Twitter Thread by Indian History

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The Kushana Empire was founded by Mah■r■j■dhir■ja Kujula Kadphises, a Shaivite Hindu convert from his ancestral Steppe religion of the Yüeh-chih. He was not a Buddhist, as popularly believed.

A thread on the Hindu Emperors of the Kushana Dynasty.



The Kushanas were part of a tribal confederation called the Yüeh-Chih that originally lived in the western part of the Gansu Province of China. They were pushed west by the invasions of the Xiongnu (Huna) confederation. Kuja Kadphises united all the five sub-tribes under Kushana.

The Yüeh-chih are the people who, from the latter half of the second century B.C. to the beginning of the first century A.D., occupied and ruled what is now Middle Asia and Afghanistan. They destroyed a country called Ta-hsia – usually identified with the Bactrian kingdom under the Greeks. Their original home is said to have been in the western part of Gansu Province in China, from which they migrated via the northern part of the T'ien Shan mountain range. They were forced to migrate because of the invasion of the Hsiung-nu, who became predominant in Central Asia. The Yüeh-chih settled to the north of the Amu Darya and ruled the country of Ta-hsia, which lies south of the same river. There they established five *hsi-hou* (*yabghu*) or governor-generalships. At the beginning of the first century A.D., the Kushans, one of the five *yabghu*, became powerful and took the place of the Yüeh-chih. This is an outline of the

Emperor Kuja Kadphises had converted to Shaivism, a Mathura inscription from the T■kr■ T■la mound (Ma■ village) clears up previous confusion (Based on him being called "satyadharmasthita" or 'steadfast in the true dharma' people speculated he was a Buddhist)

This is incorrect.

may be the *interpretatio Graeca* of the Iranian god Verethragna. On the reverse, however, the legend is already written in Kharoṣṭhī script: *Kujula Kasasa Kuṣana yavugasa dhramaṭhidasa* 'of Kujula Kasa, the Kushan *yabghu*, who is steadfast in the Law'. The epithet *dhramaṭhida-* < *dharmasṭhita-* 'steadfast in the Law' of Kujula Kadphises occurs in fuller form in the legend of a later issue, namely *sacadhramaṭhita-* < *satyadharmasthita-* 'steadfast in the true Law'. Contrary to earlier assumptions, which regarded Kujula Kadphises as Buddhist on the basis of this epithet, it is now clear from the wording of a Mathura inscription,[7] in which Huvishka bears the same epithet *satyadharmas-*

The Mathura inscription applied the same epithet to Emperor Huvishka (satyadharmasthita) but explicitly says the Kingdom was conferred upon its founder by Lord Shiva (Sarva is the epithet of Shiva). This makes it clear Kujula Kadphises had adopted Shaivism & the Kharoshti script.

thita, that the kingdom was conferred upon him by Śarva and Śaṃḍavira (*Caṇḍavīra*), that is, he was a devotee of Śiva. It is striking to see that Kujula Kadphises has already adopted the worship of Śiva and the use of Kharoṣṭhī script at such an early date. We must not, however, forget that the spread of Indian religious ideas and cults to the north-west as well as the use of Gāndhārī Prakrit and Kharoṣṭhī script had already begun under the Graeco-Bactrians. The Indo-Greeks from the time of Apollodotus I, Antimachus and Menander had regularly struck coins with Gāndhārī Prakrit legends and the later Eucratides had used the city-goddess of Kāpiśa as a reverse coin type.

This also makes sense, when we realize his son, Emperor Vima Kadphises was also a devoted Hindu Shaivite (and in his coins we clearly see a trishulin ithyphallic shiva with a tiger skin).

So his son had just been continuing his father's tradition & upbringing.



Emperor Vima Kadphises was also given the epithet m■he■vara "worshipper of Shiva" on coinage. He also transformed the temple at Dilberjin to a sanctuary of Shiva & decorated the wall with Shiva, Parvati & Nandi. He bought craftsmen from Ujjain to Bactria to build a water conduit.

probably be interpreted as *māheśvara* 'worshipper of Śiva'. Archaeological and epigraphic finds also attest the leaning of Vima towards the cult of Śiva. At Dilberjin, the temple of the Dioscuri, built in Graeco-Bactrian times, was transformed by Vima Kadphises into a sanctuary of Śiva and decorated with a wall-painting representing Śiva and Parvatī (See Chapter 15, Fig. 9). According to the fragmentary Bactrian inscription D 1 (see Chapter 17), Vima Kadphises probably had the wall-painting of Oēṣo (Śiva) prepared, and gave orders that the priest of the stronghold and the master of the hunt should take care of the sanctuary and cult. It is clear from the long Bactrian inscription D 2 (see Chapter 17) that Vima Kadphises probably had craftsmen brought from Ujjayinī (modern Ujjain) to construct a water conduit to the sanctuary of Śiva. According to

Kanishka I continuted the policy of worship of Shiva, the name O■■o with Shiva on coinage comes from none other than Sanskrit V■■a > Prakrit Ve■a. Kanishka II patronized Buddhism but made sure to switch Buddhism from Prakrit to Sanskrit and from Kharoshti to just Brahmi.

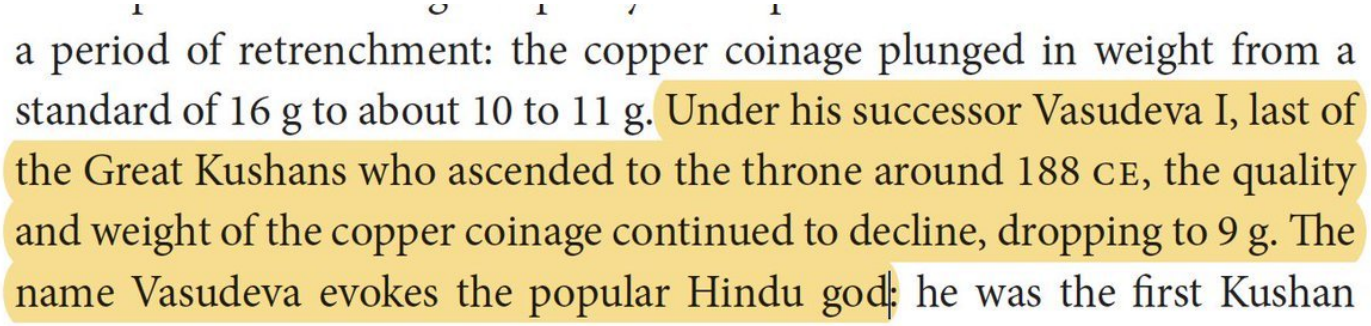
permanent threat to the Kushans.

None the less, the importance of India and the Indian religions, especially the worship of Śiva, remained unchanged. Kanishka has a reverse type representing Śiva with the name Oēṣo < Old Indian *Vṛṣa* > Prakrit *Veṣa*, identifying the god by an inscription for the first time. If Mioro, Mao, Λθṣo and Nana were the ancient divine patrons of the Kushan dynasty, then Śiva had belonged to the same group of gods since the reign of Vima Kadphises. Consequently, reverse types of the coin issues of Kanishka represent primarily the dynastic pantheon of the Kushan king, to the worship of which the sanctuary of Surkh Kotal was dedicated.

Emperor Huvishka ensured the dynastic sanctuary of the Kushanava■sha at Mathura was rebuilt and ensured regular hospitality for the Br■hmin-s in the assembly hall of the sanctuary. The Iranian War God Orlagno (Verethragna) was replaced by Hindu Gods of War like Skanda, Kumara.

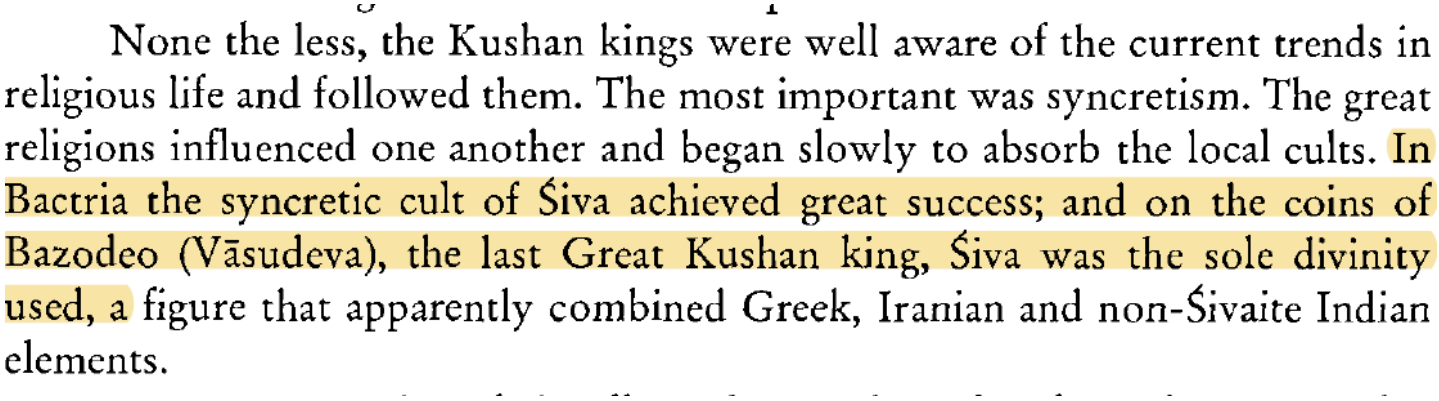
Similar activity by Huvishka can be seen at Mathura. The dynastic sanctuary of the Kushan kings built by Vima Kadphises was in a ruinous state when Huvishka sent a great general (*mahādaṇḍanāyaka*), who had the sanctuary restored and set up a statue of Huvishka in the *devakula*, ensuring regular hospitality for the Brahmans in the assembly hall belonging to the sanctuary. Even though the date of the inscription is not preserved or it was not dated, the restoration work can be dated to a later period, perhaps after Year 40, when Huvishka was already bearing the title *rājatirāja* (King of Kings).

The Emperor Vasudeva I, last of the Great Kushans was a Hindu also as is clear from the name. Also the first to have a Hindu epithet as his name.



a period of retrenchment: the copper coinage plunged in weight from a standard of 16 g to about 10 to 11 g. Under his successor Vasudeva I, last of the Great Kushans who ascended to the throne around 188 CE, the quality and weight of the copper coinage continued to decline, dropping to 9 g. The name Vasudeva evokes the popular Hindu god: he was the first Kushan

The strong Shaivite nature of almost every Kushan Emperor since the founding is no better stated than the fact the last Great Kushan King Vasudeva had only Lord Shiva on his coinage, no other diety.



None the less, the Kushan kings were well aware of the current trends in religious life and followed them. The most important was syncretism. The great religions influenced one another and began slowly to absorb the local cults. In Bactria the syncretic cult of Śiva achieved great success; and on the coins of Bazodeo (Vāsudeva), the last Great Kushan king, Śiva was the sole divinity used, a figure that apparently combined Greek, Iranian and non-Śivaite Indian elements.

I think it is unfortunate how the history of Hindu Empires is appropriated and made Buddhist or Jaina so often. I have nothing against those sects, Buddhism played a big role sharing the intellectual tradition of India to the world.. but the record must be set straight

The Kushana Empire was founded by a Shaivite convert, led by his son, also a Shaivite and for the most part patronized Shaivism. Of course, there were syncretic elements but for 99% people it has been reduced to "Buddhist Syncretic" empire.

Same thing with Maurya, Harsha etc..

https://t.co/j0Qs1yxQ09

Thread to view the Hindu Art of the Kushanas

> Hindu Art of the Kushana Empire. On the left is the Var\u0101ha Avatara (2nd century CE). Right is a sandstone bust of V\u0101sudeva (2nd century CE).
>
> Now, I can confident very few will be even aware Kushana made anything other than Buddhist Art. Why so? pic.twitter.com/UV79mU9MXc
>
> — Indian History (@sukarma0) January 10, 2021