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## HUNGAROLOGIA

### ARADI, Éva : The History of the White Huns

The subject of our research is a people of many names written in the specialized literature. These names are the following: *Sweta Hunas* or *Khidaritas* in Sanskrit, *Ephtalites* or *Hephtalites* in Greek and in the European languages, *Haitals* in Armenian and *Heaitels* in Arabic and Persian. The Byzantine Theophylactos Simocattes called them *Abdeles*, while according to the Chinese annals the name of this people is *Ye-ta-li-to* because their ruler was called *Ye-tha* (Hephtal). The earlier Indian sources called them *Chionites*. But these several names mean only one people: the *White Huns*. In the specialized literature they are indicated as *Hephtalites*.

It was doubtful for a long time if they were the same people who originated from the neighbourhood of China called *Hsiung-nus*, separated many times and finally settled in the Oxus (Amu-darya) valley. At that time they were already called Western Hunas in Indian sources. From the northern Hsiung-nus originated the Asian Huns — or the Black Huns — who moved first to the Caucasus, later on to Europe and became a world power. They were the people of Balamber — Munduk — Rua — Atilla — or the ancestors of the Hungarians.

The several archeological findings excavated since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Sanskrit literary and religious works from the early centuries A.D.<sup>1</sup> and last but not least the accurate Chinese annals chronologically parallel with the Indian sources prove that the greater part of the White Huns consisted of the Western Hunas. The famous Chinese Buddhist monks: — one of them: *Sung Yun* who visited India at the time of the Hephtalite kingdom — and the other one: *Hsuan Tsang* who went there a few decades later, gave details about the White Huns in their accounts. But the Hephtalites had mixed with other nations before they arrived in India.

#### *The early appearance of the Hephtalites*

The Western Hunas appeared in *Transoxiana* — the grassland between the rivers Oxus (Amu-darya) and Jaxartes (Sir-darya) — in the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.<sup>2</sup> At that time they did not mix with other tribes. But because they had a strong army and they were remarkably brave, they conquered more and more territories southwards of their dwellings. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. they occupied *Tokharistan* and *Bactria* (now North Afghanistan). The Greek historian: *Procopius* distinguished them from Atilla's Huns who wandered towards the west and conquered a great part of Europe.<sup>3</sup> According to him, their culture and appearance were better than those of the Northern Huns. Procopius wrote that the Hephtalites were taller, more beautiful and their skin was fairer than those of the Asian Huns. But we should mention that the colours written in the ancient sources did not mean the skin colour. The Northern Huns were the black ones because in their ancient history they had adopted the names of colours in agreement with the four cardinal points. It was customary among the Central Asian peoples. The "black" always means the more severe northern region, the "white" means the western, the "green" or "blue" means the southern, while the "red" means the eastern territories, so the descriptions of colour are not connected with the people's skin colour at all.

The majority of researchers state that the *Chionites* or in their other name: the *Hionos* joined the White Huns already in *Transoxiana*.<sup>4, 5</sup> They were related to the Western Hunas. Other scholars suppose that the White Huns are the descendants of the *Kushans* — or in their Persian name: the "*shanan-shahis*" (the king of the kings) living in *Bactria* and *Gandhara* (now North Pakistan) at that time.<sup>6, 7</sup> The Kushans were defeated by the *Sassanians* in 239 A.D. and became their vassals but yet they had relative independence. The Hephtalites confirmed the later opinion, too, when mainly in the first period of their conquest they called themselves "*shahan-shahis*" on their coins. They used Greek script and the Bactrian dialect of the Persian

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the Puranas and the Buddhist works

<sup>2</sup> M.J. Firdausi (Ms. In edits de la Bib. Nat. Paris) VI. pp. 89, 97, 145

<sup>3</sup> Procopius: "De bello Persico", I. p.3.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cunningham: "Later Indo-Scythians", N. Ch. pp. 93, 166

<sup>5</sup> R. Ghirshman: "Les Chionites-Hephtalites", pp. 69-74, 115

<sup>6</sup> A. Christensen: "L'Iran sons les Sassanides", p. 282

<sup>7</sup> A. Stein: "White Huns and Kindred Tribes in the History of India", IA 1905, pp.83-84

language. They wanted to prove by their coins that they were the successors of the Kushans and they rightly could claim the occupied territories.

As a matter of fact the abovementioned scholars are right. The main part of the White Huns consisted of the Western Hunas separated from the Hsiung-nus. But the Chionites and the Kushans of Bactria joined the newcomers: the strong people of Central Asia. They hoped that with the help of the Hephtalites they could reconquer their East-Iranian and North-North-western Indian territories. The *Khidarites* — who also joined the White Huns — belonged to the later Kushans, too. From the Sassanian rule a *Ta Yüeh-chi* (Great Yüeh-chi) prince: *Khidara* and his tribe became independent in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and occupied the eastern part of Gandhara. This fact is proved by the Khidarita coins excavated there. But the pillar found in Allahabad, India proves this, too, as the following text is written on it: „near to the border of North India lives a prince called *Devaputra Sahanushahi* (”son of God — the king of the kings”).<sup>8</sup> As this title always belonged to the Kushan rulers originated from the Great Yüeh-chis, it means that Khidara was their successor and the Khidarites were his nation. By the archeologists the pillar was made around 340 A.D., so the Hephtalites and their “kindred tribes”: the Kushans, the Chionites and the Khidarites arrived to the Indian border at that time.

### *The Hephtalites in Persia*

After occupying Bactria, the strong White Hun army made its way towards Persia. The fact that a so called nomadic nation, like the Hephtalites and their predecessors: the Kushans wanted to conquer the settled, wealthy peoples of ancient culture was understandable from their point of view. The nomadic nations were stock-breeders and agricultural peoples in the Bronze Age according to the archeological findings. But because of the climatic change in Central Asia their cultivated fields became steppe or even uncultivable deserts. At that time they adopted the nomadic, pasturing way of life “with their intense adjustment to the enviromental possibilities.”<sup>9</sup> But these harsh circumstances made them strong and brave warriors. As they possessed only the products coming from the stock-breeding, and the exchange of these products did not cover their needs, sometime they had to plunder the richer settled countries surrounding Central Asia. For them the war was almost a profession of livelihood. In the beginning they got hold of their booty or ransom from China but the Chinese started to build their walls as a protection against them.

After that the nomads wandered towards the west; a part of them occupied the Transcaucasian territories while the others started to the south and the small oasis-states of Fergana, Sogdiana and later Bactria, Gandhara; finally the “fabulous India” became the target of their conquests. They were slowly assimilated to the people of the occupied lands, the greater part of the tribes even settled there because they did not want to go back to the steppe or desert of severe climate.

It is clear from the archeological findings of the Kushans and the Hephtalites that their kings supported nearly all the Asian religions and adopted the customs, languages and religions of the occupied countries. We can find the symbols of the Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Shaiva religions on their coins; moreover the Greek deities in the Bactrian findings, it was characteristic of the late Greco-Bactrian period. We can see the script and language of the conquered countries: on one side of the coin the king’s name and title are written with Greek letters in Bactrian dialect of the Persian language, while on the reverse with Kharosthi script in Prakrit or with Brahmi script in Sanskrit. These facts prove their intense adaptability.

The wars fought with the Sassanians in Persia actually started because of the Sassanian king: *Firoz*. He denied the war booty or at least a part of it from the Huns though it was necessary for their living. The Hephtalites got into contact with Yazdigird, the Sassanian king in 457 A.D. winning many successful battles against him. After Yazdigird’s death, his son: *Firoz* was the heir to the crown but his younger brother: *Hormuzd* deposed him. At that time *Firoz* asked the Hephtalites’ help and together with them he defeated *Hormuzd* and his army. The king of the White Huns was called *Khushnewaz* and he already ruled Tokharistan, Badakshan and Bactria.<sup>10</sup> *Firoz* — though the chiefs of his army warned him — did not pay the agreed war ransom and even started a war against the Hephtalites.<sup>11</sup> He lost the war and a part of his army was destroyed. The White Huns occupied the important town: *Gorgo* at the Persian-Bactrian border. *Firoz* again attacked the Hephtalites taking his sons with him; he left back only his youngest son: *Kubad*. The Sassanians suffered a crushing defeat, *Firoz* and his sons died in the battle. The Sassanian Empire became the vassal of the Hephtalites for a short time, they paid war ransom every year and they lost two important provinces: *Merv* and *Herat*. After the Persian victory, the White Huns prepared for a new conquest: towards India.

<sup>8</sup> Sircar: “Selected Inscriptions” No.No.41 and 54.

<sup>9</sup> Vásáry István: “A régi Belső-Ázsia története”, Balassi Kiadó 2003. p.20. (The History of the Ancient Central Asia)

<sup>10</sup> Mirkhond: “Rauzat-us-Safa” tr. by Rehatsek, p. 363

<sup>11</sup> Procopius: “De Bello Persico”, III. pp. 1-19.

But before writing about the wars in India, we should refer to the sources mentioning the White Huns. Besides the well-known European and West Asian sources: e.g. Procopius, Theophylactos Simocattes, Khoreni Moses, Jordanes, Ammianus Marcellinus, Cosmas Indicopleustes, first of all the always correct Chinese annals and the reports of two Buddhist monks: *Sung Yun* and *Hsuan-tsang*, the Arabian Al-Beruni and the Persian Firdause help us to understand that era. But because a significant part of the Hephtalite kingdom belonged to ancient India, the Indian literary works, the religious scripts and the archeological findings contributed to reveal their history. The research of the White Huns in Hungary was insufficient because it did not take into consideration the Indian sources.

The Hephtalites while still living in the Oxus valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian Puranas — written in Sanskrit — first of all the Vishnu Purana and the Aitareya Brahmana refer to them and call them “Hunas”.<sup>12</sup> In the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century the famous poet-writer: *Kalidasa* writes about them in his Sanskrit epic: the *Raghuvamsha* (Raghu’s nation):

“Tatra Hunavarodhanam bhartrishu vyaktavikman  
Kapalapataladeshi babhuva Raghuceshtitam” (68)<sup>13</sup>

The abovementioned quotation means that the Huns live in the Oxus valley, they were created to practise power but the cheeks of their wives blush when they hear the victory of Raghu: the hero. The other important literary work is: *Kalhana’s Rajatarangini* (The Chronicle of the Kings). The book of many volumes from the Kashmirian historian was first translated from Sanskrit into English by Aurel Stein in 1900 A.D.

The data in Kalhana’s work always should be compared with other sources because the Kashmirian author dealt with the historical facts and dates freely. But the names of his books are real and if we compare his dates with the correct Chinese sources and the Sanskrit and Prakrit epitaphs, coins found at the archeological excavations, we can get the exact data.

Apart from the abovementioned sources there is the poem: *Harshacarita* (The deeds of Harsha), written by *Bana*, the court poet of *King Harsha* (606-640 A.D.). In this poem Bana mentioned that the father of the famous Indian king: Harsha defeated the Huns for good in the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> We should mention that it was not true because according to the Puranas the Huns ruled in India for 300 years, though after 565 A.D. only in Kashmir and in a part of Punjab, but still it was a large territory.

The other important and frequently quoted work is a Jaina religious book from Jaisalmer, Rajasthan It is the *Kuvalayamala*.<sup>15</sup> Moreover the epitaphs found on pillars, temple ruins and buildings of that period can help us to identify the names of the rulers, the date of their reign, their wars and victories or defeats. We shall refer to the sources in the proper places of this essay.

### *The Hephtalites in India*

The noted Indian scholar: professor *Modi* remarked: “The Huns always headed for India; whether they were victorious or were defeated, — in the first case they felt their power and in the second case they wanted new grazing grounds and booty.”<sup>16</sup>

Modi’s statement is supported by the Indian sources; according to them the first Hun attack against India took place in 455 A.D. in the Punjab — now in the territory of Pakistan — but at that time the Indian king: *Skandagupa* defeated them.<sup>17</sup> This fact was recorded on the pillar of victory set up in *Bhitari*:

“Skanda Gupta of great glory by his own power, the abode of kingly qualities who when his father had attained the position of being a friend of the gods (that means, he had died — E.A.) — whose fame, even with his enemies: in the counties of the Mlecchas (slaves, strangers — E.A.) ..... having their pride broken down to the root, announces: verily the victory has been achieved by him.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Aitareya Brahmana, tr. by Haug, VIII. 14-29.

<sup>13</sup> Kalidasa: “Raghuvamsha” ed. By Jivananda Vidyasagara, sarga 4-th, sl.68.

<sup>14</sup> Bana: “Harsha Carita”, tr. by Cowell, p.101.

<sup>15</sup> Udyotana Suri: *Kuvalayamala*” JBORS, 1928, p.28.

<sup>16</sup> J.J. Modi: “A hunokról, akik meghódították Indiát” (About the Huns who conquered India), Bp. 1926, Avesta Pbl. P. 42.

<sup>17</sup> R.S. Kushawa: “A Glimpse of Bharatiya History”, Delhi, 2003, Ocean Books pbl. Pp. 52-56

<sup>18</sup> Fleet: “Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum”, Vol. III. London, 1888.

The word: *Mlecchas* or the strangers of under caste naturally meant the attacking Huns. So, at that time the Indian army was victorious. The same epitaph was written on a stone-pillar in Western India: in *Junagadh*. Junagadh is situated in Gujarat province near to Kathiawar; this place was Skandagupta's head quarter and he wanted to announce his victory there, too. The abovementioned Bhitari is in Punjab.

The latest researches and the excavations in north-western part of Pakistan — where some Hephtalite coins and epitaphs were found — prove that not *Toramana* (in his original Hun name: *Turman*) was the first major Hun ruler in India. On the coins the names: *Tunjina* or *Tujina* are written in Brahmi script and on the reverse of the coins his titles: *tigin* or *tegin* are given, too. It seems that the dual power was well-known by the White Huns as *Tunjina* was war lord and ruler while the seat of the *kagan* was near to Bokhara in the north; this fact we know from the Persian sources. The title “tegin” existed already at the time of the White Huns proved by their coins. It is not true that this title appeared only later with the Khazars and the Avars.

Otherwise the name *Tunjina* was mentioned in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* as the first Hun ruler who entered India and invaded Kashmir. As we mentioned before, Kalhana's work should be treated cautiously because he has written it in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and though he referred to authentic historians, it is based on traditions and legends first of all. The names of the historical persons and the stories belonging to them are real but the chronology is uncertain. His data should be compared with other sources. But from these other sources the fact is proved that the father of *Toramana* and the founder of the conquering dynasty was *Tunjina*.<sup>19</sup> He was ruling from 465 till 484 A.D., so the first Hun campaign in 455 A.D. was not commanded by him. This battle finished with Hun defeat. But in 475 A.D. *Tunjina* quickly and successfully entered India with his army and occupied the Punjab and even the northern part of the Ganges basin. In 484 A.D. his son: *Toramana*, the energetic and talented *tegin* — war lord — became the leader of the Hephtalites.

### *Toramana*

First of all we should mention the Indian epigraphs proving *Toramana*'s reign and his conquests. We know three such stone inscriptions:

1) *The Eran statue inscription*. Eran was in the northern part of the province: Madhya Pradesh, so almost in India's center. It seems that the Hephtalite ruler already conquered Northern and Western India. The statue most probably stood before a temple built for Vishnu and the following text is written in Brahmi script on its pedestal:

“In the first year of the rule of Maharajadhiraja (the king of kings): Shri *Toramana* who is governing the earth with great fame and lustre.”<sup>20</sup>

2) *The inscription of the Kura main pillar*. Kura is a town situated in Northern Punjab — today it belongs to Pakistan. The following text is written on the stone pillar in Brahmi script:

“This is engraved during the reign of Maharajadhiraja Shri *Toramana*, the great Saha Javlah.”<sup>21</sup>

There is no date on the inscription but we are sure that it was made in the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The title: “king of the kings” — in Sanskrit: *Maharajadhiraja* — is engraved on both the stone epigraphs but on the Kura pillar the title: *Saha* can be seen, too, because it indicated that he and the Hephtalites are the rightful descendants of the Kushans as the Kushan kings had used this name. Though *Toramana* kept his own Hun identity to some extent, as the word “Javla” appears on the pillar inscription. The researchers give different interpretations of this word. On the one hand it means the birthplace of *Toramana*: the city being their head-quarter since the Persian and Gandharian wars, namely *Kabul*. They called this city on their own language *Jaula*, *Javlah*, *Zabula* or *Zabola*, these names can be found on their different coins. So the title *Saha Javlah* means: “the ruler from Kabul”. But the words: “Javlah, Juvl” mean “falcon” in the old Turkish language;<sup>22</sup> this could have been the sacred bird of the White Huns as the *turul* is that of the Hungarians. Otherwise if the words *Javlah*, *Zabula*, *Zabola* meant the name of the city, we should mention that these words are also of Turkish origin. In the eastern part of Iran — near to the Afghan border — there is a town called *Zabola* — and in Transylvania, too we know the place *Zabola*.

<sup>19</sup> Kalhana: “*Rajatarangini*”, tr. by A. Stein, Bk. III. vs 97-101.

<sup>20</sup> D.C. Sircar: “Select Inscriptions”, I. p.396, No. 55.

<sup>21</sup> D.C. Sircar: *ibid.* I. p.398, No. 56.

<sup>22</sup> Karabacek: “*Epigraphia Indica*” I. p. 239.



3) *The Gwalior inscription*. Toramana is mentioned on it, too, but the inscription was made during the reign of his son and successor: *Mihirakula*, most probably in 530 A.D. It was engraved on a temple post built for the worship of the Sun God and Shiva. Gwalior is a town in the center of India.

After mentioning the usual laudatory titles, the epigraph informs us about the exact date of its erection which was the 15<sup>th</sup> year of *Mihirakula*'s reign. It means that *Mihirakula* ruled since 515 A.D. and his father: Toramana between 484-515 A.D. The text of the inscription follows:

“Of him, the fame of whose family has risen high, the son of Toramana, the Lord of the Earth, who is renowned under the name *Mihirakula* who unbrokenly worships *Pasupati*”.<sup>23</sup>

*Pasupati* is one of Shiva's different names. It appears from the epigraph that both *Mihirakula* and Toramana were the followers of Shiva.

Besides these three inscriptions numerous coins give evidence about the first really important Hun ruler who — according to the archeological findspots — occupied Bactria, Eastern Iran, Gandhara, Kashmir, Northern and North-Western India, as far as the Ganges plain, Rajasthan on the West and Madhya Pradesh (Middle Province) in the center of India. It means that he ruled almost half part of India. During his long reign he won many successful conquering wars. The Toramana coins were current even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Kashmirian bazars. On his coins the names “*Sahi Zabula*” or “*Sahi Jauvla*” are written and on the reverse side either Shiva and his carrying animal: *the Nandi bull*, or the symbol of the Sun God: the Sun-wheel are visible. Obviously the worship of the Sun God was their original nature-religion. But as one of the best Indian Hun researcher: *Atreyi Biswas* noted in her book: “It is a remarkable feature of the Central Asian invaders that wherever they went, they adopted the local customs, beliefs and traditions, even the languages and changed themselves according to their new environments. This strong quality of assimilation persisted when they entered India.”<sup>24</sup>

Besides the stone inscriptions and coins, *Buddhist* religious books, the already mentioned *Jaina Kavalayamala* and *Kalhana's Rajatarangini* inform us about the White Hun king. From these sources — though not always authentically — we may get some data about Toramana: the war lord and the man. He occupied almost half of India's territory in the first year of his reign: in 484 A.D., as the Gupta empire became weak by that time and the smaller Indian principalities were fighting with each other. We can conclude on the basis of the abovementioned works that „Toramana was a remarkable and talented personality whose achievements in India were no less great than those of Alexander. He was the first foreign ruler in India who built up a vast empire from Central Asia to Central India. He was a born fighter who with his well-organized army gave the Hunas a stable home for more than hundred years, a better one than their original home in Inner Mongolia. After Atilla, he was the only general who re-organized the Hunas, under his inspiring leadership to a nation-reborn after many failures”.<sup>25</sup> He was not only a great conqueror but a good organizer and administrator, too. Indeed, he developed his own state organization: *Kabul* and *Purushapura* (near to Peshawar, today in Pakistan) became his headquarters in the North and the territory of *Malwa* and its towns were his center in the South. *Malwa* had been also the main place of the Indo-Scythians and the Kushans. *Malwa* included the states of today's Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh. He appointed Indian princes to important posts ensuring their loyalty. He had patience with the three religions: the Buddhism, the Hinduism and the Jainism and even supported them. He did not change the administration, he did not trouble anybody needlessly, there was a relative consolidation in the country therefore the people accepted him.

After a long reign Toramana died in Benares in 515 A.D. Before his death he declared his son: *Mihirakula* his successor. But the crown prince did not inherit his father's patience and straightforwardness.

### *Mihirakula*

He was a great conqueror but a short-tempered man with contradictory character; he ruled from 515 till 533 in the greater part of India, according to the sources, and after two fateful battles he ruled only in Kashmir for some time. His name appears on the epigraph found in *Uruzgan*, Afghanistan, as *Mihiragula*<sup>26</sup>. It must have been his original Hun name and its second part:

<sup>23</sup> The translation from the original Sanskrit text made by Indian scholars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it became an authentic text; I could not change it.

<sup>24</sup> *Atreyi Biswas*: “The Political History of the Hunas in India”, *Munshiram Manoharlal Pbl.* 1971. p. 59.

<sup>25</sup> *Upendra Thakur*: “The Hunas in India”, *Varanasi*, 1967. *Chowkhamba Sanskrit Office* pp. 95, 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Aurel Stein*: “Ázsia halott szívében” (In the dead heart of Asia), *Bp.* 1985, *Helikon*, p.368.

*gula* shows the magyar Gyula's name and royal profession, as he was a *tegin* and had the same duty than that of the later "gyulas": a ruling war lord.

The inscriptions about Mihirakula are the following:

1) *The Gwalior inscription* made in 530 A.D. We have mentioned it before, in connection with Toramana.

2) *The Mandasor inscription*,<sup>27</sup> its date is most probably 533 A.D. It appears only three years after the abovementioned epigraph and it informs us — in contrast with the announcement of Mihirakula's victory in Gwalior — his defeat by Yasodharman, a tribal prince.

The text follows:

"To the glory of Yasodharman who occupied the Earth from the river Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) up to the western ocean and from the Himalaya up to the mount of Mahendra, forced the famous Huna king: Mihirakula to bend down his forehead by the strength of Yasodharman's arm. Mihirakula's head had never previously been brought into humility of obedience to any other save the God Sthanu."

Sthanu is Shiva's other name, it is proved from the abovementioned text, too, that Mihirakula was a great devotee of Lord Shiva.

But the inscription glorifying Yasodharman is exaggerating — as it was the custom of that time — because according to the Indian scholars, he was only a tribal prince in a part of today's Gujarat and most probably he could not rule a great territory of India, up to the river Brahmaputra. In the eastern part of the country the already re-established Gupta Empire existed.

As we have mentioned before, the Mihirakula coins were found first of all in Bactria, the territory of the present Afghanistan, but also in Kashmir and in India's different parts. On one of the coins found in Uruzgan, the next inscription appears, most probably on their own language:

"Boggo saho zovolovo Mihroziki", in translation: "To the glorious king, Mihirakula of Zabul".

On one side of his silver coins the king's half-length portrait can be seen with a writing in Persian language and on the reverse the Sun-disk and the Moon crescent, sometimes the fire-altar symbolizing the Mazda religion, on another occasion the bow and arrow or the symbol of Shiva: the trident appear.

The literary sources about the Hephtalites are: the abovementioned Rajatarangini and Kuvalayamala and the memories of the famous Chinese monk: *Huan-Tsang* who went to India two generations later. His accounts based on legends and are exaggerating to some extent. Mihirakula's contemporary, the Chinese pilgrim: *Sung Yun* gives information about the Hun king, and though he does not draw a positive picture of him, his accounts are free from prejudices. Sung Yun arrived to Kashmir in about 520 A.D. and brought a letter from his master, the Chinese emperor to the Hephtalite king. Aurel Stein's account about the story in the court of Kashmir follows: "The pious pilgrim mentions as the sign of the king's barbarous arrogance and self-conceit that he heard the Chinese emperor's letter of recommendation sitting, while the other princes received the message of the Son of Heaven, the great emperor Vui with full honours, standing."<sup>28</sup> The Chinese author added to his accounts: "Kashmir stays under the power of a barbarous people."

We have to admit that the Rajatarangini is more just to Mihirakula in this case, because according to Kalhana, the king answered the offended pilgrim: "if the emperor would have come here personally I naturally received him standing but why should I pay respect for a piece of paper." This answer shows Mihirakula's sense of humour, too, but there is no doubt that he was an arrogant and cruel ruler according to all sources.

But he was an excellent military leader. He inherited from his father a vast country and he extended it with his campaigns to the South, as far as Indore — which is in the center of India, — but the whole subcontinent, even the southern provinces became his vassals. A Greek sailor-missionary called *Cosmas Indicopleustes* who travelled to India in 530 A.D. gave an account about this fact in his book: *Christiana Topographia*. He wrote the following: "India is ruled by the White Huns with the leadership of king Gollas who goes to war with 2000 elephants and with a large cavalry. The whole country is under his command and he takes ransom from far regions." According to Stein the name: *Gollas* contains the second part of Mihirakula's name /in the case of Greek authors we should leave the word-ending „s"/ and in this way we can get the word: *gula*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sircar: "Select Inscriptions" no. 54. p. 393.

<sup>28</sup> Aurel Stein: *ibid.* p. 371.

<sup>29</sup> Aurel Stein: *ibid.* p. 368.

According to the Rajatarangini he persecuted the Buddhist monks but he was the follower of Hinduism, first of all the Shaiva line of it.<sup>30</sup> He was a brave and strong warrior but fanatically kept his power. Though he built a temple called Mihreshwar in Kashmir, near Shrinagar for the worship of Shiva and the Sun God.

Otherwise he was a simple person, he lived in tent among his soldiers; he was constantly fighting to keep the occupied huge territories.

According to the Mandasor inscription, as we mentioned before, Mihirakula was defeated in 533 A.D. by Yasodharman, the tribal prince from Western India. At that time he wanted to ensure his power in the eastern part of his empire. But there, in the surroundings of Pataliputra /the present Patna, capital of Bihar state/ he and his army suffered a crushing defeat from *Baladitya*, the king of the eastern province. Baladitya, the vassal of Mihirakula did not want to pay the ransom to the Huns any longer. The Hun emperor became very angry and started with his army to punish the eastern king. But in the marshland near the Bengal Bay Mihirakula lost many soldiers while his enemy and his troop knew well their native terrain. Baladitya, as a devout Buddhist did not kill his enemy. The Hun emperor withdrew to Kashmir after the defeat because he came to know that his younger brother occupied Shakala, his northern capital. The prince of Kashmir gave him an asylum but Mihirakula overthrew the prince with intrigues and he sat on the throne. He could not enjoy his power for a long time, as he died of disease in 533 A.D.<sup>31</sup> One of his successors was defeated in 558 A.D. by the Sassanian king: *Kushrew Anushirwan* and at the same time by the Turkish army in the North. The headquarters of the kagan — near Bokhara — surrendered in 565 A.D.

The opinions of the Indian scholars are divided about Mihirakula, the great conqueror but the enemy of Buddhism. U. Thakur writes the following about him: “while his father gave a new country to the Hunas and was accepted by the Indians, Mihirakula made the Huna name dreaded and hated in India. The result was that after a hundred years power the great Hephtalite empire ended and a talented people had to fly from India.”<sup>32</sup> At the same time the other Hun researcher, Mrs. Atreyi Biswas pointed out that the Buddhist accounts are always one-sided and exaggerated and the actions of Mihirakula were not so cruel as stated by the Rajatarangini and the two Chinese monks.<sup>33</sup>

The traditions and the often mentioned Rajatarangini are informing us that the rule of the Hephtalites did not end with Mihirakula's death, only this rule did not extend to the whole country, not even to the larger part of it. The books of the most reliable Indian historiography are the *Puranas* and according to them the Huns ruled 300 years altogether, first of all in Kashmir and in the greater part of the Punjab and they had eleven rulers including Tunjina, Toramana and Mihirakula.<sup>34</sup> As the book Rajatarangini always should be compared with other sources, in this case, with the excavated coins and inscriptions, we may state the following with almost full certainty: after Mihirakula's death his youngest brother (half-brother): *Pravarasena*, after his son: *Gokarna*, the latter's son: *Khinkhila* and his son: *Yudhishthira*, finally his grandson: *Lakhana* ruled the northern part of India. They sat on the throne altogether till 670 A.D. — for 200 years instead of 300 years mentioned in the Puranas — as they had their first victory in 475 A.D. But the Puranas had the informations justified by the archeological findings that isolated „Huna Mandalas” — Hun centers — existed even in the 10<sup>th</sup> century both in Rajasthan and in the North. The account of Hsuan-Tsang also confirms the abovementioned statements of the Puranas.

When he travelled towards Nalanda in 633 A.D., he wrote about Kashmir and its people that „fierce and wild people live in this land, they are uncivilized and their language is different from the Indian languages, it sounds more roughly. They are borderland people with barbarous customs.”<sup>35</sup> His account is one-sided as he added: “the people are non-Buddhist”.

### *Pravarasena*

He was Toramana's youngest son who was a young child when his father died in 515 A.D. We should mention that the polygamy was customary at the rulers both in Central Asia and ancient India. For instance in the Hsiung-nu history we remember the case of Maotun shanyu who was the crown prince but his father wanted to get him killed because he wished to put his younger son on the throne. This fact was revenged by Maotun when he killed his father and stepbrother. But *Rama*, the hero of *Ramayana* also had to go into exile, because his father had promised his younger wife that her son would be the crown-prince. In case of Pravarasena the situation was different. His half-brother, the powerful Mihirakula would not let him near to the throne. According to the Rajatarangini, after Toramana's death Pravarasena was hidden by his mother and uncle in a

<sup>30</sup> Rajatarangini, Bk. I. vs. 289-30

<sup>31</sup> Si-yu-ki, tr. by S.Beal, pp. 168-172.

<sup>32</sup> U. Thakur: “The Hunas in India”, p.184.

<sup>33</sup> Atreyi Biswas: “The Political History of the Hunas in India”, Delhi, 1973. p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> Matsya, Vayu, Brahmanda, Vishnu and Bhagvata Puranas, ed. by Jivananda Vidyasagara, IV. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Si-yu-ki, tr. by S.Beal I. p. 164.

potter's house, then later he went to a northern country and lived there as a pilgrim. We should mention that Pravarasena's name is entirely Indian, not similarly to the names of his father and grandfather. Pravarasena went back to Kashmir from the North after Mihirakula's death and ascended the Kashmirian throne. According to the Rajatarangini this fact happened in 533 A.D. but some Indian scholars dispute this date because after Mihirakula's death a prince from other dynasty ruled the country for some years. It seems that Pravarasena's ruling started in 537 A.D. He was about 25 years old at that time.

According to Kalhana he reigned for 60 years, which means till 597 A.D. This is justified by the inscriptions and the glorifying books of the court poets of the Indian kings having connected to Pravarasena — either as his allies or as his enemies.

He helped with his army *Siladitya*, the prince of Malwa in Saurashtra (in the present Gujarat) to save the latter's throne against Prabhakaravardhana, the king of Thanesar.<sup>36</sup>

It means that he was a powerful and influential ruler. Due to the Indian researchers, Pravarasena later lost an important battle against Prabhakaravardhana still in the western part of India, this fact was mentioned by Bana, the court poet of king Harsha from Thanesar. Bana writes the following in his glorifying book "Harshacarita" (The actions of Harsha):

"Vardhana was a lion to the Huna deer,  
the axe cutting the creeping-plant of Malwa's glory."<sup>37</sup>

The battle happened in 587 A.D. and Vardhana was Harsha's father. Malwa — the present Rajasthan — meant always the center of the Huns, before them, the center of the Kushans, it was the headquarters of both nations. The "Huna deer" term is interesting because the deer was most probably their sacred animal, the symbol of the Hephtalites, — besides the falcon: "Juvl" — as it was also a symbol of the *magyars*. In the excavated Hun graves in Mongolia the pictures of deers are visible on the fairly unbroken carpets.

The abovementioned battle did not change the fact that according to the Rajatarangini and to the accounts of Hsuan-Tsang, the country of Pravarasena included Kashmir, the north-western part of the Punjab, the Swat-basin, the southern part of Bactria and Gandhara. It was a large territory. The places where their coins were found prove that the headquarters of the late Haphtalites were the same as those of their ancestors, that means: Bactria, Kabul and the valley of the river Kabul.

The Rajatarangini mentions that Pravarasena had a major town, called Paravarasenapura built near to the present Shrinagar, the capital of Kashmir. Here the Huns built a bridge, too.<sup>38</sup>

Pravarasena had his own coins and on these — as it was usual on the Hephtalite's coins — the word "Kidara" appeared next to the ruler's name. They wanted to show their ancient Kushan-Kidarita origin or relationship and the fact that they rule the occupied territories rightfully.<sup>39</sup>

According to Kalhana, Pravarasena, though he was the half-brother of Mihirakula, — contrary to his predecessor — was a kind and wise ruler, who was accepted by his subjects during his long reign.

Among the Hun rulers in Kashmir, mentioned in the Puranas, Pravarasena was followed by his son: *Gokarna*, who ruled for a short time. Some of his coins were found in North India.<sup>40</sup> His son *Khinkhila* dedicated a temple for Shiva in Kashmir and ruled for 36 years, stated by the Rajatarangini. The statement was proved by the excavations done in Afghanistan in the second half of the last century, when the archeologists found a Ganesha statue in *Gardez*, in the Swat-basin, south to Kabul. On the foundation stone of the statue a few lines were engraved in North-Indian Brahmi script, most probably in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The inscriptions were engraved for "Maharajadiraja Sahi Khingala", who was identified with the abovementioned Khinkhila by the scholars.<sup>41</sup> So, it means, the Rajatarangini was right, only the date was not correct, Khinkhila ruled between 600-633 A.D., presumably, and his reign in Kashmir coincided with the Indian journey of Hsuan-Tsang who stopped in Kashmir and wrote that its ruler was not Buddhist and descended from a lower caste.<sup>42</sup> This description from Hsuan-Tsang's point of view was fitting to Khinkhila, who, as a foreigner, was not considered by the Indians as a person belonging to higher castes. And indeed he was not a Buddhist but a Shaiva.

When Hsuan-Tsang, after his long Indian stay, returned home stopped again in Kashmir and at that time Khinkhila's son: *Judhishthira* sat on the throne. The Chinese monk wrote about him highly. According to the Rajatarangini Judhishthira ruled

<sup>36</sup> Rajatarangini, Bk. III. 330.

<sup>37</sup> Bana: "Harshacarita", tr. by Cowell, p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> Rajatarangini, ibid. p. 354.

<sup>39</sup> Cunningham: "Mediaeval Indian coins", pl.III.3,4

<sup>40</sup> Cunningham: ibid. fig.6.

<sup>41</sup> Sircar: El. 1963 p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> Si-yu-ki- tr. by S.Beal, I. p.156.

for 24 years, from 633 till 557 A.D. Judhishtira's son: *Lakhana*, whose coins were also found, ruled for 13 years in Kashmir.<sup>43</sup>

The name and date of reign of the other Hun kings — mentioned in the Puranas — are not provable. At that time, from 670 A.D. another dynasty came to power in Kashmir

*The successors of the Hephtalites in India*

After glancing over the data of the reigning princes ruling in the northern part of India, let us see what happened to them in the western and central parts of the subcontinent. As it was mentioned, some Hun states were established in several places of Indian territory, after their defeat. They were the so called Huna Mandalas — Hun centers — still representing a considerable power. Previously *Malwa* was their main center, including the present states of Rajasthan, East Gujarat and the western part of Madhya Pradesh. Here the Huns remained for a long time. This fact is known from the “victory pillars” established by the Indian kings. According to these the Huns had to be defeated even in 900 A.D. This is proved by the *Garuda pillar* from 850 A.D. It states that that the Pala king ruled in the central part of India “defeated the Hunas, the Gurjars and the Dravidiens in the eastern and the western parts of the country,” where they had some centers, too, besides of Malwa and Kashmir. This was the Uttarapatha province, north from Kanauj, so they still represented a considerable power.<sup>44</sup>

It is interesting, that the Dravidiens were fighting together with the Kushans and later on with the Hephtalites, as they have never forgotten — even today — the well-known fact that the Arians had defeated them several thousand years before. The existing Hun centers are proved by the *Gaonri epitaph* in 955 A.D. found in Vanika village near to Indore. Besides this it is well known that the Hun princesses were married some Rajasthani rulers and even other Indian princes, too, e.g. in 977 A.D. the *Medapata* ruler *Allata* married *Hariyadevi*, the daughter of a “Huna Mandala” king, proved by the *Atrpu Inscription*. The princess established a town in Mewar — today the eastern part of Rajasthan — where several Hun villages are still existing in the following names: *Hunavasa*, *Hunaganva* *Hunajunmu*, *Madarya*, *Kemri*. Similarly written documents are showing that the Chalukiya ruler *Hemachandra* in 1009 had to fight with a Hun prince for a princess in a marriage-contest. The Hun prince was his rival. In 1072 the *Khaira tablets* prove that the Kalachuri clan's queen was a Hun ruler's daughter. In 1153 the *Inscription of Ajmer* proves that in Ajmer a Hun royal family was ruling.<sup>45</sup> So it shows that the Huns were present in a huge part of India. This is due to the fact that “in the veins of three prominent ethnic groups: *the Rajputs, the Gurjars and the Jats* Hun blood are flowing in substantial quantity.”<sup>46</sup>

The Huns remained in India for several hundred years, settled down there and became Indians. Some leading tribes of Rajasthan originated from the ruling part of the Huns and even several other provinces were ruled by them. The Gurjars arrived with the Hephtalites in the fifth century, they were shepherds, but actually they supplied the foodstuff for the Hun army. In India they also became shepherds and the Ind society accepted them as *Kshatriyas* — the second caste — and in this way they are called “the royal shepherds”. The Jat tribe originated by the interbreeding of the Hun soldiers and the local population and later on they made the famous, brave fighters: the *Sikhs*. How did the despised *mlecchas* (foreigners, under-caste) change to second caste citizens? The Brahmins played a very important role in the Indian society and by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century they realized that the brave Hun soldiers adopted the Indian customs and religion — first of all the Shaivism — and through the interbreeding with the wise Arians, they became useful for the Indian society. For this reason at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Mount Abu — at that time it was called *Arbuda* — the Rajput clan undertook themselves for the so called “ordeal by fire”; the Brahmins were present on the test. Later they spread the news that a mythological bird raised up from the fire and this bird took the ancestor of the Rajputs to the plain, so they were purified from their foreign origin and they became second caste members of the society, in this way they could be elected as kings. This is naturally a nice story of the Brahmins but it shows that even they accepted them and legalized the one-time enemy's descendants.

It was a custom in India that the foreign conquerors after some time were assimilated into the Ind society but always to the caste according to their professions. For instance only one foreign tribe members became Brahmins: the so called *magas* came from Iran, or from other sources the *magars* who had arrived together with Mihirakula as the priests of the Sun God and the Sun worship.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Rajatarangini, Bk. III. 383.

<sup>44</sup> U. Thakur, *ibid.* p. 207.

<sup>45</sup> Sircar: “Foreword in Thakur's: *The Hunas in India*”, 1967, Varanasi, pp.4-5.

<sup>46</sup> Romila Thapar: “*A History of India*”, Vol. 1. England, 1974. p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> Atreji Biswas: *ibid.* pp. 156, 160.

After this the Rajputs were fighting bravely in the middle age against the Muslim conquerors who had never succeeded to occupy the whole Rajasthan, as from the fortified castles the mobile defender troops rode here and there and by the time the Muslims occupied one castle, they moved to another one.

Apart from the Rajput soldiers, the Rajput women were showing an example of ideal moral and heroism. If the Muslims occupied a fort finally — e.g. the fort of *Chittor*, the previous capital of Mewar, — the queen called *Padmini* had committed suicide on a large pyre with her court members before the enemy entered the fort. Even today Rajasthan state is the most interesting, most colourful part of India, culturally too, and it is curious that the people do not have any Arian features. Their clothes also preserve the tradition of the Central Asian pattern: the men wear tight trousers, white shirts with loose sleeves and dark coloured waistcoats — similarly to the *Chango* (today in Romania, an old Hungarian tribe) and the *Szekler* national dress. The only difference is that the Rajasthani men wear turbans but this fact is due to the hot climate. Their folk art and music expressively show the Central Asian origin. On the wall near to the Maharana's palace gate in Udaipur — the present capital of Mewar — a huge painting is visible: a Rajput warrior on horseback, with the *stirrup*, which is a Hun invention. But the whole decoration in the palace: the peacock, the tree of life and the palmettas are familiar to us. When the *Maharana* (this title means that he is the spiritual leader of all Rajput maharajas — and it corresponds to the ancient name: *maharajadiraja*) succeeds to the throne, he makes a compact sealed with blood with his old ally, the headman of the *Bhil* tribe, then makes a deep bow towards East and rides on horseback through the eastern gate to their ancient, sacred temple: *Eklingji* where the priests consecrate him. Their ancient goddess is *Mataji* and their god is *Suriya*, the Sun God. So many relationships!

In a short study it is impossible to analyze all similarities; they are presented in details in my book published in 2005.

But now let us see what happened to those groups of the Hephtalites who did not want to assimilate into the Indian society or did not rule in Kashmir but went further north to Bactria and towards their old native land in the Oxus-valley. Their previous enemy: the *Sassanians* did not forget their defeat and after winning a battle against the Parthus army, they started a war against the Hephtalites in Bactria and in the Bokhara area. In 565 they defeated the Hephtalites. In the meantime the former vassals of the Hephtalites: the *Turks* became strong in the Oxus-valley and in Tokharistan, and they wanted to revenge upon their one-time masters. They won a battle against the Hephtalites and now they wanted to put the White Huns in a vassal status claiming ransom from them. The kagan, the armed forces and the leaders naturally were forced to fly. They were joined by a part of the *Zhuan-Zhuan* tribe; they also had to escape from the Turk army. Though they were the opponents of the Hsiung-nus in old time but in 565 A.D. the common fate forced them together. Among these tribes there were the so called *Uar-Huns*, or according to other sources: the *Var-Huns* who were called *Avars* later on. The Indian sources mention that in the Caucasus they were joined by some other Avar tribes settled down there earlier. Some Indian scholars state that these tribes must have been the descendants of Atilla.<sup>48</sup> In any case, the Hephtalite army with the joined peoples marched towards Byzantium at a great speed pushed from the back by the Turks. In 568 A.D. the Byzantine sources write about them, mentioning the name of their commander, as *Bayan kagan*. The history of the Avars in the Charpatian-basin is well known. I dealt with the history of the White Huns first of all because they are our ancestors through the Avars. Really, we are the descendants of the Huns by two direct lines — this is my firm belief.

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