

## Excavations at Chogha Mish and Boneh Fazili in Khuzestan, Iran

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Since our last report (1966) the excavations at Chogha Mish have been conducted by the Joint Iranian Expedition of the Oriental Institute and the University of California at Los Angeles, directed on behalf of the latter by Professor P. P. Delougaz and by H. J. Kantor for the former. In the late spring of 1969 we went to Iran to solve the pressing problem of an expedition headquarters. We spent a hot June in Khuzestan, first occupied in finding a suitable village near Chogha Mish and possessing an adequate water supply, and afterwards with the construction of the house. We had gone out with a modest "ideal" plan drawn by Delougaz on the basis of his previous experiences with expedition houses. We had to cut down his ideal plan to one fitting both our limited finances and the space available at the edge of the village of Ghaleh Khalil. We wanted the expedition house to blend with the village, not to stand out as an alien element, and with the minor exception of the two flagstaffs on the roof we achieved our aim. By now the house has proved itself to be an invaluable asset to the expedition.

The fourth season at Chogha Mish lasted from November, 1969, to March, 1970. The staff consisted of six students from Chicago and Los Angeles whom we were able to take out with the aid of Ford Foundation Archaeological Traineeship grants. For parts of the season we were joined by Mr. D. D. Bickford, Mrs. H. A. Frankfort, and Miss Maggie van Nierop, who as volunteers gave us important aid in various types of recording. During the relatively long season we worked in a number of areas on remains of widely different periods. On the southeastern part of the high mound we cleared a considerable expanse of Elamite brickwork belonging to the fort, other parts of which we had dug previously. On the terrace we continued work in the west-

ern and eastern town quarters of the Protoliterate period (*ca.* 3400 B.C.) and considerably enlarged areas known from previous seasons to be important for the prehistoric sequence (Trenches XIII and XXV). In addition, in the search for remains of the earliest, Archaic, phases of occupation we opened up new areas on the eastern edge of the terrace (the "Gully Cut," Soundings G and H), which yielded unexpectedly rich evidence.



Trench XIII with Middle Susiana house (*ca.* fifth millennium B.C.) in right foreground. Photo by H. J. Kantor.

Our current season lasted from January to the beginning of April, 1971. During it we again received, as always in the past, cordial help from the officials of the Archaeological Service of Iran, Mr. A. A. Pourmand, Director-General, Mr. S. M. Khorramabodi, Assistant-Director, and Dr. H. T. Naimi, the new Director of Excavations. Our government collaborator in the field was Mr. Z. Rahmatian, who contributed greatly to the success of the work. The staff consisted of two student assistants, Mr. Hal Roberts of UCLA and Mrs. Susan Allen of the University of Chicago, brought out on Ford Foundation Traineeship grants, and an anthropologist, Dr. James Phillips of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus, who was responsible for lithic remains and for the collection of non-artifactual materials (e.g., bones, soil samples). During the last two weeks of the season, after the de-

parture of the staff, Dr. Mary C. McCutchan stayed with us as a volunteer. Her untiring assistance with crucial recording and hectic packing was invaluable.

The work of previous seasons had demonstrated that Chogha Mish, strategically situated midway between the entry of two major rivers into the Khuzestan plain, was a major settlement continuously occupied during the prehistoric and early Protoliterate periods, after which time it was deserted except for briefer and smaller Elamite, Achaemenid, and Parthian occupations. This season's work at Chogha Mish was concentrated on the terrace in areas important for the prehistoric, Susiana, periods antedating 4000 B.C. Besides continuing in areas previously begun (Trenches XIII, XXI, XXV, and the "Gully Cut"), three new ones were added (Trench XXXI, Sounding I, and R23).

In Trench XIII, located in the central part of the terrace, we had found in the fourth season a cemetery of burials without objects and presumably Sasanian in date, an Achaemenid grave with pottery and bronze vessels, as well as Achaemenid settlement remains. The burials had been dug down to the level of the Protoliterate period below which were prehistoric constructions. This year we dug deeper in Trench XIII as well as enlarging it on the south and at the northeast corner. The finds in the upper levels were analogous to those of 1969/70 except that the Protoliterate deposit was of greater thickness and importance than in the adjacent area dug previously. Our main goal in Trench XIII was to elucidate the architecture of the prehistoric Susiana periods, which turned out to be extensive and even more complex than expected. Many superimposed walls represent architectural phases extending from the Middle Susiana back into the Early Susiana period (*ca.* fifth to sixth millennium B.C.). In addition to the rooms themselves, various installations such as bins and kilns were found. The architectural phases are associated with ceramic finds which will enable us to build up a closely correlated sequence of architectural and cultural periods.

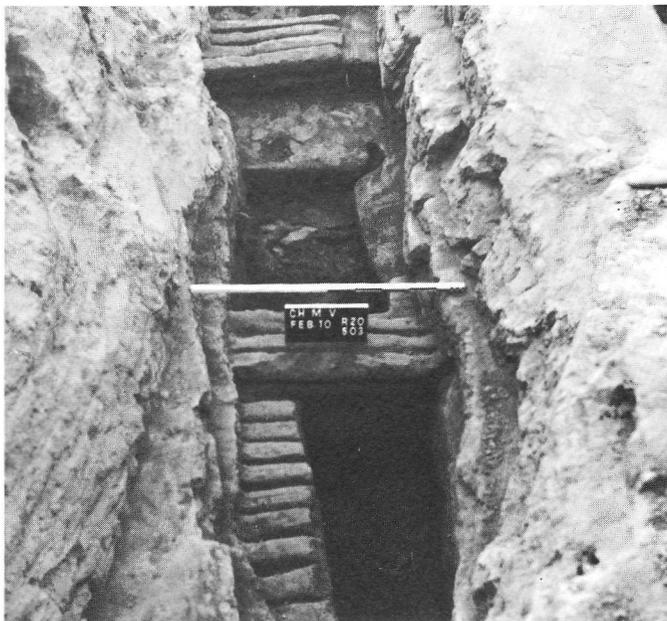
Trench XXI is located east of Trench XIII on what is now the relatively steep eastern slope of the terrace. This area was tested in the third season when we dug a narrow, deep trench which provided a good sequence of stratified sherds. At intervals since then heavy rains have washed out reconstructable pottery vessels from its edges, where, moreover, traces of brickwork were observable at some points. We decided to reopen this promising area on a larger scale and were rewarded with notable additions to our architectural sequence. In the upper part appeared two rooms with well-built walls datable by pottery

to an early phase of the Middle Susiana period. The walls run west into unexcavated ground so we may have here part of a large building. In the lower, eastern part of the trench we discovered a series of rooms built of unbaked bricks, two subdivided by thin cross walls in a slightly later phase. The potsherds from these rooms date them to the Early Susiana period and provide us with a fine corpus of pottery forms and designs. In addition, some of our most exciting finds of the season were made in Trench XXI. Alongside the Early Susiana rooms a number of large, concave-based vessels had been piled on top of one another in a small pit. We found them there in their original positions. Chogha Mish is providing us thus with the first complete forms of vessels previously known only as relatively small sherds. In the early Susiana debris below the walls was found a terracotta head (see cover), the break on the neck showing that it was part of a figurine. It gives us an example of the modeler's art to place beside those of the pot painters. The tracing of the full extent of the Middle and Early Susiana complexes of Trench XXI remains an important task for coming seasons.



Mrs. Susan Allen and Mr. Ali Reza Ansari, pickman, with vessels of the Early Susiana deposit from Trench XXI. Photo by H. J. Kantor.

One of the most significant contributions of our work at Chogha Mish, one completely unanticipated when we began excavation at the site in order to investigate the earliest complex civilization of the Persian Gulf lands, that of the Protoliterate period, has been the revelation of an unknown stage of the central Susiana cultural sequence. This Archaic stage precedes all the previously-known cultures of the



Archaic walls, built of long, narrow bricks, in Trench XXV (ca. seventh to early sixth millennium B.C.). Photo by P. P. Delougaz.

area. It now appears to represent the earliest significant settled occupation. So far we have reached Archaic remains only in the lowest parts of the terrace, one of them being the "Gully Cut." This area was started last season to check the stratification at a point of the eastern terrace deeply cut by rain water, hence the name. It has now developed into an area yielding very important evidence for the occupation of the mound in the Archaic period. Below the uppermost mixed debris and Protoliterate deposits are traces of Early Susiana remains, but the main occupation levels here belong to various phases of the Archaic period. Part of the northern end of the "Gully Cut" was covered by a jumbled mass of fallen bricks, which were relatively

short and frequently had six or eight finger marks on one side. This brickwork apparently corresponds to the final phase of the Archaic period, transitional to the Early Susiana period. Below the fallen bricks were found two crushed skeletons and still lower were levels of occupational debris with sherds, flint chips, and other fragmentary artifacts. It was not possible to complete the excavation of all parts of this area to virgin soil; next season we hope to do this and, in addition, to connect the various areas with Archaic remains into one large sector.

Trench XXV, northwest of the "Gully Cut," has a complex stratification. The uppermost levels have Protoliterate walls and a kiln, already excavated in previous seasons. In addition, during the Protoliterate occupation very large and deep pits were sunk into the earlier debris. Hence we sometimes find deposits of Protoliterate pottery two meters or more below the level of Archaic walls. These are built of distinctively long, narrow bricks (normally about a meter in length). They represent at least two phases of construction and the remains of more than one building. The walls stretch for a distance of over twenty meters, indicating a scale of construction surprising for a period which may be as early as the seventh millennium B.C. The problem of recovering the original plans is very greatly complicated by the many Protoliterate pits which have sometimes completely destroyed large sections of the Archaic walls. However, there is hope that this season's discoveries will enable us to reconstruct substantial parts of the original plans. But even now it is clear that the Archaic period comprises several building and cultural phases.

One of the new areas begun this season, R23, lies below Trench XXI and between it and the "Gully Cut." The upper half meter of soil had potsherds of mixed dates, obviously washed down in antiquity from higher parts of the mound. Below begin sherds of the latest Archaic phase and about two meters below the surface appeared walls of long Archaic bricks defining the corners of rather imposingly large rooms. Accordingly, this new area, begun late in the season, turned out to be of great interest for the extent and quality of the Archaic settlement and will teach us much more when enlarged next season.

Of the other two new areas of this season, small, square Sounding I is located in flat terrain on the eastern flank of the terrace. We wished to test the limits of the mound and the extent to which occupation remains continue under surface wash in what are now fields. The sounding was carried down to virgin soil, reaching the water table at about 8.5 meters below the surface and indicated con-

clusively that this area was never a part of the Chogha Mish settlement. Trench XXXI is located on sloping ground at the upper south-eastern corner of the terrace. Immediately below the surface were ashy deposits with large amounts of Protoliterate sherds and some complete beveled-rim bowls. A pit of the Protoliterate period about 1.5 meters deep and 1.0 meter in diameter also contained Protoliterate pottery. However, most of the Protoliterate deposits and structures had been eroded away anciently and prehistoric Susiana remains, including well-constructed mud-brick walls, appear about 0.60 meters below the surface. It became apparent that we have here superimposed structures of the Middle and Early Susiana periods and that this was a densely occupied part of the town.

To sum up the work at Chogha Mish this season: We now have a unique series of architectural remains from the Archaic, Early Susiana, and Middle Susiana periods, with several building phases within each main period. The stratification and the installations are extremely complex. Eventually the architectural data combined with that of the small finds will enable us to reconstruct much of the prehistoric development of the central Susiana plain, the home of one of the outstanding cultural traditions of prehistoric Iran and the one which had the closest relationships to Mesopotamia. Already we have learned that the settlements of the Early and Middle Susiana periods at Chogha Mish were of a size and complexity not expected for those periods.

The picture of development provided by Chogha Mish is likely to be partly conditioned by the fact that that site was a major center and thus our finds there should be, if possible, supplemented by material from other sites. Accordingly, we spent six days this season testing one of the smaller mounds within our permit, that of Boneh Fazili, about 2 kilometers northwest of Chogha Mish. We cut a trench 2.5 meters wide and over 40 meters long sloping down on the west side from near the top to the foot of the conical mound. A few burials, as well as installations and pottery of Islamic date, were found in the uppermost level. They correspond to remains which can be seen at the surface of the ground in the fields surrounding Boneh Fazili. The whole area may have been an outlying dependency of the great city of Gundi Shapur, some kilometers to the west.

Boneh Fazili was deserted for many millennia, since below the Islamic remains we came at once upon prehistoric sherds of the Middle Susiana period. In the lower sections of the trench Early Susiana pottery appears, and in the lowermost part at the foot of the mound

we discovered two walls constructed of the long Archaic bricks already well-known to us from Chogha Mish. These bricks together with the samples of Archaic pottery found prove that the main phases of the Susiana Archaic period discovered at Chogha Mish also exist on Boneh Fazili. The combined evidence from the two sites will be the foundation for understanding the character and density of the population in our region at this very early period. We already suspect that quite numerous and thriving Archaic communities laid the basis for the long and complex cultural development the details of which we are engaged in recovering at Chogha Mish.