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Six Burials Attributed to the Neo-Elamite Period from Fort Mound (Tell-e Geser); Revisiting Details, Placement, and Chronology

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Abstract

The archaeological site of Tell-e Geser has long suffered from the absence of a comprehensive final excavation report and the fragmented publication of its materials. This problem is particularly evident in the interpretation of five burials discovered in the Fort Mound, which have been inconsistently dated and stratigraphically positioned in successive publications. Previous studies have attributed these burials broadly to the Neo-Elamite period, often assigning a single burial assemblage to multiple and widely separated chronological phases. This paper presents a critical reassessment of the burial data from the Fort Mound through a systematic re-examination of published excavation plans, stratigraphic sections, elevation records, and associated grave goods. Using a historical-archaeological methodology that combines stratigraphic reasoning with comparative typological analysis, each burial is evaluated independently rather than as part of a presumed homogeneous group. The results demonstrate that several inconsistencies in earlier interpretations stem from errors in plan orientation, misreading of elevation data, and the cumulative misinterpretation of archival materials. When these issues are corrected, the burials can be placed within a coherent stratigraphic sequence, revealing that they do not belong to a single chronological horizon. Instead, the evidence indicates multiple phases of burial activity spanning from the Middle Elamite to the late Neo-Elamite period, allowing the identification of six separate burials in a relatively regular chronological sequence that were previously conflated and misidentified as five. This reassessment not only clarifies the burial sequence at Tell-e Geser but also highlights the broader methodological risks of relying uncritically on legacy excavation data.

Keywords: Tell-e Geser, Neo-Elamite, Burial Practices, Stratigraphy, Legacy Excavations, Elam.

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Introduction

Donald McCown conducted excavations during two seasons in 1948–1949 at three mounds—A, B, and the so-called "Fort Mound"—within the Tell-e Geser complex (Alizadeh, 2014: Preface). Aside from a brief preliminary note (McCown, 1949) and a short article (McCown, 1954), no comprehensive excavation report was ever published. The excavation field notes and most of the recovered materials were transferred to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago[1].Approximately two decades later, these materials and records were made available to Joseph Caldwell, McCown's assistant during the 1949 season, for study and publication. Caldwell's manuscript, however, was never approved for publication owing to its incomplete state (Alizadeh, 2014: Preface), and his contribution remained limited to a short article on Uruk-period materials from Tell-e Geser (Caldwell, 1968). Donald Whitcomb subsequently examined the Proto-Elamite remains from the site within the framework of his master's thesis (Whitcomb, 1971).

During the same period, Elizabeth Carter published a portion of the second-millennium BC pottery assemblage from Tell-e Geser in her doctoral dissertation (Carter, 1971: 256–271, 431–440). In 1994, in an article addressing the cultural transition between the Elamite and Achaemenid periods, Carter presented a selection of finds from the Fort Mound, including five burials and their associated pottery, which she attributed to the Neo-Elamite period (Carter, 1994). Finally, more than six decades after the original excavations, Abbas Alizadeh published a synthetic report on the Tell-e Geser excavations, accompanied by stratigraphic interpretations (Alizadeh, 2014).

As Alizadeh himself notes (Ibid: Preface), the prolonged interval between excavation and publication, repeated transfers of materials and documentation between institutions, access by multiple researchers, and other related factors resulted in the loss, damage, or distortion of portions of the original excavation records. These problems are particularly evident in the presentation of the Neo-Elamite material, most notably in the contradictory and inconsistent information concerning the five burials published by Carter (1994). While Carter's original chronology for the grave goods was often imprecise, frequently spanning broad temporal ranges within the Neo-Elamite period, Alizadeh's report further complicates the issue. In several instances, he assigns the grave goods of a single burial to multiple stratigraphic levels and widely separated chronological periods, ranging from the Sukkalmah to the Islamic era (e.g., Pl. 3). These inconsistencies appear to stem from a combination of factors, including insufficient engagement with Carter's earlier publication, inaccuracies in chronological attribution, and fundamental errors in the drafting of the Fort Mound plans, particularly with respect to orientation and cardinal directions. More recently, Yasmina Wicks attempted to reconcile Carter's burial data

with the plans published by Alizadeh, proposing revised placements and chronologies for the burials (Wicks, 2019). Although this effort aimed to resolve existing ambiguities, it ultimately introduced further stratigraphic inconsistencies, resulting in a spatial reconstruction that remains problematic (see: Fig. 5C).

Given the archaeological importance of Tell-e Geser and the cumulative nature of these interpretive errors, a critical re-examination of the burial data is necessary. The present study reassesses the available evidence using established methods of historical and archaeological analysis. It addresses two primary questions: 1) what was the precise stratigraphic position of each burial within the Fort Mound, and 2) to which chronological phase should each burial be assigned? By systematically re-evaluating published data, excavation plans, and field notes, this study aims to clarify the placement and dating of the burials and to demonstrate how successive misreadings of archival material can generate artificial and internally inconsistent chronological interpretations.

Methodology: This study adopts a historical-archaeological approach and employs standard methods for the identification, stratigraphic placement, and chronological assessment of ancient cultural materials. The analysis is based entirely on published excavation reports, archival documentation, plans, and comparative material from well-stratified Elamite sites, as no laboratory-based analyses were available for the present research.

The investigation proceeded in three analytical stages. First, previously published interpretations concerning the placement of the burials within the Fort Mound trench were critically reviewed. Particular attention was paid to discrepancies in reported elevation levels, burial orientations, and spatial relationships as presented by Carter (1994) and Alizadeh (2014). These data were systematically cross-checked against excavation plans and longitudinal sections in order to identify internal inconsistencies and to reconstruct the most plausible stratigraphic positions of each burial. Second, each burial assemblage was examined independently. Rather than treating the burials as a single, homogeneous group, the associated grave goods were analyzed in relation to their immediate stratigraphic context. Where inconsistencies in elevation data were identified, alternative readings were tested to determine which interpretation produced a coherent stratigraphic sequence across the trench. Third, the chronological assessment of each burial was conducted through comparative typological analysis. Pottery vessels and associated objects were compared with securely dated examples from Susa, Malyan, Chogha Zanbil, and other relevant Elamite sites. Particular emphasis was placed on stratigraphic associations rather than isolated typological parallels, in order to avoid circular or overly broad chronological assignments.

The periodization employed in this study follows the stratigraphic frameworks established at Susa—especially de Miroschedji's work at Ville Royale II (1978; 1981a,

1981b)—and at Malyan, particularly the EDD sequence (Carter, 1996). Given ongoing scholarly disagreement regarding the chronological boundary between the Middle and Neo-Elamite periods[2], this study adopts a transitional phase ("Middle-to-Neo-Elamite Transition") to account for assemblages that cannot be securely assigned to either period on typological grounds alone (Tab. 1). This framework allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the burial sequence at Tell-e Geser and avoids imposing rigid period boundaries where the archaeological evidence remains ambiguous.

Tab. 1: Periodization used in this research (Author, 2024).

Site / Period	Middle Elamite	Transition from Middle to Neo-Elamite	Neo-Elamite I	Neo-Elamite II
Susa; Ville Royale II Layers	12–11	10	9–8	7–6
Malyan; EDD Layers	4b	4a–3a	–	–

Research Background

As mentioned in the Introduction, the burials under study were first published by Carter (1994). Subsequently, partial and scattered information on these burials was presented by Abbas Alizadeh in his book, Ancient Settlement Systems and Cultures in the Ram Hormuz Plain (Alizadeh, 2014). Shortly thereafter, this book was translated into Persian under his supervision, incorporating some minor modifications (Alizadeh *et al.,* 1395: 19). More recently, Yasmina Wicks, noting the inconsistencies between the previous reports, unsuccessfully attempted to correlate the burials published by Carter with Alizadeh's maps, establish their chronology, and resolve the existing ambiguities between the two accounts (Wicks, 2019).

Tall-e Geser

The site of Tall-e Geser (RH-001) is located in the northwestern Ram Hormuz plain (Fig. 1). It comprises a complex of large and small mounds formed in two distinct groups around freshwater springs, with the tallest mound reaching a height of 22 meters (Alizadeh, 2014: Preface; 283). Overall, the complex extends over an area of approximately 1000×500 meters on a northwest-southeast longitudinal axis. A significant portion of this ancient site is now covered by the modern village of Tel-e Geser, its orchards, and agricultural lands (Fig. 2). Based on archaeological evidence, Tall-e Geser was inhabited through several settlement phases, from the 5th millennium BC (contemporary with the Middle Susiana period) to the Safavid period (Wright, 1969: 2; Wright & Carter, 2003: 76; Alizadeh, 2014: 283).

The Fort Mound

Within the Tall-e Geser complex, the most important excavated area for the study of the Neo-Elamite period is the so-called Fort Mound (Tepe/Tappe-ye Dezh), situated in the

westernmost part of the site. The mound is oriented on a northeast-southwest axis and measures approximately 160×60 m with a height of 9 m (Wright & Carter, 2003: 76). During a short season in 1948, a 28×5 m longitudinal trench was dug on its western face, extending down the slope. For the excavation, this trench was divided into three plots — "Top," "Centre," and "Base"—all of which were excavated concurrently[3] (Carter, 1994: 70; Alizadeh, 2014: 18). It is unclear whether the trench was initiated at the mound's summit or from a point further down its slope. This ambiguity is highlighted in the available records, where its highest point is marked on the longitudinal section drawing with an elevation of 5.70 meters, a figure inconsistent with the mound's 9-meter height[4] . The available drawings (Alizadeh, 2014: Figs. 9–10) indicate that while the Top plot is almost flat, the Centre and Base plots were cut into the slope; more specifically, between the 9 m and 28 m marks, they descend at a fairly uniform gradient from circa 5.5 meters down to the plain level. In a brief description, Alizadeh reports that a total of 13 burials were identified across the three plots of the Fort Mound trench. The burials in the Top plot comprised seven simple pit burials and one brick-lined tomb. Four of the skeletons (G1, G4–5, and G7), laid on their right side, were oriented southeast-northwest. These graves contained pottery vessels and semi-precious stone beads[5]. The other three graves (G2–3 and G6) had no burial objects, with the skeletons laid on their back and oriented north-south. The brick-lined tomb, found in the southwestern part of this area, was oriented northward, unlike the other graves. Its remains consist of two parallel brick walls that were covered by large stone slabs[6]. From the Centre plot, four graves were also reported, though without detailed descriptions. Furthermore, the only feature reported from the Base plot is another brick-lined tomb, in which the skull of a child/infant was found between the legs of the skeleton (Alizadeh, 2014: 19).

Carter has published only five burials from the Fort Mound, noting that other burials were omitted due to meager finds and a lack of precise recorded information. These five cases include burial K from the Centre plot; two burials from the Top plot, E and F, which according to her description were partially superimposed; and two burials from the Base plot, L and M, which were also superimposed. Burial L is described as a brick-lined tomb with remains of mud plaster, while the others were simple pit burials-oriented north-south (with the heads to the south). Each burial is accompanied by a plan, drawings, and a descriptive table of its associated pottery (Carter, 1994: 70–71, Figs. 8–12).

Notes on Alizadeh's Report

In his report, Alizadeh uses the Latin letter 'B' to designate brick-lined graves and 'G' for pit graves, followed by sequential numbers. The numbering for burials restarts from 1 for each plot. Consequently, the pit graves in the Top plot are designated G1–7, and

Fig. 1: Location of Tell-e Geser in the northwest of the Ram Hormuz plain, southwest Iran, on satellite imagery (adapted from: https://www.topomap.ir).

those in the Centre plot are G1–4. Similarly, the brick-lined graves in the Top and Base plots are both designated B1. Furthermore, the report does not specify which pottery vessels belong to which burial. Although the findspots of some objects are marked on the plans (Alizadeh, 2014: Figs. 9, 109), it is unclear, with one exception, which of the illustrated pottery vessels corresponds to the points marked near the burials. The single specified case, located next to burial G6 in the Top plot, contradicts his textual description, which lists G6 among the burials without grave goods. Additionally, unlike other burials whose elevations are provided, this burial lacks a distinct elevation value.

Another critical issue is the erroneous placement of the excavated trench on the Fort Mound plan. According to plans published by Carter (Carter, 1971: 432, Fig. 53; 1994: Fig. 5) and Wright & Carter (2003: Fig. 6.10), the trench has a southeast-northwest longitudinal axis. Its position remains discernible in recent satellite imagery and aligns with Carter's plan (Fig. 2). However, Alizadeh, despite noting a revisit and survey of

the mound in 2006, incorrectly drew the trench with a northeast-southwest orientation (Alizadeh, 2014: Figs. 1, 9–10). The north arrow in his plans is also misaligned. As a result, the longitudinal orientation of the three plots (Fig. 2: A) and, by extension, the orientation of the burials depicted in the plan (Fig. 4), are inconsistent with the textual descriptions. Moreover, the trench dimensions in the plan do not correspond to the linear and numerical scales drawn parallel to its width and length, respectively, creating an unrealistic length-to-width ratio[7]. The discrepancy between the plan and section drawings presents another problem which, combined with other issues discussed below, undermines the reliability of the finds' reported locations. Correcting the north arrow on Alizadeh's plan would reorient the burials differently from his descriptions. Although some skeletons were incomplete or not fully drawn, the outlines of the skull and upper torso are sufficient to reconstruct the longitudinal axis of each burial. Based on this reconstruction, in the Top plot, burials G1, G4, and G5 align on a northwest-southeast axis; G7 on an east-west axis, with a slight deviation; G3 and G6 on a northeast-southwest axis; and burial G2 and the brick-lined grave B1 on a north-south axis. In the Centre plot, graves G2, G3, and G4 are reconstructed on a northwest-southeast axis, and G1 on an east-west alignment. In the Base plot, the brick-lined grave B1 is reconstructed on a northwest-southeast axis.

Notes on Carter's Report

Carter provided a separate plan for each burial but did not mark their positions on the overall trench plans. Furthermore, while the text describes all burials as having the same orientation, the plan for burial F shows it misaligned with the others, on an east-west axis. Another issue is the presence of a negative sign next to all elevation levels recorded for the pottery vessels, without a datum point being defined in either the text or the drawings. Interpreting these numbers as depth from a datum can be considered in three possible scenarios. The first scenario calculates the figures as depth relative to the 5.70 m mark (the highest point of the trench), a conventional method in archaeological excavations. Wicks adopted this view, interpreting Carter's negative-signed elevations as depth in meters from the trench's highest point (Wicks, 2019: 22–23). However, this calculation overlooks the fact that, given the mound's slope, it would place burials K (Centre plot), L, and M (Base plot) at 4.80 m, 5.40 m, and 5.00 m above the plain, respectively—locating them in open air, outside the excavation limits. This would also position burial E (Top plot) on a floor associated with walls W1–2, attributed to the Islamic period (Fig. 4: B), which is stratigraphically and chronologically unacceptable. The second scenario considers the depth relative to the highest point of each of the three plots independently (5.70 m, 5.20 m, and 2.90 m for the Top, Centre, and Base plots). This, however, still fails to resolve the aforementioned discrepancies. The third scenario

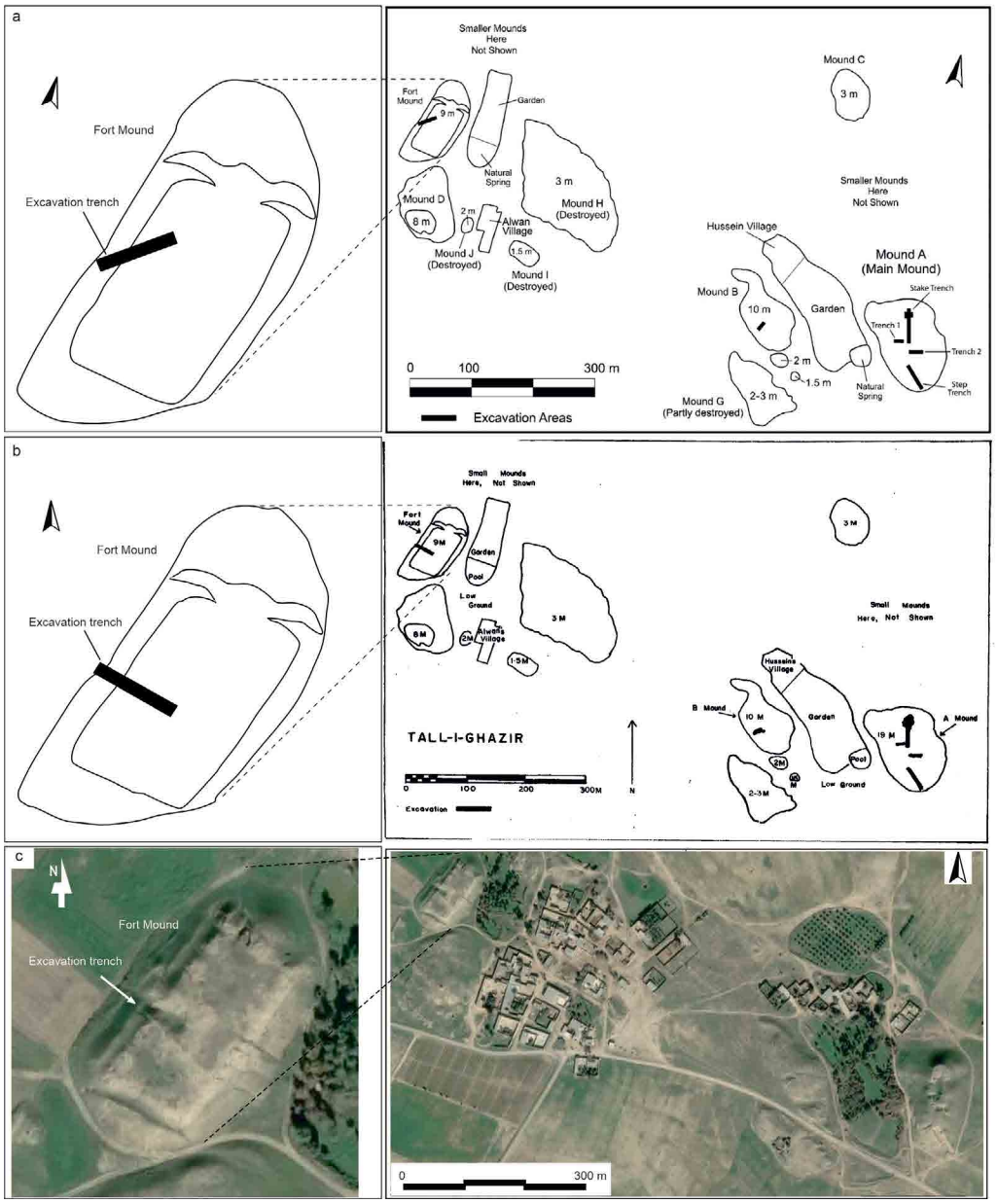


Fig. 2: Location of the Fort Mound and the excavated trench; a: The map in Alizadeh's report, which contains a distortion in the longitudinal axis of the trench and in the map's north arrow (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 1). b: The map in Carter's reports (Carter, 1971: 432, Fig. 53). c: Satellite imagery from 2023 (https://www.topomap.ir/?r=6555036&l=ghy).

treats the plain level as the datum point, but the negative signs would place all burials below the plain, a depth the excavation never reached. Therefore, the aforementioned issues can be resolved by removing the negative sign from Carter's recorded elevations and interpreting them as heights above the plain level (Fig. 4: D). This interpretation will be further clarified in the detailed examination of each burial that follows.

Burial E

Carter reports this burial from the Top plot with a skeleton laid fully supine on a north-

south longitudinal axis (head to the south). Seven pottery vessels were placed between its legs and to its left, five of which were illustrated. Elevation levels are recorded as -2.60 m for two pottery vessels and -1.70 m for three others (Carter, 1994: Fig. 9). By interpreting the -1.70 m figure as the difference in elevation from the trench's highest point (5.70 m), Wicks sought a burial in Alizadeh's plan with an elevation of 4.00 m. She consequently identified burial G2 in the Centre plot, at an elevation of 3.95 m, as a plausible match for Burial E, "despite it not being located in the Top plot" (Wicks, 2019: 17–18). It is important to note that Carter accessed these materials nearly two decades before Alizadeh and stated that she published her information based on McCown's field notes (Carter, 1994: 70). Assuming that more information was corrupted or lost over time, it is more reliable to place this burial in the Top plot, as Carter did. Alizadeh reports three burials from the Top plot—G2, G3, and G6—as lacking grave goods. However, his plan shows two pottery vessels next to skeleton G6[8]. Although these burials are described as supine, they are inconsistent with Burial E in terms of elevation and orientation. The other four burials (G1, G4, G5, and G7) were all interred on their side. Of these, burials G4 and G5 are recorded at elevations of 1.70 m and 2.65 m, which are consistent with the figures mentioned by Carter (once the negative sign is removed). Both, however, are oriented on a northwest-southeast axis. Given Alizadeh's previously noted errors in the trench placement and the orientation of the north arrow in his plans, the resulting discrepancy in orientation can be disregarded when comparing these burials. A significant challenge in Carter's report is the 90 cm elevation difference between the two pottery vessels found at -2.60 m and the three others at -1.70 m. Such a disparity in the grave goods of a single pit burial is illogical, and no parallel has been reported from the Elamite period. This same challenge, however, also appears in Alizadeh's report regarding burial G5, where two elevation markers, 1.70 m and 2.65 m, are explicitly linked to this burial.

The 1.70 m marker indicates the skeleton's abdomen, while the 2.65 m marker points to both the tips of the toes and the area near the knee. This difference in elevation between the abdomen and feet of a single individual is implausible, unless the burial was vertical. The existence of this parallel anomaly in both reports further supports a correlation between Carter's Burial E and Alizadeh's G5. It appears that both authors misinterpreted the field notes and plans. This conclusion is corroborated by the placement of vessels G-60 and G-63 in Carter's plan, which are shown near the toes and knee of skeleton E at the -2.60 m level. The 2.65 m marker in Alizadeh's plan, pointing to the toe and knee of skeleton G5, can therefore be interpreted as the elevation of two pottery vessels found approximately 85 to 90 cm higher than, but in a location corresponding to, the feet and knee of burial G5. Alizadeh's plan shows that burials G4 and G5 are almost

superimposed, with an elevation difference of about 90 cm. It can thus be concluded that the two pottery vessels at the 2.60 m elevation belong to the upper burial, G4, while the other three vessels (G102, G65, and G66) at the 1.70 m elevation belong to the lower burial, G5. Consequently, Burial E as published by Carter represents the conflated finds of two separate burials. Henceforth, to facilitate the identification and chronological analysis of the pottery from burials G5 and G4 of the Top plot, they will be referred to as Burials "E1" and "E2", respectively.

Chronology of Burials E1 and E2

Carter dates Burial E to either the Neo-Elamite I or Neo-Elamite II period (Carter, 1994: 71). Wicks, however, suggests the 6th century BC—or the late Neo-Elamite to early Achaemenid period—as the most suitable date for this burial, noting that vessels G60 and G63 (the two reported from the 2.60 m level) are likely older than the burial and the other three vessels (Wicks, 2019: 19). This is while, based on the discussion above, the elevation levels of 2.60 m and 1.70 m represent height above the plain. Stratigraphically, this means that the two vessels, G60 and G65, are later—not earlier—than the other three. A separate analysis of the finds from these two levels, as Burials E2 and E1, yields a more logical stratigraphic and chronological sequence.

Burial E1 (Pl 1): Three vessels belong to this burial: G102, G65, and G66. Vessel G102 is a jar with a relatively globular body, a flat base, and a somewhat elongated, straight neck attached obliquely (open-mouthed) to the body. Carter compared this vessel to an unpublished example from Layer IIIa at Tall-i Malyan (late second/early first millennium BC), (Carter, 1994: Fig. 9: 5). However, Alizadeh, by comparison with a specimen from Chogha Mish, attributes it to the Achaemenid period (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 33: A). Wicks, while also confirming Alizadeh's chronology, considers a specimen from Layer 5b of Ville Royale II to be comparable (Wicks, 2019: 18). The parallel cited by Carter remains unpublished, with no available drawing or photograph. On the other hand, although the vessel from Chogha Mish referenced by Alizadeh (Delougaz & Kantor, 1996: Pl. 75: A) is formally very similar, it originates from an unstratified context and was published in a plate that, while attributed to the Achaemenid period, also includes older pottery types, such as Neo-Elamite spouted vessels (Ibid: 14–16 and Pl. 75: F). The example referenced by Wicks also bears little resemblance to vessel G102. Jars with elongated necks and flat bases have also been reported from Chogha Zanbil (de Mecquenem, 1953: Pl. XV: 25) and Layer 9 of Ville Royale A (AIX) at Susa (Gasche, 1973: Pl. 19: 1). The chronology of the other two vessels from this burial presents similar challenges. Vessel G66 is a goblet with a grooved body (irregular horizontal grooves), which Carter (1994: Fig. 9: 1) and Alizadeh (2014: Fig. 35: B) compared with examples from Layer 7b of the Ville Royale-Apadana and Ville Royale II at Susa. Wicks

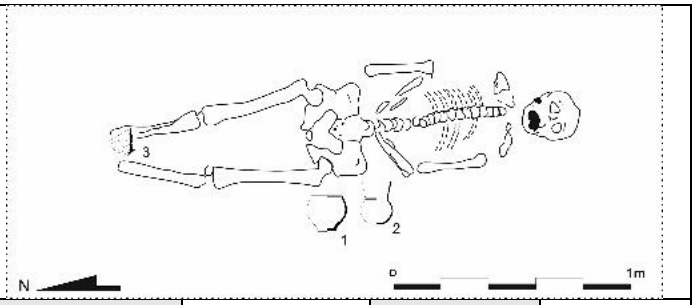
also identifies this as a common type in the Neo-Elamite II period, citing parallels from Susa and Jubaji (Wicks, 2019: 18). Although this type of open-mouthed, grooved vessel, in both bowl and goblet forms, was widespread in the late Neo-Elamite period and was commonly placed in burials, numerous earlier examples have been reported from Layers 9–8 of Ville Royale II (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 17), Middle Elamite layers at Susa (Carter, 1971: Fig. 5: 1–6, Fig. 7: 1–2), and Chogha Zanbil (Mofidi-Nasrabadi, 2007: Taf. 86; Girshman, 1966: Pl. XCV: G.T.Z.9). The third pottery vessel from this grave, G65, is a nearly ovoid, open-mouthed vessel with a flat, string-cut base and internal ridges. As the two previously mentioned vessels were not conclusive for dating Burial E1, this vessel is of particular importance. Alizadeh attributes it to the Achaemenid period without citing a similar example (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 33: G), but Wicks states that no comparable vessel has been found in Achaemenid pottery assemblages from Susa, Persepolis, or Pasargadae (Wicks, 2019: 18–19). A similar specimen from Chogha Mish has been attributed to the Sukkalmah period, though this dating is questionable (Alizadeh, 1984: Fig. 25: F). Two other examples, from Chogha Zanbil (Mofidi-Nasrabadi, 2007: Taf. 134: C.Z.81-573C-2) and Susa (Gasche, 1973: Pl. 6: 4), provide a more secure chronology. The example from Chogha Zanbil establishes a terminus post quem at the time of the construction of Dur-Untash, while the Susa parallel was recovered from Layer 11 of Ville Royale A, representing the late Middle Elamite period. Based on the evidence above, and given that the chronology for vessel G65 is more secure, this burial cannot be dated to the Neo-Elamite period. An attribution to the late Middle Elamite period appears more logical, particularly considering the chronology of Burial E2 (discussed below), which was situated stratigraphically above it.

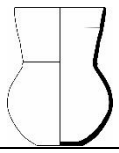
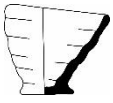
Burial E2 (Pl 2): As discussed above, the two vessels G60 and G63, found at the 2.60 m level, are attributed to Burial E2. Of the seven pottery vessels that Carter specified as being associated with Burial E, five were drawn and their elevation levels noted; the status of the other two vessels is unknown. If the placement of Burial E2 corresponds with burial G4 in the upper trench of the excavation, another vessel, described as a "narrow-mouthed jar" on Alizadeh's plan, can be identified at the same level; this vessel corresponds to G46. Furthermore, two copper rings were also recovered next to the burial (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 9: 2), which can be added to the assemblage of Burial E2. Vessels G60 and G63, which share a similar form, are small jars with everted rims, relatively convex bases, and a carinated ridge on their shoulders. Despite the identical form of these two vessels, Carter compared one (G60) with a specimen from Layer 8 of Ville Royale II and the other (G63) with an example from Malyan, and he placed vessel G46 in the Neo-Elamite I–II period (Carter, 1994: Fig. 9: 2–3 & Fig. 13: 10). Alizadeh's chronology for vessel G60 is the Middle Elamite period; however, his

comparative examples—from Layers 8–9 of Ville Royale II, Layers 4a–b of the EDD at Malyan, and Layer 10 of Ville Royale A—span a broad timeframe, including the Middle Elamite, transitional, and Neo-Elamite I periods. Regarding vessel G46, he tentatively suggests the Middle Elamite period and attributes the two aforementioned copper rings to the Sukkalmah period (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 35: I; 36: E; 91: I-J). As is evident, neither Carter's nor Alizadeh's chronologies provide consistent or reliable results for dating Burial E2. Other examples recovered from Layers 9 and 8 of Ville Royale II and Layer 4 of the Burnt Building at Malyan (the references cited by Alizadeh) are small, globular or ovoid, open-mouthed pots with flat bases. Their only shared feature with the vessels in question (G60 and G63) is the carination on the shoulder. A more detailed examination of the suggestions presented above indicates that the specimen from Malyan, which Carter considered comparable to vessel G63, is more reliable. This example was recovered from Sumner's excavations in stratum 2a of trench EE41 (Sumner, 1974: Fig. 13: e). In later excavations and the revised stratigraphy, this stratum is identified as Layer 4a (Carter, 1996: 2–3; 133–5) and is parallel to Layer 10 of Ville Royale II at Susa (Stolper, 1984: 5–6; Carter, 1996: 29). Another similar specimen from

Burial E1

(derived from Carter, 1994: Fig 9)



	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
1		G-65	15.8 × 17.4	top -1.70 m	Neo-Elamite I/II	10.8 × 11.7	Level 1 4.00 m	Achaemenid?	centre (= G2) 3.95 m (?)	Neo-Elamite-Achaemenid	top (= G5) 1.70 m	Late Middle Elamite
2		G-102	18.6 × 13.9	top -1.70 m	Neo-Elamite I	16.8 × 12.7	Level 1 3.90 m	Achaemenid	centre (= G2) 3.95 m (?)	Neo-Elamite-Achaemenid	top (= G5)	Late Middle Elamite
3		G-66	9.8 × 11.6	top -1.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	8.5 × 9.6	Level 1 1.70 m	Neo-Elamite	centre (= G2) 3.95 m (?)	Neo-Elamite-Achaemenid	1.70 m	Late Middle Elamite

Pl. 1: Composite drawing of finds from Burial E1, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

Susa was attributed by de Mecquenem (1953: Pl XIX: 40) to the Susa-Elamite III period (1100–850? BC)[9]. Therefore, a timeframe of the late second–early first millennium BC (the transition period from Middle to Neo-Elamite) can be proposed for Burial E2.

	Burial E2 (derived from Carter, 1994: Fig 9 & Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 91: I-J)											
	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
1		G-60	9 × 7.6	top -2.60 m	Neo-Elamite I/II	10.3 × 8.7	Level 1 2.60 m	Middle-Elamite	-	-	top (= G4) 2.60 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
2		G-63	8.4 × 7.9	top -2.60 m	Neo-Elamite I	-	-	-	-	-	top (= G4) 2.60 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
3		G-46	8 × 7.3	top -2.60 m	Neo-Elamite I/II	10.8 × 9.9	Level 3 2.60 m	Middle-Elamite	-	-	top (= G4) 2.60 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
4		-	-	-	-	Two copper rings (D: 1.8 and 2.2 cm)	Level 1 2.65 m	Sukkalmah?	-	-	top (= G4) 2.65 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite

Pl. 2: Composite drawing of finds from Burial E2, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

Burial F (Pl 3)

In Carter's report, contrary to the textual description, the skeleton of this burial is drawn in a supine position on an east-west axis. The elevation levels cited for the burial finds are -2.50 and -2.40 (Carter, 1994: 71 and Fig. 10). Wicks evaluates Burial G3 in the base plot as the best candidate for correlation with Burial F (Wicks, 2019: 19-20). This placement cannot be correct; the elevation of Burial G3 is 2.15 meters, which does not align with the find elevations from Burial F under any scenario (whether relative to

the plain level or the 5.70-meter datum). Furthermore, in Alizadeh's report, this burial is listed as lacking grave goods. If the negative sign is removed from Carter's figures, Burial F can be correlated with Burial G7. Burial G7 has an elevation of 2.50 meters. A portion of this burial also overlies Burial G5 (which was correlated with E1), aligning with Carter's description (1994: 71) that Burials E and F were "more or less on top of each other." The burial's axis, once the directional indicator on Alizadeh's plan is corrected, also lies with a slight deviation on an east-west axis. Additionally, contrary to what Wicks assumed—that Alizadeh had published only one of the five vessels from Burial F—four of them are presented in Alizadeh's report, and the elevation levels for three of them are identical to Carter's figures (after the negative sign is removed), (Pl 3).

Chronology of Burial F

Carter also dated this burial to the Neo-Elamite I or II period and identified a total of five pottery vessels—G47, G56, G52, G53, and G54—as its grave goods. The elevation levels for the first two vessels, located approximately 60 and 80 cm from the skeleton, are recorded as -2.50 m, while the other three vessels were found beside the skeleton at the -2.40 m level (Carter, 1994: 71 & Fig. 10). Alizadeh reports vessels G47 and G52 at elevation levels of 2.50 and 2.40 meters and compares them with examples from Layer 7b of Ville Royale II (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 35: A and C). Wicks, however, noting the absence of horizontal grooves on these bowls, compares them to a specimen from Layer 9 of Ville Royale II (Wicks, 2019: 20). This type of conical bowl was common from the late Middle Elamite period through the end of the Neo-Elamite period. Earlier examples similar to the aforementioned vessels can be observed in Layers 11–9 of Ville Royale A (Gasche, 1973: Pl 1: 1-4, 7) and Layer 10 of Ville Royale II (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 11:4). Vessel G53 is a ceramic lamp located next to the skeleton's right femur. Alizadeh mistakenly published this vessel under the number G101 and attributed it to the Islamic period (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 94: B). Vessel G54 is a small, pot-like ceramic vessel, reddish-orange in color, with an everted rim and a ring base. Its shoulder is decorated with three broad, parallel bands, and its rim is adorned with small triangles or repetitive lines in light red paint[10]. Carter dates this specimen to the second millennium BC (Carter, 1994: Fig. 10:5; 1971: Fig. 56: 2). Wicks has suggested a date around the early first millennium BC, or Neo-Elamite I, for this vessel (Wicks, 2019: 20-21). Alizadeh, while assigning this specimen to the Sukkalmah period, refers to similar examples from Layers 4a–b at Malyan (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 36: D). However, these layers at Malyan date to the late Middle Elamite period and the transition phase from Middle to Neo-Elamite, not to the Sukkalmah period. Numerous examples of painted pottery from later layers at Malyan, particularly similar motifs recovered from Layer 3 of the Burnt Building (Carter, 1996: Fig. 40: 1-4), indicate the continuity of this painted pottery

tradition into the early first millennium. Stratigraphically, Burial F is situated above E1 and slightly below E2. Given the aforementioned points, proposing a timeframe of the late second to early first millennium BC (the transitional period from Middle to Neo-Elamite) for this burial is reasonable.

	Burial F (derived from Carter, 1994: Fig. 10)											
	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
1		G-47	11.4 × 15	top -2.50 m	Neo-Elamite II	10.8 × 13.5	Level 2 2.50 m	Neo-Elamite	top (= G3) 2.15 m (?)	Neo-Elamite I	top (= G7) 2.50 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
2		G-56	7.8 × 10.3	top -2.50 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top (= G3) 2.15 m (?)	Neo-Elamite I	top (= G7) 2.50 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
3		G-52	8.5 × 11.7	top -2.40 m	Neo-Elamite II	7.4 × 9.9	Level 2 2.40 m	Neo-Elamite	top (= G3) 2.15 m (?)	Neo-Elamite I	top (= G7) 2.50 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
4		G-53	4.8 × 11.6	top -2.40 m	-	4.5 × 10.5	Level 1 4.90 m	Islamic	top (= G3) 2.15 m (?)	Neo-Elamite I	top (= G7) 2.50 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
5		G-54	7.6 × 8.2	top -2.40 m	Second Millennium BC	8.3 × 8.8	Level 3 2.40 m	Sukkalmah	top (= G3) 2.15 m (?)	Neo-Elamite I	top (= G7) 2.50 m	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite

Pl. 3: Composite drawing of finds from Burial F, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

Burial K (Pl 4)

Carter assigned Burial K to the Centre plot, describing its skeleton as supine on a northwest-southeast axis, and specified the elevation levels of its two associated vessels as -0.90 and -0.60 (Carter, 1994: Fig. 8). The elevation of this burial does not correspond

with any of the four burials from the Centre plot on Alizadeh's plan. However, common features can be found with Burial G4; with a corrected directional indicator on Alizadeh's plan, both burials are oriented along a northwest-southeast longitudinal axis, albeit in opposite directions. Furthermore, in both burials, the skeleton is in a supine position. Next to Burial G4, two vessels, numbered 12 and 13, are indicated above the head and to the right of the right foot, respectively, and are described in the figure caption as a "jar" and a "pot" (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 9).

In Carter's report, two vessels are also shown in approximately the same positions relative to the skeleton, with the difference that the pot is located above the head and the jar is at the lower right of the foot (Carter, 1994: Fig. 8). In the pottery description table, Alizadeh cites the elevation levels of these two vessels as 4.80 and 5.10 meters from the plain level (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 33: D and J). Given the sloping surface of the mound and the existing section drawing of the trench, these elevations would place the vessels above the mound's surface, in the open air. On the other hand, the sum of each of these figures and the corresponding numbers cited by Carter (after removing the negative sign) yields the number 5.70. This suggests that the figures cited by Alizadeh likely represent the difference in elevation from the 5.70-meter reference point, and were mistakenly labeled as "height from the plain level." Conversely, Carter's numbers, after removing the negative sign, could represent the vessels' actual height from the plain level. Another issue in Alizadeh's report is the discrepancy between the elevation levels in the pottery tables and those on the plan. On the plan, three elevation levels are marked for this burial—for the skeleton, the vessel near its head, and the vessel near its foot—as 4.30, 4.30, and 4.40, respectively (Fig. 4). However, these elevations cannot be correct for the Centre plot and the location of this grave (G4), as they would be situated approximately one meter above the mound's sloping surface on the section drawing. The only features marked on the Centre plot plans are walls W1 and W2. Observing the elevation numbers for the base of these two walls on the plan and section drawing, it is clear that there is an approximately 0.5-meter difference for wall W1 between the plan view and the section (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 9-10). On the plan, an elevation of 3.95 meters is marked for the base of wall W1; its difference from 5.70 (the highest point of the entire trench) is 1.75 meters. However, in the vertical section, the base of this wall is drawn nearly parallel to the 3.45-meter elevation. Adding the 1.75-meter difference to this elevation yields the number 5.20. This number is equal to the elevation marked in the corner of the Centre plot plan (as the highest elevation of this plot from the plain). It appears that in the daily field notes and hand-drawn plans from the excavation, the elevation differences of features in the Centre plot were measured from the highest point of that specific plot, not the 5.70-meter highest point of the entire trench. Accordingly,

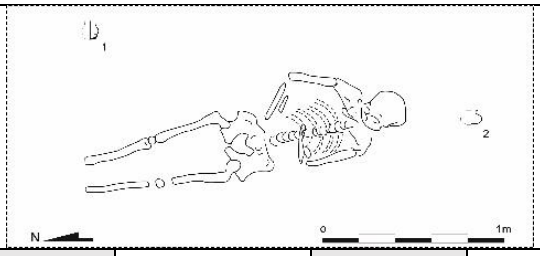
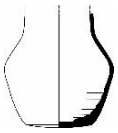
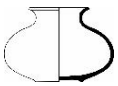
the numbers seen next to the graves in the Centre plot indicate the depth or elevation difference of these features relative to the 5.20-meter datum. In this case, the 4.30 number on Burial G4 represents its elevation difference relative to 5.20 meters, placing it at an elevation of 0.90 meters from the plain level. Consequently, the vessel elevations on Alizadeh's plan (4.30 and 4.40) represent differences relative to the 5.20-meter point, whereas those in the pottery description table (4.80 and 5.10) are relative to the 5.70-meter point. Once corrected, these are consistent and can be correlated with the elevations for Burial K (0.90 and 0.60). Wicks (2019: 22) also correlated Burial K with G4 on Alizadeh's plan, but because he assumed the burial's elevation was 4.30 meters, his positioning is incorrect.

Chronology of Burial K

Stratigraphically, Carter considers Burial K to be the oldest among the excavated burials (Carter, 1994: 70-71). He offers no chronology for vessel G48 but compares vessel G100[11] to two specimens from Susa: one from Layer 9 and another from Grave 734 in Layer 7b of Ville Royale II (Ibid: Fig. 8:1). Alizadeh attributes vessel G48 to the Achaemenid period, without citing any parallel, and assigns vessel G100 to the Neo-Elamite period, comparing it to the specimen from Grave 734 in Layer 7b of Ville Royale II (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 33: D and J). Wicks generally considers the glazed, grooved-body bottles from Susa and Jubaji as evidence for the prevalence of globular vessels with everted rims, and based on this belief, he evaluates vessel G48 as belonging to the "Neo-Elamite II" phase. He also compares vessel G100 to a specimen from Grave 734 at Ville Royale II (Wicks, 2019: 21-22). As noted, no parallels have been provided for vessel G48 by the aforementioned researchers. Furthermore, vessel G100 differs from the specimens found in Grave 734 at Susa (to which all three previous researchers refer). This vessel has an angled shoulder and a slightly convex base. Exact parallels to it have been recovered from Layer 9 of Ville Royale II (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 23: 9) and the Ville Royale-Apadana trench (Ibid, 1981b: Fig. 49:8), both of which belong to the Neo-Elamite I period[12].

Burials L (Pl 5) and M (Pl 6)

According to Carter's report, these two burials were located in the lower plot, positioned one above the other. In both cases, the skeletons were identified in a supine position along a north–south axis, with a slight deviation in Burial L. Burial L is a brick-lined grave coated with a greenish–gray plaster. An infant skull and animal bones were also reported from this burial. Burial M, however, which is of the pit type, was richer in content; in addition to ceremonial pottery vessels, including glazed bottles, iron rings were recovered from the wrists and decorative beads from the chest of the skeleton.

Burial K (derived from Carter, 1994: Fig. 8)												
	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
1		G-100	9.6 × 9.2	centre -0.60 m	Neo-Elamite I	18.7 × 17.4	Level 1 5.10 m	Neo-Elamite	centre (= G4) 5.10 m	Neo-Elamite II	centre (= G4) 0.60 m	Neo-Elamite I
2		G-48	7.9 × 11.7	centre -0.90 m	Neo-Elamite I	8.3 × 11.6	Level 1 4.80 m	Achaemenid	centre (= G4) 4.80 m	Neo-Elamite II	centre (= G4) 0.90 m	Neo-Elamite I

Pl. 4: Composite drawing of finds from Burial K, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

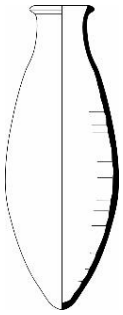
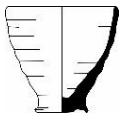
Animal bones were likewise present. The elevation levels recorded for the finds from Burial L are –0.30 for three vessels and –0.50 for one vessel (a tall, conical-bottomed jar), and an elevation of –0.70 is reported for the five published vessels from Burial M (Carter, 1994: 71 & Fig. 11–12).

Alizadeh reported only a single burial (B1) from the lower plot. This is a brick-lined grave oriented southeast–northwest. The skull of a child was recorded between the knees, and animal bone remains were noted near the toes. On the plan, an elevation of 0.30 m is indicated for this grave, although in the longitudinal section of the plot, the level of the burial is drawn considerably lower (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 9–10). As Wicks also notes, the closest correlation and strongest similarity among the examined burials is observed between Burial L and Grave B1 from the lower plot in Alizadeh's report (Wicks, 2019: 22). By removing the negative sign from Carter's elevation values, these two graves correspond closely. With regard to the placement of Burial M, Wicks proposes Grave G6 in the Top plot (Ibid: 2019: 24–25). Alizadeh classifies this burial as lacking grave goods. However, on his plan (Fig. 4), two vessels are marked adjacent to this burial with elevations of 2.40 m and 2.30 m (Alizadeh, 2014: 19; Fig. 9). Unlike the other burials on Alizadeh's plans, the elevation of this burial is not specified, and it is therefore uncertain whether the grave lies on the same level as the two noted vessels. Moreover, one of these vessels is a decorated and glazed bottle (G62), which Carter

places in the lower plot at an elevation of 0.70 m, beside Burial M (Carter, 1994: Fig. 12: 5). In Alizadeh's report, this pottery vessel appears not only on the plan but also in two additional locations: in the table of pottery assigned to Level 1, its elevation is given as 2.40 m, while in the catalog entry accompanying its illustration, the elevation is recorded as 4.95 m (Alizadeh, 2014: Fig. 33: f & Pl. 5: E). The figure 4.95 m cannot be correct for this vessel and for Burial M in the Top plot, a point that Wicks did not address. If this number is interpreted as "the difference in elevation from the 5.70 m reference point," it yields 0.75 m, which—based on the existing longitudinal section—would place it at the lowest excavated level in this plot, stratigraphically beneath Burials E and F. Conversely, treating this value as "elevation above the plain level" would position the burial impossibly high, above the remains of the Islamic-period wall and near the surface of the mound. Wicks's rationale for locating Burial M at Grave G6 is based on its supine position and orientation (Wicks, 2019: 24–25). However, as the foregoing discussion shows, Alizadeh's report—particularly with respect to elevations, find spots, and geographic orientations on the plans—is not reliable, whereas Carter's report exhibits no substantial contradictions or descriptive errors in any of the four previously analyzed burials, except for the misplaced negative sign preceding the elevation figures. It is therefore plausible that this burial was simply omitted from Alizadeh's report. Carter explicitly states that Burials L and M were located in the lower plot and emphasizes that one lay directly above the other. An elevation of 0.7 m above plain level is likewise conceivable for this burial only in the lower plot, since the excavations in the Top and Centre plots never reached this level or anything below it. Given the natural slope of the mound, placing this burial slightly above Burial L is entirely reasonable. Given the confidence established in correlating the brick-lined Burials L and B1—and the fact that one of the vessels from Burial L is listed by Carter at –0.50 and by Alizadeh at 5.20—it follows that the elevation values listed by Alizadeh for these two burials and their associated finds in the lower plot must be interpreted as "depth relative to the 5.70 m reference point." Supporting this conclusion is the observation that three vessels from Burial M, listed by Carter at –0.70, also appear in Alizadeh's report at elevations of 5.00 and 4.95.

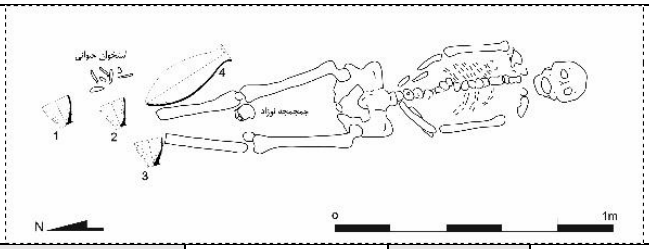
Chronology of Burials L and M

Carter and Alizadeh compared the pottery finds from these two burials with pottery specimens recovered from Level 7b of the Ville Royale II sequence at Susa and from trench 5244 of the Ville Royale –Apadana excavations. This chronology is also confirmed by Wicks (Wicks, 2019: 23–25). It is noteworthy that the burial practices represented in these two graves are comparable to those of the latest phases and centuries of the Neo-Elamite period. Animal bones have likewise been discovered in the Jubaji tombs

	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
1		G-99	19.7 × 7.4	base -0.50 m	Neo-Elamite II	54.6 × 20.5[13]	Level 1 5.20 m	Neo-Elamite	base (= B1) 5.20 m	Neo-Elamite II	base (= B1) 0.50 m	Neo-Elamite II
2		G-50	10.4 × 11.5	base -0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base (= B1) 5.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (= B1) 0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II
3		G-49	10.5 × 11.2	base -0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base (= B1) 5.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (= B1) 0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II
4		G-51	10.4 × 11.3	base -0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base (= B1) 5.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (= B1) 0.30 m	Neo-Elamite II

Burial L

(derived from Carter, 1994: Fig 11)



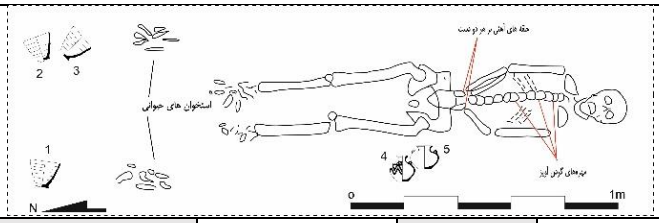
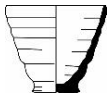
Pl. 5: Composite drawing of finds from Burial L, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

(Shishegar, 2013: 90). Animal bones have also been reported from burials excavated beneath the Achaemenid Apadana Palace at Susa[14] (de Mecquenem, 1922: 132). The brick dimensions of Tomb L (9.5×39/40×39/40 cm) are comparable with Neo-Elamite bricks, including those from Tombs 763 and 639 in Level 7b, Tombs 685, 687, and 692 in Level 7a, and Tomb 748 in Level 6 of the Ville Royale II (see: de Miroschedji, 1981a: 41). In each of these two burials, three ribbed conical cups were recovered. Although the specimens from Tomb L are more uniform and of better quality in terms of size and form compared to those from Burial M, establishing an exact chronology for this type of vessel based solely on minor distinctions is difficult. Comparable examples have been

reported from Levels 7b, 7a, and 6 of Ville Royale II, from Level 7b in trench 5244 (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 29: 2–7; 41:3–4; 44:2 & 1981b: Fig. 51), from Level 1 of the Achaemenid Village at Susa (Ghirshman, 1954: Pl. XXV: GS.1203), and from Jubaji (Shishegar, 2013: Fig. 12-1-4). This evidence suggests a relatively broad chronological range from the time of Level 7b at Susa to the beginning of the Achaemenid period.

A close examination of the above documentation indicates that these two burials belong to two successive phases, very close in time, rather than being contemporaneous. Carter likewise described the two burials as "one on top of the other," and their elevation values show that Pit Burial M lies above Tomb L and is probably later. An examination of the other pottery finds from these two burials strongly confirms this conclusion. From Tomb L, in addition to the three aforementioned vessels, a jar or amphora-shaped container with a conical base was recovered (Pl. 6: 1).

Although specimens of this type of conical-based vessel have been found in Levels 7b of Ville Royale II, 7b to 7a of trench 5244 (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 35:1–15; 1981b: Fig. 53:1–4), Level 1 of the Achaemenid Village (Ghirshman, 1954: Pl. XXVII: GS.2383), and Jubaji (Shishegar, 2013: Fig. 10-1-4), all indicating a range from Level 7b to the early Achaemenid period, this vessel resembles earlier examples more closely. The specimens from Levels 7a, the Achaemenid Village, and Jubaji, while having a globular body, exhibit a type of curvature and angle at the shoulder that distinctively separates the neck from the lower part of the vessel. By contrast, the vessel from Tomb L lacks such an angle (curvature) at the shoulder and connects to the neck through a smooth and nearly symmetrical curve. In this respect, the examples recovered from Tomb 693 of Level 7b at the Ville Royale (de Miroschedji, 1981a: Fig. 35:1–15) provide an appropriate basis for comparison and dating. From Burial M, two glazed bottles with narrow necks, outward-turned rims, and two suspension-type handles on the shoulders were reported, one plain and the other decorated with geometric and zigzag motifs on the shoulder and body. Contrary to the comparisons proposed by Alizadeh and Wicks, these two vessels are not identical to those from Level 7b of the Ville Royale[16]; rather, they correspond to later examples recovered from the excavations of Tomb A (the so-called amphora tomb) northeast of the Apadana Palace, from levels identified as Neo-Babylonian or late Neo-Elamite beneath the pavements of the Achaemenid palace of Darius, and from contemporary layers in the Ville Royale (de Mecquenem, 1922: 124, Fig. 6; 1930: 86, Fig. a–b; Alvarez-Mon, 2010: Pl. 113:e; 2013: Fig. 23: 3), from Level 1 of the Achaemenid Village (Ghirshman, 1954: Pl. XXXI: GS.863), and from the Jūbaji tombs (Shishegar, 2013: Fig. 7-1-4). On this basis, Tomb L is contemporary with Burial 693 (Level 7b of Ville Royale II), while Burial M—lying above it—is contemporary with later occupational layers (Levels 7a–6 of Ville Royale II), dating to the final centuries of the Neo-Elamite period.

	Grave Goods	Find No.	Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)		Present Study	
			Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Dimensions (cm)	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology	Location (Plot/ Elevation)	Chronology
Burial M (derived from Carter, 1994: Fig. 12)												
1		G-57	9.5 × 10.9	base -0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	9.5 × 10.4	Level 1b 5.00 m	Neo-Elamite	top (= G6) 2.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (on top of L) 0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II
2		G-55	9.3 × 10.2	base -0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top (= G6) 2.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (on top of L) 0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II
3		G-58	10.1 × 10.3	base -0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top (= G6) 2.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (on top of L) 0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II
4		G-62	9.6 × 9.5	base -0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	8.5 × 8	Level 1 2.4 and 4.95 m	Neo-Elamite	top (= G6) 2.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (on top of L) 0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II
5		G-61	8.5 × 10.4	base -0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II	8.3 × 10.1	Level 1 5.00 m	Neo-Elamite	top (= G6) 2.40 m (?)	Neo-Elamite II	base (on top of L) 0.70 m	Neo-Elamite II

Pl. 6: Composite drawing of finds from Burial M, based on various reports (redrawn by: Author, 2024).

Additional Remarks

- Overall, by examining and comparing the elevation figures recorded by Carter for the burials and their associated pottery vessels with the corresponding elevation figures in Alizadeh's report, the following results were obtained:

1- Cases in which Alizadeh's figures match Carter's elevations: In a limited number of instances—such as Burials E and F and some of the pottery vessels associated with them—Alizadeh's recorded values are identical to those in Carter's report. In these cases, the elevations may be accepted as elevation above the plain level.

2- Cases in which the sum of Carter's figure and Alizadeh's figure equals 5.70 m: In such cases, Alizadeh's number cannot represent "elevation above the plain level."

Instead, it must be interpreted either as the elevation difference relative to the 5.70-meter point, or—if a negative sign is applied—as the depth relative to the highest point of the trench (5.70 m). It should be noted that this category accounts for the largest proportion of all comparisons between the two reports.

3- Cases in which the sum of Carter's figure and Alizadeh's figure equals 5.20 m: These cases relate to the numbers written next to the finds on the Centre plot plan (with the exception of wall W2). In such cases, Alizadeh's numbers cannot represent "elevation above the plain level." Instead, they must be interpreted as the elevation difference relative to the 5.20-meter point, or—if a negative sign is applied—as the depth relative to the highest point of the Centre plot (5.20 m).

4- A limited number of cases—including pottery vessels G53 and G62—in which no consistency can be established between the two reports: In such cases, given that the finds demonstrably belong to a specific burial and correspond coherently with Carter's assemblage, the elevation figures recorded by Alizadeh must be regarded as unreliable.

- The spatial positions of the burials examined in this study, as reconstructed through the present analysis, can also be evaluated in terms of their stratigraphic sequence and its correlation with the chronological assessment of the associated finds. Based on this reconstruction, among the six identified burials, E1, E2, and F are located in the Top plot, positioned almost directly above one another. Burial E1 lies at an elevation of 1.70 m, while above it, the two burials F and E2 occur adjacent to each other at elevation levels ranging from 2.40 to 2.60 m (Fig. 4: d–e). The proposed chronological sequence confirms this stratigraphic arrangement, spanning from the late Middle Elamite period to the transition from the Middle Elamite to the Neo-Elamite period. In the Base plot, Burials M and L are positioned one above the other, a sequence that corresponds well with their two-stage chronology in Neo-Elamite II. Burial K, chronologically more recent than E1 yet earlier than M, is attributed to Neo-Elamite I, a dating that is consistent with the stratigraphic structure illustrated in the longitudinal section of the plot.

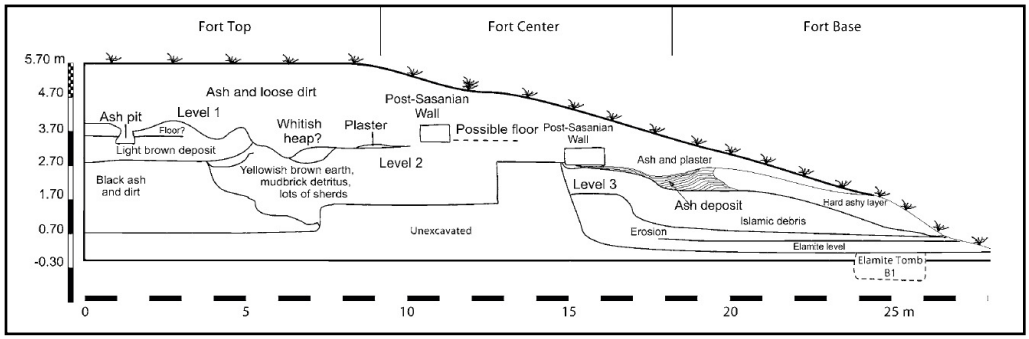


Fig. 3: Longitudinal section of the Fort Mound trench in Alizadeh's report (2014: Fig. 10B).

- Except for one case (F), the burials reported by Carter share a uniform orientation, lying along a north–south axis. Among the thirteen burials drawn in Alizadeh's report,

six exhibit a similar orientation (northwest–southeast). Five of these burials from the two datasets align with each other in the present study. In Alizadeh's report, pit burials are designated with the letter G and brick-lined burials with B, with numbering in each plot beginning from 1 (G1, G2, …; B1, …). Carter, however, used letters of the Latin alphabet to designate both pit and brick-lined burials, apparently without distinguishing the three plots or the stratigraphic levels of the trench; rather, his lettering seems to follow a sequence beginning from the top of the trench toward the lower slope of the mound. In total, Alizadeh identified thirteen burials. The final burial at the end of the trench (southwest portion) is a brick-lined grave corresponding to Burial L in Carter's report. The letter L, the thirteenth in the Latin alphabet, aligns with this position. One burial (M) was evidently omitted by Alizadeh, and two of the burials reported by him (G4 and G5) were combined by Carter into a single entry (E). Accordingly, the eight burials of the Top plot, condensed by Carter into seven (A, B, C, D, E, F, G), the four burials of the Centre plot (H, I, J, K), and the two burials of the Base plot (L, M) form a total of fourteen burials. Since Burial M was not included by Alizadeh and one of the two burials G4/G5 was not separately recognized by Carter, the actual number is fourteen, and Burials G4 and G5—represented collectively by Carter as E—were accordingly revised as E1 and E2. This model indicates that, when the alphabetical order is projected onto the burials shown on Alizadeh's maps, G4, G5, and G6 of the Top plot correspond directly to E1, E2, and F. In the Centre plot, the fourth burial (G4)—which becomes the twelfth burial of the overall trench when the eight Top plot burials are counted—corresponds precisely to K, the twelfth letter of the Latin alphabet. The two burials in the Base plot fall naturally into positions L and M (the thirteenth and fourteenth letters), (Fig. 4: e). This sequential correspondence strongly suggests that the proposed matches and spatial reconstructions developed in this study are correct rather than coincidental.

- Based on the above considerations, it can be concluded that, contrary to Alizadeh's report and Wicks's proposals, the information published by Carter regarding the burial details—aside from the misplaced negative sign in the elevation figures—is reliable and trustworthy. Although nearly twenty years elapsed between Carter's publication and Alizadeh's report—during which some of McCown's notes and documentation may have been damaged or lost—it is noteworthy that Alizadeh published fourteen objects dated to the transition, Neo-Elamite I, and Neo-Elamite II periods (twelve pottery vessels and two copper rings). Of these, six were attributed to the Neo-Elamite period (without specifying phases), while eight were assigned to various other periods (ranging from the Sukkalmah period to the Islamic era), (Tab. 2). This distribution is statistically unsatisfactory and is undoubtedly due in large part to the limited familiarity of researchers with Neo-Elamite materials, compounded by the absence of systematic excavations and the inadequate publication of cultural data for this period. Given that

the vessels under discussion are relatively complete finds recovered from in-situ burial contexts, it is reasonable to assume that the chronological assessment of small, scattered Neo-Elamite sherds recovered from surface surveys is significantly more challenging and more prone to error.

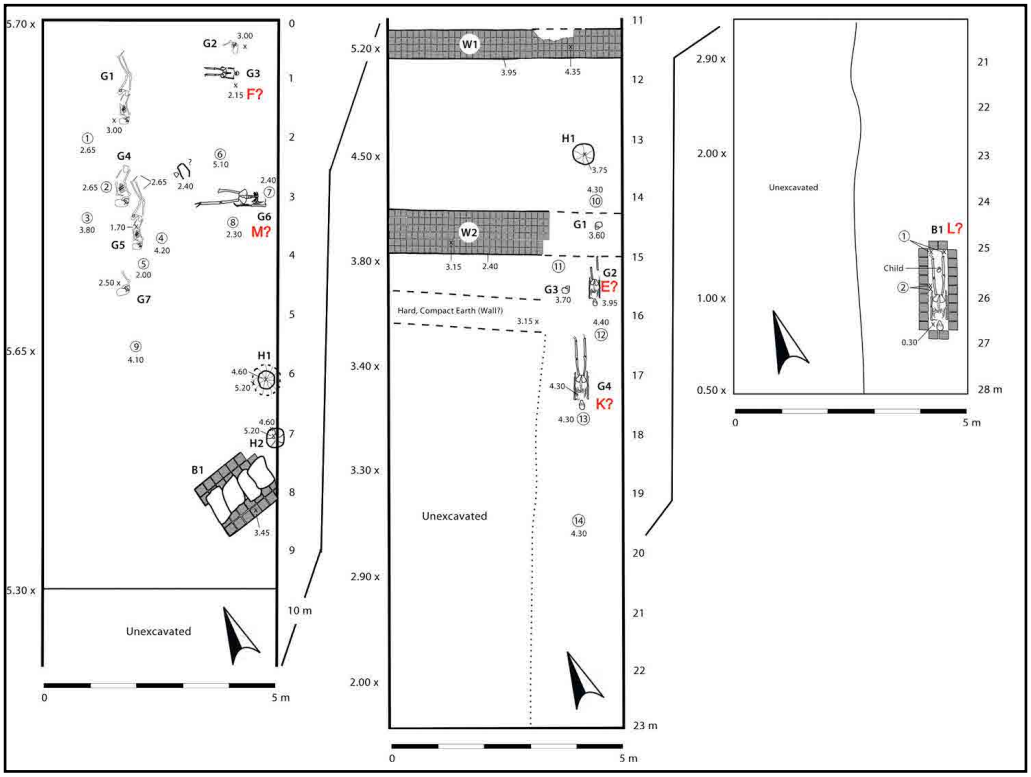


Fig. 4: Plan of the three Plots (from left to right: Top, Centre, and Base) in Alizadeh (2014: Figs. 9–10A), and Wicks's proposed placements (2019: Figs. 3–4) for the studied burials (highlighted in red).

Discussion

The revised stratigraphic reconstruction of the Fort Mound burials has several implications for both the interpretation of Tell-e Geser and the broader study of Neo-Elamite mortuary practices. Most importantly, the results demonstrate that the long-standing assumption of a single Neo-Elamite burial horizon at the site is not supported by the available stratigraphic evidence. Instead, the burials represent multiple, stratigraphically discrete episodes of interment. This finding necessitates a reconsideration of earlier chronological assignments. Previous studies tended to treat the burials as a unified assemblage, relying on broad typological ranges of individual vessels while overlooking inconsistencies in elevation data and plan orientation (Fig. 5). Such an approach implicitly assumed stratigraphic coherence and led to circular reasoning, whereby heterogeneous materials were forced into a single chronological framework. The present analysis shows that when stratigraphic relationships are prioritized over typological aggregation, these contradictions become immediately apparent.

Tab. 2: Comparative Location and Chronology of the Studied Burials in Various Reports (Author, 2024).

Burial		Carter (1994)			Alizadeh (2014)			Wicks (2019)			Present Study		
Name	Grave Goods	Plot	Elevation (m)	Chronology	Level	Elevation (m)	Chronology	Plot	Elevation (m)	Chronology	Plot	Elevation (m)	Chronology
E1	G-65	top	-1.70	Neo-Elamite I/II	Lev 1	4.00	Achaemenid?	centre	3.95?	Neo-Elamite/Achaemenid	top	1.70	Late Middle Elamite
	G-102	top	-1.70	Neo-Elamite I	Lev 1	3.90	Achaemenid	centre	3.95?	Neo-Elamite/Achaemenid	top	1.70	Late Middle Elamite
	G-66	top	-1.70	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 2	1.70	Neo-Elamite	centre	3.95?	Neo-Elamite/Achaemenid	top	1.70	Late Middle Elamite
E2	G-60	top	-2.60	Neo-Elamite I/II	Lev 1	2.60	Middle-Elamite	-	-	-	top	2.60	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-63	top	-2.60	Neo-Elamite I	-	-	-	-	-	-	top	2.60	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-46	top	-2.60	Neo-Elamite I/II	Lev 3	2.60	Middle-Elamite	-	-	-	top	2.60	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	Two copper rings	-	-	-	Lev 1	2.65	Sukkalmah?	-	-	-	top	2.60	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
F	G-47	top	-2.50	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 2	2.50	Neo-Elamite	top	2.15?	Neo-Elamite I	top	2.50	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-56	top	-2.50	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top	2.15?	Neo-Elamite I	top	2.50	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-52	top	-2.40	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 2	2.40	Neo-Elamite	top	2.15?	Neo-Elamite I	top	2.40	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-53	top	-2.40	-	Lev 1	4.90	Islamic	top	2.15?	Neo-Elamite I	top	2.40	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
	G-54	top	-2.40	Second Millennium BC	Lev 3	2.40	Sukkalmah	top	2.15?	Neo-Elamite I	top	2.40	Transition Mid/Neo-Elamite
K	G-100	centre	-0.60	Neo-Elamite I	Lev 1	5.10	Neo-Elamite	centre	5.10	Neo-Elamite II	centre	5.10	Neo-Elamite I
	G-48	centre	-0.90	Neo-Elamite I	Lev 1	4.80	Achaemenid	centre	4.80	Neo-Elamite II	centre	4.80	Neo-Elamite I
L	G-99	base	-0.50	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 1	5.20	Neo-Elamite	base	5.20	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.50	Neo-Elamite II
	G-50	base	-0.30	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base	5.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.30	Neo-Elamite II
	G-49	base	-0.30	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base	5.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.30	Neo-Elamite II
	G-51	base	-0.30	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	base	5.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.30	Neo-Elamite II
M	G-57	base	-0.70	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 1	5.00 & 0.70	Neo-Elamite	top	2.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.70	Neo-Elamite II
	G-55	base	-0.70	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top	2.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.70	Neo-Elamite II
	G-58	base	-0.70	Neo-Elamite II	-	-	-	top	2.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.70	Neo-Elamite II
	G-62	base	-0.70	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 1	2.40 & 4.95	Neo-Elamite	top	2.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.70	Neo-Elamite II
	G-61	base	-0.70	Neo-Elamite II	Lev 1	5.00	Neo-Elamite	top	2.40?	Neo-Elamite II	base	0.70	Neo-Elamite II

The distinction between Burial E1 and Burial E2 is particularly instructive. Although spatially proximate, the two burials occupy different stratigraphic positions and are associated with materially distinct ceramic assemblages. Their separation underscores the methodological risk of equating horizontal proximity with contemporaneity, especially in contexts where excavation documentation is incomplete or compromised. The re-evaluation of Burial F further reinforces this point. Its corrected placement at a higher stratigraphic level precludes contemporaneity with Burial E1, despite earlier attempts to group the two within a single Neo-Elamite phase. This misattribution can be traced directly to errors in plan drafting and the inconsistent reading of elevation markers, rather than to ambiguities inherent in the material culture itself.

Beyond the specific case of Tell-e Geser, these observations highlight a broader methodological issue in the use of legacy excavation data. When original field records are fragmentary or have undergone multiple stages of reinterpretation, uncritical reliance on published plans can generate artificial stratigraphic entities and misleading chronological syntheses. A critical reassessment that integrates stratigraphic reasoning with cautious typological comparison is therefore essential, particularly for sites excavated prior to the widespread standardization of recording practices. In this light, the burial sequence at the Fort Mound should be understood not as a single Neo-Elamite mortuary phase, but as a palimpsest reflecting intermittent burial activity across the Middle-to-Neo-Elamite transition. This interpretation not only resolves the internal inconsistencies identified in earlier publications but also provides a more parsimonious explanation for the variability observed in the burial assemblages. (Tab. 2; Fig. 5).

Conclusion

This study has re-examined the burial evidence from the Fort Mound at Tell-e Geser through a critical reassessment of excavation plans, elevation data, and associated grave goods. By prioritizing stratigraphic relationships over inherited typological groupings, it has demonstrated that the five burials previously attributed to a single Neo-Elamite phase do not constitute a homogeneous depositional horizon. The results indicate that successive misreadings of excavation documentation—particularly errors in plan orientation and elevation interpretation—have cumulatively produced an artificial chronological synthesis. By correcting an instance in which the materials of two superimposed burials had been conflated, this research identifies them as six distinct interments, each with its associated grave goods. When these errors are corrected, the burials resolve into multiple, stratigraphically distinct episodes of interment spanning the Middle-to-Neo-Elamite transition. This interpretation offers a more coherent explanation for the variability observed in the burial assemblages and eliminates the

internal contradictions present in earlier reconstructions. In general, the results obtained in this study regarding the examined burials are as follows:

• **Pit Burial E1:** This burial comprises part of the information and grave goods of Burial E in Carter's report. It lies at an elevation of 1.70 m above the plain and corresponds to Burial G5 in the Top plot of the Fort Mound trench in Alizadeh's report. This burial belongs to the late Middle Elamite period.

• **Pit Burial E2:** This burial represents the remaining portion of the information and grave goods of Carter's Burial E. It lies at an elevation of 2.60 m above the plain and corresponds to Burial G4 in the Top plot of Alizadeh's report. It is 0.90 m above Burial E1 and lies almost directly on top of it. This burial dates to the Middle-to-Neo-Elamite transition (ca. 1100–900 BC).

• **Pit Burial F:** This burial corresponds to Burial G7 in the Top plot of Alizadeh's report and lies at an elevation of 2.50 m above the plain. It also lies more or less above Burial E1 and belongs to the Middle-to-Neo-Elamite transition (ca. 1100–900 BC).

• **Pit Burial K:** This burial corresponds to Burial G4 in the Centre plot in Alizadeh's report and lies between 0.60–0.90 m above the plain. It belongs to Neo-Elamite I.

• **Brick-lined Burial L:** This burial corresponds to Burial B1 in the Base plot of Alizadeh's report and lies at an elevation of 0.30 m above the plain. It dates to the early Neo-Elamite II period.

• **Pit Burial M:** This burial is not marked on Alizadeh's plan of the Fort Mound (Tepe-Dezh). It lies in the Base plot, almost directly above Brick-lined Burial L, at an elevation of 0.70 m above the plain. It is slightly later than Burial L and belongs to Neo-Elamite II.

As was observed, the chronology of the aforementioned burials indicates a relatively orderly historical sequence from the late Middle Elamite period to the late Neo-Elamite II phase. Considering the points discussed and the available longitudinal section of the Fort Mound, the results of this research can be instrumental for future studies aimed at reconstructing and understanding the depositional sequence and stratigraphic layers of both the Fort Mound and the wider Tell-e Geser complex. Furthermore, the pottery vessels published from these burials can serve as important recognised examples from the Neo-Elamite period, proving useful for researchers in this field.

Beyond the specific case of Tell-e Geser, the study underscores the methodological necessity of critically reassessing legacy excavation data, especially where original field records are incomplete or have undergone multiple stages of reinterpretation. The integration of stratigraphic reasoning with cautious typological comparison provides a robust framework for addressing such datasets and for avoiding the reification of interpretive errors as archaeological "phases." In this sense, the revised burial sequence

at the Fort Mound contributes not only to a clearer understanding of Elamite mortuary practices but also to broader discussions concerning the limits and possibilities of reworking archival excavation data in Near Eastern archaeology. It must also be noted that the present study was conducted without access to first-hand documentation, relying instead on a painstaking deconstruction and analysis of inconsistent and incomplete

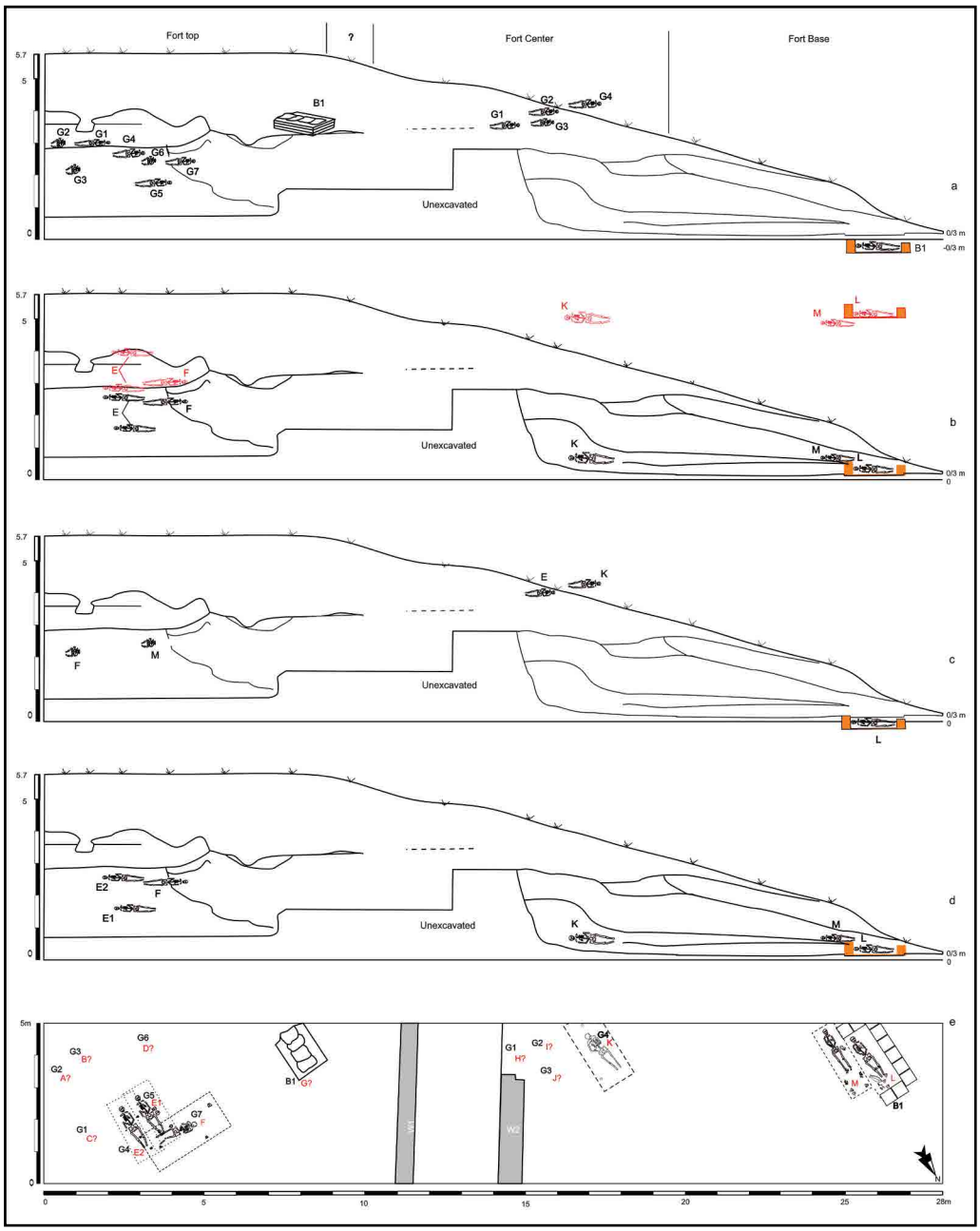


Fig. 5: Placement of the studied burials in the longitudinal section (a–d) and plan (e) of the Fort Mound trench, based on various reports; a: According to the elevations in Alizadeh's report, in which case some burials are positioned outside the excavation limits; b: According to the elevations in Carter's report (Red: interpreting figures as depth from 5.70, which places some burials above ground level; Black: interpreting figures, after removing the negative sign, as elevation from the plain level); c: According to the elevations proposed by Wicks; d: Based on the results obtained in the present study; e: Reconstruction of the plan and placement of the discussed burials in the present study. (General outlines of the maps, before modification, derived from: Alizadeh, 2014: Figs. 9–10).

reports that were fraught with errors and flaws in data recording. Therefore, a re-examination of the materials and documentation from the Tell-e Geser excavations—preserved in the archives of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (University of Chicago)—is strongly recommended. Such an undertaking would provide the research community with more accurate and detailed information regarding this valuable assemblage.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

1. This institute is now known as the "Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures".

2. It should be recalled that de Miroschedji (1978: 226–227; Tab. 3), who had initially attributed Level 10 of "Ville Royale II" to the 11th and 10th centuries BC and the beginning of the Neo-Elamite period, later changed his view. Noting a hiatus between Levels 10 and 9 of the Ville Royale, he reassigned Level 10 as the final phase of the Middle Elamite period and attributed Level 9 to the 9th century BC. Pointing to fundamental changes in the style and form of the cultural finds of this level, he stated that "the reoccupation of Ville Royale Level 9 marks the beginning of a new period, whose archaeological material is so original that it has not been excavated until now" (de Miroschedji 1981a: 37; Tab. 2). Indeed, according to his stratigraphy, circa 900 BC is established as the horizon for tangible cultural changes and the hiatus between Levels 10 and 9. Archaeological studies have demonstrated that Malyan was also abandoned within this same timeframe (Carter, 1984: 189; 1996: 133–134). Furthermore, "Elamite goblets with slender bodies and very tall necks" and "cups with molded walls," introduced by de Miroschedji (1981a: 37; Fig. 12: 13–17) as two new pottery forms characteristic of "Ville Royale II" Level 10, appear abundantly in the latest Elamite settlement levels at Malyan (IVa–IIIa), (Carter, 1996: Fig. 21; Fig. 40: 9; Fig. 42: 7). The synchronism of the aforementioned levels is not only demonstrable through comparative material culture (Stolper 1984: 5–6; Carter 1996: 29–30), but the 11th–10th century BC timeframe proposed for "Ville Royale II" Level 10 (de Miroschedji 1981a: 37; Tab. 2) is also corroborated for Level IVa at Malyan by Radiocarbon (C-14) dating results. The results of Carbon-14 analyses on seven samples from Layer 4a in Area EDD at Malyan have been published (Carter 1996: 74, Tab. 6). Based on a half-life of 5568 years, the dating results span a range from 1220 to 690 BC. After excluding two samples (1 and 7), which show a significant chronological deviation, the remaining five samples are dated to the range of 1110 to 880 BC. It is noteworthy that there is no consensus regarding this phase of Elamite rule and the chronological distinction between the Neo-Elamite and Middle Elamite periods (for proposed periodizations, see Potts, 2016: 250–251 and Waters, 2000: 3–4). Some scholars regard Nebuchadnezzar I's attack on Susa (ca. 1100 BC) as marking the end of Elam as an independent political power, or its elimination from the political scene for a prolonged period (Hansman, 1972: 106; Vallat, 1998; Gorris, 2020: 19; Lambert, 1969: 369). In contrast to de Miroschedji's proposal (1981a: 37), which posits the continuation of the Middle Elamite period after ca. 1100 BC and places Level 10 of "Ville Royale II" as its final phase, Vallat (1996; 1998) considers 1100 BC the beginning of the Neo-Elamite period. This framework would, in turn, place Level 10 of "Ville Royale II" and Levels IVa–IIIa at Malyan within the Neo-Elamite period. This disagreement has led to inconsistencies and contradictions in the findings of various studies, particularly concerning the Elamite lowlands versus the highlands. As Stolper (2013: 402) notes in this regard, this timeframe (the initial centuries after 1100 BC) is considered "Late Middle Elamite" from the perspective of Anshan, but "Neo-Elamite IA" from the perspective of Susa. Although de Miroschedji (2003: 37) has recently reiterated that typological changes in some pottery forms are, by themselves, insufficient to distinguish the 11th century BC from the "Middle Elamite II" period, it is evident that these stylistic changes—or the appearance of certain pottery forms and types (see above)—cannot be entirely disregarded. It must also be considered that the political landscape of this era remains unclear. At Malyan, signs of a decline after the conflagration of the EDD building are suggested by its replacement with several pottery kilns and a minor settlement, pointing to the diminished status of the site (Carter, 1996: 14–16; 37–39; 134). Therefore, based on the current evidence, assigning this settlement phase to either the end of the Middle Elamite or the beginning of the Neo-Elamite period is problematic. Accordingly, the present study defines this settlement phase ("Ville Royale II" Level 10 in Susa and Levels IVa–IIIa in Malyan)

as the "Middle-to-Neo-Elamite Transition Phase." For the Neo-Elamite period itself, and following de Miroschedji's research (1981a; 1981b), other cultural finds contemporaneous with settlement levels 9–8 and 7–6 of "Ville Royale II" are categorized as Neo-Elamite I and Neo-Elamite II, respectively.

3. McCown likely did this due to time constraints, aiming to excavate different elevation levels simultaneously. Alizadeh mistakenly refers to each of these plots as a separate "Level" (Alizadeh 2014: Figs. 9–10).

4. It appears the excavators considered the mound's elevation level to be from below the wall and deposits of the late-century fortress-like structure that stood on the mound.

5. In the Persian translation of Alizadeh's book, a wooden comb is added to the finds from these four burials, with the possibility of it being intrusive (Alizadeh et al. 2016: 19). However, in the original version of the book and the plans in both versions, this wooden comb is located in the southern part of the Centre plot, at a considerable distance (about 2 meters) from any specific grave (Alizadeh 2014: Fig. 9).

6. No information is available regarding the contents of this grave.

7. At the bottom of each of the three plot plans for the Fort Mound in Alizadeh's report, a linear scale representing 5 meters is placed tangent, parallel, and equal in length to the 5-meter width of the plot. Along the margin and tangent to the longitudinal wall of the plots, numbers 1 to 28 are displayed as a numerical scale. However, these two scales are inconsistent. For the Top and Centre plots, approximately every 4 meters of the trench's length corresponds to the 5-meter linear scale along its width (Fig. 4). Consequently, according to the numerical scale, the trench dimensions would be 28×4 meters, while the linear scale suggests dimensions of 35×5 meters, neither of which matches the actual trench dimensions of 28×5 meters.

8. One of these two vessels is a painted and glazed bottle with the number G-62. This is the only case where the figure caption, by referencing the pottery drawings, specifies which ceramic piece is being referred to. The contradiction regarding whether this vessel was found next to the aforementioned burial does not end here. This is the same painted and glazed bottle that Carter reported from Burial M at an elevation of 0.70 m in the Base plot. Alizadeh records the elevation of this vessel in one place as 2.40 m (in the pottery table), consistent with Grave G6 and the Top plot, but elsewhere as 4.95 m (in Pl. 5). If this latter figure is converted as the difference in elevation from the 5.70 m datum, it aligns with the elevation of Burial M. In this case, Carter's report is more reliable.

9. Another similar specimen was recovered from the Kutal-i Gulgul cemetery in western Iran, attributed to the Iron Age I (Overlaet 2003: 395; Pl. 94: 24). However, due to uncertainties in the chronology and periodization of the Iron Age in western Iran, the dating of this specimen is not taken as a primary reference.

10. Three similar drawings of this specimen exist: two published by Carter in different sources (Carter 1994: Fig. 10:5 and 1971: Fig. 56:2) and one by Alizadeh (Alizadeh 2014: Fig. 36:D). All three drawings are similar in overall form and general motifs, and all are cited as being from the Fort Mound at an elevation of 2.40 m. However, minor differences indicate they are not the same vessel. The specimen published by Carter in 1971 differs from the other two in the disk-shaped form of its base and body profile, suggesting it is a different but similar vessel to G-54. Furthermore, while the other two drawings (Carter's drawing of vessel G-54 and Alizadeh's specimen) are similar in their ring base, body profile, and shoulder decoration, the motif on the rim is different: parallel vertical lines for the former and repeating small triangles for the latter. Given this, at least two vessels (if one of the drawings is inaccurate) and more likely three similar vessels of this type were recovered from the 2.40 m level. It is also possible that one of these vessels is associated with Burial G6.

11. Based on the published plan of Burial K, the considerable distance of vessel G-100 from the skeleton raises the author's doubt about its association with the burial. The vessel was found approximately 80 cm from the skeleton's feet and 30 cm below it. No information or description of the shape and size of the grave pit is provided in the text or on the plan. Moreover, this is the only incomplete vessel among the burials published by Carter. Typically, grave goods, even if broken, are recovered in a complete state. If this vessel does not belong to Burial K, it is associated with the deposit into which the grave pit was cut. In any case, lacking sufficient information, the most optimistic approach is to trust the excavator's judgment that the vessel belongs to Burial K.

12. Other examples of these vessels have been reported from Layer 3 of Mound B at Tell Geser (Alizadeh 2014: Fig. 31: H and J).

13. In the Persian version of Alizadeh's book, based on the provided scale, this vessel has dimensions (height×width) of 27.5×10.3 cm (Alizadeh et al. 2016: 97, Fig. 33: K).

14. It appears that including animal meat as provisions for the deceased was part of the funerary customs during the final centuries of the Elamite period.

15. The specimens mentioned from Layer 7b are glazed bottles with grooved bodies, without painted decorations or suspension handles (de Miroschedji 1981a: Fig. 39:26–33).

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چکیده

محوطهٔ باستانی تل گسر در شمال‌غربی دشت رامهرمز، استقرارگاهی چنددوره‌ای و یکی از محوطه‌های کلیدی، به‌ویژه برای مطالعات باستان‌شناختی دورهٔ ایلام به‌شمار می‌رود. این محوطه طی سال‌های ۱۹۴۸-۱۹۴۹م. کاوش شد؛ با این‌حال، انتشار نیافتنِ به‌موقع گزارش و پراکندگی اسناد میدانی سبب ایجاد ابهام در داده‌های باستان‌شناختی آن گردید. از مهم‌ترین این ابهامات، اطلاعات مربوط به شش تدفینِ کشف‌شده در «تپه‌دژ» و منسوب به دورهٔ ایلام نو است که در گزارش‌های «کارتر» و «علیزاده» به‌صورت ناقص و ناهمخوان ارائه شده‌اند. گزارش علیزاده، به‌ویژه با جانمایی نادرست و انتساب پراکندهٔ گورنهاده‌های یک تدفین به لایه‌های متعدد و دوره‌هایی میان سوکل‌مَخ تا اسلامی، بر پیچیدگی‌های موجود افزوده است. تلاش «یاسمینا ویکس» نیز به‌رغم هدف‌گذاری درست، نتوانسته این ناهمخوانی‌ها را برطرف کند و خود موجب طرح مسائل تازه‌ای شده است. با توجه به اهمیت تل گسر و ضرورت بازنگری داده‌های پیشین، این پژوهش با اتّکا بر روش‌های مرسوم در مطالعات تاریخی و تحلیل تطبیقی اسناد موجود، به واکاوی این تدفین‌ها پرداخته است. هدف اصلی پژوهش، جانمایی دقیق و ارائهٔ گاهنگاری منسجم برای هر تدفین است. نتایج نشان می‌دهد که در گزارش‌های پیشین، خطاهای اساسی در ثبت جزئیات، موقعیت کشف و گاهنگاری تدفین‌ها وجود داشته است. افزون‌بر جانمایی صحیح تدفین‌ها در گمانهٔ کاوش، مهم‌ترین دستاورد این مطالعه تفکیک تدفین E به دو تدفین مستقل (E1 و E2) و بازسازی توالی زمانی منظمِ شش تدفین از اواخر دورهٔ ایلام میانه تا اواخر ایلام نو II است. نتایج پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که آشفتگی ظاهری داده‌ها نتیجهٔ خطاهای گزارش‌دهی بوده و نَه بازتابی از ویژگی‌های واقعی لایه‌نگاری محوطه؛ و از این‌رو، برای درک توالی استقراری و تفسیرهای لایه‌نگارانهٔ تپه‌دژ و مجموعهٔ تل گسر اهمیت بنیادی دارد.

کلیدواژگان: رامهرمز، تَل گِسِر، تپه‌دِژ، ایلام نو، تدفین.

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