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MARGIANA AND BEYOND

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COMPLEX SOCIETY: AN AEGEAN ANALOGY

The bronze age civilisations of the Aegean, like those of Turkmenistan and the Iranian Plateau, were not based upon the great rivers: the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus. Those of Central Asia have been described as 'oasis civilisations'. This, while not accurate, does describe the pattern of intense centres of cultivation and settlement, spread out and lying between arid lands of low population density. In the Aegean case the urban or palatial centres were on islands or near coasts, separated by sea. So far as the analogy works, the seaways and the desert ways played comparable roles. There has often been the temptation to take a diffusionist or 'world system' view of these complex societies and to see them as somehow 'peripheral' to the early urban 'centres' of Mesopotamia, Egypt or the Indus. But I think it is appropriate to consider them first essentially in their own terms.

The palaces of Crete around 1800 BC were ritual and administrative centres following a well defined architectural model, based upon a central court surrounded by 'royal' apartments situated on the piano nobile, with storerooms and workrooms beneath. The richest finds relate to ritual equipment. These palatial centres were preceded in the mid third millennium BC by a period of exchange activity among the not-yet-urban centres of the Early Bronze Age (including Troy II), in which the trade in metals appears to have played a significant role. The emergence of civilisation in the Aegean can certainly be discussed in essentially autonomous terms, despite those contacts which did undoubtedly exist with Western Asia and the Levant, although scholars since the time of V.G. Childe have frequently viewed this as a 'secondary civilisation'. I hope to explore during my visit the extent to which

comparably conventional view of the origins of complex society in Margiana have shaped prevailing models for cultural developments there.

DESERT SETTLEMENTS AND THE STEPPE

The term 'desert settlement' is used here as shorthand for settlements situated in areas of very low rainfall where the location of settlement is determined by the location of rivers and oases. To the north are the steppe lands, often good grazing lands (which the desert obviously is not), but dependent for their effective occupation upon the prior development there of largely pastoral economies

The relationship between the desert settlers and the steppe pastoralists (or agriculturalists) is a changing one, and one of great interest. Recently I had the opportunity of visiting desert settlements in Xinjiang, south of the Tien Shan mountains (in the area of the Taklamakan desert). The steppe lands begin directly to the north of the mountains. The interactions there are interesting, but so far little is known of Xinjiang prior to about 1500 BCE. It is to be anticipated that earlier settlements may soon be found there. Comparison of the culture sequence and of the interrelationship between desert and steppe in Turkmenistan with that in Xinjiang promises to be interesting.

THE INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY

There are different views about the early origins and dispersal of the Indo-European languages. One of these, the Anatolian or farming/language dispersal theory, holds that Proto-Indo-European speech was carried from Anatolia to Greece, the Balkans and the Ukraine with the early spread of farming, and then subsequently to the steppe lands of central Eurasia as these were colonised by agriculturalists and pastoralists. The 'Kurgan' theory holds that the dispersal was carried out by mounted warrior nomads of the chalcolithic period, centred north of the Black Sea. The two theories have very different consequences for Anatolia and Europe.

The two theories show convergence, however, when it comes to the Indo-Iranian languages. Both consider likely an 'elite dominance' episode, perhaps towards the end of the Indus civilisation, in the course of which Indo-European speech (in this case Proto-Indo-Iranian) would have been carried south from the central Eurasian steppe to north India and Pakistan. While the adherents of the Anatolian theory might question the 'Kurgan' view that this episode is to be associated with the demise of the Indus civilisation, both would agree that the early bronze age Andronovo culture of the steppe could make an appropriate starting point for these early Indo-Iranian speakers.

In all of this the horse causes difficulties. The Hymns of the Rig Veda speak of horses and chariots, not of mounted horsemen. The Kurgan theory is generally evasive about the time when mounted warriors first played a military role. It has become clear, however, that this was not before 1000 BCE in Greece or Central and Western Europe, but perhaps as early as 1300 or 1400 BCE in the central Eurasian steppe. It was not early enough to motivate the early Proto-Indo-European dispersals

postulated by the 'Kurgan' theory, but the chronology would not oppose the southward transmission from the Andronovo culture to India and Pakistan discussed here.

If Indo-European speech reached the Indian sub-continent from the central Eurasian steppe, it must have done so across the zone of desert settlement which is represented by Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the Iranian Plateau. The question is how. Up to now no adequate explanation or model has been proposed for this process. That is the other problematic theme which I plan to outline, and about which I hope to learn, at the meetings.

SOME CONCEPTS OF MARGIANA STUDIES

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1. Margiana archeological monuments being referred to the second millennium B.C. have been studied for a long time and are presently considered as the most investigated ones within Middle Asia. The researchers are facing new objectives and tasks while exercising those operations. However, several concepts are likely to be talked about as far as they are typical for all studies of the Bronze epoch Margiana monuments.

2. The first, and perhaps the most important, concept covers the origin thereof. Despite there are obvious parallels with the Southern Turkmenistan monuments of Kopetdag foothills referred to the Bronze Epoch, there is a direct evidence of the second cultural component related to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. Two components as minimum took part in founding the Margiana culture and civilization. They are as follows: the original local stratum and a new one, which has transformed it. A symbiosis of those components promoted a Margianian phenomenon to be founded. On the other hand, you should remember that quite similar processes were taking place in Bactria, which culture is practically identical to that of Margiana. Otherwise, any territorial borders of those processes were quite extensive and covered the population not only southwards of the Central Asia, but various ancient agricultural communities being a part of the Bactrian impact area.

3. The second concept reflects territorial structure and social hierarchy at Margiana settlements. "The oasis" term being often used by researchers, while identifying a territorial group of monuments, is obviously not far from the ancient period truth. Regarding Margiana it means nine oases, though in fact they might have been more as far as their quantity in our case reflects only a study rate of objects under analysis. It is well known that the first researchers of Margiana emphasized a general regularity for all oases as a certain number of small oasis hills had been grouped around one being central and bigger, as a rule. Gonur-Depe monument is the biggest one in the Murgab delta due to the area occupied. It has been also more studied. As it is certified by archeological artifacts and analogies thereof, the monument might have in fact played a role of Margiana town-forming and ideological center. In fact, it also may be