

Sarazm in Contemporary Scholarship. An Exceptional Long Distance Attractivness in Late IVth Mid III mill. B.C.

H.-P. Francfort

▶ **To cite this version:**

H.-P. Francfort. Sarazm in Contemporary Scholarship. An Exceptional Long Distance Attractivness in Late IVth Mid III mill. B.C.. . . ; . . . Sarazm 5500, ; , pp.5-24, 2020. halshs-03060027

HAL Id: halshs-03060027
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03060027

Submitted on 14 Jan 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ба ифтихори 5500-солагии Саразми бостонӣ

Dedicated to the 5500 annivesary of the ancient Sarazm

Посвящается празднованию 5500-летия древнего Саразма



АКАДЕМИЯИ МИЛЛИИ ИЛМҲОИ ТОҶИКИСТОН

ИНСТИТУТИ ТАЪРИХ, БОСТОНШИНОСӢ ВА МАРДУМШИНОСИИ БА НОМИ АҲМАДИ ДОНИШ

ОСОРХОНАИ МИЛЛИИ БОСТОНИИ ТОҶИКИСТОН

САРАЗМ

Маҷмуаи мақолаҳои конференсияи илмӣ-амалии «Нақши Саразм дар ташаккулёбии тамаддуни Осиёи Марказӣ» ба ифтихори 5500-солагии Саразм. Душанбе, 12-13 майи соли 2020.

Сборник статей научно-практической конференции «Роль Саразма в формировании цивилизации Центральной Азии», посвященной 5500-летию Саразма. Душанбе, 12-13 мая 2020 г.

Бароришии III

Выпуск III

Душанбе – 2020

Ҳайати таҳририя:

Раҳимӣ Ф.Қ., Муҳаммад А.Н., Убайдулло Н.К., Ёқубов Ю.Я., Пирумшоев Ҳ.П., Бобомуллоев С.Ғ., Додхудоева Л.Н., Абдурашитов Ф.М., Сайфуллоев Н.Н., Каримова Г.Р., Раззоқов А.Р., Қурбонов Ш.Ф., Худоёрова Н.М., Франкфорт А-П.

Зери назари:

д.и.т., Убайдулло Н.К.

Муҳаррирон:

д.и.т. Бобомуллоев С.Ғ., д.и.т. Қобилова Б.Т.

Редакционная коллегия:

Рахими Ф.К., Мухаммад А.Н., Убайдулло Н.К., Якубов Ю.Я., Пирумшоев Х.П., Бобомуллоев С.Г., Додхудоева Л.Н., Абдурашитов Ф.М., Сайфуллоев Н.Н., Каримова Г.Р., Раззоков А.Р., Курбонов Ш.Ф., Худоёрова Н.М., Франкфорт А-П.

Под общим руководством:

д.и.н., Убайдулло Н.К.

Ответственные редакторы:

д.и.н. Бобомуллоев С.Г., д.и.н. Кобилова Б.Т.

© Осорхонаи милли бостонии Тоҷикистон
© Национальный музей древностей Таджикистана

SARAZM IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP. AN EXCEPTIONAL LONG DISTANCE ATTRACTIVNESS IN LATE IVth mid III mill. B.C.

Henri-Paul Francfort

CNRS/ Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris, France

In the paper some aspects of the incredible attractiveness of Sarazm in the Protohistoric Period are analyzed. Explanation on extremely broad network of communications of Sarazmians based on the most exceptional artefacts found from Sarazm is given. The author argue that Sarazm appears as an example of a "formative" phase for the Oxus Civilization, the Bronze Age of Central Asia. In this relation a key role played localization of Sarazm between Steppe World and proto-urban Centers of the Old World. In the new theory proposed by the author, Sarazm appears as a sort of focal point, a node in networks, a "crucible" in which different ingredients were mixed and melted to produce Civilization.

Keywords: Sarazm, Bronze Age, civilization, proto-urban, inter-cultural relation, Old World.

САРАЗМ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ НАУЧНОМ СООБЩЕСТВЕ. ИСКЛЮЧИТЕЛЬНАЯ ДАЛЬНО-ДИСТАНЦИОННАЯ ПРИВЛЕКАТЕЛЬНОСТЬ В КОНЦЕ IV СЕРЕДИНЕ III ТЫС. ДО Н.Э.

Анри-Поль Франкфорт

Националный центр научных исследованый/ Акадамия надписей и изящной-письменности, Париж, Франция

В статье анализируются некоторые аспекты невероятной привлекательности Саразма в доисторический период. Дается объяснение чрезвычайно широкой сети коммуникаций саразмийцев, основанной на самых исключительных артефактах, обнаруженных в Саразме. Автор утверждает, что Саразм выступает в качестве примера «формирующей» фазы для цивилизации Оксус, бронзового века Центральной Азии. В этом отношении, локализация Саразма между степным миром и протогородскими центрами Старого Света сыграла ключевую роль. В предлагаемой автором новой теории, Саразм выступает как своего рода фокус, узел в сетях, «колыбель», в котором различные ингредиенты были смешаны и расплавлены для создания Цивилизации.

Ключевые слова: Саразм, Бронзовый Век, цивилизация, прото-урбанизация, межкультурные отношения, Древный Мир.

I would like to thank the A. Donish Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan for its kind invitation to take part in the international scientific-practical conference on "The role of Sarazm in the Formation of Civilization in Central Asia".

The Tajik-French cooperation in Sarazm was launched during the First Soviet-French symposium on "Arkheologija Drevnejshej Baktrii" organized in Dushanbe from October 27 to November 3, 1982 by the Academy of Sciences of USSR, the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR Institute of History Akhmad Donish and the National Centre for Scientific Research of France. On the Tajik side, Prof. N.N. Negmatov and Prof. V.A. Ranov were the organizers; Prof. J.-C. Gardin conducted the French Delegation.[1] The fieldwork began in 1984 under the leadership of Prof. A.I. Isakov and Dr R. Besenval. During the following years, many participants took part to the research and published important results.[2] Another symposium was organized in Paris in 1985, and one more in Alma-Ata in 1987.[3] After ten years of cooperation and fieldwork at Sarazm, a

[1] All references here give the French editions, but of course, a number of papers were published in Tajikistan, either jointly or by Tajik participants. For bibliographical references, the same is true concerning the translations in various languages.
Gardin, J.-C., (sous la direction de), 1985, L'archéologie de la Bactriane ancienne. Actes du colloque franco-soviétique, Paris, CNRS.

[2] Besenval, R., 1987, "Découvertes récentes à Sarazm (R.S.S. du Tadjikistan) : attestation des relations au III^e millénaire entre l'Asie centrale, l'Iran du Nord-Est et le Baluchistan", CRAI, 131 (N. 2. avril-juin), p. 441-456; Besenval, Roland, 2001, "Brève notice sur la coopération archéologique franco-tadjike", Cahiers d'Asie centrale, (9), p. 277-283 ; Besenval, R., et Isakov, A.I., 1989, "Sarazm et les débuts du peuplement agricole dans la région de Samarkand", Arts Asiatiques, XLIV, p. 5-20 ; Lyonnet, B., 1996, Sarazm (Tadjikistan) céramiques (Chalcolithique et Bronze ancien), Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale, vol. VII, Paris, de Boccard ; Isakov, A.I., et Lyonnet, B., 1988, "Céramique de Sarazm (Tadjikistan, URSS) : Problèmes d'échanges et de peuplement à la fin du Chalcolithique et au début de l'Age du Bronze", Paléorient, 14 (1), p. 31-47.

[3] Gardin, J.-C., (ed.), 1988, L'Asie centrale et ses rapports avec les civilisations orientales des origines à l'Âge du Fer. Actes du colloque franco-soviétique organisé par le C.N.R.S. et l'Académie des Sciences de l'U.R.S.S. avec la collaboration de la D.G.R.E., (Mémoires de la

symposium was organized in 1994 in Penjikent and Sarazm by Prof. R. Masov and A. Isakov, the French delegation was conducted by H.-P. Francfort. The difficult situation of the following years allowed nevertheless the participants to perform field work and research, directed by A. Isakov, A. Razzokov and R. Besenval, to publish joint articles in Tajik, French and international journals, to edit some books. Unfortunately, the important communications of the 1994 symposium remained unpublished, until this year. We are especially glad to see this long expected volume finally appearing this year in Tajikistan thanks to the efforts of both sides (A. Razzokov, G. Karimova, F. Brunet, H.-P. Francfort). Since 2009, a new start began for Tajik-French cooperation in Sarazm. This unique site is now, since 2010, on the UNESCO list of world heritage monuments, a position it deserves certainly. Fieldwork and cooperation continue, and a number of important joint articles have been published.[1]

My purpose in this communication is to highlight some aspects of the incredible attractiveness of Sarazm in the Protohistoric or Eneolithic Period.

First, I shall enumerate some of the most **exceptional finds** indicating the extremely broad network of communications of Sarazm and brings up original questions for understanding it. Asian steppe areas, Iran, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, India/Baluchistan enter into the picture.

Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale, vol. I), Paris, De Boccard ; Francfort, H.-P., (sous la direction de), 1990, Nomades et sédentaires en Asie centrale. Apports de l'archéologie et de l'ethnologie. Actes du colloque franco-soviétique d'Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Paris, CNRS.

[1] Mutin, B., et Razzokov, A., 2014, "Contacts across the Hindu Kush in the Bronze Age. Additional Insights from Sarazm - Soundings 11-11A (Tajikistan)", Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan, 46, p. 123-147; Mutin, B., Razzokov, A., Besenval, R., et Francfort, H.-P., 2017, “Resuming Tajik-French Fieldwork at Sarazm, Tajikistan. Preliminary Activity Report on the 2011-2012 Field-Seasons”, in: South Asian Archaeology and Art 2012. Volume 1. Man and Environment in Prehistoric and Protohistoric South Asia: New Perspectives, V. Lefèvre, A. Didier, et B. Mutin (Dir.), Turnhout, Brepols, p. 197-210.

Second, we explain the old **center/peripheries** model**, and migrations theories**. Sarazm marginality in traditional Soviet and Western scholarship was "explained" by "trade" and power, all coming from the West, from the Near East.

Third, we expose the "**plate tectonics",** and **neo-evolutionary** theories proposed for Sarazm and in general, searching for political-cultural entities (**"empires")**. Land occupation, roads, borders, frontiers: the Mesopotamian and Indus Civilization were the models. Sarazm appears as an example of a "formative" phase for the Oxus Civilization, the Bronze Age of Central Asia.

Third, we suggest a **contemporary theory**, with less hypothetical socio-cultural concepts, but relying on data that are more material. We observe long roads to reach small valuable places, placers, and a juxtaposition, cohabitation and coexistence of cultures?

In Conclusion we ask who were the "autochthonous" or "original" inhabitants of Sarazm? Material cultures, genetics, linguistics answer differently to different types of questions. Was Sarazm ruling an empire, a "primus inter pares" or a crucible of civilization?

1. The most **exceptional finds** indicating the extremely broad network of communications of Sarazm and the problems for understanding it. Steppe world, Iran, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, India/Pakistan/Baluchistan.[1]

Geographically, Sarazm is located in the Zeravshan valley, an important valley, however not situated in large fertile alluvial plains, as are the Mesopotamian or Indus valley plains, and not connected to any sea or ocean. Nevertheless, there was space for agriculture, for irrigated agriculture, as demonstrated by the discovery of a sophisticated irrigation canal along the terrace on which the site was

[1] Isakov, A.I., 1991, Sarazm, Dushambe, Donish; 1996, "Sarazm: An Agricultural Center of Ancient Sogdiana", B. A. I., 8 (1994), p. 1-12; Besenval, R., et Isakov, A.I., 1989, "Sarazm et les débuts du peuplement agricole dans la région de Samarkand", Arts Asiatiques, XLIV, p. 5-20.

constructed. The 4th-3rd millennium network of relations of Sarazm is exceptionally broad and extended. Let us give some selected examples.[1]

The steppe world is represented mainly by the stone circle around a prestigious collective burial, the "princess' tomb". Three more skeletons were found in this remarkable sepulchral organization. The "princess' tomb" exhibits the sort of gold, lapis-lazuli, paste and shell deposits that are expected in elite burials during the Eneolithic period all over the Inner Asian territory. However, the large stone circle around the tombs looks specifically very similar to the Afanasevo stone circles very well-known and widespread in Siberia and Kazakhstan. The Afanasevo culture is typical of the Eneolithic of the steppe area in Asia and Altai, but it appears also not far from Sarazm on the riverbank of Zeravshan, at the site of Zhukov. There, a small site, perhaps a sanctuary, was excavated, and the pottery discovered belong to the remote Afanasevo as well as to the Yamnaya cultures. An explanation has to be given for the presence such "exotic" artefacts and material, so far away from their regular places in the Eurasian steppes (see more explanations below).

On the other hand, potteries from the Kara-Kum *Kel'teminar culture* look less "exotic" in Sarazm, as seem some flint blades.[2]

Coming from more distant countries in the West, sherds typical of *the Kopet Dagh* regions pottery assemblages appear in the Sarazm material, including Namazga II and III (or Geoksjur) painted potteries.[3] The question of the manufacture place of theses ceramics is important. Whether they were manufactured in the Kopet Dagh area and imported, or if they were

[1] Razzokov, A.R., Karimova, G.R., Kurbonov, Sh. F., et Bobomullaev, S.G., 2006, Sarazm 5500, Dushambe, ECHOD (below Sarazm 5500) publishes the main items.
[2] Sarazm 5500, fig. 47, 58, 55.
[3] Sarazm 5500, fig. 66-69; 75; 136-138 ; table p. 35.

manufactured in Sarazm by immigrants, or are local imitations, the result is the same: there were close relations between the two regions.

Relation with *North East Iran* and the Gorgan culture (Hissar II and III) is demonstrated by the presence in Sarazm of grey/black burnished potteries, typical of the Gorgan Eneolitic and Bronze Age.[1] Moreover, a typical Proto Elamite cylinder seal depicting a bull displays links with the Iranian Plateau at a special period, the time of the "Proto Elamite expansion".[2] This "Proto Elamite expansion" seems to be an extension towards Baluchistan (Miri Kalat) and Central Asia 'Shahr-i Sokhta, etc. of the big phenomenon called the "Uruk expansion", from Mesopotamia. It is traced up to Central Asia with the help of some typical artefacts: "beveled rim bowls", Proto Elamite written tablets, cylinder seals.[3]

Farther West, *Mesopotamia* appears at Sarazm with disc shaped bead of Near Eastern type, but above all one single but remarkable artefact: one gold rosette with a turquoise core. Such jewel has very close parallels in the ornaments of the Royal Tombs of Ur in Mesopotamia, around the middle of the third millennium BC. Similar gold rosettes are also found in Margiana, at Gonur Depe, in the "Royal Tombs".[4]

---

[1] Sarazm 5500, table, p. 37, fig. 64.

[2] Sarazm 5500, fig. 147.

[3] Besenval, R., 1997, "Entre le Sud-Est iranien et la plaine de l'Indus: le Kech-Makran. Recherches archéologiques sur le peuplement ancien d'une marche des confins indo-iraniens", Arts Asiatiques, 52, p. 5-36 ; Mutin, B., 2013, The Proto-Elamite Settlement and Its Neighbours. Tepe Yahya Period IVC, American School of Prehistoric Research (ASPR) Monograph Series, , Oxford, UK and Oakville, CT, USA, Harvard University and Oxbow Books; Mutin, Benjamin, Lamberg-Karlovsky, C. C., Minc, Leah, 2016, "Investigating ceramic production during the Proto-Elamite period at Tepe Yahya, southeastern Iran: Results of instrumental neutron activation analysis of periods IVC and IVB ceramics", Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, p. 849-862.

[4] Sarazm 5500, fig. 141; 143; Zettler, R.L., Horne, L., (ed.), 1998, Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; Tengberg, M., Potts, D.T., et Francfort, H.-P., 2008, "The golden leaves of Ur", Antiquity, 82, p. 925-936.

However, strong relations seem also clear with the regions South of the Hindu Kuch, *Afghanistan and Pakistan (Indus-Baluchistan)*.

First, a close study of some potteries at Sarazm strongly suggests links with the pottery assemblage of Mundigak, near Kandahar in Afghanistan, South of the Hindu Kuch.[1] In between, as if on the road, some potteries from Taluqan seem to provide some sort of station in between.[2] Other painted potteries of Sarazm can definitely be related not only to Mundigak, but also with more sites in Southern Baluchistan.[3] Handle stones or weights of Sarazm find nice comparisons in a broad area South of Hindu Kuch, including Bactria and the NWFP (Sheri Khan Tarakai).[4] On its side, the Indus or Harappan Civilization appear at Sarazm too, it seems.[5]

Another striking link with Baluchistan, with the Makran coast, with the Indian Ocean appear with shell bangles. Manufactured with *Xancus pyrum* shell, the "Sarazm princess" bangles provide a beautiful link with Southern remote areas.[6]

In some buildings of Sarazm, made of mud bricks, architectural features are very similar to, for instance, to constructions. Buttresses in wall, but also fireplaces ("altars"), circular or rectangular, have their parallels at Mundigak.[7]

---

[1] Sarazm 5500, table, p. 34; Mutin, B., Razzokov, A., 2014, "Contacts across the Hindu Kush in the Bronze Age. Additional Insights from Sarazm - Soundings 11-11A (Tajikistan)", Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan, 46, p. 123-147.

[2] Lyonnet, B., 1981, "Etablissements chalcolithiques dans le Nord-Est de l'Afghanistan : leurs rapports avec les civilisations du bassin de l'Indus", Paléorient, 7 (2), p. 57-74.

[3] Sarazm 5500, table, p. 36 ; fig. 62-63 ; Didier, Aurore, et Mutin, Benjamin, 2013, "La production céramique protohistorique du Makran pakistanais dans la compréhension des relations indo-iraniennes", Cahiers d'Asie centrale, (21/22), p. 461-486 ; and in press.

[4] Sarazm 5500, fig. 42-45; Petrie, C.A., 2013, " Sheri Khan Tarakai", in: History of Ancient India II: Protohistoric Foundations, D.K. Chakrabarti et M. Lal (Dir.), Delhi, Vivekananda International Foundation and Aryan Books International, p. 852-859.

[5] Sarazm 5500, table, p. 33.

[6] Sarazm 5500, fig. 90.

[7] Sarazm 5500, fig. 33-35.

In general, all the above listed links delineate the sketch of a very broad network of "interregional" relations.[1] The late Gregory Possehl (University of Pennsylvania) has called it the "Middle Asian Interaction Sphere" or "MAIS",[2] but here we insist that it encompass also a strong "steppe" component in the NE regions of Eurasia, and not only the "sown" regions, the agricultural regions where the Proto Urban civilization of the Middle East developed. In this respect also, Sarazm is unique. Sarazm appears as a major site of the "formative period" of the Bronze Age Civilization of Central Asia, centered in the Oxus basin, which is the "Oxus Civilization" (or BMAC).[3] The Oxus Civilization is contemporary to the Indus Civilization, not later. This Oxus Civilization flourished between ca. 2500/2400 and 1750 BC, and we can define its formative or early phase with the help of sites in Central Asia, South Afghanistan and Indus, such as Altyn-Depe, Geoksjur, Mundigak, Shahr-i Sokhta, Taluqan, Miri Qalat, Rahman Dheri, Sarai Khola, Sheri Khan Taraqai, and others. Of course, our knowledge is fragmentary due to the small number of sites especially North of Hindu Kuch and to the relative rarity of material.

How can we try to understand such a phenomenon? Why Sarazm?

---

[1] Isakov, A.I., Lyonnet, B., 1988, "Céramique de Sarazm (Tadjikistan, URSS) : Problèmes d'échanges et de peuplement à la fin du Chalcolithique et au début de l'Age du Bronze", Paléorient, 14 (1), p. 31-47 ; Lyonnet, B., 1996, Sarazm (Tadjikistan) céramiques (Chalcolithique et Bronze ancien), Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale, vol. VII, Paris, de Boccard.

[2] Lawler, A., 2007, "Middle Asia Takes Center Stage", Science, 317 (August), p. 586-590.

[3] Francfort, H.-P., 2005, "La civilisation de l'Oxus et les Indo-Iraniens et Indo-Aryens", in: Aryas, Aryens et Iraniens en Asie Centrale, (Collège de France. Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, vol. 72), G. Fussman, J. Kellens, H.-P. Francfort, et X. Tremblay (ed.), Paris, Diffusion de Boccard, p. 253-328 (Russian version in : Mustafayev, S., et Francfort, H.-P., (sous la direction de), 2014, Arkheologija i istorija central'noj Azii v trudakh francuzskikh uchenykh. 2 vols, Samarcande, IICAS).

2. The **center/peripheries,** and **migrations theories**. Sarazm supposed "marginality" in traditional Soviet and Western scholarship: migrations, "trade" and power, all comes from the West from agriculture to crafts.

Years ago, when Sarazm was discovered, the picture of the Eneolithic and Bronze Age in Central Asia was quite simple, or at least seemed clear and simple. On the basis of cultural migrations from the West, from the Near East, the Neolithic, Eneolithic and Bronze Age developed. It began with the Djeitun Neolithic, starting agriculture under the influence of migrants from the Near East. The excavations at Namazga Depe (after Anau and with other sites of later periods) provided the temporal sequence from Eneolithic to the final Bronze Age (Namazga I to Namazga VI). Each change in the archaeological assemblages, roughly, was considered as a change in culture and population. This sequence has its advantages and it is still quite robust for the Kopet Dagh piedmont.[1] However, when we turn towards the Eastern countries, up to Tajikistan, this Namazga sequence induced a temporal sequence for the supposed expansion of Civilization from West to East. The Kopet Dagh piedmont comes first and later "tribes migrate" to the East, in lands where supposed backward populations remained in Neolithic stage of development. They were supposed to move slowly, thus the presence of Bronze Age in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan "necessarily", "logically", was attributed to Late phase of the Namazga sequence, i. e. Namazga VI. Incidentally, more "explanations" were searched in the expansion of long distance trade and exchanges. However, this scenario proved to be wrong. Why and how?

[1] Masson, V.M., Sarianidi, V.I., 1972, Central Asia. Turkmenia before the Achaemenids, Ancient Peoples and Places, Londres, Thames and Hudson; Kohl, Ph. L., 1984, Central Asia. Palaeolithic Beginnings to the Iron Age, Paris, E. R. C.

This theory was ruined after the discovery of Shortughaï (Afghanistan). The study of this site demonstrated 1) that since about 2500-2400 Eastern Bactria was peopled, developed and actively participating to the long distance networks of exchanges. 2) Consequently, the Bactrian Oxus Civilization (BMAC in old terminology) was not the result of migrations at the end of Namazga V, but developed independently of the Kopet Dagh piedmont, on high standards and in direct relations with NW India, Iran and the Near East.[1] We cannot enter here in more details.

Secondly, the discovery and the chronology of Sarazm, in Eneolithic period, ruined also the old "Kopet Dagh migration" theory. Sarazm was originally explained by a sort addendum to this migration theory, as a local partial migration occurring in the Namazga III/Geoksjur period. This was proposed by highlighting only and unilaterally the Kopet Dagh relations, but leaving aside all the Steppe, Iran, Near East and Baluchistan/Indus relations of Sarazm, and ignoring the strong Mundigak links, that all demonstrate that the "tribes' migration theory" cannot be valid. The relations of Sarazm with not only the Kopet Dagh regions but also with the Southern, South-Western and South-Eastern regions makes the picture more complex and more interesting.

These old migration of tribes theories were also relying upon a supposed center/periphery model, i. e. a big Civilization Centre in the Near East, and a secondary Civilization Centre in the Kopet Dagh piedmont. Supplementary interpretive histories were added by 1) using the "Indo-Aryan migration" hypothesis, from Iran to Central Asia and India; and 2) constructing hypotheses on "long distance trade" mechanics by which the big centers were exploiting the

[1] Francfort, H.-P. avec des contributions de, Boisset, Ch., Buchet, L., Desse, J., Echallier, J.-C., Kermorvant, A., et Willcox, G., 1989, Fouilles de Shortughaï : recherches sur l'Asie centrale protohistorique, Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie centrale, vol. 2, Paris, Diffusion de Boccard.

peripheries and their raw material resources, a list of which was provided (chlorite, lapis-lazuli and tin in first rank).[1] The Protohistoric big centers were seen as imperial powers, the models being found in the 19-20th centuries imperialisms. Visually, the "migrations and/or trade" theories produced large maps on which big arrows appear; in spite of all their utility we must admit that they were largely fragile, imaginary, resting upon very poor material bases and too simple models. In any case, in such theories, Sarazm is always a sort of exploited periphery, very passive. Let us add here that the "Indo-Aryan migration" questions and theories have completely changed presently with the ancient DNA analyses, and that it appears much more complicated that taught 30 years ago. We must also add that the "long distance traffic", (not "trade" *stricto sensu*), is an idea that stands and has not to be discarded, but that the social and historical "causal explanations" of this times don't hold the road: exploitation and/or trade as prime movers and expressions of imperialisms are not as simplistic as they were expressed 30 years ago.

3. The "**plate tectonics",** and **neo-evolutionary theories** for political-cultural entities. Land occupation, roads, borders, frontiers: **"empires"** and the Mesopotamian and Indus Civilization model. Sarazm as an example of a "formative" phase for the Oxus Civilization.

This second group of theories is simply modifications and extensions of the previous ones. Instead of arrows on large maps, they tried to delineate empires or Proto States, and territories. Simultaneously, they were generated in a time where it was important to take into account not only the Near East Centre and

[1] Muhly, J.D., 1973, "Copper and Tin. The Distribution of Mineral Resources and the Nature of the Metals Trade in the Bronze Age", Transactions of The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, New Haven, 43, p. 155-535; Kohl, Ph. L., 1978, "The balance of Trade in Southwestern Asia in the Mid-Third Millenium B.C.", Curr. Anthr., 19 (3), p. 463-492.

the Kopet Dagh relay or station, but also the Indo-Iranian borderlands, Indus, Baluchistan and Afghanistan. In this respect, the results of French school, integrating the works of various expeditions in Baluchistan and in Central Asia has been crucial; even if we can now consider that it is possible to propose better models (see below). The expeditions I have in mind include surveys and excavations. We can mention first the "Mission Archéologique de l'Indus" under the leadership of the late Jean-François Jarrige, excavating Mehrgarh and Nausharo in the Kachi plain near Quetta. Second, the "Mission Archéologique du Makran Pakistanais" directed by the late Roland Besenval, who studied Miri Qalat and surveyed Makran, and who also excavated Sarazm in cooperation with A. Isakov. Third the "Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale", under the direction of the late Jean-Claude Gardin and myself who surveyed NE Bactria, discovered Taluqan and excavated Shortughai, and also explored the steppe regions. These fieldworks, performed during many years, gave to the archaeologists a unique point of view, a sort of transect, a section, a broad North-South cross view.

The "plate tectonics" theory or concept was suggested in the 1990s. It was a sort of metaphor implying the existence of territories controlled, ruled by "empires". I confess I used (with quotes!) the expression "Harappan Empire" in order to express the consistency of the materials and settlements from the Indus Valley to Bactria (at Shortughaï). Cultures, or "Material Cultures", or" Civilizations" were seen as patches on maps, supposed to control territories, even if such idea of political/economical control was rarely clearly expressed. Moreover, the question of the demography, of the populations inhabiting the territories was not formulated. Large territorial expansions necessitate a high birthrate and low mortality, but such parameters are impossible to measure with a few sites, and with the very small samples of populations extracted from a very

small number of excavated burials. The "plate tectonics" and empires model were elaborated also with the help of the traditional better-documented examples of Egypt, Mesopotamia etc. where texts can explain cities, States, and territoriality. On the other hand, the consideration of the irrigated territories, constructed, known and mastered by policies, had a crucial importance in the line or against the Oriental despotism conceptions (Engels, Wittfogel). "Irrigation and peopling" were concepts at the core of the explorations, excavations and interpretations provided by our groups' researches.[1] The Indus irrigation canal of Shortughaï in Bactria, Indus canals in Haryana (India), and the canal of Sarazm were searched, discovered and originally interpreted along this theoretical framework.

In consequence of such theory, and for its consistency, it was necessary to look for organization at a very large territorial level, but also for frontiers or borders for the said "Empires". Irrigated lands are something possible to grasp for archaeologists at the local level, but for larger territories, territories of a "culture" or of a "civilization", it is necessary to consider the problem of the limits, whether natural (frontier) or cultural (border). Moreover, this, clearly, was not possible. Not just because of the rarity of the discovered material, but also because the concept of "empire", as socio-political unit, is not applicable, as all "empires" were defined from and after the Persian Achaemenid Empire. The best specialists wonder about the possibility of true empires before the Persian, and look with care to the "Akkadian" empire in the 3rd millennium, surprised that it could have lasted for some time. But how? The hierarchy of administrative organization is necessary, as is the control of armed force, the control of arts and

[1] Gardin, J.-C., 1998, Prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974-1978). Volume 3 Description des sites et notes de synthèse, Mém. MAFAC, vol. IX, Paris, E. R. C ; Lyonnet, B., 1997, Prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974-1978). Volume 2 Céramique et peuplement du chalcolithique à la conquête arabe, Mém. MAFAC, vol. VIII, Paris, E. R. C.

crafts, the concentration of population in cities etc. (see Childe and more recent studies); all that requires a class of administrators and the use of writing (all Old World empires) or an equivalent of writing (in New World some cases).[1]

Finally, the use of the terms such as "Proto Urban", "Early Class", "Early State" or "Proto State", largely utilized in all theories, are all misleading for our question, in Central Asia. In other words, the Near Eastern Model, elaborated by looking at Egyptian and Mesopotamian-Levantine data, is not working in our territories, which are Baluchistan, Central Asia and to some extent Elamite and Indian worlds, not to speak of the Chinese case.[2] What can we do now? How can we understand the Sarazm phenomenon in the context of an enlarged and more diversified Eneolithic universe?

4. **A contemporary possible theory**. Long roads to reach valuable places. Juxtaposition, **c**ohabitation and coexistence, peaceful or competitive? Sarazm: ruling an empire? "*primus inter pares*"? or crucible of civilization?

After this brief critical review of previous theories constructed for understanding the evolutionary history of Protohistoric Central Asia, we shall

[1] Enormous bibliography on Archaic State, Early State, Incipient State, Early Urban, Proto Urban, Complex Chiefdom, etc. all questions relevant for Sarazm. For the first publications, see : Moret, A., et Davy, G., 1923, Des clans aux empires. L'organisation sociale chez les primitifs et dans l'Orient ancien, L'évolution de l'humanité, vol. VI, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre ; Childe, G., 1950, "The urban revolution", Town Planning Review, 21 (1), p. 3-17 ; more recently, see next foot note.

[2] See for some examples: Feinman, G.M., Marcus, J., (ed.), 1998, Archaic States, (School of American Research. Advanced Seminar Series, Santa Fe New Mexico, School of American Research Press; Trigger, B., 2003, Understanding Early Civilizations, Cambridge, CUP ; Yoffee, N., 2005, Myths of the Archaic State. Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States and Civilizations, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Id. (ed.), 2015, Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 BCE - 1200 CE, (The Cambridge World History, vol. III), Cambridge University Press; Carneiro, R.L., Grinin, L.E., et Korotayev, A. V., (ed.), 2017, Chiefdoms. Yesterday and Today, Clinton Corners, New York, Eliot Werner Publications, Inc.; Sabloff, J.A., Sabloff, P.L. W., (ed.), 2018, [The Emergence of Premodern States]. New perspectives on the Developments of Complex Societies, Santa Fe, SFI Press.

first restate that our questions do not mean that we pretend to find the final explanation. Each theory is connected to the state of the art of its time of formulation, is a product of the dominant model of social and historical sciences, perhaps linked at a more general level to the Sciences in general, including physical and natural sciences. I shall not develop this point here but we must keep in mind that theory making is not simply a matter of Academic position and power, as asserted by the relativists' post-modern theorists. Theory making in our case, the domain evolutionary/historical questions (moreover without texts), relates to other disciplines, and all disciplines evolve. In short, not only theories, but cultures evolve, and evolutionary theories were recently widely utilized, not in the sense of "social Darwinism" (where the strongest crushes and devours the weakest), but in the sense of constructing an evolutionary model to some extent similar to the biological sciences "tree of evolution".[1] Such attempts, as interesting as they could be, are just applied to limited sets of material, sets that are manageable, measurable, quantifiable, and to some extent give possibilities of testing, if not validating the methods and the results. Therefore, we cannot just borrow them for understanding Sarazm and its material culture. The previous theories, of the three categories examined above, are all based on a socio-economic theoretical substratum, itself based on concepts borrowed in history, sociology, economy and ethnology. However, we can object that history, sociology, economy and ethnology in our case, i. e. in Protohistory of Central Asia, are the goal to reach, the result to obtain, and not a given starting point. In fact, all the previous theories are largely tautological. I mean that the questions, the interpretive concepts and the results depend all of *a priori* preconception,

[1] For example: Withen, A., Hinde, R.A., Stringer, Chr. B., Laland, K.N., (ed.), 2011, Culture evolves, (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B), London, Royal Society Publishing; Mesoudi, Alex, 2017, "Pursuing Darwin's curious parallel: Prospects for a science of cultural evolution", Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114 (30), p. 7853-7860.

borrowed outside archaeology. Therefore, we always "discover" what we pitted in the theory as axioms. What can be done to get out of such circularity in reasoning?

Going again and again to the material data is necessary. Nobody ignores that even looking at and measuring artefacts implies that we have preconceptions; but everybody knows that the question is not to be free of any preconception, but to have the good ones (as stated by S. Weinberg). How do we understand that they are the good ones? By elaborating procedures of verification, testing, validation, as in all sciences. Such validations still require adapted procedure of falsification elaborated long ago by philosopher K. Popper, and proposed by some archaeologists.[1] The claimed specificity of social sciences, where the consensus of a community of scholars takes the place of the procedures of validation in sciences is again completely circular and tautological. I shall not insist on this important question here. Just keep in mind that we are far from rigorous theory building and testing in archaeological methodology. But enough with theory. How does all that concerns Sarazm? What status can we claim for Sarazm as an Eneolithic/Bronze Age settlement? The Proto Urban etc .theories fall short: Sarazm is not a city in the usual sense. The "plate tectonics" and "empires" theories are also inadequate, since Sarazm has no large palace or temple, or workshops or storage buildings, neither big public building such as a terrace (ziggurat type). No writing or any "administrative device" appear no large crafts production, etc. Sarazm is not a city, not the "capital city" of an Empire in the usual sense. On the other hand, Sarazm is not a village or small

[1] Popper, K., La logique de la découverte scientifique, Paris, 1973. Gardin, J.-C., Peebles, Ch., (ed.), 1992, Representations in Archaeology, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press; Bell, J. A., 1994, Reconstructing Prehistory. Scientific Method in Archaeology, Philadelphie, Temple University Press.

town with simply agricultural functions: there is much more than a rural agricultural life. What then?

For Sarazm, one big question remains unsolved: what can we consider as local material culture, what is the culture of the autochthonous "Sarazmians"? We listed above a series of items belonging to, or arrived from, other areas and other cultures. So what can we see as a local culture? The recent study and analyses of potteries presented some clues for a definition of a "local" category of pottery. It is not especially flashy or spectacular, and in no way displaying the gorgeous or fancy colorful ornamentation seen in other areas (Baluchistan for example). The same applies to the stone industry, whether the large ones (A. Razzokov[1]) or the small ones (F. Brunet, micro blades), etc. raising the question of a long local tradition. In the same way of reasoning, the dwellings of the site belong to two (minimum) categories: 1) the mud brick buildings in "Proto Urban" fashion, and 2) the more simple rooms, more similar to a long local tradition. So Sarazm's material, with such enormous discrepancies in the standards of living and crafts appear to be split schematically into two big categories: on one hand the foreign-looking / foreign-related material culture, and on the other hand the local-long-tradition. What does that possibly mean?

We can look at the site itself in a historical/topographical manner. The topography represents the site as if split into two parts. The first is a sort of citadel, or acropolis, or even "*karum*" (emporium), with more prestigious luxury goods and possibly an elite population's fraction, and the second, a sort of lower town, is more rooted in the long local tradition traceable into Kel'teminar at least (mud wall, pyrotechnological activities, etc.). The first part raises another question: was this "citadel" part of the site inhabited by local elites or by foreign

[1] Razzokov, A.R., 2008, Sarazm (orudija truda i khozjajstvo po eksperimental'no-trasologicheskim dannym), Dushambe, Edjod.

groups, or by both? Was it inhabited all time or only part time? The same questions arise with the possible "lower town": were there local agriculturalists and craft persons, or a part of the "foreign" inhabitants working in production economy, agriculture and crafts? One of the main prerequisite question is: what do we mean by "foreign" at Sarazm? Actually, as strange as it could seem, we do not know exactly. In any case, that sort of observations and analyses provoke one more fundamental question: do we have to consider Sarazm as a perennial organic organization, or perhaps as a juxtaposition of groups and territorial units? In the first case, we face a syntactic material distribution, and therefore we have to consider and to reconstruct a syntactic socio-economic organization (see above: village, town, city; chiefdom, State, etc.). In the second case, we have to consider a paratactic material distribution, and therefore a juxtaposition of human groups of various origins, at various times, periods or perhaps also in the same time. Is it possible, simply? Yes, we know now other examples of such organizations in Protohistory (and not only).

Paratactic occupation of lands by different contemporary cultures: Zhukov (Yamnaya/Afanasevo), Nausharo/Sibri-Mehrgarh VIII (Oxus/Indus), Shortughaï/Farkhor (Indus/Oxus).

At Zhukov, not far from Sarazm, two cultures coexisted in the same time, juxtaposed, one coming from the European steppe area (Yamnaya) and the other coming from the Asiatic steppe.[1]

In the Kachi plain, near Mehrgarh (North Baluchistan), the Indus Civilization site of Nausahro coexisted with settlements and cemeteries of the Oxus Civilization (Sibri, Mehrgarh VIII).[1]

[1] Avanesova, Nona A, 2013, "Zhukov, un « sanctuaire » énéolithique d'anciens nomades dans la vallée du Zaravshan (Ouzbékistan)", Paléorient, p. 85-108.

In Eastern Bactria, the Middle Bronze Age site of Farkhor (Tajikistan) on the North bank of the Panj coexisted with the neighboring Indus site of Shortughai on the South bank of the Panj. It is even possible that at some point they coalesced into a "Panj culture".[2]

This concept of juxtaposed coexisting sites, or coexisting cultures in the same site leaves behind the questions of territoriality and of borders as considered in earlier theories. It opens a new field of research in which the old monolithic socio-political concepts of migrations of tribes or of empires (or any homogenous sociopolitical entity) become useless. But of course, the economic constraints based on natural resources remain important to study. In the case of Sarazm, the mineral resources of upper Zeravshan are certainly a key for understanding such a great attractiveness: alluvial gold certainly is at the center.

Conclusion: who were the "real" or "original" inhabitants of Sarazm? Material cultures, genetics, linguistics may answer differently to different types of questions. Therefore, we can put this question aside for some time, waiting for better data and analyses. Same for the socio-economical stage or entity: perhaps a variety were at work simultaneously.

Sarazm actually functioned, in this new theory, as an International Centre. If we can risk a comparison, Sarazm was working at the same time economically

---

[1] Jarrige, J.-F., 2017, "Indus-Oxus Civilizations: More Thoughts", in: South Asian Archaeology and Art 2012. Volume 1. Man and Environment in Prehistoric and Protohistoric South Asia: New Perspectives, V. Lefèvre, A. Didier, et B. Mutin (Dir.), Turnhout, Brepols, p. 19-33.

[2] Bobomulloev, S., Vinogradova, N.M., Bobomulloev, B., 2019, "Issledovanie mogil'nika Farkhor - Pamjatnika epokhi rannej i srednej bronzy na juge Tadzhikistana vesnoj osenju 2014 g.", ART, 40, p. 108-139; Francfort, H.-P., 2016, "How the twins met: Indus and Oxus Bronze Age Civilizations in Eastern Bactria. Shortughaï revisited forty years later", in: To the memory of Professor Victor Sarianidi, (Transactions Of Margiana Archaeological Expedition, N. A. Dubova, E.V. Antonova, et al. (ed.), Moscou, N.N. Miklukho-Maklay Institute Of Ethnology And Anthropology Of Russian Academy Of Sciences, Margiana Archaeological Expedition, Altay State University, p. 461-475.

as a World Trade Organization, and culturally like a UNESCO (or a Sorbonne in the Middle Age). As far as I know, no other place in the Old World played such a great role so extensively, in spite of the high development of cities in the Old World. It is quite an achievement, a unique position.

I am pleased to imagine at Sarazm, long ago, some council of representatives of the different Eneolithic cultures discussing, hopefully peacefully. Their exchange pay have been about the price of goods and transportation, the difficulties of the roads, for crossing high passes or travelling across deserts, about the changes in weather, about the meaning of words in various languages, or the latest find in metallurgical technology, and about the ways to give or receive brides…In short: about life. Sarazm, in this new simple theory, appears as a sort of focal point, a node in networks, a "crucible" in which different ingredients were mixed and melted to produce Civilization. Cannot we see Sarazm as a "crucible of Civilization"?