite aspect as well).

2) When in the past some of Oešo’s attributes on Kuṣāṇa coins and seals have been interpreted as śaiva markers (especially multiple arms and heads, the trident and the vase), scholars have in fact superimposed later (i.e. post-Kuṣāṇa) Śiva attributes upon the depictions of Oešo’s Gandhāran images and called him ‘Śiva’!

3) The initial formulation of Śiva’s purāṇic image in the subcontinent, dating to the Gupta ages, includes salient features from Gandhāran imagery. The process accounting for the development of Śiva’s Hindu iconography during the Gupta Age is strikingly similar to the process accounting for Śri-Lakṣmī’s Gupta imagery. Her representations and those of Śiva showcase some attributes that stem from the Northwest. Some of these remain while others
cease as these gods’ depictions become more complex and more stable during and after the post-Gupta Period. In the final formation of Hindu art, Gandhāra seems to have played a role. Its extent needs to receive greater recognition and further analysis.

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 220th Meeting of the American Oriental Society in St. Louis, March 15, 2010. I wish to thank Nicholas Sims-Williams for reading the paper with a view to alerting me to any incorrect citations to Iranian sources. Should any remain, it is my own doing. I am pleased to acknowledge Joe Cribb’s helpful observations for both the conference presentation and this paper, and Fabrizio Sinisi’s comments on this paper and generously sharing with me his unpublished Vienna presentation. Katsumi Tanabe gave valuable insights. I thank Michael Witzel and Oskar von Hinüber for their comments on the problematic legend found on Wima Kadphises’ gold coins. I appreciate the permission given by Aman ur Rahman to present, in St. Louis, the photos of seals, sealings and tokens from his Collection. Those photos are now used in this paper. When in early 2008 Mr. ur Rahman invited me to work on his Collection, he gave me a set of photos he made of his seal collection. He did this because he asked me to study the iconography of his seals. In the meantime, the seals that I was asked to study (and are used here) have been published in 2011 by Mr. ur Rahman and Harry Falk (see fn. 20). His invitation kindled my interest in studying early seals from the Gandhāran region. This interest has resulted in the publication of three articles of which this is the third. The other two are in South Asian Studies (Vol. 26. 1;2010; 77 -95 ) and Annali (Vol. 71; 2011; 115 - 136).
APPENDIX I:

Demonstration for the Pre-Puranic theological belief that five-headedness represents the Śiva Reality and thus underlies all śaiva cephalic multiplicity renderings

Some scholars may have difficulty in accepting the theoretical primacy of Śiva’s fiveheadedness, whether or not shown explicitly in the art (for example, Hans Bakker in Artibus Asiae, Vol. 58, No.3/4; 1999, 339–342). However the basis for the theological belief in a fivefold Śiva Reality underlying all śaiva iconic forms can be traced from the Vedic texts onwards. As the last sentence makes clear, fivefoldedness is a theological statement and the form, a Pañcamukha Liṅga is its visual expression. A Pañcamukha Liṅga is thus not a form taken by Śiva to demonstrate his powers to his worshippers. It is, rather, an intermediate form taken by the Śiva Reality as the divinity moves from the transcendental realm to the realm of man for his benefit and adoration. [For this reason, the Tilottamā episode in the Mahābhārata (I. 203. 21 - 26) is not part of the analysis of Fivefold Śiva].

The demonstration:

1. The doyen of the Dutch Indological School, Jan Gonda, starts his discussion on the five ‘faces’ of Śiva by noting that the names first occur in the tenth book of the Taittirīya Arāṇyaka, named the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad which he conjectures could date to the 3rd century B.C. (Gonda, p. 42 and fns. 103 & 104 ). The names given in the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad are: Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īśana.
2. I discuss at length the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad in Chapter 10 of my book Many Heads (see especially pp. 119 - 123). A series of mantras which can be called the Rudra Litany (unfolding of the Supreme Deity) indicate how Rudra-Śiva evolved from formlessness to apprehensible form. The intermediate stage is the subtle body of god, which is five-faced. Right after the five individual names are given as cited above, the next verse (286) states “He...is indeed Sadāśiva”.

3. B.N. Sharma provides the only iconographic study on Sadāśiva. Herein he works with the proposition that Sadāśiva is fiveheaded Śiva, represented as a full figure or a Pañcamukhaliṅga. A perusal of the images Sharma includes in his monograph shows that in addition to Pañcamukha Liṅgas, he includes Caturmukha Liṅgas, three- headed busts, three -headed full figures, four- headed full figures and five-headed full figures. He accepts the theory that three headed and four headed forms when rendered in a relief are to be understood as Sadāśiva. Sharma cites the 15th century iconographic text, the Rūpamaṇḍana (IV 92 - 94; see his fn. 7) which states that the fifth face (of Īśana) is beyond the ken of even the Yogīs and is therefore not generally shown. It can simply be represented by the dome of the Caturmukhaliṅga (Sharma pp. 2 -3).

4. My paper “Ritual as Icon” confirms the significance of the Pañcamukha Liṅga as indicated in the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad and insinuates how this intermediate stage is to be understood. The five levels of the Agnicayana brick altar are constructed by means of a ritual named the Agnicayana ritual. In each of the five layers, group of bricks called the mukha (head) bricks are placed. There are five mukha bricks in each layer and they are laid down in a specific pattern. The mukha bricks initiate a series of bricks laid down immediately after to continue building the altar. Importantly, five aṅga or limb bricks come right after the mukha bricks and they are placed in close proximity to the mukha bricks. A unit is formed. That unit (mukha and aṅga)
appears to be the beginning of ‘a body’ in the process of ‘becoming’ or ‘forthcoming’. The anthropomorphic entity evoked in the rite is Rudra, Śiva’s Vedic forerunner. Indeed, at the completion of the building of the altar a chant to Rudra is offered.

If we combine the meaning of mukha (+ aṅga) as derived from the Agnicayana ritual, with the Vedic significance of liṅga (the first, undifferentiated, etheral sign of the Godhead ), then the meaning of mukhaliṅga, specifically ‘pañcamukhaliṅga, beomes apparent: A mukhaliṅga seems to symbolize the theological belief in the forthcoming manifestation of the transcendental Śiva Reality. Specifically, a pañcamukhaliṅga is an icon representing the first part of the body of Śiva projecting out of his own cosmic essence (the Liṅga). These definitions ally themselves with the theological beliefs in the śaiva Āgamas. I discuss specific āgamaic texts in great details in two papers (“Śaiva Temple Forms: Loci of God’s Unfolding Body” in Investigating Indian Art, Berlin 1987; and “From Transcendency to Materiality: Para Śiva, Sadāśiva and Maheśa in Indian Art”, Artibus Asiae, Vol. L, 1/2, 1990 ). Both papers, available in scholarly publications, pre-date my monograph Many Heads etc. and are summarized in my monograph. In addition, both papers have been reprinted in my anthology, Listening to Icons, Vol. I, Indian Iconographic and Iconological Studies, New Delhi, 2016.

In sum, the ancients understood divine manifestation by analogy. Rudra-Śiva moves towards manifestation as a baby moves towards birth: the head projects first.

5. It remains to cite images associated with the Pañcamukha concept. The excellent paper by Maxwell, “The Five Aspects of Śiva in Theory, Iconography and Architecture” is a good place to start. He summarizes the
remarks in the Taittirīya Arānyaka and in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa (3. 48. 1 - 8) on the fivefold nature of Śiva. Then he cites the following icons: Five-faced Śiva in the Trilokanātha Temple, Mandi; Five-bodied Śiva in the Pañcavaktra Temple, Maṇḍi; Pañcāvatana Śiva-Liṅga (in the National Museum, New Delhi); Pañcāyatana – Caturmukha -Liṅga from Kalyāṇpur. The program on the face of two Śiva Temples ends his demonstration. To these I can add earlier examples: The Bhita Pañcamukha Liṅga; The following examples from Gerd Kreisel (Die Śiva-Bildwerke der Mathura Kunst, Stuttgart, 1986): Full Figure: Abb. 67 a- c (GMM E 12 ) where V.S. Agrawala finds the possible trace of a fifth head on top and depressed (A Catalogue of the Brahmānical Images in Mathura Art, Lucknow, 1951; p. 25); differentiated heads on a Caturmukha Liṅga, where the central liṅga dome represents the fifth head are in Abb. 57,58, 59, 60, 61, 62. For Full figured differentiated four-headed Śiva around a central Liṅga, see Abb 66. Numerous miniature paintings from the former hill stations of North India depict Śiva with five heads (See Sharma; Pls. XX - XXV).

I shall end by quoting the doyen of Indian art history, Stella Kramrisch, and thus bracket my demonstration by placing it between the thoughts of two great scholars in the field of Indology and art history. In her famous analysis of the three-headed so- called Śiva “bust” (see “the Great Cave Temple of Śiva in Elephants: Levels of Meaning and Their Form” in Discourses on Śiva, ed. Michael W. Meister Philadelphia, 1984), Kramrisch writes:

This colossal sculpture confronts the devotee who enters from the north. It is meant to be seen only from the front. Its back is inaccessible, and darkness merges with the plane of the ground. While the fourth head of this Pañcamukha liṅga is not represented, it is postulated by the three visible
heads. The fifth head, suggesting Śiva’s transcendency, also is absent here as on most of the Pañcamukha liṅgas carved in the round. (p. 4)

PLATE CAPTIONS

Plate 5. Bronze statuette of Heracles. Afghanistan. c. 2nd century B.C. (Private Chicago Collection.) Photo after Catalogue De l’Indus a l’Oxus. Archéologie de l’Asie Centrale, 2003; Fig. 89.
Plate 7A and 7B. Huviṣka gold stater. Obverse and reverse. Photo courtesy Joe Cribb.
Plate 15A. Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285 - West Wall.
Plate 15B. Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285 - Section of Maheśvara and his Family
Plate 16. Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285. Figure in the Crown on the head of Maheśvara
Plate 17. Sketch by Inez Konczak of figure in the Crown on the head of Maheśvara
1 Doris M. Srinivasan, “Vedic Rudra-Śiva”, JAOS 103.3 (1983); 543 - 556


3 To clarify, I am not saying that these forms are unknown in the Northwest. They are known. For example, see Ibrahim Shah, “Some Mukhaliṅgas in the Pakistani Collections”, Pakistan Heritage Vol. I (2009). 87 - 91. General observations are by S.R. Dar, “The Earliest Known Hindu Sculpture from Lahore now in the Lahore Museum” Lahore Museum Bulletin, Vol. III. 1990, 29 - 42. Plates I - VI. Also note a Liṅga inscription with an etched liṅga dating according to the author between 4th and 6th Century AD, in M. Nasim Khan, Treasures from Kashmir Smast (the earliest Śaiva Monastic Establishment), Peshawar, 2006; page 99. My point is that all three forms are not found at the same site at the same time prior to the 4th century, as for example is the case at Mathura. See Gerd Kreisel, Die Śiva-Bildwerke der Mathura - Kunst, Stuttgart; his plates 6,7,8 (for liṅga icons); 13,14,15 (for Mukhaliṅga icons); 66,67 (for mūrtis emanating from the liṅga). As all these three forms are not found at any one Gandhāran site at the same time, it is difficult to assume that the Kuṣāṇa Gandhāran śaiva icons express the same theological beliefs as the Mathura ones.

4 The best surveys for early śaiva sculptures (excluding coins) probably are G. Kreisel, Śiva Bildwerke, Gritli von Mitterwallner “Evolution of the Liṅga”, my own, “Significance and Scope of Pre- Kuṣāṇa Śaivite Iconography” and N.P. Joshi, Early Forms of Śiva “, all three are in Michael W. Meister (ed.), Discourses on Śiva, Philadelphia; 1984 pp. 12 - 31; 32 - 46; 47 - 61, respectively plus Plates; Laura Giuliano, “Studies in early Śaiva iconography: (1) the origin of the trīśūla and some related problems”. Silk Road Art and Archaeology 10; Kamakura 2004, 51 - 96;


5 Illustrated in Ghose, Anthropomorphic. .. Iconography 2. 34/5; 2.36, 2.37; also see Giuliano, “trīśūla” Fig. 1.

6 Note that Śiva holds a short neck vessel in his right hand on a pillar panel in the Muktādevi Temple, Mūsānagar. See illustration in Srinivasan, “Pre-Kuṣāṇa Śaivite Iconography”; Pl 30. Perhaps it represents a kamaṇḍalu, which is usually different from a Persian vessel (see below).
Already the post-Kuśāna standing Śiva in the Peshawar Museum (No. PM -3017 [0682 and M676] has other distinctions, namely six arms and a hand-held vajra or thunderbolt. See Catalogue No. 110 in Gandhāra.


Cribb (“Shiva Images”, p. 13; # 2), lists a few exceptions minted by Vima Kadphises.

A coin ascribed to Vima Takto, thus before Vima Kadphises, has according to Falk the image of Oešo on the reverse. See Aman ur Rahman and Harry Falk, Seals Sealings and Tokens from Gandhāra, Ludwig Reichert Verlag (Band 21 der Reihe Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie); Wiesbaden 2011; page 220; Fig. 53.

See Kreisel, Śiva - Bildwerke, p. 217; Abb. 73. The fragment shows a small round water pot on the left hip.

Srinivasan, “Pre-Kuśāna Śaivite Iconography”, page 35; Plate 23.

Kreisel, Śiva - Bildwerke, pages 215 - 216; Abb. 70.

Theological belief in the five-headedness of all śaiva cephalic renderings is an important concept in śaiva religion and art. In the present context, it is necessary to understand that this concept, not represented in Gandhāran stone, seals and coin imagery, marks the Northern representations distinctively different from Mathura images. It is therefore deemed useful to demonstrate the primacy of Śiva’s fivefold nature, again as in my book Many Heads, Arms and Eyes, in order to support this paper’s position. This paper posits the fundamental difference between Gandhāran and Mathura śaiva imagery.

Śiva’s fivefold nature, also in print prior to the publication of my book, are mentioned within Appendix I.

15 Katsumi Tanabi, “OHpO: Another Kushan Wind God”, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2, 1991/92 pp. 51 - 71. Please see this paper for a survey on the main previous scholarship relating to the identification problem. Thus, no need to repeat here. However scholars’ vacillation between calling the figure Oešo or Śiva continued; being, for example still evident in 2007, see Perkins, “Three - Headed Śiva” fn. 26.


23 See Laura Giuliano, “ Studies in early Śaiva iconography: (I) the origin of the triśūla and some related problems “, *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 10, 2004, p. 89, Figs. 25 and 26. See also Fig. 22, a Huviṣka gold stater showing a three-headed Oešo /Śiva.

24 Compare the shape with the trident held by Mahiśāsuramardini to Late Kuśāṇa stone reliefs from Mathura in Herbert Hārtel, “Early Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini

25 John Perkins, “Three-headed Śiva”. The frontal face usually has a moustache.


28 See O. Bopearachchi,”Les Premiers Souverains Kouchans: Chronologie et Iconographie Monétaire”, *Journal des Savants*, Paris; 2008; 3 - 56; see his series I - III; and again in his series VII.

29 Bopearachchi, “Les premiers Souverains Kouchans”, p.13, fn.24; noted that the deity is ithyphallic beginning only with the sixth series.

30 On this, see Robert Bracey, “The Coinage of Wīma Kadphises”; see 52 - 53. He discusses in detail the unusual elements including, for example, the weights, the absence of bull and *linga* with Oešo, Greek on the reverse, problematic dimensions - and more.

31 Note that Falk (in *Seals, Sealings* p. 96) compares GKc 416 to coins from Vīma and Vāsudeva I. But these are inexact comparisons. The Vīma coin has the face in profile and the Vāsudeva I coins show advanced styles and additional attributes.


34 Personal communication dated April 5, 2013

35 Often on Kaniṣṭha’s and Huviṣka’s issues, a nimbus is around Oešo’s head, but not on these seals.

36 Mary Boyce, “Greater Vayu and Greater Varuna”, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 7; 1993: 38. She notes that water drops falling from the vase have symbolic significance with Zoroastrianism’s Vayu. This interpretation fits well with the information gathered and presented herein, whereas Pal’s theory does not (Pratapaditya Pal, “Śiva as dispenser of royal glory on Kushan coins”, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* II, 1988, 31 - 35.

37 See designs in Cribb, “Shiva Images on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian coins “, p. 51; G2 ( on Kaniṣṭha 1 example) and G 4, G 6 (on Huviṣka examples).
38 Rahul Peter Das, “Indra und Śiva/Rudra”, Geregeltes Ungestum, eds. Rahul Peter Das und Gerhard Meiser, Bremen 2002; p. 141 and fn. 15.

39 For illustrations of several shapes, see T.A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I Part 1; Varanasi, 1971; Plate IV Nos. 3 - 6 and pages 11-12.

40 The Kaniska ‘Oesho’ coin series # 5 (812/3) in Göbl (1984: Pl. 169) and a Kushan seal (U.7.2) in Callieri’s monograph on Northwestern seals exhibit some features, though none corresponds well.

41 The name may identify the owner of the seal. See ur Rahman & Falk, Seals, Sealings; p. 96.

42 The Indian Museum, Calcutta possesses a Late Kuśāna seal showing a four-armed Śiva seated on the reclining bull. See E.V. Zeynal, “Visha-Shiva in the Kushan Pantheon” in Gandhāran Art in Context, eds. Raymond Allchin; Bridget Allchin; Neil Kreitman; Elizabeth Errington; New Delhi; 1997; pp, 245 - 266. See Fig. 6.

43 Cribb, “Shiva Images on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian coins”, pages 52 (I1; the wheel is in the upper left; vase lower left; trident and antelope are in upper and lower right), 53 (J1; the god has a halo; wheel is in upper right; antelope lower right; trident and thunderbolt are in upper and lower left).


45 See discussion and photos in Gandhāra. The Buddhist heritage of Pakistan. Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise. Exhibition Catalogue; Bonn. 2008; Catalogue Nos. 93 and 110 and page 131.


50 Tanabe, “OHpO: Another Kushan Wind God”, p. 64.
Please see my chapter “Religious Networks and Incipient Śaiva Forms” in Many Heads, Arms and Eyes.

Gupta, Mathura, 2013. See Chapter 6 on Śiva.

See also discussion on Pl. 19.19 in my Many Heads, Arms and Eyes.

Trudy Kawami writes in an email dated 3/12/2009: “The humped bull (Zebu, Bos indicus) may have originated in India but had moved as far west as the Levant but [sic] the second mill BCE (a distinctive vertebra has been excavated), Central Asia & Iran in the Iron Age, and is known on Achamenid seals engraved probably in Anatolia (modern Turkey). All of these examples date well before the Kushans so the zebu is no marker of "recently out of India." On Heracles with his attributes, she remarks in the same email:

“The image that is called Herakles in the Greek tradition was wide-spread in Iran in the Parthian period, occurring from rock reliefs in SW Iran to small bronzes to terra cotta metopes at Nisa, the Arsacid capital in what is now Turkmenistan. Like the humped bull, the naked (or nearly) strongman with a club & animal skin was all over western & central Asia. You don't need any Indian influence to develop the image of OESHO. “

See David W. MacDowall, “Coinage from Iran to Gandhāra”, in On the Cusp of an Era. Art in the pre-Kuṣāṇa World, ed. Doris Meth Srinivasan. Leiden.Boston; 2007, note his Fig. 9.66; Giuliano, “Studies in early Śaiva iconography: (1) the origin of the triśūla, 53 - 54.

Gerd Kreisel, Die Śiva-Bildwerke der Mathurā-Kunst, Stuttgart, 1986, pages 104 - 105. This is a major fact overlooked by most scholars engaged in interpreting the image of Oešo /Śiva on coins and seals. The last, in a long line of investigators attributing the trident to Śiva on Kuṣāṇa coinage is Frantz Grenet, “Iranian Gods in Hindu Garb: The Zoroastrian Pantheon of the Bactrians and Sogdians, Second - Eighth Centuries”, Bulletin of the Asia Institute, Vol. 20, 2006; 87-99. This unverified attribute for the Kuṣāṇa image of Śiva continues in Grenet’s latest paper “Zoroastrianism among the Kushans” in Kushan Histories, ed. Harry Falk, Bremen 2015; see p. 207. Here Grenet also assumes that the titles on the reverse of some of Wima’s gold coins reflect Wima’s devotion to Śiva. The legend ‘sarvaloga- iśvara mahiśvara’ is interpreted by him as (devotee of) the Lord of the World, the Great Lord, epithets characteristic of Śiva. Grenet cites and follows G. Fussman (“L’ Inscription de Rabatak et l’Origine de l’ ère śaka”, Journal Asiatique, Tome 286, 1998: 593, fn. 55 ). Fussman conjectures that ‘sarvaloga iśvara’ should be read with an initial vṛddhi and thus signifies ‘devotee of Śiva, Lord of the World’. Grenet does state that Ciro Lo Muzio (“OHpO: A Sovereign God”, SRAA 4, 1995/96, 163), thinks that mahiśvara is a royal title that Wima has conferred on himself and it does not stand for maheśvara. This position has now gained considerable support. Harry Falk is of this view in “Names and Titles from Kuṣāṇa Times to the Hūnas - The
Indian Material” in Coins, Art and Chronology II. The First Millenium C.E. in the Indo-- Iranian Borderlands, eds. Michael Alram, Deborah Klimburg - Salter, Minora Inaba, Matthias Pfisterer, 2010 ; p. 76. The latest, most lengthy and explicit refutation of Wima’s devotion to Siva comes from Joe Cribb in his paper “The Soter Megas coins of the first and second Kushan kings Kujula Kadphises and Wima Takto “Gandhara Studies, Vol. 8, 2015; 79 - 122. Cribb not only shows, on pp. 88 - 89, that the legend on Wima’s coins (namely sarvaloga-iśvara and mahiśvara) are titles that apply to the king, he also leaves no doubt that Osmund Bopearachchi’s interpretation of the same legend as indicative of Wima’s adoration of Śiva (in his “Les Premiers souverains Kouchans: Chronologie et Iconographie Monetaire”, Journal des Savants, Jan. - Juin 2008, 3 - 56, see p. 44) cannot be sustained. The title ishvara in the form ispara also appears on an Apracharaja coinage and in an Apracharaja inscription (R.C. Senior A Catalogue of Indo-Scythian coins, vol 2, p. 137) according to Cribb. In view of my Section II.1, the position expressed by Lo Muzio, Falk and Cribb makes sense.


59 The region [i.e. Sogdiana] always had commercial contacts with the Kuśāṇa and Kuśāṇa-Sassanian realms although it was not included in either. From the 5th century onwards it had strong cultural and artistic influence from previous Kuśāṇa spheres. Frantz Grenet, “The second of three encounters between Zoroastrianism and Hinduism; Plastic influences in Bactria and Sogdiana ( 2nd - 8th c. A.D.)”; Bombay; Asiatic Society of Bombay; ( 1994); 43


61 Mary Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism I p. 79.


“A study of north Indian images of Vāyu would thus show that the deity may be assigned either two or four arms. If two-armed, he is depicted either holding the ends of a scarf fluttering behind or over his head or the banners in his hands. In the case of four-armed images, his attributes have been found to be a rosary, a banner (dhvaja) a flag (patākā) and a water vessel”. Bhagawant Sahai, *Iconography of Minor Hindu and Buddhist Deities*, New Delhi, 1975; page 58.

Boyce, *Zoroastrianism*, 79. Vata is portrayed on Kanishka I bronzes and labeled OADO, in Bactrian.

Humbach “Vayu, …“ p. 405

Srinivasan, “Vedic Rudra-Śiva”; 543 - 556.


Falk in ur Rahman & Falk, *Seals, Sealings*, p. 95. opines “a bird (?)”. The formless shape challenges this identification.


Ibid.

Sims-Williams, “A Bactrian God”, 338

Falk, *Seals, Sealings*, states it is not clear whether the term Muzhduwān “is used as a personal name or whether it names the deity (Weṣ) portrayed on the seal”.


The equestrian male on the reverse of these rare Kanishka I coins is bearded, wears a diadem and hat or cap according to Rosenfield, who also sees a staff with a single ring on top (rather than the trident noted by Sims-Williams, “A Bactrian God”, 338), as well as a “small Parthian bun in the back of the neck, scarf over
“Arm”, and heavy boot pointing downward. (John M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, pp. 82 - 83; Coin Figs. 132, 133). The male sits on a double-headed horse: “Possibly it could be related to the dual nature of the god Vayu” (Nicholas Sims-Williams, “A Bactrian God”, 338). Grenet (in “Zoroastrianism among the Kushans”), makes an interesting identification for the figure on these rare gold Kaniska coins. He considers the male a royal figure, “a sort of mirror image of the Kushan king” (p. 211). Working with this hypothesis (whether or not the figure represents Kaniska I), suggests that the term is an epithet which can be employed with various “good, gracious” figures. Thus the term could be a descriptive title for Oešo (i.e. good Oešo) and for a sovereign (i.e. good king).

77 For example, the same Aman ur Rahman Private Collection contains a white crystal seal that seems to be a composite Poseiden-Śiva showing a male holding a trident and a wreath (AuR GK g 048; Pl.13). The trident which is somewhat indistinct on this seal is clearly marked on another seal (AuR GK g 033), which seems to be carved by the same hand. A fold across the chest (of GK g 048) may indicate the sacred thread. Prominent is Śiva’s liṅga shown in a way it is never shown in Gangetic Hindu art, that is, very large and raised outward, not upward, a depiction seemingly at variance with the cosmic symbolism attributed to Śiva’s upward raised liṅga at this time. Cribb (in personal communication dated June 7, 2010) observes that similar laterally raised liṅgas as on GK g 048, Pl.13) occur on Kaniska I small copper coins. He cites Nos. 813 and 814 in Göbl’s *Münzprägung des Kušānreiches*, although Göbl does not mention a raised liṅga for series 813.

78 See examples in Callieri, *Seals and Sealings*, Pl. 19: 7. 2; Pl. 31: M 5; Pl. 58: Cat, U 7.4 - U 7.6; U 7.8 A. But Pl. 38: S 4 renders Skanda’s bird more dumpy.


80 From O.M. Dalton, *The Treasure of the Oxus*, with other examples of early oriental Metal-Work. London; 1964; # 204 pages 58 -59 and Plate XXXIII.

81 The complete sentence is ( on p. 6 of “Wind, an Old Iranian Deity”, *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies*, Vol. 21, 2014; Issue 2: “Accompanying a pictorial representation of four-armed Śiva and written in Graeco-Bactrian script that name is found on the reverses of very numerous coins of the Indo-Scythian Kuśāna dynasty. That does, of course, not mean that Oešo/Vaiiu is Śiva, but it makes sure that the characteristics of Śiva were to a large extent characteristics of the Iranian Vaiiu in non-orthodox traditions of the Iranian religion”.


84 Illustrated in Callieri, Seals and Sealings, Pl. 57; Cat. U 7.3 and write - up page 190 -191.


86 Humbach, Kashan, Śiva und der Spiritus Vivens “ 402 - 403.

87 See also Humbach, “Wind”, page 6.

88 What is new in the account is an enhanced description, not the discovery of the paintings, per se. As recently as 1991/92, Henrik H. Sørensen ( “ Typology and iconography in the Esoteric Buddhist Art of Dunhuang”, SRAA 2; 1991/92; page 287), did not record the figure in Śiva’s crown, much less offer an interpretation for this figure in Cave 285. These are contained in Zhang Yuanlin’s paper.


90 Ibid; 35.

91 Zhang Yuanlin, “Maheśvara Images found in Dunhuang and Khotan and Relevant Problems ”, Dunhuang Research, No. 6; 2013; China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House. p. 2. I extend my thanks to Zhang He who translated the article for me.

92 Zhang “Dialogue Among the Civilizations”; 37. The present author cannot think of a similar image inside India.

93 Ibid; 37. For Sasaki’s bibliographic reference please see Zhang “Dialogue Among the Civilizations”; 47.


96 Zhang, “Dialogue Among the Civilizations”, 44.

97 Lokesh Chandra and Nirmala Sharma, Buddhist Paintings of Tun-Huang in the National Museum, New Delhi, 2012; New Delhi; p. 27.

98 Markus Mode, “Sogdian Gods in Exile - Some iconographic evidence from Khotan in the light of recent excavated material from Sogdiana “, Silk Road Art and Archaeology 2, 1991/92; Kamakura, 179 - 214; see page 186. For recent publications on Sogdian documents coming from China and found in Khotan, please see Bi Bo and Nicholas Sims-Williams, “ Sogdian Documents from Khotan I: Four Economic Documents, JAOS 130.4, 2010; 497 - 508 and “ Sogdian Documents from Khotan II: Letters and Miscellaneous Fragments “, JAOS 135.2; 2015; 261 - 282.

99 Zhang in “Dialogue Among the Civilizations “, 41- 42 mentions the “Ancient Sogdian Letters “ which Aurel Stein found in the ruins of the watchtower west of Dunhuang.


101 Callieri, Seals and Sealings, p. 142 and Cat. S 1.


103 See Cribb. “Śiva images”, Figures Nos. 10; 11;12; 13. Plus see his Tables II through Vb.

104 Joanna G. Williams, The Art of Gupta India, 1982, Princeton; Fig. 31. J.C. Harle, Gupta Sculpture; Oxford, 1974. Fig. 53; pages 44- 45.
105 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*; Fig. 54. I must register that I have never been completely convinced that this is a genuine carving.

106 See Kreisel, *Śiva -Bildwerke*, Abb. 73, being a Kuśāṇa fragment showing the lower part of an ithyphallic male holding a vase and standing in front of a bull.

107 See fn. 45.

108 Williams, *Gupta India*; Fig. 77 and page 73

109 Sara L. Schastok, *The Śāmalājī Sculptures and 6th century Art in Western India*, Leiden, 1985; Fig. 11.


111 See Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Fig. 100 and page 50. Harle is correct in finding a Gandhāran “echo” in this stele; this feature is not mentioned in Williams, see fn 105.

112 See Cribb, “Śiva images”, especially page 46.

113 See Kreisel, *Śiva-Bildwerke*, Figs. A15; 72;10d. See also page 95. I, for one, consider the lion worn as a skin reminiscent of Heraclean iconography popular in the North, whereas the lion animal is probably symbolic of power and majesty, in both regions and thus not necessarily under the influence from the Northwest when appearing in the Gangetic region.
Plate 2 - Śiva. Gandhāra. Probably Kuśāṇa Period. Formerly from the Julian Sherrier Collection. Photocopy courtesy Julian Sherrier
Plate 3 - Clay token. Gandhāra. Kuşâna Period. (ur Rahman Collection 07.01. 08; Inv. No. GKc 416). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 4 - Garnet ring-bezel seal. Gandhāra. Kuṣāṇa Period. (ur Rahman Collection 07.01.09; Inv. No. GKg xx 19). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 5 - Bronze statuette of Heracles. Afghanistan. c. 2nd century B.C. (Private Chicago Collection.) Photo after Catalogue De l’Indus a l’Oxus. Archéologie de l’Asie Centrale, 2003; Fig. 89
Plate 7A - Huviška gold stater (Obverse). Photo courtesy Joe Cribb
Plate 7B - Huviška gold stater (Reverse). Photo courtesy Joe Cribb.
Plate 8 - Clay sealing with auspicious symbols. Gandhāran (ur Rahman Collection 15.03.07; Inv.No. GKc 401). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 9 - Quartz seal pendant. Gandhāra. Kuśāṇa Period. (ur Rahman Collection 07.01.10; Inv. No. GKe 010). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 10 - Agate seal. Gandhāra. Kuśāṇa Period. (ur Rahman Collection 07.01.07; Inv.No.GKg 001). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 11 - Maheśa in front of Liṅga. Mathura. Kuṣāṇa Period. Photograph after A.K. Coomarawamy, History of Indian and Indonesian Art, (New York 1927; reprint 965. Fig. 68)
Plate 12 - Clay sealing. Gandhāra. Kuśāṇa Period (ur Rahman Collection 07.01.03; Inv. No. GKc 589). Photo courtesy Aman ur Rahman
Plate 15A - Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285 - West Wall
Plate 15B - Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285 - Section of Maheśvara and his Family
Plate 16. Dunhuang. Interior of the Mogao Cave 285. Figure in the Crown on the head of Maheśvara

Plate 17. Sketch by Inez Konczak of figure in the Crown on the head of Maheśvara