

# IMPORT/EXPORT IN AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL SYSTEM





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### **Abstract.**

*From the middle of the third to the beginning of the second millennium BCE, there were extensive relations between south-eastern Iran and the Oxus culture: the evidence attests to strong cultural homogeneity between these regions. A period of intercultural relations or an Integrated Cultural System (= ICS) began in the mid third millennium BCE, lasting until the first centuries of the second millennium BCE (ca. 1800 BCE).*

### **Keywords.**

*BMAC, ICS, Bronze Age, Oxus.*



## 1. Introduction.

From the middle of the third to the beginning of the second millennium BCE, there were extensive relations between south-eastern Iran and the Oxus culture: the evidence attests to strong cultural homogeneity between these regions.<sup>1</sup>

According to E. Ascalone,<sup>2</sup> a period of intercultural relations or an Integrated Cultural System (= ICS) began in the mid third millennium BCE, lasting until the first centuries of the second millennium BCE (ca. 1800 BCE); in this period, three main phases can be identified:

1) Proto-ICS (ca. 2700/2600-2500 BCE): an international overland market seems to be active between Mesopotamia and the main settlements of the Iranian plateau, as documented by the spread of chlorite/steatite vessels and handled weights from Jiroft. There is early evidence of organised trade, with settlements such as Shahr-i Sokhta and II-III and Konar Sandal on the Iranian plateau and Susa IIIB and Ur playing a central role in the establishment of the first ‘international’ relations.

2) Early ICS (ca. 2500-2200 BCE): the structured Indus and Oxus polities are established, the Jiroft valley shows intensive settlement development and the main site of Konar Sandal assumes control of the northern Halil valley; regional cultural development is now replaced by an integrated cultural system, as documented by extensive evidence of imported and exported materials; there is an increase in artefacts reflecting an artistic syncretism in which Jiroft, Margiana/Bactria and Indus seem to play an important role in its dissemination and development. We see the impact of the Indus civilisation on both the Makran coast (Miri Qalat) and Bactria (Shortugai). At the end of this period, Shahr-i Sokhta is abandoned and relations between the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia are dictated by the latter as a result of the Akkadian campaign, as cited in Mesopotamian epigraphic sources.

3) Late ICS (ca. 2200-1800/1700 BCE): an integrated system of contacts continues in the Oxus, Jiroft and Indus regional contexts. A new cultural phase is now attested in Elam (the Kaftari period), where new iconographical relations can be identified between Anshanite seals, Bactrian statuettes and Oxus silver vessels. The so-called “Gonur Depe phase” (or BMAC) begins in Margiana and northern Bactria (Sapalli and Djarkutan), and the Konar Sandal settlement changes radically, shifting northwards. New contacts are attested with the polities of the western Persian Gulf and diplomatic relations are developed with the Ur

III and Isin Mesopotamian kings. Around the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE, this period abruptly ceases, with each single regional context undergoing a crisis that is widely attested in the main sites and highlighted by regional settlement analysis. The Oxus, Indus and Jiroft (?) civilisations collapse, and the Kaftari period in Fars is superseded by a new regional cultural phase; Miri Qalat, Shortugai and Tepe Yahya are abandoned and Shahdad shrinks drastically.

## 2. Exported material from Oxus civilizations in southern Iran

In an Integrated Cultural System (= ICS) the exported/imported material was evidence for the local development of each single region; it seems that this supposed integration was a higher social level, in which only the classes of material expression of an élite were elaborated in a common way. In this perspective, the common elaboration of silver vessels, royal/divine statuettes, specific iconographies, weights and potter’s marks seems to be a clear sign of the social meaning of this integrated cultural development.

### 2.1. Khurab vessels from the “Tomb of Li”<sup>3</sup>

Khurab is located along an ancient branch of the Bampur river where A. Stein excavated a large number of burials for several days; in some of them (Trenches D and L), ceramics related to the Central Asian productions were found; in particular the closest parallels were identified with the site of Dashli, in southern Bactria. From the so-called “Tomb Li” come the ceramic types associated to the unpainted shapes of Central Asia as the trumpet shaped bowl red ware, the small or open bowl in red ware and the footed bowl or goblet in red ware.<sup>4</sup> The shape and the fabric of these ceramic types from Khurab were produced in BMAC but they were part of a ceramic corpus originated in south-eastern Iranian and Indo-Iranian regions; the “Tomb of Li” should be considered as evidence of Central Asian peoples in southern cultural contexts.

### 2.2. Compartmented seals in southern Iran

The compartmented stamp seals were produced in the so-called “Turanian basin”,<sup>5</sup> where Shahr-i Sokhta,<sup>6</sup> Mundigak<sup>7</sup> and Tepe Hissar<sup>8</sup> should be considered the southern and western geographical corners of this typology of seals.<sup>9</sup> Compartmented seals originated in the Central Asia cultural complex with an important role played by Turkmenistan sites as well as Anau, Namazga, Ulug,

1 On the Indo-Aryan population movement from Iran to Central Asia see Sarianidi 1998, 148–166.

2 Ascalone 2018.

3 Stein 1937, Pl. I; Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992a, 6 Fig. 2. See also Lamberg-Karlovsky 1969b and Lamberg-Karlovsky/Schmandt-Besserat 1977.

4 The pedestalled goblets were also discovered at ‘Ali, Sar el-Jisr, Dhahran and Hamala North (During Caspers 1992, 6–7 Fig. 3,c–d; 4,a.c–d).

5 Tosi 1977, 47; Tosi 1979, 151–154; Tosi 1986, 154–155.

6 Tosi 1968, Fig. 99–100; Tosi 1969, Fig. 276; Tosi 1970a, 189; Tosi 1976, 168; Tosi 1983, Fig. 73–75 Tab. 65,5; 66,6; Piperno/Tosi 1975b, 196. Except for one s

were found (Ferioli et al. 1979, 7–12).

7 Casal 1961, Tab. XLV.

8 Schmidt 1933, Tab. CVII; CXXIX–CXXX; Schmidt 1937, Tab. XXVIII Fig. 118.

9 For a wide analysis see Salvatori 2000. Compartmented seals were also found at Boulobaq, in the Ordos Chinese province, near the Huanghe river (Baghestani 1997).

Altyn Depe,<sup>10</sup> Gonur Depe,<sup>11</sup> Togolok, Sapalli,<sup>12</sup> Dashly,<sup>13</sup> Tekkem, Džarkutan.<sup>14</sup> The sporadic presence of compartmented stamp seals outside this regional and cultural complex<sup>15</sup> allowed to consider the seals found in southern Iran as imports from the Oxus regions.<sup>16</sup> Compartmented seals and their sealing were excavated at Konar Sandal in the Halil valley (Jiroft region),<sup>17</sup> Tepe Yahya in the Soghun valley,<sup>18</sup> Damin<sup>19</sup> and Bampur<sup>20</sup> in the eastern Jazmurian area, Shah-i Tump on the Makran coast,<sup>21</sup> and Susa in the Khuzistan region.

Different historical evaluations have to be made for compartmented seals from Shahdad;<sup>22</sup> the excavations carried out in the site of the Lut province showed strong relations between two different cultural areas, where Shahdad represented a meeting-point between Jiroft and Oxus civilizations. In the same way, the seals found at Shahdad were produced by south-eastern Iranian (cylinder seals) and Oxus (compartmented stamp seals) workshops: both types were used in the site in the same period.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3. The Oxus culture at Susa.

The Oxus culture dating from the second half of the third millennium to the earlier second millennium BCE is well attested in the far region of Khuzistan, in its main site Susa.<sup>24</sup> A gold eagle pendent found in the old excavations of R. de Mecquenem<sup>25</sup> has closest comparison with a chlorite specimen coming from the antiquities market and

now in the Louvre collection.<sup>26</sup> The gold pendent should be considered a Bactrian artefact probably strongly influenced by Central Asian bronze stamp seal production where from the half of the third millennium BCE same eagles with open wings were produced.<sup>27</sup>

An alabaster gypsum statuette from Susa<sup>28</sup> should be attributed to the Afghanistan workshops<sup>29</sup> on the basis of comparison with a specimen coming from Chalgari, in the Mundigak IV-1 period.<sup>30</sup> Same origin have the Susa<sup>31</sup> alabaster columns widely diffused also in the Gorgan plain,<sup>32</sup> at Tureng Tepe,<sup>33</sup> in Bactria,<sup>34</sup> Sistan region,<sup>35</sup> and in the Shahdad necropolis.<sup>36</sup>

A Zoomorphic bronze axe<sup>37</sup> found in a Middle Elamite royal tomb should be considered an official Central Asian production dating to the end of the third or beginning of the second millennium BCE. The type of axe with winged dragons or mythological themes directly on the blade is a peculiar class originated in Bactrian workshops as well as attested in the numerous examples coming from Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.4. Bronze trumpets from Shahdad, Astrabad and Tepe Hissar<sup>39</sup>

The bronze trumpets represent a distinctive mark of the Oxus culture; during the 1970s many of them were looted from Bactria and soon surfaced in the antiquities market (Figs. 97-99). Only recently five trumpets were ex-

10 Masson 1981a, Tab. 16–17; 22,1a–b; 29,5–10; 36,3; 37,1–6; 38,1–2; Masson 1988, 89–91 Tab. XVI–XVII; XXIX; Kohl 1984, Tab. 12–13 Fig. 12,b; 13,b.  
 11 Kohl 1984, Tab. 14 Fig. 14,d; Sarianidi 1998, 59; 66 Fig. 24,1–4; 29,1–11.  
 12 Kohl 1984, Tab. 16 Fig. 16,b–c.  
 13 Ligabue/Salvatori 1989, 19 Fig. 5.  
 14 Kohl 1984, Tab. 17 Fig. 17c.  
 15 On the southern and western part of Turanian cultural complex, analysed on the basis of the glyptic evidence, see Ascalone 2011, 453–457.  
 16 Seals w  
 Caspers 1994). See also Amiet 1999.  
 17 Pittman 2008, 28,d-f.i.  
 18 Lamberg-Karlovsky 1972, Fig. 4; Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992a, 13 Tab. IIb.  
 19 Two seals in Tosi 1974, 43–44 Fig. 20–21. See also Tosi 1970b.  
 20 One seal in de Cardi 1967a, 134; de Cardi 1967b, Fig. 2; de Cardi 1968, 148; de Cardi 1970, Fig. 47,15; 51.  
 21 Piggott 1950, 219 Fig. 26.  
 22 Amiet 1973, 24; Amiet 1974, Fig. 1–4; Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992a, 13 Tab. III,b; Hakemi 1972, Tab. XXI,B; XXII,B; XXIII,B; XX-IV,B–C; Hakemi 1973, Tab. X; Halemi 1976a, 137; 138 Fig. 8; Hakemi 1997, 659–660; Hakemi/Sajjadi 1989, 146; Salvatori/Vidale 1982, Fig. 5,19; 6,5–6).  
 23 On the new excavations at Shahdad see the appendix by M.A. Kaboli in Ascalone 2015.  
 24 Ascalone 2003a; Ascalone 2007, 126–130.  
 25 de Mecquenem 1934, 210 Fig. 53,3; de Mecquenem 1946, 85; Amiet 1966, 260 Fig. 189; Amiet 1986, 147; 201 Fig. 97; 106. Same Bactrian origin for a similar specimen found at Ebla (Inner Syria) (Matthiae 1979, 175 Fig. 80,a–c; Matthiae 1981, 219 Fig. 57).  
 26 Amiet 1986, 147; 199; 201 Fig. 199.  
 27 See the seals from Altyn-depe in Kohl 1981, Tab. 2,a; Masson 1988, 90 Tab. 17,13; Baghestani 1997, n. 8; Namazga in Masson/Sarianidi 1972, 122 Tab. 47; Baghestani 1997, n. 9; Shahdad in Hakemi 1976b, 24 Tab. 29; Biscione 1985, 101 Tab. 25,16; Baghestani 1997, n. 9 and seals placed in the Nixon collection published in Baghestani 1997, n. 21–35.  
 28 Amiet 1966, 156 Fig. 112; Spycket 1981, 124 Pl. 87.  
 29 Amiet 1986, 148 Fig. 98.  
 30 Gouin 1969, 37–51; Allchin/Allchin 1981, 147–149.  
 31 Amiet 1986, 147–148 Fig. 97,4; 101–102.  
 32 Deshayes 1977, 101 n. 10; Schmidt 1937a, Pl. LXI.  
 33 Deshayes 1976a, Fig. 1; Deshayes 1976b, Pl. II,f.  
 34 Amiet 1977, Fig. 10; Masson 1981b, Fig. 3.  
 35 Dales 1977.  
 36 Hakemi 1997, 609–610.  
 37 Amiet 1966, Fig. 307; Amiet 1986, 149.  
 38 Amiet 1  
 Pittman 1984, 76 Fig. 36.  
 39 For Shahdad see Lawergren 2003, 48–49; Lawergren 2004; for Tepe Hissar see Schmidt 1937a, 121; 210 Fig. 121; Lawergren 2003, 49–54; Francfort 2003, Fig. 14–15.

cavated at Gonur, where of about 3,000 tombs investigated by V. Sarianidi, five contained one trumpet each (two were made of copper, two of silver and one of gypsum or alabaster), no specimens were found in the citadel of the site. This production has been also found on the Iranian plateau at Shahdad, Tepe Hissar and Astrabad. One trumpet was found in grave n. 081 (item 0787) from the Shahdad cemetery,<sup>1</sup> three (two in silver and one in gold) in the Hoard I on the Treasure Hill (Stratum IIIC) of Tepe Hissar,<sup>2</sup> and two from a mound near the town of Astrabad<sup>3</sup> (100 km north of Hissar) without certain archaeological context. The trumpets were part of a homogeneous cultural complex; the geographical sphere includes Bactria, Margiana and, with uncertainty, the Gorgan plain where Namazga vessels were found<sup>4</sup> and compartmented stamp seals were also produced.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.5. Small columns

The small columns represent new strong evidence for the cultural relations between Oxus civilisation and southern and eastern Iran.<sup>6</sup> The wide presence in southern Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Turkmenistan help us suggest a possible northern origin of this class of material, likely considered a distinctive element of an “élite trading” among the main different sites of Central Asia.<sup>7</sup> Their

diffusion is well known in the main sites of the so-called “Turanian complex” in the Grogan plain (19 specimens from Hissar),<sup>8</sup> Namazga III (1), Namazga V/VI (23 miniature columns) and in the Upper and Lower Hilmand (Mundigak VI and Shahr-i Sokhta) in a chronological timespan mostly attributed to 2400-2100/2000 BCE (all ICS period).<sup>9</sup> In details, from the above-mentioned Turanian area,<sup>10</sup> during the BMAC period (= Namazga V), small columns were found at Altyn-depe,<sup>11</sup> Anau,<sup>12</sup> Djarkutan,<sup>13</sup> Dashly 1,<sup>14</sup> Dashly 3,<sup>15</sup> Fergana-Tal,<sup>16</sup> Godar-i Shah,<sup>17</sup> Gonur 1,<sup>18</sup> Hirdai-Tepe,<sup>19</sup> Kara-depe,<sup>20</sup> Kellelli 4,<sup>21</sup> Mundigak,<sup>22</sup> Shah Tepe,<sup>23</sup> Shahr-i Sokhta,<sup>24</sup> Tachirbaj Oasis,<sup>25</sup> Tepe Abdali,<sup>26</sup> Tekkem depe,<sup>27</sup> Togolok 1,<sup>28</sup> Togolok 21,<sup>29</sup> Togolok 24,<sup>30</sup> Tureng Tepe,<sup>31</sup> Hissar<sup>32</sup> e Ulug depe.<sup>33</sup>

The specimens found on the Iranian plateau at Damin, along Bampur valley,<sup>34</sup> and in the far Khuzistan at Susa should be considered exports.<sup>35</sup> There is scanty evidence in Baluchistan at Kulli,<sup>36</sup> Mehrgarh,<sup>37</sup> Quetta<sup>38</sup> and Sibri.<sup>39</sup>

Different evaluations have to be made on the small columns found at Shahdad, a city located on the bordering region of the Lut desert, in which the southern Iranian artistic experiences match the cultural developments of Central Asia, giving origin to a double cultural personality.

- 1 Hakemi 1997, 245–246; 635.
- 2 Schmidt 1937a, 210 Fig. 121.
- 3 Caubet/Bernus-Taylor 1991, 21.
- 4 Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992b, 136 Fig. 2.
- 5 Schmidt 1933, Tab. CVII; CXXIX–CXXX; Schmidt 1937a, Tab. XXVIII Fig. 118.
- 6 Boroffka/Sava 1998.
- 7 Salvatori 2008, 88–90.
- 8 On the BMAC in eastern Iran see also Vahdati 2014.
- 9 Numerous pieces come from the antiquities market (see Boroffka/Sava 1998, 78 n. 7).
- 10 Including the western and southern corners (Gorgan plain and Sistan region).
- 11 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 77 n. 3.
- 12 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 78 n. 4.
- 13 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 8 n. 27.
- 14 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 80 n. 22.
- 15 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 80 n. 23.
- 16 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 81 n. 29.
- 17 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 82 n. 35.
- 18 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 82 n. 36.
- 19 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 82 n. 37.
- 20 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 83–84 n. 47.
- 21 Boroffka/Sava 1998, 84 n. 49.
- 22 Casal 1961, Pl. 91; 110–120.
- 23 Arne 1945, 149 Pl. 195 n. 146; Pottier 1984, 42.
- 24 Tosi 1970b, 48; Pottier 1984, 42; Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 152.
- 25 Kohl 1984, 150.
- 26 Tosi 1970b, 48.
- 27 Kohl 1984, 141, pl. 20a.
- 28 Sarianidi 1998, 52.
- 29 Boroffka - Sava 1998, 91–92 n. 111.
- 30 Boroffka - Sava 1998, 92 n. 112.
- 31 Deshayes 1976b, 169; Amiet 1977, 101; Amiet 1986, 165; Pottier 1984, 42; Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 152.
- 32 Schmidt 1933, 423; 431; 444 Pl. 136,A; 152; Schmidt 1937b, 171; 216–219; 401; Tosi 1970b, 48; Deshayes 1976b, 169; Deshayes 1977, 99; 101; Amiet 1977, 101; Amiet 1986, 148; 165; 185; 195 Pl. 148,5; Pottier 1984, 42.
- 33 Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 152.
- 34 Tosi 1970b, 48 Pl. 19; 55; Kohl 1984, 170; Pottier 1984, 42.
- 35 Amiet 1986, 148; 165; 185 Pl. 97,4; 101; 102.
- 36 Stein 1931, 124 Pl. 23; Pottier 1984, 42.
- 37 Pottier 1982, 42.
- 38 Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 143, Pl. 4–5; Hiebert 1994, 154.
- 39 Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 153.

As for Khuzistan, in the earlier periods of Susa III and IV periods, Shahdad provides simultaneously two different cultural expressions, rooted in different artistic paths well known also in the glyptic art<sup>40</sup> and in the above-mentioned miniature columns, found mainly in the necropolis area in graves 57, 75, 78, 104, 134, 188a, 209, 211, 214.<sup>41</sup>

On the basis of these assumptions, the small columns seem to have the same geographical diffusion as the other Oxus archaeological markers (trumpets, seals, etc.), allowing us to draw a coherent picture on the cultural horizons of Central Asia during the second half of the third millennium BCE. Its production has to be considered deeply rooted in the complex societies of the Oxus regions, with wide evidence of manufacture also in the Semnan province, Bampur valley and Shahdad, all regions that represent respectively the western and southern borders of so-called “BMAC”.

In the diffusion of well-established classes of material from Oxus into southern Iran, Shahdad and Shahr-i Sokhta carried out a decisive role for their border geographical position between two different cultural complexes. However, Shahr-i Sokhta is well embedded in the cultural horizons of northern regions with its local and unbroken cultural development; its role seems to have been simply related to make the passage or diffusion of material easier, in order to facilitate the transmission of knowledge and materials. On the contrary, Shahdad seems to be rooted in a double cultural personality, such as Susa in earlier periods between the Mesopotamian alluvium and Iranian highlands, in which the BMAC experiences and the Jiroft culture, as known in the recent projects of excavation in the Halil valley, live together. Seals, calcite/alabaster vessels, handled weights, pottery, bronze artefacts and iconography are all elements of historical complexity; each single above-mentioned production shows peculiar cultural traits well recognized in both civilizations, allowing us to identify in the site lying on the border of the Lut desert a centre in which two different cultures were simultaneously adopted and artistic syncretism was elaborated.

### 3. Exported material from Elam/Jiroft civilizations in BMAC<sup>42</sup>

The presence of southern Iranian objects in BMAC is less frequent than Oxus materials on the Iranian plateau, however it can be assumed that this meagre presence could be explained with the scanty archaeological activities carried out in Central Asia. In particular, seals and chlorite phials are important elements to suggest a bidirectional transmission in the cultural relations between areas, as well as confirmed by wide artistic syncretism.

#### 3.1. Three south-eastern Iranian seals from Gonur Depe<sup>43</sup>

Three cylinder seals found at Gonur Depe must be considered imports from south-eastern Iran. The first is a cylinder seal coming from Gonur 1 North (in a funerary context), dating to the twenty-second century BCE, representing a seated female figure on a snake with three-petal flowers (tulip) and an ibex. The second seal was found in the so-called “*Temples des sacrifices*”; it represents two standing female divinities with vegetable elements sprouting for their bodies in front of a seated goddess within a rising-sun. The third and last cylinder seal comes from Gonur necropolis: it was found in a multiple female burial; the composition of the seal is distributed into two registers where mythological and religious themes were depicted.<sup>44</sup> The Gonur Depe cylinder seals belong to the south-eastern Iranian seals typology well-known in Shahdad, Tepe Yahya, and Konar Sandal excavations. They should be dated to the last quarter of the third millennium (earlier group) and to the first centuries of the second millennium BCE (later group).<sup>45</sup> On the basis of morphology, style and iconography the three seals from Gonur should be considered important evidence on the imports coming from southern Iran into Murghab plain where a different production of seals is attested (compartmented stamp seals, rounded stamp seals, stepped cross stamp seals, square, prismatic or rectangular-shaped stamp seal).<sup>46</sup>

#### 3.2. One Akkadian seal from Gonur Depe<sup>47</sup>

An Old-Akkadian seal was found at Gonur Depe in 2001, in the necropolis area. The seal represents a contest scene where two pairs of human being are confronting wild animals; on the left, the naked hero fights a lion, on the right a bull. The seal should be dated to the twenty-third

40 In Shahda

and Jiroft tradition, and the compartmented stamp seals, widely produced from Gorgan to eastern Afghanistan (west-east) and from Damin/Bampur to the Aral lake (south-north).

41 Hakemi 1997, 219; 239; 243; 260; 293; 348; 371; 374; 380; Pottier 1984, 42; Jarrige/Hassan 1989, 153.

42 The role motifs were considered

dot-in-circle designs see the specimens found at Gonur and Bactria (Amiet 1977, 98 Fig. 8; Amiet 1980, 160–162 Tab. III; Kohl 1979, 72); the handled weight in soft-stone from Gudar-i Shah has to be considered an import from south-eastern Iran (Dales 1977, 20; Kohl 1979, 72–74). On this subject see also de Miroschedji 1973.

43 The first one was published in Sarianidi 1998, Fig. 27.3; Salvatori 2000, Fig. 15.8; Amiet 2004, 15 Fig. 5; Ascalone 2003b, Fig. 9.g; Ascalone 2006, Fig. 181; Ascalone 2008, Fig. 9.g; Ascalone 2011, n. 4B.17; Ascalone 2012, Fig. 3.k; the second seal is in Sarianidi 2005, 283 Fig. 137; Amiet 2005, Fig. 17; Ascalone 2011, n. 4B.23; Ascalone 2012, Fig. 3.i; the last specimens were studied in Sarianidi 2002, 278; Sarianidi 2007, 105–107 Fig. 181, Tab. 245; Francfort 2010.

44 For a deeper iconographical analysis see Francfort 2010.

45 On the chronological division of south-eastern Iranian seals and the identification of two groups see Ascalone 2011, 335–336; Ascalone 2012, 4.

46 For a general analysis see Winkelmann 2004, 27–41.

47 Sarianidi 2002, 326–334; Francfort 2005b, Fig. 6.a.

century BCE<sup>1</sup> for their parallels with the specimens dating to the late Akkadian period;<sup>2</sup> no archaeological association was found during the excavations of the grave. The seal could be considered an imported material introduced via south-eastern Iran, where the cylindrical morphology was used from the late fourth/beginning third<sup>3</sup> to the early second millennium BCE.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3. Two epigraphic signs in Linear Elamite from Gonur Depe<sup>5</sup>

In 1998 I.S. Klochkov published a shard found on the surface of Gonur Depe which was incised with two signs and the beginning of a third. According to Potts evaluations, the signs should be compared to the Linear Elamite as known in the Kerman province. Thirty inscriptions in Linear Elamite have been found; 18 from Susa,<sup>6</sup> 1 from Shahdad,<sup>7</sup> 3 (4?) from Konar Sandal<sup>8</sup> and 7 have unknown provenance.<sup>9</sup> The Susa inscriptions are related to the Puzur-Inshushinak and we should assume the same date for the examples coming from Shahdad, Konar Sandal and Gonur Depe. The presence of a writing system known in western and southern Iran is strong evidence for relations between Central Asia and the Elamite kingdoms. In this perspective it is interesting that one inscription is engraved on the surface of a rounded stamp seal with Harappan iconographical elements,<sup>10</sup> and four were made on the silver vessels very similar to the Bactrian specimens.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.4. Chlorite cosmetics phials

A peculiar typology widely attested in eastern Iran and in the Oxus regions is the chlorite phials with incised decorations on the neck, formed by parallels lines, sometimes with zigzag lines or incised triangular motifs filled by parallel lines.<sup>12</sup> This specific production seems to be strongly rooted in the cultural background of eastern Iran, given its wide diffusion in the Kerman province. Numerous examples were found at Shahdad in the necropolis complex in archaeological association with materials generally dated to the second half of the third millennium BCE. In details, chlorite phials were found in Grave 39,<sup>13</sup> with a chlorite beaker belonging to the “*série ancienne*” of Miroschedji,<sup>14</sup> Grave 57,<sup>15</sup> together with a spouted bronze beaker well known in the Susa Db-c typology of L. Le Breton,<sup>16</sup> Grave 61,<sup>17</sup> in association with a Jiroft chlorite beaker, Grave 74,<sup>18</sup> Grave 116,<sup>19</sup> Grave 119,<sup>20</sup> with jars dating to the beginning of Susa IV period,<sup>21</sup> in Grave 121,<sup>22</sup> Grave 140,<sup>23</sup> Grave 166,<sup>24</sup> Grave 212<sup>25</sup> and Grave 305.<sup>26</sup>

The large diffusion of this category of objects at Shahdad and its presence at Susa<sup>27</sup> and Tepe Yahya<sup>28</sup> allows to identify in the chlorite phials a specific production of south-eastern Iran, likely originated in the so-called “Jiroft civilisation”. According to these preliminary assumptions, the phials found in southern Bactria<sup>29</sup> should be considered exports from southern and eastern Iran during the Konar Sandal phase, Yahya IVC1-IVB, Shahdad III2 and Shahr-i Sokhta III, a period corresponding to the Early ICS and dating to 2400-2200 BC.

1 See the Akkadian glyptic groups in Boehmer 1965.

2 Kaniuth 2010, 15.

3 Protoelamite cylinder seals represented the local production of Shahr-i Sokhta I period (Amiet/Tosi 1978; Amiet 1983).

4 The recent

ent phases of p

Trench

III - ca. 2400-2300 BCE), a classic group of south-eastern Iranian production (= Konar Sandal Trench V = Yahya IVB = Takab III2 - ca. 2300-2100 BC), and a later group (= Yahya IVA = Takab III1 - ca. 2100-1900 BC). The Konar Sandal sealing from Trench III seem to be very close to the ED III Mesopotamian ateliers, while the so-called “trans-elamite” seals have to be considered an indigenous production dating to the last quarter of the third millennium BC. The identification of a later group is supported by archaeological contexts of seals coming from Gonur 1 North (last century of Third millennium BC), Tôd, in the treasure of Amenemhat II (ca. 1929-1895 BC), and Tepe Yahya IVA (ca. 2100-1900 BC).

5 Klochkov 1998, Fig. 1; Potts 2008, 174-178.

6 Concerning the attempts at decipherment see Hinz 1962; Hinz 1969; Meriggi 1971; Vallat 1986.

7 Hakemi 1976b.

8 Desset 2012, Pl. IX, B-D.

9 Desset 2012, 93-127. For the silver vessel from the vicinity of Persepolis see also Calmeyer 1989.

10 Winkelmann 1999, Fig. 1; 5; Winkelmann 2001; Winkelmann 2004, 129-130 n. I.4-02; Vidale 2004, Tab. XIX, 5.

11 On the Persepolis vessel see Hinz 1969, 11; Hinz 1972; also Potts 2008; for the others see Dahl 2009, 27; Moqaddam 2009, 54; Desset 2012, 93 Tab. IX.

12 See Salvatori 2008, 84-88.

13 Hakemi 1997, 200 n. 0346.

14 Miroschedji 1973.

15 Hakemi 1997, 219-220 n. 0495.

16 Le Breton 1957, 119.

17 Hakemi 1997, 225-226 n. 0557.

18 Hakemi 1997, 238 n. 0685.

19 Hakemi 1997, 274-275, n. 1102; 1105.

20 Hakemi 1997, 278-279, n. 1151-1152.

21 Carter 1980.

22 Hakemi 1997, 281 n. 1182.

23 Hakemi 1997, 297-298 n. 1454.

24 Hakemi 1997, 323-324, n. 1826. The above phial is in archaeological association with a cylinder seal dated to 2300-2200 BCE and belonging to the Early South-Eastern Iranian production, according to iconography and style (Ascalone 2011, n. 4B.2).

25 Hakemi 1997, 376-377 n. 2573.

26 Hakemi 1997, 485-486 n. 3707.

27 Miroschedji 1973, Pl. VIII Fig. 11.

28 Lamberg-Karlovsky 1970, Fig. 21, R.

29 Pottier 1984, Fig. 18-21; Pittman 1984, Fig. 17.

The evidence collected from south-eastern Iran, Indo-Iranian borderlines and Central Asia regions cannot be simply explained as proof for a wide and unidirectional movement of people from north to south, from BMAC to southern Iran or *vice versa*.<sup>30</sup> More and deeper evaluations have to be made in order to understand the real impact of each single cultural sphere in the intercultural dynamics of the end of the third and beginning of the second millennium BC. In this perspective the role played by the so-called “Bactrian Goddess” statuette seems to be decisive in understanding the iconographical/figurative and ideological/mythological transmission process between Oxus, Elam and Jiroft civilizations.

#### 4. Conclusion

The picture that emerges in the late third and early second millennia BCE is that of relations between two worlds intensifying. At the beginning of the second quarter of the second millennium, similar historical development seems to be attested in Margiana, northern Bactria, the Jiroft valley, the Takab plain, Baluchistan and the Indus region. Given this premise, the connections described here represent new evidence regarding our understanding of intercultural processes between the Oxus and Elam/Jiroft civilisations: cultural knowledge was shared across a vast area from Margiana and Bactria to the Lut, Jiroft, and Elam regions as part of a joint cultural endeavour based on a range of indigenous developments, in which the presence of nomadic elements probably played an important role in the dynamics of cultural transmission and assimilation.

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30 Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992a; Hiebert/Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992b.