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TALL AL-ḤAMĪDĪYA 2

Symposion

RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN THE UPPER KHABUR REGION

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with contributions by

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Pläne

ملخص عن ندوة : "عمليات الحفر الحديثة في منطقة خابور العليا"
(برن في ٩-١١ ديسمبر سنة ١٩٨٦)

"التنقيب عن الآثار في تل الحميدية " بروفيسور دكتور ماركوس فيفلر
جامعة برن - سويسرا

THREE SEASONS OF EXCAVATION AT TELL MOZAN

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INTRODUCTION

Excavations at Mozan, located in the central section of the northern Khabur triangle near the Wadi Dara, have been conducted by an international team since the fall of 1984; during the first two seasons we concentrated on making soundings in the High Mound with the first regular season occurring in the spring of 1986.¹ During these three seasons we concentrated in three main areas of the site: the wall around the High Mound (in Area K), a building on the top of the High Mound (in Area B), and the Outer City. As a part of the preliminary work at the site a contour map was produced for the site (Fig. 1) and a surface ceramic survey was completed for the High Mound.²

Mozan is located in the well watered plains of the upper Khabur triangle. (Fig. 2) This area is important because of its position on the trade routes both east-west and north-south. Its position in the Wadi Dara, the central portion of the Khabur triangle, means that it is situated just below the Mardin pass which serves as the outlet into the Syrian plains from the road leading to the mineral rich Ergani area. In the late third millennium this area was

¹ This article is essentially the paper I gave at the Symposium 'Recent Excavations in the Upper Khabur Region', Berne, Switzerland, December 1986, with some references and illustrations added. The Mozan excavations were generously supported by a grant from the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation.

² For the first preliminary report on Mozan, see: G. Buccellati, M. Kelly-Buccellati, Mozan 1: The Soundings of the First Two Seasons, BM 20, Malibu 1988, hereafter cited as 'Mozan 1'.

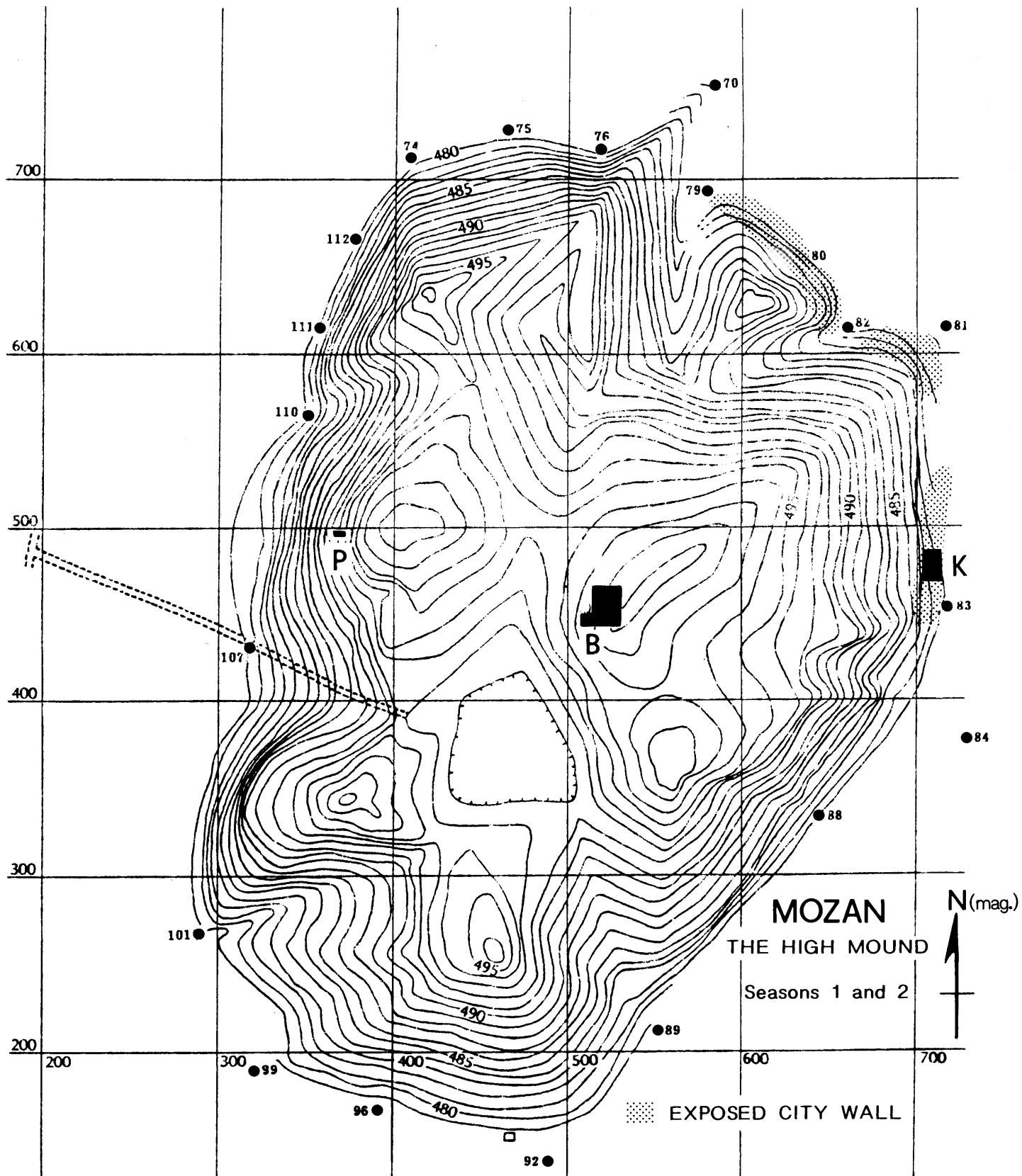


Fig. 1: Topographic Plan of the High Mound

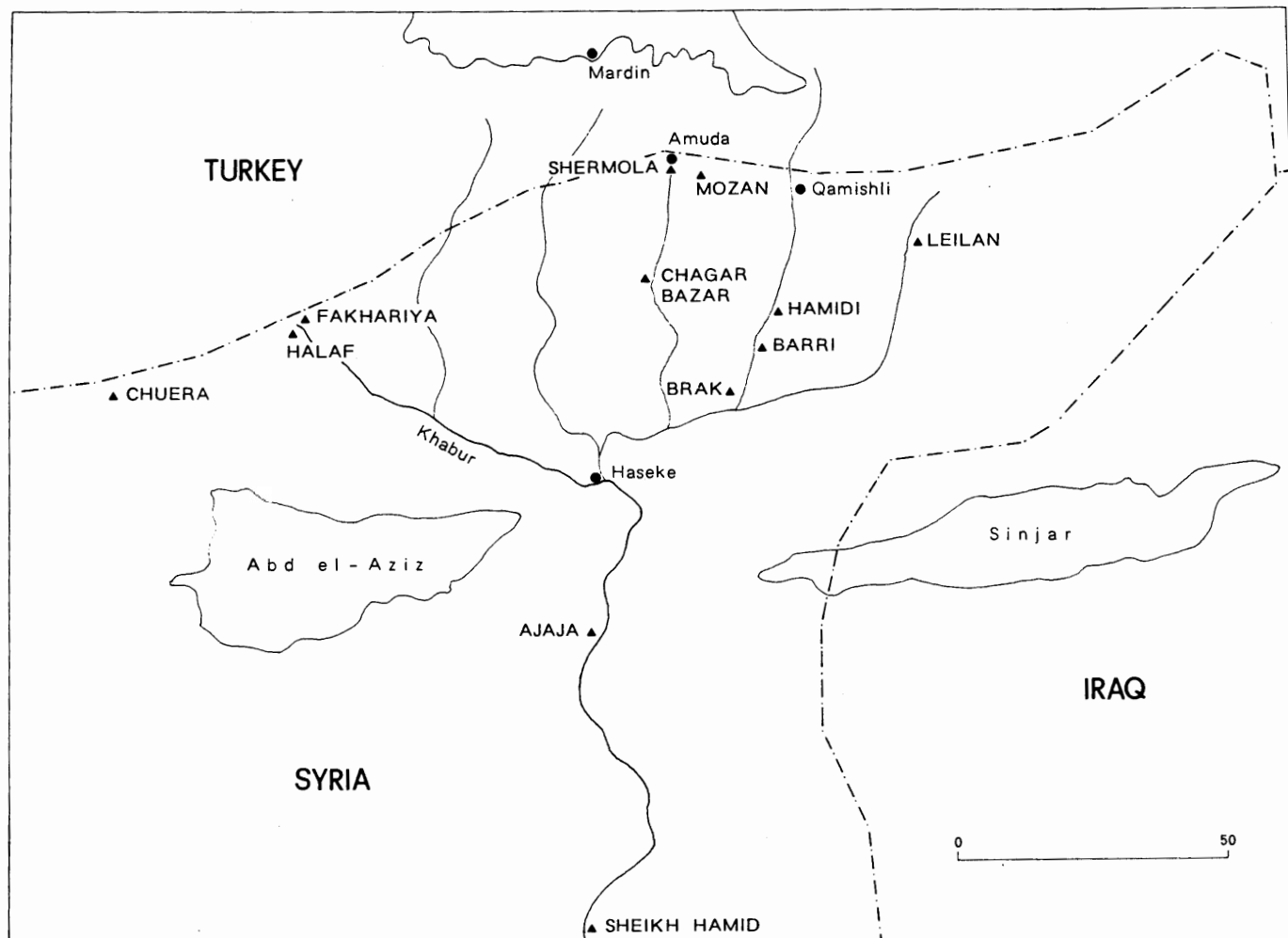


Fig. 2: Position of Mozan in the Upper Khabur Triangle

the center of Hurrian activity as can be seen from Ur III documents and from the famous lions of Urkiš which concern the founding of a temple dedicated to Nerigal by the Hurrian king Tišatal. These two lions with nearly identical inscriptions were found presumably in the area of the central Khabur triangle and sold on the antiquities market in 1948; they are now in the Louvre and Metropolitan Museum of Art respectively.³ In the second millennium Old Babylonian itineraries give an indication of a trade route from the Tigris basin across the Khabur plains.⁴ Urkiš is mentioned in these texts as a stop only on the inbound portion of the trip and then only as a side trip. This seems to indicate that Urkiš was no longer a principal urban settlement in this area and no longer a focal point for the long distance trade network in the Old Babylonian period. Whether or not Mozan may have been ancient Urkiš (a hypothesis for which there is only circumstantial evidence at best), it is certain that

³ A. Parrot, J. Nougayrol, Un document de fondation hurrite, RA 42, 1948, pp. 1-20; see also: O.W. Muscarella, Comments on the Urkish Lion Pegs, in: 'Mozan 1', Appendix 1, pp. 93-100.

⁴ A. Goetze, An Old Babylonian Itinerary, JCS 7, 1953, pp. 51-72; W.W. Hallo, The Road to Emar, JCS 18, 1964, pp. 57-88.

the general area of Mozan was an area of major Hurrian influence, and Mozan is the major ancient center in this area.

Our excavations at Mozan were not the first at the site. Previous to his work at Chagar Bazar, Max Mallowan made a survey of sites in this area and chose Mozan as one of the mounds to conduct soundings at. This is never mentioned in his scientific publications but is alluded to by Agatha Christie in her autobiography about her three years in the Khabur.⁵ It is only in his unpublished journal, now in the British Museum, that Mallowan talks about three soundings at Mozan.⁶ He concluded that the site was Roman with earlier material below; this apparently was the main reason why Mozan was discarded in favor of Chagar Bazar. Since there is no Roman pottery at all on the site I can only conclude that the red Metallic ware, present in large amounts on the surface, must have been identified by him as Roman. It must be remembered that at the time of his survey the ceramic chronology of the Khabur plains was unknown; it was his subsequent work at Chagar Bazar and Brak which laid the basis for all further research on the pottery in the region.

We chose Mozan because we were interested in the problem of the Hurrians in the third millennium in the Khabur region and specifically the Hurrian capital of Urkiš. Our interest had been sparked by our excavations at Terqa, a city just south of the confluence of the Khabur and the Euphrates rivers. At Terqa, a city was established in the first centuries of the third millennium, characterized most prominently in our excavations by the construction of a large city wall.⁷ Apart from the limited amount of material associated with the city wall, third millennium material is not easily accessible at Terqa because there is an extensive second millennium city as well as a modern town covering a large portion of the site. Hence we decided to turn to Mozan as the place at which to concentrate our interests in third millennium material.

THE CITY WALL

One of the first areas of concentration on the site was at the city wall surrounding the High Mound. Extensive brick work at the base of the tell was apparent even from casual observation of the site; this was due in part to the activities of some local farmers who had been removing dirt next to the wall for their fields. Also the large number of third millennium sherds near these mud bricks appeared to give a date for its construction. An area on

⁵ A. Christie-Mallowan, *Come, Tell Me How You Live*, London 1983 (first published 1946), pp. 63-64.

⁶ I wish to thank Dominique Collon and David and Joan Oates for help in locating and sending me copies of the pertinent pages on Mozan from Mallowan's field book and reports. Mentioned with permission of Terence Mitchell, Keeper of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of the British Museum.

⁷ G. Buccellati, *Terqa Preliminary Reports 10: The Fourth Season: Introduction and the Stratigraphic Record*, BM 10, Malibu 1979.

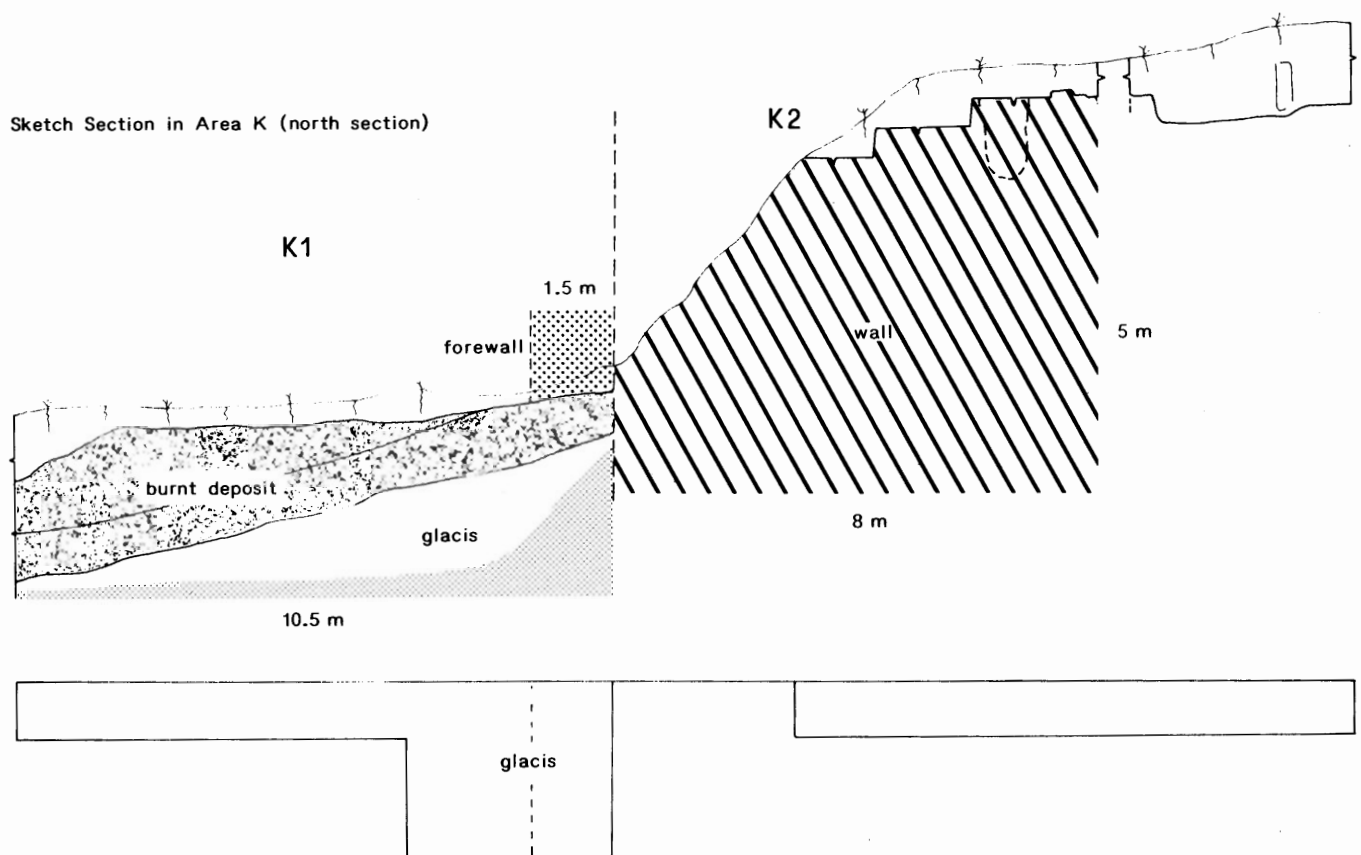


Fig. 3: Sketch section of the Wall around the High Mound in Area K

the eastern portion of the site was chosen to excavate. (Fig. 3) This was carried out by Guy Bunnens and Arlette Roobaert-Bunnens during the 1984 and 1985 seasons.⁸ After the exposed face of the wall was cleaned, a trench was dug at the base of the wall perpendicular to it; later this trench was extended to the top of the wall in order to ascertain its preserved height and thickness. However, the stratigraphy at the top of the wall was too complex to allow us to determine its thickness in the time available. Present indications are that it is at least 6 meters thick and its height at this point is more than 5 meters. At the base of this wall, against the plastered face, a sloping glacis was constructed. Thus far the glacis has been followed from the wall out into the surrounding lower city for 10.5 meters; at this point the glacis is 3.5 meters deep, and its bottom has not yet been reached.

The deposit on top of the glacis is unusually homogeneous in character considering its emplacement, *i.e.* which we presume to be the result of external dumping associated with the city wall. Just under the surface of the tell next to the wall there are some mud bricks laid on top of a burnt deposit which becomes thicker as the glacis slopes away from the bottom of the wall. Within this burnt deposit were a large number of sherds from large storage

⁸ G.L. Bunnens, A. Roobaert-Bunnens, Le mur d'enceinte, in: 'Mozaan 1', pp.61-64

jars, many of them flat. These vessels appear to have been plastered inside; some have a dark red stain which dripped down the exterior of the vessel. In addition, this deposit contained a number of small whole spouted jars (Plate 7.2) and drinking cups made in Simple ware. The only other pottery in this deposit were a few jar sherds of the thicker variety of Simple ware, one of which had a cylinder seal rolled on its shoulder. A number of door sealings were interspersed in the deposit. These show traces of three elements: a flat portion with wood grain impressions which went against the door, a rope impression showing usually three strands of rope, and a peg impression. These door sealings were not intended to prevent the entry of robbers, but rather served the bureaucratic function of controlling access to storage rooms. A few small metal objects and a very small equid head (Plate 7.3) are the only other objects found in this burnt deposit.

The circumstances which led to the deposition of this burnt material on top of the carefully constructed glacis are intriguing. On the basis of the contents of this burnt deposit it appears now that it is the remains of a storage room which principally was used to store large jars and their contents, perhaps a liquid in some cases, as well as very fragile Simple ware spouted jars and cups. These Simple ware jars and cups may have been used in conjunction with the liquid in the storage jars. We assume that the contents of a given room had burnt in a fire and were subsequently transported outside the city wall for disposal. What is intriguing is that the dumping of this material on top of the glacis would seem to negate the function of the glacis itself, since it leveled off an area which was otherwise sloping to the outside. We may infer that at the time of the dumping (sometime after the period of the seal impressions, *i.e.* in late ED III or thereafter) the city wall had lost its defensive character, perhaps because the city perimeter had widened to include a much larger portion of the outer city.

CYLINDER SEAL IMPRESSIONS ON DOOR SEALINGS

The majority of the themes on the door sealings (Plate 8.1) from the burnt deposit are those of animal combat, often with a hero. This is a common theme on ED III seals in the south but the Mozan sealings have characteristics which differ from that area. The Mozan impressions indicate a stress on the individual figure and do not emphasize the patterning of the intertwined animals in the design as can be seen in ED III seals from the south. This is indicated by the fact that many of the animals are standing on all four legs rather than being rampant (Plate 8.2), thus giving them a solid physical presence which is distinct from any part they play in the overall design of the seal. The Mozan seals show some iconographic differences too from the south which are interesting. A hero with upstanding tufted hair is found in the south on ED III seals, but rarely (Plate 8.3). In another sealing, a figure with a slit skirt holds a pole with what appears to be a bag hanging from it; he holds the pole over a standing animal with its back to him. This scene is so far unique. In one Mozan seal design we have a dramatic confrontation between a snake coil and a horned animal (Plate 8.4). The

snake coil, while found in the south, does not appear in dramatic confrontation with an animal. That this was certainly intentional on the Mozan seal can be seen by the fact that the horned animal had to be turned in an awkward position in relation to the snake in order to be facing him. There are three impressions of this design on the door sealings; it is the only design to have more than one rolling in the corpus.

TEMPLE BA ⁹

Phase A1

A monumental building in Area B (see Fig. 1), assumed to be a temple, was excavated during each of the three seasons. The lowest phase excavated thus far contains a stone ramp, and steps leading to an entrance on the south. On the western side a double stone founded wall is reinforced in one area by a semicircular stone buttress or tower. Since the walls of the temple, even for this early phase, were for the most part directly under the surface of the mound, only a few courses of the mud bricks on top of the stone foundations are preserved. On the exterior of the building were two floors which respected the stone buttress and the base of the stone walls. These floors contained large ribbed and plain storage jars dating to the Ur III period on the basis of comparative evidence from Brak and Tāya. The exact phase of the building in use along with these floors is not clear since they are only connected with the outer walls and not as yet with any floor found inside the building.

The main room of the temple, entered by means of the ramp and steps, is 10.5 meters by 9.0 meters. This room is covered with a thick white plastered floor which is connected with the freestanding stone altar, measuring 1 meter by 1.5 meters, placed near the center of the room. To the north of this room but not so far connected with it by a doorway, is a walkway paved with sherds as well as an unbaked brick pavement located against the north wall of the main room. On top of this pavement were traces of burned roofing materials consisting of impressions of light poles or sticks set in a mud matrix. Therefore we can reconstruct the presence of a use area adjacent to the temple (possibly connected with it but not necessarily so) which consisted in a roofed veranda along the north wall with a sherd paved walkway just to the north of it. That this area was heavily used is shown by the presence of many small metal objects, much pottery, and a portion of a small stone stele (see below). A series of sherd pavings and mud brick pavings in this area indicate that it continued to be used for similar purposes. Since we do not have a direct connection with the interior of the temple we cannot stratigraphically link the two.

⁹ Phases are numbered from the bottom up. The letter A which precedes the phase number refers to the current sequential order of phases. If and when this sequence is revised in the future, different letters will identify the respective sequences.

The closest parallels to the Mozan temple are the stone buildings at Tell Chuera, located about 120 km to the west of Mozan. 'Steinbau III' is similar with its monumental stone steps and 'Steinbau I' with its altar.¹⁰ While neither of these buildings is exactly like the Mozan temple, we can see in both Chuera and Mozan the elements of a distinctive corpus of North Syrian third millennium architectural types.

Phase A2

In this phase a new positioning of the entrance and interior walls was made. Two walls forming a narrow corridor blocked the Phase A1 entrance. In this corridor in association with these walls were very well preserved burnt floors. On one of these floors and against the northern corridor wall a mud brick shelf was constructed; a number of heavily burnt storage vessels were still sitting on it. At the eastern end of the corridor steps led up to a stone threshold. The higher room behind the threshold is no longer preserved. Since there is also no altar preserved for this phase, and since the general circulation patterns had changed considerably, it is possible that in this second phase the building may not have functioned as a temple. However, the repositioning of the walls could simply indicate a change in functional spaces with the altar being placed elsewhere.

Phase A3

During this phase a large platform was constructed as a substructure for a higher building which we no longer have. The platform has very regular dimensions and was constructed of red clay bricks, and utilized for part of its perimeter the wall stumps of Phase A2. Next to it was a very fine and hard gray packing, which we also understand as being part of the substructure of the building which we no longer have. The platform contained a number of sherds and a free standing lion sculpture (see below).

Phase A4

The latest phase in this area just under the modern sod layer consisted in a series of laminations within which was an intact Khabur ware jar and a series of three whole human adult skulls placed near each other. No architecture is associated with this phase. It may have been that no buildings occupied this area in the early part of the second millennium or alternatively that the buildings were completely constructed of mud brick and that the laminations represent all we have of their eroded remains.

¹⁰ A. Moortgat, Tell Chuēra in Nordost-Syrien: Vorläufiger Bericht über die zweite Grabungskampagne 1959, SMOS 4, Wiesbaden 1960; A. Moortgat, U. Moortgat-Correns, Tell Chuēra in Nordost-Syrien: Vorläufiger Bericht über die sechste Grabungskampagne 1973, SMOS 8, Berlin 1975.

From the red clay platform in Phase A3 of the temple came a small stone free standing sculpture of a lion (Plate 9.1). While its face and part of its hind quarters are partially destroyed, the rest of the piece shows deeply cut eyes, an attempt at naturalism in the incised hair pattern and the impression of a solid presence in the conveying of all its features, including the lower legs carved on the bottom.

Lions are a popular theme in Mesopotamian art from the Uruk period on.¹¹ During Early Dynastic times, highly stylized lions appear on the Mesilim mace from Tello.¹² These are characterized by deeply cut round eyes which are not at all cat-like. The hair pattern too of the lions' ruff and head is carved in an unrealistic rendering. Later the Gudea lion mace head also is highly stylized.¹³ Two lions said to come from the area of Mozan and also dating to the latter half of the third millennium are the Urkiš lions.¹⁴ The modeled hair pattern and the naturalistic poses of the Urkiš lions are far superior to the Mozan lion. However, while the Mozan lion is certainly not as sophisticated as the Urkiš lions, it does give the impression of being the work of a less skilled artist who was trying to represent a lion he had actually seen in person. None of the earlier Early Dynastic lions give the impression that a lion was actually part of the visual experience of the artist.

Since we have not yet completed the study of the deposit in which the lion was found, we cannot as yet clearly date this sculpture on the basis of the associated pottery and finds. However, we can see generally that it is to be dated towards the end of the third millennium.

The second piece of sculpture connected with the temple (more precisely, the area adjacent to it) is a small stele carved in relief on both sides (Plates 9.2-3). This stele came from under one of a series of superimposed sherd pavements located to the north of the main room of the temple. It is free standing, flat on the bottom and triangular in section. One side, carved in low relief, contains one pair of crossed animals with the head of a third animal, possibly part of a second pair can be seen behind one of this pair (Plate 9.2). The artist carved this third head in such low relief that it does not interfere with the pattern of the first pair. A border has been left blank around all preserved sides of the relief; this can be seen on the right where the design logically terminates. In this border area the artist has not cut away the background (as can be seen on the opposite side); this may have been intentional or may indicate that the piece is unfinished. In either case the artist meant to leave

¹¹ M.R. Behm-Blancke, *Das Tierbild in der altmesopotamischen Rundplastik: Eine Untersuchung zum Stilwandel des frühsumerischen Rundbildes*, BaF 1, Mainz 1979; see also: E.A. Braun-Holzinger, *Löwe*. B: Archäologisch, RIA 7 (1/2), Berlin, New York 1987, pp. 88-94.

¹² A. Parrot, *Sumer: L'univers des formes*, Paris 1960, figs. 160a+b.

¹³ A. Parrot, *Sumer: L'univers des formes*, Paris 1960, fig. 291.

¹⁴ A. Parrot, J. Nougayrol, *Un document de fondation hurrite*, RA 42, 1948, pp. 1-20.

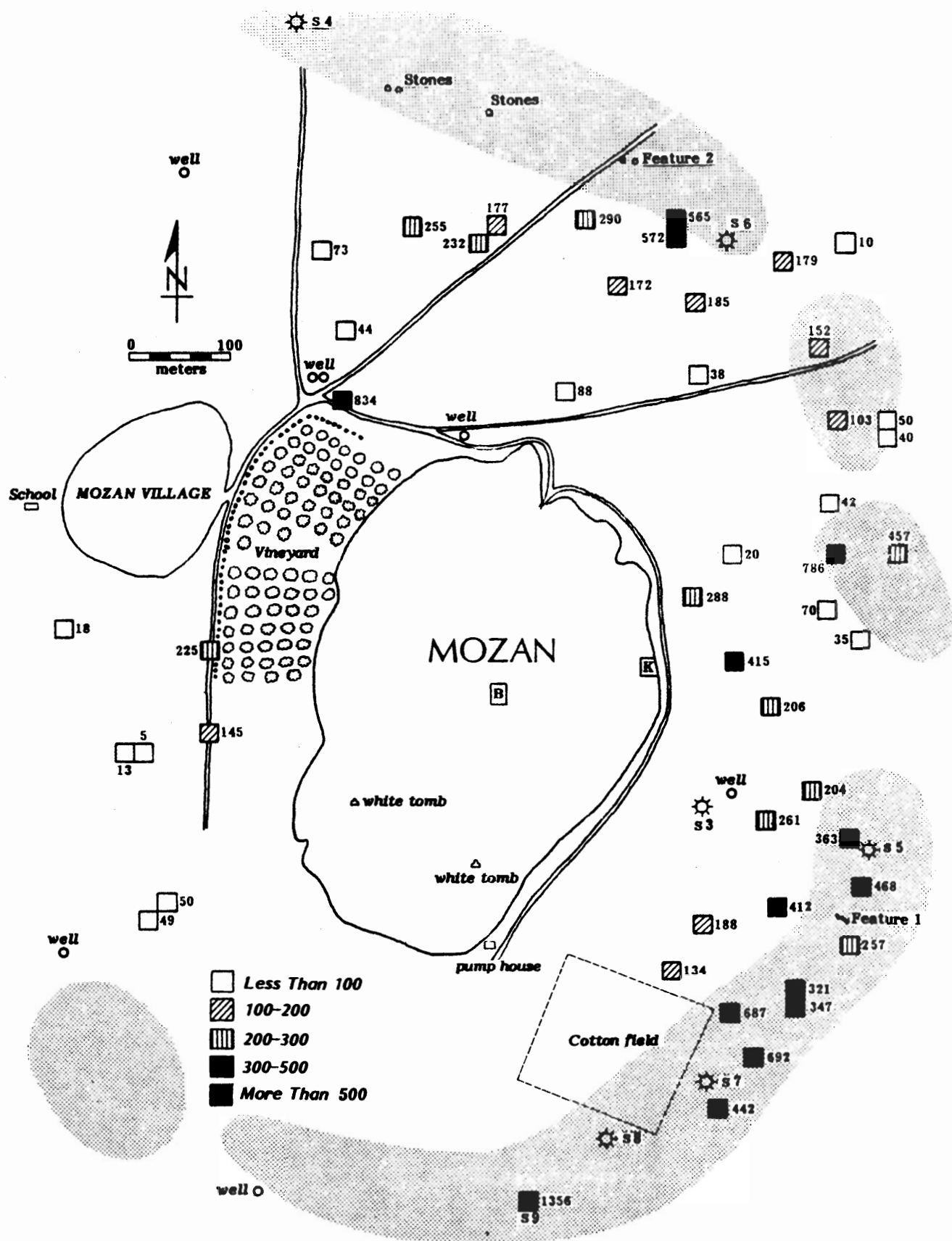


Fig. 4: Pottery Distribution in the Outer City by Number of Sherds Found

this border since the design is complete as it is. In addition to this stress on the border, the artist has portrayed the two crossed animals in movement. This is very different from the static feeling given by the usual Mesopotamian crossed animals.

On the other side of the stele is a plowman with his plow and the hind quarters of his drought animal preserved (Plate 9.3). Here too it can be seen that the artist placed the design in the center of the field to be decorated leaving a border all around the scene as we have it preserved. In this case the stone of the background has been carved away. So much care was taken in positioning the design in the center of the stone that the dog above the plowman appears to be crowding his movements. Even more interesting is the diagonal frame of the composition against which the plowman places his foot. His bent leg and foot against this diagonal gives him a very natural forward thrust to his plowing motion. Plowing scenes are found in Akkadian art but not thus far in the Early Dynastic period, except for one possible one at Halawa. Even those we do find on cylinder seals in the Akkadian period are stiff and lack the dynamism of the Mozan relief. The composition of the Mozan plowman with its emphasis on the diagonal as the conveyor of the forward thrust of his movement is not a Mesopotamian element until late in the Akkadian period and even then does not match its subtlety. The Narām-Sîn stele does have a number of diagonals in the composition which emphasize the movement upward of Narām-Sîn and his soldiers, but these diagonals do not give the dynamic thrust which we see on the Mozan stele.

The exact chronological position of the Mozan stele cannot for the moment be given, due to the fact that we cannot as yet finely differentiate the ceramic chronology of the Khabur basin in the latter half of the third millennium. Stratigraphically the pavements with which the stele is associated are not linked with the deposit inside the large room of the temple, but further excavation may give us the link between these two areas. For now we can say that the stele can be dated to the later part of the third millennium at Mozan.

THE OUTER CITY

As a part of the overall research strategy at Mozan we undertook a survey of the Outer City (Fig. 4), under the supervision of Judith Thompson-Miragliuolo. This foot survey was intended to establish the limits of the Outer City in the chronological periods in which it was occupied or otherwise used, and to ascertain differential use patterns. The information thus obtained is being correlated with a similar survey done for the High Mound. Even without all the research having been completed it can be determined that the Outer City was being used during the same periods as the High Mound. Both were intensively occupied during the entire third millennium with a substantially smaller amount of use in the Halaf period and in the second millennium. In order to check the Outer City survey results we decided to put in five test trenches at various points in the Outer City. All these soundings yielded either occupational layers or burial evidence. The burial evidence came from the north eastern portion of

the Outer City. In this area a number of large stones on the surface led to the discovery of a stone tomb below. While this tomb was robbed in antiquity its architecture showed that it was an important burial. The tomb was lined with large stones which were also used to cover the top. Few ceramics were found in association with this tomb. In an area not far from this stone tomb there were a large number of Metallic ware sherds on the surface. Excavation here showed that it indeed was the burial place of two adults, but this time they were placed in a pit without any structure. This tomb contained over one hundred vessels and a number of metal objects. The ceramics included an early form of Metallic ware conical cups and a number of late Ninevite V vessels with the grooved and incised designs typical of Chagar Bazar and Ailun.¹⁵ In addition to a number of undecorated vessels in shapes which reflected the Ninevite V pottery, there were several examples of a type of painted stand, painted in the Scarlet ware tradition. The paint is bright red fugitive paint with black used on the borders and for designs inside the panels. The designs are only geometric and cover the entire stand. The typical Scarlet ware paint and the use of designs arranged in panels can be paralleled by examples from the south; the concept of tight overall patterning in geometric designs is a northern characteristic. One similar Scarlet ware stand was published from Tell Chuera with a second one also mentioned.¹⁶ From the assemblage in this tomb it now becomes clear that the early development of Metallic ware overlapped with the latest stage of Ninevite V pottery and that this stage of development in both these wares coincided with a local development in Scarlet ware.

CONCLUSIONS

Mozan is the largest third millennium mound in the northern Khabur and as such was the most important city in the central Khabur triangle during this period. From the surface survey of the ceramics on the High Mound it appears that the height of the mound (25 m above the present plain level) is due almost entirely to its occupation in the third millennium. The Outer City too was occupied and used almost exclusively during this period. The city wall around the High Mound with its height of at least 5 meters and its deep glacis in front point to a well fortified and economically powerful city. From our excavated material we have already found a large religious building on the top of the mound and indication of major storage facilities in the remains of the burnt storage room outside the city wall. From the artistic evidence excavated in connection with the temple we can see that Mozan possessed an independent stylistic tradition related both to the southern Early Dynastic tradition and its northern counterparts (not discussed here) but was independent of both.

¹⁵ For a recent study of Ninevite V pottery, see: G.M. Schwartz, *The Ninevite V Period and Current Research*, *Paléorient* 11, 1985, pp. 53-70.

¹⁶ A. Moortgat, U. Moortgat-Correns, *Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien: Vorläufiger Bericht über die siebente Grabungskampagne 1974*, *SMOS* 9, Berlin 1976, pp. 64-68.

The central position of Mozan in the Khabur region points up the fact that the trade routes both east-west and north-south had to pass this area. In the second millennium, caravans of traders from the Tigris cities passed this area as documented in the Old Babylonian itineraries.¹⁷ Trading networks going north-south too can be reconstructed for the third millennium from the archaeological evidence. Mozan is situated in the fertile and well watered plain just to the south of Mardin located at the southern exit from the mountain pass which traverses the Tur-Abdin to the Ergani mining area.¹⁸ Mozan then must have controlled the flow of trade of raw materials, principally metals, from the sources in the north to the southern cities, along the Khabur and Euphrates.

¹⁷ See: A. Goetze, *An Old Babylonian Itinerary*, JCS 7, 1953, pp. 51-72; W.W. Hallo, *The Road to Emar*, JCS 18, 1964, pp. 57-88.

¹⁸ M. Kelly-Buccellati, *Trade in Metals in the Third Millennium: Northeastern Syria and Eastern Anatolia* (forthcoming).

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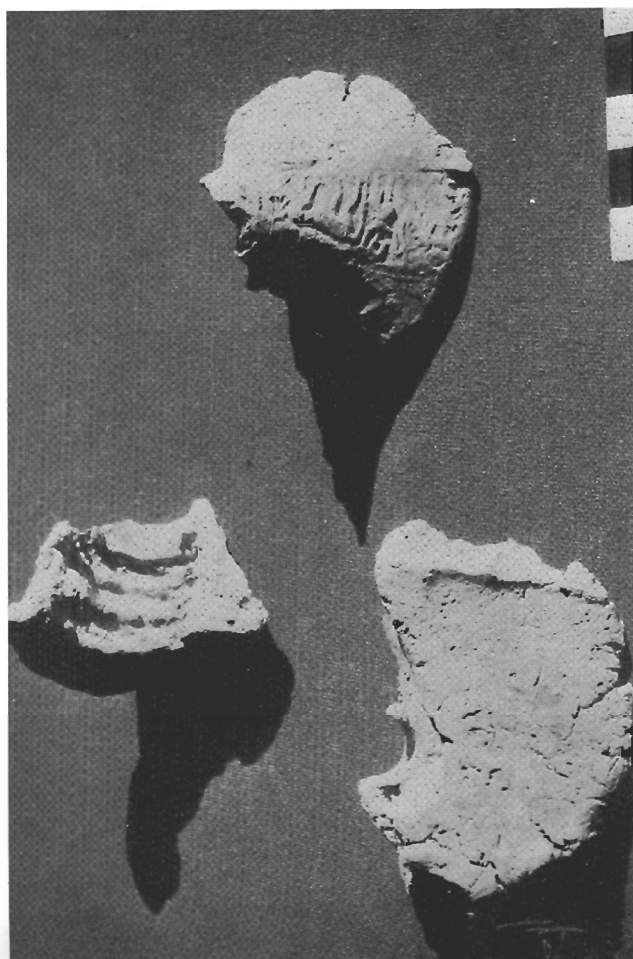
.1 M. 9623



.2 Tell Mozan: Spouted vessel



.3 Tell Mozan: Equid head



.1 Tell Mozan: Door sealings



.2 Tell Mozan: Door sealing - hero with animals



.3 Tell Mozan: Door sealing - nude hero



.4 Tell Mozan: Door sealing - snake coil



.1 Tell Mozan: Stone sculpture - lion



.2 Tell Mozan: Stone sculpture - crossed pair of animals



.3 Tell Mozan: Stone sculpture - plowman