

Excavations at Chogha Mish

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This year our work was divided between the preparation of publications at home and field work in Iran. In addition to various shorter reports, the manuscript of "Oriental Institute Communications," No. 23, *Chogha Mish: An Interim Report on the First Five Seasons of Excavations, 1961-71*, was in all essential respects completed at the end of the autumn quarter, 1973. It will provide details concerning the stratification, architectural remains, and objects, including the extensive sequences of prehistoric Susiana pottery and Protoliterate pottery and glyptic.

During a brief visit to Tehran to participate in the *Deuxième symposium de la recherche archéologique en Iran* (October 29–November 5, 1973), the practical arrangements for the approaching season were made with Dr. Firouz Bagherzadeh, director of the National Centre for the History of Art and Archaeology. His interest in the Expedition's program and his efficient aid greatly facilitated our work. We owe warm thanks to him as well as to the other members of the Centre who have given us their friendly help, in particular to Mr. Jahangir Yassi, the archeologist representing the Centre who lived through all the vicissitudes of the season with us. In addition to Professor P. P. Delougaz, whose arrival was delayed until later in the season, and H. J. Kantor, the staff consisted of Mr. D. D. Bickford,

artist, Mr. D. Shimabuku and Mrs. M. Sturz, archeologists, Miss J. Vindenas, archeological registrar, and Mr. M. M. Winn, archeologist. We were in the field from December 21, 1973, to April 9, 1974, with excavation in process from January 1 to March 30, 1974. The intervals before and after the actual digging, as well as those during it caused by unusually frequent rain, were spent in working on the numerous finds in the Expedition house.

The four sectors dug this season were all located in the eastern part of the terrace. We will summarize the results area by area.

The Trench XXI-XXXII Area.—This season in order to follow the Archaic Susiana walls running in the direction of Trench XXI previously found in Trench XXXII, we opened up the unexcavated space between the two areas. Here close to the surface were five burials attributable to the Archaic Susiana 3 period, one with a stone pendant at the throat. Below them appeared traces of walls, but the wet conditions during the season prevented us from reaching the level where we could check for the continuation of the substantial Archaic walls in Trench XXXII. On a higher level, in the Trench XXI area proper, we established the existence of a mud-brick platform of the Early Susiana period approximately 8 × 6 meters in size and preserved on its eastern side about six courses high. The platform is flanked on the north by the Early Susiana rooms excavated in the fifth season and on the southeast by newly excavated Early Susiana walls beginning immediately below the modern surface. These apparently belong to a well built house with several rooms. Although we can only speculate about the function of the denuded platform, we can begin to see in it and the surrounding buildings something of the layout of the Early Susiana town.

Trench XXXVII.—About 30 meters south of the Trench XXI area we laid out a stratigraphic test trench 20 m. long and 2 m. wide to check on the existence of Early Susiana architecture comparable to that in Trench XXI and of deeper, Archaic settlements. Even though the westernmost end of Trench XXXVII is at approximately the same level as the Early Susiana houses to the north, here no Early Susiana brickwork appeared immediately below the modern surface. Instead there was mixed debris with sherds of the Achaemenid, Protoliterate, and prehistoric Susiana periods continuing to a depth of some 3.5 m. A pit of the first millennium B.C. had here destroyed earlier remains and penetrated to virgin soil. In other parts of the trench, however,

Middle and Early Susiana layers with some architectural features were in place. Probably the most important result obtained from this narrow trench was the information concerning the extent of the Archaic Susiana settlement in this direction. In the westernmost part of the trench, occupation debris with the painted Close-line ware of Archaic Susiana 3 begins about 2.5 m. below the surface. The beginning of sterile soil, about 3.5 m. below the surface, indicated that this part of the site had not been settled in the earlier two phases of the Archaic Susiana period.

The Enlarged Gully Cut.—The Gully Cut, located in the most deeply eroded area on the east terrace, has been yielding stratigraphic evidence for the three phases of the Archaic Susiana period since our 1969/70 season. In the same season Sounding G, somewhat to the northeast, provided a stratigraphic sequence from the Middle Susiana period down to the Archaic Susiana 3 period, but the area had not

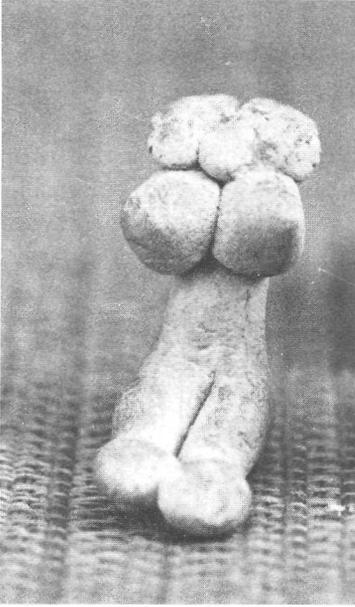


Gully Cut extension showing Middle Susiana structures, foreground; Early Susiana walls to the left; avenues of the Gully Cut sherd yard, background. Photo by Milton Winn

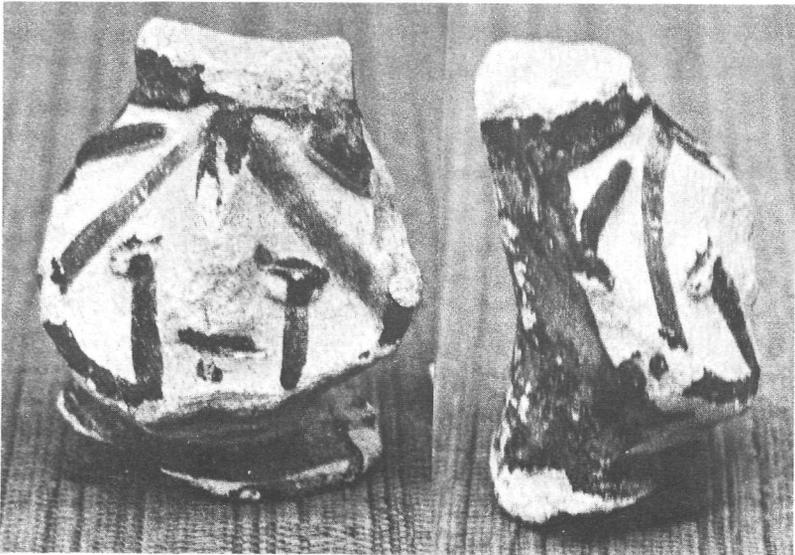
been large enough to develop the traces of architecture found. Accordingly, this sector promised to yield important evidence for the Archaic period, so that this season we opened up the entire 16 m. space between the Gully Cut and Sounding G.

Only at the southwest edges of this season's extension were earlier remains disturbed by the Protoliterate pits, one large and one small. Elsewhere, undisturbed Middle Susiana layers, with rooms containing many kilns and hearths, covered structures of the preceding Early Susiana period. The Early Susiana walls belong to substantial buildings. The greater part of a room some 5 m. long lies within this year's excavation, but its southwestern corner disappears under undug earth. To the east of this large room appears a buttressed wall which turns a corner; both its ends remain unexcavated. These Early Susiana buildings in the Gully Cut extension were constructed on a lower level than the contemporary houses of the Trench XXI-XXXII area, allowing us to visualize the ancient town of the sixth millennium B.C. with houses rising one above another on different levels. The finds in both areas indicate that the density and importance of the Early Susiana settlement was much greater than we had anticipated when we began digging on the east slopes of the terrace.

The Gully Cut extension provided this season very good representatives of Protoliterate and Middle Susiana pottery. Yet the most impressive ceramic finds were the large groups of Early Susiana sherds recovered from the debris near the buttressed wall. Their analysis and reconstruction in drawing has only begun, but it is already certain that they will provide important information concerning the continuity between Early Susiana culture and its predecessors, as well as connections with Mesopotamia. In addition to the pottery this same debris yielded fragmentary terracotta figurines. One is a well modeled figure of a seated woman only 2 cm. high; details such as the large breasts and the three beads of a necklace are represented by separate pellets of clay. A slight groove at the neck may indicate where a head, now missing, was once attached. Fragments of the bodies of female figures have details of the sex and dress added in dark brown or black paint. A head, larger in scale than any of the other fragments, has both plastic and painted details. The same deposit also yielded a well carved stone pendant in the shape of a boar. This is the first example proving that craftsmen of the Early Susiana period were able to execute such advanced representational work in stone.



Terracotta figurine of a seated woman; the head is missing. Height 2 cm. (Ch. M. VIII-1). Photo by Jahangir Yassi



Head of a painted terracotta figurine. Height 5 cm. (Ch.M.VIII-85). Photo by J. Yassi

Stone pendant in the shape of a boar. Height 2.8 cm. (Ch.M. VIII-60). Photo by J. Yassi



Considerable information on the economic modes of subsistence that supported this burgeoning Early Susiana culture will be given by the animal bones and carbonized seeds recovered this season from the Gully Cut extension. Many non-artifactual remains have also been recovered from other areas in this and previous seasons. It is already clear that by the Early Susiana period animal husbandry and agriculture were well developed.

The importance of both the architecture and small finds from the Gully Cut extension makes further enlargement of the area next season imperative. We have here the opportunity to reveal substantial Early Susiana buildings and to compare them with those of the Trench XXI area. Furthermore, we have reached at the southern end of this extension the beginning of the Archaic levels that underly the Early Susiana ones. Excavation of these low strata will, it is hoped, shed light on such outstanding questions concerning the Archaic period as the development of its architecture.

The East Area of Protoliterate Houses.—The fourth area dug this season is located considerably higher than those just described, on the northeast side of the terrace. Here, beginning in our second season (1963), we had found walls and pottery of the Early Protoliterate period (*ca.* 3400 B.C.) close to the surface. Despite the sector's importance we were unable to work there for two seasons while we were excavating large prehistoric areas. This year a long strip along the north side of the previously excavated area was dug from the surface down. Close to the surface were traces of a modest Achaemenid Persian settlement established after the terrace of Chogha Mish had



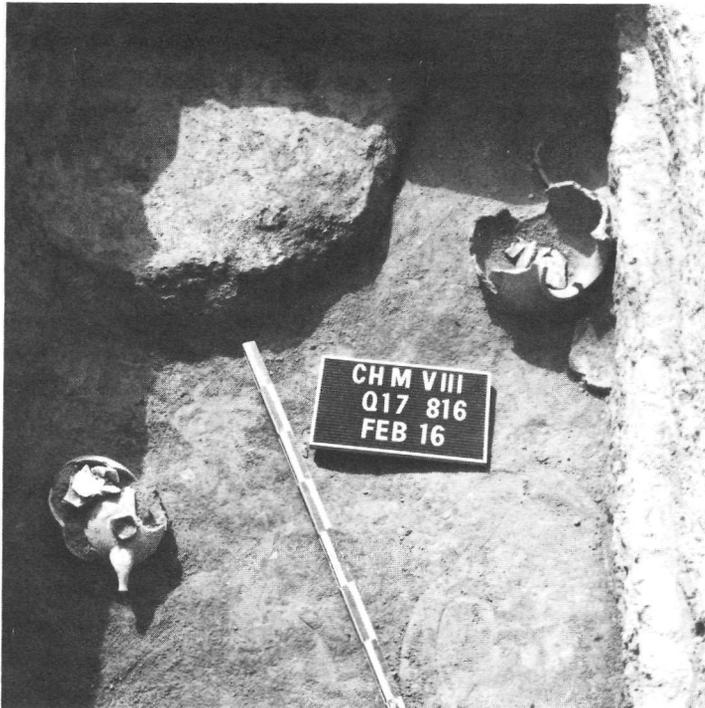
Workman laying out beveled-rim bowls, complete and fragmentary, found in one small pit in the East Area of the Protoliterate city. Photo by P. P. Delougaz

lain unoccupied for some three thousand years. Several patches of Achaemenid floors, one with a small hearth lined with tiny potsherds, were traced, as well as a kiln cut down into the Protoliterate deposits. The Achaemenid pottery will be important for comparison with finds from elsewhere. In fact, though so much monumental architecture and sculpture is known from the Achaemenid period, the evidence for the equipment of daily life is more meager. Thus, the Achaemenid village at Chogha Mish may well make a larger contribution to our knowledge of the period than might at first seem possible in view of the settlement's humble character.

As was to be expected, the remains of the Protoliterate period were both extensive and complex: pottery-crammed pits dug down from eroded levels into the rooms of private houses, which sometimes have pottery vessels *in situ* on their floors. An elaborate baked-brick installation associated with drain pipes was clearly built for a specialized purpose, which perhaps can be identified when the surrounding area is removed next season. Most of the Protoliterate walls are of the thick-

nesses normal for private houses, ranging from 25 to 50 cm. But in the reclearing and deepening of an area near the Circular Building dug in previous seasons were two much more substantial walls, over 1.5 m. thick. A corner remains of the upper one; the lower wall disappears into unexcavated earth and remains to be investigated next season.

In addition to the masses of pottery normal in the Protoliterate levels at Chogha Mish, there were small finds. Although this season's seal impressions were sparse and incomplete, for the first time a cluster of terracotta cones representing a chunk of cone-mosaic decoration fallen from a presumably nearby building was found. Such mosaics were typical for Protoliterate temples, which must have existed at Chogha Mish, although so far no architectural traces of them have been found.



Two vessels in situ on a floor of a room of a Protoliterate house. Photo by Daniel Shimabuku

This season's work has been concerned with remains varying widely in date: an early first millennium B.C. village of the final great empire of the ancient Near East; a late fourth millennium B.C. city of the vital Protoliterate period at the dawn of Mesopotamian civilization; and fifth and sixth millennium towns of the preceding prehistoric epochs. Among the latter the Early Susiana materials stand out this season. They provide excellent evidence for the contemporaneity of Early Susiana with both the Eridu or Ubaid I period, the earliest well known cultural phase in southern Mesopotamia, and the Samarra period of central and northern Mesopotamia. The close connections between the Susiana plain and Mesopotamia go back to the sixth millennium B.C. One of the major goals for the next season of the Joint Iranian Expedition is to expose wider areas of the preceding Archaic Susiana phases that parallel chronologically very early settlements of northern Mesopotamia and the Zagros mountain valleys of Iran.



Stone bowl with trough spout found in a pit in the Protoliterate city. Height 3.5 cm., diameter 8.5 cm. (Ch.M.VIII-17). Photo by J. Yassi