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WATERY HUMPBACK CATTLE PATTERN IN THE RIGVEDA AND THE FIRST ARCHAEOLOGICALLY RECORDED ROUTE OF THE RIGVEDIC ARYANS' MIGRATION FROM INDIA TO ANATOLIA

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Abstract

The article analyzes the main religious and mythological symbol of the Rig Veda - a water humpbacked bull and a cow. The material embodiment of this pattern was discovered in the Indus Valley in 4000-2000 years. BC NS. And most noticeably around 3200-2800. BC NS. The same pattern spread further west in 2800–1000. BC NS. through Afghanistan, Bactria-Margiana, Iran and Central Asia. Thus, the first in the history of Indo-European research, the exact archaeological route of migration of specific Rigvedic Indo-Aryan tribes from South Asia to Anatolia was registered, and the theory of the settlement of Indo-Europeans outside India was proved.

Keywords: Indo-Europeans, Indo-Aryans, Iranians, Rigveda, watery zebu image, archaeology.

I. INTRODUCTION

The earliest Indo-European text Rigveda (3300–2600 BCE) composed in the north-western part of Hindustan contains the image of the watery humpback cattle in all its chronological layers in the descriptions of its main — having undoubtedly Indo-Aryan and Indo-European background — Playing-in-the-Light (Devas).

The material embodiments of the watery humpback cattle pattern in the archaeological record of the Ancient East regions appear in the Indus Valley around 4000 BCE and move further in time (between 2800–1000 BCE) and farther west through Afghanistan, Bactria–Margiana and Iran up to the Central Anatolia. This enables us to trace the exact archaeological route of the Rigvedic (=Pre)Harappan Indo-Aryan migration.

The first ever in the Indo-European studies' history archaeologically based map of the dispersal of the Rigvedic core watery (hump backed) bull pattern throughout the Ancient East proving the origin of the Indo-Aryans in the Sindhu (Indus) Valley and the population movement of the Indo-Aryan and other Indo-European tribes out of North-Western South Asia through Afghanistan, Bactria–Margiana and Iran up to Central Asia Minor (the Hittite Kingdom) has been drawn and presented.



II. METHODOLOGY

The study combines the exploration of the archaeological and museum data on the watery zebu cattle cult of Asia from the Chalcolithic to the Early Iron Ages and the most archaic Indo-European text — the Rigveda (3300–2600 BCE). Thus, the article has an interdisciplinary character.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the Rigveda Vayu is described as having his own oxen flying in the river (I.135.9). Ashvins as the bulls have sent water (I.157.5) and their zebu bull (I.181.5) goes forth dispatching many refreshing drinks of honey (I.181.6). The sounding rivers are called the bull's wives (V.42.12). Parjanya is the bull of lively drops depositing his semen as embryo in the plants (V.83.1). Indra acts as a watery bull many times (I.55.4; II.12.12; X.43.3; X.49.9). Indra is characterized as the bull of the rivers and the bull of the standing waters (VI.44.21). The waters being won by him—bull are named his wives (VIII.15.6). Agni was also placed on the earth as the rivers' leader and the bull of the standing waters (VII.5.2). Agni grows and roars in the waters' womb as a bull and a buffalo (X.8.1).

But it is Soma who is most often described as a watery bull pouring some liquid and being identified with it and as a bull related to waters—waves—rivers (IX.29.1; IX.72.7; IX.74.3; IX.86.12; IX.86.43; IX.86.44; IX.93.2; IX.97.40–41). Soma is a bull roaring loudly in the waters' womb (IX.76.5), a bull flowing as a hundred of streams (IX.86.11) and as a thousand of them (IX.108.8=IX.108.11). Soma is described as a bull having a thousand streams and plunging through the sea and the rivers, as being fixed in the streams in a company of the wave of waters (IX.86.7–8).

The bull's image in the Rigveda and in the Vedic (Old) Indo-Aryan language is related to the waters' designation on a deep etymological level. The most frequently used terms to denote a bull in the earliest Samhita have not yet lost their etymological derivation from the verbal roots varsh- "to rain", "to pour" (Vrishan, Vrishabha, Vrishni) (compare the poets' play with this meaning in: I.108.3; II.34.2; V.63.3; V.83.6; VI.68.11; VIII.20.9; IX.74.3; X.75.3; X.96.13; X.116.4) and uksh- "to sprinkle", "to moisten" (Ukshan). Thus, it is evident that originally in the Vedic (Old) Indo-Aryan language and in the Rigveda the words denoting bulls meant/mean "raining", "sprinkling", "pouring" some kind of liquid or moisture.

It is clear that in the Rigveda the terms Vrishan, Vrishabha, Vrishni denoting bulls should be understood as «the bull ejaculating the seminal fluid» (I.128.3; III.55.17; IV.5.3; V.69.2; VII.101.6; IX.19.4–5). It is worth noticing that the above-mentioned terms are used in the Rigveda to signify humpback bulls (I.181.5–6; VIII.20–21; X.8.2; X.105.5–7, 9).

Moreover, the parallel relation of the several of the above-mentioned Rigvedic Devas to the images of the watery bull (see above) and the humpback bull is characteristic. Thus, zebu bulls are described as the drawing animals (I.184.3) of Ashvins' chariot (I.46.3; IV.44.2). Ashvins have a formidable (V.73.7) humpback beast—bull (V.75.4) of a golden hue (I.181.5). Indra is a humpback bull (VIII.45.14) with three humps (I.121.4). Soma's moisture is characterized as a humpback bull (zebu) (IX.67.8), the same as Agni (X.8.2).

The image of the watery cow is also widespread in the Rigveda (I.112.18; I.125.4; I.164.41–42; II.34.12; VII.42.1; IX.108.6; X.76.3).

In the material culture any vessel with the depiction of a humped bull on it can function as an embodied symbol of the Rigvedic pattern of the watery bull pouring liquid and identified with it (bull=liquid). Such vessels are abundantly evidenced in the Sindhu (Indus) valley in 4000–1500 BCE. (Photographic Applications, Plates 1–3)



But the most obvious, direct and undoubtful result of the materialization of the Rigvedic pattern of the watery zebu bull are the rythons having the humped bull shape. A rhyton itself is a specific type of a vessel from which fluids were drunk or poured in some ceremony such as libation or during the ritual(ized) feast. The rythons of the zebu bull shape do not only with all certainty demonstrate the common character of the Rigvedic culture and of the archaeological data of the North-West of South Asia but are also an essential chronological and geographic criterion pointing at the autochthonous origin of the Rigvedic Aryans in the Sindhu (Indus) valley. It also gives us an opportunity to trace the migration of the zebu keepers and the creators of the culture with the pattern of the watery humped cattle beyond the boundaries of the northwestern Hindustan.

Musé Guimet (Paris) is the home for the polychrome rhyton of the Nal culture (of the South-East Balochistan and Sind(h)) (Photographic Applications, Plate 4) in the shape of a standing humped bull with an injection cup on the nape of the neck (inv. num. MA 12675) (3000–2800 BCE) (Figure 1). Thus the pattern of the watery zebu bull is archaeologically evidenced in Balochistan just after 3000 BCE which proves our dating of the Rigveda hymns between 3300 and 2600 BCE and once more signals the habitation of the Rigvedic poets in that period in the Sindhu (Indus) valley.



Figure 1

The unique terracotta ring vessel of the Kulli culture of Balochistan (Photographic Applications, Plate 5) dated by the last centuries of the III millennium BCE has two hollow zebu figurines with the injection holes on the humps of the bovines (now in Okayama Orient Museum) (Figure 2).



Figure 2

An illegally excavated burial in the Southern Afghanistan yielded a silver cup with the engraved depictions of the humped bulls dated around 2300–2000 BCE (the estimation of Dr. St. John Simpson, a senior curator at the British Museum) (Figure 3).



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The collection of the Miho Museum (Japan) contains a cup of gold and silver alloy dated around 2100–1900 BCE with two attached figurines of the reclining zebu bulls originating from the Northern Afghanistan (Bactria) (Figure 6). A stucco moulding of a cultic vessel of clay in the form of a humped bull was excavated from a looted grave in Bactria (Figure 4). A similar clay figurine was found at the Togolok 21 site in the Murghab river (also called Margos, Margu and Margiana) delta in Turkmenistan (Photographic Applications, Plate 6 & Figure 5). Both items are the products of the Bactria–Margiana archaeological culture dated between 2300 and 1500 BCE. They were originally fixed to the rims of the ritual vessels used probably for the libations and drinking of Soma–Haoma the same as the cups from the British Museum and the Miho Museum.



Figure 6

The Shahdad site in the Kerman province of Iran was the home of several overlapping settlements dated between 4000 and 1500 BCE (Photographic Applications, Plate 6). The Kerman province gives us a stone vessel with the carved depictions of zebu bulls functioning as an embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern and evidencing the migration of the zebu keepers and the creators of the Rigvedic culture with the motif of the watery humpback bull from India to Iran even beyond Dasht-e Lut (Figure 7). A chlorite vessel from the Cemetery A of Shahdad with an incised zebu figure points at the same conclusion (Figure 8). The Halil Rud valley to the south of Shahdad near Jiroft had a large settlement called Konar Sandal in 2880–2200 BCE. Many looted graves of this area yielded numerous chlorite vessels and other items with the carved depictions and inlays of the (semi)precious stones and seashells. Quite often, they serve as a materialization of the watery humped bull pattern. Not only zebu cattle were incised on the vessels that is on the liquid containers but also the specific water flows coming out the bovines' body were quite frequently added by the craftsmen (Photographic Applications, Plates 7–11). Ancient trade between Kerman and Mesopotamia led to the spread of the chlorite vessels with zebu carvings as far west as Tarut island (al-Rafiah) of the Persian Gulf and Tell Agrab, Diyala Region, Iraq.



Figure 7



Figure 8

The excavations of the Southern Konar Sandal site resulted in the discovery of a fragmented cup with zebu image pointing once more at the spread of the watery humped bull pattern from India to Jiroft culture of Iran (Figure 9). A crucial evidence of the specifically South Asian (post-Rigvedic Mature Harappan) origin of the Jiroft motif of the watery zebu is a chlorite vessel with a double carving of a humped bull with only one horn from the Archaeological Museum of Jiroft (Figure 11). A similar vessel from the Western Kerman with a zebu unicorn carving is kept in a private collection (Figure 10).



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Around 1800 BCE the watery bull pattern penetrates Elam as evidenced by a clay vessel with a handle in the form of the front and middle parts of the body of a zebu from the Louvre Museum (inv. num. SB12654) (Figure 12). The same institution houses a bronze vase from Susa (inv. num. SB2825) dated around 1300 BCE with several protruding reliefs depicting humped bulls in the upper row (Photographic Applications, Plate 12). In our opinion, both items signal the contacts with the Kassite or Hurrian populations with Indo-Aryan elements or with Indo-Aryan influence.



Figure 12

The Gilan region to the south of the Caspian Sea (Photographic Applications, Plate 13) served as an intermediate point on the migration route from India through Iran to Anatolia used by South Asian zebu keepers. Here the excavations of Marlik Tepe cemetery near Roudbar in the Gohar Rud river valley and a number of sites around it yielded dozens of ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated between 1500 and 1000 BCE in the form of the humped bulls and cows having generally a spout hole with a gutter instead of a muzzle (Figures 13–14) (Photographic Applications, Plates 14–18).

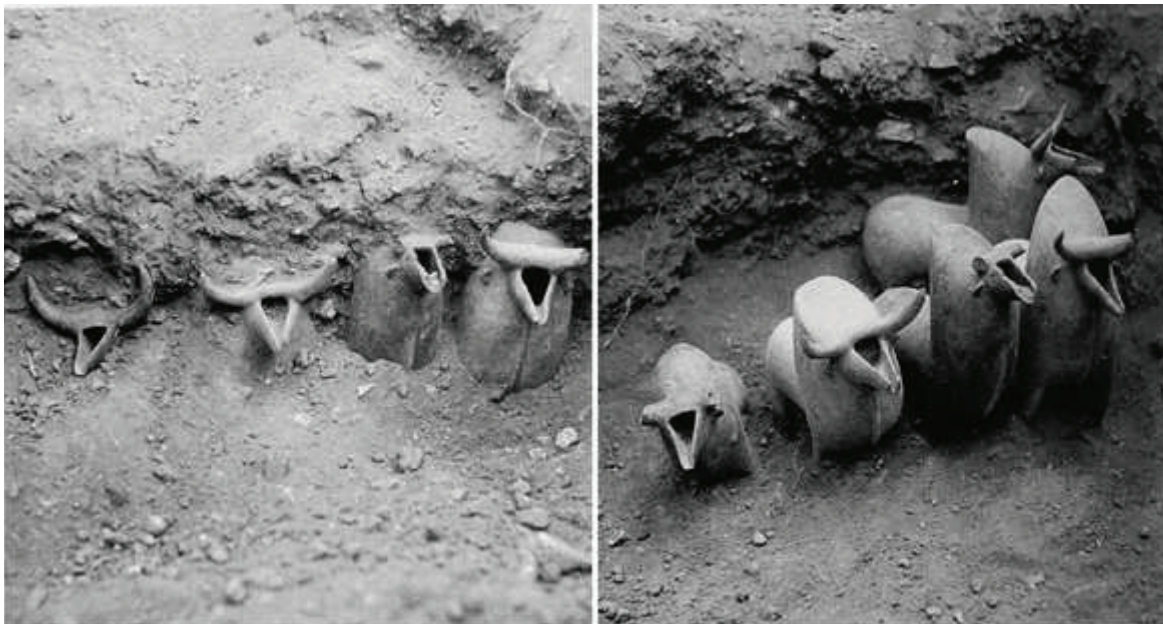


Figure 13

The hump on the most of these hollow figurines is hypertrophic which points at its sacred character. The gold earrings and other ornaments on some of the zebu vessels support the same conclusion. The humped cattle shaped vessels–figurines were definitely used for libations during the burial procedure or at least somehow connected to the idea of the afterlife. They are the ideal, perfect result of the materialization of the Rigvedic motif of the watery zebu bull and cow. It corresponds to the Rigveda evidence of the presence of the images of the aqueous cattle of both sexes in all chronological layers of the text — not only that of the watery bull but also that of the watery cow (I.112.18; I.125.4; I.164.41–42; II.34.12; VII.42.1; IX.108.6; X.76.3). A number of the official and illegal excavations have led to the appearance of numerous zebu rhytons of the Marlik/Amlash/Gilan archaeological culture in different museums all over the world. Similar humped cattle shaped vessels–figurines are also frequently sold at European and North American auctions. Among these some do have the certificates of the thermoluminescent dating, but many are attributed to the Marlik/Amlash/Gilan archaeological culture only judging by their external characteristics.



Figure 14



Figure 15

A unique vessel with a handle and a top with two bull horns, a hump and a spout hole with a gutter instead of a muzzle of the culture evidently akin to the Marlik/Amlash/Gilan ceramic tradition is kept in the Smithsonian Institution (inv. num. S1996.99) (Figure 15).

The next point on the migration route of the creators of the Rigvedic culture with the pattern of the watery bull from India through Iran to Anatolia must have been in the Iranian Azerbaijan. The excavations of Tepe Hasanlu or Tappeh Hassanlu in northwest Iran (in the province of West Azerbaijan), a short distance south of Lake Urmia yielded a gold bowl (1250–800 BCE). Among other relief depictions on its surface, it is decorated with an image of a god of storm, atmosphere and weather driving a chariot. A watery bull draws the vehicle. The bovine has a flow coming out of its muzzle (Photographic Applications, Plate 19).

The last region so far detected as the destination place of the migration of the zebu keepers and the creators of the Rigvedic culture with the pattern of the watery humped bull from the North-West of South Asia through Afghanistan, Southern Central Asia and Iran is Anatolia (Asia Minor) and in particular the Hittite kingdom. Here we have a silver drinking and libation vessel (rhyton) in the form of the front half of the body of a kneeling zebu bull (1400–1200 BCE) (Photographic Applications, Plate 20). Most probably, this cup was dedicated to the head god of the Hittite pantheon that is the god of storm having a strong connection to the (humped) bulls. There is also a strong possibility that a humped bull was depicted four times in relief on the clay Vase A from Hüseyindede Tepe near Yörüklü in the Turkish province of Çorum dated around 1650 BCE. (Photographic Applications, Plate 21)

IV. CONCLUSION

The motif of the (humped) watery bull–liquid and/or the bull producing fluid is to be met in all chronological layers of the Rigveda in the descriptions of the undoubtedly Indo-Aryan as for their cultural attribution and certainly Indo-European as for their origin objects of the religious worship — Agni, Ashvins, Vayu, Indra, Parjanya and Soma. This motif is one of the core elements of the Rigvedic culture as evidenced also by the etymology of the terms used in the Rigveda most frequently to denote the bull–liquid and/or the bull producing fluid.



The pattern of the watery (humped) bull was materialized in the Sindhu (Indus) valley culture in the form of the zebu depictions on the ceramic vessels starting from 4000 BCE and even more prominently — as the humped bull shaped rhyton — during the period of existence of Nal archaeological tradition of Balochistan (the last half of the IV – the first centuries of the III millennia BCE). This corresponds to the dating of the Rigveda by the period of 3300–2600 BCE developed by us based on other criteria. This textual and material parallelism also points at the habitation of the Rigvedic Indo-Aryans in the Sindhu (Indus) valley in the Early Harappan era. The study of the archaeological data on the spread of the items embodying the pattern of the watery (humped) cattle beyond the boundaries of South Asia has enabled us to trace the migration of Indo-European and in particular Indo-Aryan populations in the western direction through the territories of the modern Afghanistan, Bactria–Margiana and Iran (Kerman, Susiana, Gilan and Iranian Azerbaijan) to the Central Anatolia (Asia Minor) and to date this demographic process between 2800 and 1000 BCE (Photographic Applications, Plate 22). Thus the additional support to the hypothesis of the spread of the zebu (depictions) in general from the Sindhu (Indus) valley westwards up to the (North)Eastern Mediterranean region as a marker of Indo-European population dispersal developed by us has been obtained. This further proves the theory of the Indo-European homeland localization at the junction of Hindustan, Iran and Southern Central Asia.

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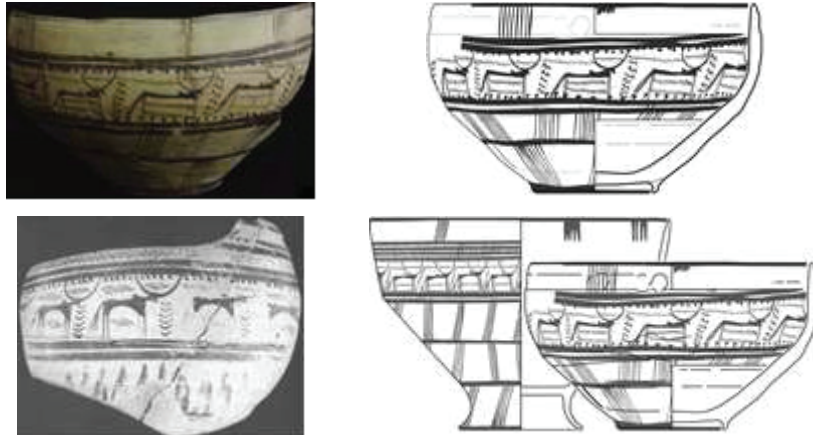
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PHOTOGRAPHIC APPLICATIONS

Plate 1. Balochistan Ware with the watery zebu pattern

Kili Gul Mohammad Ware of Togau Phase 4000–3600 BCE



Nal Style Pottery circa 3200 BCE



Quetta Style Pottery of Mehrgarh circa 3000 BCE



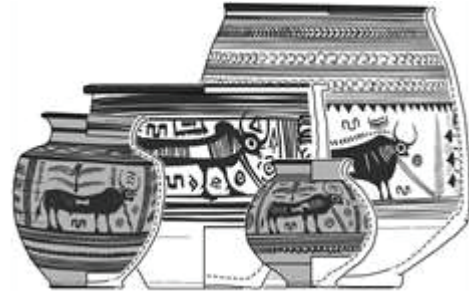
Damb Saadat II culture Ware circa 3000 BCE





Plate 2. Balochistan Ware with the watery zebu pattern

Kulli Ware circa 2600 and 2400 BCE



Kulli Ware of the late III Millennium BCE

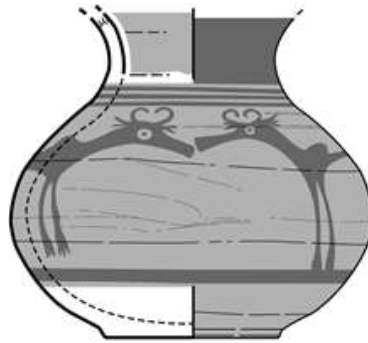




Plate 3. The Sindhu-Sarasvati Valley Pottery with the watery zebu pattern



Amri Ware of Sind(h) 3500–2500 BCE



Mature Harappan Ware from Farmana (2600–1900 BCE)



Late Harappan Ware from Harappan Cemetery H 1900–1300 BCE



Plate 4. Archaeological cultures of the Early Harappan era of the northwestern Hindustan as per Bisht R.S.

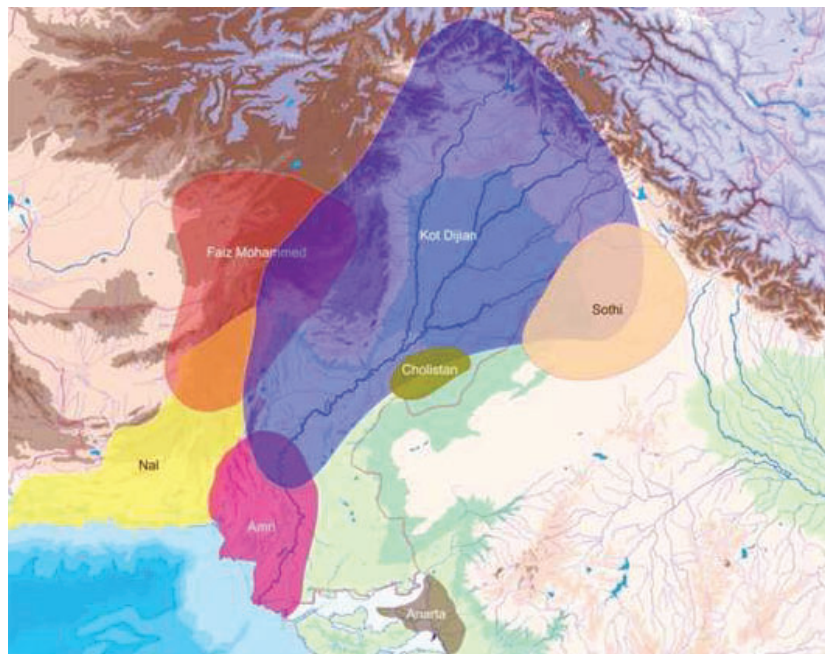


Plate 5. Archaeological cultures of the Mature Harappan era of the northwestern Hindustan as per Bisht R.S.

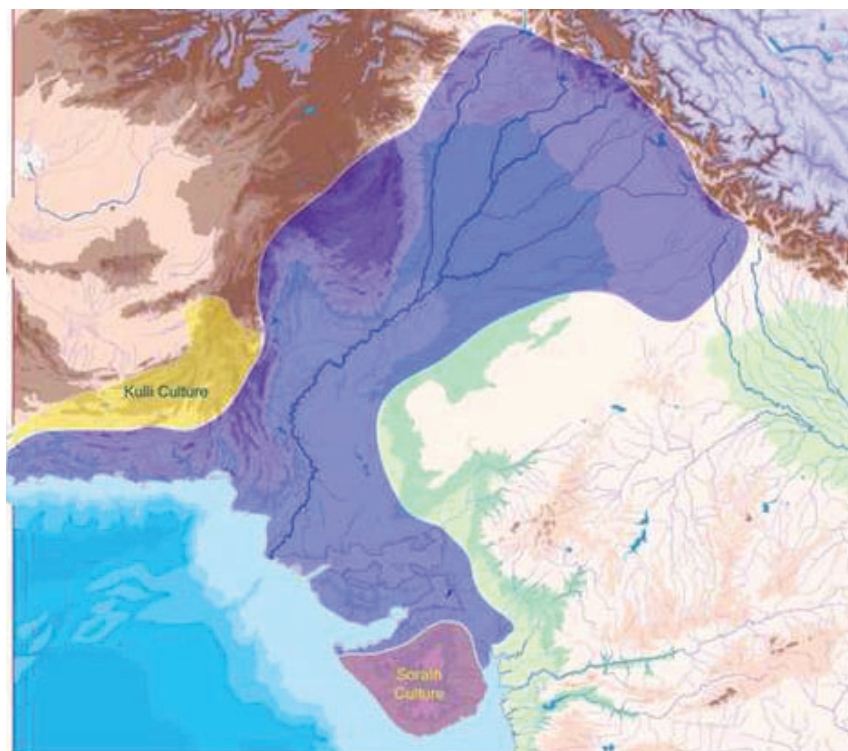




Plate 6. Archaeological maps of the bronze age of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Southern Central Asia

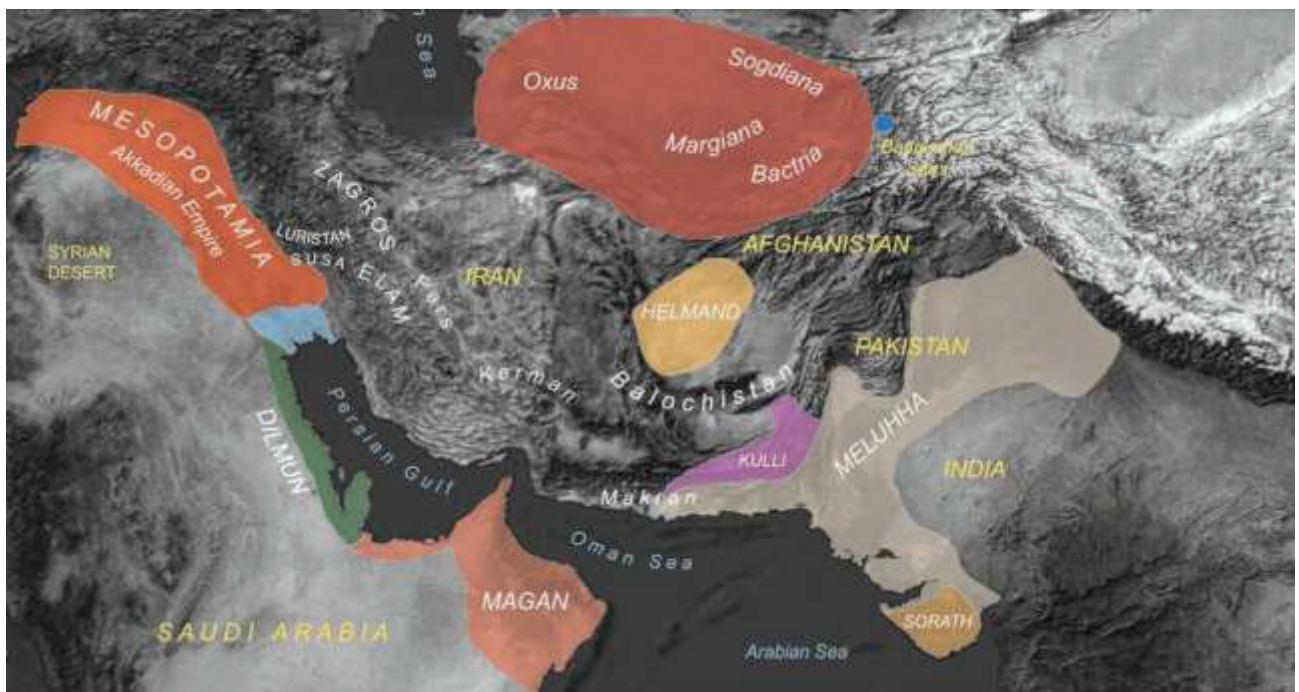




Plate 7. Chlorite items of the Jiroft culture of Iran dated between 2800 and 2000 BCE with the embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern

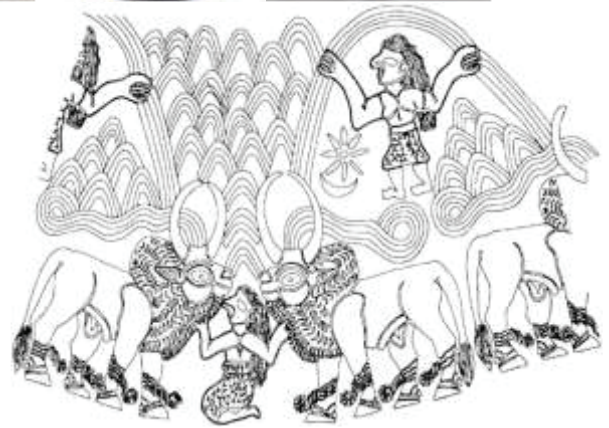




Plate 8. Chlorite items of the Jiroft culture of Iran dated between 2800 and 2000 BCE with the embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern





Plate 9. Chlorite items of the Jiroft culture of Iran dated between 2800 and 2000 BCE with the embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern





Plate 10. Chlorite items of the Jiroft culture of Iran dated between 2800 and 2000 BCE with the embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern





Plate 11. Chlorite items of the Jiroft culture of Iran dated between 2800 and 2000 BCE with the embodiment of the watery humped bull pattern





Plate 12. A bronze vase from Susa (inv. num. SB2825) dated around 1300 BCE from Louvre



Plate 13. Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture territory





Plate 14. Ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated 1500–1000 BCE





Plate 15. Ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated 1500–1000 BCE

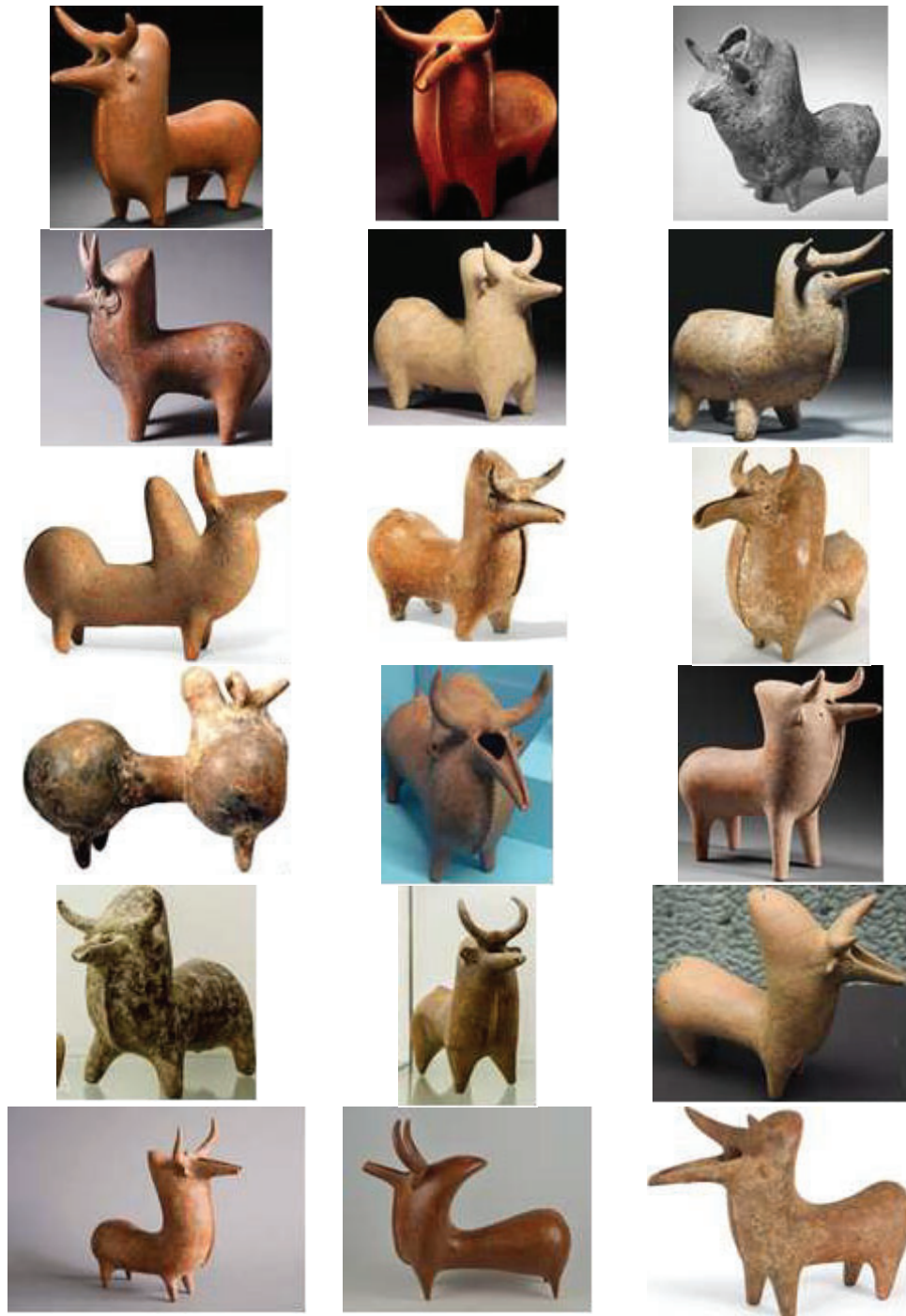




Plate 16. Ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated 1500–1000 BCE





Plate 17. Ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated 1500–1000 BCE

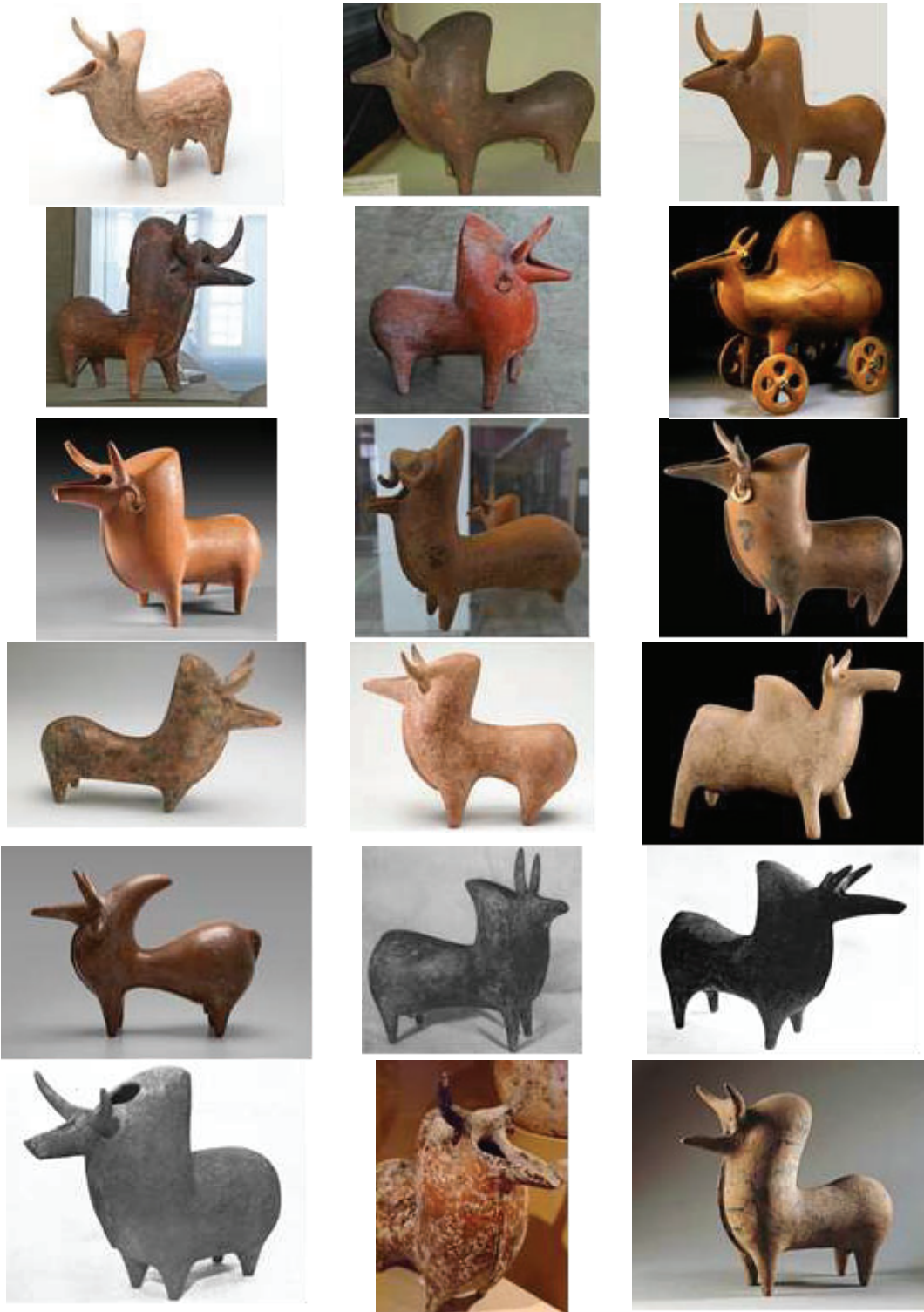




Plate 18. Ritual clay vessels of the Marlik or Amlash archaeological culture dated 1500–1000 BCE

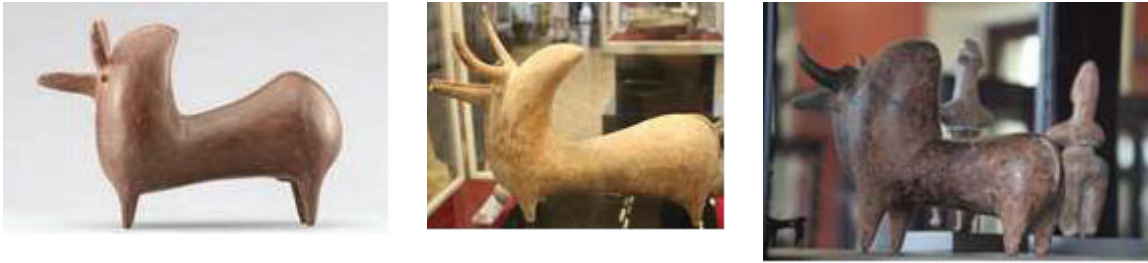


Plate 19. Tepe Hasanlu gold bowl





Plate 20. Hittite kingdom silver drinking and libation vessel (rhyton) (1400–1200 BCE)

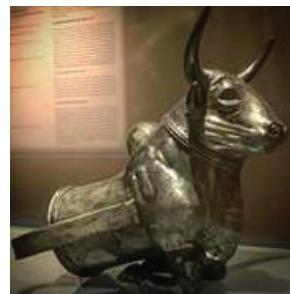
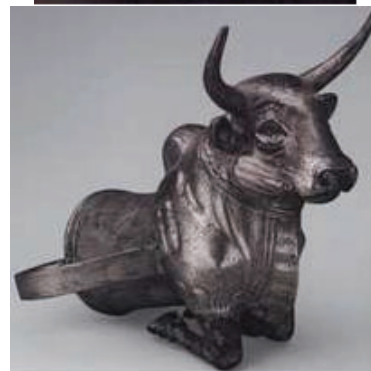




Plate 21. Vase A from Hüseyindede Tepe near Yörüklü in the Turkish province of Çorum dated around 1650 BCE

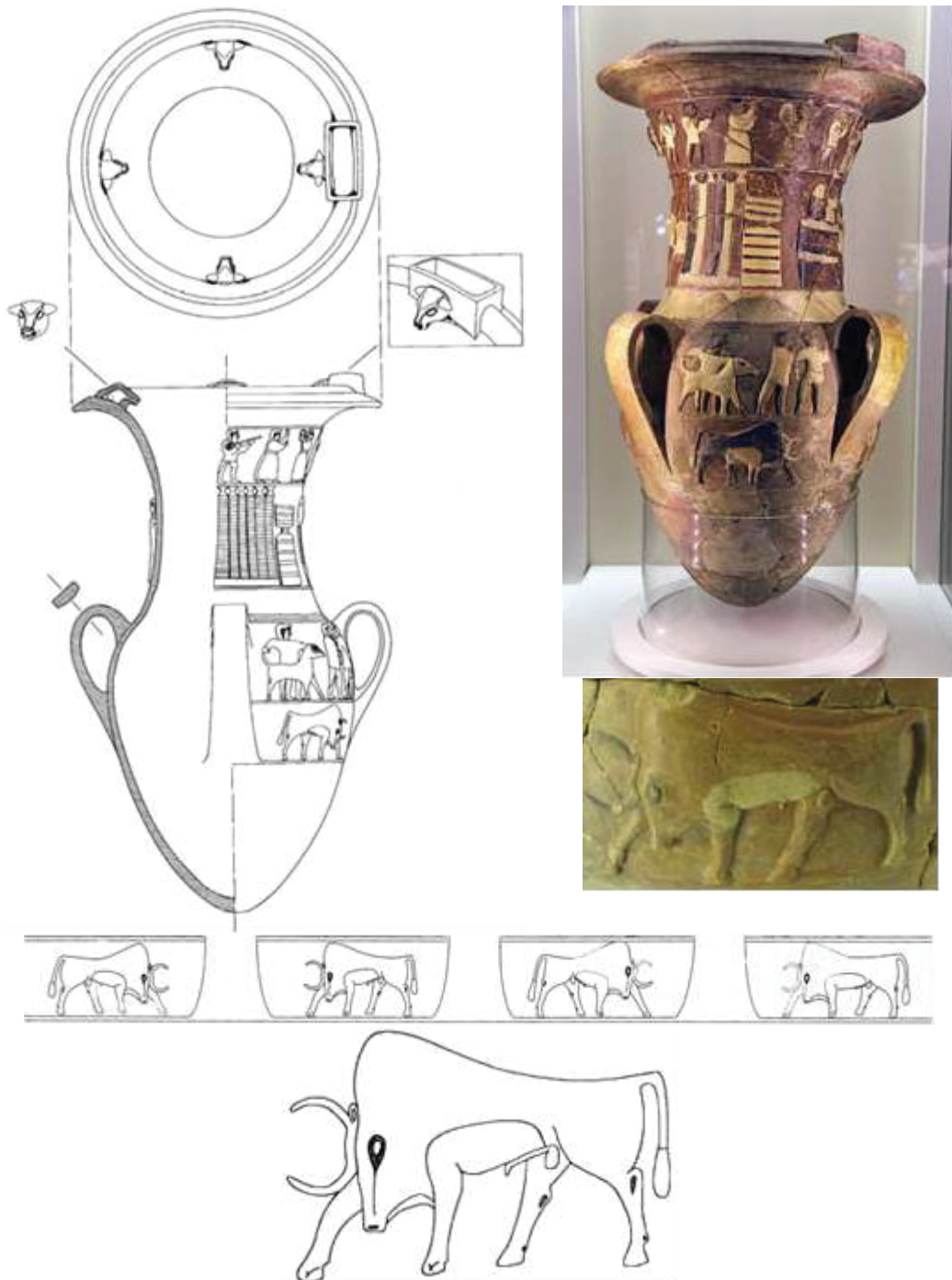
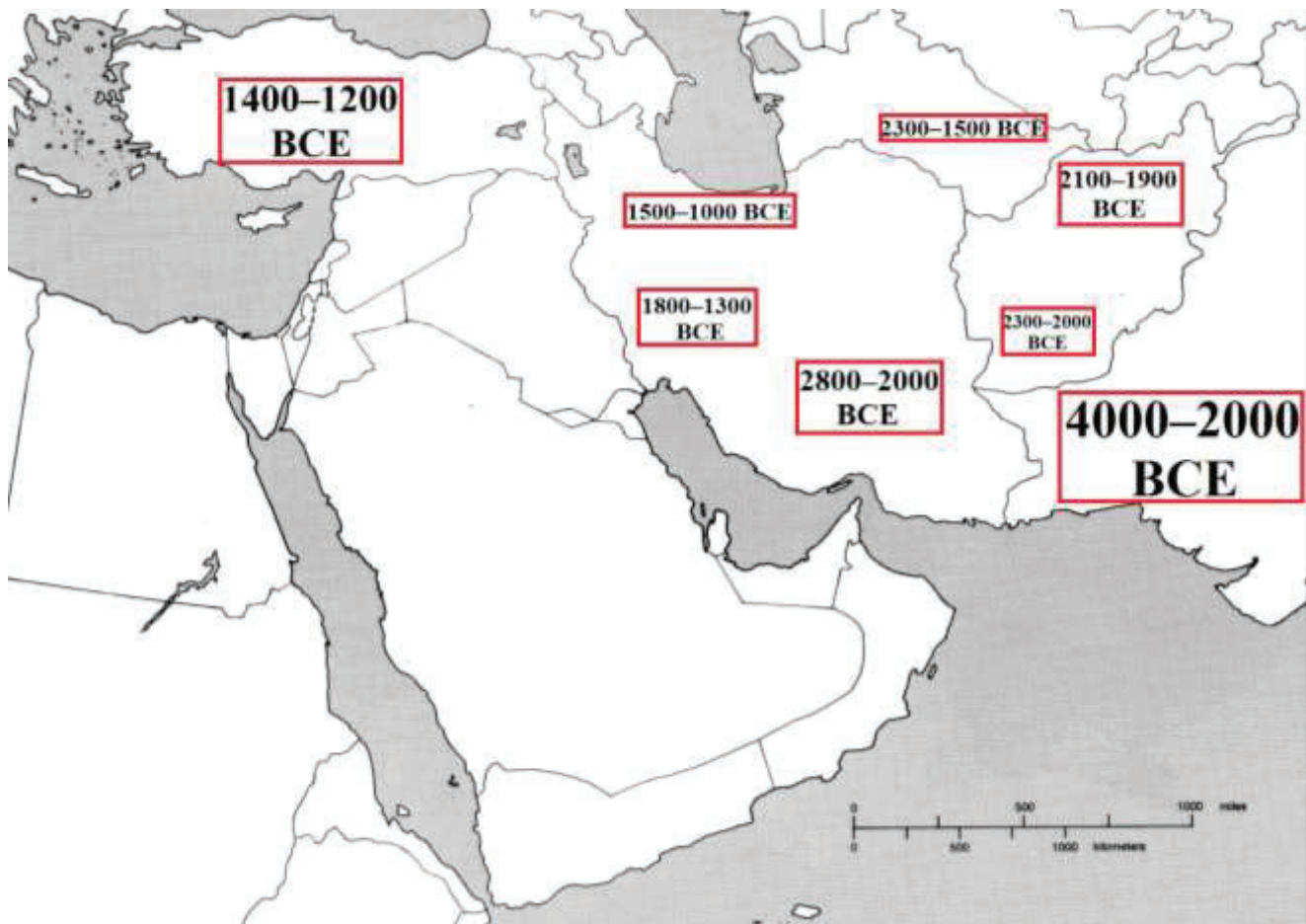




Plate 22. The first in the Indo-European studies' history exact archaeological route of the migration of the specifically Rigvedic Indo-Aryan tribes with the cultural motif of the watery humped bull from South Asia to Anatolia.

The first variant of the map was presented by Dr. Aleksandr A. Semenenko (Voronezh, Russia) on the 5th of December 2019 at the Annual All-Russian conference organized by the Voronezh State Art Institution alongside with the report 'The motif of the humpback water bull in the culture of the Ancient East: art history comes to the aid of history'. The map had to be updated because since the time of the conference at Voronezh the author found two more items embodying the watery humpback bull pattern from the capital city of Elam Susa dated 1800 and 1300 BCE respectively.





МОТИВ ГОРБАТОГО ВОДЯНОГО СКОТА В РИГВЕДЕ И ПЕРВЫЙ АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ПРОСЛЕЖЕННЫЙ МАРШРУТ МИГРАЦИИ РИГВЕДИЙСКИХ АРИЕВ ИЗ ИНДИИ В АНАТОЛИЮ

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Аннотация

В статье проанализирован основной религиозно-мифологический символ Ригvedы - водяной горбатый бык и корова. Материальное воплощение этого узора было обнаружено в долине Инда в 4000–2000 гг. до н. э. И наиболее заметно около 3200–2800 гг. до н. э. Та же картина распространилась дальше на запад в 2800–1000 гг. до н. э. через Афганистан, Бактрию-Маргиану и Иран до Средней Азии. Таким образом, был зарегистрирован первый в истории индоевропейских исследований точный археологический маршрут миграции специфических ригведических индоарийских племен из Южной Азии в Анатолию и доказана теория расселения индоевропейцев за пределами Индии.

Ключевые слова: индоевропейцы, индоарии, иранцы, Ригведа, образ водяного зебу, археология.