6

Urkesh and the Question of Early Hurrian Urbanism

Giorgio Buccellati
University of California, Los Angeles

In answering the call to consider the interplay between economy and early urbanization, I wish to address three questions: (1) how the exercise of power, *i.e.*, *political development*, was an essential condition of that interplay; (2) how distinctive *geographical environments* provided diverse production and marketing landscapes; and (3) how *ethnic factors* may be identified that helped shape the configuration of both the market and the city. The exposition is essentially programmatic, and the argumentation in the nature of a proposal rather than of a demonstration, so the evidence provided will remain indicative. As indicated in the title of my paper, I will pay special attention to the northern portion of Syro-Mesopotamia and will refer to results from my own fieldwork in the area, in particular at the ancient city of which we have been excavating the remains, *Urkesh*, modern Tell Mozan, because the freshness of the discovery has given me new impetus to locate in a proper context the historical meaning of our finds.

Let me mention briefly a question of methodology. As a contribution to our hosts' interest in "long-term" trends, I will try to show how growth in complexity went hand in hand with a *progressive symbolic distancing from the immediacy of natural sequences*. I will use this concept to define urbanization, industrialization, and ethnic consolidation. Let me use a well-known example. Hunters or gatherers collect their food supply in relatively ready form; farmers, on the other hand, have made a symbolic connection between two moments that are not immediately co-present in nature, sowing and harvesting; not only that, but they have also learned how to induce the chain of events that leads ultimately to harvesting. In other words, farmers have learned how to symbolically bridge the hidden steps of a natural sequence and have also learned how

to impose their own sequence so that it replaces the one found in nature. Writing extends the symbolic reach even further, because it allows the dissection of a natural sequence and its rearrangement along different lines of analysis which were never possible before. A list of workmen's rations is, conceptually, much more than a linear sequence of items. It allows symbolic sorting based on the written embodiment rather than on the concrete persons and goods involved — for instance, sorting and totalling by location, foremen, goods received, etc. I will look for similar categories in addressing our three questions of the political dimension of urbanization, of industrialization, and of ethnic consolidation.

The political impact of urbanization on economic development

Early urbanization as identical with state formation: the city-state as state-city. The concept of "urbanization," as seen in its earliest developmental stages when cities first came into being, describes a very complex process, which includes social, political, technical, and ideological aspects, as well as the economic ones on which we are focussing today. From a socio-political point of view, it may be viewed as a demographic coalescing of such proportions that face-to-face recognition among its individuals was no longer possible. And yet it was, at the same time, a coalescing that resulted in tightly knit organisms controlled by a clear-sighted leadership, which gave a sense of finality to this organism and shaped its structure in such a way that it acquired a suprapersonal, or public, identity of its own. In this sense, early urbanization is identical with state formation; the structures that held together the human group were in the first place structures of power, which provided purpose and constraint. Obviously, a host of other factors played a major role in allowing the city to come into existence and to flourish, such as the territorial contiguity within large permanent settlements or the new communication techniques brought about by writing. But it was political leadership that served as the determinant component. If, then, early cities were all, indeed, city-states and state-cities, it follows that a question about economic aspects of urbanization involves a question about the impact that politics had on economic processes and institutions. The city as an instrument of power channeled resources in certain specific directions; concretely, things were procured, produced, and transported in response not only to market demands, but also to political decisions, which were in the hands of the urban elite. In other words, how did the exercise of power channel and control, to its own advantage, the production and distribution of goods?

We will look first at the role of the palace, then at the phenomenon of industrialization.

The palace as the pinnacle of power and wealth. From all we know about Mesopotamian institutional development, the palace was at all times, almost without exception, at the pinnacle of the structure of power.

There is little doubt that the palace represented the *greatest concentration of unencumbered wealth* in any given city. What I mean by "unencumbered wealth" is that all entitlements, however permanent in practice, were in fact subject to direct royal decisions. In contrast, the revenues of the temple were encumbered for uses that could not be subject to the personal decision of the temple administrators. This should not be taken to mean that the temple admninistrators could not use the funds as they saw fit for either the temple's or their own personal gain; it only means that the range of initiative was limited to their specific locality (city and temple), so that they would not, for instance, open or annex other temples. State revenues, on the other hand, gave the king a greater range of choices. There were of course *de facto* entitlements — such as public works or defense — but specific allocations were the king's choice. There is no indication that a distinction was made between personal and public aspects of royal finances, so that the income from state revenues corresponded effectively to the personal income of the king. On the one hand, the palace concentrated in itself the wealth of both the state and the private family of the king; on the other, there was only one palace in any given city, since no other concentration of wealth could match the sources of income of the king. It appears then that the king was without question and in all cases the one who had by far the greatest economic leverage of all, whether individuals or institutions.

Such a privileged status for personal economic growth was not challenged because its recognition was essential to the very sense of self-identity of the city as a body politic. For it was the king's power that ensured the internal cohesiveness of the new public entity, the city-state or state-city. *Coercive force* was clearly a major tool in the hands of the king: the king was, inter alia, the military chief who would use war as a mechanism for expanding his power base and widening his revenue support. He was also the beneficiary of all forms of taxation, to the point that fines for the breach of *private* contracts were payable not only to the offended party, but to the king! Such regulatory functions were as essential to the continued existence of the city as they are profitable to the individual whose leadership was accepted as indispensable, without ever any real challenge to his role and consequent privilege.

But power was not only exercised through coercive force. There were also *integrative mechanisms,* which the palace employed to foster the sense of identity of the group. We may too easily dismiss the value of such mechanisms by considering them as mere rhetorical expressions of self-serving propaganda. They were that, of course. But the care with which they were proposed to their target audience, across boundaries of time and space, indicates that they catered to the expectation of the subjects as well as to the vainglory of the king. I am thinking of ideological models that were presented to the social group and were accepted by it, for instance the king as shepherd, as father, as beloved of the gods. I am especially thinking of the recurrent royal *topos* of economic prosperity, which each king boasts to have brought about in his reign. Whether or not the boast corresponded to reality, the very existence of the cliché implies that the king was in some ways bound by his subjects' expectations.

Coercive force and integrative mechanisms must certainly have been present in preurban times, though it would be difficult to find specific evidence to that effect: we may assume, in other words, that it was in similar ways that preurban leadership would also foster loyalty and solidarity within the group — through adjudication, defense organization, ideological uplifting, and facilitation in the access to resources. But there were certainly major differences. For one thing, the urban leader, as distinct from his preurban counterpart, was known personally to a very small proportion of his subjects. Even more importantly, the benefits of the new urban system accrued in an increasingly more lopsided manner to the personal advantage of the ruler and his family. And the well-being of the social group as a whole was predicated more and more on profoundly regulatory interventions on the part of the king. In other words, power made cohesiveness possible for larger and larger aggregates of human beings, but this cohesiveness was translated in real benefits for an ever smaller percentage of individuals. What this really meant may best be assessed by considering the perceptual impact of industrialization.

Industrialization as the economic correlative of urbanization and state formation. Industrialization, in its most basic sense, may be understood as the segmentation of the procurement, production, and marketing processes in such a way that the individuals involved in each of the segments, or even subsegments, are not in control of the overall process; in fact, they are often not even in full control of their particular segment. This means that single individuals in this economic chain can easily be replaced. As a result, they cannot alter on their own the particular

mechanisms to which they are assigned, nor can they effectively command the best profits for their own personal gain.

Understood in this sense, industrialization goes hand in hand with urbanization as a political process. We have seen how urbanization first happened when a social mass, not otherwise bound by such natural bonds as face-to-face recognition, congealed in such a way as to allow a new suprapersonal bond to form. In this sense, then, *urbanization* is the establishment of a public "persona" that in effect bonds and controls persons through impersonal means. *State formation* is the political dimension of the same process, and *industrialization* the economic dimension. All three aspects are closely bound with each other and cannot properly be understood apart from each other.

As an example of this concept of "industrialization," I will refer to a set of data that I published a few years ago in connection with our excavations in the early 80s at the protoliterate site of Qraya, near Terqa, in Eastern Syria. I have subsequently done experimental work on this topic with a colleague who is an expert in the technology of salt, Beatrice Hopkinson. The experimental aspect of this research is still unpublished, and I will describe it here briefly to the extent that it helps one to understand industrialization as I have just described it.

The problem with Qraya is that it is a site with many of the specific characteristics of early urban sites of the classic Uruk Period, but is clearly not a city, nor is it near any other major urban center. The first question then is: why is a site, which looks urban but is not, in fact, a city, located in a region with no traces of urbanization?

The second question relates to a type of vessel that is characteristic of this urban-like assemblage, the bevelled-rim bowls. As in most sites of this period, in Qraya, too, there were hundreds of complete exemplars and thousands of sherds, in relatively limited excavation areas; mass produced, mass used, and mass discarded, they are as indicative as anything of an industrial type of function. So, again, what is the meaning of industrial activities in the middle of nowhere?

The solution proposed to account for both problems is that Qraya was a specialized site established for the exploitation of salt deposits for the food preservation needs of the northern cities in the Khabur area. The experiment we did at Qraya went through the following steps.

(1) Salt was brought from the salt playas of Bouara to Qraya, which is the closest point on the Euphrates. It is important to note that (a) small proto-literate encampments have been found in the steppe between Qraya

and Bouara and that (b) salt purification requires a vast amount of running water, for which of course the Euphrates was a perfect source.

(2) Salt was then placed in large vats for a preliiminary sedimentation process, and it must be noted that such vats are prominent in the Qraya ceramic assemblage.

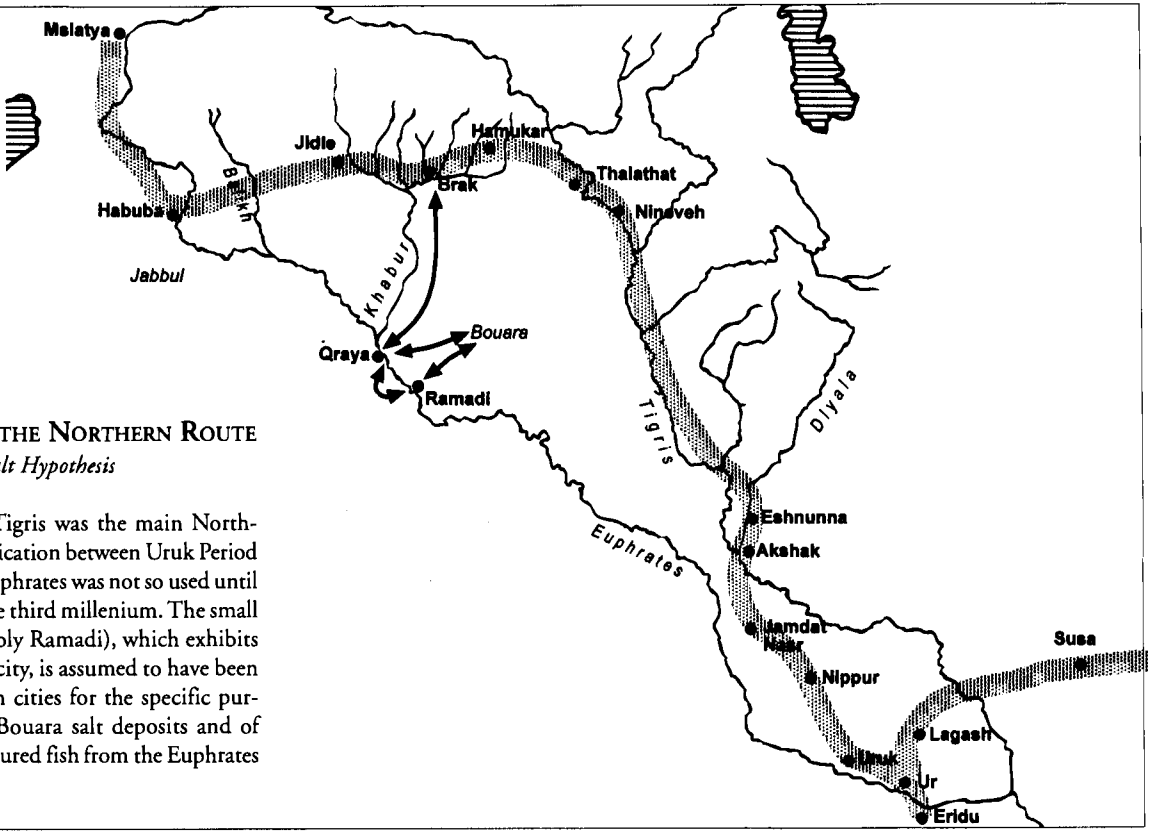
(3) The resulting brine was then placed in another vessel characteristic of the Qraya (and Uruk) assemblage, namely spouted jars. Different types of impurities would settle either above or below the spout, so that the brine in the middle of the jar would loose all impurities.

(4) The clear brine was then poured in platters, (again, very prominent in the assemblage), which were placed on fireplaces with ceramic grills. Such fireplaces and grills are prominent in the stratigraphic record of Qraya, and, significantly, there is considerable water runoff (without trace of organic components) right next to the grills.

(5) When the brine reached a certain temperature, it would suddenly condense into very pure crystals, which were scooped with pottery ladels into the bevelled-rim bowls, placed on the grills around the platters, where the salt would dry very uniformly on account of the porosity of the ceramics and the conical shape of the bowls. Salt cakes could be extracted by breaking the bevelled-rim bowls, hitting if necessary their base (which accounts for the unusual quantity of longitudinal breaks, and the equally unusual pattern of discard).

At Qraya the resulting product was most likely put to immediate use by salting fish from the Euphrates to be shipped north. But otherwise the salt cakes were shipped in their original containers, a procedure that seemed uneconomical (given the weight of these bowls) until a very plausible reason emerged as I observed what would happen to salt stored (in this case in our expedition house in Mozan) in containers other than the porous bevelled-rim bowls. Even today, some five years after our experiment, the salt stored in bevelled-rim bowls is still usable, while that stored in other ceramic vessels is hopelessly contaminated by the disintegration of the vessel.

Salt procurement as I have described it, is of particular significance because it shows a type of industrialization (in the sense described earlier) that is remarkably advanced and very closely dependent on urbanization as a sociopolitical phenomenon. Goods were not simply received through transshipment across intermediate markets; there was, rather, a single, unified market, which recognized the need for a particular resource, identified a place of procurement without any preexistent indigenous population (and obviously without any preemptive operation), set up with



Uruk Sites Along the Northern Route

Qraya Salt Hypothesis

It is assumed that the Tigris was the main North-South artery of communication between Uruk Period settlements, while the Euphrates was not so used until the rise of the Mari in the third millenium. The small site of Qraya (and possibly Ramadi), which exhibits urban traits but is not a city, is assumed to have been created by the Northern cities for the specific purpose of exploiting the Bouara salt deposits and of exporting both salt and cured fish from the Euphrates to the Northern cities.

its own know-how and its own labor force (a fairly complex production chain), and delivered the finished goods to its own markets through a specialized shipping system of its own.

This process can best be understood within, first, the specific geographic setting of Northern Syro-Mesopotamia; and, second, the impact of ethnic awareness on the definition of economic domains. To these two topics we will turn now, in sequence.

The rural hinterland: production and marketing landscapes

Sociopolitical and economic significance of the hinterland. While I believe it is valid to say that the early city-state *was* a state-city, we need to qualify this correlation as soon as we look at the simple fact that every city required, from the very beginning, a rural hinterland. If so, the concept of city applies properly to the built-up environment, which is properly distinct from the non-built-up environment of the surrounding landscape. This perception is reflected in the ancient semantic dychotomy between "city" and "country," *uru* vs. *kur* in Sumerian and *Élum* vs. *Étum* in Akkadian. The "state" is the "country," and as such it is larger than the "city."

Yet, if it is legitimate to say that the "country" environment is not built-up, it would be incorrect to consider it undeveloped. The rural hinterland is highly developed in a variety of ways. There is of course the agricultural aspect of cultivation. But more than that, there is a close cultural dependence on the city and institutions on the part of the hinterland's population. This is what I have called a "para-urban" type of relationship, which can be described concretely in terms of such diverse factors as the enforcement of the law, the enactment of cultic rituals, the availability of technology, the supply of specialized resources, the coordination of public works, and the imposition of taxation or of conscription, none of which is available in a nonurban setting. In this sense, then, the hinterland is indeed part of the "city" even if it is discrete from it architecturally and demographically.

The economic impact of the hinterland is of course of fundamental importance. The agricultural base it provides is the most obvious aspect of the close correlation between hinterland and city. But there are other aspects as well. I would like to mention here the one pertaining to demographics. The rural classes were dependent on the city for all the various cultural needs that I have just enumerated (law, cult, technology, supplies, public works); but the fruition of these needs was filtered through the very distance that intervened between the peasants and the decisional

centers in the city proper. Such distance might not be great in terms of the physical horizon, but it was extremely real in perceptual terms. So we witness here another example of what I have described above with regard to industrialization: the application of distancing mechanisms. The creation of the city was co-terminous with the creation of the rural, paraurban classes. Preurban settlements could not obviously be classified as rural hinterland, regardless of the outward similarity in their size and internal differentaition. What distinguishes the paraurban hinterland is precisely its dependence on the urban center, a dependence that implies both control and distance. And such ability to impose long-distance controls lies at the heart of urbanization: the longer the chain of command, the less it can be questioned. The overarching coordination of the system as a whole, its articulation in discrete segments that work towards a shared goal, this is the product of the urban mental template, and it results in the same kind of symbolic distancing from a natural sequence that we noticed in industrialization. The economic impact of urbanization on the rural hinterland can thus be defined as a form of industrialization of the farming cycles.

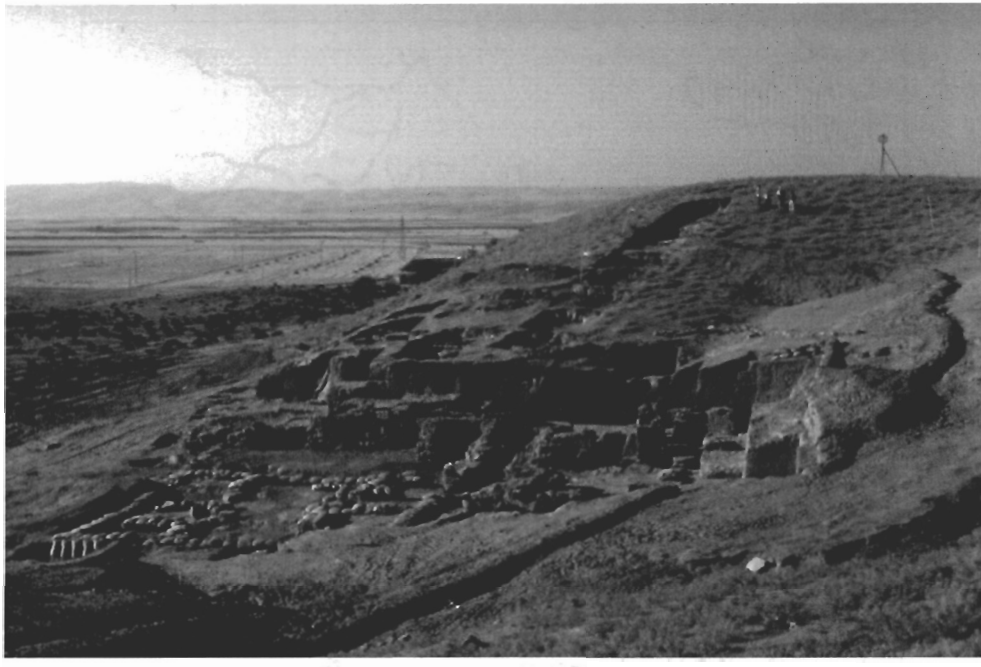
Towards a structural classification of hinterland types. In the urban situation of southern Mesopotamia there is a close perceptual link between the rural or paraurban landscape and the built-up or urban environment. Such a perceptual link is emphatically proclaimed by an element of this built-up environment, which is uniquely characteristic of that urban landscape, the ziggurat. The temple tower rises as a single architectural element above the city skyline, *i.e.*, there is, for the most part, only one such construction in any given city. And this high point of the urban conglomerate is visible for miles around, almost to the edges of the hinterland. In this respect, the temple tower is the unifying element that defines the "country" around the "city," as if a pivot on which hinges the perceptual integrity of the population, both urban and paraurban.

But such a well-defined horizon becomes less applicable as one moves away from the irrigated area of the great "river banks." In the irrigable alluvium, the landscape is essentially conditioned by cultural geography. Elsewhere, instead, the hinterland has a configuration of its own that conditions and limits the possibilities of cultural intervention. While, in the South, territorial expansion came from the progressive appropriation of major existing urban centers by other urban centers, in the Center and the North the territorial size of the hinterland was much more extensive to begin with. Territorially, Mari was the largest state of the entire Syro-Mesopotamian area, because its peasant classes (the Amorites) had already

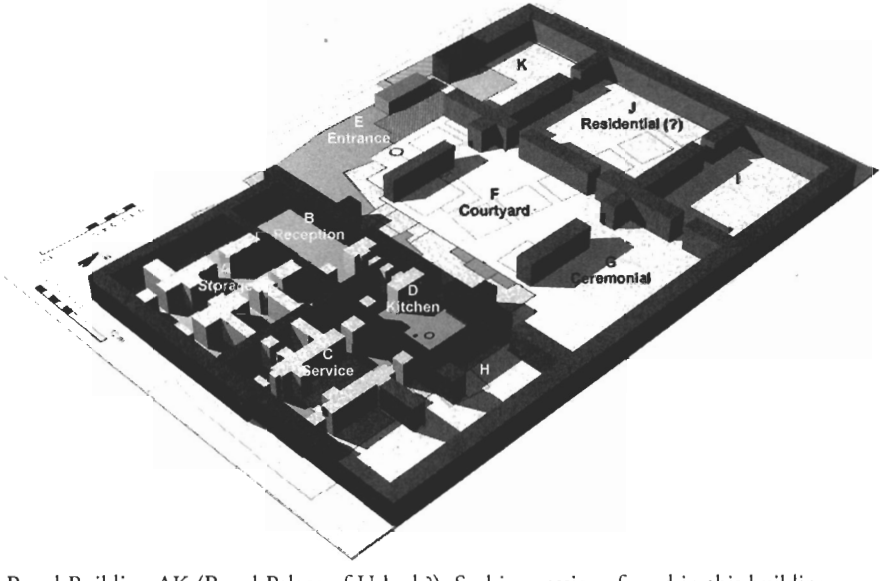
incorporated the vast rangelands of the steppe in the third millennium. But even in the dry-farming area, the territorial expanse of the hinterland was much larger than in the South. The consequence was a greater distance in the exercise of the capillary controls that urban state administration required. In other words, the "paraurban" condition in the South meant that the rural classes were all in close perceptual proximity of their urban point of reference, while in the Center and the North "paraurban" would have meant, for many, simply the knowledge that a city existed, without necessarily a visual, perceptual verification of its physical reality. This would have posed a different set of problems in terms of the integration of hinterland and urban center. I think that ethnicity was a factor in solving these problems. But before we consider the question of Hurrian ethnicity, two points must be raised about the geography of the Khabur region.

Geography vs. politics (Mozan/Urkesh and Brak/Nagar). While much more is known to date about Tell Brak, ancient Nagar, than about Tell Mozan/Urkesh, enough has already emerged to suggest that the differences between the two sites are greater than their similarities. This seems unexpected at first, since they both lie well within the same general geograhical area, *i.e.*, the dry-farming area of the Khabur plains. The only difference in this respect is that Nagar's location in the southern part of the plains places it on the edge of the zone of useful rainfall, meaning that in drier winters the rainfall might be insufficient to produce an adequate harvest; Urkesh, on the other hand, is in a favored zone, where climatic differences may account for degrees of productivity, but never for a lack of it. There are otherwise no natural barriers between Urkesh and Nagar, no mountain ranges, no major rivers.

And yet there are considerable differences in material culture between the two sites, particularly in the architecture, in the glyptic and, it would appear, in ethnic affiliation, if we are right in thinking that Urkesh was Hurrian, and Nagar was not. We will return to this in a moment. But there is also another line of argument that points to the existence of a boundary between Urkesh and Nagar. The latter is mentioned prominently in Ebla, and has provided direct evidence of Akkadian occupation. Urkesh, on the contrary, is never mentioned either in Ebla or (with only one possible exception) in the Akkadian royal inscriptions, even though the archaeological evidence from the excavations shows that it was a major city at least from ED III onward. It appears as though Urkesh belonged essentially to a different world, which did not interact directly with Ebla, and was either not attractive enough for an Akkadian invasion or sufficiently powerful to resist it.



Royal Building AK at Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh) in front of the tell slope, with the slopes of the Tur-Abdin leading to the Hurrian hinterland of the Anatolian platueau in the background. This could be the political and economic center that controlled the Hurrian highlands.



Royal Building AK (Royal Palace of Urkesh?). Seal impressions found in this building identified the city and the provided information on the royal court of Urkesh.

The presence of such an unexpected boundary between Urkesh and Nagar may be explained partly through their orientation towards the highlands, which displays at first a deceptive symmetry. Nagar controls the major route to what is today southern Iraq, across the Sinjar, and Urkesh, the major route to the Anatolian plateau, across the Tur-Abdin and particularly the Mardin pass. This symmetry, which seems at first to point towards a parallelism between the two cities, offers instead a clue to their distinction. The Sinjar offers no special natural resources, and thus the proper hinterland of Nagar is the Khabur Plain. The Tur-Abdin, on the other hand, is rich in resources (copper, timber, stones), and it is an essential component of the hinterland of Urkesh.

The highlands' urban ledge (Urkesh, Nawar, and Subartu). It may be, in fact, that the highlands represented the primary and most distinctive hinterland of Urkesh, as with the steppe for Mari. There is, in this perspective, something of an urban ledge along the southern border of the highland, where places like Chuera (of which we know the ancient name, Harbu, only for later periods), Mozan/Urkesh, and Leilan/Shehna were major centers, each with a similar, if different, hinterland in the highlands to their immediate North. In the third millennium, urbanization proper had not yet taken place in the highlands, and it appears that, instead, the highlanders moved to the piedmont area to establish their first cities. When we call these Hurrian cities, we presume that the trend towards urbanization originated in the highlands and resulted in the establishment of urban centers whose distinctiveness depended on their hinterland. But the term Hurrian is attested later and entails a rather broad concept, to which I will return in a moment. First I wish to focus on the term Nawar, which is closely associated with Urkesh. It occurs in the royal titulary of Atal-Ïen, who calls himself "king of Urkesh and Nawar." Nawar is generally assumed to be the same as Nagar, *i.e.*, as referring to the site of Tell Brak. If so, Atal-Ïen would have ruled over the entire Khabur Plains and would have incorporated in his title the names of the two major cities of that territory. For reasons that I cannot explain here, I believe that Nawar is *not* the same as Nagar, hence that it does not refer to the site of Tell Brak, but rather that it refers to the immediate hinterland of Urkesh, in particular the highlands of the Tur Abdin in the region of the modern city of Mardin. This is in line with a pattern that is common in the royal titulary of the central and northern regions of Syro-Mesopotamia, though not in the South. In other words, I consider Urkesh/Nawar to be parallel to Mari/Khana or Aleppo/Yamkhad. This dichotomy

between city and region (where the concept of region certainly included ethnic factors as well) was not found in the South because the hinterland regions of cities like Ur or Kish did not differ in any substantial way from each other, so that the names Ur or Kish referred to both the urban center and its hinterland.

The economic significance of the hinterland has to do with the way in which the urban center can harness the resources available and bring their exploitation to levels that would be unimaginable without the organization provided by the urban center. The city arises from the hinterland at the same time that it defines it. The hinterland provides the production and marketing landscape within which the urban economy can most directly unfold. In the South, such landscape was exclusively agricultural. In the Middle Euphrates (with essentially only the urban center of Mari and then, briefly, Terqa), the hinterland consisted of two alternative landscapes, the agricultural corridor along the river banks, and the steppe rangeland used for a new industrial approach to animal husbandry. The landscape of the Hurrian hinterland, the urban ledge of Tur-Abdin, benefitted from excellent conditions for farming and animal husbandry, but added to them the control of major natural resources in the highlands. To properly understand the economic significance that the control of this hinterland provided to cities like Urkesh, we need to investigate what mechanisms made it possible for the urban center to retain control over such diverse and widespread hinterlands. One such mechanism may have been the underlying ethnic affinity that bound urban and rural classes together.

Ethnic awareness and economic regions

Definition of ethnic group. An underlying problem in the use of the concept of ethnicity is the loose way in which the term is understood and applied to historical analysis. As one of Oppenheim's epigrams in *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1964) aptly indicates, the formula "Regnum a gente in gentem transfertur" is often applied as a rather elementary explanatory mechanism of historical development: the Akkadians versus the Sumerians, the Amorite invasions, the split between Babylonians and Assyrians, etc. There has been no serious attempt to define what, if anything, these terms stand for. And one has the uncomfortable impression that any "people" for which a gentilic adjective is applicable qualifies as ethnic. In other words, we assume that there were Sumerians, Amorites, Babylonians or, for that matter, Hurrians simply because we have, in English (!), an adjec-

tive that refers to a people. Consequently, we speak normally of Amorite kingdoms, Babylonian art, Assyrian religion as if these were well-defined ethnic phenomena, and while in fact they stand for rather vague regional, chronological, and political configurations.

It is however possible, I believe, to specify explicit and rigorous criteria that allow us to define when the concept of ethnicity is properly applicable and are useful in providing a valid historical categorization of the facts as we know them. The question of a "Hurrian" culture, and in particular of Hurrian art, is a celebrated example, and a renewed discussion is timely in view of our findings at Mozan/Urkesh. Accordingly, I will first propose an explicit definition of the concept, then try to show its applicability to Urkesh and the Hurrians, in order to conclude by showing the link between economic development and the kind of broad group solidarity that ethnic awareness provides.

What is, then, an ethnic group? I use the term for what I consider to be a concrete social reality in the history of ancient Syro-Mesopotamia. As such, it was operative in terms of its internal power of aggregation, and, externally, in terms of how it affected other sociopolitical entities. There is also evidence for group consciousness; in other words, members of the group exhibited awareness of their belonging to it. I suggest that the key elements that help define an ethnic group are as follows. It is (1) sufficiently large to preclude the possibility of face-to-face association, and (2) sufficiently consistent through time to span several generations while retaining its internal aggregation. It has (3) a marked sense of identity, generally expressed through a proper name referring to the group. The members share (4) a number of cultural traits, ranging from material culture to ideology and religion, from customs and lifeways to language. These traits are (5) ascribed (they are acquired at birth, or through a birthlike process of assimilation), but they are (6) nonorganizational, i.e., they do not, in and of themselves, motivate the group into a special kind of coordinate action, and they are mostly (7) symbolic in nature.

When using archaeological and textual sources, as in our case, I identify a group as "ethnic" when such a distributional patterning can be found recurrently over a large area and long period of time. The textual component is of critical importance, since nothing can otherwise really be proven (though it might be implied) about self-awareness, about linguistic cohesiveness, and about self-identity resting on a common name.

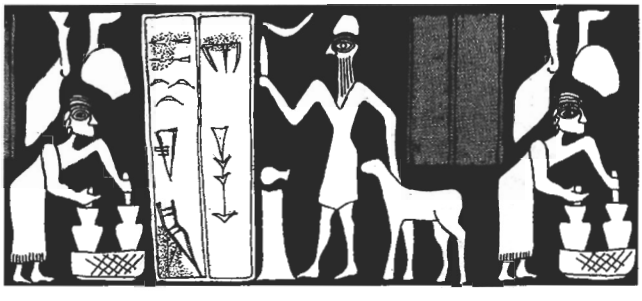
In the light of this definition, a number of other concepts may then be more specifically understood and kept distinct from that of ethnicity. Thus, for instance, the tribe can be definied as an organizational subset

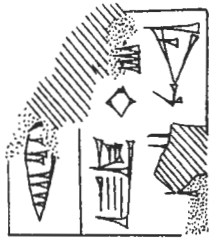
of an ethnic group, *i.e.*, a full ethnic group or a portion thereof that is also held together through some form of actual or potential organizational mechanism (political, religious, etc.).

Application to Urkesh and the Hurrians. The earliest attestation for Hurrian as a language comes from late-third-millennium Urkesh. Admittedly, the documentation is still limited. We have only, from the late third millennium, (1) the well-known foundation inscription of king Tish-Atal, which is inscribed on a stone tablet and on the bronze plaque that is found below the paws of two distinct lion figures, serving as foundation deposits for a temple built by the king in Urkesh, and (2) the numerous inscriptions of king Tupkish on royal seals found during our excavations. Nothing of the sort has been found in Brak/Nagar, where archaeological exposure has been much more extensive than at Mozan/Urkesh and where the only official inscription records the presence of the Akkadian king Naram-Sin.

To attribute special significance to the Hurrian documentation from Urkesh, however limited in size, is, I believe, justified. A scribal tradition does not arise in a vacuum, particularly when it is used to convey an official message, whether on a foundation document or on several royal seals. This does not mean that we are necessarily bound to find, in Mozan/Urkesh, a Hurrian archive. Playing the devil's advocate, I am fully prepared to accept the possibility that (1) normal administrative procedures were carried out in Sumero-Akkadian, that (2) real archives, administrative, political, or literary, may not be in store for us since the palace shows no trace of destruction, and that (3) remnants of a Hurrian scribal tradition may therefore continue to be limited to occasional finds of political texts such as foundation inscriptions and seals. (A more realistic hope is that we may find impressions of the royal seals used personally by the king and the queen, since the numerous ones we have found so far, important though they may be, were used by their administrators.) But, for all of this, even the limited evidence we already have is very eloquent. Think of it: there is, in neither Ebla nor third-millennium Mari, any equivalent of Urkesh evidence, however limited, *i.e.*, no trace of a political text written entirely in the local language. Also significant is the Hurrian title *endan*, which is the only non-Sumero-Akkadian title known in all of Syro-Mesopotamia for the third millennium.

Particularly significant with regard to the issue of ethnic identity is the nature of this early Hurrian scribal tradition, namely that the documents stemming from it are political texts. This implies two important



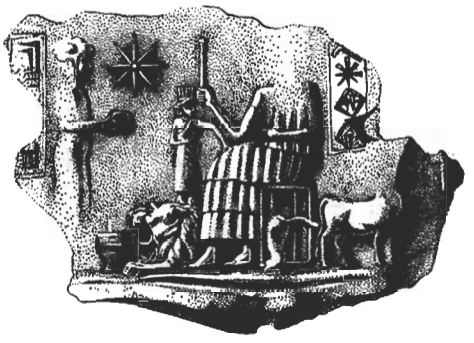


Seal of Innin-Shadu (top), an Akkadian name with both local and Southern elements.

Seal of queen Uqnitum's nurse, Zamena (second from top), a Hurrian name, who is in charge of the children and principle wife of the king. The Star and human-headed bull could be symbols for the crown prince.

Seal of queen Uqnitum's female cook (name obliterated, third from top), possibly the head cook, preparing lamb and butter.

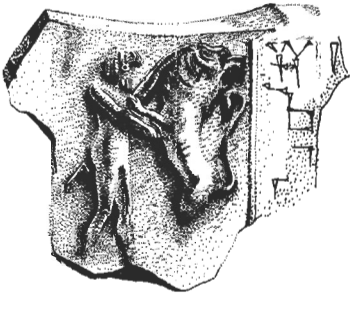
Seal of the thronebearer of Tupkish, the king (left). The word for king is the Sumerian logogram *lugal*.



Seal of "Tu[pk]ish [king of Ur]kesh" (the name of the king, Tupkish, is Hurrian). From other impressions we know that he used the Hurrian word for "king," even though this particular seal does not preserve the line with the title.

"Uqnitum, queen." The name of the queen in Akkadian. The queen's title is given with the Sumerian logogram NIN.

Queen's seal, "Uqnitum, the wife of Tupkish." Several other seals of the queen bear the title "wife of Tupkish," or simply "the wife." This stresses the importance of the "dynastic program," whereby the primary royal wife claims that title for herself and succession for her son.



Crown prince's seal, "[. . .] son of the king." The title gives the Hurrian word for "king." Unfortunately, the name of the prince is missing. It would be especially interesting to know if the crown prince had a Hurrian or an Akkadian name.

presuppositions: on the one hand, a royal will to affirm the distictiveness of its ethnic background, through the use of titles and texts that are wholly rooted in Hurrian; and, on the other, the scribal skills required for rendering complete Hurrian texts in the cuneiform script.

In addition, there is the important evidence of onomastics, for which, too, the earliest evidence comes from Urkesh. With the onomastics there is, generally, the double problem that (1) one cannot simply equate the linguistic analysis of the names with the ethnic affiliation of the name bearers, and that (2) the spread of names may be the result of factors quite different from ethnic expansion. In our case, it seems beyond dispute that Hurrian name-giving is solidly attested at least as of the last quarter of the third millennium; that there is a high degree of onomastic dispersion (the diversification of social classes for which the names are attested); and that its point of highest concentration is precisely in our region.

Another significant trait that helps us to define in some preliminary way a special Hurrian identity has to do with religious factors. Most of what we know about Hurrian myth and cult comes from texts preserved in a Hittite environment almost a thousand years after our period. But there begin to emerge interesting correlations between these texts and the finds from our excavations that suggest some direct line of continuity. Here I will illustrate two such possible points. The first pertains to myth. A seal impression from our excavations depicts a divine figure who is astride a mountain range; no such *topos* seems to be known from Akkadian glyptic, and it is tempting to interpret this as a representation of Kumarbi, who is often described in the later myths as walking in the mountains.

The second point about religion has to do with cult. A highly detailed representation on the seal of the cook of the queen of Urkesh shows a man with a knife leading a goat to be slaughtered on a butcher's block on which lies a jar turned on its side; a second scene on the same seal shows a woman who is churning butter. A very suggestive link has been proposed (in a forthcoming article) by a Research Associate of the Mozan/ Urkesh project, Dr. Alex Martin, between this scene and a Hurrian ritual preserved in a much later Hittite context: the text mirrors, with uncanny accuracy, the details depicted on our seal. The parallels are too minute and too close to be accidental, so that it seems legitimate to assume that the ritual was distinctive enough to be singled out as particularly characteristic of a Hurrian milieu. (Which is all the more interesting considering the obvious Biblical counter-parallel of the injunction against boiling a kid's meat in its mother's milk! Deut. 14:21; Ex 23:19.)

While I cannot enter into details here, it will be sufficient to mention that there is, to match this linguistic and cultural evidence, a correlative cluster of material culture traits, in particular with regard to architectural and ceramic traditions, such as the nature of construction with stone foundations and lower courses or the so-called metallic ware. This helps us define an archaeological area that essentially overlaps the highland's region and the urban ledge, *i.e.*, what may be referred to, geographically, as the region of Subartu. This homogeneity of material culture goes back, in part, to late prehistoric periods, and it was only interrupted by the strong Uruk type presence from the South at the end of the fourth millennium. This Sumerian presence was significant enough to bring urbanization to the area (possibly in the wake of a natural disaster at the end of the Khalaf period, as I have proposed in a publication of our excavations at Tell Ziyada), but it did not develop into any system of long-lasting political control, so that already in the early part of the third millennium they were readily replaced by a renewed strong indigenous tradition, which may precisely be identified with the new Hurrian urbanization.

Economic impact of ethnicity. We must now ask: what is the relevance of ethnicity for an understanding of economic development and patterns of land use in the early periods of urbanization? The answer is suggested by the considerations I have advanced earlier about the nature of the urban hinterland. If we look at the political dimension of urbanization, it appears that the cohesiveness of a large human group was an essential precondition for the development of industrial types of production and marketing. The early city provided exactly that, not just in the built-up environment of the city as an architectural entity, but in its hinterland as well. The earliest cities, in the South, defined the extent of their hinterland almost in terms of a radius of visibility from the top of their temple tower. Territorial contiguity, understood perceptually in direct reference to the built environment, served as a strong bond of solidarity for the human group. The "servants of the king" are at the same time the "sons of the city."

But in the central and Northern parts of Syro-Mesopotamia environmental factors caused the hinterland to be much vaster than in the South, from the beginning. Even though settled, the Hurrian highlands remained sparsely populated over a relatively vast geographical area. And this was probably a good reason why ethnic awareness came to play an important role, perhaps as important as with the Amorites in the region of Khana. It is interesting to note in this connection the contrast between

Southern terms, like "Babylonians," which derive from cities, and Northern terms, like Amorites or Hurrians, which do not (there is no city called Amurru or Hurri). In other words, Amorite and Hurrian serve as referents of proper ethnic realities, while Akkadian and Babylonian serve as referents of political organisms. Alternatively, Amorites and Hurrians were ethnic groups, while the Babylonians were not. Ethnicity, then, helped ensure the bond of solidarity within vast hinterlands that had not yet been integrated by urban political means. I think it may be argued, in fact, that ethnicity was not properly a factor before urbanization created the notion of a hinterland. Of course, villages or nomadic human groups would have shared common cultural factors, and to that extent there would have been a prehistoric place for ethnic awareness. But, in practical terms, ethnicity would have become an operative factor of political development only when it was seen to serve the integrative purposes of the early states, *i.e.*, when urbanization first began. Accordingly, as we begin to gain a deeper understanding of historical development in the center and the North, we will have to pay greater, and more careful, attention to this important factor.

We may assume that the major *economic* impact would be the fact that ethnic solidarity favors the implementation of a what may be called in effect a *common market.* An integrated economic region would certainly have been a goal of the political leadership, since *it* would be the first to reap economic benefits from such a situation. Not that ethnic cohesiveness would in and of itself guarantee a commonality of interests and an integration of markets. But in the presence of powerful central controls, such cohesiveness would be made to serve a common economic good, which of course coincided with the personal advantage of the ruling class. Avoiding the need of costly transshipments, affected as they were by merchants' markups and intermediate tariffs, an integrated market would place the procurement and disposition of resources from the Hurrian hinterland, especially metal, under the single control of the king of Urkesh.

The myth of Silver

Let me bring my paper to a conclusion by referring briefly to a Hurrian myth about Urkesh. It serves as a poetic retelling of the themes I have been developing. The myth is about Silver, the metal, deified.

First act: The young god, Silver, lives with his mother away from the city, hence presumably in the mountains where silver, the metal, is actually mined. He does not know who his father is, and the boys with whom

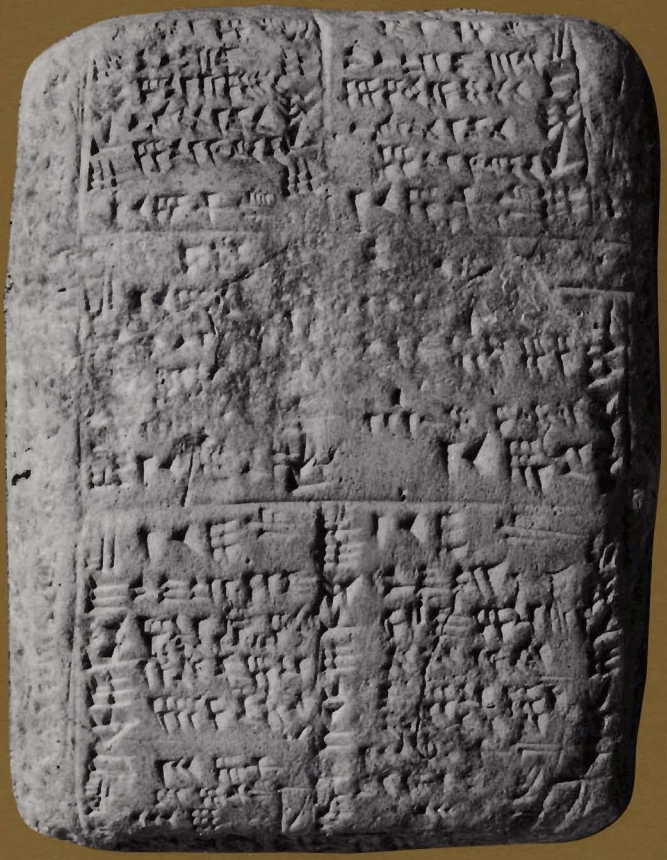
he plays make fun of him as if an orphan. Resentful, he strikes them and runs home weeping. He is in such a bad mood that, even as he asks his mother about his father, he starts hitting her as well. Interpreted, this means (in my euhemeristic reading of things!) that there is little harmony in the mountains, with strife among the smaller settlements, even when something precious, like silver, is available. There is a generic sense of dependence from a higher level of integration, but it remains unknown (the *topos* of the unknown father).

Second act: The mother reveals to Silver the secret of who is father is: "Oh Silver! The city you inquire about, I will describe to you. Your father is Kumarbi, the Father of the city Urkesh. He resides in Urkesh, where he rightfully resolves the lawsuits of all the lands. Your brother is Teshup: he is king in heaven and is king in the land. Your sister is Sauska, and she is queen in Nineveh. You must not fear any of them. Only one deity you must fear, Kumarbi, who stirs up the enemy land and the wild animals." For which again I propose the following exegesis: recognizing the authority of the city down in the plains brings both peace (through justice) and ethnic awareness (through recognition of one's father).

Third act: Silver takes off for Urkesh to look for his father, but does not find him, because, just when the boy went seeking his father in the city, the father has taken off in turn for the mountains — as if in a reciprocal interaction between city and hinterland! "Silver listened to his mother's words. He set out for Urkesh. He arrived in Urkesh, but he did not find Kumarbi in his house. He, Kumarbi, had gone to roam the lands. He wanders about up in the mountains." Here this portion of our text breaks off, but here is also where, it seems, we encounter Kumarbi on one of our seal impressions, as he roams through the mountainous hinterland of Urkesh.

Urbanization and Land Ownership in the Ancient Near East

Edited by
Michael Hudson and Baruch A. Levine



Peabody Museum Bulletin 7
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
Harvard University

URBANIZATION AND LAND OWNERSHIP

IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

■

VOLUME II
in a series sponsored by the
Institute for the Study of Long-term Economic Trends
and the International Scholars Conference on
Ancient Near Eastern Economies

A Colloquium Held at New York University, November 1996, and
The Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia, May 1997

EDITED BY
Michael Hudson and Baruch A. Levine

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
Harvard University
Cambridge MA 1999

Copyright © 1999 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College
ISBN 0-87365-957-0
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 98-67087
Manufactured in the United States of America

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system now known or to be invented, without permission of the publisher.

COVER:
Cuneiform tablet recording the division of property at the New Canal among Egibi family heirs, noting plot sizes and agricultural use (see also pages 404-405). Babylon, 519 BC (Third Year of Darius). © The British Museum.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 5

PREFACE 7

INTRODUCTION

The New Economic Archaeology of Urbanization 9

PART I

URBAN AREAS AS COSMOLOGICAL AND RITUAL CENTERS

1. Space and Time in Preagricultural Europe and the Near East: The Evidence for Early Structural Complexity
Alexander Marshack, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University 19

2. "Town" and "Country" in Ancient Egypt
Ogden Goelet, New York University 65

3. From Sacred Enclave to Temple to City
Michael Hudson, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University 117

PART II

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MESOPOTAMIAN CITIES

4. Households, Land Tenure, and Communications Systems in the 6th-4th Millennia of Greater Mesopotamia
C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University 167

5. The Constraints on State and Urban Form in Ancient Mesopotamia
Elizabeth C. Stone, State University of New York, Stony Brook 203

6. Urkesh and the Question of Early Hurrian Urbanism
Giorgio Buccellati, University of California, Los Angeles 229

PART III

LAND TENURE AND REAL ESTATE

7. Thoughts on Urban Real Estate in Ancient Mesopotamia
Marc Van De Mieroop, Columbia University 253

8. Land-Tenure Conditions in Third-Millennium Babylonia: The Problem of Regional Variation
Piotr Steinkeller, Harvard University 289

9. Economic Aspects of Land Ownership and Land Use in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria from the Late 3rd Millennium to the Neo-Assyrian Period
Carlo Zaccagnini, Naples 331

10. Sellers and Buyers of Urban Real Estate in South Mesopotamia at the Beginning of the 2nd Millennium BC
Nelli V. Kozyreva, Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg 353

11. Land Use in the Sippar Region During the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods
Muhammed A. Dandamayev, Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg 363

12. The Egibi Family's Real Estate in Babylon (6th Century BC)
Cornelia Wunsch, Heidelberg-Perth 391

13. The Biblical "Town" as Reality and Typology: Evaluating Biblical Reference to Towns and Their Functions
Baruch A. Levine, New York University 421

PART IV
METHODOLOGY DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

14. Methodology Discussion 457

15. Summary Review: From Open Lands to Private Ownership
Michael Hudson 481

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SHORT TITLES 491

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation and the Henry George School of New York for funding both the November 1996 and May 1997 colloquia and their publication in this volume.

Also due our thanks are New York University for hosting the first set of meetings in New York City and the Oriental Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia, for hosting the second colloquium.

Thanks to the publication team at the Peabody Museum, Donna Dickerson and Amy Hirschfeld, for shepherding the work into print. As with our first volume, *Privatization in the Ancient Near East and Classical World*, Anne Robertson transcribed the oral discussion from audio tapes made at NYU and from audio tapes made by Christopher Kent from the St. Petersburg videotapes. Lynn Yost designed and typeset the book and prepared the illustrations for printing. This volume could not have been produced without their efforts.

Michael Hudson (ISLET)
Baruch Levine (NYU)

PREFACE

This volume is the second publication of the International Scholars Conference on Ancient Near Eastern Economies (ISCANEE), which is sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Long-term Economic Trends (ISLET). The first colloquium, ***Privatization in the Ancient Near East and Classical Antiquity,*** was published by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (Bulletin 5) in 1996. With the present publication our group has begun to synthesize a new archaeological approach to studying long-term economic trends in their broadest social, institutional, ethnological, and intellectual context.

This colloquium was divided into two sets of meetings. The first six papers, dealing with the cosmological and archaeological dimensions of the most ancient Near Eastern cities, were delivered at New York University on November 14-15, 1996. The remaining seven Assyriological papers analyzing written texts were presented at the Oriental Institute of St. Petersburg on May 21-23, 1997. In addition to the papers published herein, oral presentations were made by Rita Wright (New York University) on the Indus Valley cities, Diana Craig Patch (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) on Egyptian cemeteries, Larry Stager (Harvard University) on the archaeology of ancient Israelite housing, and Johannes Renger (Freie Universität Berlin) on urban areas and foreign trade.

Present at the NYU meeting were representatives of the Henry George School, and in St. Petersburg, the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation president, Nicholas Tideman (Virginia Tech), and Fred Harrison (London) were present. Additional discussants were Larry Shiffman (New York University) and Sergei Koshurnikov (Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg). Other interested scholars attended each session.

The oral discussion of the papers by Muhammed Dandamayev, Carl Lamberg-Karlovsky, and Michael Hudson have combined the New York and St. Petersburg meetings, as these three papers were presented at both. The closing methodological discussion included only the St. Petersburg participants.