JOHANNA LHUILLIER, NIKOLAUS BOROFFKA (ED.)

A MILLENNIUM OF HISTORY
A Millennium of History


Edited by Johanna Lhuillier, Nikolaus Boroffka
# Table of Contents

Preface of the series editors
Svend Hansen, Julio Bendezu-Sarmiento ........................................ VII

Chapter 1:  
Nikolaus Boroffka, Johanna Lhuillier ........................................ 1

Chapter 2:  
History of research of Early Iron Age sites in southern Turkmenistan during the Soviet period  
Aydogdy Kurbanov ..................................................................... 7

Chapter 3:  
The Influence of Bronze Age Sedentary-Mobile Interactions on the Iron Age: Mobile Pastoral Occupation Sites in the Murghab Alluvial Fan, Turkmenistan  
Barbara Cerasetti, Lynne M. Rouse, Ilaria de Nigris .......................... 17

Chapter 4:  
The Early Iron Age occupation in southern Central Asia. Excavation at Dzharkutan in Uzbekistan  
Johanna Lhuillier, Julio Bendezu-Sarmiento, Samariddin Mustafakulov, with the collaboration of Mathilde Cervel, Armand Dupont-Delaleuf, Jessica Giraud, Sébastien Gondet, Aysulu Iskanderova, Komil Rakhimov, Mutalib Khasanov, Jean-Claude Liger, Elise Luneau, Marjan Mashkour, Danièle Molez, Ulugbek Rakhmanov, Joëlle Suire ........................................ 31

Chapter 5:  
The Early Iron Age in northern Khorasan  
Ali A. Vahdati ........................................................................... 51

Chapter 6:  
Dashly-30, a settlement of the Early Iron Age in the south of Turkmenistan ( piedmont of the Kopet Dag, Etek)  
Viktor N. Pilipko ....................................................................... 67

Chapter 7:  
A short note on the Iron Age at Tillya-tepe and Naibabad (Afghanistan). Some unpublished image documents from the excavations of Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi  
Johanna Lhuillier ..................................................................... 113

Chapter 8:  
Layers of Early Iron Age in Dzhandavlattepa (Sherabad District, Surkhandarya Region of Uzbekistan)  
Kazim Abdullaev ...................................................................... 123

Chapter 9:  
Settlement patterns of the Yaz culture in the deltas of the Tadzhchen River in Turkmenistan  
Nazariy Butawka ...................................................................... 143

Chapter 10:  
The Balkh Oasis. A huge potential  
Philippe Marquis ..................................................................... 159

Chapter 11:  
New data on the Iron Age in the Sherabad district, South Uzbekistan  
Ladislav Stančo ....................................................................... 171

Chapter 12:  
Exploiting the Virgin Land: Kyzyltepa and the effects of the Achaemenid Persian Empire on its Central Asian frontier  
Wu Xin .................................................................................. 189

Chapter 13:  
New data on the historical geography of Old Termez and its vicinities  
Jaoliddin Annaev ..................................................................... 215

Chapter 14:  
Bactrians in Persepolis – Persians in Bactria  
Wouter F.M. Henkelman .......................................................... 223
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 15: On the way to Roxane 2. Satraps and hyparchs between Bactra and Zariaspa-Maracanda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claude Rapin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 16: Burials with fractioned bones in the funerary practice of Bactria in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazim Abdullaev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 17: A sepulchral pit from the Late Iron Age in Bactra. The site of Tepe Zargaranz (Afghanistan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julio Bendeuzi Sarmiento, Philippe Marquis, Johanna Lhuillier, Hervé Monchot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 18: The fire temple at Topaz Gala depe in southern Turkmenistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcin Wagner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 19: Kindyktepa: a temple of the mid-first millennium BC in Southern Uzbekistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viktor V. Mokroborodov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction

Nikolaus Boroffka, Johanna Lhuillier

The conference “A Millennium of History” was conceived by the editors towards the end of Dr. Lhuillier’s research as a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation. At the same time the passing away of the renowned archaeologist Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi, one of the pioneers in the Iron Age archaeology of Central Asia, in 2013 gave reason to dedicate the conference proceedings to his memory.

Although the Iron Age was identified over a hundred years ago, named in 1908 as “Culture IV” of the southern mound at Anau by H. Schmidt, research on the pre-Hellenistic Iron Age of Central Asia has remained in the shadow of the more intensely studied, and more spectacular, preceding Bronze Age, and of the following Hellenistic period, where especially the written accounts of Alexander the Great’s campaign in Central Asia have for long and continuously attracted the attention of scientists.

New impulses were again provided by the publication of results from the excavations at Yaz Depe in the Murghab Delta of Turkmenistan, where three phases of the Iron Age were proposed, named Yaz I, Yaz II and Yaz III. The discussion on their origin, genetic interconnection, chronology, and, especially, ethnic attribution did not cease, unfortunately frequently without any concrete archaeological data. While the Yaz I period, characterized primarily by handmade and sometimes painted pottery, chronologically clearly lay after the Bactro-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC), which was originally dated to the 2nd Millennium BC, the Yaz III period was correlated with the Achaemenid time, i.e. beginning with the conquest of large parts of Central Asia under Cyrus II (the Great) around 539 BC up to the successful campaigns of Alexander the Great in 329 and 328 BC. Thus Yaz I was dated to the early 1st Millennium BC and Yaz II filled the period up to the integration of southern Central Asia (Provinces of Bactria, Gandhara, Khorezmia and Sogdia) into the Persian Empire, i.e. roughly the entire 7th and the first half of the 6th Century BC.

Major new collections of data were provided, among others, by the excavations at Ulug Depe in the Kopet Dagh foreland of southern Turkmenistan, and other Turkmen sites (see Chapter 2 by A. Kurbanov, in this volume), Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan, and Kuchuk Tepa in southern Uzbekistan, although these did not solve the problems mentioned above in any unanimously accepted way, leading V. I. Sarianidi to describe the Iron Age in 2007 as “one of the intriguing mysteries of Central Asian archaeology.”

In 2009, in connection with the exhibition “Alexander der Grosse und die Öffnung der Welt. Asiens Kulturen im Wandel”, a confer-

1 Schmidt 1908, 183-186. Schmidt dated this layer to the period between 1000 and 500 BC, mainly on account of a three-sided arrowhead and a few iron fragments found in clear context. Given the very initial stage of archaeological research in Central Asia his dating is remarkably correct viewed from today.
2 Macc on 1959.
3 Besides this name the period is, with slightly varying understanding of the material culture, also known as Namazga V-VI or the Oxus Civilisation (Francfort 1981, 176; Sarianidi 1990; Hiebert 1994; Francfort 2009). For further points of view see, for example, Götzelt 1996; Luneau 2014; Teifer 2015, each with further literature. The Sarpal culture is a term used for the local variant in southern Uzbekistan.
4 Sarianidi 1968; Sarianidi 1969; Sarianidi 1971; Sarianidi 1972. For a more recent overview see Lecomte 2013; Lhuillier et al. 2013.
7 For overviews of research history and the present stage of research see Сверчиков/Борوفка 2008; Борофка/ Сверчиков 2013; Lhuillier 2013; Сверчиков/Борофка 2016.
8 Sarianidi 2007, 135.
9 Hansen et al. 2009. The exhibition was further shown in Leoben (Hansen et al. 2010a) and Madrid (Hansen et al. 2010b).
ence was organized, in which international participants presented and discussed new research and present problems of Antiquity in Central Asia. One thing which became clear to all participants was the general neglect and lack of modern studies on the Iron Age preceding the conquest of Central Asia by Alexander the Great.

Two years later a first conference, dedicated to problems concerning Iron Age pottery, was organised in 2011 in Warsaw. The proceedings appeared in 2013 and introduced new information on the typology and chronology of pottery shapes, which is one reason why pottery does not play a major role in the Conference held in Berlin. At the Warsaw conference it was also proposed to continue a series of meetings, in order to discuss the problems of the Iron Age in Central Asia mentioned above. The Berlin conference should also be seen in this context, bringing together experienced and younger scholars in an effort of international collaboration.

The Iron Age of Southern Central Asia, here understood as the period between the end of the BMAC and the conquest of the region by Alexander the Great, may thus most conveniently be considered as the Yaz I-III period, corresponding to the Early, Middle, and Late Iron Age.

The hand-made painted pottery culture of the Early Iron Age (Yaz I period) shows very clear and significant changes against the preceding BMAC:

- proto-urban sites with monumental buildings are no longer constructed,
- wheel-thrown pottery is either absent, or present only in a minor percentage compared to hand-made wares, sometimes painted,
- long distance trade is archaeologically no longer clearly visible,
- highly skilled stone and metal crafting is very reduced or even absent,
- symbolic objects are very rare,
- the iconography is no longer significantly present in the archaeological record,
- standardised funerary practices, expressed in varied forms in the frame of cemeteries that may comprise several thousand burials are no longer known.

The changes in this cultural phenomenon, spread from northern Iran in the west (see Chapter 5 by A. Vahdati, in this volume) up to the Ferghana Valley and the borders of China in the east, appear radical at first glance. In how far the changes were caused by influences or migrations from the steppes of the north is still a matter of debate (See Chapter 3 by B. Cerasetti, L. M. Rouse and I. De Nigris, and Chapter 4 by J. Lhuillier, J. Bendeuz-Sarmiento and S. Mustafakulov, both in this volume). However, some form of monumental buildings may still have been constructed, such as the platforms at Kuchuk Tepa or Maidatepa (Bandikhan I), in southern Uzbekistan, and as may be the case at Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan (see Chapter 7 by J. Lhuillier, in this volume). Irrigation agriculture was still practiced during the Yaz I period, as has been documented recently (see Chapter 9 by N. Bulawka, and Chapter 11 by L. Stančo, both in this volume). Wheel-thrown pottery, partly of BMAC tradition, is still present, with around 18% of the assemblage at Maidatepa, as also appears to be the case at Dashli-30 in Turkmenistan (see Chapter 6 by V. Pilipko, in this volume). Very few long distance contacts are documented, although by no means as spectacular as in the BMAC, e.g. by ornaments made from ocean shells found at Maidatepa. Very few artistic objects are known, such as the remarkable stone head from a nameless mound on the territory of the "Karl Marx" kolkhoz near Mirshade, while the abstract clay anthropomorphic statuettes from Maidatepa are still unique. Burials of this period are still practically unknown in southern Central Asia, although some funerary activity - involving atypical burials, excavation and handling of defleshed bones - does appear to have taken place (see Chapter 4 by J. Lhuillier, J. Bendeuz-Sarmiento and S. Mustafakulov, Chapter 16 by K. Abdullayev, both in this volume; graves mentioned in Chapter 6 by V. Pilipko should also be reinterpreted in the light of these most recent studies). The dating of the Yaz I period to the entire second half of the 2nd Millennium BC today appears clear.
The following Middle Iron Age (Yaz II period) sees a return to wheel-thrown pottery dominating (see Chapter 8 by K. Abduillaei, in this volume).\textsuperscript{26} At Ulug Depe the impressive monumental fortress on the top of the mound is built at this time,\textsuperscript{27} and clay sealings document some kind of administration and possibly trade.\textsuperscript{28} Apparently the first fire temples also date back to this time (see Chapter 18 by M. Wagner, in this volume), while some unclear rituals involving a stork were performed at Ulug Depe and maybe also at Koktepe.\textsuperscript{29} However, at least for the moment, we still do not know very much about many of the other aspects of life listed above and especially information on burials is still reduced.\textsuperscript{30}

Although we know from written sources that Central Asia was conquered and incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire around the middle of the 6th Century BC (corresponding to the Late Iron Age, or Yaz III period), the effects of this political change on the region remain elusive. On the one hand, in the pottery a continuous evolution from the preceding Yaz II period is observed,\textsuperscript{31} the feeble renewal of glyptics may be traced back to the pre-Achaemenid period,\textsuperscript{32} and the architecture also follows local traditions (e.g. Chapter 12 by Wu Xin and Chapter 13 by J. Annae, both in this volume). Even the construction and layout of fire-temples, which seem to appear for the first time, may date back to the Yaz II period, considering the complex at Topaz Gala (see Chapter 18 by M. Wagner, in this volume), although they probably become firmly established only in the Achaemenid (Yaz III period (see Chapter 19 by V. Mokroborodov, in this volume).\textsuperscript{33} The lack of standardized burials persists, even though funerary activity of varied form exists, in the continuity of practices that appeared at the beginning of the Iron Age (see Chapter 17 by J. Bendezu Sarmiento, Ph. Marquis, J. Lhuillier and H. Moncho, in this volume). On the other hand recent analysis of settlement structures (see Chapter 12 by Wu Xin and Chapter 10 by Ph. Marquis, both in this volume) and a fresh look at the texts (see Chapter 14 by W. Henkelman and Chapter 15 by C. Rapin, both in this volume) indicate that Bactria and Sogdia were fully integrated, and the people from here, at least when of any acceptable social standing, were treated in the same way as other citizens of the Achaemenid Empire.

The conquest of large parts of Central Asia by Alexander the Great brought significant changes, documented both in written sources and in archaeological finds. The exposure of the dead to wild animals (birds or dogs) is forbidden by Alexander and burials are indeed again documented archaeologically, although funerary research for the early Hellenistic period is still insufficient.\textsuperscript{34} In architecture at least fortification technology changes, as has been recognised some time ago.\textsuperscript{35} Although perhaps not immediately and not simultaneously everywhere, the material culture, and especially the pottery, demonstrates completely new technologies and shapes. Composite vessels made by joining a model-shaped bottom to a wheel-finished top (“cylinder-conical vessels” of Yaz II and Yaz III tradition) disappear fairly quickly, and generally a Greek determined repertoire of shapes becomes standard. This, presumably, was also connected to different food and ways of eating, since the new ceramic set is dominated by what is known as “fish-plates”, while plates and bowls had practically been absent in the previous periods. Alexander the Great's conquest thus marks a decisive and lasting break in the cultural history of Central Asia, and was therefore chosen as the late time-limit for the Berlin conference.

In conclusion, although recent research has improved our knowledge of the pre-Hellenistic Iron Age in southern Central Asia considerably, not least illustrated by the contributions collected in the present volume, much further research is still needed. This is perhaps especially well shown by Ph. Marquis in Chapter 10, where the great potential for archaeological and historical research in newly accessible Afghanistan, the southern part of Central Asia is presented.

We think that with the new research presented here, various impulses are given and useful paths for future research are opened.

\textsuperscript{27} Сараджиди 1968; Сараджиди 1969; Сараджиди 1971; Сараджиди 1972. For a more recent overview see Leconte et al. 2010; Lhuiller et al. 2013.
\textsuperscript{28} Leconte 2004; Wu/Leconte 2012.
\textsuperscript{29} Leconte/Mashkur 2013.
\textsuperscript{30} The only discoveries (atypical burials) with a well-established stratigraphy related to this period were found at Ulug depe, see Lhuiller et al. 2013, 86-87, Fig. 11.
\textsuperscript{32} Francfort 2013.
\textsuperscript{33} Achaemenid sanctuaries may have existed in southern Uzbekistan at Pachmak-tepe (Пачмак 1974), Sangi-tepe and maybe also Koktepe (Араходжаев et al. 2014; Rapin/Khasanov 2016, 71-77), although in the two latter cases the publications still leave open questions.
\textsuperscript{34} Teuffer 2013, with further literature.
\textsuperscript{35} Francfort 1979.
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5