

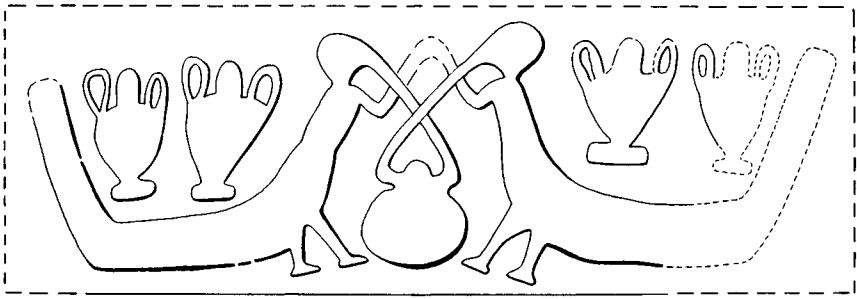
Chogha Mish and Chogha Bonut

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Events in Iran last autumn and winter caused the first interruption in the annual seasons of work in the Chogha Mish area since the expedition's house was built in 1969. There have been great difficulties in making those practical arrangements which are necessary even when the expedition is not in the field. However, throughout the whole time the guard of the expedition house has carried on his duties with great conscientiousness and initiative. Despite my absence, essential repairs to the expedition house have been done, and the equipment and archeological materials stored there kept in good order. The guard of the mounds has also remained faithfully on duty.

The interruption of field work has come at a time when the expedition was in the midst of momentous discoveries. Significant individual structures and levels remain unfinished as we had to leave them at the end of previous seasons. Instead of describing newly excavated finds, this year's report deals with the progress of work at home and summarizes some of the significant results of twelve seasons of excavations spread over the years 1961-1979.

Inevitably, the work in Chicago lacks the glamor of excavation and is slower in the doing than in the telling! The analysis of the finds and records of the 1977/78 season in preparation for a preliminary report has begun. Work has also continued on the finds and the drawings of earlier seasons. Some of these results are illustrated here. However, the main effort has been devoted to the report on the first five seasons of excavations at Chogha Mish, a joint publication of the late P. P. Delougaz and myself. In preparing the manuscript and illustrations for the printer innumerable details must be checked. In these time-consuming tasks, I am fortunate to have the energetic assistance of Mrs. Carolyn Livin-



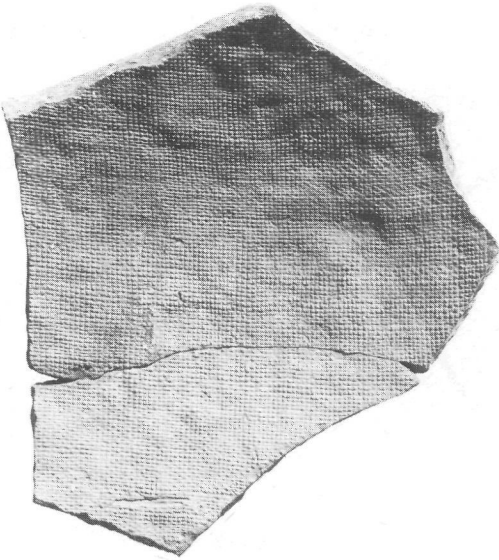
Chogha Mish: design of a Protoliterate seal impression showing two boats with prows in human form.

good, and of W. Raymond Johnson and Guillermo Algaze, graduate students in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

The Protoliterate Period (ca. 3400 B.C.). The excavations at Chogha Mish were begun by P. P. Delougaz in 1961 in order to investigate the crucial period in which writing and many political and cultural institutions characteristic for the historical civilizations of Mesopotamia and Elam appeared. A sufficient number of strategically located areas have been excavated at Chogha Mish to prove that the Protoliterate settlement there consisted of an acropolis and a lower city with clusters of private houses divided by narrow lanes. Indirect proof for the existence of temples, some now completely eroded and some possibly still hidden in the high mound, are provided by a platform on the western terrace and by terracotta cones, normally used for temple decoration, scattered in the Protoliterate levels.

The identity between the pottery and other objects from Chogha Mish and those from Mesopotamian sites is important as an indication that one cultural continuum covered both southern Mesopotamia and the Susiana plain. The pottery proves also that Chogha Mish was occupied only during the earlier part of the Protoliterate period. In contrast, the site of Susa, located west of Chogha Mish more toward the center of the Susiana plain, continued to flourish in the later Protoliterate period. We cannot reconstruct specific political events, but can recognize that Susa was rising to the preeminent position which it held throughout the historical periods.

A few examples will illustrate the importance of the information provided by the small finds from Chogha Mish. In 1963, after P. P. Delougaz used X-rays to determine that clay balls covered with seal impressions contained variously shaped pellets, we concluded that such objects were economic documents consisting of tokens protected and authenticated by their round, sealed "envelope." The many cylinder seal impressions from

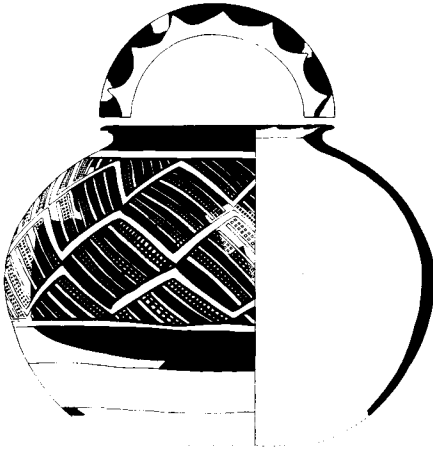


Chogha Mish: sherd of a Middle Susiana 3 jar with imprint of cloth on inner surface.

Chogha Mish have made major contributions to the history of Mesopotamian art. For example, an anti-thetical design shows boats with prows in human form. These figures drink with tubes from the jar placed between them; other jars appear above the hulls of the boats. This imaginative composition provides the earliest known representation of figures drinking through "straws," a motif prominent in the Early Dynastic period. Even more significant, we have here the prototype of the divine boat of the sun god known from the Akkadian period. This is only one of a number of Chogha Mish designs showing the amazing vitality with which the Protoliterate craftsmen invented many of the outstanding and dominant motifs of Mesopotamian art.

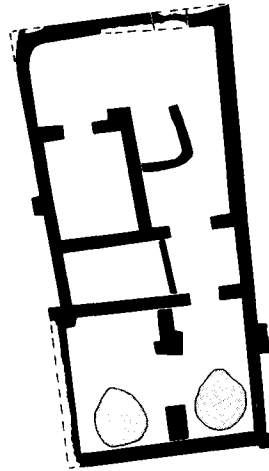
The Middle Susiana Period (Fifth Millennium B.C.). One

of the most important discoveries at Chogha Mish was the size of the settlement during the Middle Susiana period. The entire site of some forty-five acres was occupied throughout the period. Such a concentration of population implies the existence of a society and economy far more advanced than had previously been envisioned for this area in the fifth millennium B.C. Gradually the detailed evidence is being accumulated.



Chogha Mish: Middle Susiana 3 jar of fine ware with geometric decoration.

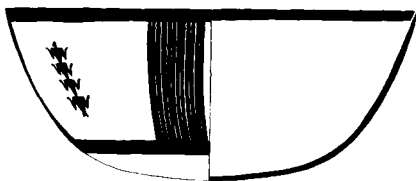
Chogha Bonut: plan of a house of the Middle Susiana 3 period.



Flint and ground stone tools, plant and faunal remains provide detailed information concerning modes of subsistence. Among the crafts, textiles are documented not only by spindle whorls, but by vividly sharp cloth imprints on the interior walls of some jars. The products of the potters range from utilitarian utensils to elaborately painted luxury vessels.

The architecture of the last phase of Middle Susiana is now known from both sites currently being excavated. At Chogha Bonut in 1977/78 we found a house with several rooms, probably entered from the north. An L-shaped room flanked a smaller one; behind was a room with a storage area delimited by a narrow partition wall. The back of the house was probably an open court

with some partitions; the two oval ovens appear to belong to a later stage of the house whose remains were destroyed when Bonut was bulldozed. The layout of the Bonut house is essentially the same as that of the eastern segment of the Burnt Building discovered at Chogha Mish in 1974/75. However, the Bonut building is a house with modest walls in sharp contrast to the grandeur of the Burnt Building. The latter's thick walls, ex-



Chogha Mish: Middle Susiana bowl of fine ware with design of tiered bird motif.



Chogha Mish: Early Susiana lid with tiered bird motif.



terior buttresses, and, above all, meticulously regular and symmetrical plan give it a monumental character. Furthermore, the small finds from the Burnt Building support the hypothesis that one of its rooms was a shrine.

The architecture and finds of the Burnt Building have added a new dimension to our knowledge of the final phase of the Middle Susiana period. By that time there existed a complex differentiated society already displaying some cultural elements which, in developed form, were to become diagnostic for the Protoliterate period. As work continues, the combined evidence from Chogha Mish and Bonut, i.e., the similarities and differences between a focal site and one of the villages in



the network of settlements which it dominated, will contribute much more to our understanding than the evidence from either site alone.

The Continuity of the Susiana Development. Chogha Mish is the only excavated site which was continuously occupied for at least two thousand years before the Protoliterate period. Thus, a long series of cultural periods



Chogha Mish: Clay figurines representing women in long dresses. Top, Archaic Razuk; bottom, Early Susiana.

has been established by means of remains stratified at one site. Several stages of the sequence occur at a small mound near Chogha Mish, Boneh Fazili, which we tested in 1973. In addition, Chogha Mish has added a previously unknown archaic period, the investigation of which has been a major objective of the expedition since 1963. By now we know that the Archaic Susiana period lasted for a long time and had three phases. The earliest one already possessed painted pottery of a disconcerting variety and complexity. Though lying on virgin soil, these sherds of Archaic Susiana clearly do not exemplify the beginnings of pottery. The question of whether antecedents for the Archaic culture should be sought outside or inside the Susiana plain remained open for some time.

In earlier seasons at Chogha Mish, while establishing the sequence of the prehistoric development, we concentrated on the distinctive characteristics of individual phases. As work progressed, however, the essential unity of the prehistoric Susiana culture over thousands of years became increasingly evident. At no point in the sequence is there a sharp cultural break. For example, various Early and Middle Susiana vessels, different though they are in other ways, share a predilection for designs of birds in tiers. Successive cultural phases are always linked by specific characters such as the pottery designs and the figurines which link the Archaic and Early Susiana periods. The demonstration of the coherence of the prehistoric Susiana culture during millennia of development is an important result of the Chogha Mish project.

The Formative Stages of the Susiana Culture. After the bulldozing of Bonut in 1977, a rescue dig there was made particularly imperative by the presence on the surface of Archaic sherds rather different from any at Chogha Mish. Since the two sites are only six kilometers apart, this discrepancy between their Archaic sherds created a problem. Unlike Chogha Mish, Chogha Bonut was unoccupied during much of the prehistoric era. In fact, wall stumps immediately below Middle Susiana 3 levels are associated with sherds identical with the simpler varieties of Archaic Susiana 1 pottery from Chogha Mish. Still deeper levels contain sherds of more primitive pottery, unknown at Chogha Mish, while the deepest layers tested contained only flint tools, stone vessel fragments, and rudimentary clay figurines. Chogha Mish had pushed back the Susiana sequence to the Archaic period. Now Bonut takes us still earlier to a Formative Susiana period. As the name we have now chosen indicates, the simple wares of the Formative period provide antecedents for the already sophisticated pottery of the Archaic Susiana 1 phase. One of the major questions raised by the excavations at Chogha Mish is now answered at Bonut. The Susiana plain was occupied well before the earliest settlement at Chogha Mish, perhaps already in the seventh millennium B.C., before the invention of pottery. The culture of the area was not brought in from the outside, but developed in Khuzestan.

From its inception the Chogha Mish project was envisioned as a regional one. The complexity of the focal site and practical limitations have necessitated a concentration of effort at Chogha Mish, but the brief sounding at Boneh Fazili in 1973 and the recent work at Bonut have indicated how much can be learned by the parallel investigation of a major site and the smaller settlements nearby. At Chogha Bonut the bulk of the evidence for the earliest Susiana periods still remains unexcavated. At Chogha Mish the western portions of the Burnt Building are still buried beneath the Protoliterate levels and the Archaic settlement is known only from a relatively small area on the eastern periphery of the terrace. These and many other areas promise to yield important evidence when the field work interrupted this year is resumed.