
Chogha Mish

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As the time comes for another Annual report, the circumstance that the first volume of the publication of the Chogha Mish excavations is not yet in press as expected needs explanation. Unfortunately, much time during this year was preempted by other commitments. Nonetheless, good progress has been made by members of the Chogha Mish team. A new phase of work, the preparation of material for the second volume on the excavations, has been inaugurated by analyses of the structures in areas of prehistoric occupation which were greatly enlarged after the fifth season and by the preparation of lists of sixth season objects according to loci. Meanwhile, the amount of work still needed for the completion of the *Chogha Mish I* volume is minor in proportion to that already done and involves primarily materials of the prehistoric Susiana epoch. They represent a cultural development which covered at least two and a half millennia and ended around 3400 B.C., with the Protoliterate occupation of Chogha Mish. The range and interest of the material involved can be illustrated by a few examples.

First is the evidence for the technology of the pottery of the Archaic Susiana period, the early phase of the prehistoric sequence whose revelation has been one of the major results of the Chogha Mish project. Sherds which have broken along planes of cleavage show that vessels of the Straw-tempered Smoothed and Red-washed wares were made up of concentric lay-

ers of clay. Larger, thicker vessels have three layers; the middle one was built up by superimposing strips of clay which were carefully dovetailed by fitting the concave lower edges over the pinched rounded upper edges and pressing them together (Fig. 1). Then outer and inner layers of clay were added and all three layers so successfully fused that they can only be distinguished in a few fragments (Figs. 2, 3). Both the outer and inner surfaces were smoothed and such plain vessels form the bulk of the pottery during the Archaic Susiana period. Sometimes a wash of red pigment was added on the exterior (Fig. 2). Smaller, thinner vessels of the same wares have only two layers, a coiled layer plastered with thin clay on the exterior and smoothed on the interior surface so that no trace of the joins remain there.

An alternative and apparently less common method was to use the interior of a basket as a mold for the inner layer of a vessel; this, when dry enough, was removed and an outer layer of clay was pressed into the basketry imprints, obliterating them and producing vessels indistinguishable from coil-made ones. Small vessels of plain ware and painted vessels do not show layers and were presumably shaped by paddling and pinching.

The technology just described belongs to an early stage of a ceramic tradition that appears to have developed without any major break for a remarkable length of time. Many details of wares, shapes, and designs

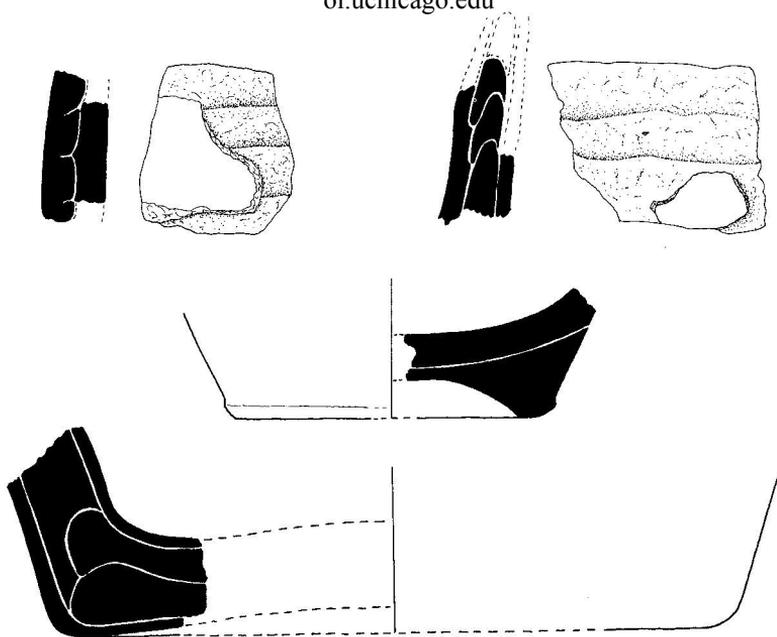


Fig. 3. Drawings by Abbas Alizadah showing profiles of Figure 1 sherds and of two bases made in two and three layers respectively

eastern marches of Mesopotamia. In southern Mesopotamia proper, sherds from the Warka survey of Adams and Nissen and from the lowest level reached in a stratigraphic pit at Tell el-'Ouei near Larsa apparently represent a late, debased version of a ceramic tradition related to the Close-line ware. The connections with the Susiana plain may well become more specific when additional information for the still almost completely unknown pre-Ubaid stage of development in southern Mesopotamia is obtained.

In northern Mesopotamia the famous painted ware of the Samarra period is clearly closely related to the Close-line ware (Fig. 5), although the latter is stratified in demonstrably earlier levels. These Archaic Susiana levels

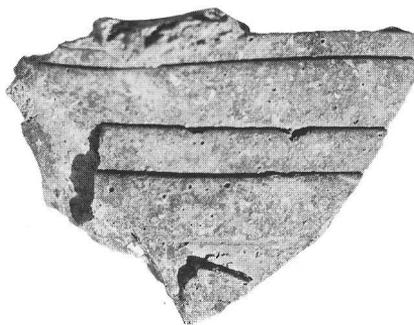
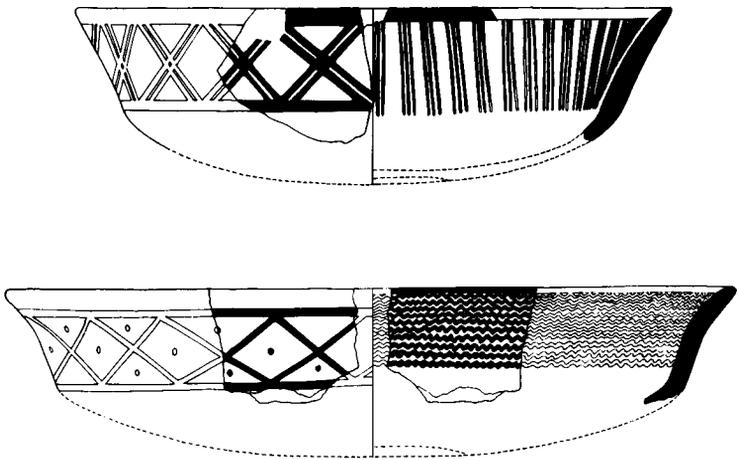


Fig. 4. Pottery waster of Middle Susiana 3

are succeeded at Chogha Mish by an Early Susiana settlement which provides links with both parts of Mesopotamia: for example, figurines paralleled in the Samarra culture of the north and pottery almost exactly duplicated in the earliest phase of the Ubaid culture as known from Eridu and Tell el-'Ouei. In the following cultural stages, Middle Susiana 1 in Khuzestan and the Ubaid 2 or Hajji Mohammed phase in southern Mesopotamia, relations were so close



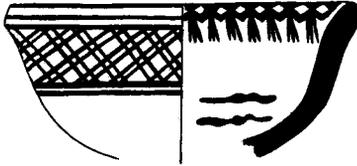
*Fig. 5. Bowls of Archaic Susiana 3
Close-line ware from Chogha Mish (left)
and Samarra ware from Mesopotamia
(right)*

that a bowl from Boneh Fazili, a small site near Chogha Mish which was briefly tested in 1971, is being shown in the present Mesopotamian exhibition of the Oriental Institute Museum (Assemblages, Case 2) as a representative vessel of the Hajji Mohammed period (Fig. 6)! The pottery of the later stages of the Ubaid and Susiana sequences still shows considerable similarity even though the two ceramic traditions were developing along diverging paths. These examples taken

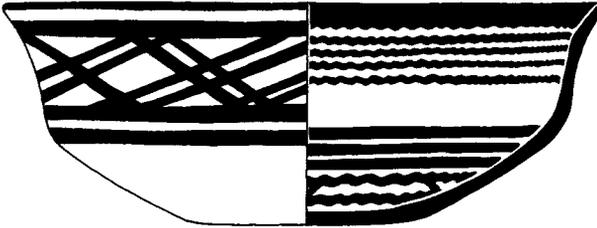
from pottery exemplify the archaeological detail enabling the reconstruction of the prehistoric epochs of southwestern Iran and Mesopotamia in which the great historical civilizations of Elam and Sumer were rooted.

I would like to close this report on a personal note. For a number of years Carolyn Z. Livingood has been a member of the Chogha Mish home team. We would not know what to do without her devotion and comradeship. She never falters in her enthusiasm or

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her willingness to do anything whatsoever that is necessary to advance the work, and never quails in the face of convoluted scrawls that would defeat anyone else. She has added to her many previous competencies such esoteric skills as the registration of archaeological fragments, the classification of sherds according to families, and the application of arcane methods of footnoting and cross referencing. It is particularly appropriate at this time to express appreciation to Carolyn Liv-

ingood for all that she does for the Chogha Mish project since 1984 is the thirtieth year that she has been working at the Oriental Institute. When she first came she helped Donald E. McCown and after his departure P. P. Delougaz, who was then the curator of the Oriental Institute Museum. One of the most elaborate of her museum projects was the reconstruction of part of a ceiling from the palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata at Thebes. It consists of a quadruple-spiral



Carolyn Z. Livingood. Photograph by Diana Olson

network formed by plaster covered with gold leaf on a ground of blue faience tiles, but is unfortunately no longer on exhibition. Carolyn Livingood had already had a long career at the Institute before she served as Secretary of the Museum and also undertook to develop a docent service, tasks for which her splendid talents for organization stood her in good stead. She had firmly established a flourishing guiding service by the time that she decided to end her “docent period.” Then to our great good fortune she chose to join the Chogha Mish team. Her contribution to the success of the project is immeasurable.

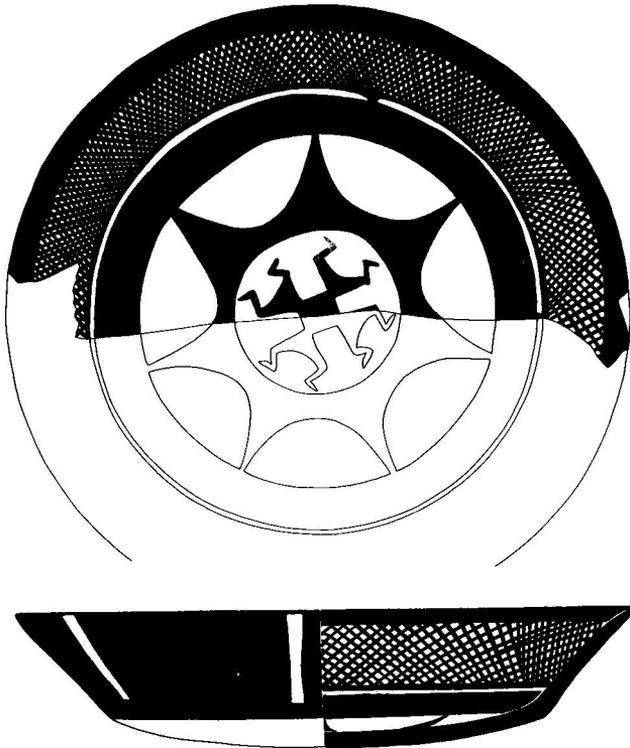


Fig. 6. Middle Susiana 1 bowl from Boneh Fazili