CHAPTER I
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter delineates a short history of the Kushāṇas along with the physiography, climate, soil, floral, faunal remains of the Mathurā region. The chapter also highlights Mathurā’s trading networks, methodology, scope and limitations of the present work.

Historically the age of the Kushāṇas is a significant period of Early Indian History. The political development and the transformation of socio-economic life moulded in a different way under the rule of the Kushāṇas in North India. The growth of rural settlements in North India conceived the influence of the Kushāṇa tradition and the latter flourished in various forms in the changing contexts of culture, socio-economy and political ideologies.

The Kushāṇas were originally one of the tribes of the Ta Yūeh-chih or the Great Yu'eti people. Their original homeland is said to have been in the western part of Gansu Province in China. They had migrated between c. 174 and 160 (158) B.C. from their homeland to the Sai (Śaka) country in the vicinity of the Lake Issik-Köl. From there they migrated through Ta-Yuan (a region on or near the Syr Darya and including Ferghana) and occupied a territory on the north of the Kuei or the Oxus river and also Ta-hsia to the south of the same river. Ta-hsia included Wakhan, Badakhhsan, Chitral, Kafiristan and also the region lying between them. It appears from the Hou Han-shu that after conquering Ta-hsia they divided their territory into five his-hou or yavugas (or leaders). One of them was the his-hou of Kuei-shuang or the Kushāṇa. The his-hou of Kuei-shuang destroyed the other four his-hous and established the kingdom of Kuei-shuang. Miaos, who can be dated to the second half of the 1st century B.C. was the first independent
Kushāṇa ruler of the area of Ta-hsia (which included Wakhan, Badakhshan, Chitral, Kafiristan and the intervening areas). It has been suggested that Miaos probably extended the Kushāṇa rule to the Great Yūeh-chih territory to the north of the Oxus, which was in Sogdiana. But we have no references of Miaos in the list of the Rabatak Inscription. So, Miaos probably belonged to a branch of the Kushāṇa family, which was separated from that of Kujula Kadphises. We have known from the Hou Han-shu that Ch'iu-chiu-ch'ūeh or Kujula Kadphises conquered Kao-fu or the Kabul area from An-his or the Arsacid empire and also destroyed P'u-ta and Chi-pin. Kao-fu or the Kabul area included the land of the Paropanisadai, parts of which were included in the Arsacid empire as attested by the Geographikon of Strabo. P'u-ta was probably one of Bactra in Western Bactria. Chi-pin is probably identified with Kāśmirā and certain other areas in the north-western part of the Indian sub-continent. So, it is clear that Kujula Kadphises entered the extreme north-west of the Indian subcontinent after capturing the greater part of the territory of Afghanistan. The Hou Han-shu states that Ch'iu-chiu-ch'ūeh or Kujula Kadphises was succeeded by his son Yen-kao-chen or Wima Kadphises who conquered T'ien-chu or Shen-tu (Lower Indus country). In the east, Wima Kadphises must have proceeded up to Mathurā as proved by the Māt inscription and an inscription from Meghera near Mathurā. The Rabatak inscription refers to Wima as the father of Kaṇiška I. So it is clear that Wima Kadphises was succeeded by Kaṇiška I. The inscription records that in the year I, Kaṇiška (I)’s authority was proclaimed in India, all satrapies and in different cities like Koonadeano (Kuṇḍīna), Ozene (Ujjayinī), Kozenbo (Kauśāmbī), Zagedo (Sāketa, near Ayodhya), Palabotra (Pāṭaliputra) and Ziri-Tambo (Śri-Champā). So it appears from the Rabatak inscription that in the east Kaṇiška’s empire extended up to Ziri-Tambo or Śri-Champā. Champā was the capital of Aṅga and located in the area of
Champānagar near Bhāgalpur district of Bihar. The inscription also helps us to determine the southern extension of Kaṇiṣka's empire. According to the Rabatak inscription, Kaṇiṣka had under his rule the region of Koonadeano or Kuṇḍina, which is identified with the locality of Kaunḍiniyapura on the Wardha in the Amraoti district of Vidarbha in Maharashtra. The Kushāṇa rule in Ākara in Eastern Malwa is also attested by the epigraphic records like the Sānchi inscription of Vaskushāṇa of the year 22. On the basis of epigraphic, numismatics and other sources it is proved that out side India Kaṇiṣka I might have conquered the greater part of Afghanistan, Balkh, different localities to the north of the Oxus, Pāmir region. Thus, regions under the Śaka-Kṣatrapa rule incorporated under the Kushāṇa rulers. So, Kaṇiṣka I might have ruled over a vast territories starting from the Oxus to parts of eastern U.P. or even southern Bihar. After that, Vāsiṣṭha, Huviṣṭha, Kaṇiṣka II, Vāsudeva I, Kaṇiṣka III, Vāsudeva II also able to keep Kushāṇa control from Central Asia to Mathurā. Huviṣṭha might have been able to extend the north-western limit of the Kushāṇa empire to the area to the immediate east of Mu-lu or Merv in Turkmenistan. It appears from the Naqush-I-Rustam inscription of Shapur I (A.D. 241-271) that the Kushānshahr (Kushana country) at the last stage of the Kushāṇa empire stretched up to Skstn (Seistan), Ḥryw (Heart), Sogdiana (area between Samarkand and Bukhara), Sh'as ('ast'n) (Taskent) and K'sh (Kashgarh). On the eastern side, a number of inscriptions of Huviṣṭha and Vāsudeva have been recovered from the Mathurā region. By circa 262 A.D. in the western part of the empire (beyond the present Indian subcontinent) upto the Peshawar region of the Kushāṇa territory was captured by the Sasanid emperor Shapur I and in the eastern section (territories inside the Indian subcontinent) some local tribes and chiefs gained their power and were responsible for the gradual decline of this empire by about or shortly after the middle of the 3rd century A.D.
The epigraphic as well as numismatic sources give enough light on the Kushāṇa genealogy and their ruling houses, i.e. the Imperial Kushāṇas (Kadphises I, Kadphises II, Kaṇiška and Huviṣka) and the Later Kushāṇas (Vāsudeva and his successors).

Now we turn our attention to the Mathurā region, which is regarded as an important area under the Kushāṇa rule. The modern city of Mathurā (27°31' N / 77°41' E), located on the right bank of the river Yamuna, is the headquarter of the district, (27°14'-27°58'N / 77°17'-78°12'E) with an identical name. (Map 1)

The district is bounded on the north-west by the Gurgaon district of Punjab, on the north east and east by Aligarh (U.P.), on the south by the district of Agra and on the west by Bharatpur (Rajasthan). The district has an area of 3769.5 sq.kms. Mathurā is located between Delhi-Agra filter zones, to the immediate west of the upper Gangetic basin. The principal rivers and streams of the district consist of the Yamuna and two intermittent streams, the Pathwara and the Jhima or Karwan. The Yamuna flows through the centre of the district. To the north, its banks are sandy and low with large areas subject to fluviatil action. South of Mahāvan the river is more closely confined within its bluffs. The Yamuna has frequently changed courses in this region and the old courses can be traced both to the east and to the west of the river. The Yamuna first touches the district at the small village of Chaundras in the Chhata Tahsil and after a meandering course of approximately 100 miles changes its direction at the village of Mandaur in Tahsil Sadabad. On or near its bank are situated all the larger towns of the district. Shergarh, Brindāban, Mathurā, and Farah being on the right and Māt, Mahāvan and Gokul on the left bank. The two intermittent streams are deep beaded torrents, which form continuous streams only during rains. Entering from Aligarh
district, the Pathwara joins the Yamuna after a short course through the
north of Māṭ. The Jhirna or Karwan after quitting Aligarh runs south­
eastward across Sadabad, the Agra district, where it ultimately joins the
Yamuna. The Yamuna divides the district into two physical units – the
eastern or Trans-Yamuna tract and the western or Cis-Yamuna tract.
The Trans-Yamuna tract comprising the Tahsils of Māṭ and Sadabad, is a
part of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. In this region the land drops gently
from the north to the southeast. Two intermittent streams, the Pathwara
and the Jhirna flow through this area. The Cis-Yamuna tract includes
the Tahsils of Chhata and Mathurā and lies at a higher level than the
eastern tract. The line of highest elevation is parallel to the Yamuna, at
some distance from the Yamuna and the Bharatpur border. To the west
of the tract are outlying ranges and detached hills of the Aravalli
system. These hills are made of ancient quartzite and the largest is the
Govardhan hill, which extends for about five miles. Apart from these hills
and the valley of the Yamuna, the district has a gentle slope from north
to south. The Yamuna is at present the only river in this tract, but two
old lines of drainage can be traced to the west of the district.

The climate of the district is characterized by an intense hot
summer, a cold winter and general dryness throughout the year except
during the south-east monsoon. The hot weather lasts somewhat longer
than in the north of the province and the rainfall is decidedly less. The
mean average rainfall of the district is 24.42 inches, the bulk of which
occurs during the months of July and August. Among the Tahsils,
Mathurā appears to receive the maximum rainfall with an average
rainfall of 26 inches and Māṭ with an average rainfall of 22.92 inches
receives the least.

The Soil of the district is divided in to two categories – the bhanger
or up lands and the khadar or Yamuna valley. The soils of the uplands
vary from dumat or rich loam to bhur or sand. Dumat is not plentiful and
is found in Mat, Sadabad and the northern tract of Chhata, which once comprised the old *pargana* of Kosi. It varies from dark to mellow brown in colour. *Piliya* or light loam is the prevailing soil of the district. It is yellow in colour, mixed with sand and is more workable after rain than *dumat*. This is generally fertile but inferior varieties differ from *bhur* or sand. Pure clay is found in the low lands, which are known as *dahar*. It is hard and unyielding and except in years of favourable rainfall, cannot be worked with the plough. *Bhur* is almost pure sand found in undulating hillocks. In the ravines of the Yamuna, generally known as *behar*. The pure clay is only found in the *tarai* or the lowlands, and is known as *dahar*.46 *Kankar* is abundant in the district, particularly in the *bangar* (the older Pleistocene alluvium). The *kankar* found east of the Yamuna is hard and has an ashy blue colour, while that of the west is small, soft and lighter in colour. Black *kankar* is found in Sadabad Tahsil.47

The vegetation in the district is of dry deciduous type like *Faras, Pilu, Cheonkar, Reonj, Babul, Kharjal, Kadam, Karil, Hins, Bansí* etc. Trees like *Dhau, Pasendu* and *Pilukhan* are found on the hilly out crops of Barsana.48 Pasturelands are more common in the western Tahsils.49

The faunal evidences of the district are almost same as those, which occur throughout the Gangetic Plain. Leopards, wolves, hyenas and nilgais are usually found in the hilly tracts near Bharatpur, whereas black bucks, gazelles, wild boars are found all over the district. Besides, varieties of reptiles and birds are also found in the district.50

The archaeological reports collected during excavations at Mathurā also give a vivid picture of the man-animal relationship and the impact of some animal species on their economy during 6th century B.C. to 3rd century A.D. Available evidences clearly indicate that there was gradual increase in the number of cattle, sheep and goats from Period I to Period II and III and in Period IV there was sudden decrease in number.
Presence of cutting, splitting, chopping, chewing and burn marks in bones of cattle, sheep, goats and fowls indicate that these animals were preferred for their meat. There was also evidence of horses from 4th century B.C upto 3rd century A.D. 51

Mathurā was a well-known political centre in the early centuries of the Christian era. Apart from its political importance, the region reached at a favourable status in terms of inter-regional and international trade and commerce. (Map 2)

Mathurā was located at the nodal points of the two principal sub-continental highways- the Uttarāpatha and the Daksīṇāpatha.52

Uttarāpatha denotes both the region as well as the routes, which linked the Ganga plain with the northern and north-western regions. There were three major trade routes, which led from Mathurā to the Śākala, Takṣaśilā, Puṣkalāvatī, Kāpiśa and Bālhīka/Bactria. The first route followed the course of the Yamuna passing through Varṇa (Bulandshahr) and joined somewhere in modern Meerut and Saharanpur districts, the Mauryan 'Royal Road' from Pātaliputra and an earlier version of Uttarāpatha from Śrāvasti and Sāketa and proceeded to its north-western limits.53 The second route led through Indraprastha along the Delhi-Ambala road via Kurukṣetra and joined the main Uttarāpatha somewhere in the Ambala district.54 The third route proceeded along the Yamuna by way of Rohitaka, Aggalapura/Agrodaka and Udumbara (Pathankot) to Śākala and merged with the main highway.55 The north-western region was also linked upto Mathurā through the lower Indus region via Bolan and Mulla, passes and reached Alexandropolis in Arachosia.56

Mathurā had direct links with Sindhu-Sauvīra in the lower Indus region and with Saurāṣṭra. It was connected with Roruka and Patala/ Patalene through Mathurā-Dvāravatī route, which led from Mathurā via
Virāṭanagara and Puṣkara, following the spurs of the Aravalli Range. From Puṣkara, a branch of this route went to Madhyamikā and joined with the roads to Malwa and Gujrat. Branches of the Mathura-Dvāravatī route reached different places in Rajasthan, especially the Karkoṭanagara and the Rairh region.

Mathurā had been an integral part of the communication network through the Ganga Plain. There were three major trade routes, of which the southern route (followed the Yamuna to Kauśāmbī and joined the Central highway at Prayāga) was specially significant for Mathurā.

Dakṣināpatha refers to the ‘Southern route’ as well as the ‘Southern Region’. The most important route(s) of Dakṣināpatha led from Mathurā to Vidiśā and Sānchi, where it joined with the older Southern route from the Ganga plain and its easterly branches. From Vidiśā it continued to Ujjayanī from where a western branch reached Bhārukaccha and linked with the routes to Aparānta and Lāṭa and the main route went southward through Māhiṣmatī to Pratiṣṭhāna, the capital of the Sātavāhanas. Mathurā was connected through the Ganga plain and particularly through Tāmralipti with the trans-peninsular highway passing through Dantapura in Kaliṅga, Tropina in Kerala, Peruma or Charul in Maharashtra to Patala in Sindh. The places in the Deccan, especially Nāsik, Kalyāṇa and Bhaja in the west and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, Amarāvatī and Chinna in the southwest were connected to Mathurā through Gujrat and the Ganga plain.

Besides its nodal position in the inter-regional trade routes, Mathurā was also an important centre of the international communication networks. Mathurā was not only linked to West Asia and Europe but also to Central Asia, China and South East Asia through a number of trade routes.

Mathurā was connected with the West through the continuation of Mathurā’s principal routes to the north-western region beyond Takṣaśilā.
and the strategic Alexandropolis (Kandahar)-Ortospana (Bala Hissar-Kabul)-Kāpiśa-Bactria line. Bharukaccha (Barygaza) and other ports of Gujrat, and Patala and Barbaricum in Sind provided the best maritime connections between Mathurā and the West by way of the Persian Gulf to Omana and Gerrha on the Arabian side and Charax and others on the Iranian side. Trade was also carried out on the caravan routes to Petra, Palmyra and Antioch or the way of through the Red Sea to Dioscorida via different Arabian, Ethiopian and Egyptian ports.

Mathurā was linked with Central Asia by routes, which led from the principal junctions of the north-western highway, especially from Takšaśilā, Puškalāvatī, Puruṣapura, Kāpiśa and Bactria to the Tarim basin where they joined both branches of the ‘Silk Route’ crossing along its southern borders through Kashgarh, Yarkand and (Kuchi) and Karashahr. These routes met at Yu-men-kuan or the Jade Gate near Tun-huang before entering China.

Mathurā was connected to South-east Asia (Suvaṇṇadvīpa or Suvaṇṇabhūmi) through maritime trade from different Indian ports. Among them the most famous and easily accessible port was Tamralipti.

Now we are entering into the discussion on the scope, methodology and limitations of the present work. The archaeology of the Mathurā region has a special significance in the context of settlement history of the Ganga valley. The rich historical tradition along with cultural proliferation certainly provides a background to extent our viewpoint through the archaeological sources. The present work is obviously an attempt to elaborate the same. It is essentially a study of archaeological remains and artefacts (including the characteristics of the sites/mound/occurrences, structural and sculptural remains, ceramic industry, objects made of terracotta, metal, stone etc.) of the Mathurā
region (27°14'-27°58'N / 77°17'-78°12'E) (belonging to the age of the Kushānas) discovered so far to trace the growth of settlements and the changing contexts of geo-political developments along with the growth of the socio-economic structure from pre-Kushāna to Kushāna times. Though primarily we are concentrating on the archaeological sources, the general historical records in form of epigraphic and numismatic references are also taken into account to get a coherent picture of the society of Mathurā.

In this context it is to be noted that, though the present work basically focuses on the Kushāna rule in the Mathurā region, here we are more concerned about the period of Kushāna rule as gleaned from archaeological database, rather than the dynasty itself. The settlement history in and around Mathurā dealt here in a sense of a periodization falling between 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. (which is generally known as the “Kushāna Period”/ “Śaka-Kushāna Period”/ “Kṣatrapa – Kushāna period” in the Indian sub-continent). Hence, it is a humble effort to understand a centre of activities in the context of a particular period, rather than the involvement of a dynastic rule and its subsequent polity. Here, we should also mention that the materials of the earlier and later phases have also been taken into consideration to trace the continuity and overlapping of the cultural remains as well as legacy of the Kushāna rule. In connection with the over all comparative study, we have tried to substantiate our materials with that of the data collected from other areas of the Ganga Valley and north-western frontier regions.

The methodology we have followed in the present work is essentially a documentary work of all published and unpublished (first-hand study) archaeological records followed by brief field investigations and finally an evaluation of archaeological data from the perspectives of geo-political, socio-cultural and economic history. It includes the general procedures of archaeological investigations to interpret the
characteristics of the sites/mounds. While concentrating on the ceramics, the work follows the modern methodology of ceramic studies and their relationship with the universal approaches. Absence of detail excavation report of Mathurā and limited scale of exploration works poses constraints in fulfilling the major ambition of the present work. The aim of the present work would certainly help us to reorient the arbitrary connotations generally available in the published records.

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