



Choqa Zanbil Ziggurat

Choqa Zanbil is an ancient Elamite complex in the Khuzestan province of Iran. It is one of the few extant ziggurats outside of Mesopotamia. It lies approximately 25 kilometers west of Dezful, 45 kilometers south of Susa and 230 kilometers north of Abadan by way of Ahvaz, which is 120 kilometers away.

It was built about 1250 BCE by the king Untash-Napirisha, mainly to honour the great god Inshushinak. Its original name was Dur Untash, which means 'town of Untash', but it is unlikely that many people, besides priests and servants, ever lived there. The complex is protected by three concentric walls which define the main areas of the 'town'. The inner area is wholly taken up with a great ziggurat dedicated to the main god, which was built over an earlier square temple with storage rooms also built by Untash-Napirisha.

The middle area holds eleven temples for lesser gods. It is believed that twenty-two temples were originally planned, but the king died before they could be finished, and his successors discontinued the building work. In the outer area are royal palaces, a funerary palace containing five subterranean royal tombs.

Although construction in the city abruptly ended after Untash-Napirisha's death, the site was not abandoned, but continued to be occupied until it was destroyed by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in 640 BCE. Some scholars speculate, based on the large number of temples and sanctuaries at Choqa Zanbil, that Untash-Napirisha attempted to create a new religious center (possibly intended to replace Susa) which would unite the gods of both highland and lowland Elam at one site.

Archaeological excavations undertaken between 1951 and 1962 revealed the site again, and the ziggurat is considered to be the best preserved example in the world. In 1979, Choqa Zanbil became the first Iranian site to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The building had five levels and is the best preserved of all ancient ziggurats. There were small channels for water. The temple of Inšušinak was on the top of the tower. It was believed that from this point, he could ascend to heaven or come down to earth. This idea is also present in the name of the Babylonian temple tower Etemenanki: place of the foundation of heaven on earth.

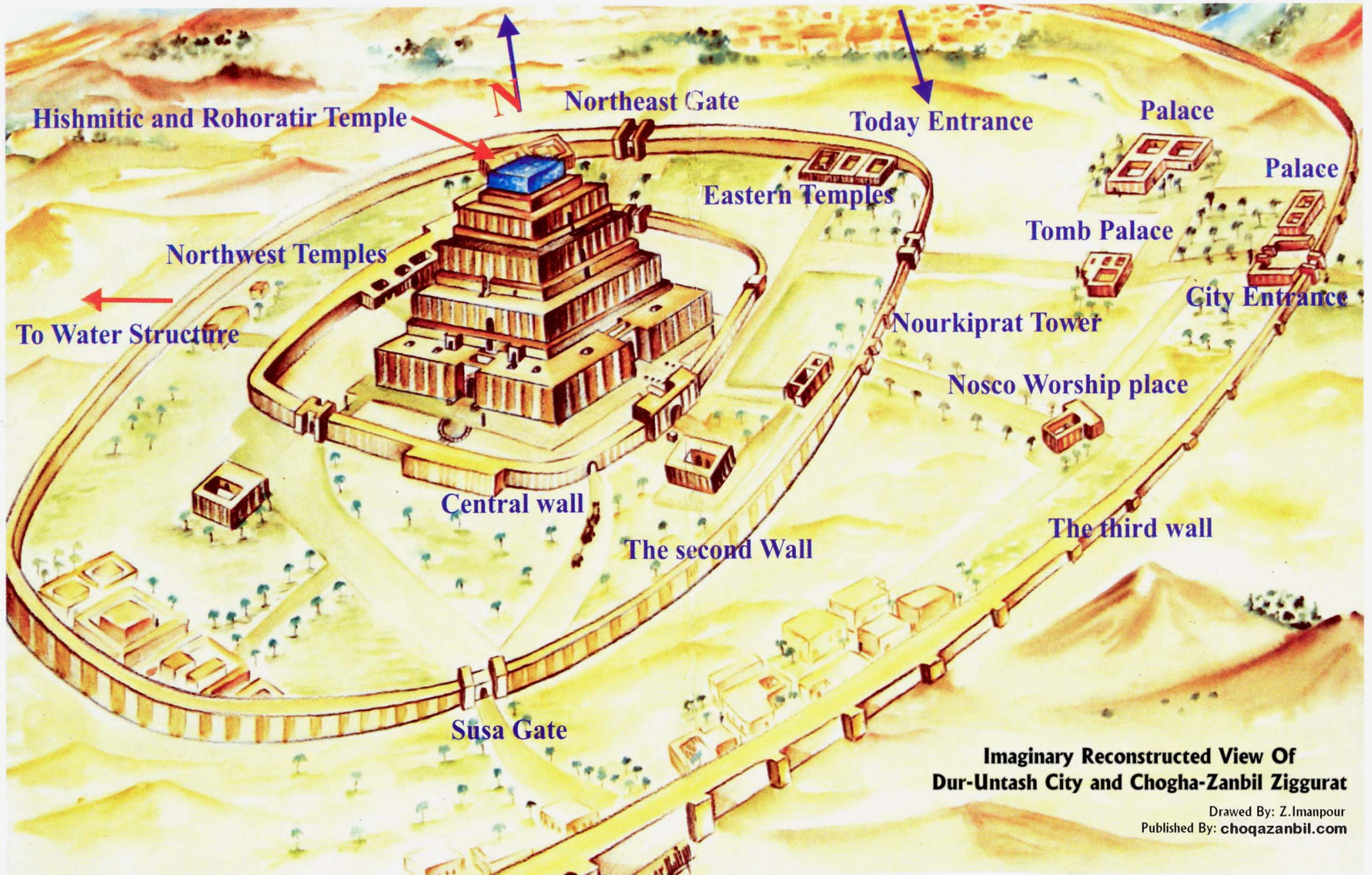


The pavement of the terrace itself sometimes shows remarkable details, like this footprint. There's no deeper significance - just the foot of one of the people who made the tiles



The water of the river Karkheh was not among the most healthy, so it was necessary to clean it before it could be used at the shrine. This picture shows the installation in which the water was refined. It was led through several basins; this picture shows the first and largest.

Another basin, connected with the one above. The refinery is the oldest one in the world. It is situated about 500 meters from the sanctuary.



**Imaginary Reconstructed View Of
Dur-Untash City and Chogha-Zanbil Ziggurat**

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