

Excavations at Chogha Mish

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Since the last annual report the activities of the Joint Iranian Expedition of the Oriental Institute and the University of California at Los Angeles have been varied and conducted at home as well as abroad. Throughout the academic year 1972/73 the presentation of the results of the Chogha Mish excavations in written and oral reports has been a major preoccupation. Detailed communications on "The Prehistoric Architecture at Chogha Mish" (read for P. P. Delougaz by H. J. Kantor) and "The Prehistoric Cultures at Chogha Mish and Boneh Fazili" (HJK) were presented to the Sixth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology held in Oxford, England, during September, 1972, and another on "The Prehistoric Sequence at Chogha Mish" to the Columbia University Seminar on the Archaeology of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East in April, 1973. A more popular presentation by H. J. Kantor, "Chogha Mish and the Beginnings of Civilization in Khuzestan," inaugurated the Iran America Society's lecture series on the Archaeology of Iran in Tehran early in October, 1972.

The Joint Iranian Expedition was in the field for an autumn season, from which we returned on January 2, 1973. As in all our previous work, we were fortunate in having the cooperation and generous help of the Archaeological Service of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. We owe thanks to Mr. A. A. Pourmand, Director of the Archaeological Service and to Dr. Firouz Bagherzadeh, Director of the National Center for Art and Archaeology, as well as to members of their staffs for their cordial interest and help. We were fortunate also in having Mr. Memar Reza Zahedani assigned to us as our government associate and colleague for a second time.

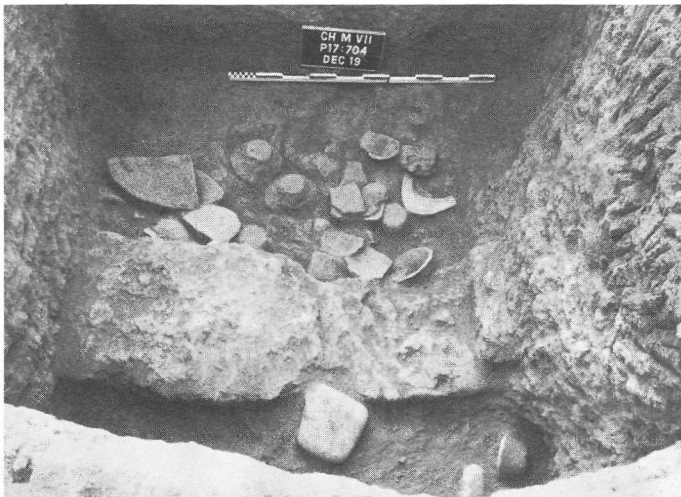
In addition to Professors Delougaz and Kantor, this season's staff consisted of Dr. Mary C. McCutchan and three students from the University of California at Los Angeles, Mr. Paul Gaebelein, Mr. Daniel Shimabuku, and Mr. Milton M. Winn. A student from the University of Chicago, Mr. Donald Whitcomb, was unfortunately delayed in reaching us until the very end of the season.

On October 11 the "advance party," consisting of H. J. Kantor and

Dr. McCutchan, reached Khuzestan. The autumn schedule of field work this season meant that we arrived when the weather was still very hot and the mound too hardened by the long, rainless summer to allow excavation. These conditions had been foreseen, and we had planned for a study season before beginning actual digging. Numerous sherds and other fragmentary small objects remained in the expedition house from previous seasons. These materials, though sometimes rather insignificant in appearance, can frequently provide just as important information as more complete or striking museum pieces. Accordingly, we devoted much effort to analyzing and recording as much of this evidence as possible.

In November after the arrival of Professor Delougaz and his students and the softening of the ground by the first rains, work began on the mound. One of our aims this season was to continue the excavation of prehistoric Susiana strata from the point at which we had left off last year. Another was to resume the digging of the Eastern Protoliterate houses, which had yielded such important information during our second, third, and fourth seasons at Chogha Mish. Still another was to test the southwestern part of the site in some detail.

The East Area of Protoliterate Houses.—Here below the fragmentary stumps of walls, near the modern surface, dug in 1963, we found a



View of Protoliterate room with deposit in East Area of houses. Photo by P. P. Delougaz.

row of regular small rooms, one including a small kiln. These are near other rooms and a long baked-brick drain found during the third and fourth seasons. Now we have evidence enabling us to visualize a little street with a drain in the middle and houses on both sides. North of these rooms and below the pottery-filled pits dug in the second season parts of at least two new rooms were discovered. In the northern one was a deposit of beveled-rim bowls and other Protoliterate vessels as well as a practically complete pottery sickle. The adjacent room, also rich in potsherds, yielded some fragmentary, but interesting seal impressions on clay balls. These were found at the very end of the season so that there has been time for only preliminary cleaning and examination. The fragmentary impressions show various human figures and the façade of a building, but the clarification of the details of the designs as well as their reconstruction in drawings can only be done after further study, and hopefully, after finding more pieces impressed by the same seals.

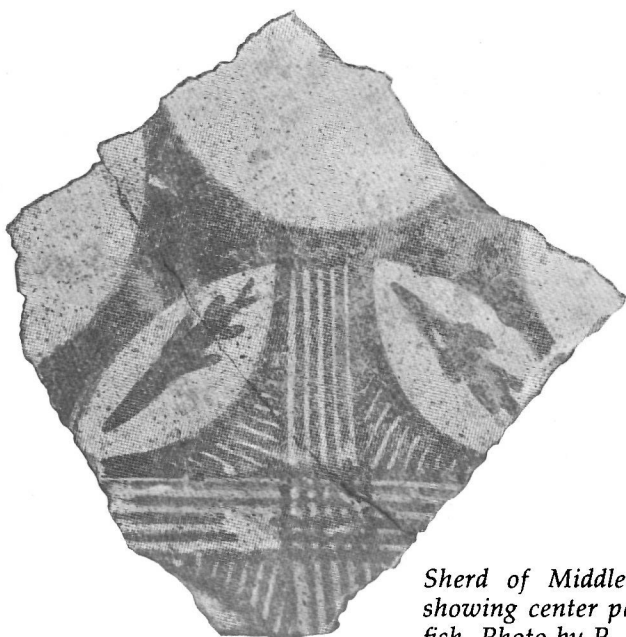
In a narrow strip opened up along the north side of the area, fragments of various installations were found, the most interesting being a kiln of a type new to the Protoliterate Period at Chogha Mish. It is round with a diameter of 1.5 m. and equipped with radially set pairs of bricks at the bottom, presumably to increase the draft.

The Gully Cut.—This trench is of particular importance for the Archaic Period. Our aim here this season was modest, namely to remove a small area of deposit along an edge of the trench where excellent stratified finds of Archaic pottery had previously been found. However, as we started to go down, Protoliterate baked bricks were found which turned out to be a part of a drain built gable-fashion. Although only a relatively short section of this drain was preserved, it appears to have been longer originally, judging by similar baked bricks some 10 m. to the southwest in the other edge of the trench. More important than the drain itself is the additional information it gives about the topography of the Protoliterate city. At this point on the east slope of the mound a Protoliterate structure appears *in situ* at a depth lower than the Early Susiana walls in Trench XXI, illustrating clearly the different levels at which Protoliterate installations were placed.

Rain prevented us from finishing the excavation of the relatively small area of Archaic remains below the drain. This must still be done and the Gully Cut has been so productive that we hope to have the opportunity of continuing it to the north.

The Trench XXI Area.—Work was for the most part confined to the easternmost part of the area. Here in the south we uncovered Early Susiana rooms in the fifth season and in the north had reached Archaic walls by the end of the sixth season. The latter we cleared in more detail this year and traced some of them to the northeast until they petered out with the slope of the mound. To the south we checked the footings of the Early Susiana walls and in the space between them cut deeper into the underlying deposits in which Archaic sherds began to be found, providing good evidence for the intimate connection of the Susiana Archaic and Early periods. The Early Susiana remains lie immediately on top of Archaic ones with no break between them. Further untangling of the complicated stratification of Middle, Early, and Archaic Susiana architecture and deposits in this area of particularly rich remains is an important task for the future.

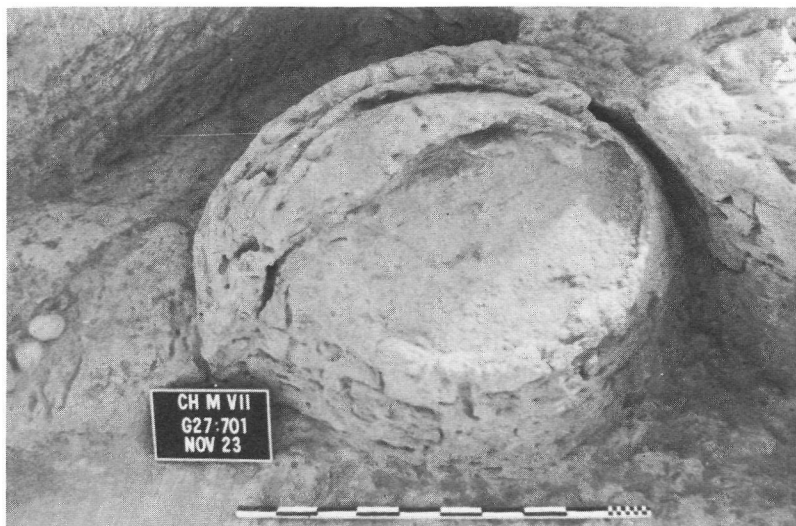
Trench XXXII.—This trench lies east of and lower than the Trench XXI Area. The task here was to trace the continuations of Archaic walls found in the fifth season. As so often at Chogha Mish, the stratification turned out to be more complicated than one could possibly anticipate. Thus, the well-preserved wall segments found in the fifth



Sherd of Middle Susiana bowl showing center pattern with two fish. Photo by P. P. Delougaz.

season did not continue to the east. Instead, debris with excellent Middle Susiana potsherds occurred at a considerably lower level than had Archaic sherds in the western side of the trench. When rain made further work in the low-lying part of the trench impossible, we returned to its western edge and began from the surface to check whether the previously discovered Archaic walls continued there. Fairly close to the surface the potsherds represented the final phase of the Archaic Period, occurring at about the same absolute level that marks the Early Susiana-Archaic transition in Trench XXI. Below was found the sought-for continuation of the Archaic brickwork. Here, too, further work is demanded to clarify the plan of the building and to combine Trench XXXII with Trench XXI into one area.

An outstanding feature of Trench XXXII are the human bones found at various levels. In the present season the remains of about six individuals occurred, most of them quite incomplete. The individual bones were in poor condition and frequently disarticulated. The skeletons were without grave goods, but the majority could be attributed to the Archaic Period by adjacent potsherds or walls. Fragments of bricks were often found among the bones. One skeleton was in a crumpled position with its head higher than the rest of the bones and



Middle Susiana kiln in Trench XXXVI. Photo by P. P. Delougaz.

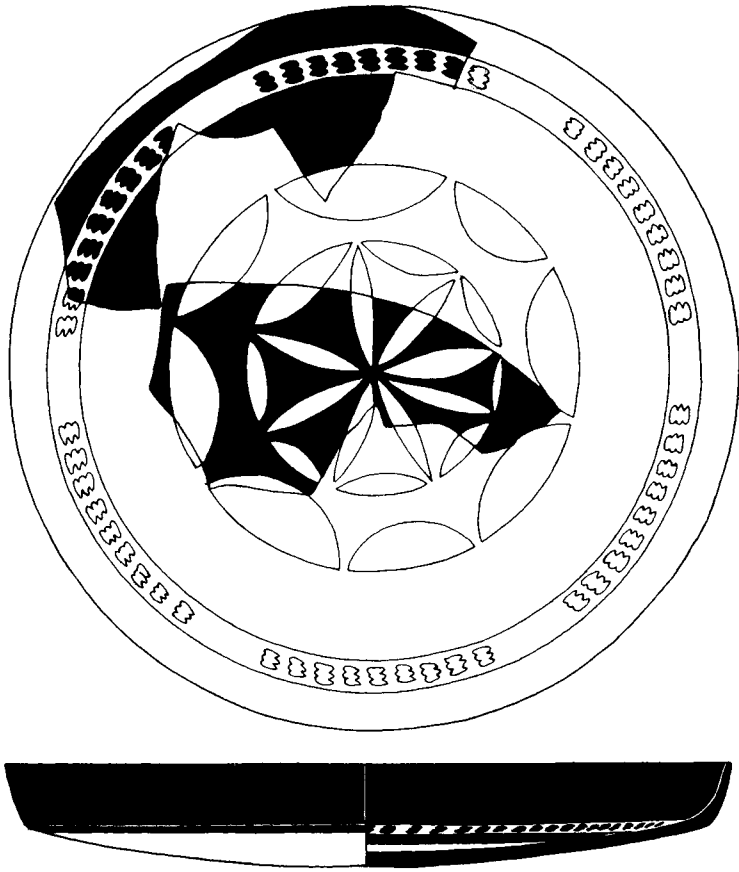
the disarticulated legs some distance away. Skeletons were found under jumbled brickwork in the Gully Cut, and it is possible that we have further evidence in Trench XXXII of a catastrophe in the Archaic Period, with people killed under collapsing walls. One of the skeletons was apparently laid in the ground in a regular fashion and seems to be Archaic. Also found at an Archaic level were the skull and disarticulated long bones of a dog or other canine animal.

Trench XXXVI.—The southwestern spur of the terrace had been tested provisionally in our second season in its lower slopes by two trenches of very limited size (X and XV). This area, however, rises to some height and, as the least known part of the terrace, needed more thorough investigation. Accordingly, a new trench, 60 m. long and 2 m. wide, was cut from the high part of the southwestern terrace down into the surrounding field. At the very top was a rounded Protoliterate pit with the typical ashy, filled deposit. It shows us that the Protoliterate occupation extended to this point but has been greatly eroded.

The bulk of the material from Trench XXXVI is of the Middle Susiana Period, including various floors and wall fragments. The most outstanding structural feature was a well built circular kiln or oven, with a diameter of about 1 m. Its domed top, consisting of several layers of plaster, was still preserved. Farther down the slope was a well, about 1.90 × 1.80 m. in diameter and some 6 m. deep. It was cut from above levels whose pottery was quite distinct from that found in it. Among the characteristic forms are bow-necks of large vessels and ring-based beakers with broad solid washes of color. Although further study of the material is necessary, we expect the ceramics from the well to provide us with good representatives of the pottery of the final phase of Middle Susiana, a phase for which we have so far excavated relatively limited material at Chogha Mish.

Some of the most important information provided by this trench is that concerning the extent of the settlement at various periods. Thus, the Early Susiana remains are limited, consisting only of a shallow deposit not at all comparable to the rich settlement on the eastern side of the terrace in the Trench XXI and XXV areas. On the other hand, the Middle Susiana materials are very extensive, emphasizing again that the entire area of our large site was occupied in that period.

In summary, then, the finds of the autumn, 1972, have added considerably to our knowledge of the settlement patterns on Chogha



*Drawing showing Middle Susiana bowl as restored from sherds.
 Drawn by D. D. Bickford and C. H. Joslin.*

Mish and enlarged our corpus of the Susiana pottery of various periods. For example, the finds from Trench XXXVI make a substantial contribution to the clarification of the Susiana phases at Chogha Mish itself and will form a valuable yardstick for comparisons with other sites in Khuzestan. The discoveries made in a limited space of the east area indicate how much is still to be learned concerning the Protoliterate Period at Chogha Mish, particularly as we penetrate below the uppermost levels of badly destroyed walls.

During the summer of 1972 and since our return from Iran at the beginning of January we have carried on in Los Angeles and Chicago

with the analysis of the architecture and the objects as well as with the preparation of plan and pottery drawings. Dr. McCutchan has been assisting with this work in Chicago during the Winter and Spring quarters. The faunal remains from Chogha Mish are being analyzed in detail by Dr. Jane Peres-Ferriera, who speaks with great enthusiasm about the quantity, interest, and importance of the material. All of this work is oriented toward publication. We are now in the final stages of the preparation of a preliminary report covering our first five seasons of excavation at Chogha Mish. This report will present our results in considerable detail. In the meantime, a summary of some of our main results as of 1968 is now available in a joint article by Delougaz and Kantor, "New Evidence for the Prehistoric and Protoliterate Cultural Development of Khuzestan," in *The Memorial Volume of the Vth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology*, Vol. I (Tehran, 1972).

Drawings showing Early Susiana pottery with typical decoration. Drawn by D. D. Bickford and C. H. Joslin.

