House and Household Economies in 3rd Millennium B.C.E. Syro-Mesopotamia

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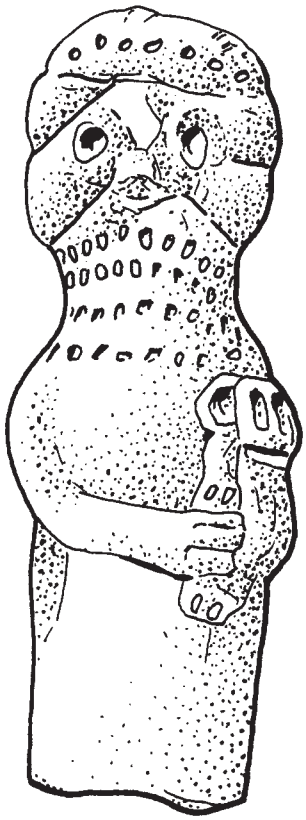

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Neighborhoods in the Outer City of Tell Mozan, Ancient Urkesh: A case study from survey data

Caitlin J. Chaves Yates, Boston

The call for papers for the workshop from which this paper is derived described the need to move away from the study of elite institutions and 'big men' as the main avenue for understanding urban society of the third millennium Upper Mesopotamia. Traditionally the excavations of Mesopotamian tells have focused on the central tell areas uncovering temples, palaces and administrative buildings. The last two and half decades have seen an increasing attention to household structures and non-elite aspects of society in the Near East (Stone 1987, 1997; Creekmore 2008; Nishimura 2008; Pfälzner 2001). With increased attention on the smaller scales within cities, archaeologists have begun to investigate the social structures that shape cities (M.L. Smith 2003).

Levi-Strauss (1987) proposed the "house-society" model as a meaningful model for understanding both rural and urban society. This model proposes the household as the major organizing component of society. The household, as an individual unit, is then a building block of larger society, in this case, cities. In this paper I will explore the intermediate structures between households and cities – neighborhoods and districts. Neighborhoods and districts bridge the gap between understanding individual households and larger societal structures. They affect how cities are organized, are administered and function. Neighborhoods have primarily been studied within the disciplines of sociology and urban geography with a focus on the organization of modern post-industrial cities.[1] Some of the concepts derived from the study of modern cities can be applied to ancient cities as well.

As M.L. Smith (2003) and M.E. Smith (2010) have argued, these mid-level units of neighborhoods and districts can be understood as a result of both bottom-up and top-down social processes. Neighborhoods reflect the bottom-up, or generative, social processes, the organization and reorganization of households and private spaces. Urban geographers have found that the neighborhood is the "principal geographic anchor of social interaction" (M.L. Smith 2003). The district instead represents the administrative and exogenously recognized groupings within the city. The boundaries of neighborhoods and districts are not necessarily the same, particularly since administrative districts are usually larger than the neighborhoods. Districts are often structured according to an idealized view of how the city is organized, but often must address ad hoc and generative processes that function within the districts (Alexander 1972).

Neighborhoods are a cultural universal – found in cities throughout time and across the globe. For purposes of this discussion a neighborhood is a socially (and possibly economically) integrated grouping that provides for the daily needs of its residents, generally restricted the size of possible face-to-face interactions (Keith 2003). Neighborhoods are generally structured to address the daily needs of local inhabitants. Food production facilities, shops, storage and milling facilities are just some of the activities that may be addressed within neighborhood communities. Districts are generally larger with institutionally recognized boundaries and "administrative or social significance" (M.E. Smith 2010:137). Since districts are larger and organized in service to the centralized organization they generally address larger social units and broader social structures such as waste management, tax collection, and administration. Numerous aspects of ancient cities were undoubtedly administered through both the generative and centralized processes. For example, small alleyways and streets within neighborhoods may be built and maintained by the bordering households while main thoroughfares are planned, built, and maintained by centralized institutions. Examples from Old Babylonian cities demonstrate this phenomenon with small alleys repeatedly moved and restructured over time, while the main roads they connect to remain static (Keith 2003:63).

An ethnographic example from Italy can help illuminate the kinds of different social processes at work within neighborhoods and districts. The small town of Croveo in the Italian Alps is composed of only a few hundred households and could easily be integrated as if one neighborhood. The local residents, however, recognize several differences in the local geography, in particular separate neighborhoods. Beola is a small sub-section of the village to the east and one of the recognized separate neighborhoods. In the 1600s this section of the village was organized to care for many of the daily needs of the inhabitants solely within their own neighborhood. For example, residents installed their own mill for grinding wheat and

[1] See Smith 2010 and Marcus / Sabloff 2008 for a brief literature review of Urban Geography and sociology of cities within and archaeological context.

other products. They also built a bakery for the communal baking of bread within the neighborhood, for the primary use of Beola's citizens. These facilities are indicative of bottom-up localized social processes at work within the neighborhood. Beola was structured to provide for the daily needs of residents within their small scale neighborhood without relying on village-wide resources.

Also within the neighborhood is a small chapel. The chapel was built in 1607 using funds raised from Beola's residents and remains an important landmark in the neighborhood to this day. Although a church is situated in the center of Croveo, only a few hundred meters away, the neighbors within Beola commissioned a chapel within their own community. Although the construction of the chapel indicates the local agency in shaping their neighborhood, it also situates the neighborhood within the larger social and administrative structures of society. The chapel is an official recognized outpost of the Roman Catholic Church and a part of the local diocese as administered by the authorities within the Church structures.

Thus, the Beola neighborhood demonstrates first and foremost, the ubiquitous presence of neighborhoods and the small-scale, "face-to-face" interactions that shape these spaces. The example also shows the ways that smaller neighborhoods are integrated into larger social structures that are administered through top-down social processes. Beola serves as an example for understanding the kinds of bottom-up and top-down social processes we might expect to find in ancient cities as well.

This paper uses data from a surface survey and excavation at Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh, to explore concepts of the neighborhood and the district. I argue that it is possible to detect the presence of neighborhoods and districts within the city from the combination of surveys and excavations in the outer city and briefly discuss how the finds can reflect different the organizational and structural principles of the ancient city.

Tell Mozan is a large 120 hectare tell situated in the Khabur region of Syria (Fig. 1). The site morphology is typical of the Bronze Age with a large main mound, or acropolis, surrounded by an inner city wall. The city then extends about 300–400 meters in all directions, at which distance another small rise, indicative of the outer city wall, encircles the site (Fig. 2). The outer city area, the focus of this paper, covers about 100 ha around the main mound. The outer city is generally defined as the area between the inner city wall, surrounding the central high mound, and the outer city wall, as defined by the topographic rise detectable around the site.

The Tur Abdin Mountains of Turkey lie about 15 kilometers to the north of the site and provide the sources of both the rivers in the area and the resources that made the site desirable for occupation in the 4th and 3rd millennia BCE. From Mozan it is possible to see the pass of

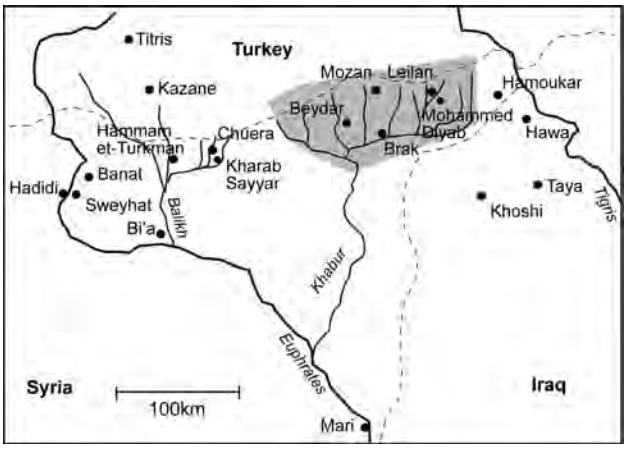

Fig. 1 Map of Syria showing locations of sites mentioned in the text (after Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 234).

Mardin, which cuts through the Tur Abdin and leads to the Taurus Mountains placing Mozan along a major trade route. Paleoclimate data and geoarchaeological investigation suggest that Mozan was surrounded by woodland and regular streams in the Bronze Age (Deckers/Riehl 2007). In addition, Mozan receives about 420mm of rain a year, creating an area suitable for sustainable rainfall agriculture (Pustovoytov/Deckers/Goldberg 2010). The ancient city would have dominated the surrounding plain, and would have been bordered by cultivated fields and a network of small villages.

The earliest finds at the site so far suggest it was founded sometime in the Late Chalcolithic (LC) as a small village. Early Jezirah II and III likely represent Urkesh's apogee and are periods well-represented in the outer city indicating the widespread settlement of this area during this time (Thompson-Miragliuolo 1988). In the Early Jezirah III (EJ III) period the complex was rebuilt and substantially expanded with a large revetment wall, monumental staircase, plaza, and temple (Buccellati/Kelly-Buccellati 1988, 1998). An inner city wall was also constructed around this time (Bunnens/Roobaert 1988**)**. During the EJ III and EJ IV the site was a Hurrian religious capital and the site remains linked to the Hurrians through the Mitanni period, during which the area was controlled by the Hurro-Mitanni Empire. The outer city data indicate that the main period of occupation was during the mid-third millennium. During this phase the city reached its maximum extent and the outer city was widely occupied.

Since it generally not possible to excavate an entire city, archaeologists must rely on alternative methods for understanding the distribution of activities and buildings within ancient cities. In the case of the investigation of Mozan's outer city a multi-tiered approach has been used, including a combination of remote sensing, surface survey, geomagnetic survey, and small test excavations. The primary data set for the study of neighborhoods at Mozan is a surface

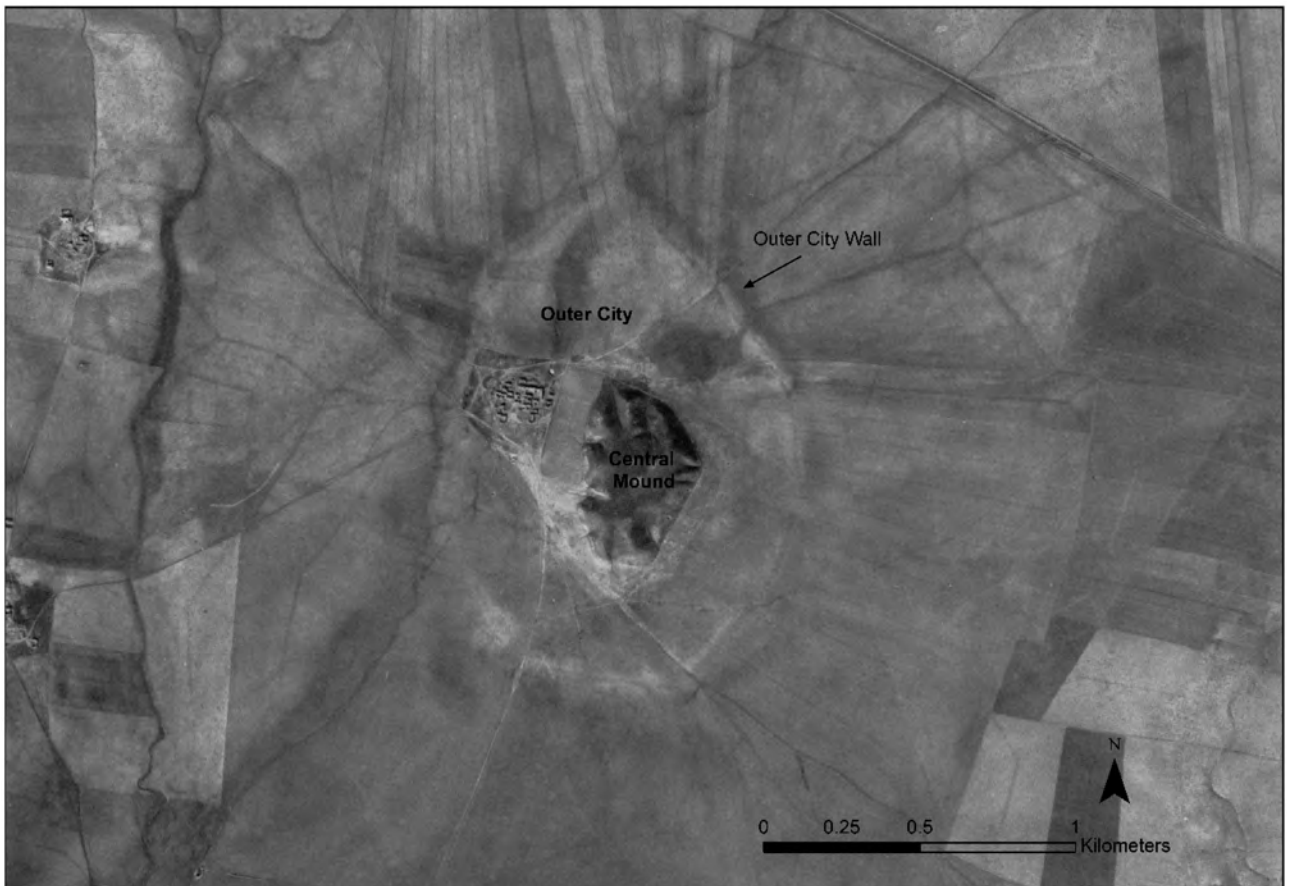

Fig. 2 Map of Tell Mozan zones.

survey of the outer city conducted in 1985. The surface survey included 62 collection units, which have been re-analyzed and digitized by the author in 2011 (Chaves Yates 2014). Supplemental surveys were conducted in 2009 and 2010 to cover some areas under-represented in the 1985 survey (Chaves Yates 2014). A magnetometry survey of a portion of the southern outer city further illuminates the distribution of activities and buildings in the outer city (Pfälzner / Wissing / Hübner 2004). A small excavation is also discussed, providing additional insight on the organization of the outer city.

In order to identify neighborhoods or districts at Mozan, it is necessary to identify potential archaeological correlates for these zones. Detecting the presence of neighborhoods in ancient cities is predicated on the understanding that these areas exist within ancient cities. Virtually all cities, both modern and ancient, have evidence for residential groupings on the scale of neighborhoods so it can be reasonably argued that ancient cities of the Khabur region will possess these groupings as well. Excavations at later, Old Babylonian sites, have also demonstrated the presence of neighborhoods (Stone 1987; Keith 2003; Stone / Zimansky 2004). M.E. Smith (2010:145-146) identified three potential archaeological indicators for neighborhoods; "areas bounded by physical boundaries", "areas of spatial or social distinctiveness", and "spatial clusters of buildings".

Other surveys, such as the Mashkan-shapir project led by Elizabeth Stone and Paul Zimansky have demonstrated the utility of survey data in identifying differential use across ancient Mesopotamian cities (Stone/Zimansky 2004). At Mashkan-shapir the excavators conducted a total surface survey of the site before beginning excavations, with the explicit goal of studying if the surface remains reflected the sub-surface excavated remains. Additionally, they planned to examine if it was possible to recognize different areas of the city from the collected surface finds. The Mashkan-shapir survey did reveal significant differences in the distribution of finds across the site. Certain finds were hypothesized as representing different districts or functional zones of the city. For example, the distribution of votive figurines was predicted to cover the area associated with temples and ritual activity. Grinding stones, however, were taken as indicative of residential occupation. When these two types of objects were mapped they demonstrated a clear pattern of clustering. The cluster of artifacts (of these two types but also others) led Stone and Zimansky to suggest the two different areas represent a temple district and a residential district respectively. The subsequent excavations confirmed this hypothesis with apparent clusters of

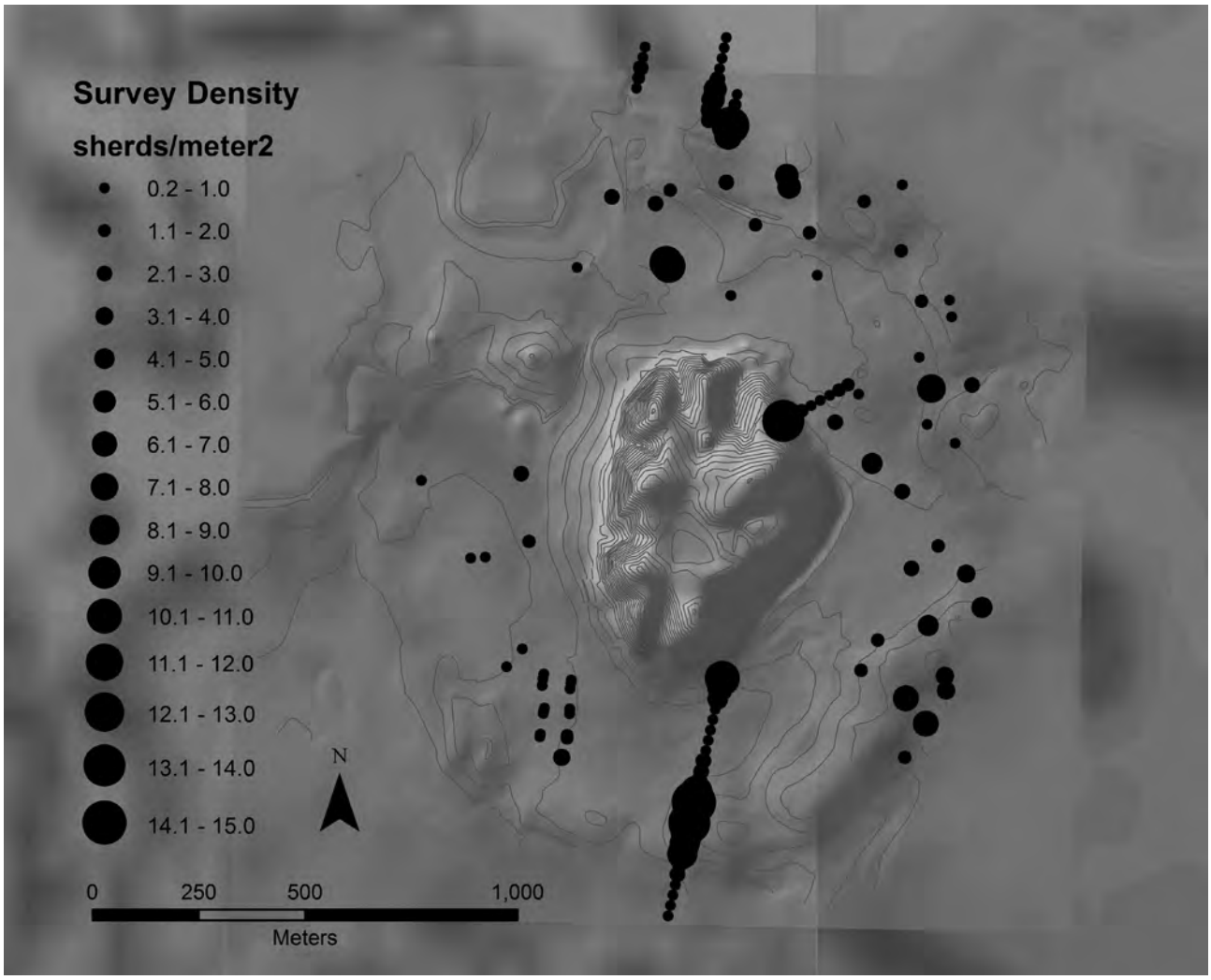

Fig. 3 Ceramic densities from 1985 surface survey.

buildings. This experiment demonstrated that the surface finds did, in fact, represent the sub-surface structures. The ability to distinguish different zones within the city purely from surface survey is a concept I will apply to the survey data from Mozan.

Unfortunately, the data from Mozan is not quite as clear as the Mashkan-shapir data due to differences in climate and preservation; however, the Mozan data also shows differences in the density and distribution of artifact types across the outer city. Direct correlation of surface finds and subsurface structures can not be firmly established as Mozan's outer city is currently an active agricultural zone and undergoes yearly plowing. Despite this, studies have shown that ceramics are only disturbed on a scale of a few meters by plowing (Ammerman 1985). Although the locations of ceramic types may not indicate the exact location of a subsurface structure the surface survey has sufficient resolution to examine the larger patterns in the outer city. The distribution of materials within the survey data can be used to explore the possible organization of the outer city at Mozan.

The first question to be answered about Mozan's outer city is the extent of occupation. Not all lower or outer towns are densely occupied during the third millennium. A particularly prominent case is the city of Tell Beydar, where the lower town is largely empty. Conversely, sites such as Chuera (discussed elsewhere in this volume) are densely packed with residential buildings. The density of ceramics in the outer city ranges from 0.1 sherds/meter2 to more than 14 sherds/meter2 (Fig. 3). The majority of the survey collection units display densities higher than the 0.3 sherds/meter2 that is considered the threshold for determining occupation or the presence of habitation sites in other regional surveys (Wilkinson/Tucker 2005; Ur 2002; Wright *et al.* 2007). Studies of ancient Near Eastern urban environments suggest that some open space such as gardens and orchards may be preserved within cities (Zaccagnini 1979; Wilkinson 2003). Although this is likely the case at Mozan as well, the densities of ceramics (as well as

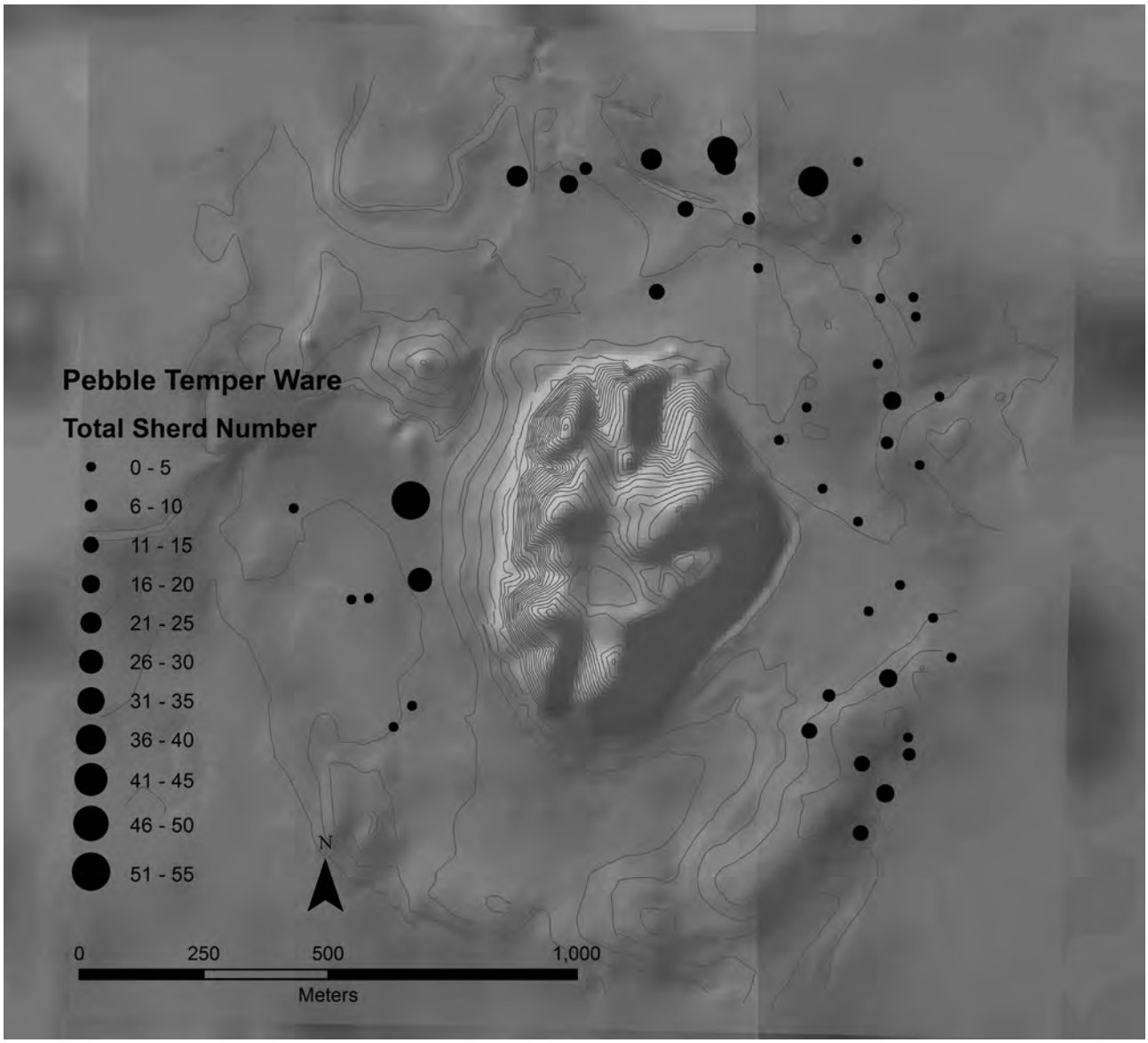

Fig 4 Distribution of cooking wares. The 1985 survey used a random sampling methodology to select the collection units. As a result SW and NW corners of the outer city were not surveyed. In some of the maps this can give the impression that the distribution of types does not extend to these areas, but in fact it simply represents a lacuna in the data.

geomagnetics) suggest that large portions of the outer city were likely settled.

A potential correlate for habitation in the outer city is the presence of cooking wares – specifically pebble-temper ware and mica-grit wares[2]. Cooking wares are found widely distributed throughout the survey data (Fig. 4). The widespread distribution of material associated with households at Mozan is in direct contrast to the Mashkan-shapir example in which the households were confined to a specific zone of the outer city. The overall ubiquity of cooking wares suggests the outer city was the main locus of habitation during the mid-third millennium at Mozan. Cooking wares have been found to represent a comparatively higher percentage of the wares in the outer city when compared to the surveys and excavations on the central mound (Thompson-Miragliuolo 1988), also suggesting a strong habitation component in the outer city. Although houses were also located on the high mound, large portions of the center are occupied by the ceremonial buildings of the Temple and open Plaza.

Since, as previously discussed, people were likely to take care of most of their day-to-day needs within their neighborhood; we can begin to look for evidence of other activities within the residential zone of the outer city. The outer city's size would necessitate that it be divided into

[2] See Kelly-Buccellati 2011 for a complete description of Mozan ware-types and their functions.

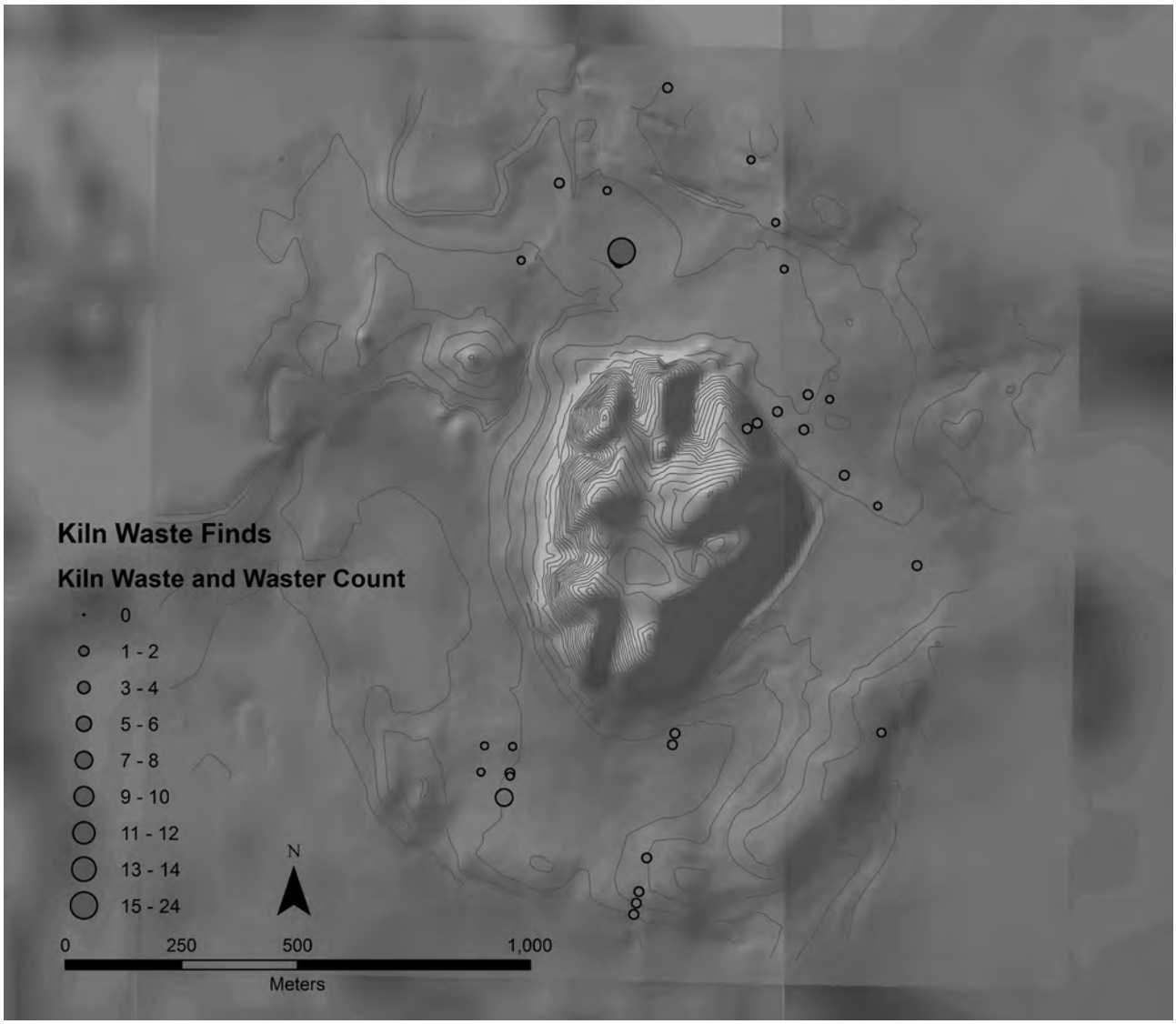

Fig. 5 Distribution of Ceramic Slag as detected by 1985 survey. Although no slag was detected in the 1985 survey in the southern and western portions of the outer city due to the overall fewer collection units and lower artifact densities, subsequent surveys did find ceramic slag in these areas as well.

smaller neighborhoods, since the distance from the northern boundary to the southern boundary spans almost a kilometer. Wattenmaker (1998) has explored the connection between households and production at several contemporaneous sites in Anatolia and has found that, in general, production takes place associated with households. Old Babylonian workshops in southern Mesopotamia also appear to be built and maintained on as private enterprises without the involvement of centralized administration (Keith 2003: 59). There are some instances of free-standing workshops, however, the majority of the workshops are integrated within households. The workshops and associated households represent a broad spectrum of wealth and social status.

Possible production in the outer city is indicated within the assemblage of small finds associated with the survey. Ceramic kiln waste and kiln wasters (misfired sherds) are a good indicator of possible ceramic production areas. Ceramic slag was found in numerous locations during the initial surface survey (Fig. 5). Furthermore, the 2009 Pilot survey detected a significant concentration of ceramic wasters and kiln waste material just north of the central mound in area OG51. This supports the idea that production took place on a household or neighborhood level. If the production were centralized, we would expect separate facilities in concentrated areas of the outer city rather than widely distributed. There is little evidence for neighborhoods organized by occupation in the textual records from Southern Mesopotamia with legal documents often mentioning mixed occupations in legal disputes involving neighbors (Keith 2003: 75). At Chuera (see Tamm in this volume and Babour in this volume), ceramic workshops

are found within houses of the lower city with no apparent differentiation from the neighboring households.

As suggested by the Beola example above, individual neighborhoods may have had their own food processing facilities, baking facilities, ceramic workshops and local shrines and temples. These facilities, while part of the larger matrix of society, are shaped by the bottom-up social processes within the neighborhood. The broad distribution of habitation and production debris in the outer city begins to demonstrate that Mozan's urban areas were separated into smaller groupings or zones, which may be classified as neighborhoods according to Smith's definition.

Some outer city finds are unmistakably associated with district-level, or city-wide, administrative levels. The city wall is the clearest example of this kind of administrative implementation in the outer city. Even if each neighborhood was involved with the construction and upkeep of the city wall within their neighborhood – as has been suggested at Chuera (Meyer 2007) –, the city wall must be conceived and executed as a whole in order to be effective. The placement and control of gates would likely be within the purview of the central administration. The open space immediately inside the detected city gate in the south may represent a place of interaction and mixing of people from the different neighborhoods and districts as they traveled through the city gates and came face-to-face in these open public spaces.

A small excavation in the north-west outer city, area OH2, provides additional evidence for district-level administration in the outer city. In this excavation 35 clay sealings were found in a clay layer 70 cm below the modern surface. The thin laminations of the surrounding matrix suggest the area the where sealings were found was an enclosed open area subject to the ongoing collection and evaporation of water. The excavators have suggested that this represents the discard of these administrative tools just outside an administrative complex (Walker / Buccellati 1998). The sealings preserve 8 seal impressions and numerous sealings of both movable and immovable objects (Chaves Yates 2011). The seal impressions have been dated to the EJIII period, roughly contemporaneous with the presumed construction and use of the outer city wall (Kelly-Buccellati 1998). The location of OH2 near the city wall suggests that the administration was concerned with the movement of goods into and out of the city. Similar finds of sealings from the city gate excavations at nearby Tell Leilan support this interpretation (Ristvet 2007).

A potential indicator of a neighborhood is a physical boundary. At Mozan the city is divided by a few major boundaries. The first is the double-wall construction. The inner city is bounded by a city wall that constrains the center of the city including its most sacred institutions such as the temple and its monumental terrace and plaza. Later the palace is also included on the fringes of this urban center. The outer city wall represents the second barrier. The majority of urban settlement was confined within these boundaries. There are some small structures and other possible production areas outside the outer city wall suggesting that extra-mural areas could also be considered part of the urban system. Each of these rings represents a clear demarcation of boundaries separating the different zones or districts of the city. These boundaries were created through top-down centralized authority, restricting the growth of organic neighborhoods and situating them within the social framework of the urban administration. Evidence from the geomagnetic study shows a mix of top-down and bottom up planning in the arrangement of streets and the directionality of the major roads (Chaves Yates 2014).

Spatial clusters of buildings can serve as an indicator of neighborhoods (M.E. Smith 2010: 146), however, surface survey was incapable of providing this kind of resolution. A magnetometry study in the southern portion of the outer city, in contrast, has returned some valuable results on the location and distribution of buildings in the outer city. Pfälzner *et al.* (2004) conducted a magnetometry survey over 10.9 hectares of the outer city and detected several roads, buildings and confirmed the existence of the city wall. The streets appear to separate the buildings into small isolated areas composed of a few buildings. The streets do not only separate small neighborhoods or building clusters, they also facilitate movement and interaction within the city. The pattern of streets, as detected by Pfälzner et al., appears to radiate out from the location of the city gate, creating a variety of ways to move throughout the city without having to travel directly to the heart of the city or even pass through the central mound at all. The roads then also indicate the presence of neighborhoods and bottom-up social processes and the inhabitants of the outer city created ways to move about their space that do not wholly rely on connections to the gates or entrances to the central mound. This is in contrast to some examples of cities in which main roadways are primarily associated with gates and provide access only to main monumental structures (Schmidt 1964).

A wadi, or seasonal watercourse, has been detected in the western outer city (Deckers/Riehl 2007; Deckers 2011) and reflects another important boundary within the city. Since watercourses were an important transit route, it seems likely that the contact point of the watercourse and the city would be a highly administered area under the control of the centralized authority. Future research in the outer city might focus on this area to detect any possible administrative structures.

"Areas of social distinctiveness" can also be used to identify neighborhoods; unfortunately, the survey data is not sufficiently refined to determine any distinct differences in the social status or social make-up of different neighborhoods. Further investigation, particularly excavation might look for evidence of different social groupings based on the material culture within buildings. Smith's archaeologi-

cal correlates for neighborhoods rely on a complex understanding of the shape and layout of cities. At Mozan the pieces have only begun to be pieced together yet a clear pattern begins to emerge.

Based on the archaeological data from Mozan's outer city we can begin to see the spatial organization of the third millennium city. Evidence can be seen that suggests that while Mozan was a large integrated urban center, localized communities existed within the larger framework. Neighborhoods were not organized by craft or specific functions but instead represent integrated and mixed activities. Further research should focus on understanding the complexities of the urban form and the social processes that created and sustained the cities of third millennium Syria.

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