

News & Notes

The Oriental Institute

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Issued confidentially to members and friends

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TWO NEWSLETTERS FROM THE JOINT IRANIAN EXPEDITION
of the Oriental Institute, The University of Chicago and The University of California at Los Angeles

January 25, 1975
Ghaleh Khalil, near Chogha Mish

To Our Colleagues and Friends in Chicago and Los Angeles, Greetings:

It is exactly a month ago that six of us arrived at five o'clock in the morning at the railroad station of Andimeshk after a night trip from Tehran. We had planned to arrive a day earlier, but for the first time in our experience all the trains were so crowded that no seats were available even several days in advance. Many buses that carry passengers between Tehran and Khuzestan had been taken out of service to carry pilgrims to the ports where ships were waiting to take them on their way to Mecca.

Starting from various points in the USA and Europe, we had gathered in Tehran according to schedule. To give us the possibility to resume work without delay, Dr. Bagherzadeh, the Director of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, and his staff with their usual courtesy and efficiency had our permit to resume excavations in Khuzestan ready by the time of our arrival. A new representative had also been appointed. We were very happy to learn that our new colleague would be Mr. Aghil Abedi, who had, in fact, participated in the work of the Expedition while still a student of archeology at the University of Tehran. Mr. Abedi joined us after a few days, and excavations began as planned on January 1, 1975. Three other members of the staff came about two weeks later. The complete staff consists, in addition to the two of us, of Miss Johanne Vindenas, Mr. Aghil Abedi, Mrs. Karen Briggs (Institute of Fine Arts, NYU), Miss Valerie Fargo (University of Chicago), Mr. Glenn Schwartz (Yale University), Mr. St. John Smith, architect from Boston (volunteer), Mrs. Elizabeth Richmond, archeologist stationed at Masjed-i-Suleiman (volunteer), and Miss Jane Cowgill, daughter of the Defense Attaché at the British Embassy in Tehran (volunteer).

Except for the two of us and Miss Vindenas, who has been a member of the Expedition during two previous seasons, and Mr. Abedi, who worked for five weeks with us before and has since had considerable experience on other sites in Iran, all members of the staff are newcomers to Iran and to Chogha Mish. Consequently, considerable time has had to be spent to acquaint them with the site, the various types of materials and the variety of methods and techniques employed in recording the progress of the work and the finds.

In order not to disperse the staff over too wide an area, we began excavations in a limited sector on the west end of the private houses of the Protoliterate period in the East Area. The number of the trained pickmen employed was increased gradually and the total number of workmen has grown gradually from about thirty in the first days to about fifty. Continuing the "tradition" established in our previous excavations of Protoliterate houses, a truly prodigious amount of pottery has been found. A group of trained sherdboys are kept busy washing, sorting, and mending this pottery, as well as catching up with similar chores with accumulated pottery from previous seasons that requires special attention. Most members of the staff have by now acquired the skill necessary to draw pottery vessels to scale and at a standard acceptable for publication.

After concentrating for about two weeks in one area, we reopened excavations on the southwest slope of the high mound, where in our third season Protoliterate building remains of apparently monumental character were discovered at the edge of and possibly beneath the massive brickwork of an Elamite fort. It is hoped that additional information about the earlier building will be forthcoming in the course of this season's work.

With the new members of the staff gaining more experience and skill in the various aspects of the work, we plan to return to yet another sector of the site, on which work was interrupted at the end of the

MAR 24 1975

2 eighth season. This is the Gully Cut, where considerable areas of Early Susiana architecture and deposits were exposed at the end of last year.

The weather on the whole has been much better this season than last. We had only about two and a half days interruption of work on the site during the first two weeks—days that were spent very profitably in the house in catching up with work left over from earlier seasons and recording new finds. Just now we have had a longer interruption; today is our fifth day away from the site. During the first three we did not work on the *tepe* by request of the workmen, who asked for a three-day holiday in connection with Ashura, the tenth day of Moharram, one of the two most important religious holy days in the Shi'ite religious calendar. During that period it rained intermittently and the site is still too wet for effective digging. We are using this opportunity to catch up with work indoors and also with correspondence, including this newsletter.

We have already had a number of visitors to the site and it is a pleasure to see our friends, both Iranian and foreign. New acquaintances are the American Vice-Consul at Khorramshahr, Mr. Michael Arietti, and Mr. Lane Cubstead from the U.S. Information Service in Tehran, who were here a few days ago.

We have been noticing some important changes in the conditions and even in the landscape around us. The progress of the country toward industrialization, including agricultural industry, has brought the construction of a network of canals and roads in our vicinity. Even on the first day, in driving from the railroad to the house we had to cross the steep embankment of a future canal where only a shallow creek had existed before. Two such embankments between the house and the site also necessitate steep crossings and minor detours. The major change, however, is the fact that many of our workmen have found jobs in newly-built sugar and paper factories at considerably higher wages than we can afford to pay them. Also more and more of the younger and middle-aged men seek employment in the booming cities where they can find work in the building trade and developing industries. In fact, we have found several of our own younger men, including the former houseboy, employed in Tehran. The Expedition thus steadily loses some of its most gifted, best-trained, and ambitious young workers. Inflation also has reached out from the urban centers into the countryside and our average wages for unskilled workers have risen more than 250% since we first came to this part of the country in 1961. In addition, the devaluation of our own currency also has its effect, so that the archeologist in the field faces a new set of problems that are not strictly archeological. However, it is still early in the season, and, as usual, we are optimistic. We hope that, *inshallah*, this season will produce worthwhile results as have all the previous ones at this marvelously rich site.

P. P. Delougaz
Director, Joint Iranian
Expedition

Helene J. Kantor
Co-Director, Joint Iranian
Expedition

February 9, 1975

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Since we wrote to you on January 25 the weather has been perverse. We have only been able to work on the mound in short spurts of two or three days before being interrupted by rain. Though we all have plenty to do in the house, days of steady pelting rain are not conducive to cheerfulness. Afterwards, though, when the clouds part and the sky is blue we can always hope for a magnificent view of the surrounding mountain ranges blanketed with fresh snow. Now the fields are green with wheat and the first flowers of the season, pyramids of yellow blossoms, are beginning to unbend. Fortunately, such a bright day while the mound was still too wet for digging gave us the opportunity to visit the impressive Elamite temples and ziggurat at Chogha Zanbil. The next day it rained again.

Over a week ago we heard a rumor that the Minister of Art and Culture would be visiting Khuzestan. Since the site of Chogha Mish and the small village where we built the expedition house are far from any good road we hardly expected that he would be able to visit us during his short stay in the province. However, last Tuesday (February 4) the assistant to the governor of the Dezful area came to inform us that a visit to Chogha Mish was definitely on the Minister's program and that he would come in two days.

On the following day, a bright and sunny one, we laid out the landing circle for the helicopter which was to transport him and told our workmen about the important visitors we expected. The Minister was being accompanied by his assistant, Mr. Pourmand, by Dr. Firouz Bagherzadeh, by the governor of the province of Khuzestan, and by several other high officials. After the visit to the site we hoped to bring them all to the house, and everyone pitched in to bring it into a suitable state. By the end of the evening wonders had been achieved. The workroom gleamed for the first time since we arrived and the alcove shelves in the living room and dining room were arranged to show off some of the more complete Protoliterate and prehistoric pottery vessels. Another major achievement was to free all the chairs in the living room from the fragile, newly mended pots which had gradually acquired squatters' rights there.

The next morning we woke up to a disappointing drizzle. Though it was too wet for digging we went out to the mound to keep our appointment with the governor's assistant, who was due to arrive in a helicopter to test the chalk circle laid out on a flat part of the terrace. Eventually a grey and red helicopter appeared through the overhanging clouds, circled the heliport, and made a perfect landing. The governor's assistant told us that the minister would arrive with his companions from Dezful around three o'clock. By early afternoon the skies were still overcast, but the drizzle had stopped. We all went out to the mound to await the visitors. What with the jeeps of the gendarmes and the governor's assistant, we had an impressive line-up of six cars near the improvised heliport. A number of workmen came despite the clouds. Flags on the cars and on the mound added an air of festivity to the scene. Time passed but there was no sound from the skies. Our workmen were cold, and to warm them up we proposed some jogging and exercises. These were a great success and everyone stood more cheerfully in a circle. Next we requested that someone recite portions of the Iranian national epic, the *Shah Nameh* of Ferdowsi. One of our pickmen did this in a very impressive and dramatic way, striding from side to side with the appropriate gestures. This was the high point of the afternoon, for much to our disappointment our visitors never arrived. We gave up as the clouds parted and the shafts of the setting sun lit up the countryside and the mountain ranges in spectacular fashion. The next morning we heard that it had rained so hard in Dezful that the helicopter pilot did not dare to risk the flight to Chogha Mish.

To turn to archeology: although so far we have had fewer digging days than we expected, there are already some important results to report. One of the Protoliterate pits in the East Area has yielded two tablets of a type new to Chogha Mish, namely, small square ones with numerals but no seal impressions. They resemble some found by one of us at Khafaje in the Diyala region of Iraq many years ago. Also in the pit was a four-sided sealed bulla, an object which is very rare both from this period and in general. Preliminary cleaning and study of the design suggest that the seal impression shows two figures kneeling at a horizontal loom, with an offering-bearer carrying the finished cloth. Another cylinder seal design is represented by a fragmentary impression. Enough of it survives, however, for the reconstruction of a unique motive. It shows two opposed monsters with human heads, arms, and tiny feet projecting from bodies shaped like the hulls of ships. The monsters appear to hold a large vessel which fills the space between them; other vessels appear above their bodies. We are quite excited about this design, since it is new for the Protoliterate period but may well be a forerunner of later, Early Dynastic, representations. We have not yet finished clearing the pit in question, so there is the possibility of further finds.

A few days ago we opened a new strip along the edge of the sector excavated in the fourth season (1969-70), on the opposite side of the East Area. Traces of walls appeared immediately below the modern sloping surface of the mound. In a matter of hours there began to emerge parts of a building destroyed in a conflagration, but with doorways intact and walls standing almost to a man's height. Some of the well-preserved plaster of the walls was red, and relatively large amounts of charcoal were collected. The amazing condition of this "mystery house" suggested at first glance that it might be the remains of a residence of a local Khan built not earlier than the end of the last century. The massiveness of the walls, the sophistication of the doorway revetments, and sparsity of Protoliterate pottery gave the impression that the structure must be fairly late. We realized at once that none of the Achaemenid pottery types by now becoming familiar to us at Chogha Mish were to be found in the building, and that there were a surprising number of characteristically prehistoric pottery types. It was at this point, two days ago, that Jean Perrot (the director of the French Archaeological Mission at Susa), Genevieve Dollfus, Elizabeth Carter, and other members of the Susa staff visited us. In showing them the new building, we assured them that the mystery would soon be solved; and it was the next day when the stratigraphic position of its walls as related to those of the Protoliterate houses was established. This fits in perfectly with what we had noticed earlier in some preliminary sorting of the pottery from the house. The building is still far from completely excavated, but its date is now no longer a mystery. It belongs to the fifth millennium B.C., that is, to the Middle Susiana period. Yesterday afternoon one of its rooms, only about one-third cleared so far, turned out to be chock-full of complete or nearly complete large jars. So far we have counted seventeen. In addition to pottery, the first room we found of the house had a large number of flint cores and fine long blades, suggesting that it was a flint-making workshop. Now that the date of the building is clear, we are eager to solve some of the many problems raised both by the discovery of such a massive Middle Susiana structure and by the circumstance of its destruction by fire.

We are again in the house for a while, since after two days the drizzle resumed. We expect, though, that soon there will come long spells of sunny weather when we will be back to the demanding routine of early-morning to late-at-night work and will not have a chance to catch our breath, let alone write a newsletter. So we are using this opportunity to bring you up to date on the latest developments here.

With our best wishes,
P. P. Delougaz

Helene J. Kantor

4 **Spring Members' Course**

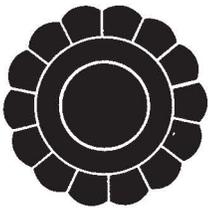
Professor McGuire Gibson will offer a special Members' Course of eight lectures on Mesopotamian Civilization, Wednesday evenings, April 16th to June 4th, 1975, from 6:30 to 8:00 P.M.. The fee will be \$50.00, which will benefit the Nippur Archeological Expedition. Please call Mrs. Jill Maher at 753-2573 or 753-2471 to register.

Docent Training

There will be a training course for Museum Docents and Suq Volunteers on ten Mondays from April 14th through June 16th. The course will be held in Breasted Hall from 10:30 to 2:30 with a break for lunch. Trainees must be members of the Institute and a fee of \$20.00 for materials will be charged. Parking will be available. Please call Mrs. Jill Maher at 753-2573 or 753-2471 for an interview.

The Chinese Exhibition: April 27th, 1975

Arrangements have been made for a group of Oriental Institute members to visit the remarkable Chinese Exhibition on its last stop before returning to Peking. After London, Paris, Vienna, Stockholm, Toronto, and Washington, this collection of archeological finds from the People's Republic of China will be in Kansas City from April 20th through June 8th, 1975. Oriental Institute members will be received as a group on Sunday, April 27th. The cost of the excursion, including the chartered flight and luncheon, will be \$90. Please call Mrs. Linn Buss at 986-0330 for details.



The Oriental Institute

The University of Chicago

1155 East 58th Street · Chicago, Illinois · 60637

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