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wide variety of sources and the frequent mention of the Huns, who, after all, originated on the Chinese borderlands. The presentation of the material has been optimized for usefulness. Rather than simply providing in one place all the entries, say, in the *Weishu* that refer to the Huns, the entries are provided separately in different sections referring to specific topics. Thus there are entries from the *Weishu* in sections on Dong Wan's mission in 437 CE, on Song Yun's mission of 518–22, on the Yeda (i.e., Hephthalites) generally, on their expansion, on their population, on their court, political system and economy, on the characteristics of ordinary people, on their language and script, on their funeral customs, on their international status, on their wars, and on their tribute payments to China. I provide this exhaustive list to give the reader a sense of the detail to which the authors have gone. Within each section, material from other sources are interspersed with that from the *Weishu* and other sources.

Next, Mauro Maggi reviews the Khotanese and Frantz Grenet the Pahlavi sources. The dearth of material in Pahlavi is a real surprise, considering how much interaction the Sasanians had with the Huns and how well developed the Sasanian state was. There are only two entries here, neither very informative. This is followed by the extremely informative material in the Sogdian and, especially, the Bactrian sources, reviewed by Nicholas Sims-Williams. I suspect more information is to emerge from the Bactrian documents.

There is a very interesting section on the Armenian sources, authored by Giusto Traina, extending to 24 pages. These are much less familiar to most researchers, but the Armenian sources provide information on a number of topics, including the war of Shapur with the Kidarites, the war of Yazdegerd against the Huns, the defeat of the Sasanians at Herat and the use of Hun troops in the battle of Peroz against the Albanians. The chapter on Armenian sources is followed by chapters on the Syriac sources (by Mark Dickens and Christelle Jullien) and the Arabic literature, both Islamic (by Étienne de la Vaissière) and Christian (Mark Dickens and Orsolya Varsányi).

We next have over 50 pages on the Greek and Latin sources, authored by Timo Stickler. These will be more familiar to most readers but of course they are an essential part of this compendium. A total of 13 sources is cited, from the most familiar such as Priscus, Ammianus and Procopius, to lesser known authors such as Agathias of Myrina and Ioannes Lydus.

The last chapter of textual sources is on the Indic material, studied by Hans Bakker, Csaba Dezső, Gergely Hidas and Dániel Balogh. This is the second-longest chapter in the book, extending to some 90 pages. The most important material here is of course the various inscriptions of the Gupta and Hun kings, but there are references to the Huns in a wide variety of places and all are covered. I was particularly happy to see a substantial entry for the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, which is given short shrift by some authors.

The last chapter in the book, by Robert Bracey, covers the numismatic and sigillary evidence. This includes a very useful concordance of the coins listed in Göbl's seminal work on the coins of the Iranian Huns with more recent works by Cribb, Pfisterer and Vondrovec. There are also lists of the Bactrian, Brāhmī and Pahlavi legends found on coins. Finally, 43 coins are illustrated in full colour.

The book closes with 22 pages of references, and a detailed seven-page index to allow the reader quick access to entries on any one topic in all of the different sources. Handsomely published in hard cover by Barkhuis, this will be an indispensable resource for all researchers in the field and to anyone interested in the history of the period.

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*The Alkhan: A Hunnic people in South Asia*

by Hans T. Bakker  
 Groningen, 2020  
 Hardback, xiii + 128 pp

This slim but brilliant volume is a companion to the *Sourcebook* on the Huns (reviewed above). Although coins play only a minor role in the presentation, students of the Huns will find it indispensable, as it gathers together in one place several advances made by Bakker in a series of papers published in different places. That is why it is reviewed here. It is a wonderful example of what can be achieved in our understanding of a topic once a knowledgeable and imaginative scholar has all the sources of information on that particular topic at his fingertips. In that sense, it is indeed an outgrowth of the project to gather all the primary sources of information on the Huns into one volume. Specifically, it is a reconstruction of the history of the Alkhan Huns in India based on the source material collected in the *Sourcebook*.

Bakker begins with the well-known history of the Huns, starting with the appearance of the Kidarites in the mid-fourth century both north and south of the Hindu Kush mountains. Seals and coins play an important role in establishing their presence in the area. The Alkhan were a related tribe and they appear to have replaced the Kidarites in the Kabul valley, Gandhara and Punjab late in the century. Again, coins are a crucial part of this story. Bakker subscribes to Pfisterer's theory that the Alkhan formed a quadripartite confederacy, perhaps immortalized in the famous Swat bowl. This silver bowl, in the collection of the British Museum, shows four royal Hun hunters, thereby providing concrete evidence of a 'quadrumvirate' and also suggesting that the Alkhan and Kidarites were in an alliance.

Bakker points out an aspect of the bowl that is not often discussed: an inscription that was apparently punched onto the bowl after its creation. After noting various attempts to read this legend, none satisfactory, Bakker proposes to read *khīngi* (perhaps denoting *Khīngila*), followed by two numerals, perhaps reading 206, with the letter *ka* (perhaps denoting Kidara). Assuming 206 represents a date, Bakker was unable to provide a good explanation for what year this might represent. He also notes that Harry Falk proposed that the *ka* stood for *karshapana*, a silver weight, so that 206 *ka* might represent the silver weight of the bowl. However, the weight of the bowl is actually only about half of what we might expect 206 karshapanas to weigh, leading to the suggestion that 206 *ka* might stand for the total weight of a pair of bowls, of which the Swat bowl is only one. Although the discussion is inconclusive, it is nevertheless fascinating and one that all students of the period must keep in mind.

Bakker also looks carefully at the well-known Schøyen inscription and offers a powerful new argument to locate the place where the copper plate was inscribed, Tālagāna, in the vicinity of the Salt range rather than in Bactria where Melzer (2006) had placed it. This is because the inscription mentions the princess of Śārada as the one who instigated the building of the stūpa memorialized in the inscription. Bakker makes a persuasive argument to connect this name to the Śārada Devī temple in the village of Śardi in Kashmir. Bakker's suggestion reinforces the one made by de la Vaissière (2007) that Tālagāna was not north of the Hindu Kush but rather the town of Tālagang in Pakistan, just north of the Salt Range.

Next, Bakker makes another remarkable advance: the identification of Toramāṇa's capital. Using a number of sources and leads, he argues very persuasively that Toramāṇa's capital was near the town of Akhnur, where the Chenab river flows out from the mountains towards the Indo-Gangetic plain. He identifies a very attractive site from the point of view of its strategic location and defensibility, where excavations have yielded a coin of Toramāṇa. This then would have been the launching point for Toramāṇa's campaign of conquest in the last decade of the fifth century.

The last and longest chapter brings to bear a wide array of evidence: archaeological remains, inscriptions, literary sources, and coins, to reconstruct what Bakker calls the 'Age of Hunnic Wars'. The period under review is c. 490–535. The author suggests that there were two Hunnic wars during this period and that India was left transformed by their end.

The first Hunnic war took place c. 495 or shortly thereafter, when Toramāṇa ventured south from his original base, entering the Gangetic plain and then making his way to the Betwa valley to confront the Gupta armies in the western portion of the empire. Interestingly, Bakker does not mention Sanghol in this context, where excavations have revealed coins of Toramāṇa, very much supporting the idea that he passed through that area. Since coins of the Guptas were also found in Sanghol, it is likely that Toramāṇa defeated a Gupta garrison there before moving on to Mālwa. There he defeated the Gupta armies again, as revealed by the Eran inscription, establishing his 'year one' there.

Within the next year or two, Toramāṇa ventured further west, presumably in order to control the trade route all the way to the Arabian Sea. The Sanjeli copper plate inscriptions testify to his success in this enterprise also.

Toramāṇa's next expedition was to the heart of the Gupta Empire. This effort is attested by the sealing of the Ghoshitārāma Monastery overstruck by the name Toramāṇa found in Kauśāmbī and by the fact that Toramāṇa issued coins, particularly gold dinars, on the Gupta model. This is the last we hear of Toramāṇa in the book, although some texts do report on further activities in the heart of the Gupta lands, namely the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa and the testimony of Xuanzang. The first Hunnic wars come to an end, however, with a Hun defeat back in Mālwa at the hands of the Aulikara king Prakāśadharman, as attested by the Rīsthal Inscription.

Bakker turns next to Toramāṇa's son Mihirakula. He is encountered in the year 520 by the Chinese monk Songyun on the banks of the Jhelum river. He subsequently invades Mālwa again, like his father, as attested by the Gwalior inscription, which suggests that he had some preliminary

success. However, by the 530s, he seems to have been forced to bend his head to Yaśodharman, the son of Prakāśadharman, as we are informed by the Mandasor and Sondhni inscriptions of Yaśodharman. That is the end of the second Hunnic war.

Bakker shows convincingly that, at the start of this period, Vaiṣṇavism was very much in force, as this was the preferred religion of the Guptas, and Toramāṇa also showed some affinity to it. By the end of the period, however, the Guptas were no longer on the scene and Śaivism was in ascendance. The Aulikaras and Mihirakula were all Śaivites. The author argues that the critical advantage of Śaivism was that the Guru was seen as a channel to the Divine and therefore could effect worldly success.

More companion volumes to the *Sourcebook* are planned, including one on coins; stay tuned!

## References

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*Rivalling Rome: Parthian coins and culture* by V. Curtis and A. Magub  
London, 2020  
Paperback, 128 pp, £20

\* The book is reprinting and will be available again shortly



As a student and enthusiast of Iranian history, it is often surprising to me that the Parthian period is often seen as an afterthought to be mentioned as a side note. This is quite odd as they in fact stood as one of the great rivals to Rome during the time in which they reigned and even defeated them in very theatrical fashion during the time of Crassus. With that in mind it is wonderful to see the book *Rivalling Rome: Parthian Coins and Culture* by Vesta Curtis and Alexandra Magub, attempt to rectify this. This book was published to accompany a special exhibition at the British Museum in 2020 which did not take place owing to Covid-19, but the book makes a contribution to the field on its own.

The book of course gives an overview of Parthian history, from its origins to the Sasanian conquest. This is of particular use as Parthian history has a tendency to be mentioned only within the context of other major political units such as Rome, the Seleucids and the Sasanians. Here, however, the authors do not write about the Parthians in a regional vacuum but take the time to compare them with other local states such as Elymais, Characene and Persis. This makes the book a