

The Relation of the Finds from Shahdad to Those of Sites in Central Asia

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C. C. Lamberg Karlovsky has been working with engineer Ali Hakemi's archive of photographs made in the course of excavations at an oasis on the edge of the Dasht-i Lut, near the village of Shahdad. Up to the present, a relatively small number of the numerous finds of the site have been published.¹

The pottery, vessels of stone—mostly chlorite—and metal objects from Shahdad largely presented new types in the archaeology of Iran. A few relations could be established only with finds from Tepe Hissar and Yahya IVA. By presenting the Shahdad material preceding the following survey of finds from Central Asia by Hiebert, Lamberg Karlovsky made the connections of the Iranian site with those of Turkmenistan appear very obvious.

He mostly stressed those finds that showed relations to material of Namazga V–VI at Central Asian sites, with the larger number associated with Namazga VI. In describing burials discovered at Shahdad, he mentioned round architectural blocks with paint on them, which seem to have been built around the corpse that was accompanied by some funerary gifts and by the statue of the deceased, which, in one case, seems to have fallen face down into the tomb. A second feature, unknown so far, are *cenotaphs*. There were many photographs of those by Hakemi, each of them numbered. They had no indication of a burial at all, and very few remains, other than ceramics. They were found all over the open field areas.

There were three types of burials: the simple grave, the actual brick ones surrounded by an architectural façade, and the cenotaphs. The pottery in the latter was essentially Namazga VI. In some of them were the typical Central Asian miniature colonettes. There were pots, too, as many as eight to ten. In the disposition of the statues, there were two different orientations: one on top of the brick block, the other face down in the tomb or just on the side. Among the statuary, Hakemi records two other aspects: one of full statues, the other of only heads, male and female.

1. Ali Hakemi, *Découvertes d'une civilisation préhistorique à Xabis "Shahdad," Kerman; époque chalcolithique. Catalogue de l'exposition LUT, Xabis (Shahdad)* (Teheran, 1972); idem and S. M. S. Sajjadi, "Shahdad Excavations in the Context of the Oasis Civilization," in Giancarlo Ligabue and Sandro Salvatore, eds., *Bactria: An Ancient Oasis Civilization from the Sands of Afghanistan* (Venice, 1988), 143–52; Aandri Salvatore and M. Vidale, "A Brief Surface Survey of the Protohistoric Site of Shahdad (Kerman, Iran)," *Rivista di Archeologia* 6 (1982), 5–10, figs. 1–14. The article contains an instructive map of the location, of the collecting units, and the areas of working activities within the survey area.

Lamberg Karlovsky commented on the fact that there was no example of memorial stones or architectural façades, that is 1.20 to 1.80m blocks to mark a grave anywhere in Western Asia at that time. What is interesting is that inside these blocks are central Asian materials with perfectly good Yahya(?) signs. There is one body per grave and no visible distinction among the funerary gifts in the different grave types. There are objects—a seal with a pot and an axe—which are purely central Asian.

The colors on the wall reliefs were green, black, red, and yellow. Lamberg Karlovsky pointed out that Hakemi made some reconstructions but took no photographs of the original state of these reliefs.

Attention was called to several more items not hitherto known from publication; for example, a bun-shaped ingot apparently of a type known from Mohenjo Daro, Susa, Syria, Anatolia, and Europe.² Ten or eleven axes with chased designs were mentioned, as well as long pins with geometric designs related to designs on seals. These pins were again related to Central Asian types.

A trumpet was shown of a type known from Hissar and Bactria (see fig. 1). It has a design not yet recognizable under the accretion on the object. A type of central Asian ceramic vessel (fig. 2) is of good Namazga VI type.

Chlorite vessels with *série ancienne* and *série récente* designs are found (see fig. 3).³ They exhibit shapes of the earlier group, which also have designs of the later, indicating some kind of continuity. One marble vessel (Lut Catalogue, pl. XII:D) is identical with one from Hissar in the Arthur M. Sackler Collection of Columbia University.

Many beads were found, as well as “microliths” for bead making.

An element that appeared at Shahdad that bears little relation to the finds from Yahya or Shahr-i Sokhta is red and black painted pottery. The closest parallels are found in Yahya IVB, and similar vegetal motifs appear on the decorated pottery from Baluchistan. The potter’s marks resemble those of Namazga VI, Yahya IVA.

After the survey of Shahdad objects, Lamberg Karlovsky introduced Fred Hiebert, who had worked with V. I. Sarianidi at the site of Togolok in the old delta of the river Murghab in Turkmenistan and at other sites of Central Asia in the area called Margiana. Typical of this area are sites that show low rises with no tell formation. Generally these sites represent a single period of occupation; very few show horizontal stratigraphy. The technique that the Soviets have adapted to this type of site entails a clearing of the top few centimeters of earth to expose the wall lines, then digging test trenches within certain rooms. The first period of occupation in the Bronze Age at these sites is equated with Namazga V.⁴ The small

2. Remarks on this widely distributed ingot shape were made by G. G. Bass, *Cape Gelidonya, a Bronze Age Shipwreck*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, new series 57, part 8 (1967), 78–81. In note 148 Bass cites the various occurrences.

3. For the division into an earlier and a later series, see P. de Miroschedji, “Vases et objets en stéatite susiens du Musée du Louvre,” *Cahiers de la D.A.F.I.* 3 (1973), 9–76.

4. For the relevant period at the type site of Namazga, see V. M. Masson, “Urban Revolution in Southern Turkmenia,” *Antiquity* 42 (1968), 178–87.

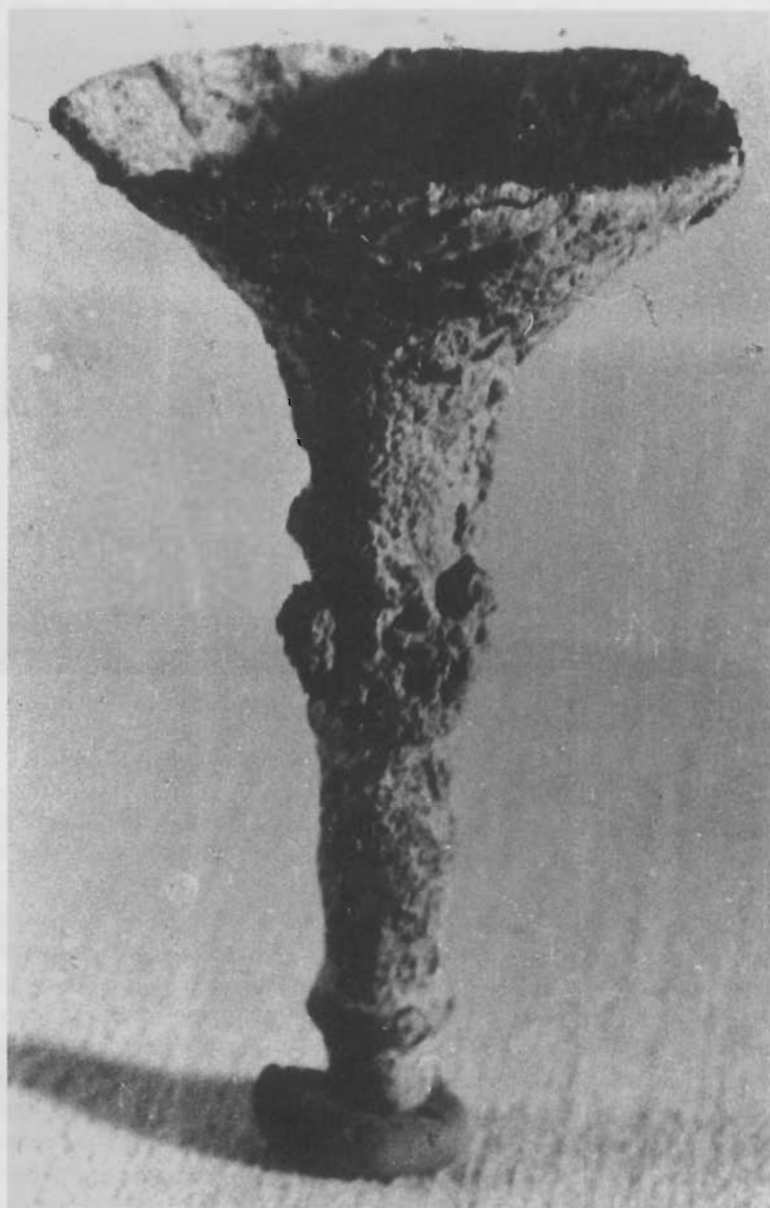


Fig. 1. A trumpet. Three trumpets of gold and silver were found at Tepe Hissar and two in the Treasure of Asterabad. Unprovenienced trumpets come from the market of Bactrian antiquities; see M. H. Pottier, *Materiel funéraire de la Bactriane méridionale de l'Age de Bronze* (Paris, 1984), 47–48.



Fig. 2. A typical Bactrian Bronze Age ceramic vessel.

finds that characterize this period include mace heads, miniature columns (earlier thought only to have begun in Namazga VI), geometric bronze seals, and female figurines.

The second period of Bronze Age settlement in Margiana is equated with Namazga VI and is represented by Togolok 21. The architecture is monumental and very regular. These levels contain miniature columns and various ceramic forms, including one of painted ware, and bronze shafthole axheads. Several objects from Togolok 21 fall into the realm of ritual use. A particular type of terracotta vessel from Togolok, featuring a scene of animals and only two human figurines placed on the rim, was illustrated by Sarianidi in his book on the art of Afghanistan.⁵ Certain carved steatite vessels also form a group. In the central part of Togolok 21 were found two human figurines of clay, a male and female, that seem to have been ritually "killed" with a piece of bone. These are the only known human representations from Namazga VI in Central Asia.

An important additional area of Togolok 21 is a small circular building. Inside it is a large round structure where large jars were placed upside down and

5. V. M. Sarianidi, *Die Kunst des alten Afghanistan* (Leipzig, 1986), 138.

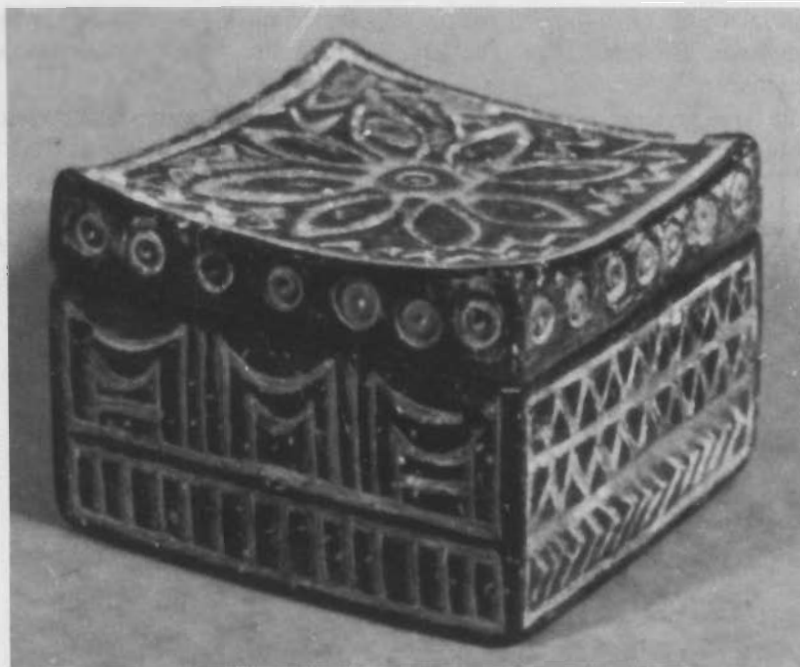


Fig. 3. A chlorite vessel of the recent series. For the recent series, see P. de Miroschedji, "Vases et objets de stéatite susiens du Musée du Louvre," *Cahiers de la D.A.F.I.* 3 (1973), 26-50.

buried, and fires built on top of them. Radiocarbon tests were run on samples from this area, and their results are indicated below.

A second site excavated by Sarianidi is Togolok 1. Its plan and ceramics are similar to Togolok 21 and are also equated with Namazga VI. Here the American team joined the Soviet excavation working in a small area on the north mound, while the Soviets continued work on the south. The Americans discovered that both Namazga V and VI were represented. The architecture was of an unusual type for this area, consisting of an apartment type building with a kitchen area. The bricks were laid with extraordinary care as shown in the views of the excavation. Hiebert pointed out that the drawing of bricks is essential for an understanding of the architecture. He added that the Soviet archaeologists were reluctant to follow this practice, perhaps to the detriment of their reconstructions. In the American excavation Namazga V ceramics were discovered *in situ*. The unusual small finds from this kitchen included a phallus, an enigmatic object, and a foot in terra cotta.

On the south mound the Soviets had discovered a 100 meter square building, with the long narrow rooms (now identified as storage facilities) characteristic of Namazga VI architecture. Again pottery exists here *in situ*, but the excavation technique used does not permit its identification. More bone tubes were found, very typical of Namazga VI in the area. These hollow sheep bones are engraved

with facial features. In the dirt matrix scientists from Moscow State University have discovered opium pollen. The large building also seems to have contained industrial areas.

The large organic samples taken from various floor contexts yielded radiocarbon dates. These fall into two general groups: 2200–2000 for Namazga V and 2000–1750 for Namazga VI. The found building with the inverted vessels from Togolok 21, called the “fire altar” by Sarianidi, dates to 1850 B.C.E. The earliest Iron Age levels at Yaz Tepe, Yaz I period date to 1512–1400 B.C.E. In Central Asia, then, a considerable gap exists between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, as on the Iranian Plateau.