

Western Hegemony over Eastern resources: Adaptation of Western religious symbols by Greco-Bactrian rulers

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Following the death of Alexander that marked a relatively brief period of reign, his vast empire fell into the hands of Macedonian leaders. The lands of the old Achaemenid Empire such as Persia, Choarsmia, Parthia, Aria, Bactria-Sogdina, Syria and Mesopotamia fell under the power of the Seleucids. Eventually, the establishment of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom and the Indo-Greek kingdom further furnished in retaining the Western power over these Eastern lands. Consequently, these political outbreaks braced the Hellenistic traditions to interweave with oriental cultural traditions. In Classical culture, the use of religious symbols such as Omphalos and Labrys are identified as a measure of indicating the restate of their authority over the conquered territories. Besides, the use of divinities to legitimize the power of new rulers can also be recognized as a method which these people had in practice. Systematic observations on the adaptation of religious symbols by the Western rulers who were on Eastern lands had been done in modern scholarship. Osmund Boparachchi has examined the choice of iconographies of the monetary issues from Alexander the Great to imperial Kushanas and according to him the 'Apollo sitting on the Omphalos' is a monetary type that had acted as the arm of the entire Seleucid dynasty. According to Kyler Erickson and Nicholas L Right, the Seleucid's use of 'Apollo sitting on the Omphalos' was not intended to depict a pure Greek image but a mere expression that the oriental population was under the rule of Greeks. Deviating from the commonly dealt Seleucids and the Indo-Greeks, the purpose of this paper is to identify the objective of adapting western religious symbols in monetary issues by the Greco-Bactrian kings over their oriental population. Due to the meager recordings encountered in the ancient historical texts by Classical historians, information on the Greco-Bactrians is chiefly traced from archaeological and numismatic evidence. Stylistic features, overstrikes, iconography and monograms are taken into consideration in observing the numismatic evidence while taking into account the theories in modern scholarship as well as the existing ancient literary sources.

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