

2. The archaeological context – M. Liverani

2.1 General setting

During the 6th season in Tell Mozan (May-June 1990), a new operation was started in the Northern area of the mound (area F; operation F1; cf. Fig. 1).⁸ The operation was carried on in squares of 5 by 5 meters in size, with no baulks, excavated in a checkered fashion in order to temporarily preserve the sections to be drawn. Four such squares were originally opened in order to obtain an area of 10 by 10 meters, eventually enlarged for practical needs to cover a total area of 10 by 12.50 meters (Fig. 2).

The area selected for excavation is located on the left (i.e. western) flank of an erosion gully leading northwards to the edge of the High Mound, sufficiently inside the mound to avoid meeting the interior of the city-wall. The absolute elevations of F1 (from ca. 489 to 486) are roughly mid-way between the top of the mound (area B is ca. 499-498) and the Outer City (ca. 480).

This area had been selected for excavation in the hope that the levels of the first half of the third millennium ("Ninevite 5" horizon) could be reached more easily there, than in the central part of the mound (because of its higher absolute elevation)⁹ or in the outer slopes of the mound (because of the presence of the city wall).¹⁰ The surface collection of sherds had also revealed a relatively higher

⁸The work was supervised by Mario Liverani, with the assistance of Prof. Lucio Milano, Dr. Barbara Cifola, and Miss Alessandra Asteriti. When the tablets were found, Lucio Milano acted also as epigraphist. In the present report, all the f- and i- numbers refer to the season MZ6 and the area F1.

⁹Area B, cf. G. Buccellati in *Mozan 1*, pp. 59-61 and M. Kelly-Buccellati *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰Area K, cf. G. Bunnens and A. Roobaert in *Mozan 1*, pp. 61-64; M. Kelly-Buccellati *ibid.*, pp. 67-81.

(though certainly low in absolute terms) presence of Ninevite 5 fragments in the north-western portion of the mound.¹¹

Although these assumptions proved to be partly wrong in the course of excavation, area F1 turned out to be particularly interesting for different reasons. The slope of the gully was only partly modelled by erosion, and basically stood on a terraced structure clearly adapted to a slope already existing in the mid-third millennium B.C. It is still possible that, behind and underneath the terraced structure, the Ninevite 5 levels will eventually be reached. For the moment however we are dealing with the same general horizon (metallic/simple ware, although a later variety of each) already met in the central mound (Area B) and in the outer slope (city wall: Area K) which can be dated to the second half of the 3rd millennium.

2.2 Stratigraphy of area F1

The general stratigraphy of area F1 is rather simple (Fig. 3). The materials have not yet been completely studied, however; even the excavation itself is still to be continued in order to reach satisfactory results. We can provide here only a few preliminary and quite general comments, in order to place the tablets in their proper archaeological context.

The upper strata,¹² consisting of washed down materials, to an average depth of ca. 50-60 cm., follow the incline of the present slope. Quite clearly they accumulated in the absence of containing structures, so that no horizontal stratification is present. These layers, although unstratified (and also notably degraded by deep roots and rodents holes), cover a long period of time: most probably extending from the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. up until modern times. Some burials (f 15, 26, 28, 81) had been dug in this upper layer, at various depths; at the bottom are a couple of crescent-like stone structures (f 100, 126), the probable remains of huts or shelters, partly cut into the slope.

Under these layers and structures which follow the incline of the present slope, other strata follow which are horizontal in deposition, and are connected to or based upon a terraced structure which gives the slope its present outline (and is

¹¹M. Kelly-Buccellati in *Mozan 1*, p. 44. Also obsidian fragments are more frequently met in the same area.

¹²Features 95, 10, 19, 11, 16 in the section published as Fig.3.

in its turn most probably containing and regularizing an earlier slope). The terrace wall is built up of a mud-brick core (f 70, 115), with an outer revetment in stone (f 31, 75) towards the “down-stairs” rooms, and an inner pisée fill (f 68) covered with stones (f 30, 67, 82) leveling the “up-stairs” area.

The architectural and stratigraphic interpretation of the “down-stairs” area (north-east of the retaining wall) is quite easy. A line of two store-rooms (f 77 and 125) lies adjacent to, and is protected by, the terrace wall. A second line probably of kitchen rooms (f 129 and 130) lies further north and is still unexcavated (but the tops of two tannurs, f 87 and 128, already appear). The two store-rooms have been excavated down to the floors: one completely (f 93 is the floor of f 77), the other only in part (f 123 is the floor of f 125). They contain a full collection of ceramic vessels, all of them in situ on the floors or benches, and sealed under the burnt collapse of roof and walls.

The interpretation of the “up-stairs” area (south and west of the retaining wall) is more complex. As already mentioned, the space between the earlier slope and brick wall had been filled with bricky material and a row of stones. Behind them, a compacted horizontal layer (f 73), of notable thickness, is probably to be interpreted as the original levelling (floor plus subfloor¹³) of the upper terrace – possibly an open area. Above such a compact layer, some stone structures have been built (f 56+57, 27+29, 59), which cannot be satisfactorily understood before the dig is extended further south. They should belong to a slightly later period than the building of the terraced structure (retaining wall plus f 73); but to a period when the store-rooms (f 77 and 125) were still in use. The same destruction should have affected at the same time both the “upper” structures and the “lower” store-rooms. As far as we know at present (most of f 73 is still to be cleared), the upper floor had no vessels resting on it, and contained very few sherds. For the moment its date is therefore partly dependent on that of the store-rooms, but it is to be hoped that a second campaign in F1, by enlarging the dig southwards, will provide the necessary elements for an independent dating.

¹³The compact layer is ca. 50 cm. thick; in the section published here (Fig. 3) f 73 is properly the floor, f 108 the sub-floor.

2.3 The ceramic horizon

In the two storerooms protected by the retaining wall, a large number of vessels have been found in situ on the floors and on the benches: about 50 in f77 and about 15 in the excavated portion of f125. A large repertory of types and sizes is present: large storage jars, medium and small jugs, a variety of goblets and bowls, as well as some stone tools.

A careful study of this material has, of course, to be postponed until the excavation is completed (possibly in the 1992 campaign), the vessels have been fully restored and drawn, and some analysis has been carried out. For the moment, a preliminary examination of a part of the vessels (the large jars are still to be restored) points to a late metallic ware horizon. The best parallels are provided by the so-called "Akkadian" levels in Tell Brak¹⁴, and also in other sites of the Upper Habur area, such as Chaghar Bazar and Tell Leilan – while sites (like Tell Khuera) occupied only to the end of the ED III period, provide a different picture. It is true that some forms in the ceramic inventory of f 77 + 125 go back to earlier traditions¹⁵. But on the other hand the large jars, with their wavy lines and rope decoration, seem to point to later developments. All in all, a date in the Akkadian period seems to fit best with our material, at least at this preliminary stage of our study. In comparison to the other areas already excavated in Mozaan, F1 f 77 + 125 is clearly later than the ED III burnt deposit (f 16) of area K¹⁶, and should be located in between the early floor (ED III) and the later laminations (Ur III) of the stone founded temple in area B.¹⁷

Apart from the ceramic inventory of f 77 + 125, found in situ on the floors, more pottery fragments were obviously found in the accumulation above both the lower storerooms (f 23 + 32 in the section of Fig. 3) and the upper area (f 37 + 47 in the same section). A few sherds were also found in the very small part of f 73 already removed. All this material, although necessarily mixed and in secondary

¹⁴Cf. K. Fielden, *Iraq* 39 (1977), pp. 245-255; J. Oates, *Iraq* 44 (1982), pp. 205-219; more "Akkadian" material has been found in the last seasons.

¹⁵In particular a large jug (i 114) has good parallels in ED III Brak (*Iraq* 44 (1982), p. 209: 4 and 17) and Khuera (H. Kühne, *Die Keramik vom Tell Chuera*, Berlin 1976, Abb. 31 and 35); and an incised jug (i 137) goes back to a form belonging to the "fine, no III) in Leilan (G.M. Schwartz, *A Ceramic Chronology from Tell Leilan*, I, New Haven 1988, fig. 47: 4).

¹⁶M. Kelly-Buccellati, *Mozaan* 1, pp. 66-67.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 65.

emplacement, belongs quite consistently to the same “late metallic ware” horizon, with very few earlier or later inclusions. But an inner chronology of such material is largely dependent on the recovery of well-sealed primary emplacements like that of the storerooms.

2.4 The findspot of the tablets

The two tablets i 121 and i 122 were found together, inside f 73, the compact layer referred to previously (Illustr. 3.). Their horizontal position (as marked in Fig. 2) is not far from the head of a stone wall (f 82) belonging to the upper arrangement of the terraced structure. The two tablets (and a broken goblet, i 119, in upside-down position) were partly covered by two large fragments of jars (i 108) (Illustr. 9). No trace of a pit was visible, and the soil including the tablets was quite hard, so the possibility that we are dealing with a later inclusion in the already existing compact floor can be ruled out.

It is to be acknowledged that this arrangement of the tablets is not devoid of problems: during excavation the possibility was duly taken into account, that the tablets had been intentionally buried and covered with the jar fragments. But the impression is clearly that the two tablets (and the broken goblet) had been already discarded when included in the floor/sub-floor f 73. Also, the jar fragments were not properly covering them, and their association is the result of pure chance. Most of the area in which the compact layer f 73 extends is remains to be cleared and eventually removed in order to ascertain whether more discarded material is embedded in the floor and sub-floor.

Although the work is still in progress and further clarification will certainly be obtained in the next campaign (by completing the excavation of the entire building), we decided to publish immediately the tablets and their provisional stratigraphic context. It is already certain that the tablets belong to an “Akkadian” level; their more precise relation to the storerooms and their well datable ceramic inventory will be more exactly described in the final report. For the moment, the tablets seem to belong to the *construction phase* of the terraced structure (provided that they are included into f 73, and that f 73 is the original floor of the upper terrace): in this case, they should be (slightly?) earlier than the ceramic inventory of the storerooms, belonging to their *destruction phase*.

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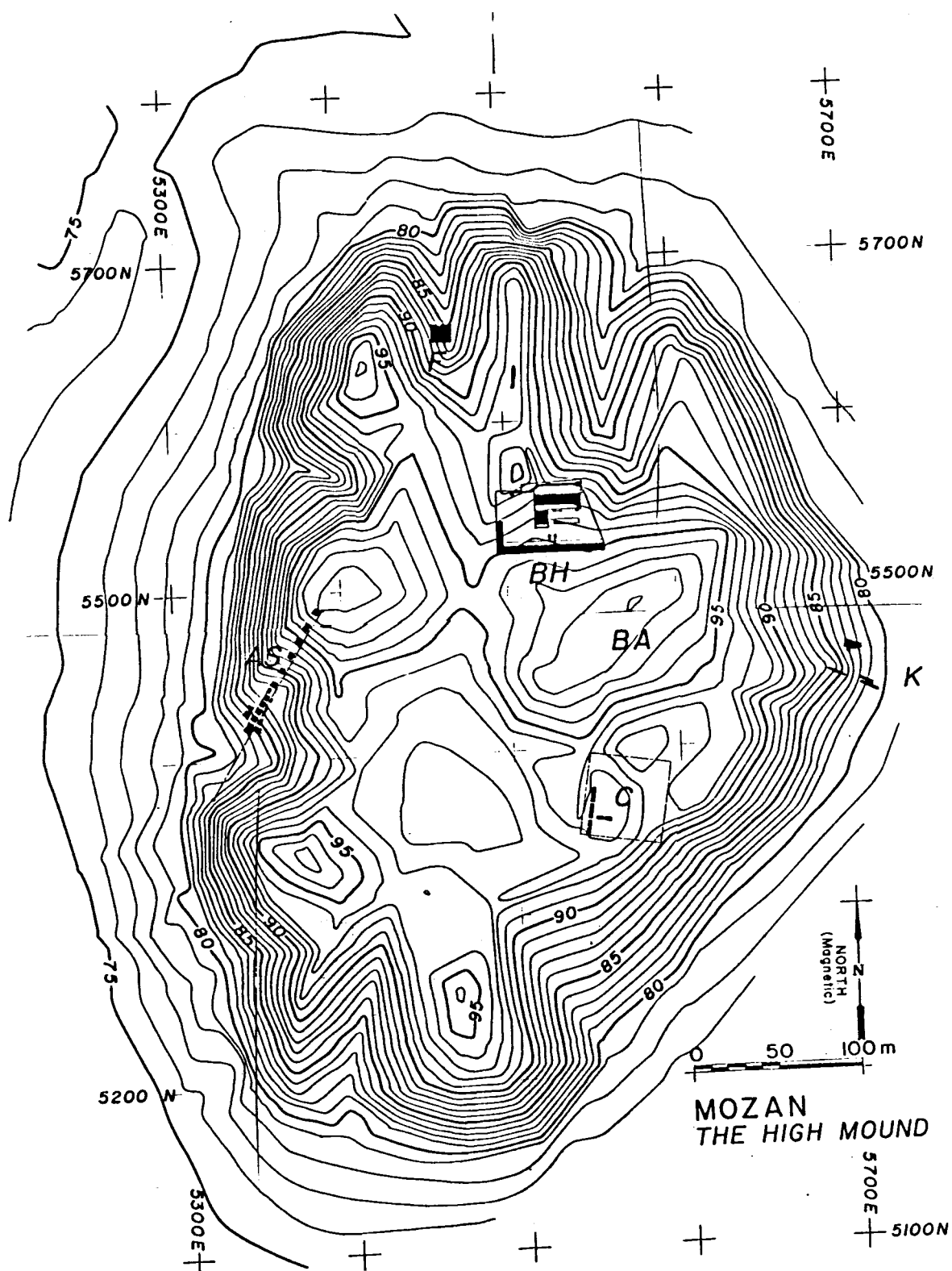


Figure 1
Site plan of Mozan

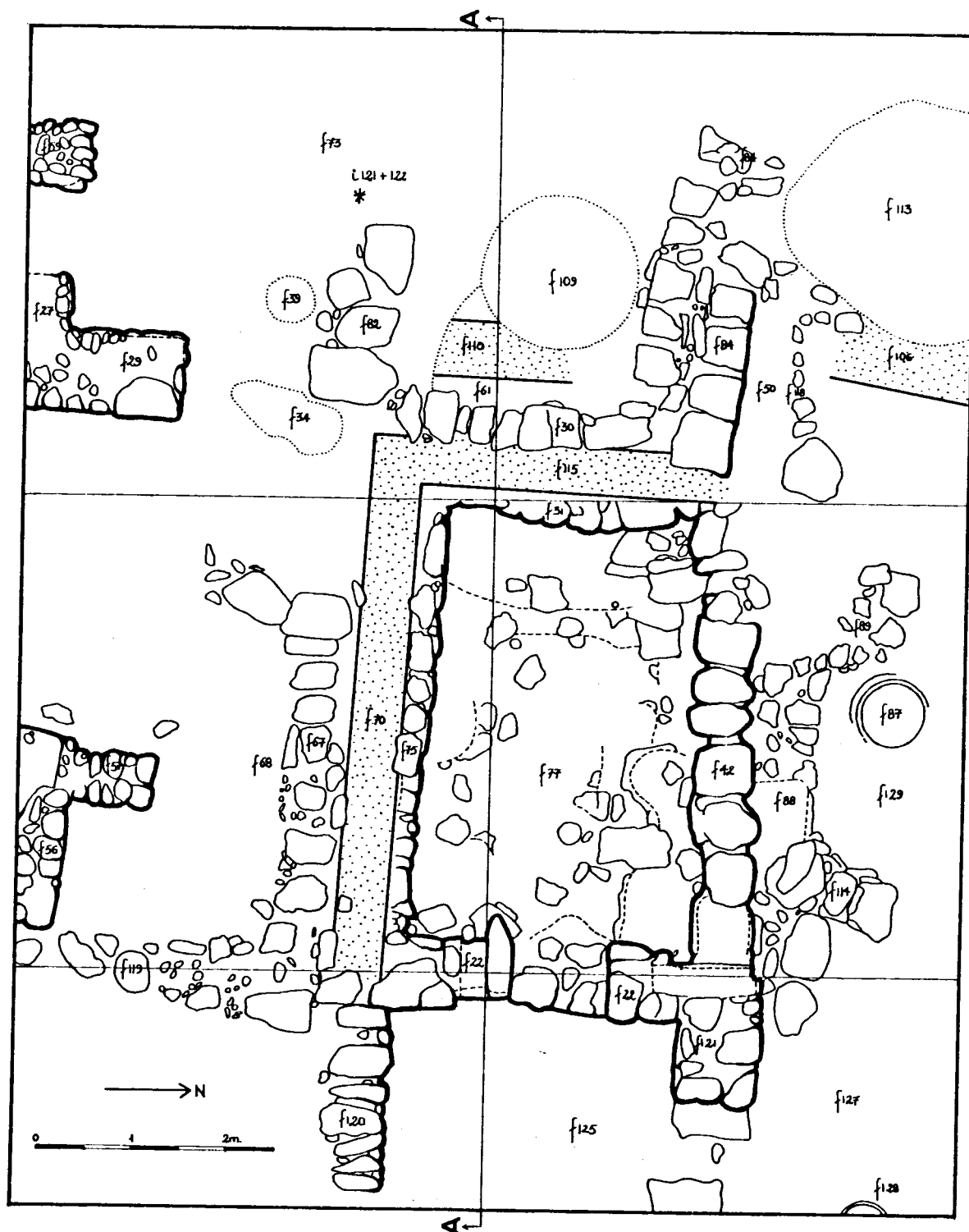


Figure 2
F1: Floor plan

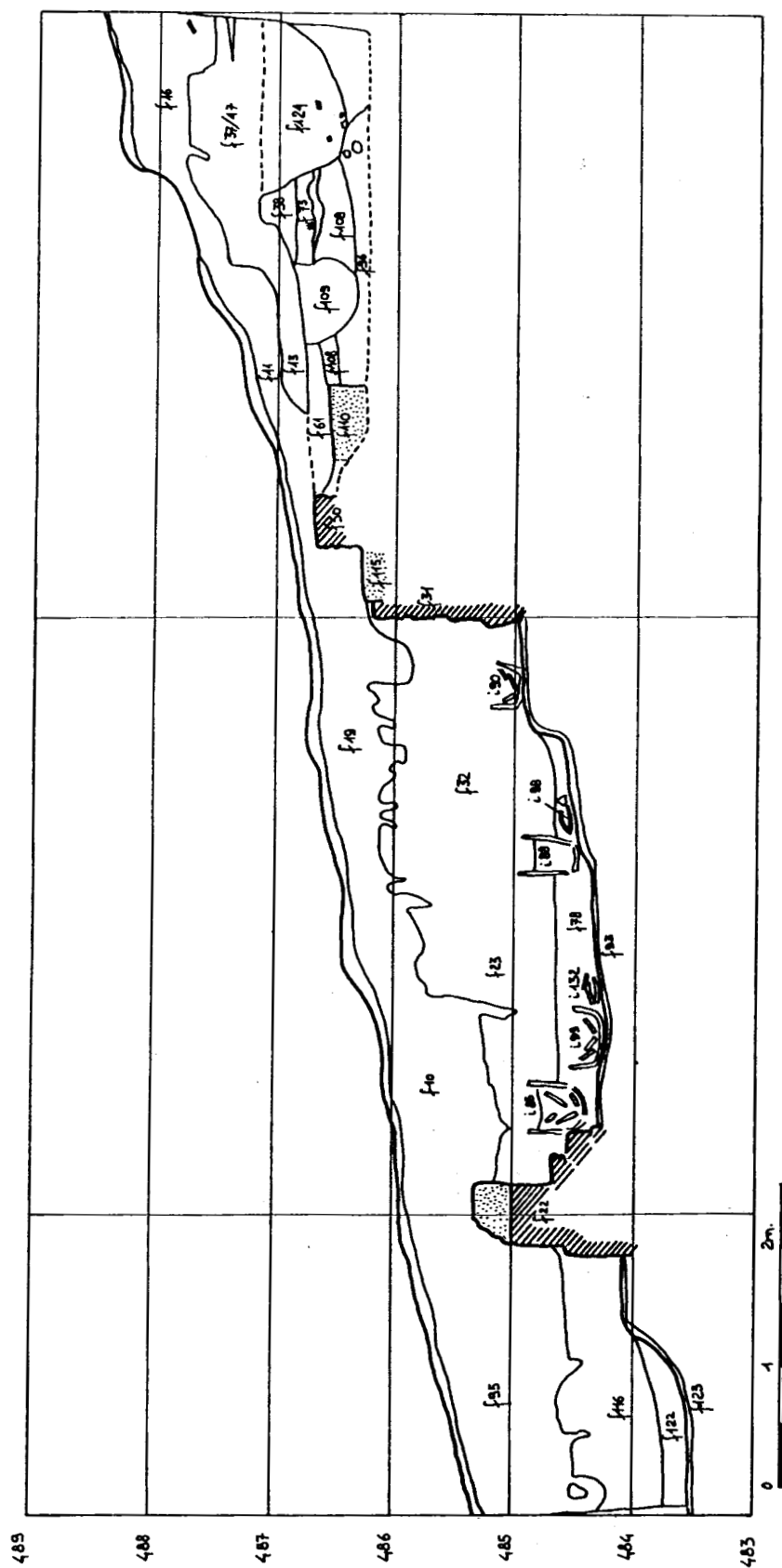


Figure 3
F1: Section AA

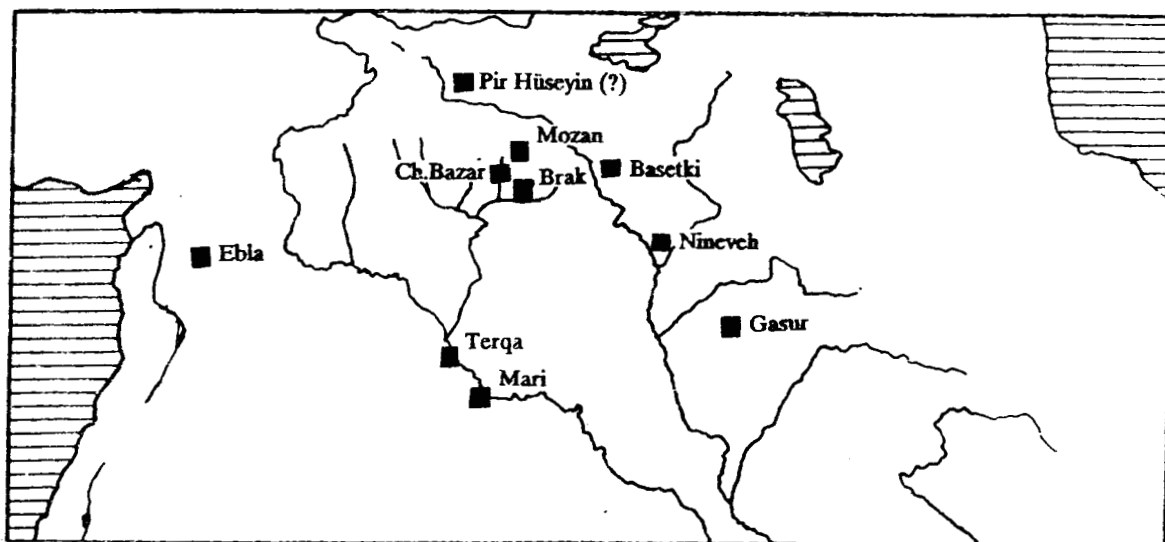


Figure 4
Third millennium epigraphic finds from Northern Syro-Mesopotamian sites

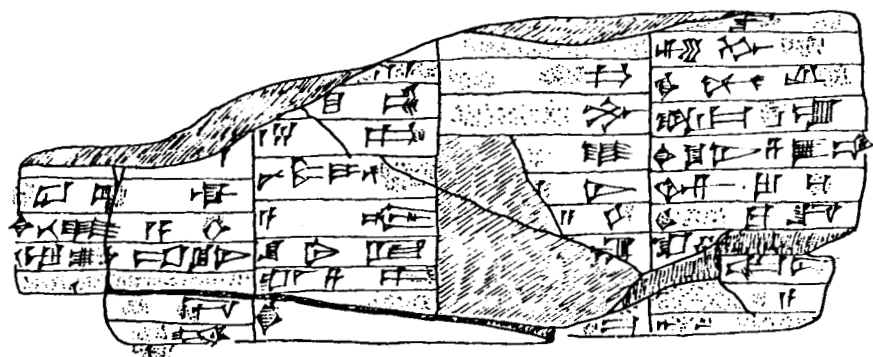


Figure 5
M2 1: Obverse (?) (1:1)

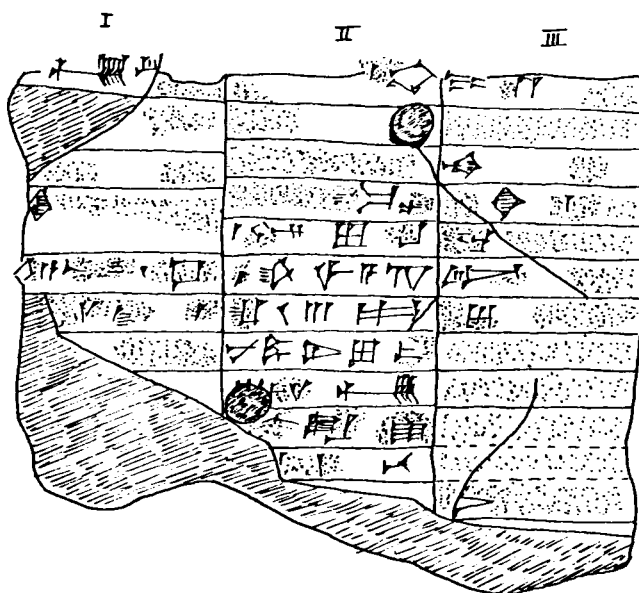


Figure 6
M2 2: Obverse (1:1)

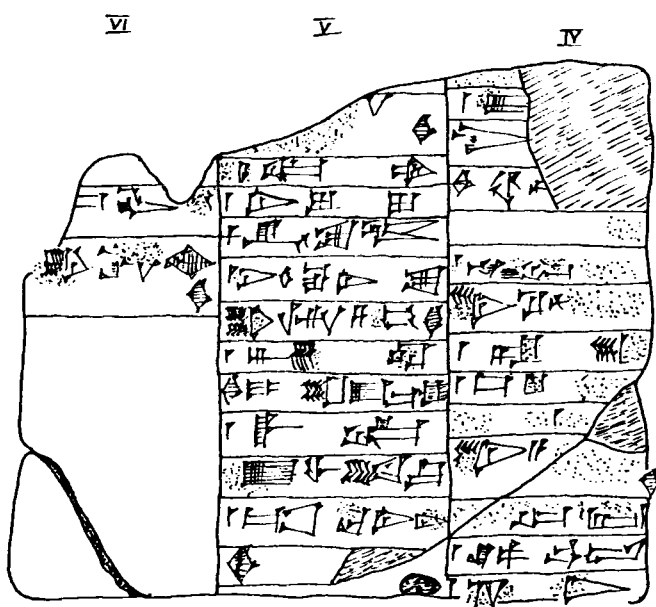


Figure 7
M2 2: Reverse (1:1)

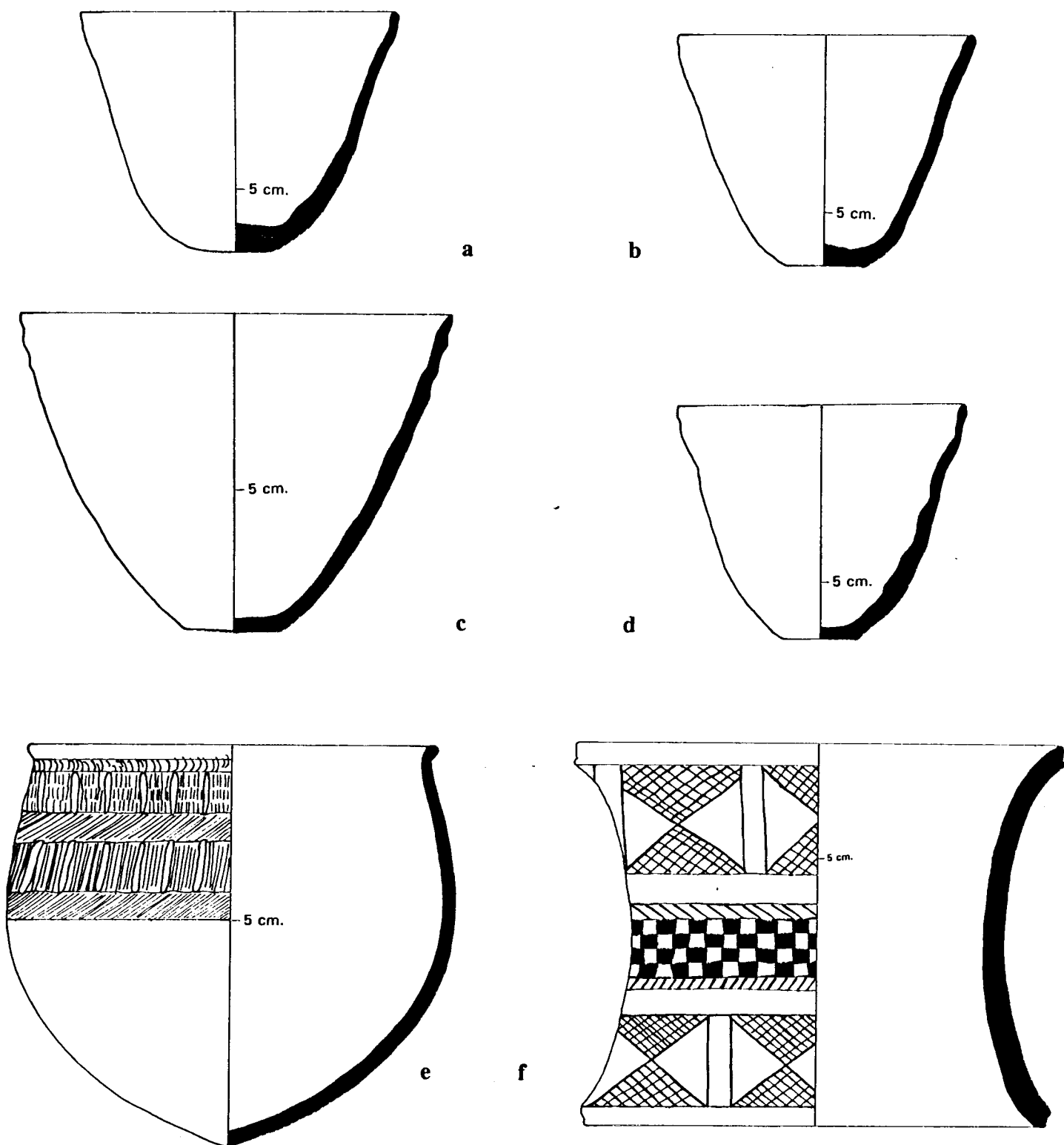


Figure 8
Early third millennium ceramics from grave Ob1

a-d: Metallic ware cups; e: Ninevite V deep bowl; f: Scarlet ware stand
Field numbers: a: Ob1.25; b: Ob1.26; c: Ob1.57; d: Ob1.36; e: Ob1.47; f: Ob1.52

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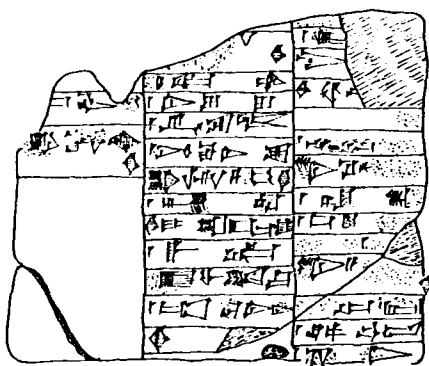
MOZAN 2

**THE EPIGRAPHIC FINDS
OF THE SIXTH SEASON**

Lucio Milano

with contributions by

Giorgio Buccellati, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, and Mario Liverani



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SMS 5/1. – The tablets recovered in Mozan during the sixth season of excavations in 1990 represent the northernmost find to date of well stratified cuneiform texts for the third millennium. They are accounts of people listed by name, profession and sometimes provenience. The language in which the texts are written is plausibly Old Akkadian, and so is a majority of personal names, but several names may be explained as Hurrian. The date is that of the later portion of the Sargonic period. Besides providing a complete philological treatment of the texts, this fascicle briefly describes the archaeological context – a stratigraphically well defined deposit within a sizeable stone building; it also provides a brief report on the work of the sixth season of excavations.

An electronic version of the text portion of this monograph (labeled *CM E2*) is available from Undena.

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