



A. Soudavar

BY CERTIFIED MAIL

May 8, 2005

Dr. John Curtis  
British Museum  
Dept of the Ancient Near East  
Great Russell St  
London WC1B 3DG

Ref: Your letter dated Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 to Mr. Jeremy Summers, lawyer to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Dear Dr. Curtis,

I am now in possession of a copy the above mentioned letter, a letter in which you have labeled various objects contained in the "online catalog" of the Barakat galleries as being of the "Jiroft type," claimed that this type has characteristics that are different from the "intercultural style," and concluded that no other site but Jiroft could have produced the Barakat items.

I find this letter inappropriate: because it is intended to reinforce a claim of the Iranian government which is based on false assumptions; because it is inaccurate and makes erroneous representations; and because it is written on a British Museum letterhead, thereby implicating said institution in a dubious affair.

1- The use of a new label such as "Jiroft type" presupposes two conditions: a) that there is a verifiable and secure group of reference items that define this label, b) that this group has novel characteristics clearly distinct from previously known material. Neither is true in this case. To make my point I shall rely on issue no. 287 (Oct. 2003) of the journal *Dossiers d'archéologie*, entitled Jiroft, which reproduces most of the Majidzadeh catalog, with commentaries by various western scholars who analyzed the items reproduce therein (in contrast to the Majidzadeh catalog which has practically none).

- a) It is rather odd that your labeling is based on a group of items none of which have been unearthed in a scientific excavation, and that by Majidzadeh's own avow, they are all from illicit provenance since they were gathered from art markets as far away as Bandar Abbas and Tehran (*Dossier* pp. 25-26), more than a 1000 kms away from Jiroft. Even though, some, or many, may have originated in Jiroft, how can one be sure that they all came from there, and how can they constitute a reliable reference base. To this date, the general practice of archeologists has been to avoid reliance on illicit material alone.
- b) For years, similar items have surfaced in scientific excavations and in various art markets. In a series of well documented papers, Ph. Kohl documented the

similarities of objects produced in different sites (within and outside Iran) and dispersed over a wide geographical area, ranging from India to Mesopotamia. He thus labeled them as “intercultural-style.” I have attached herewith an excerpt of his 1978 article in which he not only reproduces maps to illustrate the wide extent of cultural exchange, but also documents the iconographic elements (snakes, scorpions, palm trees, etc) that he recognizes as characteristic of this style, all of which are to be found on the Majidzadeh items. It is precisely for this reason that, contrary to your assertion, the various contributors to the *Dossier* continue to use the accepted Kohl label and make no distinction between the intercultural-style material and the Majidzadeh items. Indeed:

- Carl C. Lamber Karlovsky, whom you cite as an authority on the intercultural style, asserts that the style of the Majidzadeh items and those of Tepe Yahya (which he himself excavated and constitute the core group of the “intercultural-style”) are one and the same (*Dossier*, p. 76)
- Holly Pittman, (*Dossier* p.79), also emphasizes the similarity between the purported Jiroft items and those from the intercultural-style, especially Tepe Yahya.
- François Vallat (p.92), the iconographic similarities of Zigurat-type monuments in both groups
- Finally, Serge Cleuziou (p. 117), denotes the strong similarities between the Majidzadeh group and intercultural-style items produced in the Tarut workshops situated on a Persian Gulf island (outside Iran).

2- To create a distinction between what you consider as “Jiroft-type” and the intercultural-style, you mention that most of the items of the latter style are “usually not complete.” Not true. I for one had acquired in the early 1970s, at a time that most archeologists couldn’t situate such items, 5 pieces, which were studied by Mayrhofer (he may have published some of them); which were documented by Prudence Harper in the 1980s for the Met’s internal use; of which I published one in 1992 in my *Arts of the Persian Courts*; and which were exhibited in various US museums from 1992 to 1996. In sum, none could have come from Jiroft as this site was only discovered recently. Nevertheless, a quick look at the illustrations that I provide in appendix 2 (figs 1-4), clearly show that they are more “Jiroft-type” than all of the Barakat items, and they are complete. In addition, Oscar W. Muscarella, who published *The Lie that Became Great, The Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures* (Styx Publications, Groningen 2000) with the sole purpose of “exposing” non-excavated material as forgeries, reproduces a number of complete items that are again more “Jiroft-type” than any other intercultural-style material published so far, especially in their bird and palm garden motifs. Muscarella labels them as forgeries. If true, one must conclude that the Majidzadeh items are copies of fakes. If wrong, then you clearly have examples of “Jiroft-type” material that are complete and predate the discovery of the Jiroft site.

3- You recognize as a characteristic of the “Jiroft-type”: an “inlaid decoration in the form of coloured stones.” Unfortunately, it’s a claim unsupported by facts. Indeed, many intercultural style items display cavities that once contained inlaid stones. Nonetheless, examples of items that still carry such inlays are plenty and I have produced three of them in appendix 2: a) the aforementioned fig. 2; b) a piece from

the Baghdad Museum reproduced in *Sumer, Assur, Babylon*, Petit Palais exhibition of 1981, p.60; c) another one from the Miho Museum reproduced in *Ancient Art from the Shumei Family Collection*, Met exhibition of 1996, pp.10-11. As the images clearly show they have color stones inlays, and they are certainly not from Jiroft.

4- More importantly, you recognize, unlike for the intercultural-style, a similarity in the “grey” color of stone, its softness, its weathering, and the quality of its carving, between the Barakat items and your “Jiroft type.” How can one reach such a verdict without seeing the items, and on the basis of online images alone! Such a verdict is not only unacceptable to the scientific community but rejected in the court of law as well. For your information, I have attached in Appendix 3 the rebuke that a French judge addressed to Mr. Perrot who, without physically inspecting a complete and intricate intercultural style item, had also concluded that it came from Jiroft. As it turned out, the experts from the Louvre Museums emphasized among other characteristics, that the item contained mother of pearl inlays not found on any of the Majidzadeh items, and the judge concluded that given the wide circulation of the intercultural style material, a Jiroft provenance could not be ascertained.

5- You also make comparative judgments based on an online catalog that in many instances does not provide dimensions. Such is the case for instance of item X0313, which is larger than vases from the Majidzadeh group.

6- In choosing to reply in such a biased manner to the enquiries of Mr. Summers, you have in fact accepted to engage the reputation of the British Museum, as well as your own, in a case based on a false assumption: as explained by their lawyers in a letter dated Nov. 14, 2004, the Iranian government’s “position is” that “the ownership” of all items that it declares to be of historical value, and which has left the country of Iran without proper authorization, “remains with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” The problem though is that the Iranian government cannot even read its own laws. For, no Iranian law, whether the basic 1930 law on antiquities, or its later supplements, has given the government a blanket ownership on antiquities. There is of course a ban on excavations and on exportations, with penalties stipulated for each. But bans and penalties do not constitute a proof of ownership, even when an item is exported illegally. In fact, article 47.4 of the penalty laws (*ta`zirāt*) promulgated by the Islamic Republic of Iran stipulated prison terms (up to 2 years) for those who attempted to illegally export antiquities but, significantly, emphasized that said antiquities “shall not be confiscated.” It clearly means that the law never attributed a blanket ownership of antiquities to the government. And for good reason. The corner stone of all valid legal systems, from Magna Carta onwards, has always been property laws. An antiquity found on a private property must belong to the land owner. The government cannot take it without a fair and just compensation. An unjust taking is the domain of totalitarian regimes. Neither a British court must condone such a totalitarian claim of ownership, nor should the British Museum be associated with such an endeavor.

I understand and respect your contempt for illicit excavations and your animosity towards the art market even though I disagree with it. I disagree because, fundamentally, I see antiquities as part of a world heritage rather than the privilege of a particular government, and I believe that the most meritorious person or institution

to take custody of this world heritage is the one who will best preserve it, will best study and publish it, and provide access to it. I see no merit in excavating items from the ground in order to bury it in museum reserves that nobody can see, where they usually rot or get damaged. I distrust Islamic zealots who for centuries have defaced the Persepolis reliefs as well as countless miniatures, and whose latest avatar was in the form of Talibans. One should not forget that Khomeini's hangman, Sadegh Khalkhali, had vowed to level down Persepolis, and that more recently, a gold foundation plaque of Persepolis was melted for the price of its metal. When a museum keeper is part of a government which is corrupt to its root, and sees officials taking bribes and steal money everywhere, he naturally sees no harm in stealing a gold plaque that nobody had seen for the past twenty years.

Your goal is to probably have the so called Jirof-type items return to Iran. Yet, the last time the Iranian government rounded up dealers and confiscated the silver vessels from the Kalmakareh grotto, within a couple of months most of them resurfaced in London. Lured by the high prices that these items could fetch on the art markets, members of the Iranian secret services smuggled them out (some were subsequently arrested). In the case of intercultural-style items, it is a fact that they regularly appeared in auction catalogs but nobody raised a fuss about it. This new found zeal only developed in the wake of two high priced auctions in Paris. There are hundreds of archeological sites and historical monuments in need of basic repair but are neglected because efforts in that respect do not make headlines. The Iranian government's time and efforts need to be directed towards the preservation of these national treasures rather than the return of intercultural-style objects, thousands of which it already has.

The more pertinent question though is: how could it be that while there is a ban on the export of antiquities, intercultural-style items come out of Iran in hundreds and in a steady stream? How can borders be so porous? The fact is that corruption in the Islamic Republic of Iran is institutionalized and each group has been allocated a share. The Revolutionary Guards are those who get the lion share in contraband activities. They have their own port, and against a fee bring in items duty-free, and against another fee, export banned items. If the government really wants to stop exportation of banned items, all it has to do is shut down the contraband activities of its Revolutionary Guards.

The soil of Iran is so rich in archeology that no ban will ever be able to stop accidental discoveries. Archeologists want to protect their turfs and keep items underground even in the face of the imminent threat of dams and irrigation projects that are due to submerge in deep water so many of the archeological sites of Iran. I prefer an open market system with one, or two, yearly auctions in Iran, through which discovered items will be auctioned with proper certificates and established provenance. Because such a system will ultimately create a better market and higher prices, farmers who discover items will have a natural tendency to bring it there and avoid illicit channels. The government will then be able to exercise preemption rights on the spot, as practiced now in the French system.

Finally, I see the dissemination of antiquities as one of the best ways to disseminate the knowledge of Iranian culture around the world. This is my point of view. Yours

may be different. But no belief, as deep rooted as it may be, should lead to a falsification of truth and misrepresentation of facts. Your letter is factually incorrect and I vow to fight it in court if need be. Its negative impact will undoubtedly affect the British Museum as well.

Respectfully yours,

Abolala Soudavar

CC:  
The Director of the British Museum  
The British Museum legal department  
Mr. Jeremy Summers  
Barakat Galleries

# The Balance of Trade in Southwestern Asia in the Mid-Third Millennium B.C.<sup>1</sup>

by Philip L. Kohl

THE DELINEATION AND INTERPRETATION of prehistoric exchange networks has been the focus of several recent archaeological studies (Wilmsen 1972, Sabloff and Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975, Earle and Ericson 1977). Two reasons for this interest have been an increasing awareness of the importance of exchange for maintaining and transforming cultural systems and the growing ability of archaeologists, aided by various physical and chemical techniques, to distinguish nonlocal from indigenous artifacts. Archaeologists have been compelled to consider trade or exchange an important independent variable for understanding cultural processes, the explicit goal of contemporary archaeology.

Similarly, social anthropologists, tired of the limited perspective afforded by community studies, have begun to analyze exchange networks with increasing frequency. Smith (1976, vol. 2:309-11, 369), for example, reverses the traditional Marxian paradigm and argues persuasively for the dominance of exchange over production. Utilizing an impressive array of studies of agrarian societies from China and India to Africa and Guatemala, she suggests that

the critical variable is the mode of exchange. Stratification is seen to result from differential access to or control over the means of ex-

<sup>1</sup>I wish to thank C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Annemarie and Abner Shimony, and Robert McC. Adams for critically reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this paper. The maps were drawn by Romyne Dawnay Timms; the final manuscript was typed by Jean Norling.

PHILIP L. KOHL is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology, Wellesley College (Wellesley, Mass. 02181, U.S.A.). Born in 1946, he was educated at Columbia University (B.A., 1969) and at Harvard University (M.A., 1972; Ph.D., 1974). He has done archaeological fieldwork with the Harvard-Iran Project at Tepe Yahya (1968-71, 1973) and surveys in Turkey and Iran (1972) and northeastern Afghanistan (1975-76) as well as extensive studies in museum collections in Europe, the Near East, and the United States. His publications include, with C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "The Early Bronze Age of Iran as seen from Tepe Yahya" (*Expedition* 13[3-4]) and "The Rise and Development of the Earliest Civilizations in the Old World" (*World Civilization Project*, vol. 1, chaps. 8-9); "The Archaeology of Trade" (*Dialectical Anthropology* 1:43-50); "Steatite Carvings of the Early Third Millennium B.C." (*American Journal of Archaeology* 80[1]); "Carved Chlorite Vessels: A Trade in Finished Commodities in the Mid-Third Millennium" (*Expedition* 18[1]:18-21); and "The Mode of Production: Evolutionary Considerations," in *The Mode of Production: Method and Theory*, edited by J. Silverberg (in preparation).

The present paper, submitted in final form 24 VIII 77, was sent for comment to 50 scholars. The responses are printed below and are followed by a reply by the author.

change; and variation in stratification systems is related to types of exchange between producers and non-producers as they affect and are affected by the spatial distribution of the elite and the level of commercialization in the region and beyond.

I shall criticize archaeological discussions which treat trade as one of a limited number of variables that cumulatively must be evaluated to explain specific instances of cultural evolution and further argue that the dichotomy between production and exchange is overdrawn. Any diachronic analysis of changing exchange relations presupposes alterations in the forces and relations of production. History provides countless illustrations of the principle that production and exchange cannot be separated into distinct analytical spheres or subsystems.<sup>2</sup> I shall develop this position by summarizing recent archaeological work in highland Iran which has shown how long-distance trade in both finished commodities and raw materials linked geographically separated centers on the Iranian plateau with the urban communities of the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia and Khuzistan. I shall review the archaeological evidence for this trade and discuss its relevance for understanding the development of early state societies in southwestern Asia and the nature of prehistoric exchange networks.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR LONG-DISTANCE TRADE

Numerous archaeological investigations have been initiated in Iran in the past decade. Under the direction of Perrot (1971), French archaeologists at Susa have reexamined sections left from earlier work on the Acropolis, conducted limited excavations, and produced a reliable, stratigraphically determined sequence extending from late Susiana times (c. 4000 B.C.) to the end of the Protoliterate period. Bampur and Tal-i Iblis, two sites originally investigated by Stein (1937), were reexcavated in the 1960s by de Cardi (1970) and Caldwell (1966, 1967). The latter site yielded evidence for the melting of copper in the early 4th millennium and contained rare but diagnostic ceramic parallels with sites as far west as Mesopotamia. Both Sumner (1974) at Malyan, the ancient Elamite capital of Anshan, and Young (Weiss and Young 1975) at Godin Tepe have unearthed large literate settlements on the Iranian plateau which date to

<sup>2</sup>For example, the rise of serfdom in Eastern Europe in the late Middle Ages depended not only upon the growth of external markets for grain, but also upon the relations of production, such as the relative lack of common lands, that had distinguished the region in earlier periods (cf. Brenner 1976:43, 57-58).

Khafajeh, Nippur, and Mari can be firmly dated to the terminal Early Dynastic II-III A period (c. 2600-2500 B.C.). This date agrees perfectly with historical reconstructions based on Sumerian king-lists which indicate strong Elamite (Iranian) influence on Sumer and the preeminence of Adab (Hallo and Simpson 1971:50-51). The Intercultural Style vessels represent a classic archaeological horizon; therefore they are extremely helpful for understanding cultural interaction in southwestern Asia in the mid-3d millennium.

The common material and shared shapes and the specificity of the designs allow us instantly to recognize these vessels as widely exchanged luxury goods. Comparison of the products of the small soft-stone workshop at Tepe Yahya with stratified examples from Mesopotamia permits us to examine the economic and social background of long-distance exchange in the mid-3d millennium, to analyze the motives and purposes of the participating societies, and to understand how such trade was consistent with and reinforced the social structures of markedly disparate communities. It must be emphasized, however, that the vessels are not unique indicators of long-distance trade during this period; other commodities, such as metal weapons and gold and silver vessels, as well as precious materials, such as shells, turquoise, and lapis lazuli, were also exchanged over vast distances. I am concentrating on the vessels simply because they are so diagnostic and well known; they are not exceptional, but represent the tip of an iceberg whose mass can already be dimly perceived.

A brief examination of the literature confirms this interpretation. For example, Young's (1972) analysis of gold artifacts

suggests that golden objects found in Sumer may have come from the Pactolus Valley in western Anatolia, and Bass's (1966) stylistic comparison of jewelry presumably from the Troad with objects from the Royal Cemetery at Ur also supports a common western Anatolian production center. Similarly, Vanden Berghe's (1973) discovery of metal weapons in Luristan which exactly duplicate material from Mesopotamia confirms Aitchison's (1960:41) observation that "during the early dynastic period most of the metals used in Sumer were imported, even in fully fashioned forms." Archaeologists have long known that lapis lazuli, perhaps the stone most highly esteemed by the Sumerians, had to have been obtained from the Badakhshan mines of northeastern Afghanistan (cf. Hermann 1968). The recent discovery of the Fullol hoard (Dupree, Gouin, and Omer 1971, Tosi and Wardak 1972, Kohl n.d.), which combines familiar Turkmenian and Central Asian motifs with highly specific Mesopotamian designs such as the bearded bull, might suggest that some of the lapis lazuli from Badakhshan reached Sumer in the form of finished goods.

The wealth of discoveries from Early Dynastic II-III A ("Fara zeit") sites and later Sumerian conceptions of a mythical Golden Age imply that the extent of foreign trade may have been greater at this time than in the immediately succeeding periods. In his discussion of textual references to seafaring merchants from Ur in the late 3d and early 2d millennia, Oppenheim (1954:14) notes the decline of foreign relations from an apogee in earlier times: "A process of gradual and slow

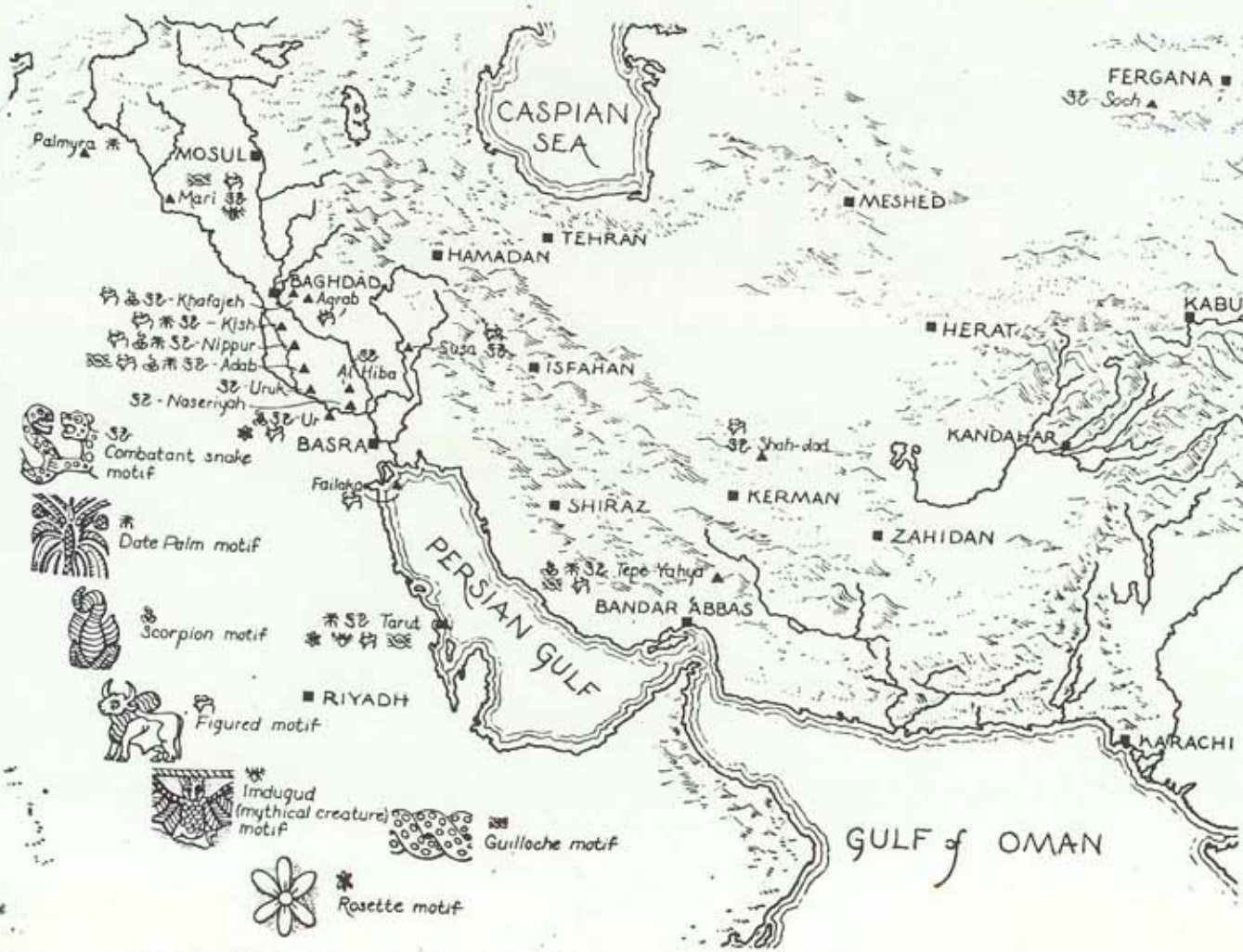


FIG. 1. Distribution of Intercultural Style vessels: Naturalistic motifs. ▲, archaeological sites; ■, modern towns.

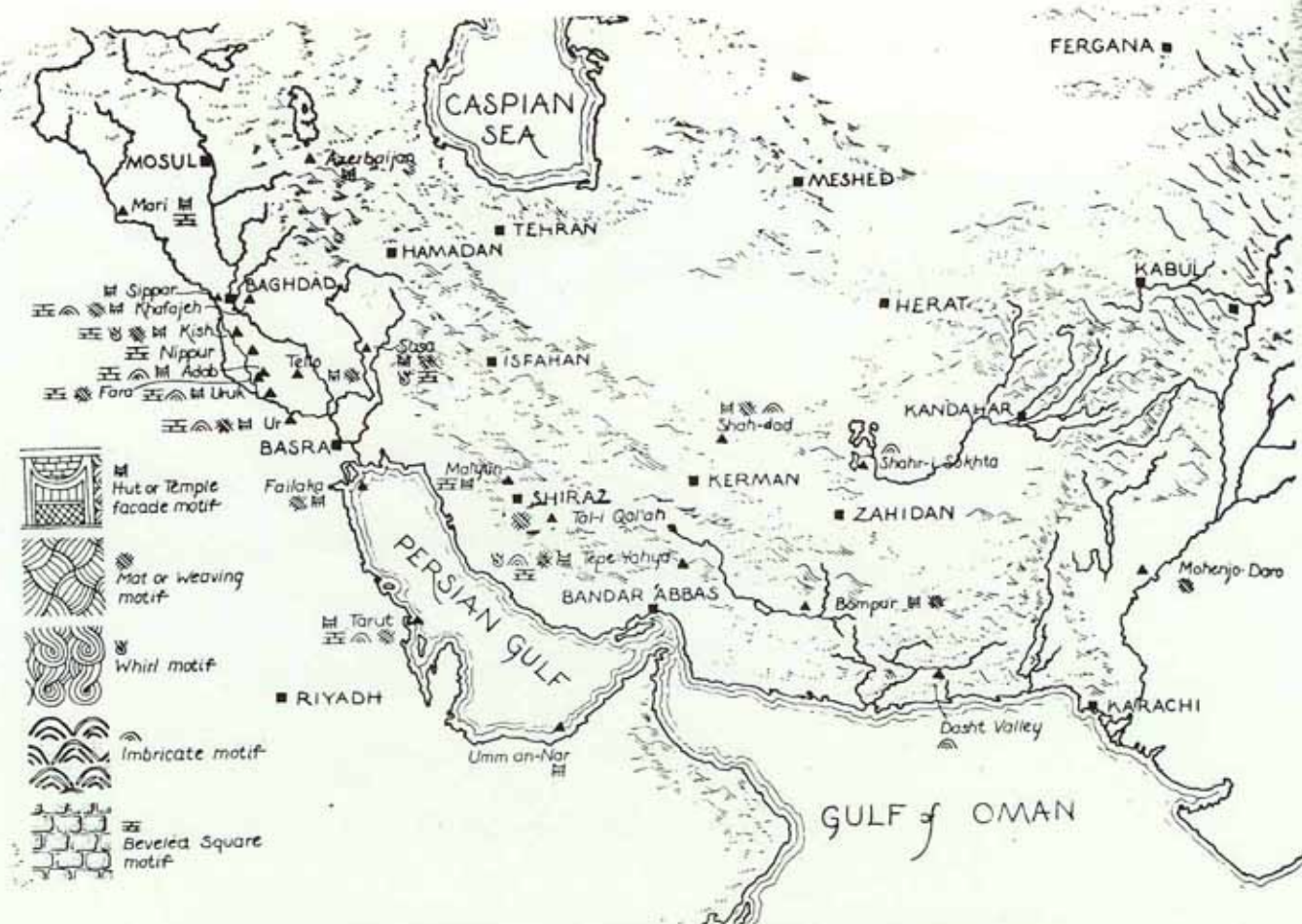


FIG. 2. Distribution of Intercultural Style vessels: Architectural and geometric motifs.

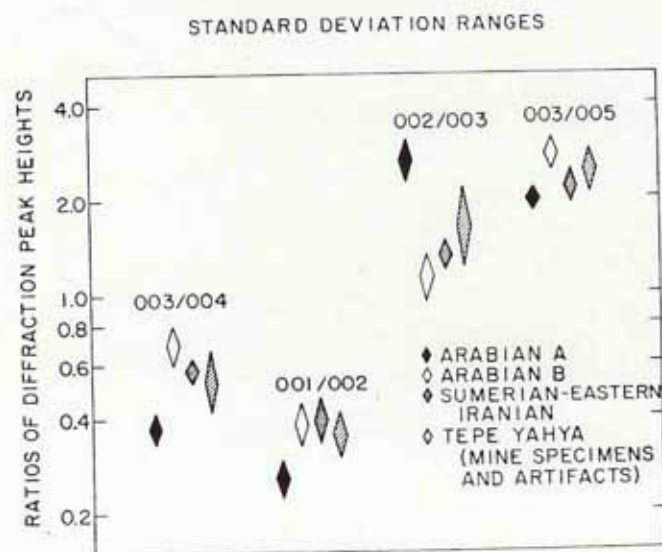


FIG. 3. Standard deviation ranges for ratios of basal plane x-ray diffraction peaks for four groups of chlorite artifacts.

restriction of the geographical horizon marks the entire development of these commercial connections. We may well assume that the frequency and intensity of contact had reached a peak early in the third millennium B.C." The nature and mechanics of this earlier exchange have yet to be explored, but any exclusive model for characterizing such extensive trade is inappropriate. Foreign trade in the mid-3d millennium was an exceedingly complex process, involving the movement of

finished luxury commodities, raw materials, and staple products, and was probably conducted both by state agents and by private entrepreneurs. For instance, certain classes of material, like seals and beads (cf. Tosi and Piperno 1974), were probably imported in unworked or semifinished form and carved to meet local demands and tastes. At the same time, evidence for the production of Intercultural Style vessels at Tepe Yahya and at least four other workshops, as well as the intriguing stylistic parallels in weapons and jewelry between highland areas on the Iranian and Anatolian plateaus and lowland centers on the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia, suggests that substantial quantities of finished goods were also exchanged.

Figure 4 summarizes the foreign relations obtaining during the mid-3d millennium; the illustration is necessarily schematic, but it does show that developments in southwestern Asia were not limited to the alluvial plains and that widely separated communities were linked by complex, well-defined exchange networks.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE NATURE OF TRADE

How did these networks operate? Material may be distributed spatially in the archaeological record by a variety of means,

<sup>5</sup> The recently reported discoveries (Lyonnet 1977, Gardin n.d.) of Harappan sites near Ai Khanoum, north of the junction of the Kokcha and Amu Darya (Oxus) Rivers in northeastern Afghanistan's Shortugai plain, considerably extend the area of the Indus Valley civilization. Current excavations of Francfort (Francfort and Pottier n.d.) in Kabul should help determine when such expansion occurred and whether or not the Harappans moved north to direct the flow southward of valuable raw materials, such as lapis lazuli from Badakhshan and tin reportedly from Central Asia (Masson and Sarianidi 1972:128).

APPENDIX 2



Fig.1



fig. 2



fig. 3



Fig.4



fig. 5



fig. 6



Fig. 7



Baghdad Museum



Miho Museum

Après avoir entendu les parties comparantes ou leur conseil,

Vu l'assignation en référé introductive d'instance, délivrée le 14 octobre 2003, et les motifs y énoncés,

Vu les conclusions en défense déposées à l'audience du 15 octobre 2003,

\* \* \*

La **RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D'IRAN** expose que les autorités iraniennes ont été informées de ce qu'une "coupe aux poissons" en chlorite est présentée à une vente aux enchères à l'Hôtel Drouot à Paris le 19 octobre 2003 (objet n° 20 figurant page 10 du catalogue de la **MAISON DE VENTE AUX ENCHÈRES BOISGIRARD ET ASSOCIES**) ; que selon le catalogue, elle provient de la "Région du Golfe, Ile de Tarut (?) 3ème millénaire av. J.C.", qu'en réalité cet objet est issu de l'aire de Jiroft comme en atteste un avis du Professeur Jean Perrot ; que ce site a fait l'objet de fouilles non déclarées et de pillages, en 2001 et 2002, comme la presse quotidienne et spécialisée en a rendu compte ; qu'il est d'une importance archéologique considérable ;

Que la découverte et la sortie de cet objet s'est opérée en violation de la législation iranienne qui réserve à l'Etat le droit de fouille et prévoit la confiscation des objets trouvés en cas d'infraction à cette disposition, confie le commerce des antiquités aux personnes autorisées, prévoit une autorisation d'exporter les objets classés comme "oeuvres nationales" ;

Faisant valoir les dispositions de la "convention concernant les mesures à prendre pour interdire et empêcher l'importation, l'exportation et le transfert de propriété illicites des biens culturels" ratifiée par elle le 27 janvier 1975 et par la République Française le 7 janvier 1997, le trouble manifestement illicite et le dommage imminent que représente la vente, elle demande la mise sous séquestre de cette pièce jusqu'à constatation judiciaire de ses droits, subsidiairement la rectification de la provenance de l'objet par la lecture avant sa vente d'un extrait de la présente ordonnance ;

La défenderesse relève que la **RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D'IRAN** n'apporte pas les éléments permettant d'établir avec une vraisemblance suffisante que l'objet provient du site de Jiroft, que l'expert qu'elle a consulté n'émet qu'une supposition dans l'attestation versée aux débats, que le propriétaire certifie l'avoir acquis en 1964 ; elle réclame le débouté ; à l'audience du 16 octobre 2003 elle a indiqué que le propriétaire bénéficiait d'une prescription trentenaire et qu'en l'état la **RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D'IRAN** ne revendiquait pas la propriété ;

A l'audience du 15 octobre 2003 elle a développé les points suivants : les échanges à la période considérée ont dispersé des objets en chlorite de la Mésopotamie à l'Indus ; aucun objet découvert sur le site de Jiroft ne présente la forme et les caractéristiques techniques, stylistiques et décoratives de la pièce querellée ; en particulier les incrustations de nacre formant le décor de poissons qui orne son intérieur sont étrangères aux techniques et aux décors employés



à Jiroft ; malgré la prudence de l'énonciation de l'expert : "Ile de Tarut (?)" la pièce est rattachable à la production du Golfe et plus précisément au style interculturel ou international ;

Considérant que l'attestation du Professeur Perrot avait été délivrée sans examen de l'objet, l'audience a été prolongée au 16 octobre 2003, les parties étant invitées à justifier leurs prétentions respectives en se faisant accompagner du ou des sachants qu'elles souhaiteraient et à organiser un examen de l'objet par le sachant de la demanderesse ; la demanderesse a été priée de préciser les mesures qu'elle proposait pour authentifier l'origine de l'objet ;

A l'audience du 16 octobre 2003, elle a fait entendre le Professeur Perrot et Monsieur Madjidzadeh, Directeur du centre national archéologique de Jiroft, qui ont indiqué n'avoir jamais vu de pièces similaires, que les incrustations de pierres et la technique étaient identiques à celles pratiquées à Jiroft, les incrustations de nacre dans la forme présentée par la coupe apparaissant propres à l'objet ; le premier a affirmé sa conviction que le style de l'objet était celui de Jiroft, le second que la pièce en parvenait ;

La défenderesse a produit une lettre du conservateur général chargé du département des antiquités orientales du Louvre, confirmant ses analyses et soulignant que "l'usage de nacre dans le cas de cette coupe à poissons est sans exemple dans cette production", le Professeur Perrot avait considéré qu'il y avait alternance de poissons et de rapaces ;

Des sachants ont relevés une différence stylistique avec les objets publiés de Jiroft : "l'horreur du vide" qui la caractérise ne marque pas la coupe ;

La demanderesse a proposé une expertise amiable refusée par la défenderesse ;

Attendu que l'office du Juge des référés consiste à apprécier la vraisemblance ou le caractère d'évidence de la prétention de la République Islamique d'Iran qui allègue nécessairement que la coupe présentée à la vente du 19 octobre 2003 a été extraite de l'aire de Jiroft récemment et a été exportée illégalement, depuis 1997, date de ratification par la République française de la convention relative aux transferts de propriété illicites de biens culturels ;

Qu'il lui appartient de l'établir ; que les parties ont convenu du caractère unique de la coupe, actuellement, tant par sa forme que par son décor intérieur, qu'elles conviennent que la matière, les techniques employées, à l'exception de l'incrustation de nacre, sont à la période considérée répandues, que la circulation de ce type d'objet était importante et couvrait une vaste zone géographique ; que dès lors la demanderesse n'établit pas avec une vraisemblance suffisante que la "coupe à poissons" provient d'une extraction récente du site de Jiroft et d'une exportation illégale postérieure à 1997 ;

Qu'il n'y a pas lieu à suspension de la vente ;

Qu'il n'entre pas dans les pouvoirs du Juge des référés de déterminer l'origine de la pièce ; qu'il n'y a lieu à référé sur la demande subsidiaire ;

5

## PAR CES MOTIFS

Statuant publiquement en premier ressort, par ordonnance contradictoire,  
Disons la demande de suspension de la vente du 19 octobre 2003 non fondée ;  
Disons n'y avoir lieu à référé sur la demande subsidiaire ;  
Laissons les dépens à la charge de la **RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D'IRAN**.

Fait à Paris le 17 octobre 2003

Le Greffier,

Le Président,



Christelle BATARSON



Louis-Marie RAINGEARD DE LA BLETIÈRE