

1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Earlier work

Tell Mozan is a major site in the piedmont area of Northern Syria, just below the mountain passes which lead to the Tur-Abdin range and the Turkish plateau. In spite of its size and its accessibility (practically on the main road between Amuda and Qamishli), it has escaped the attention it deserves.

Not that it was always totally ignored. In fact, what little mention is made of it in the scholarly literature is quite significant. Thus L. Dilleman wrote: "Tell Mozan, à 8 km au sud-est d'Amouda, imposant par sa longueur et son elevation relative, est sur un modeste talweg. Son deuxième nom, Mal Tepe, en turc, la colline au trésor, lui vient probablement d'une trouvaille clandestine" (Dilleman 1962, p. 36).

Similarly appreciative, but puzzling on other grounds, are the references to Mozan in Mallowan's work. In his *Memoirs*, he spoke of the "wonderful mound named Mozan" (Mallowan 1977, p. 105). That this was not an accidental hyperbole is shown by these other remarks in the same work: "We were greatly attracted by Mozan, a site endowed with magnificent masonry walls" (p. 108); and again: "I wondered if the massive and obviously rich mound of Mozan ... is not an echo" of Hurrian civilization (p. 124). In his scholarly work, Mallowan refers occasionally to Mozan, and then takes it for granted that it is a third millennium site. In his report on Chagar Bazar he published a small black burnished "vase" (Mallowan 1937, p. 140, Fig. 17) which he records as coming from Mozan and as having been purchased (he does not say where; presumably it came from the villagers at Mozan). In the *Cambridge Ancient History* he wrote that "the varieties of pottery [from Tell Khuera] corresponded very closely in type with the ceramics familiar in the Khabur valley — at Brak, Chagar Bazar, Mozan and Germayir" (Mallowan 1971, p. 313).

Nowhere does Mallowan, as far as we can tell, give a published account of any soundings at Tell Mozan, although they are referred to in the autobiographical account which

his wife, Agatha Christie, wrote of the years spent with Mallowan in the Khabur region:

Three Tells compete for the honor of our attention — Tell Hamdun,... Tell Chagar Bazar, and a third, Tell Mozan. This is much the largest of the three, and a lot depends on whether there will be much Roman deposit to dig through. Soundings must be made at all three mounds. We make a start with Tell Mozan. ...Three trial trenches are selected at different levels of the Tell. There is a murmur of “Inshallah!” and the picks go in.

Abruptly, the next paragraph continues:

Tell Mozan has been reluctantly erased from our list of possibles. There are several levels of Roman occupation, and though the periods we want to dig are there underneath, it would take several seasons — that is to say, more time and money than we can afford. Today we drive to our old friend Chagar Bazar... (Christie 1977, p. 72f.).

What is puzzling in Agatha Christie’s statements is the double reference to soundings on the one hand and to evidence of Roman occupation on the other, neither of which is mentioned by Mallowan himself. As for the first point, there are only a few traces of earlier excavations visible today: those along the edge of the tell are likely to be the result of surface activities by local farmers in search of good mudbrick material, while those on top of the tell appear to be very limited and generally superficial. Thus it would seem that if Christie’s information is correct, Mallowan’s “soundings” may either have been not very deep or they may have been located in areas (such as gullies at the edge of the tell) where normal erosion would have obliterated their traces. As a curiosity it may be reported here that upon asking the local villagers for information about earlier visitors to the tell, the eldest in the group remembered some foreigners who had conducted some work at the tell — among them, he related without prompting, a lady who would “sit on a walking stick”!

As for the second discrepancy between Agatha Christie’s and Max Mallowan’s accounts about Mozan, i.e. the alleged presence of Roman materials at the site (large enough, she says, to have discouraged Mallowan from excavating there), one wonders if Mallowan may in fact have mistakenly considered to be Roman what we now call “Metallic ware.” Such ware is in fact present in fair amounts on the surface of the tell, and in the thirties it was not yet fully recognized for what it was proven to be later. It has been suggested that a similar situation may have obtained during Seton Lloyd’s 1938 visit to Tell Taya, which he attributed to the Moslem period, “with the rider ‘probably Roman’.” As Julian Reade goes on to say, “it was an understandable reaction: even in 1967 another visiting scholar was to suggest that the site was mainly Sasanian” (Reade 1982, p. 72).

Whether the explicit reference in Agatha Christie's autobiography to the alleged Roman levels at Mozan deterred archaeologists from seriously considering this site for further excavations, or whether the proximity of Amuda, reputed to be the major ancient site of Urkish, made it appear unlikely that a second major site could have been located so near it — the fact remains that Mozan has been left largely to itself. Apart from the very limited evidence of localized excavations at the base of the tell possibly by farmers (plus of course the effects of plowing in the lower city, for which see Chapter 4), and apart from the presence of three small cemeteries on the top of the mound, Tell Mozan appears wholly undisturbed. There is no obvious evidence of clandestine excavations for antiquities, and the village at the base of the tell, while it sits on part of the lower mound, has not encroached on the higher mound.

In recent times and prior to our own work there, several more projects have come to focus their attention on this particular area of the upper Khabur, and Tell Mozan has again been considered by other archaeologists as the site for a potential excavation — among the more recent the Tell Barri/Kahat project under the direction of Paolo Emilio Pecorella (Pecorella and Salvini 1982, especially p. 8, where Mozan is referred to as Muazzar, following Van Liere, for which see presently). The only extensive and published survey work has been that of Davidson and McKerrel (1976). It is not, however, our purpose to review here the history of excavations and of surface explorations in the area of Mozan, except for a brief remark concerning the survey by Van Liere and Lauffray. In their often quoted article of 1954-55 in which they reviewed the typology of the various settlements of the Khabur region, utilizing especially aerial maps newly made available for agricultural projects, they do not take any special notice of Tell Mozan. The site is in fact shown on their map, but it bears the name "Muazzar," which is also the name of a large site to the South, on the slopes of the Jebel Abd el-Aziz. The references in their text to Tell "Muazzar" all seem to refer to the latter tell, so that to all intents and purposes Mozan was in effect overlooked in their study (and the symbol used for it on the map identifies it as a site of relatively lesser significance than others). No one in the area today (whether in Mozan itself, or Amuda or Qamishli), knows of the site as Muazzar.

1.2 The Mozan Archaeological Project

We were first attracted to Mozan on the occasion of a visit to Amuda, a modern town with the remains of an ancient tell which is generally assumed to correspond to ancient Urkish. The imposing profile of Mozan was clearly noticeable from Amuda, but at first we passed the site by without stopping there. On the occasion of a subsequent visit to the area, we asked first Ismail Hijara and Mark Chavalas to take a look at Mozan, and then the following day the entire party went back for a closer look. A preliminary walk over the tell left us stunned: there was no trace whatsoever of Roman material, and instead we could only see third millennium and Khabur ware wherever we walked. The local villagers came out to greet us, and showed us two small vessels, and one small stone axe head of the type that has been explained as a scribal eraser: very freely and generously they made us a gift of these objects, which we delivered to the Der ez-Zor Museum. Travelling by car around the edge of the mound, we estimated its perimeter to be about a mile, and the height was clearly imposing.

This was on June 3, 1983. Besides the writers, Mario Liverani and Ismail Hijara were also in our party, and we all shared an overwhelming impression of a site which, for all its massiveness, was very homogeneous in its deposit. And certainly not Roman. We all returned to the site on three different occasions, accompanied by different staff members, and each time our first impression was strengthened.

We had reached an easy consensus: that we should prepare an application to the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums for a sounding permit at Tell Mozan. We had been planning for a while to develop a research project that would build on our experience at the southern end of the Khabur region, at Terqa and Qraya, and would fit in with our general historical and archaeological interests in the upper Khabur. We had also become more specifically interested in the question of the Hurrians and the intriguing issue of the localization of Urkish. Mozan was clearly the site that most seemed to fit our requirements. Thus we proposed to begin with a two year project that would entail soundings at Mozan itself and also a survey in the region, along the lines of the arguments outlined briefly below in Chapter 2.

Our request was most graciously granted by the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr. Afif Behnassi, in the winter of 1984. A first brief season was immediately planned for the subsequent Fall. This took place from the 21st of October to the 20th of November, 1984. It was under the joint directorship of Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati and Giorgio Buccellati, with the participation of Dr. Guy Bunnens, Dr. Arlette Roobaert, Mr. William R. Shelby and Ms. Daniela Buia Quinn. In addition, Mr. Mark W. Chavalas joined us for a brief working period. Mr. Hamido Hammade served as the representative of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, and also participated in the excavations. Mr. Stephen M. Hughey, with the assistance of Ms. Barbara W. Pritzkat, did the topographical survey of the upper mound, and prepared the site plan which is reproduced below as Fig. 5 and is introduced in Section 3.5.

A second season took place in the spring of 1985, from the 22nd of April until the 20th of June. It was again under the joint directorship of Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati and Giorgio Buccellati, with the participation of Dr. Guy Bunnens, Dr. Arlette Roobaert, Dr. Ismail Hijara, Ms. Louise A. Hitchcock and Ms. Andrea M. Parker. In addition, Dr. Lucio Milano, Dr. Judith Thompson-Miragliuolo, Mr. Timothy Seymour and Ms. Veronika Selb joined us for a brief working period. Mr. Hamido Hammade again served as the representative of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, and also participated in the excavations.

At various times during the two seasons, Dr. Guy Bunnens and Dr. Arlette Roobaert undertook the survey project in the immediate vicinity of Mozan, and in particular studied the visible remains of the tell located in Amuda. This, it turns out, is not called Tell Amuda (which is instead the old name of another tell on the other side of the Turkish border just north of the town of Amuda, renamed Kemaliya in recent years), but rather Tell Shermola. They report separately on their work in Chapter 7 below.

During the first season of soundings it had already become apparent that there were traces of occupation over a large area all around the high mound, and we had also noticed that there was a general rise that extended for several hundred meters all around the main tell. Accordingly, we had planned on exploring the base of the tell in the following Spring, but this proved to be very difficult at that time on account of the extensive cultivation during that season. We were fortunate in securing at that point the collaboration of Dr. Judith

Thompson-Miragliuolo, who was residing for family reasons in the area, and who accepted the charge to develop a systematic survey of the lower city in the Fall of 1985. The results of her work appear in Chapter 4 below.

Given the extremely positive results of the work which we had conducted under the terms of the sounding permit, a new request was submitted for a regular permit of excavations at Tell Mozan. This was granted in the winter of 1986.

1.3 Results and perspectives

The substantive results of the first two seasons, about which we report in this book, may be summarized briefly as follows.

(1) The *High Mound*, some 18 hectares in size and 20 meters in height, is a single major mound, without a separate prominent hill of the type generally called a citadel. The *Outer City* seems to represent a continuous occupational zone extending to as much as 400 meters from the edge of the high mound: it is possible that the circular rise at the perimeter of this outer zone may represent an exterior city wall, but in any case the nature of the surface evidence is such that it seems reasonable to assume a vast contiguous settlement around the High Mound, with a North-South axis of about one mile and an East-West axis of a kilometer.

(2) *Second millennium* material has been found especially on the surface, and to a more limited extent in excavations (in P1 and minimally in B1). It is possible that the original extent of second millennium occupation was greater, and if so its disappearance may be explained as the result of erosion over the centuries: it seems in fact likely that the site was abandoned by the middle of the second millennium, so that structures from this period would have been the ones more readily exposed to weathering.

(3) Late *third millennium* material was found immediately below the surface at the very top of the High Mound in B1, and mid third millennium material was found at the base of the mound in K1 as well as in B1; materials of the same periods are represented everywhere else on the surface of both the High Mound and the Outer City. The later third millennium material rests on floors, and thus one period of the building's history seems fairly secure. The mid third millennium material at the base of the city wall in K1 is somewhat more problematical. Since the burnt deposit on top of the glacis is in the nature of a dump, it could have been taken from anywhere on the site and placed where we have it now at any point in time; in practice, however, it is possible to assume that the dumping took place not long after the period from which the dump itself originated, since the excavated deposit is considerable in size and there is no admixture of later material. If so, the glacis and the wall behind it would have been in use in the Early Dynastic III period.

(4) The vastness of the site and the general homogeneity of the deposit, plus the monumental scale of the architecture, the quality of the artifactual material, and the nature of the preservation, make of Mozan a choice site for the study of early Syro-Mesopotamian *urbanism*. Whether or not the site corresponds to ancient Urkish, the fact that it matches as well or better than any other site the cultural profile of this ancient city makes of Mozan a very significant new source of information. The circumstantial evidence which favors a possible identification with Urkish serves more than anything else to highlight the broad

historical perspective within which the excavations assume their special value. Thus the arguments developed in favor of the identification help first of all to focus on the issues and goals of archaeological research in the area, among others the validity of expecting the existence of an autonomous scribal Hurrian tradition in the late third millennium, the centrality of the upper Khabur region for an understanding of the rise and growth of early civilization, and the significance played by the piedmont regions in the development of long distance trade with the highlands.

(5) The *rural base* of Mozan and its region is just as interesting an object of research. A unique dynamism resulted from the direct interaction of three quite diverse types of rural populations — the farmers of the dry-farming zone immediately around Mozan, the agropastoralists (Amorites) who had learned to tap the ground-water of the Syrian steppe (the *nawu*), and the montagnards of the small settlements in the Tigris valley north of the Tur-Abdin (possibly as far as the Euphrates/Murat-Su valley in the Keban). The piedmont belt that was the stage for the coming together of these populations seems to have been identified in ancient times as a specific cultural landscape and geo-political entity, and to have been known by such terms as “Subartu” or “Urkish and Nawar.”

(6) A very significant long distance *trade* was carried out in the area of Mozan during the third millennium in both directions: east-west and north-south. Just north-west of Mozan the Mardin pass leads directly to a road which goes to Diyarbakir and beyond, passing the famous Ergani mines. This route has been postulated as the path of the Persian Royal Road in the first millennium and in Roman times it was recorded on Peutinger’s map as the main route through these mountains. Evidence from Byzantine times confirms its continued importance. In this part of the plain then there has been a continuous history of a major city on the plain connected with the exit from the mountains at Mardin whether it be Dara or Amuda in the later period, or very possibly Mozan in the earlier period. This major city was not located at Mardin itself, although that city was important at times, because of its extremes of temperature and paucity of water immediately available. During the third millennium there was a great demand for copper and tin not only in the Khabur area itself but in the wider Syro-Mesopotamian region. Mozan and its neighbor Hamdun are ideally situated on the southern end of the pass which leads directly out of the mountains near the Ergani mines.

(7) Whether or not these mines were in use at this time, we do have evidence of contact between Mozan and the Early Transcaucasian area of the Anatolian mountains which had access to metal sources and trade routes throughout the third millennium. Previously, *Early Transcaucasian pottery* had been found in the Khuera excavations, and now is also found at Mozan. We do not however find this pottery further south. Another type of ware whose geographical distribution suggests significant implications with regard to long term contacts is the *Metallic ware*, for which the center of production was in northern Syria. This pottery was exported as far south as Terqa and Mari; imitations of it are found both at Terqa and Mari. Northward, Metallic ware is found in the excavations in the Elazig area. The distribution of these two wares indicates a wider pattern of interconnections wherein a proposed major trade route in metals could fit. In this tentative reconstruction of trade patterns in this area the metals were brought southward from the Ergani area or beyond along the Mardin route and exchanged at Mozan from where they were shipped farther south. Goods from the Mozan area were shipped northward also via the Mardin route to the Anatolian

highlands as evidenced by the Metallic ware in the Elazig area and beyond. The large amount of metal objects for the relatively small amount of excavations we have done on Mozan could be another indication of its unique importance with regard to metal trade.

1.4 Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to Dr. Afif Behnassi, Director General of Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic, for his steadfast support of our endeavors in Eastern Syria. His stewardship is leaving a deep trace in the development of modern Syrian and Near Eastern archaeology: the open and constructive policies which so clearly mark his administration offer us both a benefit and a challenge — the benefit of an ideal working atmosphere in which to test and develop significant new research projects, and the challenge to integrate our individual finds and hypotheses into the massive explosion of information that is coming out of Syria. We are also most grateful to Dr. Adnan Bounni, who, as Director of Excavations, not only supervises directly the technical aspects of our archaeological work but also, as a colleague, shares so willingly of his own unrivalled experience in field work.

Various other members of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums have assisted us in a number of ways during the first two years of our work at Tell Mozan. Mr. Kassem Touer, Director of Research, was the first visitor to Mozan from Damascus, and helped us all along with his advice. As the Representative of the Directorate General during both seasons, Mr. Hamido Hammade was very effective in helping us establish a firm basis, looking after a number of practical matters with unswerving eagerness. Mr. Jean Lazar, head of the regional office of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums for Hasseke, welcomed us as one more of a number of foreign projects streaming to the Khabur region. And Mr. As'ad Mahmud, Director of the Der ez-Zor Museum and Director of the nearby Syrian Expedition to Tell Ajaja, lent us the support of his friendship and good knowledge of the area as we were branching out to the *matum elitum* from the *zor* of Terqa!

Of authorities in Qamishli we wish to thank the Mudir Mantaqa, Maj. Turki ash-Sheikh, and the Ra'is al Qasim, Capt. Hussein Turki al Omar, who expressed a genuine interest in our work and assisted us in all official matters. The Mudir Nahia of Amuda, Capt. Muhammad Amin Al-Murai, in whose territory Mozan lies, gave us very generously of his help in a number of practical matters: the fact that he was originally from Ashara, the town at the other end of the Khabur which hosts our excavations of Terqa, seemed to favor even more readily a collaboration which we have come to appreciate greatly. Dr. Muhammad Droobie took on the task of the medical care of the Expedition with a skill, promptness and kindness for which we all are most grateful. The local people of the village of Mozan and surrounding villages welcomed us from the start, when they offered us very freely some of the artifacts they had found on the surface, and continued to do so as they became our neighbors, workmen and friends.

The work of our staff is only in part represented in this publication. While the names of all the participants have already been given above, and while some of them have contributed in a more direct way to the writing of this report (and are accordingly given credit as authors of individual sections), the work of others is not as directly represented below and should be given special mention here. William R. Shelby served as Assistant Director and ceramicist

during the first season, and lent us his continued and very real assistance at home during the analysis of the data and preparation of the report; as Administrative Analyst of IIMAS, the International Institute of Mesopotamian Area Studies, he further assisted very concretely in all the organizational aspects of the Expedition as we were preparing for it here at home. Dr. Ismail Hijara, besides contributing to the formulation of the original plans for our new project, gave us the support of his invaluable expertise in field work, and of his unmatched knowledge of the ceramics of the early periods. Daniela Buia Quinn was an indefatigable and very exacting excavator, and was responsible for the bulk of the data entry during the first season. Andrea M. Parker provided the same service during the second season, with the addition of her considerable programming experience. Hamido Hammade put whatever spare time he could muster in the service of archaeological field work, and thus assisted us in our research as well as in the overall organization of our work. The photographers were Dr. Guy Bunnens and Louise A. Hitchcock for the first and second season respectively. The drafting was entrusted to Daniela Buia Quinn during the first season and to Judith Thompson-Miragliuolo, Andrea M. Parker and Timothy Seymour during the second season. Stephen M. Hughey did masterly work in providing us with the initial topographic survey (on which he reports briefly in Section 3.5); Timothy Seymour also provided surveying assistance during the second season.

Here at home we have benefited from the help of Linda Mount-Williams and Ronald Williams, who have contributed of their expertise in both photography and the development of technical equipment. And to Timothy Seymour goes our gratitude for preparing in camera-ready copy all the drawings contained in this volume, providing an even level of high quality in spite of severe health problems during the time in question.

Financial support for the Mozan Archaeological Project has come first and foremost from the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, which has also provided a special grant for the publication of this volume. As we mentioned in the preface, we were especially pleased to have had a visit in Damascus from the President of the Foundation, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, during our second season at Mozan. While limitations of time and health prevented him from coming all the way to the field, his visit gave us a warm demonstration of his personal interest in our work in Syria, made possible by the major support of the Foundation. To Dr. Herman L. Hoeh, also of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation and a Trustee of IIMAS—The International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies, goes our sincere gratitude for the continued concern and constructive support he has unfailingly shown us.

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