

The Tumuli at Sé Girdan

A Preliminary Report

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ON AUGUST 25, 1936, Sir Aurel Stein completed a six-day excavation on the mound called Dinkha Tepe, situated in the Ushnu valley in northwestern Iran, and moved his camp about three miles to the east across the Gadar River to a location near the modern village of Cheshmé Göl. There he examined "a curious succession of conical mounds stretching in a straight line at short intervals, known as Seh Gird." Stein first thought that the mounds might be "a series of burial tumuli." After examining them and finding them to be composed of a hard gravel, the same type of soil found in the adjacent area, he concluded that they were "natural."¹ The mounds were, therefore, not excavated, and Stein moved his camp to another area.²

In the summer of 1966, the writer and Robert H. Dyson, Jr., accompanied by several members of the

Hasanlu Project excavating at Dinkha Tepe, visited the mounds and concluded that they were in fact tumuli and not natural formations. At that time nine tumuli were counted; in 1968 a total of eleven were recorded.³

The tumuli lie about five kilometers east of Dinkha Tepe and may be seen with the naked eye from that mound. They were built about one kilometer below and west of the foothills that form the eastern boundary of the valley. The most important site recognized in the immediate area is a recently discovered Urartian city located at a place in the same foothills now called Qalatgah, just slightly to the northeast (Figure 1).⁴ That site is known today in the area for a pair of magnificent springs that gush from the rocks and irrigate the fields below. All the tumuli are clearly

1. Sir Aurel Stein, *Old Routes of Western Iran* (London, 1940) pp. 376 ff.

2. Stein, *Old Routes*, p. 377. An old landlord from Cheshmé Göl told us that he remembered "a fat elderly American" (i.e. someone who spoke English) who came to the area with an Indian and his wife about 30 years ago after excavating at Dinkha. He also claimed that the Indian found two vessels in one of the tumuli. It would seem that these vessels must actually have come from one of the tepes sounded in the area by Stein (e.g. Stein, *Old Routes*, p. 377). Tumuli G and H show unmistakable signs of having been excavated to a limited extent, and they are probably the ones tested by Stein. However, two or three other tumuli also show signs of excavation, *infra*.

3. Tumulus K, the eleventh recorded in 1968, was recognized

as a tumulus by Christopher Hamlin while he was planning the site.

4. Qalatgah means "place of the fortress." The site was first visited by the author, Agha Z. Rahmatian, and two members of the staff, Christopher and Carol Hamlin, on August 31, 1968. We were guided by a local landlord who promised to show us the place where an inscribed stele was allegedly found in 1967. A major stretch of Urartian-type walls, Toprakkale-type pottery (highly polished red ware), and Iron III Iranian sherds were discovered. A second trip a week later led to the discovery of an Urartian inscription on a building stone and an Urartian stone stamp-cylinder seal. Collectively, the evidence suggests that Qalatgah is an Urartian site.

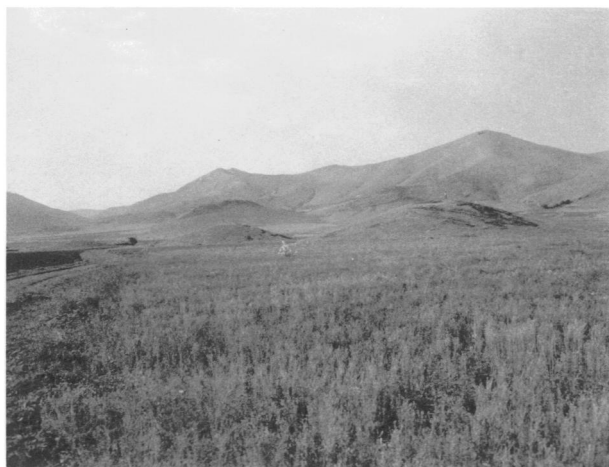


FIGURE 1

Tumuli I, E, and F, before excavation, right to left. Qalatgah lies to the left of and above the cluster of trees in the right background

visible from Qalatgah and also from the modern Nagadeh-Ushnu road, which passes just below at the base of the hills. The village of Cheshmé Göl lies about half a kilometer to the northwest of the tumuli.

In 1968 the Hasanlu Project, under the joint sponsorship of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and The Metropolitan Museum of

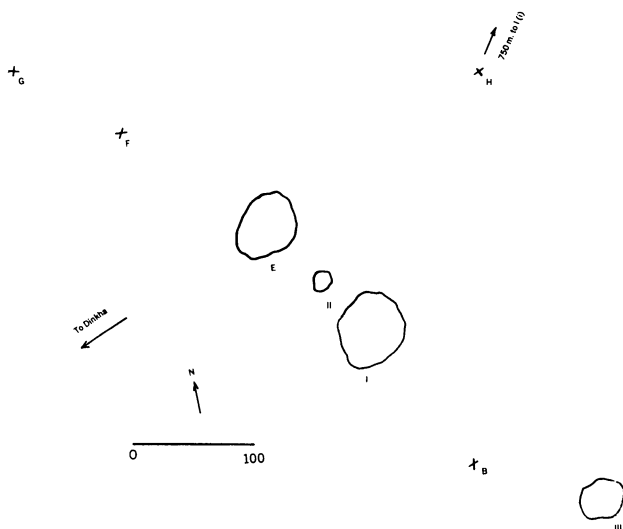
Art, began a second campaign at Dinkha Tepe.⁵ Permission was generously granted by the Iranian Department of Antiquities to conduct a sondage at Sé Girdan. The aim of the sondage was to study the tumuli: the way they were constructed, the type of tombs they contained, and any evidence as to their date or the identity of the people who built them. No Iranian tumuli of the type found at Sé Girdan have hitherto been excavated or published. Any information provided by the sondage was certain, therefore, to be of some significance and interest in the study of the ancient history of Iran.

The area of the necropolis was first surveyed, and four tumuli were measured; the short time at our disposal precluded the measurement of the other seven tumuli. The letters A to K were assigned to the tumuli for the purpose of field identification; as they were selected for excavation, Roman numerals were assigned. Seven of the tumuli lie roughly in a straight line oriented northwest-southeast, extending over a distance of 600 meters (Figure 2). The four other tumuli lie to the north and northeast in no apparent order. Tumulus I (i) is 750 meters northeast of Tumulus H; Tumulus K is isolated about one kilometer east of Tumulus I (i), just off the modern road. A large, a medium, and a small tumulus were chosen for examination. In two of these tumuli, II and III (D and A), tombs were discovered and recorded, while in the other, I (C), excavation had to be suspended before a tomb could be located.

The main problem faced by the excavators was that the area surrounding each tumulus was part of a cultivated pea field. The excavated earth from all three

FIGURE 2

Plan of Sé Girdan showing Tumuli A to H. Four tumuli, A, C, D, and E, have been planned



5. For a report on the first campaign, see R. H. Dyson, Jr., "Dinkha Tepe," in "Survey of Excavations in Iran During 1965-66," *Iran* 5 (1967) pp. 136 ff.; Oscar White Muscarella, "Excavations at Dinkha Tepe, 1966," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 25 (1966) pp. 16 ff.

The 1968 campaign was codirected by the author and Professor Robert H. Dyson, Jr. The author directed the work at Sé Girdan. He was ably assisted by Mr. Christopher L. Hamlin, who planned the site and contoured Tumuli I, II, III, and E; Mrs. Carol Hamlin, who excavated and planned Tumulus II; Miss Elizabeth Stone, who contoured Tumulus III; and Mr. Arthur Smith, who was the photographer. Agha Z. Rahmatian was our most cooperative inspector, who helped us in many ways. Agha Nozar Supheri was, as always, our right hand in all matters. Our foreman, Beshir, deserves much credit and thanks for his intelligence, honesty, and help, both to his Kurdish- and Turkish-speaking workers and to the excavation staff; through his endeavors we were able to accomplish much work in little time.



FIGURE 3
Tumulus II, partially excavated, in the foreground; Tumulus I in the background. Note the pea field and the dumps

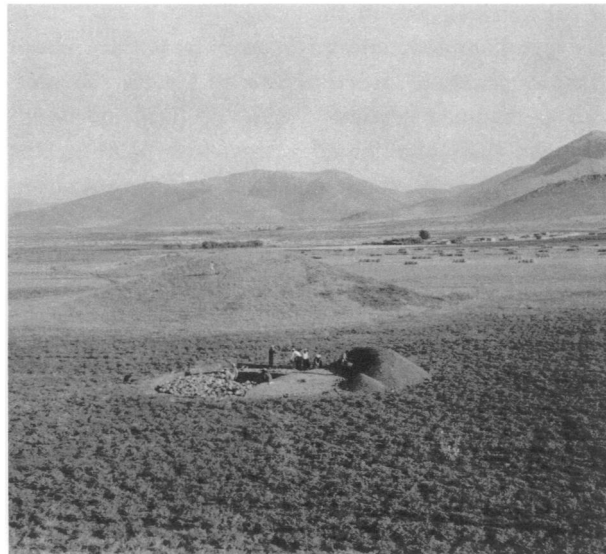


FIGURE 4
Tumulus II, during excavation, and Tumulus E. Cheshmé Göl may be seen in the upper right background. Photograph taken from the top of Tumulus I

tumuli had, therefore, to be deposited on their peripheries and on the unexcavated sections (Figures 3, 4). Moreover, because the pea field encroached on the tumuli, we were in no instance able to excavate the original outer border.

TUMULUS I

This is the largest tumulus at Sé Girdan (Figures 1, 2, 5): its height is 8.25 meters; its diameter, limited by an irrigation ditch and the pea field, measures about 60–65 meters. Figures 6, 7, 11 show the present border of the tumulus and the pea field. The tumulus was divided into quadrants using compass directions as dividing lines. The northwest quadrant was further subdivided into two sections, and the southern section was excavated. While excavation progressed in the main cut, four narrow test trenches were excavated around the tumulus (Figure 5).

The upper part of the tumulus fill was composed of a mixture of gravel and earth, characterized by masses of small pebbles (1 in Figure 7). Below this level the fill was composed of hard and firmly packed clay in combination with small pebbles, but not in the same

quantity as in the upper level (2 in Figure 7). After we reached this level, which continued until we suspended digging, work proceeded very slowly.⁶ A color change was noticed in the clay at a certain point, and there was also a lens of clay, but otherwise nothing distinctive about the density and composition of the clay could be detected (2A, 2B, and 2C in Figure 7). The color change may represent only different sources for the clay.

After some days of digging, vertical cleavages were noticed in the north–south scarp; the faces of some of these cleavages had a southeast, others a northeast, orientation penetrating into the undug scarp. At first it was assumed that these cleavages represented the drying and cracking of the clay in the sun, but soon other cleavages were noticed in the surface of the clay in the main cut. Work ceased for several days while these cleavage lines were cleaned and recorded. It was soon evident in the main cut that a series of roughly concentric circular units were present (Figures 7, 8, 9, 10), and moreover, the cleavages joined neatly with some

6. Each of the four strong pickmen found it necessary to strike the clay four to six times before a section could be removed. The clay seems to have been packed in while still wet.

of the vertical ones in the north-south scarp. Other cleavage lines were noticed in addition to the circular ones: longitudinal lines that divided the circular units into partitioned sections. Some of these partition-cleavage lines also joined neatly with some in the north-south scarp, thus explaining the different angles observed there for the vertical cleavages. Examination of the cleavages showed that there was a grain pattern on all the faces cleaned, indicating that wood fences, stockade-like, had at one time served to contain the clay and left their impressions upon it.

Valuable information is thereby supplied to us relating to the techniques employed in the erection of the tumulus. The builders first established roughly circular

FIGURE 5 Plan of Tumulus I

areas by means of wood fencing, and they subsequently subdivided these areas into irregular sections by means of wood partitions. After the spaces so divided were filled with clay, it would seem that all wood fences and partitions were removed, as no traces of such wood (other than the imprints) were found. Except for the change of color recognized in the scarp, no horizontal lines were visible; moreover, the vertical cleavages in the scarp uniformly pass through the area of the color change. We must, therefore, assume either that the fences and partitions were fairly high or that they were

FIGURE 6
Section of test trench 1, Tumulus I

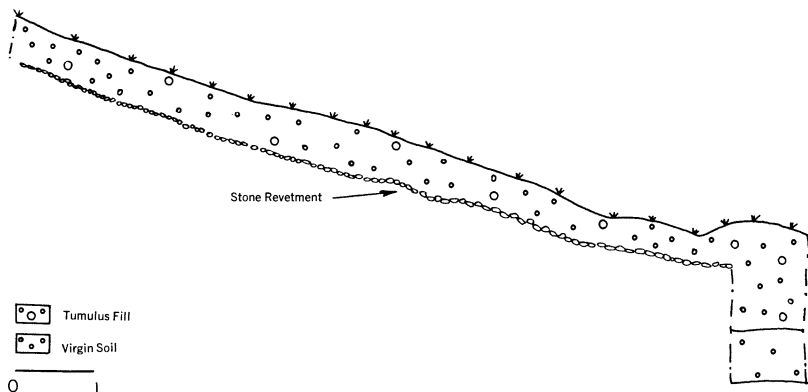
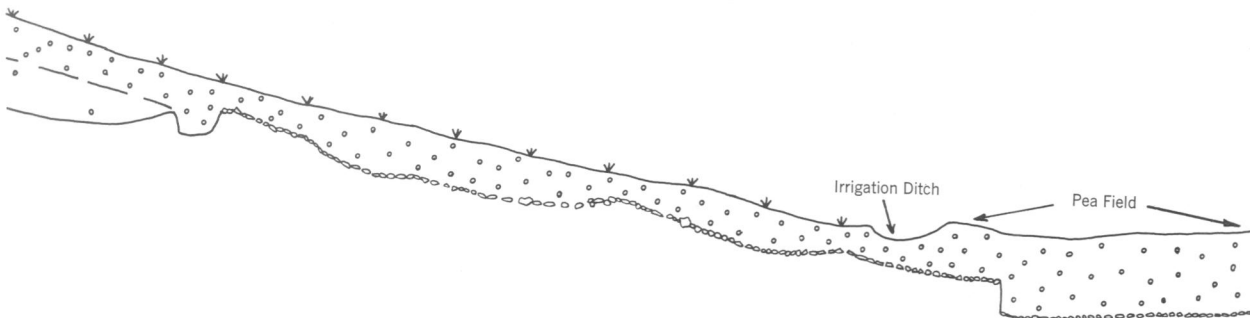
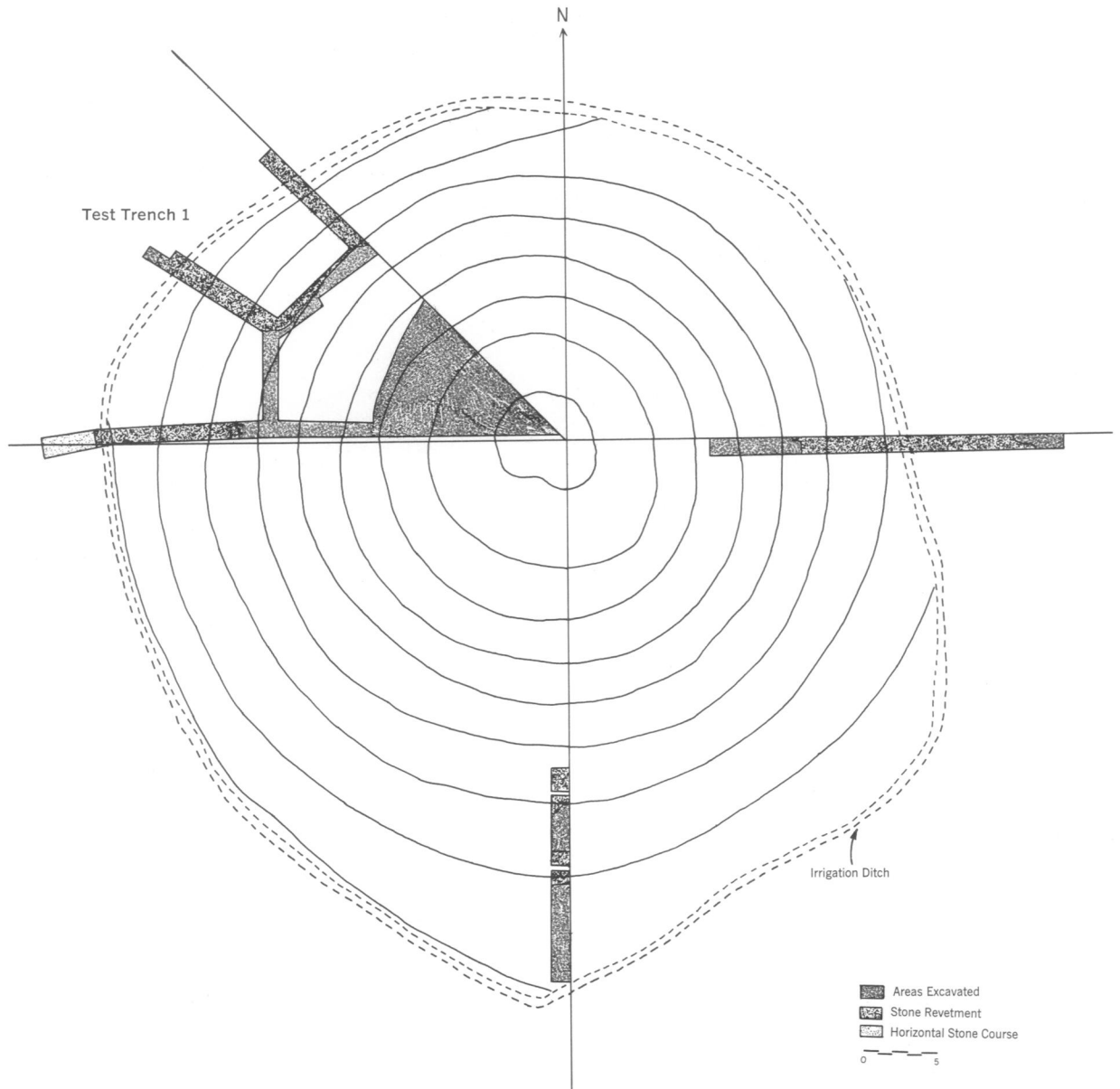


FIGURE 7
East-west section of the northwest quadrant, Tumulus I





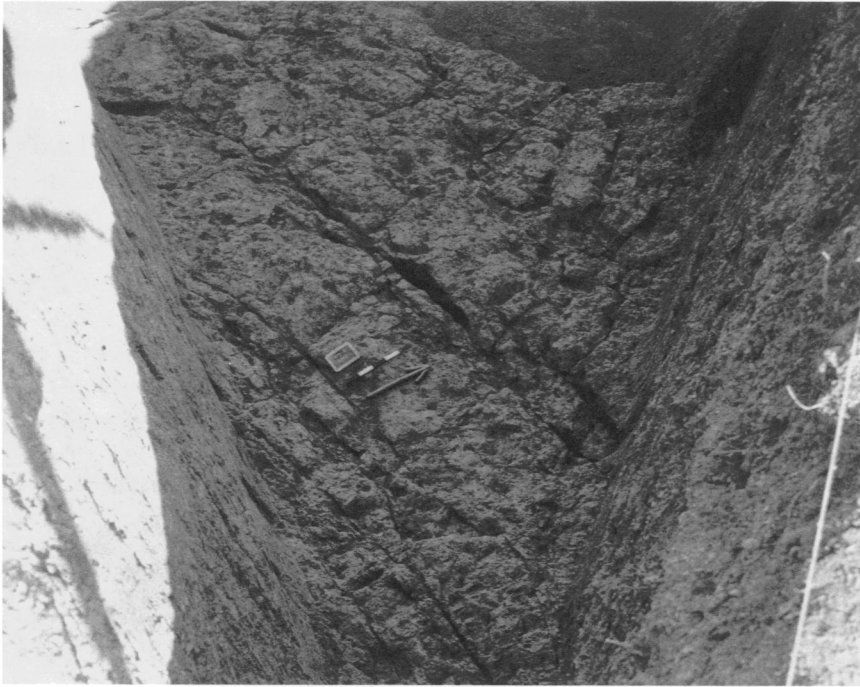


FIGURE 8
Circular cleavages in the
surface of the main cut,
Tumulus I. Photograph taken
from the top center of the
tumulus

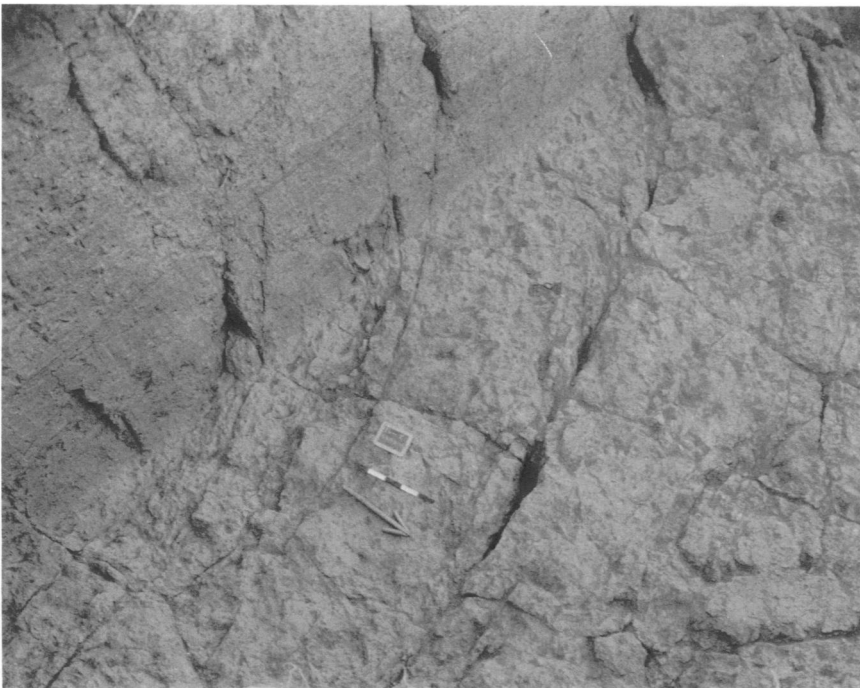


FIGURE 9
Cleavages in the east-west
section and on the surface of the
main cut, Tumulus I



FIGURE 10
Plan of cleavages in the main cut, Tumulus I

continuously raised after a given amount and level of clay had been deposited. We do not know at this stage of the excavation whether or not the cleavage lines continue to the base of the tumulus.

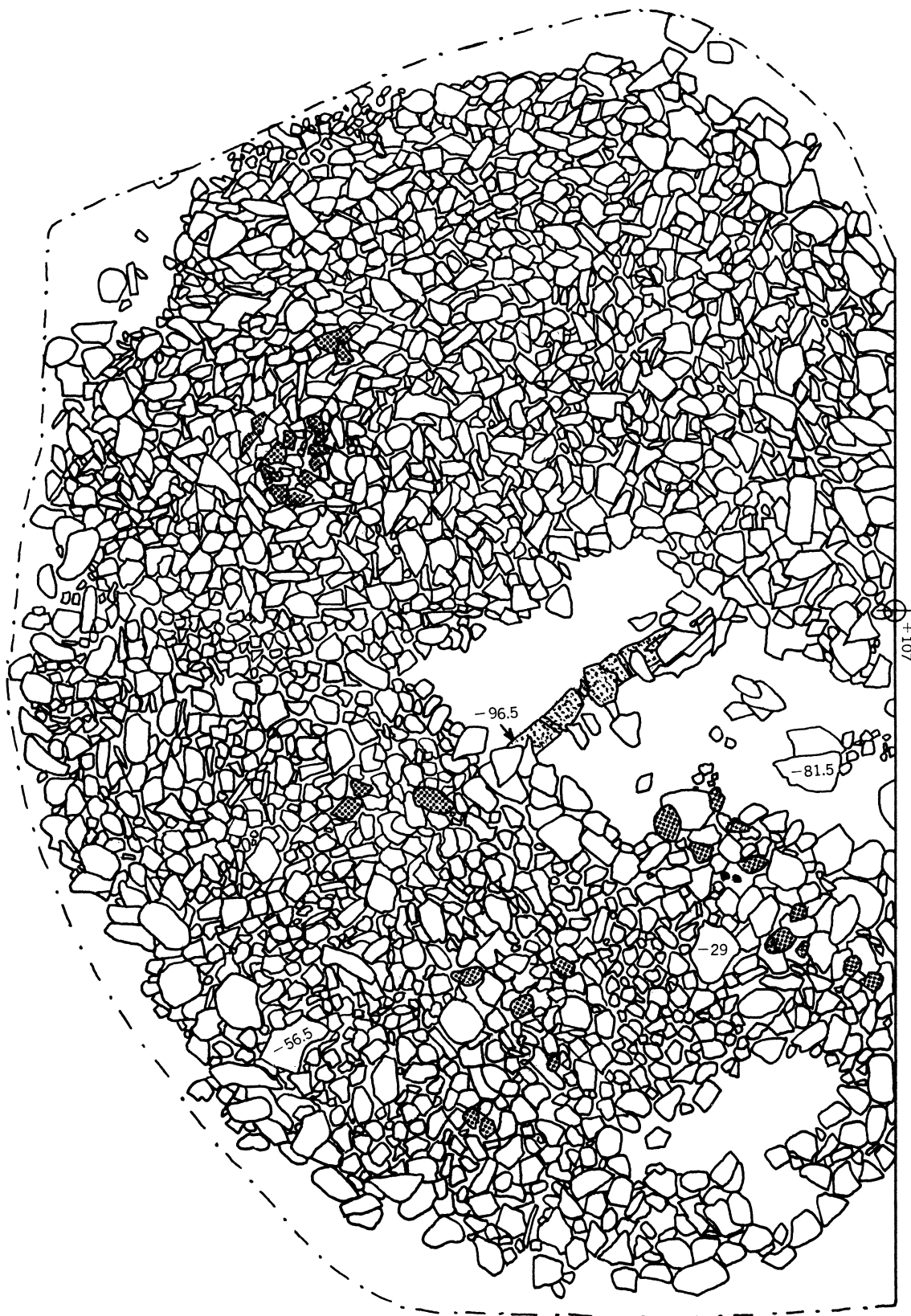
A long trench was dug extending from the outer limit of the main cut to a point slightly beyond the present periphery of the base of the tumulus (Figures 5, 7). In this trench a neatly laid and compact sloping layer of small stones, 1 to 3 cm. in diameter, was encountered at irregular depths of from 40 to 60 cm. below the surface. The stone layer was only one or two courses thick and extended from a point near the present base up the slope for a length of 10.5 meters, ending in an irregular line. At a depth of about 40 cm. below the lower edge of the stones another layer of



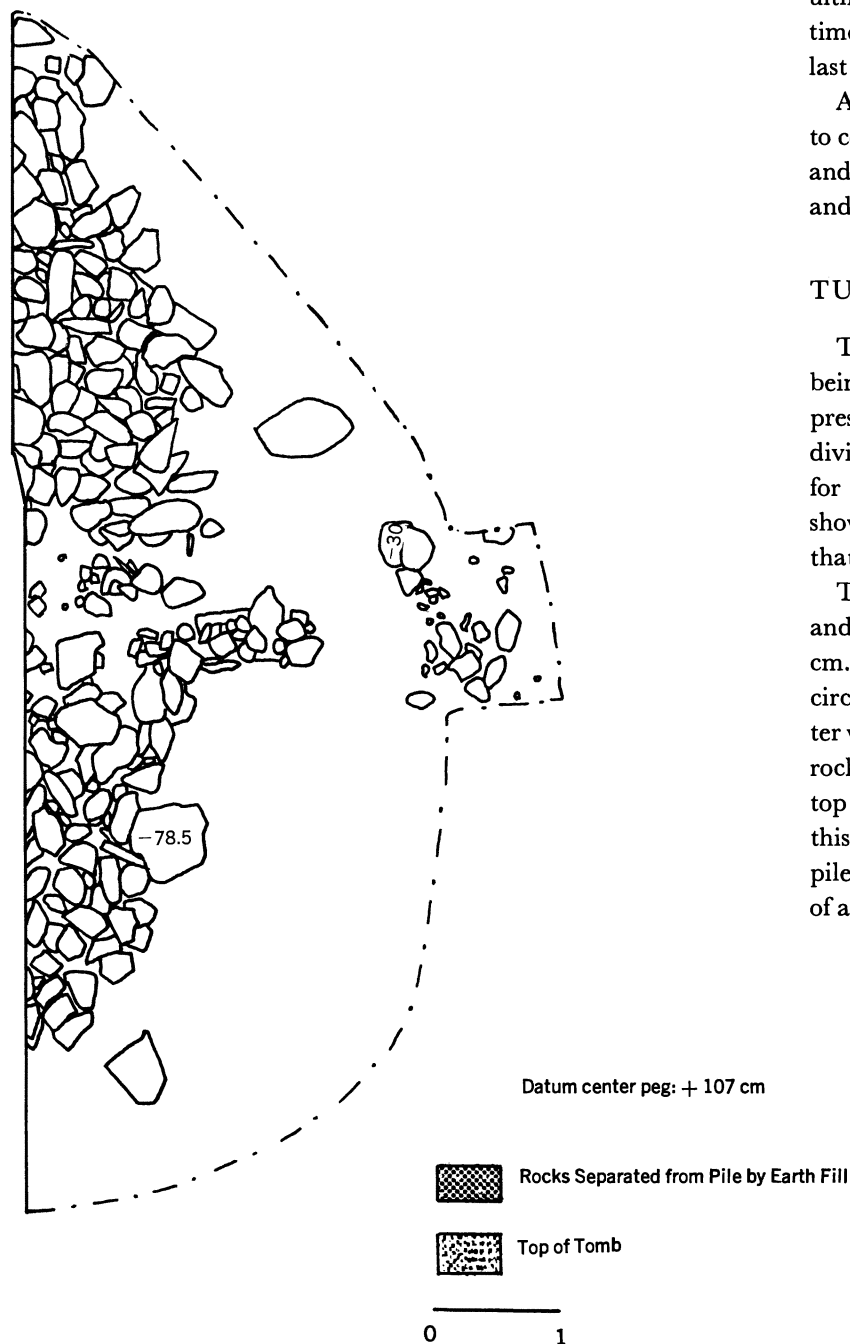
FIGURE 11
Stone revetment as seen in test trench 1, Tumulus I, looking down the slope with the pea field in the background

neatly laid small stones was encountered, this time, however, laid horizontally (Figure 7, lower right); where it begins and ends could not be established.

Each of the four test trenches excavated around the tumulus yielded the same layer of small stones sloping up the sides (Figures 5, 6, 11). The depth of the stones was irregular within each trench and also with respect to the other trenches, and the length of the sloping stone layer in each trench was not uniform. Gaps in the stones of test trench 4 could be explained either as the result of stone robbing (though there is no evidence of this on the surface), or by assuming that the builders began to run out of stones when they reached this part of the tumulus and proceeded to pile the stones at random. In one of the four test trenches, number 3, a



N



horizontal course of stones was found below the sloping course.

It is certain, therefore, that Tumulus I was encircled by a sloping revetment of small stones neatly laid below the surface of the tumulus but at an irregular height. This revetment was apparently built with the view to further protecting the tomb, already covered with a mass of hard clay. The form of the tumulus ultimately desired apparently did not develop until the time when this revetment was covered with gravel, the last stage in the construction.

Although we did not discover a tomb, it may be safe to conclude, on the evidence collected from Tumuli II and III (*infra*), that it exists in the southwest quadrant and that it will be away from the center of the tumulus.

TUMULUS II

This is the smallest of the tumuli excavated in 1968, being about 47 cm. in height and about 14 meters in preserved diameter (Figures 3, 4). The mound was divided into quadrants, and the southwest one chosen for initial excavation. The surface of the tumulus showed remains of recent hearths, but no other features that might suggest disturbance were noticed.

The fill was very shallow and was composed of gravel and gray-brown earth. At a depth of from 10 cm. to 30 cm., at different parts of the quadrant, portions of a circular pile of rubble stones 10 cm. to 30 cm. in diameter were uncovered. In two areas there were gaps in the rock pile, and below the larger gap we encountered the top of a well-built stone wall and a section of another; this turned out to be the tomb. At this stage the rock pile was completely excavated (Figure 12). It consists of a round mound of stones several courses thick at the

FIGURE 12
Plan of Tumulus II showing the tomb area
and the rock pile overlay

center and diminishing to one or two courses at the edges. The center of the rock pile was not under the center of the tumulus but was actually some meters to the west. The tomb was placed at the center of the rock pile.

Gaps in the rock pile noticed early in the excavation made it evident that the tomb had been plundered: one gap in the southwest area seems to indicate an abortive attempt; the large gap in the area directly over the tomb represents a successful one. The stones scattered in this area, and extending beyond the rock pile, at a higher level, represent debris from the robbers' trench, which was apparently dug from the east. This trench was subsequently refilled with the same gravel and earth that covers the rest of the tumulus. There was no evidence of the robbers' trench in the north-south balk despite the fact that there is a break in the line of stones. This could indicate that the robbing occurred soon after the completion of the tumulus and that the refill had consolidated with the undisturbed fill in the course of time. Nothing on the surface of the tumulus gave any hint that plundering had occurred, which further suggests that the robbery took place in antiquity. Several of the other tumuli in the necropolis (I, III, F, G, and H) have noticeable hollow depressions that indicate relatively recent attempts at excavation. The depressions in two of these, F and G, represent the soundings of Stein, according to some local inhabitants.

In the excavation of the tomb, the rubble stones of the overlying rock pile were removed, and the south and east tomb walls were freed from earth and rubble. The tomb (Figures 13-16) is built of neatly cut large flat stones, set into a thick mud mortar layer. The same mud used in the mortar was also applied as a plaster to the outside walls of the tomb. The walls form a rectangular structure one stone thick and about 1.5 meters by 3.1 meters. Around the top (except on the robbed south side) the flat stones are bordered by additional large flat stones, which are themselves bordered by rubble stones. On the three sides not disturbed by the robbers, the depth of the tomb is preserved fully to a height of 1.2 meters. There is no evidence to suggest of what material the roof was constructed.⁷

7. A wood roof could have been employed over the stone tomb, cf. M. Gimbutas, *Bronze Age Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe* (The Hague, 1965) p. 284.

Below the walls to a depth of about one meter the tomb was filled with rubble stones mixed with gravel and earth. Either these stones were thrown in by the robbers or they fell in from the disturbed pile above. Under this rubble fill, a layer of well-packed pebbles and some fist-sized stones were encountered, apparent-

FIGURE 13

Tomb of Tumulus II during excavation



FIGURE 14

Tomb of Tumulus II after excavation



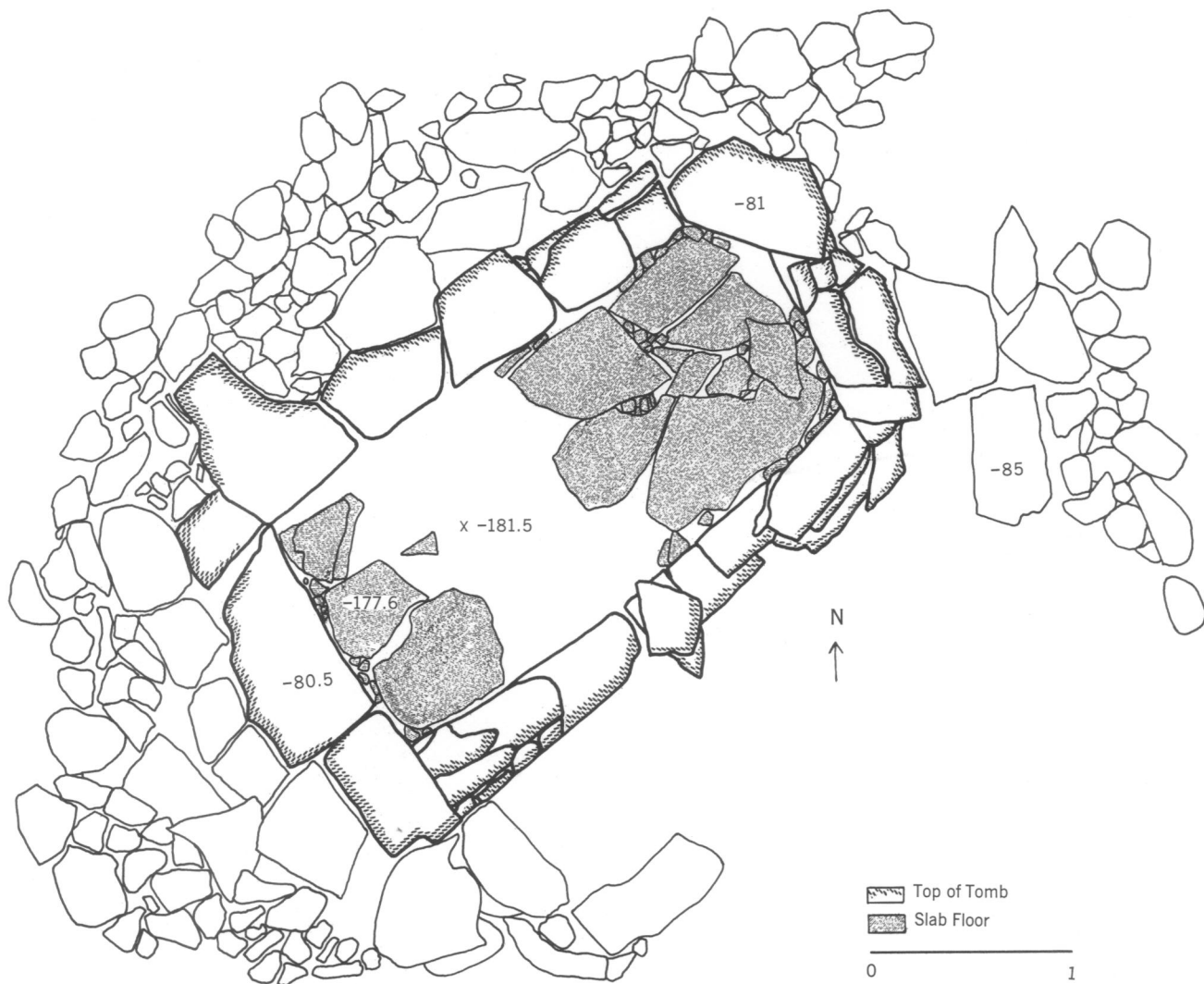
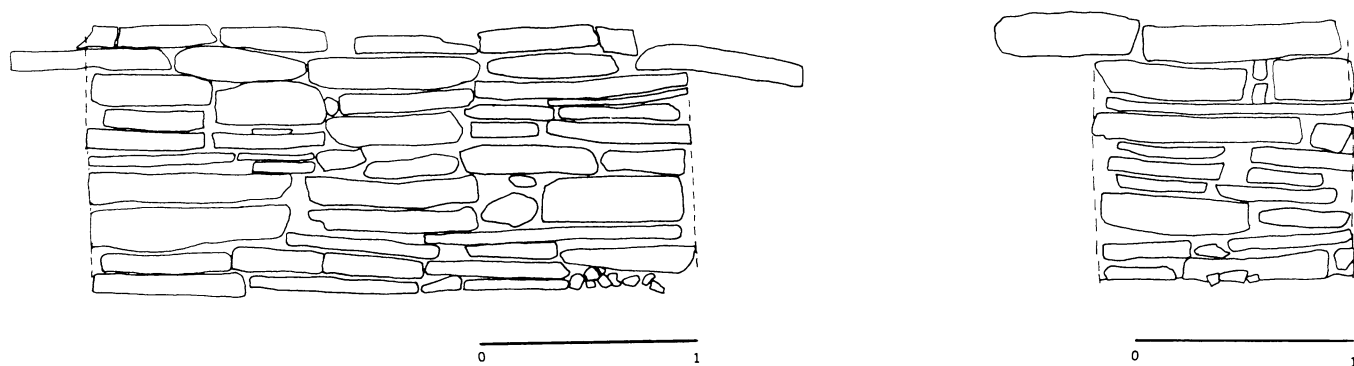


FIGURE 15 Plan of the tomb, Tumulus II (Datum: +107)

FIGURE 16 Sections of the tomb, north and west walls, Tumulus II



ly representing a deliberate packing. Among the pebbles were two thin lenses of fine gray ash whose origin remains a mystery. Under the packing was the tomb floor proper, constructed of large flat stones of the same type used in the walls. The center of the tomb floor contained no slabs but only a smooth and hard gravel surface spotted with red stains, samples of which were collected. A test trench dug 25 cm. into this surface demonstrated that it was virgin soil. It may well be that the pebble packing rather than the partially slabbed floor served as the surface on which the dead person was placed, and that the slabs were missing in the original tomb construction.

Attempts were made to find out whether a tomb pit had been dug, but no evidence of one was found. Sections were cut at both the north and south ends of the tomb area, and no pit lines could be recognized. The present surface of the valley is 2 meters above the stone floor of the tomb, and it would indeed be possible to assume that a pit had been dug for the tomb. Perhaps, since the gravel used as fill was of very much the same consistency as the neighboring virgin soil, the outlines of the pit have been obscured.

The contents of the tomb consisted of a few small bone fragments in very poor condition, found in the northwest corner at a depth of 40 cm. from the top of the wall, and a small, nondescript disc-shaped shell bead. A small, coarse sherd was found below the rock pile overlying the northeast corner of the tomb, but it unfortunately yields no information.

Three sherds, each incised with part of a triangle, were found in three areas of the tumulus fill, in each case just beyond the circular rock pile. We will return to a discussion of these sherds shortly.

It may be seen from the plans and photographs that Tumulus II has not been completely excavated. It would therefore be premature to arrive at a negative conclusion concerning the presence of a circular stone revetment, as was excavated in both Tumulus I and Tumulus III. The tomb area and the overlying circular rock pile have been cleared, but not the outer areas of the tumulus. Perhaps during a future season conditions in the pea field will allow a test trench to be dug in a search for a revetment.

TUMULUS III

Tumulus III was selected for excavation because it represents a medium-sized example, being 3 meters in height and about 35 meters in preserved diameter (Figure 17). Whereas Tumuli I and II were apparently never cultivated, Tumulus III had been plowed and therefore blended into the surrounding pea field. After the tumulus was divided into quadrants, the southeast section was decided upon for initial excavation. The fill throughout was solid clay mixed with a few pebbles. Aside from the upper area, which had been softened by plowing, this clay was quite hard and compactly laid down. No horizontal lines were visible in the balk, nor were there any cleavages such as those recognized in Tumulus I (Figure 18).

Approximately 50 cm. below the surface around the outer perimeter of the tumulus, a section of a sloping ring of rubble stones one or two courses thick and of varying sizes was uncovered (Figures 18, 19, 20). The ring is about 5.75 to 6 meters in width (measured horizontally) and seems to have served as a revetment. Although many stones are missing as a result of plowing, there is no evidence of plundering. A test trench was cut into the north slope of the tumulus (Figure 17) and a sloping stone surface thereby uncovered, indicating that the revetment encircled the tumulus in the same manner as recorded in Tumulus I.

Some 2.5 meters below the center of the tumulus a small section of a rubble rock pile was encountered. The outer border of the pile was one stone thick, and the pile increased in depth toward its center, thus forming a low mound; the outer edge, which was curved, indicated that the pile was round in form (Figures 19, 21). The rock pile rested on a well-made floor of clay, smooth and hard, only part of which could be cleared. Since it was evident that the center of the rock pile was located in the southwest quadrant, a trench extension was made in that direction; another extension was made to the north to expose more of the rock pile and to allow extra room for excavating the tomb.

A hollow dome in the clay over a depression in the stones 1.1 meters deep indicated clearly that the rock pile had collapsed into the tomb chamber. When this area was cleared, the top of a grave pit completely filled with fallen rubble stones was revealed. Powdery remains and small fragments of wood, which apparent-

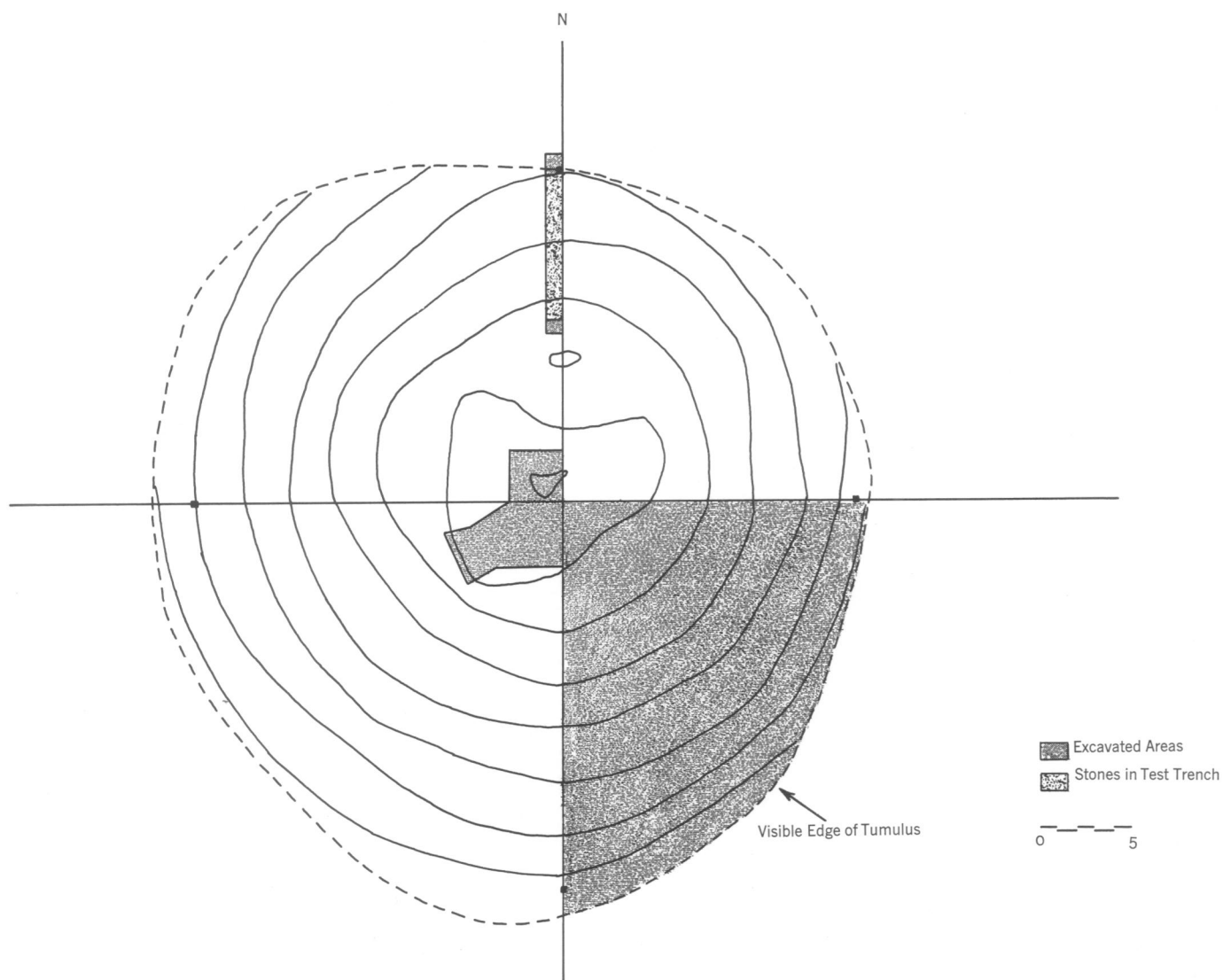


FIGURE 17 Plan of Tumulus III

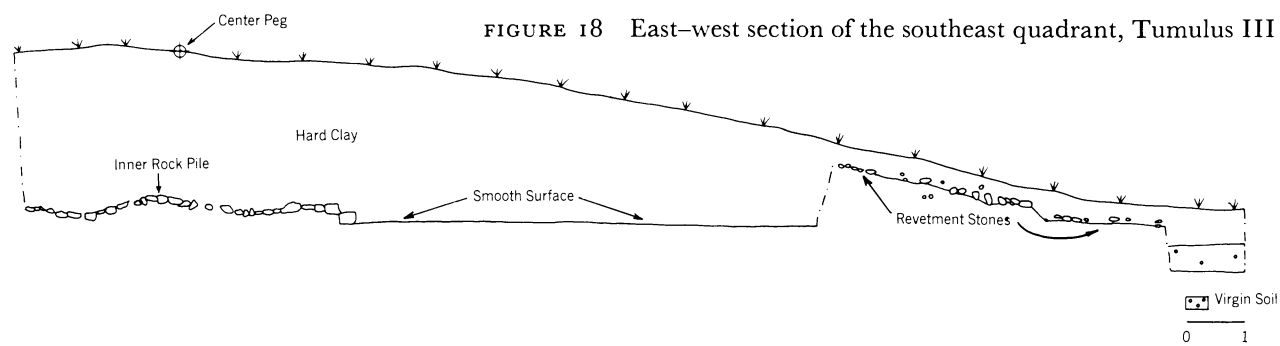


FIGURE 18 East-west section of the southeast quadrant, Tumulus III



FIGURE 19

Plan of Tumulus III showing excavated areas: circular stone revetment, inner rock pile, and tomb area



FIGURE 20

The excavated southeast quadrant of Tumulus III with the outer stone revetment in the foreground and the inner rock pile just above it in the center



FIGURE 21

Inner rock pile, Tumulus III

ly belonged to the now decayed roof, were also recovered mixed with the rubble. No rubble stones found in the area could have served as a roof for the grave pit.

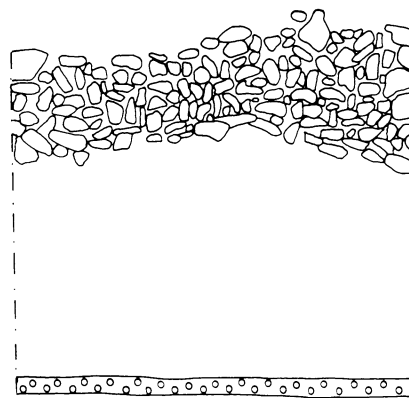
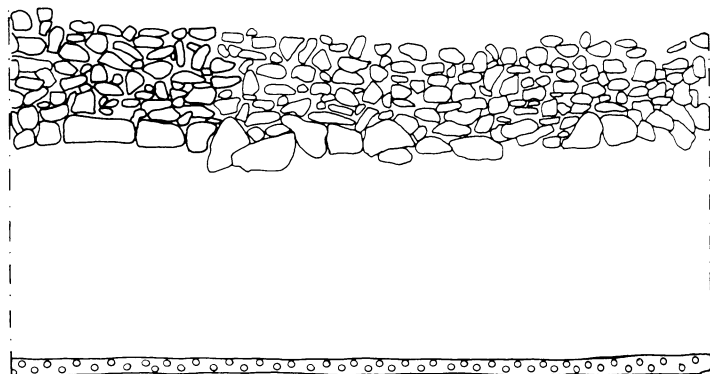
The grave pit was a neatly excavated rectangular area 2 meters wide, 3.5 meters long, and 1.2 meters deep. The walls sloped outward slightly and were coated with a thin mud plaster. The level gravel floor of the pit was carefully covered with a layer of small pebbles

to a depth of 7–8 cm. (Figure 22). Excavation into the gravel floor showed it to be virgin soil.

On the pebble surface was found the badly crushed skeleton of an adult male (Figures 23, 24). It lay on its side with the head facing southeast and the legs drawn up in a contracted position. The left arm was awkwardly positioned under the right arm, and the back was twisted. The original position of the skeleton may have been distorted by the rubble collapse, but the place-

FIGURE 22

South and west sections of the tomb pit, Tumulus III



••• Pebble Floor

0 1

••• Pebble Floor

0 1

FIGURES 25, 26, 27

Stone whetstone-scepter, Tumulus III. Iran
Bastan Museum, Tehran

FIGURE 23

Plan of the tomb, Tumulus III

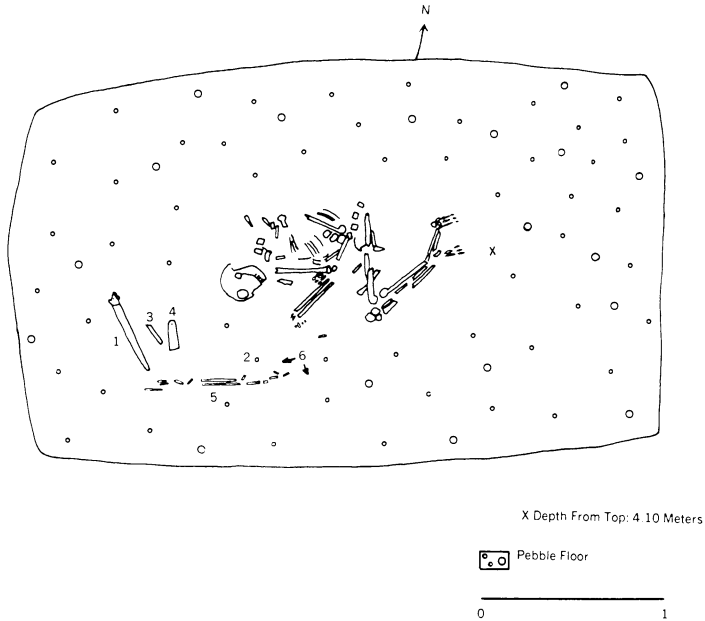


FIGURE 24

Skeleton on the floor of the tomb pit, Tumulus III



ment of the arms seems surely to have been original. All bones of the skeleton were completely covered with a deep red color, specimens of which have been taken for analysis.

The following objects were found on the pebble floor beside the skeleton and clustered in an area to the west and northwest of the head (Figures 23, 24):

1. A perfectly preserved whetstone-like object terminating in a feline's head. The stone is finely grained and very smooth so that if it is a whetstone it does not appear to have been used; perhaps it served as a baton or scepter. Length 37 cm., diameter 3.2 cm. (Figures 25, 26, 27).

2. A very fragmentary silver drinking vessel, the metal of which was in excellent condition when found (Figure 28 for a reconstructed drawing; Figure 23, 2 in plan).

3. A bronze knife blade with the remains of a plaited material adhering to one side. Length 12.8 cm., greatest width 1.8 cm.

4. A bronze celt, also with the remains of a plaited material adhering to one side. Both the knife and the celt may have been resting on this material, as fragments of it were recovered underneath both objects. Length 13.4 cm., width 5.1–3.5 cm. (Figure 29).

5. Two long silver rods, very fragmentary. They were made by rolling silver plate in the manner of a scroll.

6. Many small beads of gold, stone, and paste. They are all plain and are round or rectangular in shape. The beads were recovered near the right hand; none were found near the neck (Figure 23, 6 in plan).

Picked up in the tumulus fill were a few sherds of coarse ware, a few sherds decorated with incised wavy lines of second-millennium type, and three small and fragmentary human bones. All these objects could have been inadvertently deposited along with the clay.

The building of the tumulus may be reconstructed as follows: An area in the field was leveled and smoothed to a neat, hard surface. Into this surface a rectangular

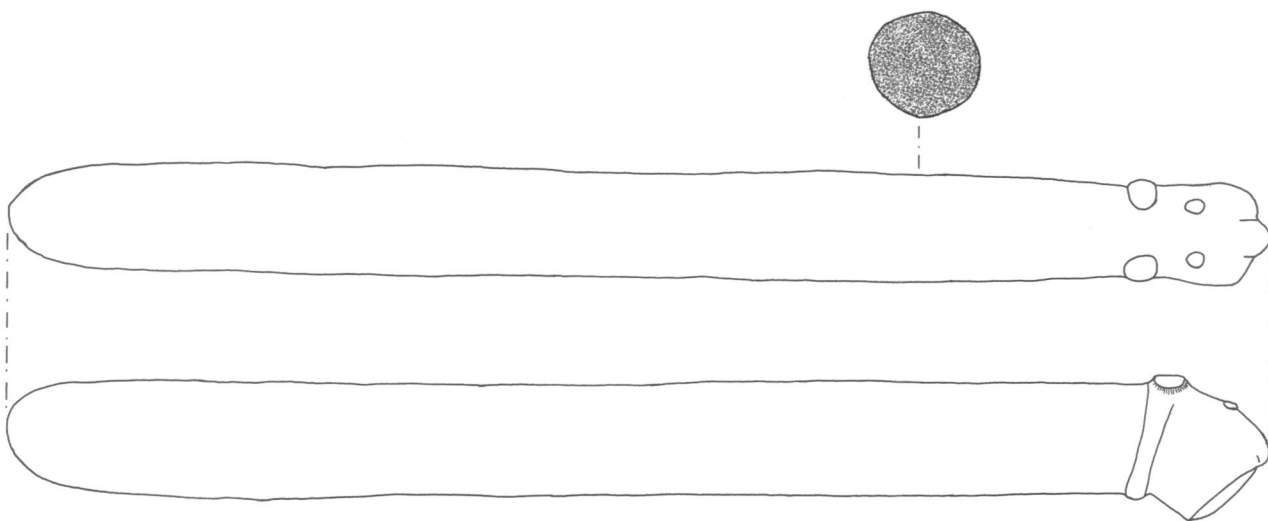
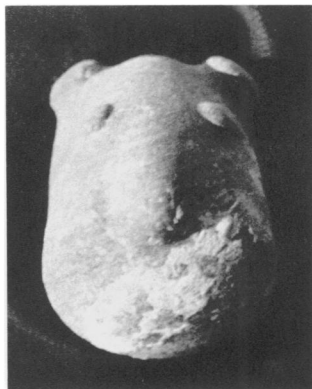
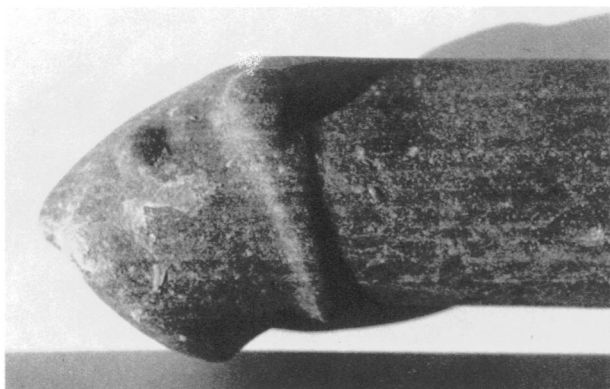
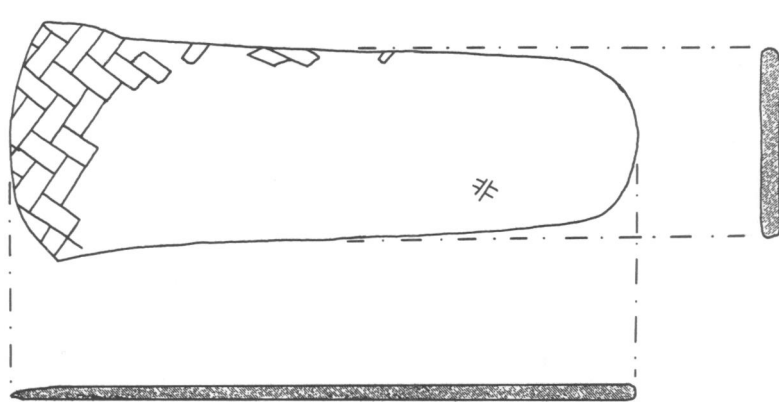
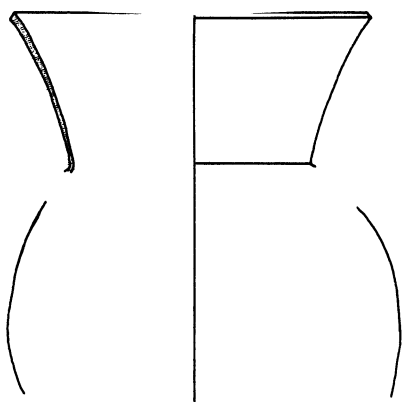


FIGURE 28
Reconstructed drawing of a silver vessel, Tumulus III. Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran

FIGURE 29
Bronze celt blade, Tumulus III. Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran



pit was dug, floored with pebbles, and lined with plaster. After the deposition of the body and of the objects, wood beams or logs were placed over the pit, and a carefully laid mound of stones was placed over the closed tomb, which was kept under the center of the rock pile. Following this stage came the laying down of the clay, in which the center of the rock pile and tomb were kept away from the center of the tumulus. No stones or wood remains that might have served as a marker for the center of the tumulus were found.⁸ At a certain stage, near the completion of the tumulus, a sloping, encircling stone revetment was built. Following this stage, more clay was dumped in order to cover the revetment and to create the shape desired for the tumulus. None of the evidence suggests that wood fences or partitions were employed in the construction.

SUMMARY

Tumuli II and III share certain features: each of their tombs was situated away from the center of the overlying tumulus; each tomb was built into a pit (not absolutely certain for II); each tomb had a pebble floor; and each tomb was covered by a mound of rubble stones. Until a trench is cut into the outer area of Tumulus II, we are not in a position to conclude that it had a stone revetment like Tumulus III, but this is very probable. The major difference between the two

tumuli, aside from size, is that II contained a well-built stone tomb whereas III contained only a simple pit as the grave chamber. Whether this fact may be interpreted as reflecting a difference in wealth between those who were buried in the tomb or a chronological gap between the erection of the tumuli cannot yet be established.⁹

A feature Tumulus I shares with Tumulus III is the stone revetment. With respect to the unique technique used in the construction of Tumulus I (wood fencing), one may presume that the relatively small size of Tumuli II and III precluded such an elaborate system.

Tumuli whose construction exactly parallels that of the tumuli at Sé Girdan do not come readily to mind. Particular features of the construction, however, are paralleled in various areas of the ancient world, extending from England to Russia, and possibly beyond.¹⁰

The placement of the tomb away from the center of the tumulus is a characteristic feature of Phrygian and Lydian tumuli in Anatolia beginning in the eighth century B.C. and continuing for several centuries.

Phrygian tumuli excavated at Ankara, Gordion, and Kerkenes Dag, with rare exceptions, have a grave chamber off-center.¹¹ The Phrygian tumuli usually also have a grave pit into which a tomb was placed; they sometimes have a pebble floor; and they almost always have either rubble stones placed around the tomb in the pit or, more commonly, a rock pile covering the tomb pit. In at least one Phrygian tumulus, one of those excavated by Makridi at Ankara, there is evidence that fences or partitions were erected to help in the orderly

8. Such markers were found within some Phrygian tumuli: G. and A. Koerte, *Gordion Ergebnisse der Ausgrabung im Jahre 1900 (Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Institut, Ergänzungsheft V; Berlin, 1904) p. 39*; R. S. Young, "Gordion 1956: Preliminary Report," *American Journal of Archaeology* 61 (1957) p. 325 (Tumulus P); *idem*, "The Gordion Campaign of 1959: Preliminary Report," *AJA* 64 (1960) p. 228 (Tumulus W).

9. The low height of Tumulus II might have resulted to some extent from the plundering activity, but there is no conclusive evidence that it was ever as high as Tumulus III.

10. A fragment from the Stele of the Vultures of Eannatum, now in the Louvre, has a scene that could represent the erection of a tumulus over a mass burial. Two men carry earth up a ladder or slope in order to cover a group of dead men, the defeated enemy. The fact that they are climbing seems to preclude the suggestion that we are witnessing a regular inhumation burial. However, there is at present no known tumulus burial from the Mesopotamian area of this time, or indeed later. For a drawing of the fragment and a suggestion that the scene does represent the erection of

a tumulus, see G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, *A History of Art in Chaldaea and Assyria* (New York, 1884) pp. 177 ff., fig. 93.

11. Ankara: M. Schede in *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1930, col. 480; T. Özgüç and M. Akok, "Die Ausgrabungen an zwei Tumuli auf dem Mausoleumshügel bei Ankara," *Belleten* 11 (1947) p. 59, where the excavators' statement that the tomb of Tumulus 1 was directly under the "Gipfel" seems contradicted by fig. 5; on p. 69 they state that the tomb of Tumulus 2 was "unter der Mitte des Hügels . . ." Gordion: Koerte, *Gordion*, pp. 99, 105, 139 ff. (Tumuli IV, II, V); the Koertes specifically state, p. 40, that the tomb was under the center of Tumulus III, which appears to be an exception at Gordion; R. S. Young in various preliminary reports: *AJA* 61 (1957) p. 325 (Tumulus P); *AJA* 64 (1960) p. 228 (Tumulus W); *AJA* 62 (1958) p. 147 (Tumulus MM); *Bulletin of the University Museum* 16 (1951) p. 11, pl. v (Tumulus G); *Archaeology* 3 (1950) p. 200, fig. 7 (Tumulus B); *AJA* 70 (1966) pp. 267 ff. (Tumuli X and Y). Kerkenes Dag: E. Schmidt, "Test Excavations in the City of Kerkenes Dag," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 45 (1929) pp. 250 ff.

dumping of earth fill.¹² In the case of this particular example, the partition walls were constructed of stones and were left in place as the fill rose (cf. Salamis, *infra*).

None of the Phrygian tumuli have an outer stone revetment, and this seems to be the only important structural difference between these tumuli and those at Sé Girdan. Another difference is that in Phrygian tumuli the tombs are usually constructed of wood, but this may only reflect ecological differences between Anatolia and western Iran.

Several Lydian tumuli excavated in the region of Sardis also have the tomb placed off-center, a feature, incidentally, that one may interpret as an example of Lydia's cultural dependence on Phrygia.¹³ In some tumuli there is also a pile of rubble stones placed over the tomb. While there is no evidence of a stone rubble revetment in the tumuli at Sardis, the elaborate stone wall found in the large tumulus called Karniyarik Tepe may actually be related in some manner to the type known at Sé Girdan.

Still another area where there are tombs placed off-center is on the island of Cyprus at the necropolis at Salamis, recently excavated by V. Karageorghis.¹⁴ One of the tumuli, called Tomb 77, is a fourth-century B.C. cenotaph. The pyre, with its contents and covering rock pile, was excavated intact only because it was missed by grave robbers who had tunneled straight for the center of the tumulus and thereby missed their goal. In addition to these parallels with Sé Girdan, the tomb off-center and the overlying rock pile, there is another feature of some importance: thin stone rubble walls were found that radiated out from the center of the tumulus, dividing the area into sections in order to

facilitate the orderly dumping in of the earth fill. This employment of stone partitions was also recorded in Tumulus 3 of the same necropolis.

Some European tumuli also present interesting parallels to those at Sé Girdan. Tumuli of the second millennium B.C. excavated in the western Ukraine, the Baltic area, and central Europe often have a tomb pit that is covered with a pile of rubble stones. In addition, some have a simple stone ring encircling the tumulus at the base.¹⁵ These stone rings do not seem to have functioned as a revetment, as we suggested stone rings did at Sé Girdan, but the same general idea—an encircling of the tumulus with stones—seems to be in evidence. And it is this feature that particularly relates the Sé Girdan tumuli to those known in Europe. An important difference may be seen in the fact that it was normal for a European tumulus to have a tomb built directly under its center.

One tumulus known to me from England that has a feature recognized at Sé Girdan is a long barrow at Skendleby in Lincolnshire. Its excavation produced evidence that upright wood posts and fences were employed in its construction. The system of partitioning, or dividing areas into units, was also recorded.¹⁶ This technique is the same as that employed in Tumulus I, and, as already discussed, in tumuli from Ankara and Cyprus.

Tumuli in the Altai area do not present direct parallels with those at Sé Girdan in that many are actually rock cairns rather than earth tumuli. The rock pile covering the tomb pit was itself the tumulus and was usually centered over the tomb below.¹⁷

An outer ring of stones surrounding a centrally

12. H. H. von der Osten, *Explorations in Central Anatolia Season of 1926*, *Oriental Institute Publication*, V (Chicago, 1929) pp. 48 ff., fig. 78; M. Schede in *AA* 1930, cols. 479 ff., fig. 23; M. Forrer in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient Gesellschaft* 65 (1927) abb. 20 with caption.

13. Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Phrygia, Lydia, Caria, and Lycia* (New York, 1892) p. 262, fig. 159, p. 270; H. C. Butler, *Sardis*, I (Leyden, 1922) p. 10; G. M. A. Hanfmann, "The Fifth Campaign at Sardis (1962)," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 170 (1963) p. 56, fig. 39; *idem*, "The Ninth Campaign at Sardis (1966)," *BASOR* 186 (1967) p. 39, fig. 25, pp. 42 ff.; on p. 47 there is mention of a tumulus called Cambaz Tepe that has a tomb placed under the center. For a brief discussion of Phrygian influence on Lydia see Oscar White Muscarella, *Phrygian Fibulae from Gordion* (London, 1967) p. 44, notes 30, 31.

14. V. Karageorghis, "Chronique des Fouilles en Chypre,"

Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique 90 (1966) p. 377 (Tomb 77); *BCH* 89 (1965) p. 283 (Tomb 3, seventh century B.C.).

15. Gimbutas, *Bronze Age Cultures*, pp. 285, 308, 319 ff., 420, 460, figs. 190, 212, 219, 273, 301. Parenthetically I would mention in this context the "tumulus" covering the House of Tiles at Lerna. A circle of stones surrounded the earth mound, and a layer of stones covered its surface. No burial was found, but the construction is certainly similar to that employed in grave tumuli: *Hesperia* 25 (1956) p. 150, fig. 3, pp. 165 ff., fig. 5.

16. C. W. Phillips, "The Excavation of the Giant's Hills Long Barrow, Skendleby, Lincolnshire," *Archaeologia* 85 (1936) pp. 60 ff., fig. 7 on p. 61, and pl. XXI, fig. 2.

17. M. R. Giaznov and E. A. Golomshtok, "The Pazirik Burial at Altai," *AJA* 37 (1933) pp. 32 ff., fig. 1; K. Jettmar, *Art of the Steppes* (New York, 1964) pp. 120 ff., fig. 105.

positioned tomb is fairly common in the Caucasus region.¹⁸ These stones, however, form a simple ring and not a revetment, and as such may be more closely related to European tumuli. I am told that some of the tumuli ruthlessly plundered in the Ardebil area in recent years have an outer ring of stones like those in the Caucasus.

The objects recovered from the rubble-filled tomb at Sé Girdan do not yield as much information about culture and chronology as one would wish; especially lacking is pottery. Nevertheless, certain general comments may be set down. The silver drinking vessel, although badly crushed, can be partially reconstructed on paper (Figure 28) and has several parallels at Ziwiye belonging to the Iron III period, there not earlier than the late eighth century B.C. and continuing through the late seventh century B.C.¹⁹ The knife and celt, however, are not distinctive enough to allow them to be placed chronologically with any certainty.

The most important object from the tomb, and the only one completely preserved, is the feline-headed whetstone-scepter. The head of the feline is stylized and simple in execution, and seems to be pre-Achaemenid in style. Whetstones, often with detachable metal animal heads, are known from the Achaemenian period and earlier.²⁰ A few whetstones of a similar but smaller type are reported from the Minusinsk area in Russia. These have animal heads and were made in one piece. Tallgren states that they are difficult to date.²¹ I would tentatively suggest a pre-Achaemenid

date for the whetstone-scepter found in Tumulus III.

The few sherds with incised triangles found in the fill of Tumulus II (Figure 30) may fit within the Iron III period, perhaps late eighth to early sixth century B.C. Painted and incised triangles were common motifs in that period (hence Iron III's original field name "Triangle Ware Period") at such sites as Hasanlu, Susa, Ziwiye, and Zendan, and at sites in the Caucasus.²² Recently there have appeared on the antiquities market vessels with incised triangular decoration allegedly coming from northwest Iran (Figure 31); these also seem to belong to the Iron III period.²³

Sherds and other material found in the fill of a tumulus do not date its construction except in the form of an *ante quem non* date,²⁴ that is to say, the objects may be interpreted as either contemporary with the erection of the tumulus (a workman scattered a pot he accidentally broke) or earlier than the erection of the tumulus (the material was inadvertently scooped up by workers while they gathered clay for the fill). If I am correct in attributing the sherds to the Iron III period, then Tumulus II and, I would suggest, also the others are either Iron III or later in date. The Sé Girdan tumuli remind us strongly of the Phrygian and Lydian examples of the eighth through the sixth centuries B.C., the silver vessel has Iron III parallels, and the whetstone appears to be pre-Achaemenian in style—these three factors do suggest that we would be on the right track in tentatively dating the construction of the tumuli as seventh or sixth century B.C.

18. J. de Morgan, *Mission Scientifique en Perse* (Paris, 1896) p. 43, fig. 45; H. de Morgan, "Recherches au Talyche Persan," *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires* 8 (Paris, 1905) pp. 256 ff., figs. 339–342, p. 260, fig. 346, p. 262, figs. 347, 348, etc. For similar types of tombs in Italy see A. Minto, *Marsiliana D'Albagna* (Florence, 1921) pp. 22 ff., 30 ff., fig. 2, pl. vi.

19. T. Cuyler Young, Jr., "A Comparative Ceramic Chronology for Western Iran, 1500–500 B.C.," *Iran* 3 (1965) p. 60, fig. 4, no. 10. There are examples from Ziwiye still unpublished.

20. *7000 Ans d'Art en Iran* (Paris, 1961) no. 689; R. Ghirshman, *The Arts of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1964) p. 67, figs. 84–86; A. Godard, *Bronzes du Luristan* (Paris, 1931) pls. xi, xii, an example from Susa and others from Luristan. In this context compare a "door socket" made of a finely grained stone with a stylized ram's head at one end, found at Hasanlu, dated to the ninth century, R. H. Dyson, "Treasures From Hasanlu . . .," *Illustrated London News*, Sept. 30, 1961, p. 536, fig. 12. The scepters discussed by D. Berciu, "A Zoomorphic 'Sceptre' Discovered in the People's Republic of Bulgaria . . .," *Dacia* 6 (1962) pp. 397 ff., may be relat-

ed to but are not of the same type as the one from Sé Girdan. For this last reference I wish to thank Professor T. Sulimirski.

21. A. M. Tallgren, "Some North Eurasian Sculptures," *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua* 12 (1938) p. 119, fig. 8a, b, p. 126.

22. R. Ghirshman, *Village Perse-Achéménid*, MDP 36 (Paris, 1954) pl. xxxi, GS. 863, pl. xxxiii, GS. 3; Young, "Comparative Ceramic Chronology," pp. 68 ff., p. 56, fig. 2; R. H. Dyson, Jr., "Problems of Protohistoric Iran as Seen from Hasanlu," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 (1965) pp. 204 ff., figs. 7, 9, 10, 11, 13; *idem*, "Iran, 1956," *Bull. Univ. Mus.* 21 (1957) p. 36, fig. 27; W. Kleiss and R. M. Boehmer, "Die Ausgrabungen auf dem Zendan-i-Suleiman," *AA* 1965, cols. 763 ff., figs. 74–76; J. de Morgan, *Mission Scientifique au Caucase* (Paris, 1889) p. 148, fig. 155, p. 151, fig. 162, p. 155, fig. 170. (I am not unaware of the fact that the sherds from Tumulus II could be second millennium in date.)

23. See also *Trésors de l'Ancien Iran*, Musée Rath (Geneva, 1966) no. 672, fig. 64. Many others are to be seen in dealers' shops.

24. Muscarella, *Phrygian Fibulae*, p. 7; Karageorghis, *BCH* 90 (1966) p. 377.

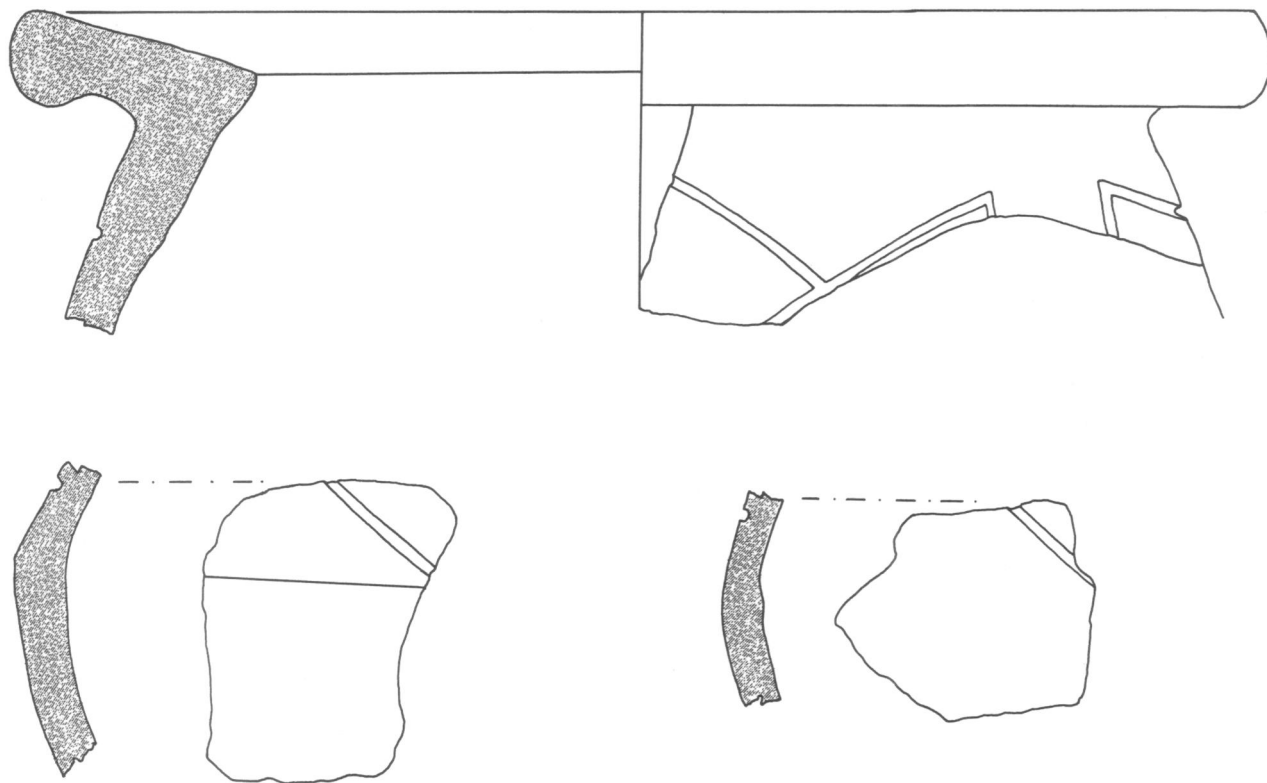


FIGURE 30
Sherds from the fill of Tumulus II

A preliminary report cannot be more definite, and C-14 samples are still to be collected and evaluated. Another season's work might supply the much-desired pottery needed to arrive at a stronger conclusion. One of the problems, in addition to chronology, that requires further research is that of the location in the Ushnu valley of the settlement occupied by the people who buried their dead at Sé Girdan. Another related problem, one of some importance, is concerned with the cultural identification of the tumuli builders: were they, for example, Medes or Scythians, or still another people?

FIGURE 31
Vessel with incised triangular decoration, Iran, VII–VI century B.C. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 66.202

