



## HAFT TEPE

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**HAFT TEPE**, an archaeological site in Kūzestān province, in the southwestern alluvial plains of Persia, about 10 km southeast of Susa and 60 km south of Andīmešk ([PLATE I](#)). This large Elamite site (see [ELAM](#)), composed of many individual mounds, forms an imposing mass rising about the surrounding plain. The ancient remains of Haft Tepe have long been a prominent feature of the flat Kūzestān plain. The number seven, *haft* in Haft Tepe, the “Seven Mounds,” is used loosely to indicate the number of mounds in this large archaeological complex.

The ancient name of the site remains in doubt. Some scholars have suggested that it may have been Tikni, which is described in early documents as a religious center located between Susa and Čoḡā Zanbīl (q.v.), but no evidence has yet appeared in the Haft Tepe excavation itself to support this theory. However, several seal impressions and clay tablets found at Haft Tepe contain the name “Ka-ap-nak” and it is possible that this was the original name of the Haft Tepe site (Herrero, 1976).

In the 1950s and 1960s, Haft Tepe became part of a large sugar cane plantation. In the course of leveling the land for planting, some of the archaeological remains were destroyed and others exposed. During the construction of the main road to the plantation, a baked brick wall was uncovered and the discovery reported to the Iranian Archaeological Service. An expedition organized under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture and Art, of which the Archaeological Service was then a part, began to excavate the site in 1965. From the fourth season of the expedition onwards, a program of



field training in excavation technique was instituted for graduate students of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Tehran and eventually a site museum was built together with permanent headquarters for the archaeological team. Although the expedition worked for fourteen seasons, until it was halted by political conditions in Persia, only a small fraction of the large site was uncovered.

The archaeological complex of Haft Tepe contains four-teen major visible mounds, the largest rising about 17 m above the surrounding plain which, with its related extensions, cover an area about 1500 m long and 800 m wide. This is a single level site with almost no evidence of occupation before the major constructional period and very minimal evidence afterwards. The massive sun-dried and baked brick buildings of Haft Tepe, perhaps of a religious or some other public function (PLATE II), were built during a single period, lasting for one or at the most two centuries during the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., at which time Haft Tepe was a major Elamite city.

Most of the construction is of sun-dried brick, with baked brick used only for very important buildings and in areas particularly exposed to weather. The sun-dried brick was put together with a simple clay mortar and the baked brick with an extremely strong gypsum mortar. Gypsum was also used as a covering for baked brick pavements and for plastering walls and the inner surfaces of vaulted roofs. Natural bitumen was used to seal basins and water channels and as a mortar and surface covering.

The architectural remains thus far uncovered include the Tomb Temple Complex, a royal tomb of baked brick with a barrel vaulted roof (PLATE II) and another subsidiary baked brick tomb also with a vaulted roof, now collapsed, both attached to a large temple of sun dried brick with two parallel halls opening onto a large portico which in turn opens onto a large courtyard paved with several layers of baked brick. This courtyard contained two broken stone stelae inscribed with the name of Tepti-ahar, the Elamite king believed to have built the Haft Tepe complex in the middle of the 2nd millenium B.C.E. (PLATE III).

Surrounding the entire Tomb Temple Complex is a massive wall of sun-dried brick. Extending in an easterly direction from the outside wall of the courtyard are large constructional remains with a long wall of at least 60 m. About 100 m southeast of the Tomb Temple Complex, connected by this long wall, is a large solid sun-dried brick construction which forms a many-sided



terrace built in sections, referred to as Terrace Complex I. This may have served as the foundation of a much higher structure, a ziggurat palace or temple, whose plan can no longer be distinguished. Around this massive solid terrace are numerous halls, many of whose walls had been covered by polychrome paintings on a gypsum surface. These halls had had flat roofs supported by large timbers of palm tree fiber covered with reeds and matting.

On the eastern side of Terrace Complex I is a particularly interesting large hall, apparently an artist's workshop, partitioned into several sections in which various crafts were carried out. Bowls with dried paint, a sawn elephant skeleton, a solidified cluster of several hundred bronze arrowheads and small bronze hooks, fragments of colored stone mosaic framed in bronze, and a butterfly pin of gold and carnelian were all found here, but the most unusual objects in the workshop are two life-size painted portrait heads of an Elamite king and queen (see [ELAM ii](#), PLATE V), together with a clay mask. Directly in front of this workshop is a very large kiln composed of two long partitioned wings with a fire chamber in the center, in which both pottery and bronze apparently were baked (PLATE IV). South of Terrace Complex I is another massive solid brick terrace, which was only partly excavated when the expedition was halted.

Among the most important remains of Haft Tepe are the written records, including several stone stelae and many hundreds of inscribed tablets. These are for the most part Elamite tablets written in Babylonian and include letters, accounts, scholarly treatises, and works of divination. On one clay tablet the name of Kadashman Enlil is inscribed with an impression of the seal of King Tepti-ahar. Apparently Tepti-ahar, king of Elam, was a contemporary of Kadashman Enlil I, the Kassite king of Mesopotamia, who is known to have reigned before Burnaburiash III, whose rule began around 1375 B.C.E. (Negahban 1991). Many cylinder seals and seal impressions belonging to the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. were also found, some with design details unique to Haft Tepe.

The bulk of the Haft Tepe pottery is comparable to pottery of the late Kassite period. Most of the vessels, including jars and bowls, are of plain unpainted pottery in various shades of buff, together with a very limited amount of plain gray pottery. Some stone vessels and mace heads were also found. Other objects from the site include many small broken figurines of Ishtar in a wide variety of costumes and headdresses, male figurines including musicians holding string instruments, and small animal figurines of various materials.



Among the bronze objects are arrowheads, daggers, and various tools, including a wide variety of chisels.

The constructional complex of Haft Tepe was sacked and burned at some time. In the courtyard of the Tomb Temple Complex a solid platform formed of nine layers of baked brick with gypsum mortar was badly damaged. Scattered over this platform were pieces of stone with cuneiform writing, which belonged to stone stelae originally installed on the platform but were found lying elsewhere in the courtyard. After the stelae were broken away from the platform they apparently proved to be too heavy to carry away and so were abandoned. In many of the halls of Terrace Complex I traces of burned timbers were found on the floor, indicating that the rooms had been set on fire. Although nothing was found to show when this destruction took place, the material uncovered in the Tomb Temple Complex and in Terrace Complex I all point to a major occupation of the site for at most one or two centuries during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., corresponding in time to a previously dark period of Elamite history from 1505 to 1350 B.C.E.

Altogether during fourteen seasons of work at Haft Tepe one hundred and fifty trenches, 10 m by 10 m, for the most part concentrated together and covering an area of 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>, were opened. Since Haft Tepe itself was a single level site, a step trench was dug into the large mound of Abu Fandowa, about 1 km northwest of Haft Tepe, in the first season, in order to obtain background material on the prehistory of the area. This step trench revealed twelve archaeological levels, from the 6th millennium B.C.E. through the proto-literate period and Elamite periods. During the last two seasons at Haft Tepe work was reopened at Abu Fandowa, where on the northwestern and northeastern slopes kilns of the protoliterate period were uncovered. At the same time remains of the early first millennium B.C.E., including some inscribed cuneiform tablets of the Neo-Elamite period, were found in the topmost levels of the mound.

For nearly a century archaeological activity in southwestern Iran was conducted almost solely by the French Archaeological Mission in Iran, with headquarters at Susa. Their long span of survey, excavation, and research, concentrated on the massive ancient mound of Susa with some attention given to other remains in the Susiana plain, uncovered much archaeological information about the prehistoric and historic periods of this region where Elamite culture and civilization arose.



The archaeological activities of the French Mission produced a general framework for the prehistoric development and historic periods of the Elamite kingdom. Although the resulting picture of Elamite-Iranian political history was rather continuous from 2700 B.C.E. to 640 B.C.E., three major dark periods remained, the first between 2200 and 2000 B.C.E., the second between 1505 and 1350 B.C.E., and the third between 1110 and 760 B.C.E. The excavations at Haft Tepe succeeded in producing material illuminating the second dark period of Elamite-Iranian history, i.e., between 1505 and 1350 B.C.E.

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