

MOZAN 1

THE SOUNDINGS OF THE FIRST TWO SEASONS



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Primary sources and interpretive analyses for the study
of Mesopotamian civilization and its influences from
late prehistory to the end of the cuneiform tradition

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Mozan 1
The Soundings of the First Two Seasons

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ABSTRACT

Preliminary soundings were conducted at Tell Mozan in the north-central portion of the Khabur plains in 1984 and 1985. The site has proven to be a major urban settlement of the third millennium and early part of the second millennium, with the possibility that it may correspond to ancient Urkish, known to have been a major Hurrian center in the early periods.

This volume reports on the finds made as well as on various aspects and research goals of the project. After a presentation of the environmental, historical, archaeological and methodological considerations which provide the project its special scope, the following topics are covered: the two surface *surveys* of the High Mound and Outer City respectively; the *excavations* of the City Wall at the base, and of a stone building at the top of the High Mound; the *artifacts* found during the excavations, with special reference to an important group of seal impressions mostly on door sealings; paleobotanical and ¹⁴C *samples*; the beginning of a *regional survey* in the immediate vicinity of Tell Mozan; an art historical discussion (by O. W. Muscarella) of the *Urkish lion pegs* preserved in the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the application of *computer aided design techniques* to a study of the stone building on top of the High Mound. More than 200 objects are given in line drawings, and more than 50 black-and-white photographs illustrate various aspects of the report.

Color documentation for the material presented in this volume is available from Undena Publications in the form of 20 slides published as set No. 1 within the series *Photographic Data Sets (PDS-1)*. Reference to the slides is given in the text.

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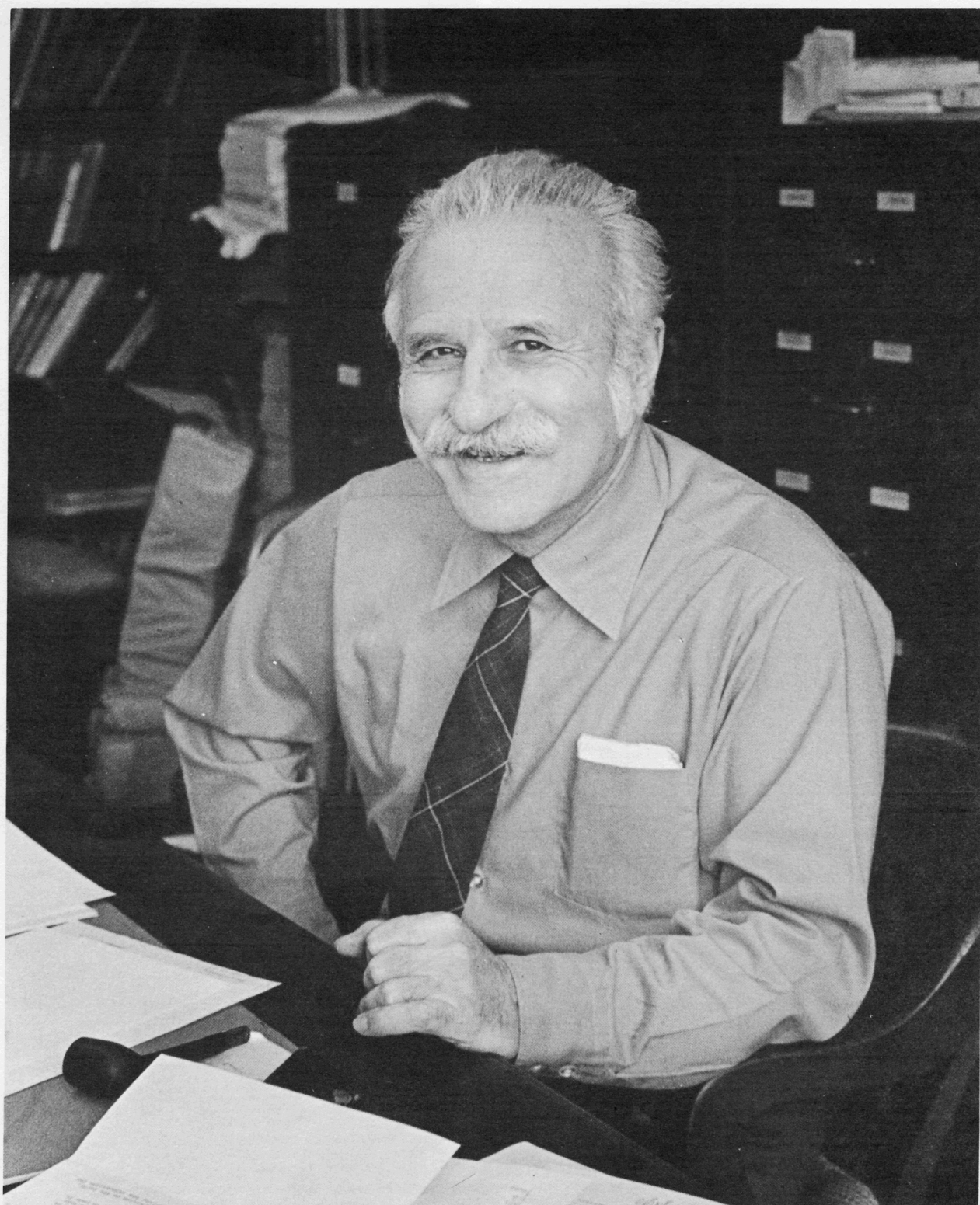
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**In Memory of I. J. Gelb
Who Showed Us the Way**

PREFACE

The wheatfields of the Khabur have seen many a harvest over the millennia, but none perhaps as significant as the archaeological harvest which a number of expeditions have begun to reap in recent years. We have to thank for this the enlightened policies of the Syrian authorities, which have consistently welcomed and encouraged an unprecedented expansion of scholarly activity in their country. As a result, whole new vistas have been emerging not only for the history of Syria, but more broadly for the history of the ancient Near East as a whole. The Khabur region is especially attractive because it is generally less well known, while at the same time it gives every evidence of having been a crucible of civilization on a par with Sumer in the South or Ebla in the West.

Our new excavations at Tell Mozan are in line with these general developments on the one hand, and with our own specific interests on the other. The work we have been conducting at Terqa and Qraya for the last ten years have given us a special appreciation of the larger regional dimension within which the history of those two sites has to be understood. The Khabur region provides the natural setting for such a broader scope of inquiry. Terqa and Qraya are at the heart of both the fertile mid-Euphrates trough (known today as the *zor*) and the high-ground steppe dotted with springs and wells (known in ancient times as the *nawu*). They are also at the mouth of the Khabur, which serves as a major artery linking the *zor* with the "upper country" (the *matum elitum*, as it was known in ancient times). The start of a new excavation project in this "upper country" will thus allow us to develop a true regional project, based on concurrent field work at different sites, conducted with parallel methodology and direct cross-information. We hope that such long term and broadly based research may yield proportionately greater insights in the archaeology and history of the area, and serve as a significant experiment in the methodology of regional studies.

In and of itself, Tell Mozan seems to hold in store archaeological promises of the greatest magnitude. Its size makes it one of the largest settlements in the region, in fact one of the largest in ancient Syria if the preliminary indications for a vast lower city are verified by future work. The homogeneity of the deposit, which belongs predominantly and throughout to the third millennium, is just as impressive. And the circumstantial evidence which seems to suggest a possible identification of the site with Urkish provides a tantalizing working hypothesis for an interpretation of the pertinent historical framework. Regardless of

what the answer might be to the questions of either identification or size, Mozan is certain to prove a major site for the understanding of the civilization in the piedmont area, which not only thrived on rain-fed agriculture, but also served as the link between the mountain regions with their rich reserves of metal ores to the north and the urban states in the southern alluvium. Only the discovery of third millennium epigraphic material, of the type known through the Urkish lions, may allow us to define such culture as Hurrian: and that the prospect of such discovery is realistic is suggested by the fact that the inscriptions on the Urkish lions presuppose an important and autonomous scribal tradition that must have been at home in the Khabur plains.

As we were articulating our overall research design for the excavations at Mozan, we had made plans to have Dr. I. Jay Gelb join us in the field in the Spring 1985. In spite of his lifelong work in this general region, he had never been able to travel there, and we were eager to offer him, our personal mentor and friend for so many years, this opportunity. The potential significance of Mozan for an understanding of Hurrian civilization was especially inviting from a scholarly point of view, and we had great hopes to be able to develop with him a long term plan for the full historical evaluation of our findings there. For family reasons he was not able to join us in 1985, and so we postponed his visit until 1986. Or so we thought. The sudden illness which struck him in the Fall of 1985, and his death on the 22nd of December 1985, were to sadly alter all our plans. We can only, at this date, dedicate this first volume of the Mozan Reports to his memory — a small token of the strong human bond which united us as friends, and, we hope, a meaningful indication of the reverberation that his fundamental work on the Hurrians has left for the field.

It is with special pleasure that we recall one of our preliminary visits to the site in 1983, when we were joined by Dr. Herman L. Hoeh of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation and a trustee of IIMAS — The International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies. As we looked together from the commanding position of Tell Mozan at the mountains to the North and the rolling plains to the South, we shared a precious moment in which the potential historical significance of the site seemed to blend with the sheer beauty of the landscape and elicit in us the resolve for an expanded new commitment to the archaeology of the region. The association with the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, whose sponsorship has made it possible for us to develop the ambitious project on which we report here, was celebrated in a special way with the visit to Damascus in the Spring of 1985 by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, President of the Foundation. This was to be his last trip overseas before his death, and while he could not come as far as Mozan, where we were excavating at the time, we were able to share with him two days in Damascus, where he was most graciously hosted by the Minister of Culture, Dr. Najah Attar, and the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr. Afif Behnassi.

We consider ourselves privileged to be able to be a part of these significant new developments in Syrian archaeology, and fortunate to be the recipients of the traditional and unmatched Syrian hospitality, at both the official and personal level. Especially at a time like today, it is but a small witness to truth to say that we feel as welcome in the contemporary Syria we have come to know through living there as in the ancient periods of her history, to the reconstruction of which we are happy to contribute.

G. B. and M. K-B.
15 April 1986

Because of a series of vicissitudes beyond our control, publication of this volume has been unfortunately delayed for over a year. Publication in its present form is essentially the same as had been originally submitted in completed form by the Fall of 1986, without updates (except for references to *PDS-1*).

A special note of gratitude is owed Dr. Alexis Martin, who with the greatest skill and personal commitment has provided the indispensable ingredients for seeing this volume through to its final publication.

6 January 1988