

A Silk Road Hero: King Chashtana

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During the Old Uighur period, many works were translated into Old Uighur under the influence of Buddhism. Among these works, literary works such as *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā* hold an important place. These works were usually translated from Pali to Sanskrit, from Sanskrit to Sogdian, Tocharian and Chinese, and to Old Uighur from these languages. These works which were added to the Old Uighur repertoire by translation indicate that different peoples along the ancient Silk Road had deep linguistic interactions with one another. Aside from these works, other narratives that we have been so far unable to determine whether they were translations, adaptations or original works have also been discovered. *The Tale of King Chashtana*, which was found in the work titled *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā*, is one of the tales we have been unable to classify as a translation or an original work. This tale has never been discovered with this title or this content in the languages of any of the peoples that were exposed to Buddhism along the Silk Road. On the other hand, the person whom the protagonist of this tale was named after has a very important place in the history of India, one of the countries that the Silk Road goes through. Saka Mahakshatrpa Chashtana (or Cashtana), a contemporary of Nahapana, declared himself king in Gujarat. A short time later, Chashtana, having invaded Ujjain and Maharashtra, established a powerful Saka kingdom in the west of India. His descendants reigned in

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the region for a long time. Another important fact about Chashtana is that coinage minted in his name was used all along the Silk Road. Chashtana, who became a significant historical figure in north western India, inspired the name of the protagonist of a tale in Old Uighur. That it is probable that the tale of King Chashtana is an original Old Uighur tale and not found in any other languages of the Silk Road brings some questions to mind: Who is Chashtana, the hero of the story? Is he related to the Saka king Chashtana in any way? What sort of influence did Chashtana have on the Silk Road and its languages? If this tale which we have never encountered in any other language of the Silk Road is indeed an original tale, why did the Old Uighurs use the name of an important Saka ruler? Is Saka-Uighur contact in question, given tales of this kind? What can we say about the historical and cultural geography of the Silk Road, given the fact that coinage was minted in his name and used along the Silk Road? In this study, I will attempt to answer these questions and share the information we have gleaned about Chashtana the hero of the tale and the Saka king Chashtana. One of the main aims of this study is to reveal the relationship between the narrative hero Chashtana and the Saka king Chashtana according to this information. Another aim of this study is to understand the history of the Saka, the Uighur and the Silk Road and to reveal the relationship between these three important subjects of history. The importance of the Silk Road will be emphasized again with the understanding of these relations. In this way, new information about Chashtana, who is an important name in the history of the India and the Silk Road, will be put forward. The history of the Sakas will be viewed from a different perspective through the Old Uighur Buddhist story.

Key words: Silk Road, King Chashtana, Saka/Śaka, Buddhism, Old Uighur

Introduction

Aside from being an important channel which transmitted ancient Eastern cultures to the West, the historical Silk Road was also a notable bridge between the economic and cultural contacts of the East and the West. The Silk Road was a road used not only by merchants but also by sages, armies, ideas, religions and cultures from the West to the East and vice versa. The trade of silk, porcelain, paper, spices and precious gems was maintained on the caravan roads stretching for thousands of kilometres and it was named the Silk Road in time. More than being a trade road connecting Asia to Europe, it has the traces of cultures, religions and races that have occupied the area for 2000 years and thus offers an extraordinary amount of cultural wealth. In the past, technical developments, cultural goods and ideologies expanded more easily and permanently than commercial products. All sorts of trade for commercial,

political, diplomatic or missionary purposes gave rise to cultural exchange between different societies. Songs, stories, and religious and philosophical views along with scientific information were transmitted by travellers and remained up to date.

In general, as a road opened by Zhang Qian at the time of the Western Han dynasty, the Silk Road reached out from Chang'an (*Xi'an* today) to the Roman Empire. Scientists today have determined that the Silk Road followed three main routes: the Northern Silk Road (also known as the steppe road), the Southern Silk Road, and finally the Connected Land and Sea Route.

The Connected Land and Sea Route emerged in the 6th century BCE when certain sea and land routes were unified during the conquest of Punjab by Aheman Perisans under the command of Darius the Great, and this route provided an alternative trade route to the northern and southern roads. This route formed the third trade line that led to Barygaza on the estuary of the Narmada River and merged with the trade route leading to Egypt and Mesopotamia. There is also a dissenting view that historical artefacts found during excavations in Somalia in eastern Africa prove that the Connected Land and Sea Route was formed during the Song dynasty. The information that trade was conducted throughout the Indian Ocean dates back to the birth of Christ. This trade route was also a land route that spread out from Barygaza to Thinoi through Bactria. Thinoi was the capital of the Ts'in state in western China at that time. This route connected Egypt to the sea ports serving as the Kushan Empire's gates to the sea in western India via the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. One of its branches led to the Persian Gulf while the other went further to the east covering an area from India's Malabar coast to Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Between the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, it stretched to the estuary of the Ganges where the Vanga state was founded. It went from the port of Guangzhou to the Malacca Strait, reaching Sri Lanka, India and East Africa (Toprak 2008).

Silk Road routes have always had a unique look. The route along the Indus going from Gilgit and Karakorum Pass to Khotan in the Tarim Basin was used for delivering graphite starting from the 1st century CE onwards. Accordingly, it is possible to assert that the Northern and the Southern Silk Road along with the Connected Land and Sea Routes developed throughout the centuries. The northern route was particularly effective for the migrations of nomadic tribes. Thanks to the Northern Silk Road, an essential partnership and a common cultural structure took form between the nomadic tribes living in China, Central Asia and southern Russia. The southern routes had a historically crucial role in the transmission of major religions of the world. The northern route in particular was the only route that went directly to the Byzantine Empire from the territory where various Turkic peoples lived. As such, Turks were engaged in leading mediation activities regarding the delivery of goods from the East to the West. All in all, practices conducted with cutting-edge tools, photographs taken from the air and space, show us that even in ancient times societies knew how to select the most appropriate roads and routes (Toprak 2008).

This road acted as a bridge between the East and the West in terms of political-military and economic-cultural relations. The Silk Road particularly affected the Turkic people in different ways. These effects were mostly seen in the fields of economics, religion and culture. In history, economic and cultural relations between the Central Asian Turkic people

and China under the reign of the Tang dynasty (618-907) were as important as political and military relations. The Köktürks (First Turkish Khanate) gained dominance on the northern route of the Silk Road by taking control of the western field, and the reason behind this dominance was to make use of the silk they bought from the dynasties of China and to introduce the thought of “world domination” in the traditional Turkish political philosophy. Once more, during the period of the Uighur Khanate, several activities were implemented to trade the silk acquired from China. While Uighurs did not rule over a territory as wide as that of the Köktürks, they still carried out commercial activities on the Silk Road. They too knew the importance of the trade on the Silk Road and the market for the silk in their possession (Yıldızdağ 2005).

In addition to its commercial and economical significance, the Silk Road helped the exchange of many cultural elements between peoples and territories. Cultural exchange among peoples became influential in the cultures of Central Asia, China, the Near East and even Europe. The expansion of various religions and sects found an opportunity along the road, engendering interactions in various areas such as music, art, literature, and architecture. Turkish *yurts* (dwellings), acting as bridges between the East and the West, provided Chinese culture and high Chinese civilisation with the chance to spread to the Near East and later Europe. In accordance with this, Turkish *yurts* became places where various cultures had an impact on each other and even fought for dominance (Bedirhan 1994).

Due to the religious diversity it has, Asia has always had a special place in the minds of those researching religious history. Many major and minor religions have either emerged in this territory or come from outside during the long history of the region. Without any doubt, one of the fundamental reasons behind this religious diversity is cultural exchange between regions. It might be said that the Silk Road has played a special role in this exchange. It is crucial to determine the contributions that the Silk Road has made to the expansion of beliefs between regions to reach an insight into the religious wealth of Asia. Regarding the religious diversity in Asia, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Manicheism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Nestorianism, a branch of Christianity, can be counted among major Asian religions if we consider the ones that spread out into wide areas and drew masses to them. The Silk Road has had a significant influence on the spread of these religions all over the world (Bik 2012).

Buddhism has a special place amongst these religions. Buddhism had a remarkable influence on the social, political and cultural relationships of Eastern societies in the past. Buddhism formed a leading part in the process of the Eastern Renaissance through contributing to views in relation to national unity and the development of society. The Silk Road considerably affected the dissemination of Buddhism among Asian peoples. Thus, Buddhism became prominent as the largest and most influential religion of the East. The reason why it became the most powerful religion was the economic and cultural relations of the peoples that settled around the Silk Road. Buddhism spread from Central Asia to the northern regions of China and inland China via the Silk Road. How Buddhism spread is also noteworthy. Buddhism expanded among Asian peoples not by raids and battles, but by proselytism and commercial

and cultural interactions. As it spread from one country to another, it brought the cultural traditions and religious views of the old countries to new societies. Peoples living around the Silk Road developed their own beliefs as dictated by the creed of Buddhism. Accordingly, Buddhism connected the peoples settled along the Silk Road and ensured continuity among cultures and consensus on religious views (Sadıkov 2007).

According to Baypakov, who is known for his archaeological excavations at the commercial centres of the Central Asia Silk Road, “The Silk Road is a symbol of temporal connections; it is very hard to follow and evaluate the development of civilisations in Eurasia without knowing the past of the Silk Road” (Baypakov 1998, 2).

We can get into the past of the Silk Road by perceiving the history of the material and spiritual cultural elements along this road. Almost every city along the Silk Road was also a cultural centre. In these cities, many crucial scientific and art works were created. One of these works was *Daśakarmapathāavadānamālā* (DKPAM), a work of Buddhist literature. DKPAM is one of the rare important works of Buddhist literature that have survived to this day and has been translated into many of the languages used along the Silk Road and is known to many civilisations. *Kalmāṣapāda and Sutasoma, Kanchanasara, Brave Bimbāsēna and Devil Hidimbah, King Chashtana, Monkey King and Padmāvati, King Daṇḍapala, Sacred Rabbit, Udayana, Kāmapriya Story, Sena-Upesena Story, and Six-tusked Elephant* are stories that we can encounter in ancient and modern languages alike (Elmalı 2016).

The study of these stories and their elements has drawn our attention to different aspects of the Silk Road’s history. These studies urge us to ask some new questions about the Silk Road.

The Story of King Chashtana

One of the stories that has made us ask some questions about the historical Silk Road, the languages spoken along it, and the civilisations there is the story of King Chashtana. This story is one of the best known stories written in Old Uighur in Turkic history and one of the first examples of Avadana literature. This story, found in the ninth sin of *Daśakarmapathāavadānamālā* (DKPAM) is about *önke üz buz köñül* (Skr. *vyāpāa*) or “Wrath,” the chapter dedicated to the ninth sin (Elmalı 2016). In this story, King Chashtana fights against demons spreading a plague which ravages his country. King Chashtana saves his land from the plague and attains the status of Buddha after heroically winning a battle against the demons.

Müller and Gabain published a series of writings in *Uigurica IV* (Müller and Gabain 1931). The story of King Chashtana was one of the first Avadanas to be examined and published in its entirety in these writings. The first study in Turkey on this story, an epic tale in Old Uighur, was conducted by Saadet Himran. Himran’s work was a translation of the study in *Uigurica IV* into Turkish (Himran 1945). The most recent studies by Wilkens (2016) in Germany and Elmalı (2016) in Turkey were published in the DKPAM studies, and the plot of the story was discussed in “New Documents on the Story of King Chashtana” (Elmalı 2014a).

The summary of the story of King Chashtana is as follows:

Once upon a time, there was a king who ruled over Uccayn. His name was Chashtana. He was as brave as a lion. One day, a plague started to spread in his land. The people did not know what to do about it. This plague was ravaging all parts of the country. King Chashtana set out to find a cure for the plague. He went out of town. He arrived at a crossroad. Each passage was occupied by horrific demons. Chashtana went near the demons. He demanded the demons stop the plague ravaging his country, or things would not end well for them. The demons got furious at Chashtana's threat to them and they attacked him in no time. The king caught one of the demons by its hair and attempted to snap its neck. The demons got scared and asked the king for his mercy. They begged him. They told the king that they were not the ones spreading the plague; it was a three-eyed demon that lived far away from there. When the king heard this, he let these demons go and continued on. After a long journey, he arrived at the lair of the three-eyed demon. The three-eyed demon attacked the king and tried to kill him. However, the king took the demon down in one hit. Realising that he was about to die, the three-eyed demon told the king that he was not the one spreading the plague. He added that the one spreading the plague was a succubus that lived far away. Setting out again, Chashtana arrived at the lair of the succubus. However, when the succubus saw the king coming, she immediately took the guise of his beautiful wife to trick him. Chashtana figured out the succubus's trick and told her to end the plague, or he would kill her. The succubus realised that there was no way she could trick the king and told him that the plague was being spread by another demon. So, the king travelled all over the country to find out what demon was spreading the plague, going from one demon to another. In the end, King Chashtana encountered a whole army of demons. He prepared for a battle. Meanwhile, in the heavens, the son of Indra who lived amongst the gods was also preparing for a battle to support Chashtana. However, two gods named Yashomite and Maytreya who also lived in the heavens told Indra's son that there was no need for that. They added that King Chashtana would be a Buddha in the future and there would be no force that could stop him, for he had already accomplished great things and done great service to his country. As he dedicated his whole life for the good of his people, he would be Buddha in the future. In the meantime, on earth, a battle between Chashtana and the demons ensued. All the gods in the heavens watched this battle. In the end, King Chashtana saved his lands from the plague by defeating the army of demons (Elmalı 2016, 183-190, 268-272).

There is no tale similar to the story of King Chashtana among Buddhist tales. This story may have been pieced together from the tales of wandering heroes who fought wherever they went in order to protect the world from evil spirits and banish them. Heracles and Theseus in Greece, Krishna and Rama in India, Gilgamesh in Sumeria, Kalewipoeg in Finland, Gesser in Mongolia and most of the heroes in the sagas of the Altaic Turks in Central Asia are such

wandering heroes. The plot of the story is the same as those of the tales of Central Asian heroes (Ruben 1995). The story of King Chashtana is different from other Buddhist tales in this respect. It is an interesting one for many reasons. That this story was found in Old Uighur and no other language can make this story important for the history of Buddhism. Moreover, that the protagonist of the story has the same name as a ruler of historical importance sets this story apart from other Buddhist stories. The hero of the story shares the same name as the first ruler of the Saka state founded in north-western India, Chashtana (Old Uighur *çaştané*, Skr. *caṣṭana*, Chinese *qia-xi-ta-na* 恰希塔那).

Chashtana

Chashtana is not mentioned in studies on Scythian history conducted in Turkey. More precisely, the history of the Saka (Śaka, Shaka or Saca), who ruled north-western India starting with Chashtana, is never mentioned in these studies. As for studies on Saka history carried out abroad, the Old Uighur Buddhist story of King Chashtana has escaped notice. Only those who studied this story in particular have briefly mentioned the relationship between this tale and the Saka state.

Who was Chashtana? This question is relevant to the Silk Road. In order to understand who Chashtana was, one has to know about the Saka state founded in north-western India. As such, we will need to refer to sources related to the Saka to answer the question of who Chashtana was.

Historical sources provide us with different information on Chashtana. In some of these sources, Chashtana lived in India around 80 CE and founded the dynasty known as Satrap. Chashtana was presumably mentored by the father of the Great Emperor Kanishka. It is possible that Chashtana came from Central Asia, just as the other Sakas did. It is also probable that Chashtana supported Buddhism and fought against Brahmanism after taking over India, just like Emperor Kanishka (Ruben 1995).

On the other hand, in some other historical sources, this king known as Chashtana or Tiastane was the governor of Malava, which was a part of the great Kushan state. Chashtana sought independence in Malava, but was defeated by the Satavahana and the Kushan. On Nahapana coins, his portrait and his name written in Greek, Kharoshti and Brahman scripts can be seen. His father was Zamotika. Chashtana coins are very rare. They have been found in Kathiawar and Gujarat. Chashtana was an important person in the Kushan Empire (Banerji 1934).

During the reign of Kanishka, the Kushans gained complete control of Central Asia and the Northern Silk Road. No ruler had accomplished that before. Indian culture, religions and commerce spread out to the Termiz Valley in the east and Sogdania in the west. During this period, many books written in the Brahmi script reached these regions. Under the Kushan Empire, trade with the Roman Empire was at its peak. Sea caravans were crucial for the trade here. Some historians mention a relationship between Chashtana

and Kanishka during this period. This relationship isn't quite clear. Kanishka conquered the city of Bharukachcha in western India with Chashtana's help. At this time, Kanishka was middle-aged while Chashtana was young. Chashtana is believed to have been a brother of Kanishka's, or otherwise very close to him. It is claimed that Chashtana was related to Kanishka (Chandra 1977).

Aside from this claim, there is no information indicating that the Saka were the vassals of Kushan or enslaved by them. The Saka never used Kushan imperial titles in any way, or rather, they never used imperial titles. On the other hand, the Saka Ksatrapas accepted the title of Raja, which was the title of rulers in ancient times on countless coins and manuscripts. With the title of sovereigns, Raja were present at least in Dejjan until the 1st century BCE. In fact, Satavahana emperors were quite happy to use this title for their decrees and coins. The Indian tradition also separates the Saka and the Kushan in a clear way. In later periods, the *Raja-tarangini* (River of the Gods), written by Kalhana Kanishka (the Kushan emperor) (1149-50) says that the Saka branched from Turushka (the Turks). This claim seems to be supported by the author Jaina Hemacandra, who erroneously described the Turushka (Turks) as Sahi, which is indeed a title used on countless coins and Brahmin texts by the Kushan, under the name of Sakhi according to Abhidharma-Cintamani (line 959). The titles *yavnga* or *yana* (leader) for the king used on the reverse of a manuscript in the Kharosthi-Prakrit dialect and the *ζααου* for Greek characters seen on a copper coin of Lujula Kadphises, one of the first Kushan rulers, need to be interpreted as the Indian forms of the Turkish word *yabgu* (Shastri 1996).

There were two Saka branches in western India: Ksaharata and Karmadaka. The Ksaharata and Karmadaka branches of the Saka rulers are usually known as the Western Ksatrapas, who were in a bitter struggle against the Satavahana dynasty during the first century BCE. These two groups of Saka arrived in this region from the lower Indus region after migrating from southern Iran. The term Ksaharata appeared in manuscripts in Taxila and Mathura and on the coins of Saka rulers found in Sind and Saurashtra (the Kathiawar region of modern-day Gujarat). While this link with Ksaharatas isn't very clear, it has been observed that Bhumaka and his son Nahapana used the title Ksaharata Ksatrapas on their coinage. The main reason for the struggle between Satavahana and the Saka was to obtain control of the trade routes stretching from Liman and the Western Ghats to the inner regions of India. Kardamaka, another branch of the Western Ksatrapas, became the heirs of Ksaharata Ksatrapas and ruled over Gujarat, Ujjain and other regions of western India until 415 (Neelis 2011).

The figure determined as the earliest figure of the Saka Ksatrapas was Chashtana, son of Ysamotika (Zamotika). The texts in which these figures are found indicate that Chashtana reigned for a long period of about 52 years (from 78 to 130 CE). D.C. Sircar and V.V. Mirashi claim that Chashtana was appointed the governor of Kushan after Nahapana's death (in their explanations about the lost period following the Satavahana period in the Satrap territory). A relief of Chashtana can be found in a tomb belonging to the Kushan dynasty outside Mathura. The spread of Chashtana's dynasty in Ujjain and other western Indian territories points out

that he was under the command of the Kushan Empire. He rose as an independent ruler around the 2nd century CE after the temporary fall of the Satavahana and the overthrow of the Kshaharatas. It is debatable when Chashtana's rule truly began. Some historians claim it began in 78 BCE and some others claim that it began in 78 CE. Some claim it began after he took over Ujjain. This seems to be a problem stemming from the use of different solar and lunar calendars (Neelis 2011). In conclusion, many historians determine that the Saka period began with Chashtana, the king of Kardamaka.

The Saka, who had sovereignty over important areas of western and north-western India, also took control of the trade routes and ports between the cities of Ujjain, Mathura and Taxila. While it has not been studied in as great detail as the Hellenistic period and the late Kushan Empire, the benefactors who contributed to the Buddhist institutions were directly related to Saka rule. The Saka adapted to the climate and the religious landscape of the region just like the dynasties that preceded them or they fought against. On the other hand, recent studies along with recently discovered manuscripts and records suggest that the Saka state was of importance due to the fact that it brought the Persian, Hellenistic, and Central Asian cultures together in South Asia and carried the Indian religions (of which Buddhism was the most prominent) to Central Asia (Neelis 2011).

Another fact that ascribes great significance to Chashtana is that he is one of the few rulers who had coins minted in his name (Thomas, 1881, 3-7).¹



Chashtana, silver drachma. 78-130 CE

Weight: 2.01 gm. Diameter: 15 mm

Left, head of king, blundered Greek legend around
 Right, *Chaitya* (3-arched hill), with river below, crescent moon and sun above, and Brahmi legend around the outside: *Rajno Mahakshatrapa Zamotikaputrasa Chashtanasa*

¹ The pictures of the coins and statue of Chashtana used here are taken from <http://coinindia.com/galleries-chastana.html> (Accessed October 27, 2018).



A statue believed to be a statue of Chashtana

Ujjain (Ujjayinī), as mentioned in the story of King Chashtana is one of the oldest cities of India. This city has an important place on the Silk Road. Furthermore, it was one of the 16 prominent cities in India at the time of Buddha. This city, which is known as Ujjain today, was once the capital of the Saka state. The relationship between the fictional Chashtana who ruled over Ujjain and the real Chashtana who selected Ujjain as the seat of his state is well worth our attention.

Relationship Between the Hero of the King Chashtana Story and the Saka King Chashtana

Considering the role he played along the Silk Road and being a figure of interest for our cultural life of which records have survived to the present day, Chashtana is an extremely important figure. It is true that this important figure is not well-known in Turkey. This personality, who holds a noteworthy place in both historical studies and books on Saka/Scythians, has not been sufficiently mentioned, and this presents a serious problem. It is a fact that almost all research indicates a relationship between the Saka/Scythians and the Turks. The Saka who lived in this territory branched off from the Saka/Scythians who migrated to the West (Neelis 2011). Whether the Scythians who spread from Eurasia and the north of

the Black Sea to the east of Europe were Turks was a matter for the Sakas who founded a state in this territory. An essential duty falls to Turkish historians to participate in this debate to uncover the history of the Saka, who became an important power in north-western India. Chashtana was the founder of this state. He became a legend both in his own time and in the era that followed his reign. Basing the research of Saka history on such an important figure will facilitate the works of historians. As such, the King Chashtana story written in Old Uighur is of special importance.

Given all this information, one of the first questions to be asked is whether there is any relationship between the hero of the King Chashtana story and the Saka King Chashtana. One of the simplest ways to analyse the sagas, tales, legends and stories which were written throughout history is to determine to which territories these stories expand. We have found some of the DKPAM stories in various languages used at that time. The tale of the *Six-tusked Elephant* (Ṣaḍdanta Jātaka) sets forth one of the best examples of this. This story has been found in Chinese (2 different versions), Sanskrit (2 different versions), Pali, Tochar and Old Uighur (Elmalı 2014b). Other DKPAM stories can be found in some or all of the related languages. In addition, it is also possible to find most of these stories even in Buddhist tales translated into modern languages. However, it is impossible to find the story of Chashtana written in Old Uighur in any other historical or modern languages.² Some Buddhist stories have been observed to have the same content despite the difference in titles. While Wilkens (2016) claims that this story is related to the story of Prince Kanakavarman (Straube 2009), these two stories are quite unrelated in terms of plot, events and side characters. This brings the following questions to mind: Is this story an original story without parallels in any other language? Was this story only written in Old Uighur? If so, why is the Saka emperor who had a name of Sanskrit origin the hero of this story? Why does this story take place in Ujjain and not anywhere else?

We can answer these questions as follows. DKPAM, which contains the King Chashtana story, is a translation of a book on religious studies of the Vaibhāṣika sect of Buddhism. The work was translated from the Ugu Küßen (Tocharian B) to Tocharian (Tocharian A) and to Old Uighur later (Elmalı 2016). This fact makes one think that it is highly unlikely that this story is original. Tochars' relationship with the Saka and their language is well-documented. Many Saka words used in this region were borrowed by Tocharian.³ It is highly unlikely that the word *chashtana*, which is of Sanskrit origin (Wilkens 2016; Elmalı 2016), came into the Tocharian language from the Saka language. It is well known that many works in Old Uighur and other classical languages of the time have sadly not survived up to this day. There is a possibility that the story of King Chashtana was one of the stories that didn't make it to the present day. King Chashtana was a very powerful and influential ruler in the territory governed by the Saka and the

² Peyrot found the clause “castane wa(lo)” on fragment Toch 659 written in the Tocharian B language. From this, he thought that another version of the story could have been written in the Tocharian language (Peyrot 2013). However, this is not very convincing.

³ <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~rnoyer/courses/51/TocharianTrekks.pdf>

Kushan. It is quite natural that such historical figures become legendary before or after their deaths and sagas were written about them. Thus, many legends about the Kushan Emperor Kanishka, the second great benefactor of Buddhism who lived in the same time period as Chashtana, were created (Ruben 1995). Such a tendency towards legends in the territory under the influence of Buddhism could present King Chashtana to us the hero of a Buddhist story. This case reveals something we need to stress in particular, and it is whether this story was written while Chashtana was alive or after his death. While the DKPAM stories were translated to Old Uighur from Tocharian languages, many of these stories were originally in Sanskrit or in Pali, which means they were first written at least 400 years before their translations. Thus, this story, which isn't found in any other classical languages, strengthens the direct relationship of this story with the Saka Sultan Chashtana. This is a post-Saka tale that sets it apart from other Buddhist stories. All in all, it is quite possible that the story of King Chashtana, which has so far been found only in Old Uighur, was created by the Uighur who embraced the Saka King Chashtana during the Saka period and in the following centuries (in their oral tradition at least) and never forgot about him. Chashtana being accepted as a hero of some sort among the present-day Uighurs and as the subject of many poems and essays strengthens this possibility. Wilkens cites Michael Frederick on this subject matter. Frederick bases his interpretation on the poem "Otun Baziri" by Adil Tunjaz (Friederich 2001, 169; Wilkens 2016, 93).

Another question is why this story takes place in Ujjain and not anywhere else. Uccayn (Ujjayinī) mentioned in the tale is one of the oldest cities in India. King Vikramaditya, who was the subject of many tales and legends, may have lived in this city. It is likely that after Chashtana took over the city of Ujjain, his descendants exalted him as a heroic king equal to Vikramaditya. However, the plot of the tale and its format resembles the heroes in the tales of Central Asian more closely. Chashtana was made a sage or a saint like Buddhist emperors such as Ashoka and Kanishka (Ruben 1995). It is quite natural that a personality so important to Buddhism was associated with such an important and sacred city. This makes it likely that the story is a Buddhist Saka story.

Conclusion

The historical Silk Road has many historical figures. We do not know many of these figures today. We have very little information about some of these historical heroes. We know only the names of some kings and emperors. We do not mention the historical significance of these names. We do not mention the importance of these rulers in terms of common points of different nations and different cultures. The fact that there is not enough information about these historical characters until today is the most important reason for this situation. Evaluating even the smallest clues is necessary because of the scarcity of information. One of these clues is about the Chashtana who is one of the important kings of the Saka state

in north-western India. The clue is the story of King Chashtana written in the Old Uighur era. This story, which is the clue, brings some questions to mind about the Saka state and Chashtana: Who is Chashtana, the hero of the story? Is he related to the Saka king Chashtana in any way? What sort of influence did Chashtana have on the Silk Road and its languages? If this tale which we have never encountered in any other language of the Silk Road is indeed an original tale, why did the Old Uighurs use the name of an important Saka ruler? Is Saka-Uighur contact in question, given tales of this kind? What can we say about the historical and cultural geography of the Silk Road, given the fact that coinage was minted in his name and used along the Silk Road?

The main purpose of this study is to find the answer to these questions and to reveal the relationship between the narrative hero Chashtana and the Saka ruler Chashtana. We can answer these questions as follows: Chashtana in the Old Uighur Buddhist story is a blessed bodhisattva king who fights to expel the demons from his city. Chashtana defeated the army of demons and saved his country from demons and epidemic disease. This hero of the old Uighur narrative has the same name as the first ruler of the Saka state in north-western India. The possible transmission chain of the story reveals that there is an important relationship between two names and the narrative hero takes his name from the Saka ruler Chashtana. Chashtana kept the important ports of the Silk Road. Both he and his descendants had a significant impact on this road. Buddhism was preserved in this region by Chashtana and his descendants. Many cultures on the Silk Road were shaped by Buddhism. In a geography where Buddhism is influential, it is highly probable that Chashtana can appear as a story hero in a Buddhist story. Although the stories of DKPAM were translated from Tocharian to Old Uighur, this situation suggests that the story is directly related to the Saka ruler Chashtana. The story was written after Saka or during the Saka state. It can be also said that the story of King Chashtana was created by the Uighurs who adopted and remembered the Saka ruler Chashtana.

I have tried to answer these and similar questions through the study. One of the main aims of the study was to reveal the relationship between the Old Uighur, the Saka and the Silk Road with these answers. Another aim of this study was to understand the history of the Saka, the Uighur and the Silk Road and to reveal the relationship between these three important subjects of history. The importance of the Silk Road has been emphasized again with the understanding of these relationships. In this way, new information about Chashtana, who is an important name in the history of India and the Silk Road, has been put forward. The history of the Sakas has been viewed from a different perspective through the Old Uighur Buddhist story.

Therefore, it can be said that the King Chashtana story as an important work in the Old Uighur language was written in the Saka language and translated to Tocharian and Old Uighur later. Chashtana, one of the powerful kings of the Silk Road, lived in the languages existing around the Silk Road thanks to Buddhism, and his memory survived to this day. Many similar examples prove to us that the Silk Road was not just a trade route; it was essential for the transmission and survival of cultural elements. Such cultural elements rather than trade-

related ones might revitalise the Silk Road in the future, and the Silk Road might facilitate many cases regarding cultural exchange. Publishing historical stories like King Chashtana along with the comparisons of these stories in different languages will help us better observe cultural expansion and cultural exchange and also offer good examples upon which to build new relationships.

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