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EXPLORING THE EARLY POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE INDO- SCYTHIAN IN GANDHARA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MAUES

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ABSTRACT:

This paper deals with the early political history and an analysis of the Indo-Scythian from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE in Gandhara with special reference to Maues. Maues started his rule conceivably in 85 BCE and remained king till 57 BCE. He was the founder of this dynasty and established a strong political system on the pattern of Indo-Greek and declared Taxila as the capital city. The main objective of this paper is the reconstruction of Maues' political history based on material culture (inscriptions and coins) found in Gandhara, while in this connection the Patika Kharoshthi inscription shedding light on the socio-political and religious conditions during the Indo-Scythian rule in this region. His coins have been discovered in most of the major archaeological sites in Gandhara, confirming his territorial jurisdiction.

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Scythian were a group of Central Asian nomadic tribes who migrated to the Gandhara and Indian subcontinent during the beginning of the 1st century BCE and dominated this region till the beginning of the 1st century CE (Dar, 2012: 13, Marshall, 1960: 25, Nasim Khan, 1998: 08). They established a powerful and influential political presence in the region, integrating their Scythian cultural heritage with local Indian traditions. The early political history of the Indo-Scythian is characterized by the rise of various dynasties and their interactions with the existing Indian kingdoms (Dowson, 1879: 105). One of the most renowned Indo-Scythian rulers was Maues, who is considered the founder of this. He established his capital in the city of Taxila (Marshall, 1951: and extended his dominion over Gandhara and parts of Punjab (Legge, 1998: 31). Maues' successors, such as Azes-I and Azilises, further expanded the Indo-

Scythian kingdom, with Azes-I being particularly famous for his coinage and his association with the Buddhist religion. However, it is believed that Azes-II was the last ruler of the Indo-Scythian dynasty and his inscriptions and coins have been reported from most of the major sites in Gandhara and Pakistan (Mitchiner 1976a: 391-394; Senior, 2001: 7-8). The early political history of the Indo-Scythian in the Indian subcontinent was marked by their establishment of powerful dynasties, their interactions with Indian kingdoms, and their contributions to art, culture, and religion (Dani, 1986: 41). They left a lasting impact on the region, influencing subsequent dynasties and leaving behind a rich cultural legacy. While in the Political arena of Gandhara, which is adequately evidenced through the invention of their coins, inscriptions, and architectural remains (Rehman, 1979: 75).

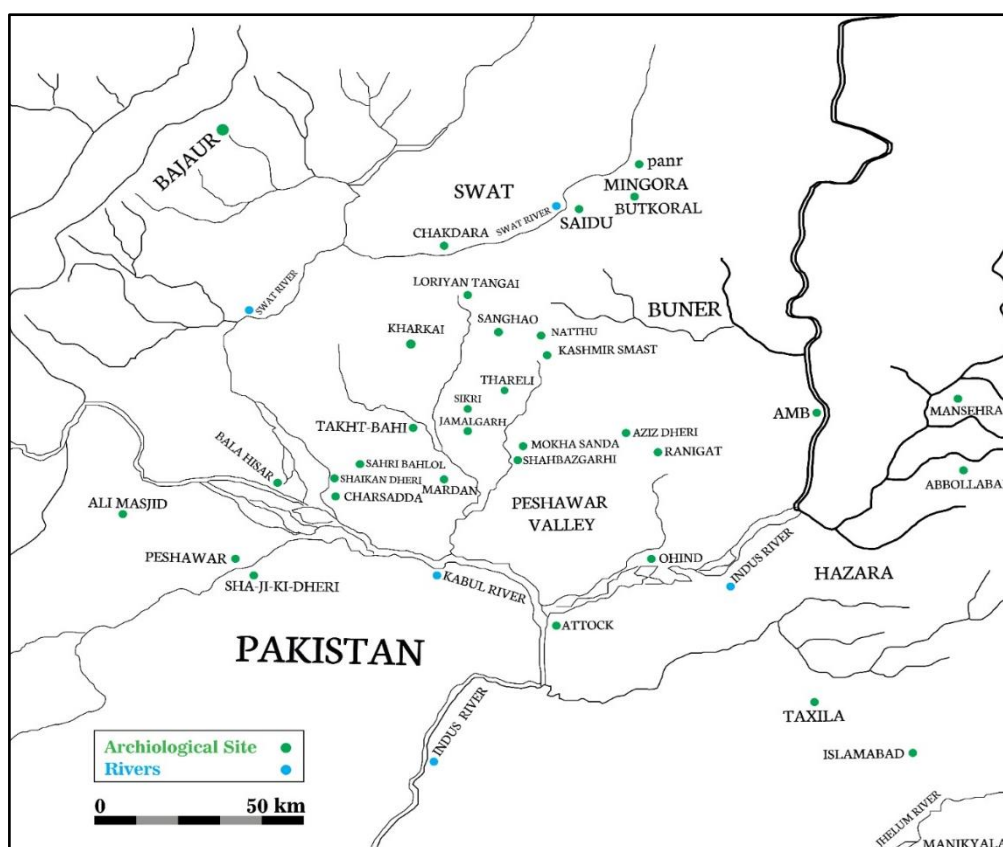


Figure: 1 Map of Archaeological sites in Gandhara

Despite their brief tenure, they played a significant role in the political history of ancient Gandhara (Dar, 1984: 221, Senior, 2001: 7-8). The political history of the Indo-Scythian has been reconstructed by examining numismatic and epigraphic evidence from Gandhara (Mitchiner 1976a: 391-394). Marshall identified and collected comprehensive and valuable information regarding the Indo-Scythian period from Sirkap the second city of Taxila. The recent excavation at Hayatabad, Peshawar which was conducted by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar in collaboration with the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa produced the Indo-Scythian period and the coins of Azes-II. During the course of the excavation Indo-Scythian antiquities and materials culture have been reported

such as coins, terracotta figurines and pottery from this site (Khan, et. al., 2018: 79).

Historical Background of the Indo-Scythian Dynasty

The Scythians or Sakas are an ancient group of people documented in history, dating back to at least the time of the Achaemenians, who permitted their crossing of the Jaxartes River (Edwardes, 1969:23, Majumdar, 1946: 56). They migrated and settled across Central Asia, establishing a new homeland in eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan, which gave rise to the geographical name Seistan or Sakastan (Samad, 2011: 64-65). Seistan, presently known as Sistan, corresponds to the native land of the great Saka and encompasses regions in eastern Iran, Baluchistan, and southern Afghanistan. It holds historical, cultural, and geographical significance (Mitchiner, 1978: 307-308).

The Indo-Scythian subsequently expanded their dominion over northwestern India by successfully conquering the local kingdoms of the Indo-Greeks, effectively extending their authority. Even the Kushana Empire, it seems, fell under the rule of the Indo-Scythian dynasty (Bopearachchi & Rehman 1995: 170-196; Mitchiner, 1978: 314). It is worth noting that the term "Scythian" or "Saka" generally refers to the nomadic people who had a presence in various regions of northern Europe and Asia that came under their control. The Chinese tribe Yue-Chi displaced the Scythians from their original homeland, prompting their southwestward migration and subsequent occupation of Bactria, Chi-Pin (Kapisa), Herat, and Sistan (Sakastan). Eventually, they reached the lower Indus region, where they became known as the Indo-Scythians (Puri, 1999: 191).

The Scythians, having settled in Sistan in the southeastern regions of Iran and Afghanistan, exerted their political influence in Punjab and Sindh by the 1st century BCE (Ali, 2003: 50). They successfully overthrew the Greek rulers in these territories, establishing a new nation to the east and west of the Indus River, known as the Indo-Scythians (Whitehead, 1914: 91). After the demise of the Greek kingdom, the Indo-Scythian dynasty emerged as one of the most significant foreign invaders in Gandhara and India. Although their rule was short-lived, they made substantial contributions to the political history of Gandhara and India. Notably, the recovery of the copper plate inscription from the Maues period in Taxila and the Lion Capital inscription of Mathura shed light on their political system and the chronological sequence of their kings (Dani, 1995: 49; Ali et al., 2004: 8). They became the masters of the same territories previously governed by later Indo-Greek rulers (Rahim, 1998: 50).

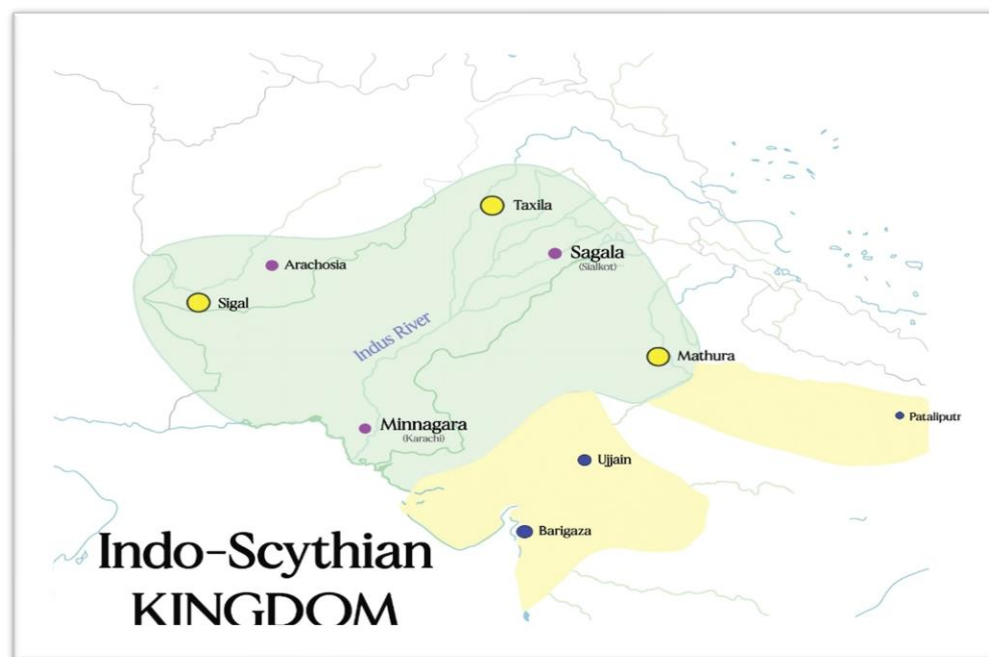


Figure: 2 Map showing Territorial Jurisdiction of Indo-Scythian Empire during 1st Century BCE

Early Political History

It is important to describe here, that the Indo-Scythian invaders did not come through the Kabul Valley. In reality, they arrived right here with the assistance of Bolan Pass from Drangiana (modern Sistan) and Arachosia Kandahar over the Brahui Mountains into the decreased Indus (Sindh) (Puri, 1999: 192). Subsequently, before the invasion of the Kabul Valley by way of the Yue-Chi the Scythians captured the areas north of the Hindu Kush Mountains. The Greek kingdom in the Indus Valley Taxila ruled by Apollodotus-II was taken over by Scythian king Maues around 85 BCE (Bopearachchi & Rahman, 1995: 44-45). The Scythians were nomadic and war-like people they entered these regions probably through the Gilgit route and took possession of it from the Greeks (Sardar, 1997: 152).

After this, the Greeks under the leadership of Apollodotus-II were able to regain the lost territories of the Punjab. However, they have been expelled from this region around 55 BCE by another Scythian ruler Azes-I who dethroned Hippostratus, the Indo-Greek king to reign inside the western Punjab, Taxila, and Pushkalavati. Especially, the Scythian beneath the Maues and the House of Azes-I inside the Indus Valley captured the provinces dominated with the aid of the Indo-Greeks because of the time of Menander (Bopearachchi, 1993: 56).

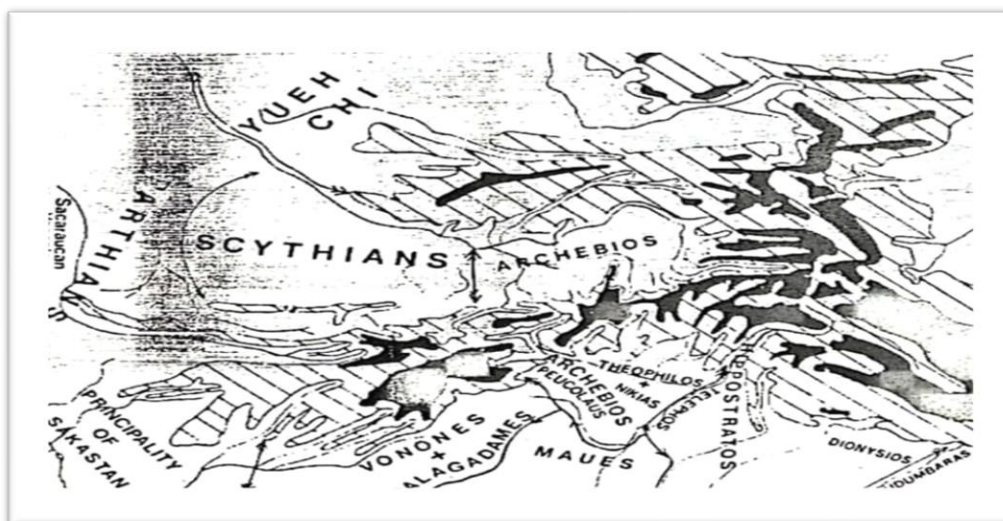
However, Charles Masson, H. H. Wilson, and James Prinsep became the earliest to investigate the record and political history of the Indo-Scythian dynasty. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, their work have been considered a pioneer in other antiquities discovered. Similarly, H.H. Wilson established the sequence relating to this dynasty and the first ruler was Maues Spalarishes or Spalirises, Splayrius

which was followed by Azilizes and Azes-I as barbarian rulers and Vonones identified (Wilson, 1841: 300-336). Nevertheless, Whitehead and Percy Gardner also designated the classifications of the kings and their coins to some extent in a way, especially like Maues, Azes-I, Azilizes, Vonones with Spalahores, Vonones, with Spalagadames, Spalagadames with Spalarises (Whitehead, 1914 Gardner, 1871: 78). Samad has described that nomadic folks who belonged to Central Asia and was called Scythian. In the 2nd Century BCE, the Indo-Scythians have been compelled to leave Issikul Lake and the economic establishment (Samad, 2011: 64-65). This group mentioned that important Maues and his descendants are named Azes-I, Azilises, and Azes-II and his governors (satraps). While they begin their rule at Taxila and after that conquered Gandhara and 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: 8).

When they participated in the nomadic migration of 130 BCE and interrupted the consciousness of Hellenistic kingdoms situated below the river Oxus. Pushed ahead of the migrating Yuch Chi various Scythian tribesmen among whom the Sacraucaae formed a major contingent were forced from the Trans Jaxartes regions across Sogdiana and the river Oxus to the North Afghanistan plateau. Some of these Scythians settled in northern Afghanistan. But many of them continued their migration down the west Afghanistan where they found themselves in conflict with the Parthians who had recently ruled this region. The conflict between Parthian and Scythian continued from the early 120 BCE until equilibrium was established about 80 BCE and the Parthians then forth ruled western Afghanistan whose Scythian population was organized into a Sacrauca vast state governed by Tanlismiadates, Otannes, and their various successors ((Dar, 1984: 221, Mitchiner 1976a: 391-394).

Early settlement of Indo-Scythian

The Indo-Scythian migrants then settled and consolidated their control over these new lands and those who had come furthest were organized into a settled kingdom by their chief Vonones circa 100-65 BCE who was assisted by his brother Spalahores and later by the latter son Spalagadames. Vonones had as his name implies and acquired a modicum of Parthian culture while his



migrating around the west Afghanistan plateaus the culture of his new Arachosian kingdom was to be based on the Indo-Greek cultural heritage of this region. The kingdom of Vonones extending from Kandahar and Ghazni to the bank of the river Indus was not, however, a stale entity, and within a decade it split and put 90 BCE into its two major geographical divisions. The kingdom ruled by Vonones and his

Figure: 3 Map showing the Indo-Scythian realm of Maues circa 90 BCE (after Mitchiner 1975/76) associates and then by Spalarises became restricted to the southeast Afghanistan plateau Arachosia by the loss of the lowland province where a vigorous new leader rose to power in the person of Maues circa 85- 57 BCE (Dar, 1984: 221, Leeuw, 1948: 78).

Conquest of Taxila by Maues

Maues, also known as Maukes in Greek and Moa or Moga in Kharoshthi (Tarn, 1951: 321), stands as the earliest Scythian ruler in the Indus region (Puri, 1999: 193). He dethroned the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus II and seized control of Taxila. This significant event occurred around 85 BCE, predating the major invasion of the Kabul Valley by the Yue-Chi, who later captured territories north of the Hindu Kush Mountains (Bopearachchi, 1993: 56). Maues' conquest of Taxila and Gandhara separated the Greeks of Eastern Punjab from those in Paropamisadae (Tarn, 1951: 323). In the historical crisis that witnessed the collapse of the Graeco-Bactrian principalities established by Alexander the Great and the arrival of Central Asian peoples, whose descendants play a substantial role in Gandhara and Pakistan, Maues undoubtedly played a decisive role (Bivar, 1984: 5-15).

The Maira inscription recovered from the Salt Range which is dated 58 years clearly mentioned the name of Maues as Moasa. Similarly, from the region of Fateh Jang near (Attack) two more inscriptions were also collected which significantly dated 68 years (Dar, 1998: 217-219; 2006: 46). Maues period inscription found from Shahdaur in the Agrora valley dated year 60 (Marshall 1951: 45; Puri 1994: 193). The name of Moga has been identified in yet another inscription which was recently discovered by Dani from Chilas Gilgit (Dani, 1983: 62-64). It has been suggested by Konow that in around 88 BCE Maues established Indo-Scythian power in the Indus regions while this was the period of the death of Mithradates-II in Parthia (Chopra et. al, 2003: 116).

However, Taxila had been occupied and controlled by Maues in a very short form of time and defeated Apollodotus-II the Indo-Greek ruler till 55 BCE in the same area (Bivar, 1984: 5-15; Bopearachchi & Rehman, 1995: 45). This was the ear where his political power extended over the Indo-Greek in the upper valley of Kabul Paropamisadae, in the eastern Punjab and Gandhara. Subsequently, Maues extended his kingdom toward river Jhelum after conquering eastern Punjab and Gandhara from upper Indus (Dar, 2006: 46). In this connection the main prominent reliable sources which confirmed his authority was the numismatic and epigraphic evidence c. 90 BCE to 75 BCE over this region, particularly Gandhara and Taxila. Senior mentioned a great number of coins that have been recovered from the Gandhara, Kashmir, and Hazara regions. His coins were collected from Uḍḍiyana, (Swat Valley) (Bivar,

1984: 14; Narian, 1957: 145) while very less evidence from Begram, Kabul, Seistan, and Arachosia regions (Fusman, 1994: 32). (Mitchiner, 1978: 307).

The extension of the Indo-Scythian Empire under Maues

The Maues indications of numismatics are to be trusted, the last of the Graeco-Bactrian rulers to hold extensive power was the militant archer. His coin portrait helmeted and thrusting with the spear, doubtless recalls an early portrait of Alexander and is designed to convey an image of military skill (Fusman, 1994: 32). The monograms of his coinage tend to suggest that he still controlled three of the remaining centers of Graeco-Bactrian power, Capisa, now Begram to the north of Kabul, Arachosia the province with urban centers at present Kandahar and Gardez and finally Taxila (Bivar, 1984: 8). According to Alexander Cunningham, even to date the disappearance of Archebius and the advent on the Punjab scene of Maues 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. 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 to be the same era as the Patika Copper Plate and follow Tarn's 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). It is unreliable through the damaged Maira inscription maybe there is no doubt about the second attestation of Maues provided by the Copper Plate inscription of Patika. It is discovered at Taxila in 1862 and presents at least a clearly legible text in unexplained circumstances. Maues has been mentioned in the variant form Moga as the Great King of Kings in the year 78 of an unspecified (Tarn, 1951: 321). Interestingly, if the Tarn explanation is correct as in fact, I believe, the commencement of this era was c. 155 BCE, and the date is equivalent to 78 BCE. 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 apparently the founder of a monastery. Maues was ruling Taxila with full imperial titles (Dar, 1998: 217-219; 2006: 46). The end of Maues career had been recorded from the famous Lion Capital inscription of Mathura which is now at the British Museum. It was founded in the year of 1869 the text records a donation to a Buddhist monastery by the chief queen of Rajuvula, satrap of Mathura (Dani, 1986: 129). These personalities were the course well-known from coins and to 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. As one may expect in the case of an Indo-Scythian chief, Maues was buried with his horse. (Bivar, 1984: 8).

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. 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, according to Dani

that 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 (Dani, 1984, 129).



Figure: 4 Map showing extension of Indo-Scythian under Maues 1st Century BCE

However, in view of the very specific information in this text, one cannot doubt that those who engraved it in later years had an authentic foundation document in their possession. It also would explain the frequent archaic letter forms copied exactly from the hypothetical archetype even though the transcriber otherwise adopted the later writing of his own day. This characteristic, however, impairs the Mathura Lion Capital as a means of paleographic 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. Therefore, even the earlier scholars have tended to suppose that Maues, the generally acknowledged Indo-Scythian emperor, belonged to his western group. Interestingly, Rapson has dismissed the theory that the Indo-Scythian could have reached Punjab through the Kabul Valley (Bivar, 1984: 9, Dani, 1986: 135).

It is worth mentioning that the Indo-Scythian conquerors Maues must have come through Sistan and Kandahar to the lower Indus. Similarly, Tarn used the evidence of Maues Poseidon type on copper coins symbolic of a naval victory to infer that Maues forces a steward crossing of the Indus in the face of Bactrian naval opposition. Subsequently, the Tarn view necessarily implies that Maues travelled east from Arachosia across the Indus. On the other hand, Narain mentioned in his study of the Indo-Greeks (Narain, 1957: 135). 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 (Dani, 2001: 12, Boppearachchi, & Rehman, 2003: 26). The excavated sites of Taxila, as described by Sir John Marshall, have yielded significant and fruitful results over an extended period of time. However, it is worth noting that even in 1955, when Jenkins wrote about these findings, their full implications may not have been fully realized, and perhaps they still remain unrealized to this day. The successor of Archebius, who can be linked through a monogram, is Maues. His coin series begins with a Victory type, followed by subsequent issues featuring a different monogram. Notably, there is a remarkable coin in Paris that bears the same monogram and depicts a standing Zeus on the reverse, holding a miniature victory and surrounded by the customary Kharoshthi inscription of Maues. On the obverse, a new type features an enthroned goddess with a Greek inscription identifying her as Mahen, an Iranian queen. It becomes evident that the drachma in Lahore, featuring a similar goddess and the name of Maues on both sides, represents the preceding and closely related issue. This suggests that Emperor Maues had passed away, and his Iranian queen assumed the regency in an attempt to maintain the unity of the Scythian kingdom, the empire of Sakastan (Marshall, 1951: 376, Jenkins, 1955: 26).

However, this phase of the Scythian rule was exceedingly brief, with only two coins known from this series. The subsequent ruler, whose coins are plentifully found around Rawalpindi, is once again an Indo-Greek figure, Apollodotus II, who is connected to Maues through the monogram. The kingdom had reverted back to Greek rule. Hippostratus, another Greek ruler, followed Apollodotus II. The significance of his name, which relates to the cavalry army, suggests contemporaneity with a period of extensive cavalry movements. Eventually, the Scythian rule was restored with the arrival of Azes I from Arachosia to Taxila, marking the beginning of the era in 57 BCE (Narain, 1957: 135, Marshall, 1951: 394).

CONCLUSION

The Indo-Scythian dynasty began their rule in the (1st century BCE to the 1st century CE) in Gandhara and some other regions in Pakistan. Maues was a prominent leader and the founder of this dynasty. He is credited with defeating the last Indo-Greek ruler, which led to the establishment of the Indo-Scythian dynasty. The Indo-Scythian extended its rule over a large area in the northwestern region, stretching from Seistan in present-day Iran and Afghanistan to Gandhara, Sindh (Pakistan) and Mathura (India) specifically, became an important center for the Indo-Scythian. During Maues' reign from

85 BCE to 57 BCE, he implemented a strong and well-organized political system modeled after the Indo-Greek pattern. This system brought stability to the region and allowed the Indo-Scythian to govern effectively. To understand more about the socio-political and religious aspects of the Indo-Scythian period, scholars rely on various sources, such as epigraphic inscriptions and numismatic evidence found in archaeological sites in Gandhara and its neighboring regions. These sources provide valuable insights into Maues' early political history and offer a glimpse into the conditions of the territories surrounding Taxila and Gandhara during that time. The rise of the Indo-Scythian dynasty under Maues' leadership, their conquest of a significant portion of the northwestern region, the stability brought by their political system, and the sources that help researchers understand the socio-political and religious context of that era. These sources shed tremendous light on Maues' early political history and reveal the state of the territory surrounding Taxila and Gandhara during this time.

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