

Two Inscribed Seals from Gandhara

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This article introduces two inscribed seals from ancient Gandhara that have recently come to light and share a common Hellenistic iconography. The names of their ancient owners provide a welcome addition to the growing onomastic corpus of the Gāndhārī language. It is a great pleasure to dedicate this small study as a token of respect and affection to Monika Zin who has taught us so much about the arts of India, Gandhara and Central Asia.

A seal from an American private collection (Figs. 1 & 2) was first brought to my attention by Osmund Bopearachchi (Paris) in December 2020. Initially, only an imperfect impression was available that did not faithfully reproduce the letters in the name of the owner on the right. (Here and in the following, I will use the terms “left” and “right” with reference to how the seal was meant to be viewed, i. e., as in an impression.) In March 2021, thanks to the good offices of Jeffrey Spier of the J. Paul Getty Museum, I received a set of much better images of the seal as well as of an impression that clearly revealed all parts of the inscription, two of which are reproduced here. Nothing is known of the findspot of the object.

The seal is made of rock crystal with a convex top and flat bottom, measuring about 10 mm in diameter and 5 mm in thickness. A hole is drilled through it from the top to the bottom, doubtless to attach it to a string to carry it on one’s body. This is likely to have been done in antiquity, though detailed inspection of the original by an expert would be required to confirm this (cf. the technical analysis of the Indravarma seal provided by Simon SCHMITT in SALOMON/CALLIERI/SCHMITT 1999).

At the center of the seal is a female figure facing left. Her hair is done so as to yield a thick fringe surrounding the face and neck (unless she is meant to be wearing a cap). Her long dress is tied by a girdle under her chest, leaving her proper left leg exposed and bent slightly forward. In her bent proper left arm, she holds a cornucopia, identifying her as a form of Tyche (who in Gandhara underwent syncretism with Demeter and the Iranian Ardokhsho, cf. CALLIERI 1997, p. 263; UR RAHMAN/FALK 2011, p. 79). Her proper right hand holds in front of her face a globular object that is difficult to identify. It could either be a fruit (compare the image of seal U 7.22 in CALLIERI 1997, p. 197, pl. 61 of a female goddess of the syncretistic Tyche type either holding out her hand or offering an object to a boy), or the ball symbolizing the unsteadiness of fortune that is associated with Western depictions of Tyche.

To the right of this depiction of Tyche, we can now clearly read, in Kharoṣṭhī letters, the name of the owner, and to her left his patronymic, as follows:

zauḍasa budhadasaputrasa
“Of Zauḍa, son of Budhadasa.”

The letter *s* has an archaic shape with its stem extending halfway into its head, most clearly in the first *s* of *budhadasaputrasa*. Given the general archaic tendencies of inscriptional Kharoṣṭhī, this is no clear indication of its dating, and the seal may well belong to the 1st century CE or the early Kushan period.

The name of the owner, Zauḍa, does not appear to be of Indo-Aryan derivation, and its initial *z* in



Fig. 1 Seal of Zaüḍa. 1st or 2nd c. CE? Rock crystal; Ø ca. 10 mm. Private collection, United States.



Fig. 2 Seal of Zaüḍa (impression).

particular suggests an Iranian or other local language of origin. Among the several names with this initial attested in Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions (cf. BAUMS/GLASS 2002– a), Zaduṣa (CKI 476; SALOMON 2014–15, p. 167: “sicherlich iranischen Ursprungs”) is most similar, Zaṃdasa (CKI 466) and Zaṃdina (CKI 561) somewhat less so.

The owner’s father bore, by contrast, a straightforward Indo-Aryan Buddhist compound name of Budha- (Skt. Buddha-) and -dasa- (Skt. -dāsa-) with the literal meaning “servant of the Buddha.” The number of Gāndhārī compound names starting with Budha- (cf. HILKA 1910, pp. 104–105) is expectedly large, including Budhaghoṣa, Budhajiva, Budhadeva, Budhadhatra (Greek transcription in CKI 104: Βοδαζατρα), Budhanaṃda, Budhanaṃdi, Budhapala, Budhapriya, Budhamitra, Budharakṣida, Budhavaṃma, Budhaśava and Budhasena (cf. BAUMS/GLASS 2002– a s. vv.). More interesting is the second element of the name. Names ending in -dāsa (cf. HILKA 1910, pp. 28–29) are, of course, well-known from Sanskrit, the most famous bearer probably being the poet Kālidāsa (“servant of Kālī”). In the Gāndhārī corpus, we find the type in the names of two Audumbara kings, Śivadasa (CKC 246) and Rudradasa (CKC 247), but also in Buddhist contexts in the

names Dhammadasa (CKI 68) and Saṃghadasa (CKI 166), the former of these explicitly a monk (*bhikṣu*), and the second likely one. Our newly attested name Budhadasa thus neatly completes the Buddhist three jewels for this naming pattern, in a fashion entirely parallel to the triad Budhaśava (CKI 392, 1169), Dhammaśava (CKM 77) and Saṃghaśava (CKM 4), with a second element -śava- (Skt. -śrava-) that may be a calque on Greek names ending in -κλής. Buddhadāsa was also the name of a 4th-century king of Sri Lanka (*Mahāvamsa* 37.105–178; HILKA 1910, pp. 29, 48, 104).

The second seal (Figs. 3, 4 & 5) was likewise brought to my attention by Osmund Boparachchi, in January 2021, and improved images were communicated by Robert White (New Zealand) in February 2021. The object is said to have been found in Jalalabad in Afghanistan, and remains in private hands in its region of origin.

This seal is made from a dark red stone, probably garnet, and is oval in shape. Judging from the available images, it measures approximately 10 mm in height and 5 mm in width. Its upper surface is convex, and its lower surface appears to be flat. The right edge of the seal is broken off and lost.



Fig. 3 Seal of Aśpadeva. 1st or 2nd c. CE? Gandhara. Garnet(?); h. ca. 10 mm, w. ca. 5 mm. Private collection, Pakistan.



Fig. 4 Seal of Aśpadeva (impression).

At its center is a depiction of Tyche facing left (using the orientation on the impression) that is in all essentials identical with that on the first seal discussed in this article: her hair is tied, her dress girdled under the chest, and the proper left arm holds a cornucopia. The damage to the right side of the seal has cut off the proper right lower arm and hand of this Tyche, but the preserved part gives the impression that the arm is not bent upwards as on the first seal, but stretched out downwards. It is impossible to tell what it once held, though the most typical secondary attribute of Tyche in Gandhara (in addition to the cornucopia) was a branch (cf. CALLIERI 1997, pp. 45–46, pl. 1, no. 1.7). The overall execution of the image on this seal is coarser than on the first one.

To the right of the central figure is the name of the owner, oriented as on the first seal, with the foot of the final *sa* touching the cornucopia just a little lower under its rim. The name can be confidently read as follows:



Fig. 5 Seal of Aśpadeva (mirrored view of inscription).

aśpadevasa [...]
“Of Aśpadeva [...].”

It is likely that a patronymic or title followed on the left side, now lost due to the damage to the seal. The letters are of the same type as on the first seal, with archaic half-closed *s*. Notable is

the ligature of *de*, with a top that resembles that of the letter *ṇ* and the *e* vowel attached horizontally at its bottom. This form is well-known from 1st-century Gāndhārī manuscripts (BAUMS 2009, p. 99) as well as, further simplified, from the Niya documents (GLASS 2000, pp. 79). As was the case with the first seal, the paleography does not reveal much about the dating of the object.

The name is of the Indian compound type and — as HILKA (1910, p. 144) following BÜHLER (1892, p. 374) points out — derives from the constellation Áśvayuj rather than the animal, giving a literal meaning “whose deity is Áśvayuj.” The first part Aspa- (cf. HILKA 1910, p. 119) occurs in four other names in the Gāndhārī corpus: Aspaghoṣa, Aspabhrada, Aspamitra and Aspavaṃma. This list notably includes that of the general (stratega) Aspavarma, son of Indravarma, of the Apraca royal house (SKINNER/RIENJANG 2020, pp. 152–154), but no family connection can be deduced for the owner of our seal from the partial similarity of the names alone. The last part -deva- (cf. HILKA 1910, pp. 20–22, 144) is attested in no less than nine other names in Gāndhārī inscriptions and manuscripts: Imḍradeva, Uvadeva, Puṃṇadeva, Baladeva, Budhadeva, Braṃmadeva, Bhagadeva, Vasudeva and Sudeva (cf. BAUMS/GLASS 2002– a s. vv.). At Sanchi, the same name is attested in the feminine, as Asadevā (MAJUMDAR 1940, pp. 370–371, nos. 703 & 714) and Asvadevā (MAJUMDAR 1940, pp. 302, 310–311, nos. 23, 108 and 119; HILKA 1910, pp. 17, 36, 119).

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CKC = *Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Coins*. In: BAUMS/GLASS 2002– b.

CKI = *Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions*. In: BAUMS/GLASS 2002– b.

CKM = *Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts*. In: BAUMS/GLASS 2002– b.

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