

THE INDO-SCYTHIAN DOMINANCE IN GANDHARA FROM 1ST CENTURY BCE TO THE BEGINNING OF 1ST CENTURY CE: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR POLITICAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses the political history of the Indo-Scythians in the Gandhara region, spanning from the 1st century BCE to the early 1st century CE. It highlights the rule of prominent Indo-Scythian kings such as Maues, Azes-I, Azilises, and Azes-II, emphasizing their significant impact on regional governance. The Indo-Scythians, originally nomadic warriors from Central Asia, established their dominance in Gandhara, a culturally rich and strategically important area, after migrating to the northwestern Indian subcontinent. They implemented and improved the administrative systems of preceding dynasties, contributing to the region stability and prosperity. Gandhara, known for its rich cultural heritage, saw considerable developments in art and architecture under Indo-Scythian rule, an amalgamation of Scythian, Greek, and Indian styles. However, their reign was relatively brief, ending due to invasions, internal strife, and the rise of the Indo-Parthians and Kushan Empires. Artifacts such as coins and inscriptions, including the prominent Patika and Lion Capital inscriptions, provided evidence of the Indo-Scythians political and cultural influence. The Indo-Scythian era is extensively studied through numismatic and epigraphic evidence, which has significantly contributed to understanding their impact on Gandhara history. Despite their short rule, the Indo-Scythians profoundly influenced the political aspect of Gandhara, succeeding the Indo-Greek kingdoms and leaving an enduring mark on the region. Their history has been precisely reconstructed by scholars through archaeological findings and ancient records.

Keywords: Political History, Gandhara, Coins, Inscriptions, Greek, Influence, Indo-Scythians

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Scythians political history in the Gandhara region from the 1st century BCE to the beginning of the 1st century CE. It covers the rule of several key Indo-Scythian rulers, including Maues, Azes-I, Azilises, and Azes-II during specific periods along with independent straps. This study aims to provide a comprehensive account of the rule of the prominent Indo-Scythian monarchs in the region during precise periods. The Indo-Scythians were a nomadic people originating from

Central Asia, who migrated to and established (Grenet, 2012: 1-22) their dominion in the Indian subcontinent in the northwestern regions, including the Gandhara region, during the 1st century BCE. They were a group of warrior-nomads who were experts in horse-riding and archery (Chaliand, 2017; Magee, 2007: 8). The land of Gandhara remained an attractive destination for foreigners since early historical period (Dowson, 1879: 105; Legge, 1998: 31; Ali,

2012: 9). The artifacts provide sufficient evidence of the political developments that took place in the region of Gandhara (Bishop, 2023:12). The founder king Maues ruled Taxila before being succeeded by Apollodotus-II, who maintained Greek influence in the region until 55 BCE (Bivar, 1984: 5-15; Bopearachchi & Rahman; 1995: 45; Muhammad & Jan 2023: 1179-1189). He reigned from approximately 90 BCE to 75 BCE, consolidating his authority over Taxila and Gandhara, evidenced by coins found in regions such as Hazara, Kashmir, Gandhara, and Swat Valley (Fussman, 1994: 32; Bhandare, 2017). The Indo-Greek regained some territories during Apollodotus-II rule, suggesting a reign around 90 BCE in Chach and Bannu, and around 60 BCE in Taxila (Mitchiner, 1978: 307; Cribb, 2018: 7-34). Azes-I, succeeding Maues around 57 BCE, ruled the same territories, with numerous coins indicating his wealth and power (Cribb, 2015: 57-91; Siddiqui, 2014: 47). Distinctions between the coins of Azes I and Azes II were noted, with Azes I coins showing a mounted king with a spear, and Azes II coins depicting a king with a whip (Marshall, 1951; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83; Senior, 1991; Banerji, 2007: 7-14). After Azes-I, Azilises brought changes to the Indo-Scythian tradition, co-ruling initially with Azes I (Whitehead, 1914: 132; Chopra et al., 2003: 118; Siddiqui, 2014: 47; Yang, 2020: 446-464). Coins from Pushkalavati, Taxila, and Gandhara during Azilises reign indicate his rule (Mitchiner, 1978: 313; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). Azes II, the last Indo-Scythian ruler, expanded the territory but his reign marked the decline of Indo-Scythian control in Gandhara (Bivar, 2002; Cribb, 2018: 7-34; Morris, 2020: 53-93).

Historical Background of the Indo-Scythian

The Indo-Scythian originated in the Central

Asian steppes and migrated to the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent in the 1st century BCE (Senior, 2001: 8; Khan, 2020). They established their rule in present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, and parts of northern India, primarily in the regions of Gandhara, Mathura, and Taxila (Puri, 1999: 195; Ghosh, 2019: 41-67). The early political history of the Indo-Scythians is marked by their struggles with the existing powers in the region, particularly the Indo-Greek kingdoms and the Parthian Empire (Dawar, 2013; Glenn, 2020: 467). The first Indo-Scythian ruler, Maues, is believed to have usurped the Greek king Strato-II in Gandhara and established his own rule in the region around 85 BCE (Morris, 2020: 1, 53-93; Ali, 2003: 48).

Following Maues, a series of Indo-Scythian rulers continued to expand their territories and influence in the region. The most prominent among them were Azes-I and Azilises, who established their rule in Gandhara, Mathura, and parts of northwestern India (Siddiqui, 2014: 47). Azes-I is particularly known for his contribution to the development of Gandharan art and the patronage of Buddhist monasteries in the region. The Indo-Scythians were eventually overthrown by the Kushan Empire, which emerged as a powerful force in the region in the 1st century CE (Mitchiner 1976a: 391-394; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). Despite their relatively short-lived rule, the Indo-Scythians left a lasting impact on the cultural landscape and political setting of the area (Warraich, 2011). After this, the Greeks under the leadership of Apollodotus-II were able to regain the lost territories of Punjab (Dar, 1984: 221). However, they were expelled from this region around 55 BCE via another Scythian ruler Azes-I who dethroned Hippostratus, the Indo-Greek king to reign inside the western Punjab, Taxila, and Pushkalavati (Cribb, 2009: 461-529).

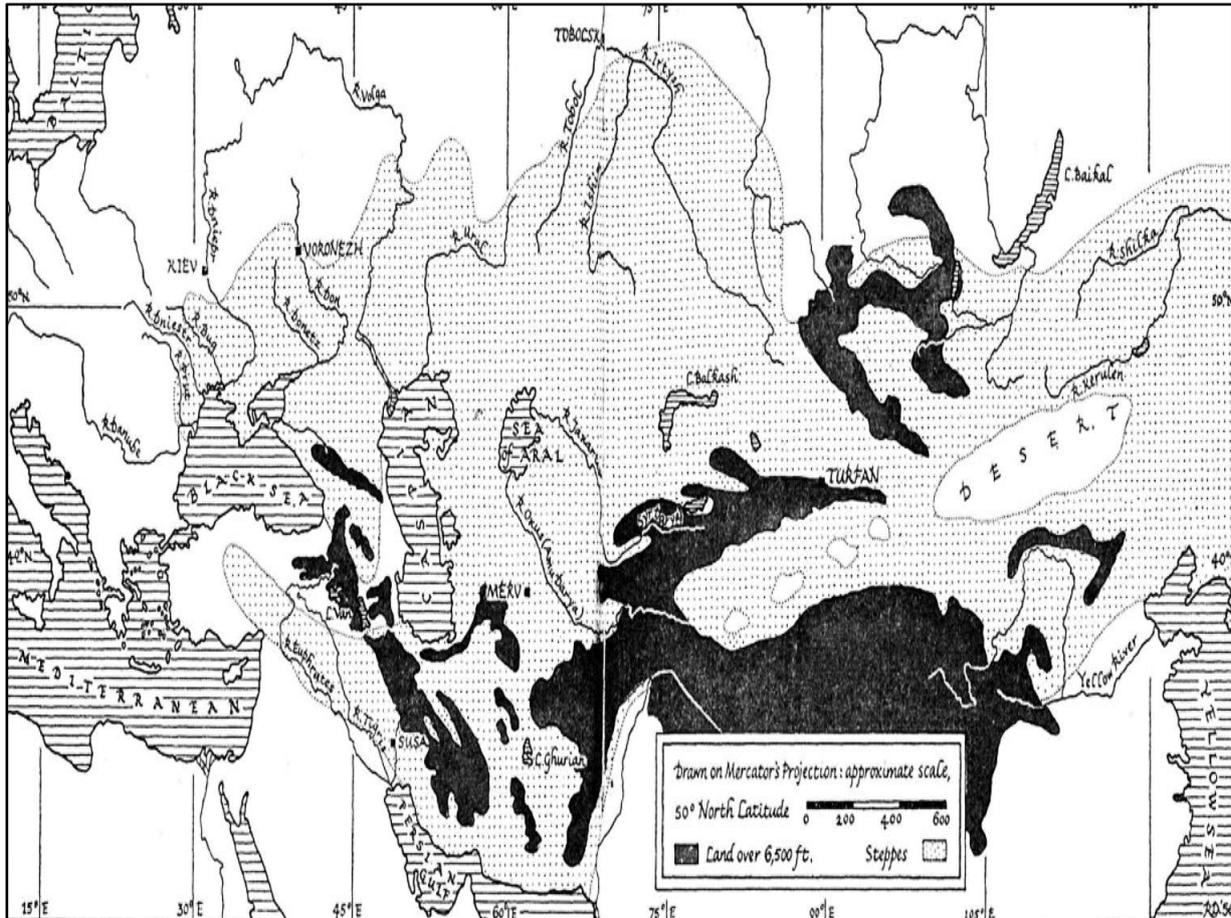


Figure: 1 Physical map of the territory of the Scythians' background and influence (after, T. T. Rice, 1957)

The Scythians, particularly under the reign of Maues and the House of Azes, successfully captured the provinces that were previously under the control of the Indo-Greeks in the Indus Valley during the time of Menander (Bopparachchi, 1993: 56; Widemann, 2007: 9-28). However, Charles Masson, H. H. Wilson, and James Prinsep became the earliest to investigate the record and history of the Indo-Scythian dynasty. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, their work has been considered the pioneer in terms of the antiquities discovered (MacDowall, 2007: 103-110). Similarly, H.H. Wilson established the sequence relating to this dynasty and the first ruler was Maues Spalarishes or Spalirises, Splayrius which was followed by Azilizes and Azes as barbarian rulers and Vonones identified (Wilson, 1841: 300-336; Senior, 1991; Bivar, 2000: 69-75). However, Whitehead and Percy Gardner also made some contributions in terms of classifying the kings and their coins, even though to a limited extent. They specifically mentioned the classifications of Vonones with Spalahores, Vonones with Spalagadames, Maues, Azes, Azilizes, and

Spalagadames with Spalirises (Whitehead, 1914; Gardner, 1871: 78).

Samad has described the Scythians as nomadic people originating from Central Asia. In the 2nd century BCE, the Scythians were compelled to leave Issikul Lake and their established economic center (Samad, 2011: 64-65). This group is notable for its important figures such as Azes-I, Azilises, Azes-II, Maues, and his descendants, who served as governors (satraps). They initially established their rule in Taxila (Petrie, & Magee, 2012: 1-25) and subsequently conquered Gandhara, other surrounding regions, and Sindh. They launched their rule and reached up to Mathura and in the east, the governors had extended their kingdom (Senior, 2001; Samad, 2011; Muhammad, & Jan, 2023: 1179-1189).

Indo-Scythians rule in Gandhara in the 1st Century BCE

The Gandhara region was an important cultural center of the Indian subcontinent (Ahmad, & Rehman, 2021: 42-54; Siddiqui, 2014: 47) and had a rich history before the arrival of the Indo-

Scythian (Cunningham, 1888; Iori, 2018, Muhammad, Sehrai, & Munsif, 2023: 2163-2178). The region had been ruled by various groups before the Indo-Scythians established their rule (Muhammad, Sehrai, & Munsif, 2023: 2163-2178). The Indo-Scythians ruled over the Gandhara region from the beginning of the 1st century BCE and continued to rule to the 1st century CE (Tarn, 1902: 22, 268-293; Dani, 1995: 49; Kumar, 2007: 3-33; Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189). During their rule, they established a centralized administration and developed a system of governance that was influenced by the political and administrative structures of the earlier dynasties that ruled over the region. The Indo-Scythians were known for their military expertise and their ability to maintain peace and stability in the region (Morris, 2020: 1, 53, 93). Their rule saw the flourishing of art and architecture, with the development of distinctive Indo-Scythian art (Angel, 2021) with elements of Scythian, Greek, and Indian styles (Korolkova, 2023: 19). The region also saw the growth of new trade routes and the development of commerce Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 212-223; Rosenfield, 1967; 373-390). The decline of the Indo-Scythian rule in the Gandhara region can be attributed to various

factors, including invasions from neighboring kingdoms, internal conflicts, and the rise of new dynasties (Samad, 2011). The last Indo-Scythian ruler was likely overthrown by the Kushan Empire, which emerged as a major power in the region in the 1st century CE (Cribb, 2008: 15-25). Despite the decline of the Indo-Scythian rule, their cultural and artistic influence continued to shape the region for centuries to come. Gandhara, a region of great historical significance, was ruled by the Indo-Scythians from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE (Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189) making a significant impact on its political history (Loeschner, 2012: 137-194). Scholars have heavily relied on numismatic and epigraphic evidence discovered in Gandhara associated with the Indo-Scythian to reconstruct cultural and political history (Rosenfield, 1967; Cribb, 2015: 10, 57, 91; Mitchiner 1976a: 391-394; Senior, 2001: 7-8). Archaeologists, art historians, along numismatists are studying Indo-Scythian dynasties from their coinage to obtain a clear picture relating to religious, cultural, and political records and achieved magnificent findings from the last two hundred years (Ali et al, 2004: 8).

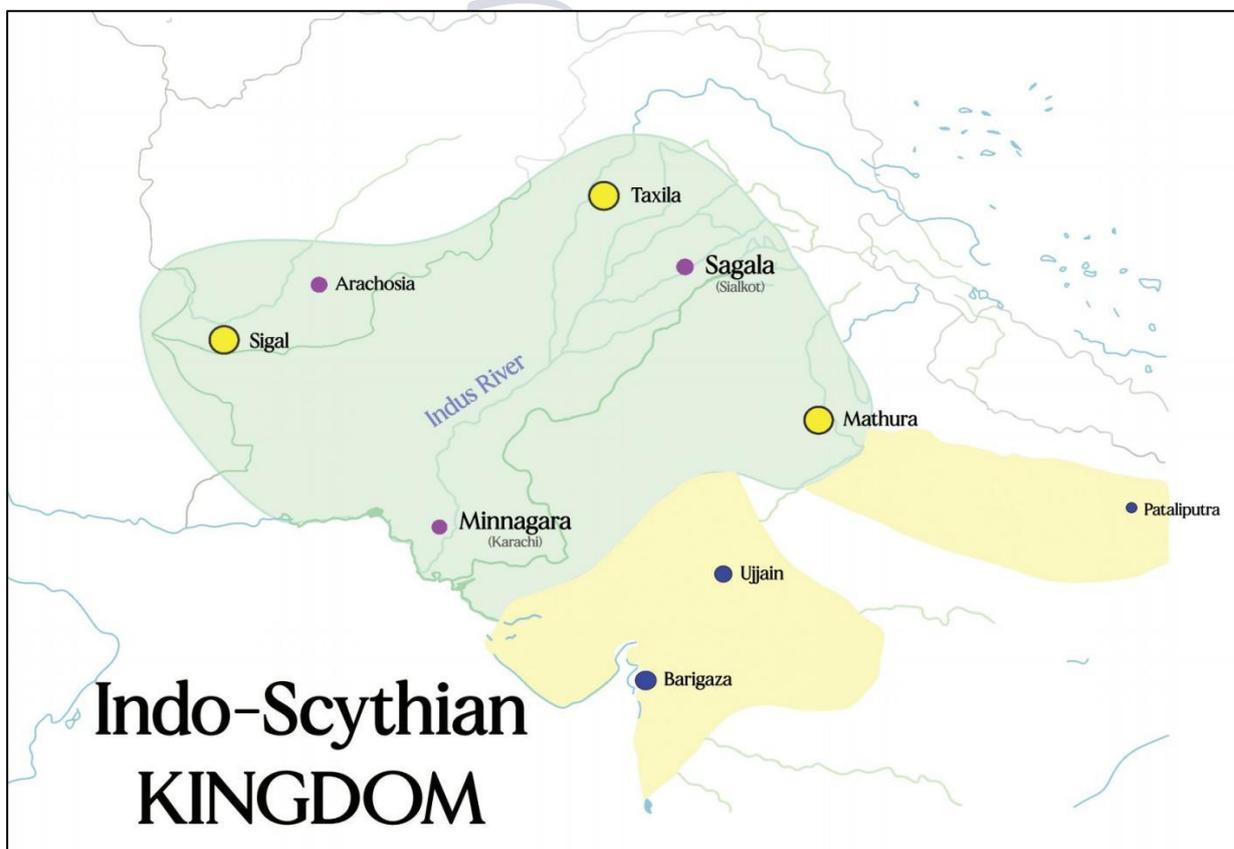


Figure: 2 Map showing Territorial Jurisdiction of Indo-Scythian including Gandhara (Jan 2023)

However, the most significant foreign invaders (Indo-Scythian) entered the region of Gandhara and India (Dawar, 2013). They destroyed and defeated the mighty dynasty of Indo-Greek while occupying the same territory and ran the political administration on the pattern of their predecessors (Meyer, 2013; Ramesh, 2023: 221-271). It has been noticed that the Indo-Scythians ruled for a very short period, but they greatly influenced the Gandhara in many ways especially politically and culturally (Widemann, 2000: 227-258). The material culture evidence is based on coins and inscriptions particularly the famous Patika inscription recovered from (Neelis, 2007: 55-94). The territory previously held by the Greek sovereigns was now ruled by Indo-Scythian, (Khan, G. R. 1998: 50). According to different scholars that Scythians is a general term that refers to the nomadic people. who occupied and captured various regions and territories such as Asia and Northern Europe, Asia (Movsesian, & Bakholdina, 2017: 589-599). Scythians were displaced by the famous Yue-Chi (Chinese tribe) from their native land and compelled to move in different directions later they settled in the historic land of Herat and Sistan, Sakastan Chi-Pin (Kapisa) (Majumdar, 2016) and Bactria (Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 212-223). However, in the 1st century BCE they reached and established political power in the regions of Punjab and Sindh (Ali, 2003: 50; Whitehead, 1914: 91; Khan, 2020; Muhammad, & Jan, 2023: 1179-1189).

Maues founded the Indo-Scythian kingdom in Gandhara in 90 BCE

Maues has been identified with different tiles /names in the different epigraphic records in Gandhara such as Moa or Moga in Kharoshthi, while in Greek he was called Maukes (Tarn, 1951: 321; Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189), emerged as the earliest Scythians ruler in the Indus region (Puri, 1999: 193; Neelis, 2007: 55-94). Around 85 BCE, Maues successfully overthrew the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus-II and established his authority in Taxila, marking a significant event in the region's history (Widemann, 2000; Muhammad, & 2023: 212-224). It is important to note that this occurred well before the major invasion of the Kabul Valley by the Yue-Chi, who later captured territories north of the Hindu Kush Mountains

(Bopearachchi, 1993: 56; Frumkin, 2022). Gandhara and Taxila were conquered by the great Maues in the first century BCE, later, Punjab and Paropmisadae (Tarn, 1951: 323) and the arrival of Central Asian peoples who would significantly shape Gandhara and Pakistan, Maues played a decisive role (Bivar, 1984: 5-15; Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189).

Several inscriptions refer to Maues, an Indo-Scythian ruler who is believed to have established his power in the Indus region around 88 BCE (Dar, 1998: 217-219; 2006: 46, Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). The Maira inscription from the Salt Range, which is believed to be from year 58, mentions the word "Moasa" and is one of the earliest references to Maues. Two other inscriptions have been found from Fateh Jang and Shahdaur, both dating to around the years 60-68 (Marshall 1951: 45; Puri 1994: 193). An inscription discovered in Chilas along the route from Taxila to Gilgit references the name "Moga," although the readings of this inscription have been contested by certain experts such as Gerard Fussman (Fussman, 1994: 18, Wickramasinghe, 2021: 69-91). It is important to acknowledge that the reliability of these inscriptions as evidence is not universally accepted, and some scholars have raised doubts regarding the accuracy of the dates and readings. However, according to Konow, there is evidence to suggest that an Indo-Scythian dynasty did establish its authority in the Indus region around 88 BCE (Chopra et al., 2003: 116). Despite the uncertainties surrounding these inscriptions, they offer some details information regarding the early Indo-Scythian era and rulers in the Indus region, but more research and evidence may be needed to fully understand their impact and influence in the area (Morris, 2020: 53-93). Maues was an Indo-Scythian ruler who briefly controlled Taxila, a major city in the ancient Indian subcontinent (Samad, 2011) before being succeeded by Apollodotus-II, a Greek ruler, Apollodotus-II, played a significant role in maintaining Greek influence in the region until 55 BCE (Bivar, 1984: 5-15; Bopearachchi & Rahman, 1995: 45; Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189). Apollodotus-II expanded his sphere of influence over the Greeks in Eastern Punjab, extending towards Gandhara, as well as the Paropmisadae in the Upper Kabul Valley (Dar, 2006: 46; Cribb, 2003: 1-19). Maues, on the other

hand, is believed to have reigned from approximately 90 BCE to 75 BCE (Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). During his rule, he consolidated his authority over the Taxila and Gandhara regions, which is supported by numismatic evidence. Coins minted under his rule have been discovered in Hazara, Kashmir, Gandhara, and the Swat Valley, indicating that his reign was primarily centered in these areas rather than Seistan or Arachosia (Fussman, 1994: 32; Bhandare, 2017). After Maues, the Indo-Scythian ruler, control of Afghanistan (Bivar, 1984: 14; Khan, G. R. 2009). The Indo-Greek recaptured this once again some of the territory by

Apollodotus-II from the Indo-Scythian rulers. Based on the analysis of Apollodotus-II coins, it is suggested that he ruled in around 90 BCE on Chach and Bannu, similarly in around 60 BCE dominated Taxila (Mitchiner, 1978: 307; Cribb, 2018: 7-34). These historical details shed light on the political dynamics of the region during this period, highlighting the shifting powers and influences of Indo-Scythian and Greek rulers in the area (Neelis, 2013: 97-116; Morris, 2021). The numismatic evidence also offers some clues about the extent and reach of their power, as reflected in the distribution of their coins in various regions (Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189).



Figure: 3 Map showing the kingdom of Maues circa 90 BCE of the Indo-Scythian (Mitchiner 1975/76) According to Alexander Cunningham, even to date, the disappearance of Archebios and the advent of the Punjab scene of Maues (Simpson, & Pankova, 2021: 1-774) exact evidence is lacking). However, a hint is provided by the inscription from Maira in the Salt range unhappily it is far from certain that the name of Maues (Moasa) figures in this record (Muhammad, & Jan, 2023: 1179-1189). He seems to have believed that not only are the surviving fragments of the stone in poor condition but the section in which the royal name was supposed to appear is now unaccountably lost. If we refer to this as Konow believed in the same era as the Patika Copper Plate and follow Tarn view of the latter the start of the era would have been c. 155 BCE, and that of the Maira inscription 98 BCE a terminus for the arrival of Maues (Tarn, 1951: 501; Samad, 2011; Baums, 2012: 200-251). It is unreliable through the damaged Maira inscription; there is no doubt about the second attestation of Maues provided by the Copper Plate inscription of Patika. It was discovered at Taxila in 1862, and unexplained circumstances present at least a legible text (Bivar, 2000: 69-75). Maues has been mentioned in the variant form Moga as the Great

King of Kings in the year 78 of an unspecified era. Interestingly, if the Tarn explanation is correct as I believe, the commencement of this era was c. 155 BCE, and the date is equivalent to 78 BCE (Dobbins, 1980: 31-53; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). Also mentioned are subordinate officers of Maues Liaka Kusulaka Satrap of Chukhsha the plain land on the Indus east bank near Attock and his son Patika prominent also in later records and the founder of a monastery. Maues was ruling Taxila with full imperial titles (Dar, 1998: 217-219; 2006: 46; Bivar, 2006: 231-240).

The end of the Maues career had been recorded from the famous Lion Capital inscription of Mathura which is now at the British Museum (MacDowall, 2007: 103-110; Widemann, 2003: 95-125, Marshall, 2013). It was founded in 1869 the text records a donation to a Buddhist monastery by the chief queen of Rajuvula, satrap of Mathura (Basham, 1953: 80-97; Dani, 1960: 129; Cribb, 2015: 57-91). Who was the daughter of Kharahostes? These personalities were the course well-known from coins and have been at the funeral of the illustrious king Muki and his horse Muki no doubt being a variant form of the name of Maues (Bivar, 1984: 8). As one may expect in the case of a Scythians chief Maues was buried with his horse. It is of course a type of Scythian burial in South Russia and Siberia (Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). Among the leading personalities mentioned in the Lion Capital Inscription, we hear again of Patika with no further reference to his father Liaka possibly deceased, of Rajuvula and his son Sodasa, both known from inscription and coins of Mathura and of several more personalities not otherwise known. We have seen that the Patika Copper Plate inscription belonged to 78 BCE (Bhandare, & Wessels-Mevissen, 2019).

The next clear chronological event of the 1st century BCE is the accession of Azes-I now known to be the originator of the Vikrama era of 57 BCE (Fleet, 1907: 1013-1040, Dani, 1960, 129). According to Dani, the letter forms of the Lion Capital inscription have been extraordinarily mixed. Some still resemble the characters of the Ashokan inscriptions while the outlines of others are as developed as in the Kushana record attributable to the late 1st century CE. (Muhammad, & Jan, 2023: 1179-1189). This characteristic, however, impairs the Mathura Lion Capital as a means of Palaeographic dating for

Maues. Subsequently, we have seen that Maues may have arrived at the Taxila area even before, 98 BCE, that he was firmly established there in 78 BCE and this his death possibly at an advanced age took place at Mathura before 57 BCE (Bivar, 1984: 9; Thompson, 2022). The emphasizes the account of the Chinese Chien Han Shu, recording that a Scythian group crossed southwards from the Kashgar area to reach via the legendary Hanging Pass of Indus Kohistan the neighborhood of Kashmir. Narain does not specifically claim that Maues was the leader of this remarkable expedition but maintains that it formed an important part of the Scythian invasion of Punjab (Muhammad, Jan 2023: 1179-1189).

Azes-I rule in Gandhara 1st Century BCE

Azes-I, who succeeded Maues around 57 BCE (Cribb, 2015: 57-91) ruled over the same territories and did not significantly expand Maues's dominions (Bernard, 1994: 99-129; Marshall, 2013, Siddiqui, 2014: 47). However, the abundance of Azes coins serves as a testament to his wealth and power (Gardner, 1971: 13; Gazerani, 2016: 11-44). Azes-I, one of the prominent and influential kings of the Indo-Scythian dynasty, left a significant numismatic legacy found in various renowned sites across Gandhara and Pakistan. Numismatists have identified the existence of two kings named Azes (Puri, 1999: 194; Neelis, 2007: 55-94). Marshall in 1951, distinguished between the coins of Azes-I and Azes-II based on numismatic evidence from the Taxila excavation. This differentiation was further developed by G.K. Jen King in his dissertation. According to this classification, silver coins featuring a mounted king holding a transverse spear on the obverse are attributed to the reign of Azes-I (Mints, 2001: 251-286), while those depicting a mounted king holding a whip are associated with the reign of Azes-II (Bopearachchi, 1993: 57; Ghosh, 2016: 1-2).

Numerous Azes-I coins have been discovered in Taxila (Marshall, 2013; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83; Senior, 1991; Banerji, 2007: 7-14) as noted by Dani in his report on Shaikhan Dheri in Charsadda (Samad, 2011; Olivieri, Elisa, & Omar, 2022: 110-135). The excavations at Shaikhan Dheri yielded coins from different periods, including Kushan, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian, and Indo-Greek. Based on this numismatic

evidence, Dani established the chronology of Charsadda. Importantly, Dani also uncovered a hoard of Azes-I coins during the excavation at Shaikhan Dheri, which is currently stored in the SSAQ Museum (Dani, 1965; Siddiqui, 2014: 47). Subsequently, Aziz Dheri which is another important site of Gandhara excavated by Nasim also recovered coins belonging to Azes-I a famous ruler of the Indo-Scythian dynasty which provides comprehensive information about the mentioned ruler in Gandhara and Pakistan (Nasim Khan, 2010). According to Senior Azes-I was one of the most important and powerful kings of the Indo-Scythian reign and his coins have been collected from Gandhara sites (Cribb, 2018: 7-34) which indicated that he ruled there for many years. Marshall equally mentioned a large number of coins from Taxila (Marshall, 1951, 2013; Dani, 1963; Nasim Khan, 2010: 7). The Bajaur reliquary which is engraved in Kharoshthi gives great respect to Azes-I and belonged to the Azes era. According to Van Lohuizen de Leeuw the engraving dates to the Vikrama era of 58 BCE (Leeuw, 1949: 1-50). While on the other side, it is considered that the Greek period may commence in 173 BCE. Which engraving indicates the Azes-I period started in 45 BCE (Marshall, 1914: 973-986). It has been confirmed that in 57 or 47 BCE Hippostratus- II the last Indo-Greek ruler defeated by the Indo-Scythian king. (Kumar, 2009: 452). After capturing Taxila Azes-I established the kingdom and gradually extended his empire towards Indus and Punjab (Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 117; Bopearachchi & Rehman 1995: 45). Now ancient Sakala (Sialkot) vanished from the Indus Greek and overcame Paropmisadae and Gandhara (Grenet, 2012: 1-22). The success of east Punjab Azes-I was also connected to Mathura in 58 BCE (Dar, 2006: 47; Muhammad, & Jan, 2023: 1179-1189).

Extension of the Indo-Scythian Kingdom under Azes-I

It is important to note that the coins of the Azes-I have been recorded from several renowned archaeological sites of Gandhara (Widemann, 2000: 227-258). The Azes-I coinage spread from Sakastan Arachosia to Gandhara and Taxila where it replaced that of Hippostratus (Bivar, 1981: 47-58). Soon after this enlargement of territory covered by the Azes-I currency, the reverse device of the silver denomination in

Sakastan Arachosia was changed from Zeus Mithra to Ardoxsho goddess with lamp (Dobbins, 1980: 31-53; Walton, 1978: 80; Loeschner, 2012: 137-194). In 58 BCE Phraates-III of Parthia was murdered by his sons Orodes-II and Mithradates-III and after a civil war, Orodes accepted the surrender of his brother and executed him in 55 BCE (Sampson, 2020). Both Mithradates-III and Orodes used the title king of kings which had been in abeyance except in one instance since the death of Mithradates-II. At the same time, Sakastan Azes-I began issuing coins with the imperial title which was used except on one striking since the Vonones coinage had stopped (Walton, 1978: 91; Fussman, 1994: 32, Warraich, 2011). Azes-I one of his successors instituted an era based on his accession calculated from 58 BCE which later became known in India as the Vikrama Era (Dobbins, 1980: 31-53; Senior, 2001: 32; Bivar, 2000, 69-75; Neelis, 2011: 65-181). The coincidence between the accession of Orodes-II and Azes-I and the reintroduction of the imperial title on both their coinages becomes even more striking when parallels with the story of Mithradates-II (Marshall, 2013; Siddiqui, 2014: 47) an era and coinage with pseudonyms for himself to be used by his Scythian satraps. However, in later times, imperial coinage and era are initiated on the models of the earlier ones. It is, therefore, to complete the analogy the name title Azes-I may be regarded as a pseudonym of Orodes-II (Dobbins, 1970: 33; Cribb, 2018: 7-34; Warraich, 2011; Cribb, 2015, 57-91).

The well-known analysis of Indo-Scythian coinage published by Jenkins in 1955 attributes the coinage of the Scythians to three main mints. One ascribed to the province of Arachosia may have been situated at Kandahar or even at Gardez (Wilson, 1841: 336; Cribb, 2015: 57-91). In this territory, the successor of Archebius is Vonones associated with Spalahores, then Spalyris and Spalagadama, and subsequently, Spalirises, who was finally associated with Azes-I (Whitehead, 1914: 168; Bopearachchi, 2011: 259-83). Eventually Azes-I mints in his sole name as Great King of Kings to be succeeded by Azilises. The strange names Spapahora, Spalyris, Spalagadama, Spalirises, and the old Iranian Spada army appear to constitute the chief claim of the Scythians of Arachosia to be among the linguistic ancestors of the present-day Pushtu speakers (Gardner 1971: 68-102, Beckwith, 2023). Two Indo-Scythian

rulers have been recognized based on Numismatists (Jenkins, 1955: 1). Azilises managed his rule in c. 58 at Taxila, the northwestern district after Azes (Senior, 2001: 32). However, numismatists and researchers have recognized that the name of Azes-I and grandson named Azes in main Indo-Scythian emperors Azilises. Mitchiner examined that between 57 to 35 BCE, the area of Taxila, Bannu, and Chach the Azes-I changed the exhaustion by Maues. Subsequently, he defeated the ruler of Hippostratus the Indo-Greek dynasty in the eastern region of Hazara (Mitchiner, 1978: 117). It has been mentioned by the numismatics and students unmistakably referred Azes-I ruled and administered Afghanistan Paktiya and Arachosia regions while displaced Taxila and Gandhara from Hippostratus after Vonones families (Jenkin, 1955: 1-26; Dobbins, 1972: 193).

Azilises rule in Gandhara 1st Century BCE

After Azes-I, Azilises became a new leader of the Indo-Scythian dynasty who brought some changes in the Azes-I tradition and occupied the territory of the Indus regions (Whitehead, 1914: 132; Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 118; Siddiqui, 2014: 47; Yang, 2020: 446-464). According to Pool Azilises was a co-ruler with Azes-I who gave some joint money with each name. A combination was issued with Azilises and Azes-I (Tarn, 1951: 348; Warraich, 2011). However, the different sides which were affected by overstrikes and described unearthed a few features Azes-I converted into Various side effects related to overstrikes and described which characterized that Azes I, transformed into flourished via Azilises after that by Azes-II (Jenkins, 1955: 23-25; Siddiqui, 2014: 47). The researchers have observed that the coins of Azilises were issued from three different mints such as Pushkalavati, Taxila, center Indus regions, and Gandhara. (Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 118). Azilises started his rule from Kashmir and north of Pakistan contemporary with Hippostratus the predictor of troops (Whitehead, 1923: 338; Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189; Olivieri, Elisa, & Omar, 2022: 110-135).

However, Mitchiner mentioned that the rule of Azilises has been confirmed from Hazara, Bannu, Taxila, and Chach and these regions (Yang, 2020: 446-464) produced a great number of Azilises coins (Mitchiner, 1978: 313; Boppearachchi, 2011: 259-83) subsequently R.C. Senior has identified a large number of Azilises coins which clearly

confirmation of his rule from Taxila and Hazara (Senior, 2001: 89). Initially the rule of Azilises from different regions in Afghanistan, Arachosia and Seistan (Frye, 1984: 196). From the Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila some Azilises silver drachms were discovered (Marshall, 1951: 277-292). The rule of Azilises became situated between the two other Indo-Scythian rulers Azes-I and Azes-II (Senior, 2001: 89; Mitchiner, 1978: 313). It is believed that in the Province of Indus Azilises succeeded by Azes-I as the king of kings (Puri, 1999: 195). Before his independent rule, Azilises served as a subordinate to Azes-I. Similarly, Azes-II held a subordinate position under Azilises (Whitehead, 1914: 93) before ascending to power. It is known that Azes-I associated Azilises with himself as a co-ruler, as evidenced by the existence of coins minted in both of their names (Gardner, 1886; Tarn, 1951: 348). However, such joint coinage is extremely rare, and these coins may represent the continued use of old dies from the Azes-I reign for striking Azilises' coins in the three mints previously used by Azes-I (Puri, 1999: 195). The collection of coins in the Peshawar Museum includes 76 round silver coins featuring joint issues of Azes and Azilises. These coins depict a mounted king with a whip and the name "Azilises" in Greek on the obverse, while the reverse depicts Zeus with Nike or the name "Azes" in Kharoshthi (Simonetta, 1957: 44-66). The weight of these coins ranges from 1.98 to 2.48 grams, and their diameter ranges from 13.88 to 16.06 mm. In addition, two coins from the reign of Azilises have been assigned to different types (Ali, et al, 2006: 83-84). The first type features a mounted king on the obverse and armed Dioscuri on the reverse. This specimen is round-shaped and minted in silver, weighing 2.08 grams with a diameter of 16.40 mm (Senior, 1991; Ali, et al, 2006: 85).

Azes-II rule in Gandhara 1st Century BCE and the Climax Period of Indo-Scythian

According to some scholars, the last Indo-Scythian ruler was Azes-II, and he was a powerful king who ruled in Gandhara and Taxila (Bivar, 2002; Filigenzi, 2012: 111-141). He started his rule in 35 BCE and remained king till 15 CE (Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 118; Mac Dowall, 2007: 233-265). Azes-II increased the Indo-Scythian territory toward other regions (Dobbins, 1973: 279-294; Mitchiner, 1978: 314). His entire political history has been reconstructed based on coins recovered through

the main archaeological sites in Gandhara (Siddiqui, 2014: 47). During excavation and exploration in Gandhara, they determined such a huge territory occupied by him. Another great source that provided us with authentic information regarding Azes-II is the Kharoshthi inscriptions discovered from Gandhara (Senior, 1991; Morris, 2020: 53-93). These inscriptions mostly described the religious activities of the concerned era but also gave us some useful political and territorial information about the ruler. Azes-II was the last and most powerful ruler of the Indo-Scythians. He succeeded Azilises and ruled from around 35 CE to 55 CE (Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189; Siddiqui, 2014: 47). Azes-II expanded the territory of the Indo-Scythian kingdom, and his reign marked the climax of the Indo-Scythian rule in Gandhara (MacDowall, 2007: 103-110; Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 119).

However, the reign of Azes-II also marked the beginning of the decline of the Indo-Scythian rule in Gandhara (Marshall, 2013). The political instability, infighting among the rulers, and external pressures from neighboring states weakened the kingdom (Cribb, 2018: 7-34; Morris, 2020: 53-93). In the decades that followed Azes-II death, the Indo-Scythians gradually lost control of their territories in Gandhara, paving the way for the emergence of new dynasties and kingdoms in the region (Muhammad, & Jan 2023: 1179-1189). In the later period, Spalagadames and Spalahores issued coins with Vonones as rulers of the Indo-Scythian dynasty where the Azes-II did not control the Indus territory (Dobbins, 1968: 151-162). The coins of Azes-II provided information and his rule over other regions like Gardez and Jalalabad where a great number of coins were stored and noticed (Marshall, 2013: 3-32, Chopra, et. Al, 2003: 118; Morris, 2020: 53-93). It has been noticed that the Indo-Scythian rule in Bannu was reconstituted by Azes-II and the regions were lost before him. He organized and recaptured the lost territory once again and extended the Indo-Scythian Empire to the north and south of Gandhara (Mitchiner, 1978: 312). According to Chopra that Gandhara and Taxila were significant mints during the Azes-II period (Chopra, et Al 2003: 118) while Senior has of the opinion that just a single ruler of Azes ruled on these lands (Senior, 2001: 65; MacDowall, 2007: 103-110; Cribb, 2018: 7-34).

The two most important engraving inscriptions discovered were from Taxila and Kalawan which related to the Azes-II period (Konow, 1932: 949-965). The first copper engraving inscription was found at Kalawan which mentioned the name and date of the year 134 of Azes rule. Similarly, another silver engraving inscription found at Taxila also mentioned the name and date of rule in the year 136 of Aya (Behrendt, 2004: 35-174; Konow, 1932: 949-965). It is quite interesting that both the inscriptions indicate the name Aya and Aja and the year. According to Sircar the name of Azes of Azes-II on these dates involved equal situation coins (Mitchiner 1975: 6; Srinivasan, 2007). On the other side, the Patika copper inscription showed the name and date of the founder Indo-Scythian rule Moga (Maues) discovered at Taxila which call of the Moga and supplied with imperial titles. Nevertheless, Azes-II, who ruled in Gandhara and a huge territory of the Indo-Scythian dynasty, and his coins have been recorded from many famous archaeological sites in this region with encompassing regions and Sindh (Senior, 2001: 7).

Azes-II coins from Peshawar Museum, the Peshawar Museum has a series of 153 coins attributed to Azes-II. These coins have been labeled into 17 different types. All feature the call Azes-II written in Greek on the obverse and the name Ayasa in Kharoshthi on the opposite (Khan, G. R., Durrani, & Samad, 2019: 111-197; Loeschner, 2012: 137-194). The one-of-a-kind varieties of those coins have a king on horseback with a whip at the Obverse and Zeus with Nike at the opposite. There are overall 80 spherical-formed silver coins of this type (Ali, et. al 2006: 83). The coins of type two have the same functions as type one but are minted in copper (Senior, 1991; Mac Dowall, 2007: 95-117; Cribb, 2015: 57-91). Three types have an installed king with a whip at the obverse and Pallas crowing herself at the reverse. The three-silver coins of this kind. The coin of kind four has an established king with a whip on the obverse and Pallas on the opposite (Dobbins, 1972; Nasim Khan, 2010; Errington, Cribb, Morris, Baker, Khera, Fabrègues, & Rienjang, 2021). The archaeological site of Akra produced Ashmolean coins that contain five examples nos. 36-40 of the Indo-Scythian series with the name of King Azes-II. The coins are dated 20 BCE to 20 CE a variety of lead coins of the Indo-Scythian formerly unpublished

(Cribb, 2002: 65). These coins represent a seated figure of the Greek city goddess of Tyche on the back and a lion on the front. There are six other lead coins representing the name of the Indo-Scythian King Azes-II. In this regard, two coins have been published while one collection is in the British Museum. It has also been mentioned by Cribb that the lead coins represent the consequence of the coinage of bronze and the site of Akra reported two more examples of nos 34 and 35. According to Mitchiner bronze coins have reduced weight standards which suggested the continuation of lead coins (Mitchiner 1975: 6; Cribb, 2002: 65, 2015: 57-91).

Conclusion

The Indo-Scythians, originally nomadic warriors from Central Asia, migrated to the northwestern Indian subcontinent, establishing dominance in culturally rich Gandhara. The political history of the Indo-Scythians in the Gandhara region focuses on the 1st century BCE to the early 1st century CE. However, Maues laid the foundation of the Indo-Scythian dynasty and a strong political system in Gandhara initially on the pattern of the Indo-Greek. While the other prominent rulers such as Azes-I, Azilises, and Azes-II were highlighted for their governance and influence. Their rule improved the regional administrative systems, contributing to stability and prosperity. Under Indo-Scythian rule, Gandhara witnessed significant developments in art and architecture, combining Scythian, Greek, and Indian styles. Although their reign was brief, the Indo-Scythians made a lasting impact, leaving behind a rich legacy of artifacts, including coins and inscriptions, which have provided significant understandings of their political and cultural influence. Despite internal contention and external invasions leading to their downfall, their contributions are still studied through numismatic and epigraphic evidence. Maues, the founder, ruled Taxila before being succeeded by Apollodotus-II. Azes-I, a key figure, followed Maues and ruled a vast territory, with coins reflecting his power.

It is significant to note that Azes-I, Azilises, Azes-II, and their predecessor Maues, along with their independent governors (satraps), played important political roles. Subsequently, their independent satraps extended the Indo-Scythian kingdom to Mathura (India). The Age of Satraps describes the decentralization of power and government during

the last generation of Indo-Scythian control over territory located in the west of Mathura province and the River Indus. The great increase in provincial autonomy manifested during these decades heralded the demise of the Indo-Scythian realm in the hands of two different conquerors. From Kabul valley and Gandhara, the great Kushan rule of Kujula Kadphises and Parthian ruler Gondophares expanded his kingdom from southern Afghanistan and Bannu in the southwest. The Azes-II was considered the last prominent ruler with a royal title and after him, the Indo-Scythian dynasty was controlled by independent satraps. It was observed that the Indo-Scythian Empire was immediately destroyed with the end of the rule of Azes-II and divided among several satraps (lead representatives) they introduced their rule between the southwest of Mathura and west of River Indus in the first century CE to 35 CE. However, the different locality satraps were replicated with the guide of a succession of Kharahostes, Jihonika, and Zeionises of the money study of Azes-II. The different regions have been controlled by these satraps such as Mathura and Jammu by Rajuvula, Hazara by Damjada, Chach regions, and Taxila by Aspavarma and Indravarma. The expanding of the regions and its impacts have been confirmed by the numismatic and epigraphic record of those satraps. The Indo-Scythians brief however influential rule shaped the cultural and political geography of Gandhara, a pattern of a transition from Indo-Greek to Indo-Scythian rule before being overtaken by the Parthians and subsequently the Kushans.

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