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It appears that the Scythians invaded India from at least three directions. Since, as stated above in the "Preface", all Śakas were Scythians but not all Scythians were Śakas, and since some sources indicate that the Scythians in the east were called Śakas, as the literary and epigraphic texts of ancient India and Iran often mention, the Scythians in Indian territories will also be referred as Śaka/Scythians. The three major directions from which the Śaka/Scythians invaded India were, in the first place, from the former Sai country (to be placed in the modern Ili basin) through Hsien-tu to Chi-pin or Kashmir. Secondly, there was a Scythian migration across the Hindu Kush into the north-western borderlands of the Indian subcontinent. Thirdly, they came from Seistan via Arachosia and the Brahui mountains into the lower Indus country.¹

As a result of tribal movements, as well as due to the aggression of

¹ *Agr. So. Imp. Par. Hist.*, p. 205.

neighbours, the Scythians who were originally Central Asian nomadic tribes, formed a number of ethnic groups. They appear to have founded various settlements in different regions even in very ancient times. In the early records of the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia, reference is made to no less than three settlements of the Śakas who were subjects of the Achaemenids . These were the Śakā Tigrakhaudā (Śakas with pointed helmets), Śakā Haumavargā and Śakā tayaiy paradraya (Śakas beyond the sea).

The Śakas with pointed helmets are probably also referred to in the Achaemenian records. They lived beyond Suguda or Sogdiana (modern Bukhāra region). According to Herodotus, they were the neighbours of the Bactrians¹. They are supposed to have lived in the plains of the Jaxartes or Syr Darya. The Śakā Haumavargā have been identified by scholars including D.C.Sircar with the Scythian settlers of Drangiana in the Helmund valley which was known later as Śakastān (modern Seistan). The Śakas of the land beyond the sea are usually believed to have been those who lived in the Russian steppes to the north of the Black Sea.²

¹ According to Arrian, a chief named Mauaces or Mavaces (i.e. Maues) who led the Sacians (Śakas), a Scythian tribe dwelling in Asia not far from Bactria and Sogdiana, was an ally of Darius III.

² *The Age of Imperial Unity*, edited by R.C. Majumdar, Bombay, 1970, p.120.

As mentioned above¹, the first major direction from which the Śaka/Scythians invaded India was from the north, from the former Sai country. The *Ch'ien Han-shu* (ch. 96B) states that the territory of the Wu-sun (in the Ili basin and including the area on the lake Issyk-kul) was originally the country of Sai (Sakas). When the Great Yüeh-chih went to the west and defeated and drove away the Sai wang (Śaka king), the latter went southwards and crossed Hsüan-Tu and the great Yüeh-chih occupied their country. This happened during the reign of the Hsiung-nu ruler Mao-dun (171-158 B.C.). This migration probably took place between 174 and 160 or 158 B.C.² The *Ch'ien Han-Shu* (ch. 96A) further records that the Sai king went southwards and became ruler of Chipin³ and indicates that the Śakas following their leader, migrated through the area of Su-le (Kashgarh). It appears that a section of the Śakas migrated southwards from the Lake Issyk-kul and through Kashgarh and the Pamirs entered Chipin the name of which can be phonetically related to that of Kāśmīra, included a part of the north-western section of the Indian subcontinent (incorporating the Kashmir valley). Thus, the earliest Saka (Śaka) invasion of India, which came from the north, resulted in the

¹ See p.29, above.

² B. Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, New York, 1961, Vol. II, pp.173-175.

³ *C.H.S.*, ch. 96A, p.10; ch. 96B, p.76.

establishment of a Saka (Śaka) kingdom in the extreme north-west (including Swat and Darel and also the Gilgit and Chilas areas) by c. 158 B.C. At that time (100 B.C. - 50 A.D.) the Indo-Greeks were a major power in that part of the subcontinent. This inference is supported by Patañjali, who, in about the first half of the second century B.C. indicated in his *Mahābhāṣya* (II, 4, 10), that the Śakas lived outside Āryāvarta situated to the south of the Himavat or the Himalayan region.

Secondly, they came from the north-west. The Yüeh-chih occupation of the Śaka territory on the Lake Issyk-Kul might have also compelled a section of the Śakas to move westwards from the Lake Issyk-Kul region in the direction of the Jaxartes river or Syr Darya and beyond (as indicated by the *Prologus* XLI of the *Historiae Philippicae* of Trogus, which refers to the Scythian invasions of Bactra (or the Bactrians and Sogdiana between the Jaxartes and Oxus).¹ The Greeks ruled these territories or at least Bactria.

Bactrian Greeks of the post-Alexandrian period were a significant power. The Seleucid house of the Alexandrian legacy, ended sometime between c. 246 and 237 B.C. when Diodotus, a Greek satrap of Bactria revolted and became

¹ P. Trogus, *Prologus XLI, Historiae Philippicae* (quoted in Justin's *Epitome*).

independent of the Seleucid empire.¹ About hundred years later, the Śaka-Scythians gave the final blow to the Greeks. He was succeeded by his son Diodotus II who was defeated by Euthydemus. Euthydemus probably had established his authority over Sogdiana (between the Oxus and the Jaxartes river). One of his coin-types showing a bust and seated Heracles is known to have been imitated by the Tokharian nomads in the territory of Sogdiana.²

Chang Ch'ien saw the Yüeh-chih in occupation of Ta-hsia or roughly, eastern Bactria, in c. 130/129 B.C. By or before this year, the Greek rule must have ended in Bactria.³ According to Strabo,⁴ Bactriana was taken away from the Greeks by the Scythian nomads like the Asioi, Pasianoï, Tokharoi and the Sakarauoi, who had originally come "from the country on the other side of the Jaxartes river that adjoins that of the Sakai and the Sogdianoï and was occupied by the Sakai". Thus, it appears, that the Śakas had occupied a part of Transoxiana before conquering Bactria. Bactria, at that time was a centre of Greek culture. Thus the nomads came in direct contact with the Greek culture and naturally the latter influenced these tribes. Round about this time (130-125 B.C.) the Imperial Parthians began to take some interest in the Indus

¹ *Ibid.*, XLI. 4.

² B.N. Mukherjee, *The Kushāṇa Genealogy*, Calcutta, 1967, p.25.

³ *Epitome*, XLII. I.

⁴ *Geographikon*, XI. 8, 2.

region. Attempts of such an expansion of power were in the logic of their struggle against their enemies, the Greeks, who were contemporary masters of the territory in question. Mithradates I conquered at least a part of Arachosia from the Greeks.¹ From the same power he perhaps captured an area on the lower Indus, perhaps including Patalene. From Bactria the Sakas migrated across the Hindu Kush into the north-western borderlands of the Indian subcontinent.²

From the west, as mentioned above,³ the Śaka migration involved the Arsacid emperor, Mithridates II (c.123-88/87 B.C.), who according to Justin,⁴ scored success against the Scythians and added many new provinces to the Parthian empire. He could have subdued the Scythian (Saka) nomads in western Bactria. A section of them could have ultimately settled in about Drangiana or Śakastāna of *Stathmoi Parthikoi* towards the end of the first century B.C. The Parthian philhellenism had an impact over another group of Śakas who lived in Śakastāna or Seistan owing allegiance to the Arsacids. In course of its description of an itinerary of a caravan trail, the *Stathmoi*

¹ *His. Ad. Pag.*, V. 3, 16-17.

² A.D.H. Bivar, 'Maues at Taxila', *JCA*. 7, pp.5-15.

³ See p.31, above.

⁴ *Epitome*, XLII. 2.

*Parthikoi*¹ states that in the city of Sigal in Śakastāna, a part of the Parthian empire “is the royal residence of the Sakai” (i.e. the Śakas). This certainly means the existence of a Śaka feudatory state in Śakastāna or the Seistan region in or about the last quarter of the 1st century B.C. In Seistan, the Scythians (including the Śakas) and the Parthians mingled with each other forming a composite people whom we may call the Scytho-Parthians. Thus the Śakas of Śakastāna was within the limits of the Parthian empire and were likely to develop a close relationship with the Pahlavas or Parthians who were the ruling groups in India hailing from that direction in the first century B.C. as well as first century A.D. Hence, they may be called Śaka-Pahlava or Scytho-Parthians. The activities of the different groups of Śakas and Śaka-Pahlavas in the subcontinent can be enumerated on the basis of numismatic, epigraphic and literary sources. The names of the Śaka-Pahlava and Scytho-Parthian rulers are furnished mainly by their coins, several varieties of which can be attributed to different areas on the basis of their types and major findspots. Such attributions help us in determining the limits of the domains of different rulers. There was an increase of alloy in the metallic currency of North-Western India during the period between c.50 B.C. and 50 A.D. This has been

¹ *The Parthian Stations by Isidore of Charax*, edited by W.H. Schoff, Philadelphia, 1914, p.17.

attributed to the absence of a strong monarch or political authority in a commercially important zone like North-Western India. This factor probably tempted private moneyers to mint coins.¹ In the Scytho-Parthian period, the tendency to replace good money by sub-standard coinage became so popular and powerful that an important ruler like Azes II could not check it. However, in the Kushāṇa period, coinage became reformed.

Against the above noted background of the advent of the Śakas in India and its borderlands, the activities of different groups of Śakas and Śaka-Pahlavas in the subcontinent have been studied .

The earliest Śaka kingdom was established by (c. 158 B.C.) in a region of the extreme north-western section of the Indian subcontinent, which included Darel and Swat on the Indus and also Gilgit and the Chilas area. The area was then known as a part of Chi-pin. It is not certain whether the Kashmir valley was a part of the Śaka kingdom. We also do not know the name of the earliest Śaka king in India. However, there is an indication that the Śaka power spread southwards via the Hazara region. A Kharoshṭī inscription on a rock near

¹B.N. Mukherjee, 'The Usefulness of Modern Economic Theories for The Study of Economic History of Ancient India-An Illustration', *J.A.S.*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1967, p.15.

Shahdaur in the Hazara country refers to a king called Damijada (or Namijada) as a Śaka. Obviously the king had the Hazara area under his sway.¹ Regarding the extension of Śaka inroads into India it may be noted that they must have been aware of the existing trade routes penetrating the Indian subcontinent. For example, the Audambaras and the Indo-Greeks had busy trade relations based on favourable commercial routes joining Kashmir with the Gangetic valley.²

The extension of the Śaka rule to the Shah Dheri (ancient Taxila) area is suggested by an inscription found in that locality. It records a pious act at or near Takhaśilā by Patika, the son of Liaka Kusuluka, a scion of the Kshaharāta (family) and the *Kshatrapa* of Chukhsa,³ in the year 78 and during the reign of the Great King, the Great Moga. The name indicates a Scythian affiliation.

It appears that the territory of Chukhsa or the Sind Sagar Doab between the Indus and Jhelum (including Taxila or Shah Dheri near Rawalpindi) was ruled by a governor named Moga in the year 78. The year can be attributed to the so-called old Śaka Era of 170 B.C. Thus, by c.92 B.C. Moga, probably of a

¹ *The Parthian Stations by Isidore of Charax*, edited by W.H.Schoff, Philadelphia, 1914, p. 207.

² Osmund Bopearachchi, Wilfried Pieper, 'Ancient Indian Coins', *Indicopleustoi: Archaeologies of the Indian Ocean*, II, Turnhout, 1998, p.47.

³ *Cor.Ins.Ind.*, Vol. II, Pt.I, pp. 23f.

group of Śakas, occupied a part of the Punjab (now in Pakistan). Moga has been universally identified with Moa and Maues of legends on several varieties of coins.¹ Maues probably conquered Gandhāra to the west of the Indus from the Indo-Greek ruler, Artemidorus. From the group of Maues, if not from the Greeks themselves, the hegemony over Arachosia passed to the Imperial Parthians. With the end of the hegemony of the group of Maues towards the close of the first quarter of the first century B.C. ended the first phase of the Śaka or Śaka-Pahlava rule in India. In Sind Sagar Doab and Gandhāra, the Indo-Greek rule was re-established. The Indo-Greeks to the east of the Jhelum, which had not been disturbed by Maues, continued to rule in that zone.

In about the second quarter of the first century B.C. Arachosia passed into the hands of another group of rulers.² Their coins have been discovered mainly within the limits of its territory. On the basis of the inscriptions on the coins of the group of rulers concerned, they can be divided into several classes. The first class bears the names of Vonones and Spalahora. The second class bears the names of Vonones and Spalagadama. The third class of coins mentions the name of Spalyris and Spalagadama. The fourth class of silver coins refers to Spalirises and Spalirisa. The fifth group of copper coins

¹ *C.H.L.*, Vol. I, p.570.

² *C.C.G.S.K.*, pp., 98-100.

mentions Spalirises and Spalirisa.¹ Thus Indo-Parthian coins show the rule of Parthian or Scytho-Parthians like Vonones and Spalirises in Arachosia (Kandahar area in South-east Afghanistan). Together with the above classes of coins we should consider another group of coins² bearing the name of Azes on the obverse and on the reverse Azilises. Another group has these names in the reverse order. These groups of coins ultimately prove the existence of Azes I, Azilises and Azes II. Azes I, who probably began to rule in c. 58 B.C. hailed from Arachosia. He conquered Gandhāra³ and the Sind Sagar Doab including Taxila.⁴ Azilises, his co-ruler and successor controlled an area to the west of the Indus. On the east, he probably extended his rule up to Mathurā.

The coins of the Scytho-Parthian ruler Vonones and his associates carries the device of Herakles on the reverse of their coins (naked, beardless Herakles with a lion skin over his left raised club in the half raised left hand and right hand crowning his head with a wreath). These coins are found mainly in the regions of Kandahar, Ghazni (both included in ancient Arachosia).⁵ Hence the Vonones type may be referred to that territory. Some coins of Vonones are found in Seistan, Kabul, Taxila and different places of the Punjab

¹ *Pun. Mus. Cat.*, Vol. I, p.143 and Pl. XIV, No. 397.

² *Cat. Co. Ind. Mus.*, Vol. I, pp. 43f.

³ *Jour. Num. Soc. Ind.*, 1955, Vol. XVII, pt. II, pp. 5-8.

⁴ *Taxila*, Vol. II, p. 781; cf. also *P.M.C.*, Vol. I, p. 130.

⁵ *Num. Chr.*, 1890, pp. 106-107 and 109; cf. also *C.I.I.*, Vol. II, pt. I, p. XL.

area of Pakistan. Thus, the provenances of coins locate the kingdom of the group concerned only in Arachosia and its vicinity. This inference is corroborated by the fact that not a single coin of Spalirises, who is to be associated with the Vonones group, has been discovered at Taxila. Only three coins of Spalirises and two of Spaliris, another member of that group were found at Begram . The number is too small to indicate the rule of the Vonones group in the Begram area. One Azes was associated with Spalirises,¹ but his direct relation with Vonones is not known and this Azes may not be taken as one of Vonones' associates.

The names of the rulers of the group of Vonones as found from Indo-Parthian coins betray Scythic as well as Parthian affiliations. Therefore, it should have its origin in the Śaka-Pahlava or Scytho-Parthian area of Śakastanā. Spalirises served as an associate of Vonones before becoming the sole ruler of Arachosia. Later he had to accept Azes I as his co-ruler. The coins of Azes I struck independently with the devices (seated Herakles, etc.) used earlier by the group of Vonones in Arachosia can be attributed to that region. There are clear numismatic evidence that Azes I extended his authority to the north-western section of the Indian subcontinent. The "Citygoddess of

¹ *Num.Chr.*, 1890, pp.107 and 139.

Pushkalavati : bull¹ type coins¹ of Azes I indicate his presence in the area of Pushkalavati (Charsada in the Peshawar district). Azes I had for sometime a co-ruler in Azilises. On the basis of coins it appears that Azilises extended the Scytho-Parthian power to Mathurā. Azilises was succeeded by Azes II. No coin-type of Azes II can be found at Arachosia. On the other hand, the *Stathmoi Parthikoi* of Isidore of Charax, compiled on the basis of information collected up to c. first B.C., includes Śakastāna and Arachosia within the Parthian empire. The *Stathmoi Parthikoi* of Isidore of Charax (in the closing decades of the first century B.C.) states that “beyond (Zarangiana) is Sakastana of the Skythian (or Scythian) Sakai (or Sacae), which is also Paraitakene, 63 schoeni. There are the city of Banda and the city of Min and the city of Palacenti and the city of Segal; in that place is the royal residence of the Sakai (or Sacae)... As far as this place, the land is under the rule of the Parthians.”²

Thus from the testimony of Isidore, we come to know that by the last quarter of the 1st century B.C. Śakastāna or Seistan and Arachosia including the Kandahar area were within the Parthian empire.³ This inference is in a way

¹ C.C.G.S.K., Pl. XXIX, No. 15; cf. also *Pun.Mus.Cat.*, Vol. I, Pl. XII, No. 308.

² *Stat.Par.*, Sec. 19.

³ *Loc.Cit.*

supported by a section of chapter 96A of the *Ch'ien Han-shu*.¹ So Arachosia was lost by the group of Azes I either towards the close of the reign of Azilises or rather in the beginning of the rule of Azes II. There is no indication of the reign of Azes II in the Mathurā area. Mathurā region was under the *Mahākshtrapa* Rajula (Rājuvula).² Soḍāsa succeeded him. Since Soḍāsa, the son of Rājuvula was a *Mahākshatrapa* in the year 72 (13-14 A.D.), as indicated by the Āmohini votive tablet inscription, Rājuvula might have conquered the territory of the Strato family either in the last quarter of the first century B.C. or in the first decade of first century A.D. It appears that in the first quarter of the first century A.D. the satraps of Mathurā ruled without acknowledging supremacy of the Azes group. Ultimately, the Śaka/Pahlava satrapal dynasty of Mathurā seems to have been overthrown by Kaṇishka.

Finally, the Śaka migration from the west was effected by the Gondophares group. The Takht-i-Bahi inscription³ found near Mardan (Peshawar district) and evidence from numismatic data suggest that the group of Gondophares more or less captured the kingdom of the Azes group. The group of Gondophares might well have come to the north-west in the wake of

¹ *C.H.S.*, ch. 96A; cf. also *J.A.L.*, 1881, Vol. X, p.23.

² *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p.199.

³ *Cor.Ins.Ind.*, Vol.II, pt. I, p.62.

the Parthian invasion. Its presence in Arachosia and Śakastāna, the two regions of the Parthian empire, are attested to by numismatic evidences. On some copper coins of Gondophares, we find the name of one Orthagnes.¹ It appears that Orthagnes commenced his rule in Seistan swearing allegiance to the imperial Parthian throne some time before the rule of Gondophares, the first year of which corresponds to 20/21 A.D. The coins of Gondophares, based typologically on the issues of Orthagnes in Sakastana and Arachosia, allude to his rule in these areas. Gondophares also ruled over the lower Indus country.² His family probably extended its authority upto the Mathurā area.³

Syrastrène or Saurashtra is mentioned by Ptolemy as a province of Indo-Scythia and is described as the region about the mouths of the Indus and the Gulf of Kanthi or Gulf of Kutch.⁴ In the second or the third quarter of the 2nd century A.D., Ptolemy enumerated Patalene, Syrastrène, and Aberia or Sabeiria as the provinces of Indo-Scythia.⁵ As a tract is not likely to be called after a people until some time after their first settlement in it, Ptolemy's evidence should indicate that the Scythian colonization of these provinces probably

¹ *Pun. Mus. Cat.*, Vol. I, pp.155-156.

² *Ibid.*, p.156.

³ J. Allan, *A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum, Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, p. CXV.

⁴ *Geog. Hup.*, VII. I, pp.55-61.

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

started long before the date of his *Geographike Huphegesis* i.e. the second or third quarter of the second century A.D. Thus the advent of the Śakas in the territory concerned might have taken place even before the dawn of the Christian Era.¹ There is no evidence of a Śaka migration to the lower Indus area in the period of the Achaemenids of Persia. So the Arsacid dynasty or the Imperial Parthians of the East, which ruled from c. 250 B.C. to c. A.D. 227 or A.D. 228/29, after ousting the Greek successors of the Achaemenids and Alexander, witnessed the first Śaka activities in the lower Indus country. Ptolemy's provinces of Indo-Scythia coincides with two of the three territories indicated in the Jaina *Kālakāchārya-kathānaka* which were colonized by the Sagas² or Śakas by the first century B.C. before the latter settled in Saurashtra. Also the *Periplous Tes Erythras Thalasses* (or the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*), a text probably of the first century A.D. locates Scythia in the lower Indus area.³

Thus, the testimonies of the *Kālakāchārya-kathānaka* and *Geographike Huphegesis* not only indicate the presence of a Śaka colony on the lower Indus including Patalene probably under the rule of the Imperial Parthians but also the activities of the Śakas or Scythians in Saurashtra.

¹ E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography* [2nd edition], Vol. II, p.548.

² N. Brown, *The Story of Kālaka*, Washington, 1933, p.40.

³ *Periplus*, Section 38, translated by W. H. Schoff, New York, 1912.

That Parthian rule continued in the Sindhu valley as late as the eighth decade of the first century A.D. is evidenced by the *Periplus* which says, "Before it (Barbaricum on the principal mouth of the Sindhu) there lies a small island and inland behind it is the metropolis of Scythia, Min-Nagara; it is subject to Parthian princes who are constantly driving each other out."¹

The Scythian satrapal dynasty of Mathurā seems to have been overthrown by Kaṇishka. The Kushāṇas did not totally uproot the numerous Śaka principalities under subordinate chiefs. In the Rajasthan area, several tribal states appear to have submitted to the Śaka-Scythians. In western Uttar Pradesh and adjoining region of Punjab, the Śakas dominated till the time of the early kings of the Gupta dynasty, but this Śaka domination has not yet been detected in the archaeological strata. The Śakas under Chasṭana and Rudradāman ruled over parts of western Maharashtra. Their successors were finally defeated by Chandragupta II and the Śaka dominions were annexed to the Gupta empire.

¹ *Ibid.*, Section 38.