

Indianization of Shaka Rulers known from Local Coins of Mathura

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Abstract:

This paper examines the numismatic evidence of Shaka (Scythian) rulers who governed the Mathura region, located in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India. Mathura, the ancient capital of the Shurasena Mahajanapada, came under Shaka control following the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

The study analyzes coins issued by local Hindu rulers (Mitra and Datta dynasties) and subsequent Shaka Kshatrpa rulers, including Rajuvula, Sodasa, Hagamasha, Hagana, Shivadatta, Shivaghosha, and Taranadasa (or Bharanadasa).

The research categorizes these coins based on iconographic similarities and inscriptional evidence, dividing them into distinct groups. Rajuvula's coinage shows a progression from Greek-influenced designs to purely Indian motifs, reflecting his transition from subordinate to independent ruler with the Mahaakshatrpa title. His son Sodasa's coins similarly evolved, initially bearing the title Kshatrpa as a subordinate ruler before adopting Mahaakshatrpa upon independence. Other Kshatrpa rulers like Hagamasha, Hagana, Shivadatta, and Shivaghosha issued coins with traditional Mathura symbols, including the sacred tree and horse motifs, using the Kshatrpa title apparently as independent sovereigns.

The paper demonstrates the progressive Indianization of Shaka rulers through numismatic evidence, showing their adoption of local religious symbols and iconography. The study concludes that Shaka rule in Mathura was eventually terminated by the Kushanas, likely under Kanishka, who established Mathura as an important center and possibly the eastern capital of the Kushana Empire.