

## Chogha Mish

*Helene J. Kantor*

This year there has again been no possibility for a season in the field, but in Chicago work has proceeded systematically with the untiring and invaluable assistance of Carolyn Livingood, Guillermo Algaze, and Abbas Alizadeh. For some time the large report on the first five seasons of excavation at Chogha Mish (OIP 101) has hovered, like Penelope's web, on the brink of completion. The documentation of the great amount of material has been a time-consuming process, but the end now seems to be approaching.

In addition to objects, much non-artifactual evidence was found at Chogha Mish. Approximately 40,000 animal bones and teeth have been identified in detail by Dr. Jane Wheeler, who has sent her coding cards and sheets to Chicago for computer processing, a project which is being generously supported by Professor R. McC. Adams. The transfer of the records into the computer

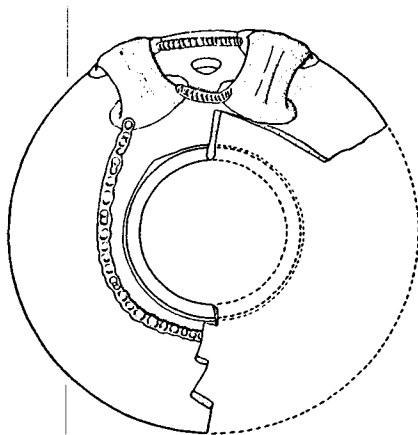
and the organization of master print-outs of the data and of analytic tables have required much time and many consultations with Mr. James Lichtenstein of the Computer Center of the University. The animal bones were found in prehistoric Susiana, Protoliterate, and Achaemenid Persian contexts and thus provide evidence for the changing economy of the region during thousands of years. Bones belonging to the earlier phases of the Archaic Susiana period are of particular interest because of their pertinence to the problems of the domestication of animals. It is hoped that a report on the faunal materials, based on the computer analysis and prepared in collaboration with Dr. Wheeler, will be finished by the end of the summer. Meanwhile, the programming of this large body of specific data has aroused such interest in the Computer Center that an article on the project appeared in its June Bulletin.

Though the preparation of data for publication at times

constitutes a rather tedious side of archaeological research, once done, the significance of the results becomes apparent. For example, comparisons between individual pottery vessels provide not just interesting facts concerning utensils of everyday life, but significant indications of events which in the protohistoric period must still be traced primarily by archaeological evidence. The tables of parallels for pottery found in the Protoliterate levels at Chogha Mish show that around 3400 B.C. exactly

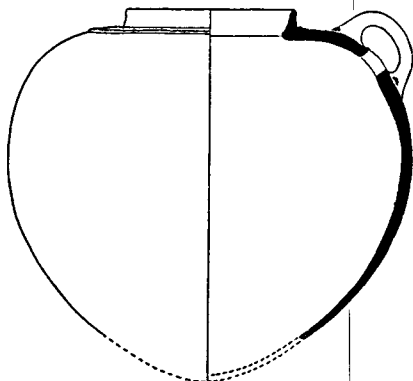
*Figure 1*  
*Two-handled jar Ch.M. IV-142a*  
*being drawn by Mr. Abbas Alizadeh.*  
*Photograph by Miss Diana Olson.*



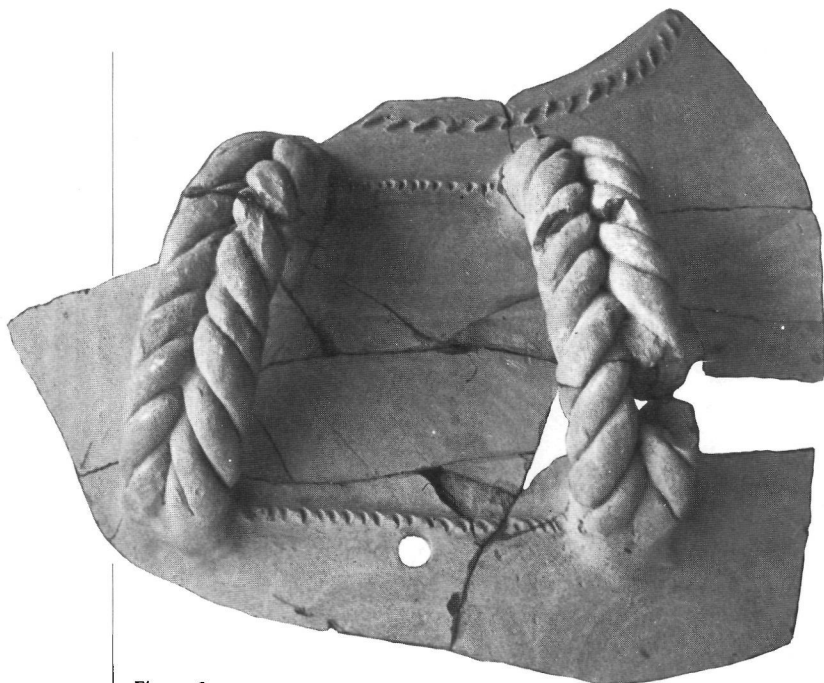


the same assemblage of vessels occurs at nearby Susa and at such southern Mesopotamian sites as Warka and Nippur. The cultural diversity shown by the late prehistoric pottery of southern Mesopotamia and the Susiana area (the central part of the modern province of Khuzistan) has been replaced by a single ceramic tradition specific for a stratified society in which writing was developing. Particularly remarkable is the appearance of exactly the same ceramic repertoire at both Chogha Mish and sites such as Habuba Kabira-South over 600 miles to the west on the Euphrates in Syria. Also significant are the comparable vessels appearing on the Iranian plateau and in Fars, where Malyan

Figure 2  
Two-handled jar Ch.M. IV-142a  
from Chogha Mish. Drawing by Mr.  
Abbas Alizadeh.



provides a parallel for a Chogha Mish four-lugged jar of unusual type. Thus, the distribution of pottery shows that in the earliest period of Mesopotamian urban civilization the cities of the core area at the head of the Persian Gulf were already sufficiently powerful and dynamic to establish colonies and outposts in distant areas. The extent of the diffusion of Protoliterate influence from such outposts, on one side into southern Anatolia and western Syria and on the other into the eastern marches of Iran and beyond, was undreamed of only a few



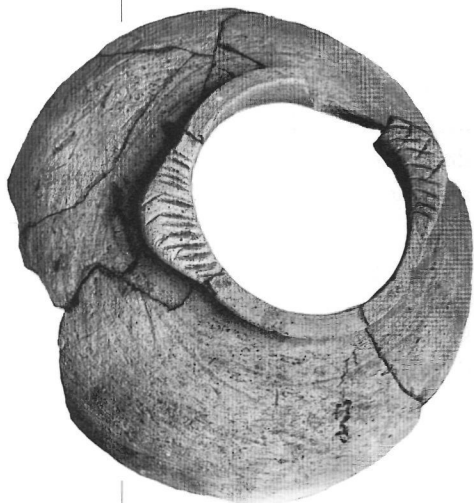
*Figure 3*

*Sherd of large two-handled jar Ag. 36: 565 from the Shara Temple at Tell Agrab. Late Early Dynastic I. Cf. P. P. Delougaz, Pottery from the Diyala Region (OIP LXIII), Pl. 51 b.*

years ago. Moreover, the recognition of the tremendous expansion of Mesopotamian civilization in its earliest phase makes its dominant role later easier to understand. For over two millennia the diverse peoples of western Asia were to be profoundly influenced by the traditions of Mesopotamia.

The search for parallels for pottery from Chogha Mish sometimes produces surprises, as in the case of a vessel recently mended by Mrs. Theodore D. Tiekens. The accompanying figures show the difficulties of recording accurately an outsize vessel and

the resulting drawing (Figs. 1, 2). The absence of Protoliterate parallels either at Chogha Mish itself or elsewhere would leave the jar as a unique, aberrant specimen were it not for fragmentary vessels excavated in the thirties by the Oriental Institute's Iraq Expedition. Although several centuries later than the Chogha Mish example, the sherd illustrated has the same specialized features: a perforation and a pair of large handles linked by clay ridges (Fig. 3). Taken together the vessels establish



*Figure 4*  
Notched-ledge jar Ch.M. 4.013 from Chogha Mish. Protoliterate.



*Figure 5*  
Notched-ledge sherd Kh. III 505 from area of robber pits at Khafajah. Early Dynastic I.

the existence of a specific type that spanned the Protoliterate and Early Dynastic periods. Other examples of the numerous affinities between the pottery of these two periods are provided by the Chogha Mish jars with two notched ledges at the mouth, and the analogous notched ledges of Early Dynastic I pottery from the Diyala region (Figs. 4, 5). In fact, the Diyala pottery of the late fourth and early third millennia B.C. continues the ceramic tradition whose early Protoliterate phase we have come to know so well at Chogha Mish.

On a practical level pottery testifies to the coherence of the Mesopotamian tradition, which can also be traced in more elaborate manifesta-

tions such as the antecedents for later Mesopotamian art to be found in cylinder seal designs from Chogha Mish. The evidence recently excavated there is providing new pertinence for old discoveries

and exemplifying how the results of many decades of Oriental Institute excavations combine to reconstruct cultural development in the formative periods of Mesopotamian civilization.