

## 7. Dandanayakas & Kshatrapas Of Kushana Administration

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### **Abstract**

*What we notice in the case of the Kshatrapas and the Mahakshatrapas, the same principle seems to have been applied in the matter of appointment of these feudal lords-who acquired the position by inheritance or on other grounds. The names of all the Kshatrapas, Mahākshatrapas and Mahādandanayakas appear to be foreign, and that explains the absence of Indian official heads at the higher level, but the village heads were local people. The term Dandanāyaka and the higher one Mahādandanāyaka seemed to have formed a link in the Kushāṇa administrative machinery.*

**Keywords:** *Kshatrapas, Mahakshatrapas, Dandanayakas, Mahādandanayakas, Sāndhivigrahika*

Besides the usual titles-Mahārāja Rājātirāja or Rājādhirajas for all the monarchs, Wima Kadphises is also called Sarvalokaīśvara and Mahisvaras (or Māheśvara).<sup>1</sup> Besides the Sanskrit titles, the Greek ones Basileus Basileun<sup>2</sup> and the Iranian Shaonano Shao-corresponding to the later Shahanshah<sup>3</sup> suggest that the Kushāṇa monarch was anxious to exhibit his position to all his subjects-Greeks, Indo-Greeks, Iranians and Indians. In inscriptions, the ruler is also called Devaputra-suggesting the divine origin of the king.<sup>4</sup> The use of the title Kaisara by king Kanishka of the Ara inscription might be suggestive of the attempt of this ruler, not obviously to challenge the authority of the Roman emperor,<sup>5</sup> but probably to place himself on a footing of equality with him.

The Kshatrapas and the Mahākshatrapas: The term Kshatrapa in Sanskrit literature is used in the sense of dominion, rule and power, as exercised by gods and men.<sup>6</sup> It is used in the sense of ruler in the Rigveda,<sup>7</sup> Kshatra was the military or the reigning body, the members of which were generally called Rājanya, not Kshatriya in earlier times. Later on, it was applied to the second military class which ruled. According to the Brahmanas, Kshatra indicated the rank or member of the reigning or military order.<sup>8</sup> The term Kshatrapa, therefore, points to ruler with a dominion, however small it might be. Historically, we know of Darius I dividing his empire into a number of satrapies,<sup>48</sup> followed by

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Alexander.<sup>9</sup> Even before the Kushāṇas, we hear of Kshatrapas of Kāpiśa and Abhisāra Prastha",<sup>10</sup> and of Mathura.<sup>11</sup> The Kushāṇa rulers followed the system of their predecessors. Kanishka's Kshatrapas enjoyed a position different from that of the western Kshatrapas. The inscriptions of Kanishka have reference to several Kshatrapas. The Sarnath records<sup>12</sup> dated in the year 3 of Mahārāja Kanishka are very important in this respect. The first record inscribed on the Bodhisattva statue associates the Kshatrapa Vanaspara and Kharapallana in the pious act of dedication of the statue by Friar Bala. The two short epigraphs on the same statue add some more details. The one referring to the image of the Bodhisattva, describes Kharapallana as Mahākshatrapa, while the other short epigraph referring to the image along with the umbrella and the post one only mentions the date and the name of the ruler. In another record of dedication by the same donor at Sravasti,<sup>13</sup> there is no reference to the Kshatrapas but the king's name either Kanishka or Huvishka-the first two letters being mutilated, figures prominently. If these Kshatrapas were enjoying any status of independence, or even a shadow of it, their names would never have been ignored in the other record. Secondly, the reference to Kharapallāna as a Mahākshatrapa is equally interesting and important for two reasons: the promotion from a slight lower to a definitely higher status in administration, and the necessity of two Kshatrapas at one place. To obviate the difficulty it can be suggested that Vanaspara was the actual Kshatrapa at Varanasi. as his name comes first in the main record and Kharapallana is not given any title. The scribe's error seems to have been subsequently corrected with the visit of Kharapallāna who was a Mahākshatrapa, possibly with his headquarters at Mathura. We, therefore, presume that there were at least two administrative units -the main one at Mathura which was also the regal seat, and, secondly, the other one for the eastern portion of the Kushāṇaempire, probably at Vārāṇasi,<sup>14</sup> An undated Kushāṇa record from Anyor (Mathura) mentions another Kshatrapa Upāsika Namida.<sup>15</sup>

It was really a difficult task for the Kushanas to devise an appropriate system to administer efficiently the vast extent of territory stretching from Balkh, and Khotan to Bihar in the East, and from Kashmir in the north to upper Sindh in the south- west. Extremities separated by long distances in days of difficult communication necessitated a decentralised scheme of administration with powers distributed among different units forming some sort of hierarchy. This had in no way alienated or even affected the powers of the King as an absolute monarch. The Kushāṇa rulers followed the pattern of the Achaemenian satrapies, although the Saka-Kshatrapas of Western India seem to have enjoyed complete independence, except in the use of the high sounding titles of Mahārāja Rājātirāja. In the

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context of those of Northern and North-Western India-there were only administrative heads with hardly any shadow of independence. To this category belonged Mahākshatrāpa Kharapallāna, Kshatrāpa Vanaspara, Kshātrāpa Liaka and a few others whose names are noticed in the Kushana records but never independently. The name of the Kushana ruler figures prominently in these records. The donors knew his name, and the administrative head was associated in these records of donations or dedications for religious or administrative considerations. In this connection we might as well consider the data on the subject afforded by the Sanskrit Buddhist literature and Pali works-like Milindapañha, more or less of a contemporary period, but these can only be for corroboration, rather than be independently tagged on to the Kushāṇa administrative set up.

The information relating to the Kshatrapas in the north-west is a little more in detail. Taxila was definitely an administrative seat. In the time of Maues, we find reference to Kshaharāta<sup>16</sup> Kshatrāpa of Chuksha Liaka Kusuluka whose son Patika established relics of the Lord Śākyamuni and a Sangharama through Rohinīmitra a navakarmika (architect). During the reign of Jihonika (Zeionises), the Kshatrāpa of Chuksha, son of Maṇigula,<sup>17</sup> brother of the king, a silver vase of duckshape was donated. Chuksa thus continued to be an administrative unit entrusted to the nephew of this ruler. Among the Kharoshthi records of the time of Kanishka, the Manikiala stone inscription<sup>18</sup> of the year 18, refers to the Kshatrāpa Veśapasi, and Lala, a scion of the Kushāṇa race. The Bronze casket inscription<sup>19</sup> from the same place records the gift of the Kapiśa Kshatrāpa, the son of the Kshatrāpa Graṇavhryaka. The Zeda inscription<sup>20</sup> of the year 11, records, a gift of Hipea Dhia, in honour of the Kshatrāpa Liaka. Zeda is a village near Und. The location of these administrative units on the basis of the reference in the Kushāṇa records and their find spots might be as follows: Kāpiśa, identified with modern Begram was under a Kshatrāpa<sup>21</sup> whose name is not mentioned but he was the son of the Kshatrāpa Graṇavhryaka. Veśapasi, the Kshatrāpa mentioned in the Manikiala stone inscription, might have been stationed there in the Rawalpindi district, where ancient buildings, monasteries, and isolated massive stone walls were excavated in 1830, or he might have come from Taxila which was an administrative unit under a Kshatrāpa as noticed earlier. Similarly the headquarters of the Kshatrāpa Liaka were either at the place of the find-spot of the record near Und, slightly to the west of the Indus; or he might have been some relation of Patika, son of Liaka Kusulaka of the Taxila record of the year 78 of the old era. In that case he has also to be placed in Taxila. Though it is difficult to locate the headquarters of the Kshatrapas it seems certain that there was one at Kāpiśa in Afghanistan

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where the hostages were kept by Kanishka,<sup>22</sup> and secondly at Taxila which was an important seat. There might have been two more Kshatrapas- one for Kashmir,<sup>23</sup> and the other for the south-western portion of the empire, but the evidence is wanting. It appears from these records that the Kshatrapas were mostly foreigners, as their names suggest; and sometimes hereditary appointments were made as for example, the Kāpiśa Kshatrapa was the son of Kshatrapa Granavhryaka. Such hereditary appointments are also noticed in other administrative units as well.

Dandanāyaka and Mahādandanāyaka: The term Dandanāyaka and the higher one Mahādandanāyaka seemed to have formed a link in the Kushāṇa administrative machinery. Their exact status, in the light of later evidence has to be determined, These terms occur for the first time in the Kushāṇa records.<sup>24</sup> The Mat. Inscription<sup>25</sup> of the time of Huvishka mentions a Bakanapati whose father was a Mahādandanāyaka. Another inscription<sup>26</sup> dated in the year 74 of the time of Mahārāja Rājātīrāja Devaputra Vasudeva mentions a Mahādandanāyaka Valina. The Manikiala inscription<sup>27</sup> mentions Lala, a scion of the Kushāṇa race as a Dandanayago corresponding to the Sanskrit Dandanāyaka. It is natural to presume the two grades of dandanāyakas, like the Kshatrapas in the Kushāṇa administrative system. The higher term indicated a superior status, Fortunately these two terms are noticed in dozens of epigraphic records from the Allahabad pillar to the Nagarjunikund inscriptions -in Sanskrit and Kanarese and from the Senas of Bengal to the Chalukyas of Gujarat. The term dandanāyaka also occurs in literature, and it has been translated by scholars with different and sometimes with conflicting meanings.<sup>28</sup> As this title is associated with several other ones, it should not be very difficult to estimate the exact position of a dandanayaka. It has been translated as a magistrate,<sup>29</sup> and in another inscription by the same scholar as 'the leader of the four forces of the army,'<sup>30</sup> 'as a 'fortunate general' and as 'Commander of forces. In lexicons, its recorded meaning is 'a rod-applier'<sup>31</sup> or 'a Judge.' Prinsep<sup>32</sup> editing the Allahabad pillar inscription translated the word as 'administrator of punishment' (Magistrate) and 'Criminal Magistrate,' and Fleet took it in the sense of 'the great leader of the forces.'<sup>33</sup> Aurel Stein translated it 'as the perfect of police and Ranjit Pandit as 'Commissioner of Police.'<sup>34</sup> Military, Judicial and Police functions are given to this officer in terms of the interpretations of various scholars. As 'the Commander of the forces', or 'the fortunate general', he should have exercised unfettered authority over the armed forces, but we find that he is distinguished from the Senani or General.<sup>35</sup> As a Police Officer,' or a 'Judicial Magistrate', he had nothing to do with forces, which was not a fact. He is also distinguished from a dandapāśika,<sup>36</sup> He was neither a Civil Officer in the true

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sense of the terms, nor were his activities confined to the battle field as Commander of the forces. Moreover we also find a still higher appellation Mahāprachamda Dandanāyaka,<sup>37</sup> and the same officer is also given other titles suggesting other functions. Thus Hariṣeṇa of the Allahabad record besides being a Mahādandanāyaka, which title or position he acquired from his father-Mahadandanāyaka Dhruvabhata, he was also a Kumārāmātya and a Sāndhivigrahika. In another record,<sup>38</sup> he also holds the titles- Mahāsāmanta and Mahāpratihāra, while in the Nāgarjuni Kund inscription,<sup>39</sup> he is also called a Mahāsāmantaādhipati and Mahātālavari<sup>40</sup> who had married in the royal household. The Dandanāyaka is also considered a feudatory, authorised to keep a certain amount of royal levy and administering 71 villages.<sup>41</sup> There are references to promotions given to Dandanayakas-as minister or as Sāndhivigrahika.<sup>42</sup>

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rulers and others in different parts of India. The Mahādandanayaka of the Kushāṇa record of the time of Huvishka, was the son of a Bakanapati, while Lala of the Mānikiala record was a scion of the Kushāṇa family. So this feudal set up in the administrative machinery was worked out on a limited scale.

It was really a difficult task for the Kushanas to devise an appropriate system to administer efficiently the vast extent of territory stretching from Balkh, and Khotan to Bihar in the East, and from Kashmir in the north to upper Sindh in the south- west. Extremities separated by long distances in days of difficult communication necessitated a decentralised scheme of administration with powers distributed among different units forming some sort of hierarchy. This had in no way alienated or even affected the powers of the King as an absolute monarch. The Kushāṇa rulers followed the pattern of the Achaemenian satrapies, although the Saka-Kshatrapas of Western India seem to have enjoyed complete independence, except in the use of the high sounding titles of Mahārāja Rājātirāja. In the context of those of Northern and North-Western India-there were only administrative heads with hardly any shadow of independence. What we notice in the case of the Kshatrapas and the Mahakshatrapas, the same principle seems to have been applied in the matter of appointment of these feudal lords-who acquired the position by inheritance or on other grounds. The names of all the Kshatrapas, Mahākshatrapas and Mahādandanayakas appear to be foreign, and that explains the absence of Indian official heads at the higher level, but the village heads were local people.

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