

## **Tar'am-Agade, Daughter of Naram-Sin, at Urkesh**

*Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati*

In August 1999, on what was meant to be the last day of excavation in Area AA, we began, unexpectedly, to find inscribed clay sealings. The first words that could be read were LUGAL A-ga-dè<sup>KI</sup>. It was an unexpected discovery that suddenly brought a whole new dimension to bear on our excavations. There was no question but that we had to alter our projected schedule. Borrowing time from the study period planned for the end of the season, we continued our excavations for a few more days, and by the end we had a total of some 200 sealings. Several of these allowed us to determine that the king in question was none other than Naram-Sin. The last fragments recovered told us further that the seal belonged to his daughter, a previously unknown princess by the name of Tar'am-Agade. Several impressions were also found of two other seals that turned out to be of great importance, even though only the personal names of the seal owners are given, without a title – Ewrim-atal and Ishar-beli. During the 2000 season, we were able to read the impressions of two more seals that also proved to be of great significance; the first belonged to an endan of Urkesh who was possibly the husband of Tar'am-Agade; the second revealed the recutting of a seal of which we had found an impression in the levels of king Tupkish. These five seals, reconstructed from their impressions, are the subject of the present article.

The seal impressions recovered in the Royal Palace of Urkesh are the most important single find made so far at Tell Mozan, and it seems especially fitting to publish them in the volume that honours the dean of archaeology in our area, David Oates. His work has blazed a trail in all of Syro-Mesopotamia, and we had the good fortune to encounter him along the way at several of his other stops. But it has been here, between Nagar and Urkesh, that we have come to benefit most fully from his friendship and collegiality, to learn more generously from his unsurpassed understanding of stratigraphy, architecture and geography. He has truly been a mentor for ourselves and for the younger generation that has also had the privilege to get to know him personally. And it is finally emblematic that Mozan should have regaled us with the only mention of Naram-Sin found in the Khabur outside Brak. We are extremely happy to publish this evidence in a volume dedicated to David Oates.

### **The stratigraphic context**

The reason why the discovery of these sealings came as a surprise is in itself significant. We were removing a thin layer that lay on a damaged floor in room H2 (Fig. 1), where there was no indication that it was anything other than an accumulation of discarded rubbish, but it contained a *cache* of door sealings collected at some previous time and then disposed of in a single episode. The nature of the finds strongly suggests that it was a primary discard, i.e., that this was the original dumping ground of the *cache* of door sealings, and that they had not been moved around from place to place. These observations have a bearing on the chrono-

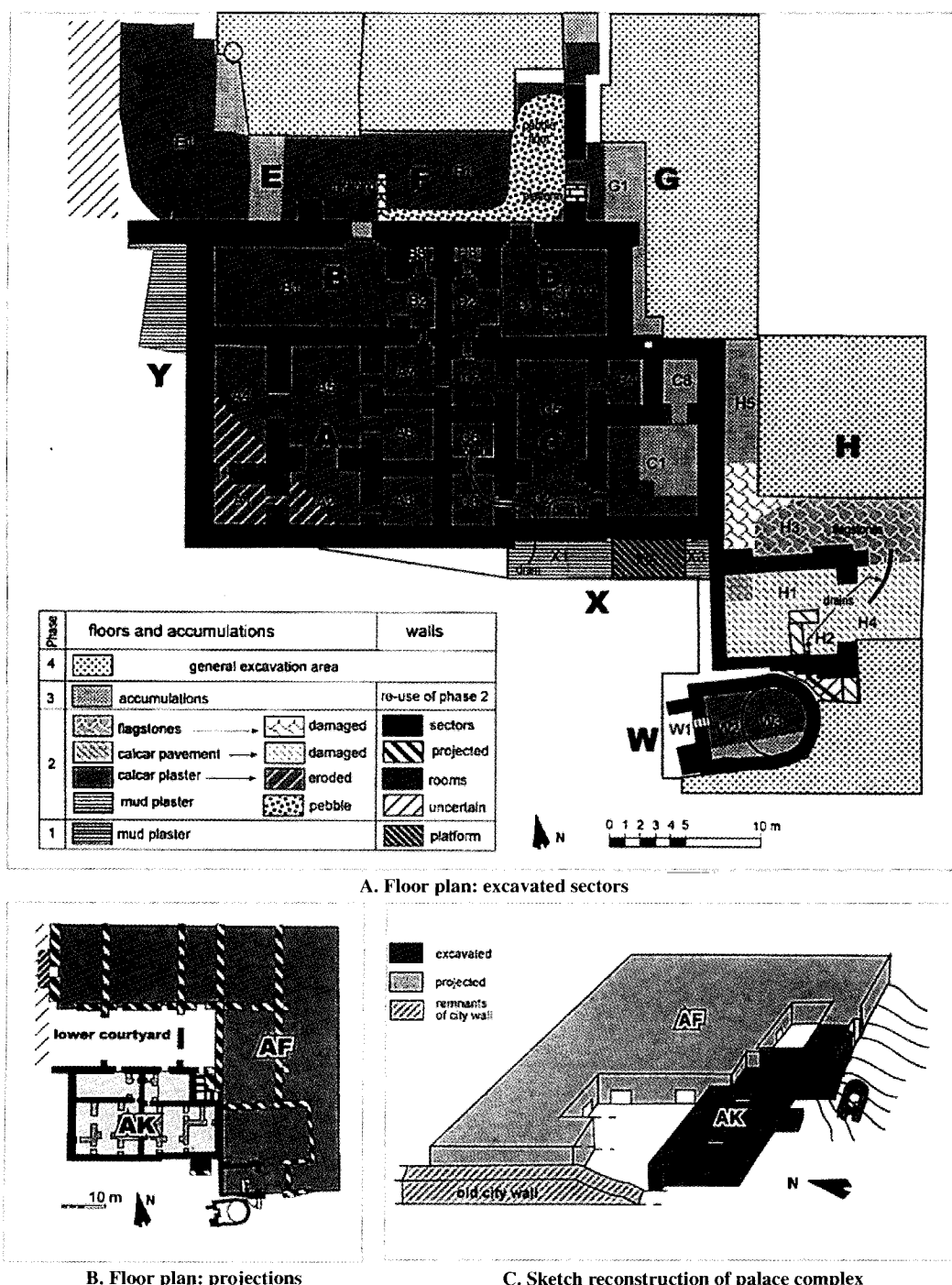


Fig. 1. The Royal Palace of Urkesh.

logical relevance of the find. This argument has been developed in one of our recent publications, where a fuller discussion of the stratigraphy and architecture, as well as the general historical significance of these discoveries, can be found (Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2000; for a recent general overview of the excavations at Tell Mozan, see Buccellati 1998). The conclusion we came to is that the cache of door sealings from room H2 is later than the main floor accumulations of Tupkish and Uqnitum excavated in previous seasons. In other words, the earlier strata of Tupkish and Uqnitum would date to the early part of the reign of Naram-Sin or possibly even slightly earlier. Our stratigraphic argument was to be

uncontrovertibly confirmed in the 2000 season by the discovery of the two Unap-[ ] seals, which are discussed below (p. 25).

To understand better the depositional sequence, we must refer to the architectural layout of the building. The portion of the building which has been excavated almost completely can now be understood as the service wing of the Palace (labeled AK, and including sectors ABCD, Fig. 1); it is from the earliest floor accumulations of this portion of the building that we have the major corpus of seal impressions belonging to Tupkish and Uqnitum. The formal wing (labeled AF, of which so far only sector H is under excavation) had been raised by some 2 metres above the floor level of the service wing AK, and was characterised by very good hard pavements; the large courtyard H3 was surfaced with flagstones. In AK, on the other hand, the floors had only a thin coat of plaster. We do not as yet have stairs to link the two different levels, that is, of the service quarter AK on the one hand and the formal wing AF on the other.

Our present evidence indicates that the excavated portion of the formal wing AF had been destroyed, but not the service wing AK which continued in use although no longer with the same function (none of the installations that characterise the early floors continue in the upper strata). Thus the dumping of the door sealings in H2 must have taken place immediately after the destruction of sector H of AF, probably coinciding with the change in function of AK.

### **The seal of Tar'am-Agade, the daughter of Naram-Sin (AFc1)**

The reconstruction of the seal bearing the name of the daughter of Naram-Sin (Fig. 2) is based on the match of 22 fragments, the composite reconstruction being designated AFc1 (AF stands for the locus, and c1 for the composite reconstruction) The seal from which the impressions were derived was not large, 3 cm high and about 2 cm in diameter. The sealings had been affixed to a door, demonstrating that the seal had been used locally. The inscription reads, in the usual Syro-Mesopotamian style, '(Of) Naram-Sin, the king of Akkad, Tar'am-Agade, his daughter' (the reading *Tar-àm* was first suggested by Piotr Steinkeller, for whose generous assistance we are very grateful). The contest scene illustrates a bull-man fighting a lion on one side of the inscription case and a nude hero fighting a water buffalo on the other (see Boehmer 1975; also Boehmer 1965, fig. 232, where the buffalo is shown together with a servant of the god Ea). The end of the elegantly upturned s-curve of the lion's tail overlaps the case of the inscription box, indicating that the inscription was carved first. The carving style is typically that of other contest scenes from the period of Naram-Sin (see Nagel and Strommenger 1968).

Two alternatives seem possible for the position of Tar'am-Agade in Urkesh: she was there either as the queen married to the endan or as the priestess of the most important temple. We have opted for the interpretation that Tar'am-Agade was queen of Urkesh, an interpretation made almost certain by the presence in the same cache of a seal that is most likely to have belonged to an endan of Urkesh (p. 18). It is also possible that at the time her seal was in use, Tar'am-Agade was the queen mother rather than the wife of a ruling endan. This would not affect the chronological sequence, which is derived from the stratigraphy and from the recutting evidence discussed below. Her filiation alone indicates that she was of the highest rank, as the daughter of the dominant king in Syro-Mesopotamia. Most importantly, the contest scene on her seal is also found on the seals of her brother Ukin-Ulmash and of several administrators linked with the family of Naram-Sin. Nor could she have come to Urkesh except



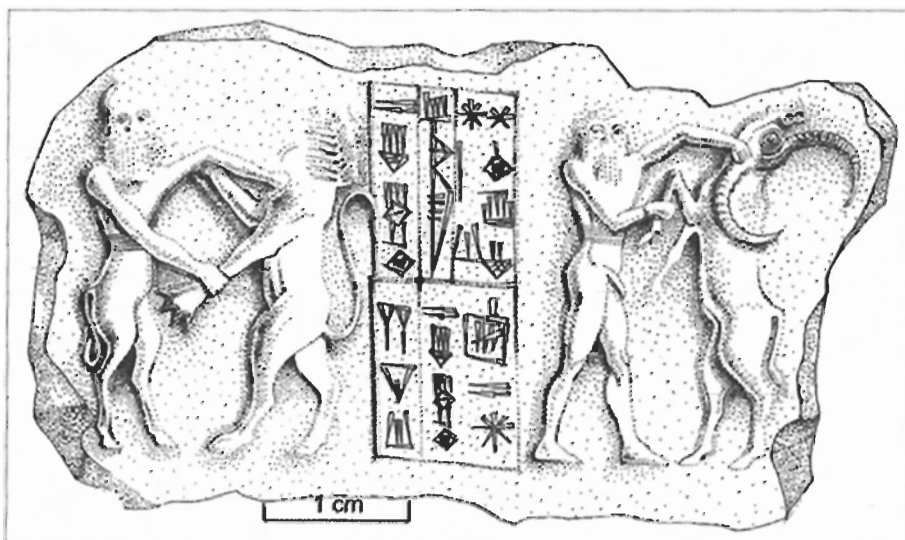
A. Lion's tail and lines 2-3 of inscription  
Item A13.9; photograph V12d5626



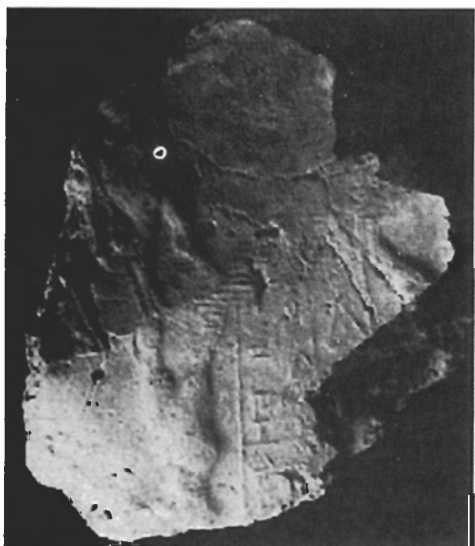
B. Lines 1-3 of inscription  
Item A13q106.1;  
photograph V12d5761



C. Tilted head of water buffalo  
Item V13q106.1;  
photograph V12d5759



D. Composite drawing of seal impression.



E. Upper rolling: bullman. Lower rolling: Leg of lion,  
lines 1, 4-6 of inscription, hero.  
Item A13.99;  
photograph V12d5741



F. Lines 1 and 4 of inscription, hero  
Item A13q97.8;  
photograph V12d5628

*Fig. 2. The seal of Tar'am-Agade, the daughter of Naram-Sin (AFc1). Photographs by Rick Hauser. Drawing by Pietro Pozzi.*

under the most favourable conditions, that is, as the main wife of the endan. Such interdynastic marriages are well known from Ebla (Biga 1987; 1991; 1998), and Naram-Sin himself may have married the daughter of the king of Elam (Hinz 1967). The historical implications are significant. Knowing of the links between Ebla and Nagar (Archi, *in press*; Biga 1987, 46; 1998), it seems possible that Naram-Sin may have forged an alliance with Urkesh to counteract the Ebla-Nagar association. If so, Urkesh emerges more clearly in the light of history as the other major power in the Khabur plains. Whether such an alliance took place before or after Naram-Sin's conquest of Nagar (about which we know from his stamped bricks at Tell Brak), it would certainly have strengthened his position, politically and militarily, in the North.

There remains also the possibility that Tar'am-Agade was at Urkesh not as queen but as a priestess acting alongside an Akkadian administrator – a situation which would of course imply an Akkadian conquest of Urkesh. This hypothesis is supported mainly by the fact that she uses neither the title queen nor wife of an endan. Moreover, three other daughters of Naram-Sin are known to have served as priestesses (in Ur, Nippur and Sippar; for a summary of the texts related to Naram-Sin, see Frayne 1993, 87). But this interpretation of her role seems unlikely for four reasons. (1) The scene on her seal is specifically linked with political and administrative functions, whereas the seals of her two sisters who served as priestesses bear completely different themes (discussed below). (2) While it is true that she does not have a political title, neither does she use a priestly title, which would have been important since her position as priestess would have served a political agenda. (3) Her seal impressions were found in a palace context and were all on door sealings (though discarded in a destroyed part of the building); thus she is more likely to have been connected with the palace than with the temple. (4) Other door sealings discarded with those of Tar'am-Agade (and therefore presumably used for the same original function) belong possibly to an endan and to a certain Ewrim-Atal, an individual with a Hurrian name (p. 18).

Interestingly, the seal of Tar'am-Agade documented in its impressions from Urkesh represents the first example of a seal belonging to a member of the Akkadian royal family that has been discovered where it was actually in use. Moreover, with the exception of the seal of Ukin-Ulmash, all the other inscribed royal seals from the entire Akkadian period, although naming a member of the royal family, indicate that the seal was owned by (or was presented to) a servant of that family member. The seal of Ukin-Ulmash (Boehmer 1964, no. 15; 1965, fig. 256) was not found in an archaeological excavation; we therefore have no evidence, beyond the inscription, to support the idea that it was his personal seal or for that matter how his seal would have been employed. Nor do we know whether he was a brother or half-brother of Tar'am-Agade.

On all the inscribed sealings contained in this cache, the figurative scene is less well preserved than the seal legend. This is typical for rollings of inscribed Akkadian seals and one of the reasons why it is thought that in the Akkadian period, for the first time, the inscriptions were considered more important than the seal design. Indeed Frankfort (1996, 90) noted that in Akkadian seals the inscription was cut as the central feature of the composition with the pairs of combatants flanking it. In the case of Tar'am-Agade and Ewrim-Atal (below) the reconstruction of the seal design presents no difficulty, since both bear a version of the standard Akkadian contest scene with two symmetrical pairs flanking a full length inscription box (compare for example Matthews 1997, nos. 308, 311-321; Boehmer 1965, figs. 160, 164, 182).

The personal name Tar'am-Agade, 'She loves Akkad',<sup>1</sup> proclaims a political programme and, as such, may or may not have been given at birth. If given at the time of her

presumed enthronement in Urkesh, one must wonder whether this together with the lack of an Urkesh-related title, was intended to remind the Urkesh court of the predominant role of Akkad in the alliance. However we interpret the specific meaning of the title on her seal, it should be emphasised that the message is political and that her seal was employed in administrative functions within the context of the palace.

### *Akkadian Royal Seals*

With the addition of the Tar'am-Agade seal, we know of forty seals (or relevant impressions) connected directly through their inscriptions with the royal family of Akkad. These include 32 individuals of whom we have the names or titles or both (Zettler 1997, 33–39). The inscribed seals and seal impressions connected with Naram-Sin or members of his family, for which a context is known, come mostly from Tello (12 examples); one is from Ur, one from Adab, one from Nippur, while two were excavated at Brak. One of the Brak examples came from the Naram-Sin building and belonged to a servant of Naram-Sin; the second came from Mallowan's 'Sargonid level' in Area ER (Matthews 1997, 319–20; see also Oates *et al.* 2001). Thus most of our evidence from these seals has no context. Even when they are found in excavations, little can be gained from their findspots and, except for the two seal impressions found at Brak and the new example from Urkesh, all the evidence for royal seals comes from the south.

The contest scene was the widely accepted design for officials directly connected, through their seal inscriptions, to members of the royal family. Furthermore, the only two strictly royal Akkadian seals, that of Tar'am-Agade and her brother Ukin-Ulmash, both bear contest scenes.<sup>2</sup> Seals of the servants of Binkalisharri depict the same iconography. Both brothers may have held administrative/political positions within the dynasty, since we know from inscriptions that another brother, Nabi-Ulmash, was governor of Tutub, while the crown prince, Shar-kali-sharri, may have been governor of Nippur before he succeeded his father (Gibson 1977, 32; Michalowski 1981, 175). It appears, then, that the seal designs connected with the Akkadian royal family are closely linked to their individual political positions within the dynasty (seals bearing the names of other daughters of Naram-Sin are discussed below). Restrictions on the iconography of the contest scene may even have been controlled directly through an administrative office in Akkad, since we see it so intimately connected with members of the court.

The carving of these seals is also of the highest quality, perhaps indicating that certain court artists were exclusively engaged in their production. With regard to the importance of the contest scene during the reign of Naram-Sin, we may conclude that it did indeed represent the power of the dynasty and as such was employed to project a political message. If this is true, it is not surprising that the use of this image had sharply decreased by the Ur III period, when the new dynasty wished to project a more theocentric image. In Boehmer's catalogue (1965) 47 per cent of the scenes can be classed as contest scenes, in contrast with 17 per cent on Ur III seals in the collections of the British Museum, the Morgan Library and Yale. The fact that the presentation scene becomes more prominent in the late Akkadian period may reflect some political dissatisfaction, possibly that which resulted in serious disturbances during the reign of Naram-Sin (see Oates *et al.* 2001). However, the connection between the name Tar'am-Agade and the contest scene imagery on her seal strengthens both the power of the iconography and the political message it conveyed.

The integration of iconography and text can be studied further through seals connected with two other daughters of Naram-Sin: Enmenanna and Tutanapshum.<sup>3</sup> Neither sis-

ter has a contest scene illustrated on the seals of her servants, and it would appear that the designs are linked with their respective positions as priestesses: Enmenanna in Ur and Tutanapshum at Nippur. In the case of two of their servants' seals we can interpret both the scenes and the depiction of the figures quite specifically. The banquet scene on the seal connected with Enmenanna (Boehmer 1964, no. 21) depicts a goddess seated opposite a god wearing a crescent crown; two other goddesses stand behind them. The distinctive character of this scene undoubtedly suggests the possibility that here is a 'portrait' of Enmenanna – the moon god is surrounded by females (priestesses in the guise of goddesses?), one of them seated, indicating a more equal relationship with the god (although the god has a more elaborate seat); the two seated figures are also comparable in that each presents a flat cup. The single seal connected with Tutanapshum illustrates a seated woman with a many-pointed crown; in front of her stands a woman holding a musical instrument (Collon 1987, no. 530). A tree appears to indicate an outdoor setting. There is a distinct probability that the seated figure is Tutanapshum herself, depicted in a setting which would identify her. Indeed Zettler (1977, 35) has also suggested that the seals 'are extraordinary and specific to two individuals, perhaps an attempt at portraiture'.

In the stratified impressions from Urkesh the text of the seal inscriptions and the associated iconography are closely linked in that they too depict the seal owners themselves in settings which are specifically connected with their political and administrative positions. Of the greatest significance is the fact that the scenes are loaded with political meaning. At Urkesh, moreover, we have the only excavated body of evidence from a context within which these seals were actually employed and therefore the only example of how the political message was specifically promulgated. On the basis of this very clear evidence we think the same connection can be made in the Akkadian royal seals discussed here: just as the priestly status of her two sisters is indicated through their iconography, so the political status of Tar'am-Agade as queen is emphasised. This is not as explicitly rendered as on the seals of her sisters, since we lack a seal impression showing her actually seated in a court setting. However, both the corpus of Urkesh royal seals from the stratum of Tupkish and Uqnitum and the seal impression of Tar'am-Agade contribute clear evidence that internal mechanisms were developed through the seal cutting workshops to articulate and disseminate clear political messages. This paralleled the function of Akkadian stelas in the south, although we have none in their original contexts and are therefore uncertain of the settings within which their messages were transmitted (see Buccellati 1993; Goodnick Westenholz 1998; Nigro 1998). Certainly the contrast between the combat scene of Tar'am-Agade and the designs on seals of individuals connected with her sisters is striking, and if the very clear pattern linking the text with depictions of the seal owner in a specific setting already clear at Urkesh can be extended to the south, then the proposed interpretation of Tar'am-Agade as queen is strengthened.

To the small group of Akkadian seals representing specific persons in distinct settings can be added the seal of a servant of Tuta-shar-libbish, the wife of Shar-kali-sharri. Here, a woman is seated outdoors with a smaller female attendant standing behind her and another figure in front, a scene in which it is possible that the seal owner, Dada, her majordomo, can be identified as the figure greeting her. The outdoor setting and the differentiation in the sizes of the two standing servants compared with the seated woman contribute to the feeling of specificity in the scene (see Boehmer 1964, no. 34; the seal of a servant of Ubil-Eshtar, 'brother of the king', had already been similarly interpreted by Frankfort, 1996, pl. 24c; also Collon 1982, no. 141). One last example can be cited from Nippur. The seal of a servant of the crown prince Shar-kali-sharri, found in an Old Babylonian drain, probably depicts this prince as part

of a presentation scene (Gibson 1977, 30–32). In the Nippur seal the god Ea stands with his hand extended forward in a gesture of greeting, while the standing man in front of him holds up his hand in homage; the vizier Usmu stands between them. In Akkadian presentation and adoration scenes it is rare for the deity to be standing, thereby giving the impression of a more equal relationship between god and worshipper, while the greeting gesture of the god toward his obviously human subject is also rare in this period (for one example see Boehmer 1965, fig. 650).

### **The seal of an unnamed endan of Urkesh (AFc4)**

A single sealing found in the same cache as Tar'am-Agade's many sealings bears two rollings of a seal with an inscription that is badly broken but of great importance (Fig. 3). The inscription box contains three cases, and despite the very fragmentary nature of the text, the reading suggested here seems inescapable: [xxx] / [e]n-[da-an] / [U]r-kèš.[KI].<sup>4</sup>

In the third case, the sign *kèš* is written in the less frequent sequence attested in a pre-Sargonic administrative document and in a seal of Tupkish (Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1996, 97). What little is left of the sign *ur* leaves little doubt as to its restoration, especially considering the placement within the case. The determinative KI to the right is broken, but there is just enough space for it. In the second case there is a small portion of a sign that can only be read as *en*. Given the reading [U]r-kèš.[KI] in case 3, and considering the dimension of the cases, we can think of no other plausible restoration but the one suggested, [e]n-[da-an]. The first case, which would have contained the name of the endan, is missing altogether except for one small but important element. A small fragment of the frame is present, located in such a way as to show that the box extended far enough to the right to accommodate the readings of [e]n-[da-an] and of [U]r-kèš.[KI] in the following two cases, as suggested above.

The presence of a sealing of an endan together with the many sealings of Tar'am-Agade suggests very strongly that the two individuals were closely linked, in other words, that they were respectively the ruling endan and his queen, i.e. his principal wife, a hypothesis which is also supported by other considerations already discussed. The lack of a reference to the endan in Tar'am-Agade's seal corresponds with several of Uqnitum's seals. At the same time, the explicit reference to Naram-Sin suggests that, when the seal was carved, Naram-Sin was still alive and that its use in the Royal Palace AP may date to the early period of Tar'am-Agade's presence in Urkesh.

The seal bears a combat scene but is carved in a style different from the other combat scenes found in the cache. In this seal a short skirted human stands before a human-headed bull with the head shown full-face. A second pair includes a second human-headed bull and a nude hero wearing a belt and shown full-face. The backward tilt of the necks and heads of the human-headed bulls, the twisted tail end which curves behind the back leg, the hero wearing a skirt and the thick modeling of the nose, lips and beard of the figures are characteristics of Early Akkadian seals (Boehmer 1965, figs. 53, 58, 74; Matthews 1997, no. 283, from Brak?).

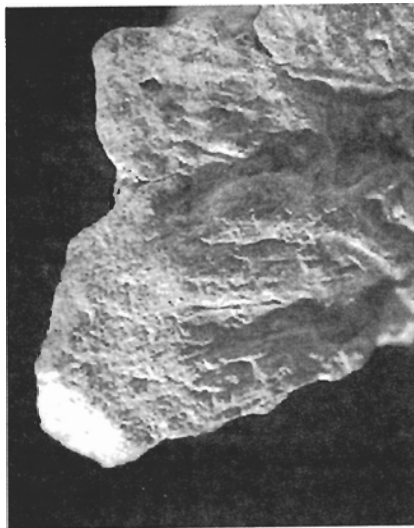
### **The seal of Ewrim-atal (AFc2)**

The only other inscribed seals which recur frequently in the Tar'am-Agade cache are those that belong to two individuals whose names are given, without title, in the legends of the seals. They are significant in different respects.





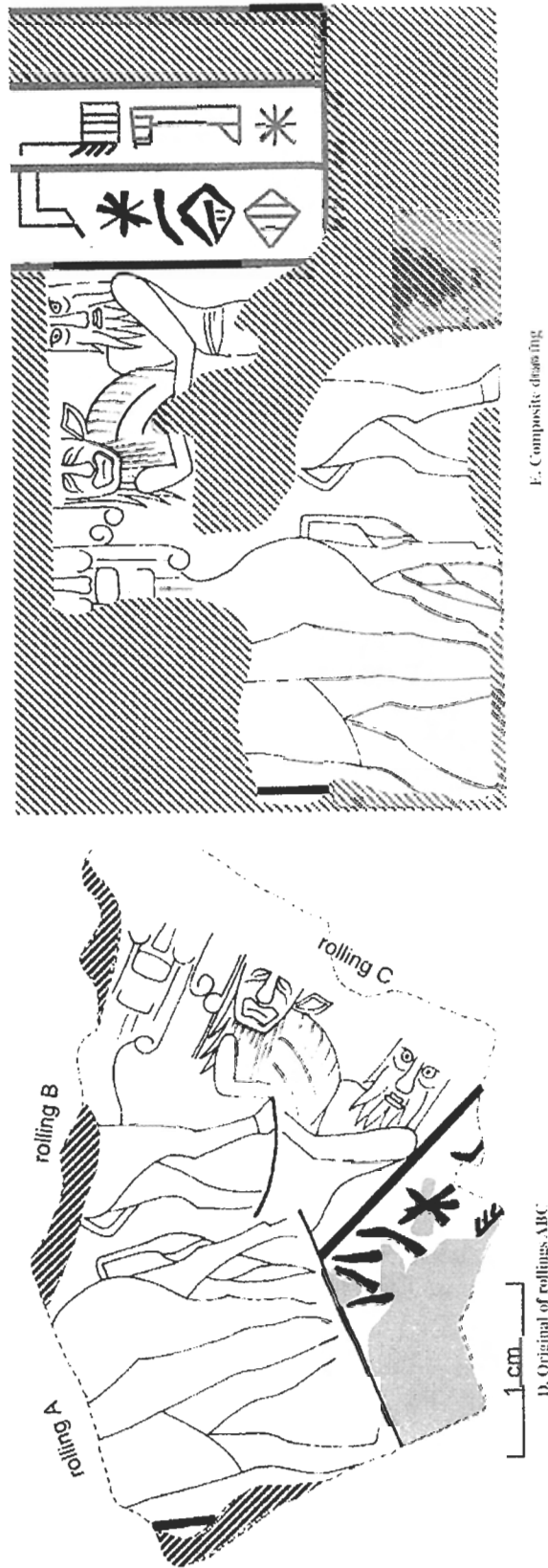
A. Rollings ABC. The impressions are shallow and distorted  
Item A13.15; photograph V13d2702



B. Rolling C. Detail of the three faces  
Item A13.15; photograph V13d2710



C. Rolling C. Detail of inscription  
Item A13.15; photograph V13d2725



E. Composite drawing

Fig. 3. Seal of an endan of Urkish associated with Tar'am-Agade (AFc4) (rollings B and C are very shallow and distorted on the original). Photographs by G. Buccellati. Drawings by Elena Devecchi.

The first (Fig. 4) has the very distinctive Hurrian name Ewrim-Atal and a classic Akkadian contest scene which can be compared with that of Tar'am-Agade. The reading of the name is *IB-ri-im-a-tal*. In some impressions the first sign looks like LA, but this may be attributed to a poor rolling of the seal. We owe to the kindness and promptness of Gernot Wilhelm the following remarks on the interpretation of the name:

There is a Hurrian name *ew<sub>x</sub>/eb-ri-ba-tal* (*evri=b=adal*) attested twice at Umma (TCL 5, 6039; DV 5, 329). I am not yet sure how we should interpret the element *b~m* in this case, but this is a long grammatical story. *-b* and *-m* are suffixes of verbal forms (Wilhelm 1998, 130f.). But they should not interchange in a verbal form before a vowel, and apart from that we presumably do not deal with a verbal form but with a noun (*evri*, Nuzi *ervī/e* 'lord').

*Ew(PI)-ri-a-tal* 'The Lord is strong' or 'The Strong One is lord' (both are possible in Hurrian names of different areas, the distributional pattern is not yet fully understood) is attested in the Tigunanu Prism I 4 (Late Old Babylonian period), also in Nuzi (with the typical metathesis) *er-wi-a-tal*, *e-er-[wi-a-tal]*, also with a pronominal element of 3rd ps. sg. *-n*: *er-wi-na-tal* (*erve/I=n=adal*).

A LA would cause some trouble. Though Urkeš apparently does not know the phonological rule which does not allow /l/ in initial position, or at least does not apply it as strictly as other Hurrian areas (to judge from Lubadag-, elsewhere Nubadig), a root *\*lar-* should appear as *\*nar-* elsewhere. There is Naraya and Naria at Nuzi, but apparently phrase names of the type *\*narib-...* or *\*narim-...* are not attested.

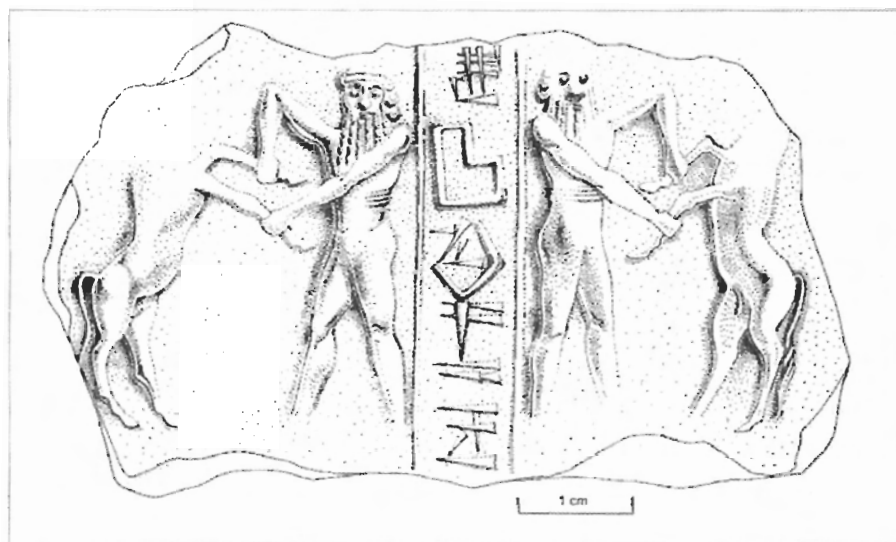
The specific contest scene on the seal of Ewrim-Atal has a composition known in other Akkadian examples from the Naram-Sin period, but not frequently. In this type of scene the same two figures (here a bison and a nude hero shown full-face) are placed antithetically, that is they are repeated on both sides of the inscription but not in the same order since the figure next to the inscription on one side is also next to it on the other (i.e. A vs B, B vs A). Thus the one pair is a mirror image of the other. We can postulate a high rank in the Urkesh palace for this Hurrian official both on the basis of the presence of his sealings in the cache with the impressions of Tar'am-Agade and of the design and style of his seal. The latter also links him to holders of other Akkadian royal seals from Nagar and the south. At Nagar (Tell Brak) this specific type of contest scene is found on the seal of a prominent person (probably the king) with the Hurrian name Talpush-atili, 'sun of the land of Nagar'. Additionally, at Nagar, the seals of both Itbe-laba, an ensi of Gasur, and a scribe named Irdani, have this composition; all are obviously important individuals in the city (Matthews 1997, nos. 316, 317, 321). In the south the same organisation of the contest scene is found in the seal of the son of Naram-Sin, Ukin-Ulmash, although his seal has different figures in the contest (Boehmer 1965, fig. 175). Another son of Naram-Sin, Bin-kali-sharri, is mentioned in a seal of the scribe Abi-ishar from Tello that probably has the same composition (Boehmer 1964, no. 13). The inscriptions on the two seals of the sons of Naram-Sin (and on a seal of Enmenanna and five other officials) contain both the divine determinative before the name of Naram-Sin and the epithet 'God of Agade'. Therefore the most complete proclamation of the divinity of Naram-Sin on the part of one son and the servant of another is connected with this antithetical contest scene composition. As mentioned above, in Nagar also important individuals are ac-



A. Signs 1 and 2 (B-ri)  
Item A13q106.12; photograph V12d9115



B. Signs 3-5 (-im-a-tal)  
Item A13.35; photograph V12d9022



C. Composite drawing of seal impression



D. Upper rolling: back of two animals; lower rolling: bearded hero and second sign (-ri-)  
Item A12q538.1-1; photograph V12d9043



E. Two heroes flanking inscription; third and fourth signs (-im-a-)  
Item A13.35; photograph V12d9021

*Fig. 4. The seal of Ewrim-atal (AFc2). Photographs by G. Buccellati. Drawing by Pietro Pozzi.*

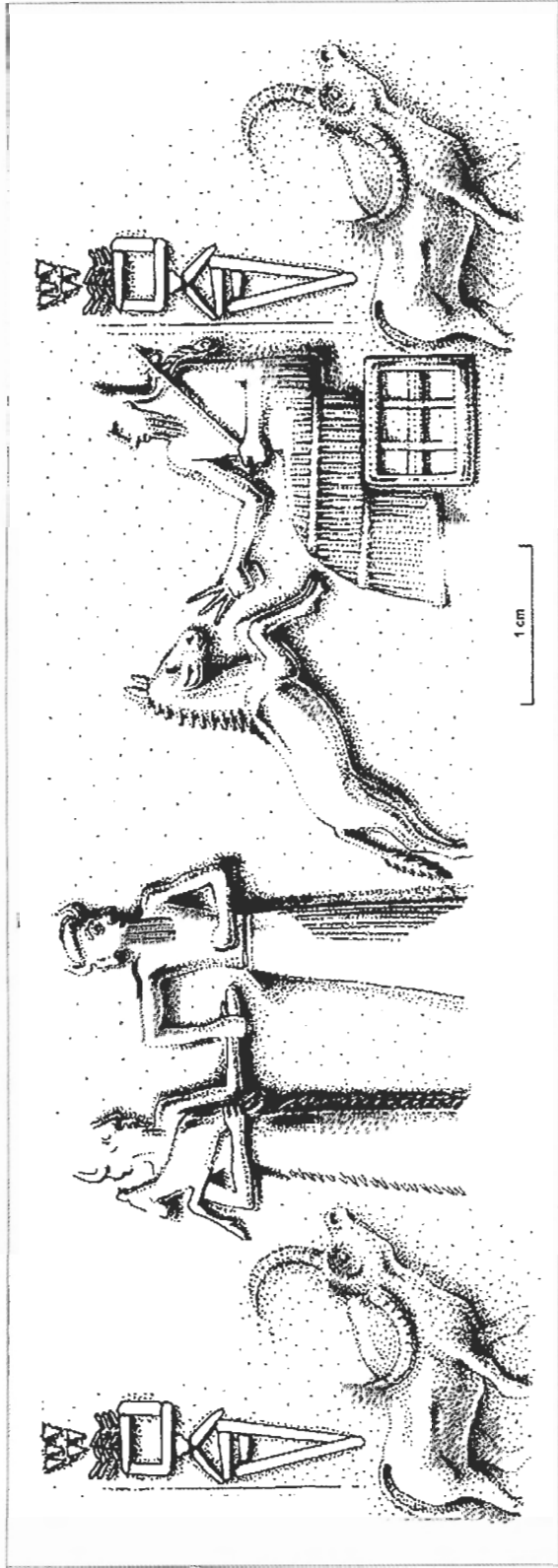
corded this type of mirror-image contest scene. The same composition on the seal of Ewrim-atal, in the context of this body of evidence, is yet another indication of his high status.

Thus we have for the first time in Urkesh a person with a Hurrian name who is obviously connected in some official capacity with a prominent figure of the royal house of Akkad. If, as suggested above, this type of scene reflects an emphasis within the period of Naram-Sin on the secular power of the dynasty, then the use of this scene by Ewrim-Atal is even more striking. Moreover, if his seal was employed to seal the same door or doors in the Urkesh palace as that of Tar'am-Agade (whether she herself or some official actually used her seal), then it would appear that Ewrim-atal was of a similarly high administrative status. Urkesh remains the only certainly identified third-millennium Hurrian city, but as yet we know little of its administration. The interconnection within the palace setting of Akkadian royal figures with presumably local officials, on what appears to be an equal footing, is suggestive of the interrelationship between the two powers in the northern part of Syro-Mesopotamia.

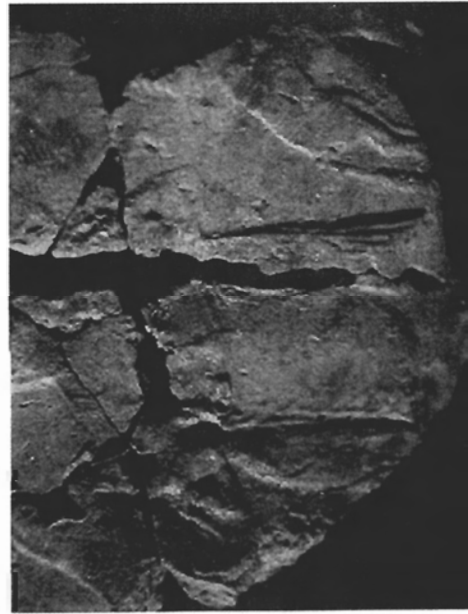
### **The seal of Ishar-beli (AFc3)**

Another important seal of which impressions have been found together with those of Tar'am-Agade was owned by a person with an Akkadian name (*Išar-beli*) (Fig. 5). The iconography of his seal offers some remarkable peculiarities in that it depicts an equid in a position of prominence within the framework of a divine presentation scene. While the style generally is Akkadian from the time of Naram-Sin, the subject is unknown in the South. The seal depicts a god leading another god before a third, seated god, facing left. The unique aspects of the scene do not centre around its general subject, but around its stylistic features and the types of animals shown.

The composition of the scene is striking. A water-buffalo is placed under the inscription, but for two reasons is much more than a filler motif. First, its head and body extend beyond the inscription so as to leave an open space above its head. Second, the animal looks up at the small animal being brought as an offering in the arms of the left-hand god, lending a harmonious continuity within the design. Similarly, the second large animal, an equid, is also framed within an empty space that highlights its whole figure. Here, too, the animal's eyes look up at the seated deity. In addition to the parallelism of the common void that surrounds them, the two animals are further linked in that the composition is built along two parallel diagonal lines, running along the backs of both animals. The dynamism of the two animals is all the more striking as it contrasts with the lack of movement of the gods, highlighted by the strong vertical and horizontal lines. The seal of Ishar-Beli is thus based on a profoundly integrated design, conceived to produce a continuous pattern achieved through the formal arrangement of the two animals and through the fact that the water buffalo is carried forward from under the inscription into the main portion of the design, both physically and psychologically, as it looks at the small animal (unlike the water buffalo of Boehmer 1964, no. 5). It seems to us that this seal may rightly be considered a masterpiece of Akkadian art, bringing to full fruition a number of its stylistic canons. Note, for instance, how the continuous flow of the figures contrasts with the linkage between the scene design and the centrality of the inscription found on other Akkadian seals, especially those dating to the reigns of Naram-Sin and Shar-kali-sharri, which is usually carried out in a manner which stresses the static symmetry of the design (see Frankfort 1996, 84–85). The continuous flow of the Ishar-beli seal is obviously well suited to the cylinder seal as an artistic medium, a characteristic which the artist deliberately exploited.



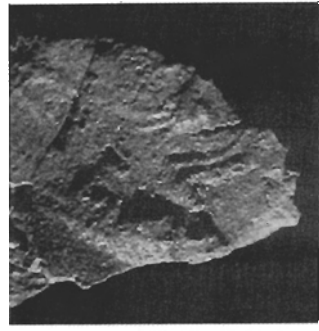
A. Composite drawing of seal impression.



B. Standing deities and back of equid. Item A13 28; photograph V1209713



C. Prancing equid, seated deity and last two signs of inscription  
Item A13 28; photograph V1205638



D. Prancing equid and hand with  
three-pronged object  
Item A 13 8-2; photograph V1209212

Fig. 5. The seal of Ishar-beli (AFc3). Photograph B by G. Buccellati, photograph D by F. Buccellati, C. by R. Hauser. Drawing by Pietro Pozzi.

Unique, too, is the iconography. The prancing equid in front of the seated god is prominently placed. It seems as though the animal is expecting something pleasurable from the god – note the non-aggressive position of the front hoofs. The seated deity is holding a three-pronged object in his right hand and over his left shoulder a staff of which the terminal portion is unclear. Since the three-pronged object appears to be held out to the equid, it may perhaps be something to eat. The god wears a flounced robe typical for divinities in this period. The standing gods are dressed differently; the central god wears a long pleated garment, while the god holding the offering wears the fringed garment often connected with the human worshipper in presentation scenes. The latter carries a small animal over his right shoulder. While this Urkesh design has no direct parallels, there are seals in the Akkadian corpus that show caprids at the level of the knees of seated deities (Boehmer's 'gods feeding animals'; Boehmer 1965, figs. 561–64). In a seal from Tell Asmar, the god feeds the caprid within the context of a presentation scene where two smaller animals are being presented (Boehmer 1965, fig. 561; Frankfort 1996, fig. 96A). A seal from Brak, belonging to a scribe, shows a seated god facing a seated bearded man (Felli 2001, figs. 181–84; Oates 2001, figs. 170–71); both have young, rampant animals at their knees, and both extend one hand toward the animal's mouth. While the bearded man is associated with a horned animal on which the long hair is clearly indicated, the god has at his knees an animal without horns, now interpreted by the Oates as an equid.

We assume that the equid on the Ishar-beli seal was probably an onager or a hybrid, for the animal is short in stature and has the typical tail and mane of these animals (Moorey 1970, 37). Evidence for the breeding of expensive hybrids is well known from the South (Zarins 1986), from Ebla and from Beydar (van Lerberghe 1996, 112–16). In the case of Ebla, these animals were bought from Brak-Nagar by merchants from Ebla and cost more than the normal price of an ass. Onagers have the advantage of being sturdy and fast animals, but are untamable. They could not therefore be used in agricultural activities or in pulling vehicles. They were important, however, in breeding and their hides were sold (Zarins 1978; Postgate 1986; Zarins 1986; Bollweg and Nagel 1992; Postgate 1992, 165 f.; Strommenger and Bollweg 1996). In Area FS at Brak there is a temple, interpreted by the excavators as being dedicated to Shakkan the god of steppe animals (Oates and Oates 1993, 161–67), where delivery notes relating to the hybrids have been found (Eidem *et al.* 2001, fig. 138b and texts 77, 78).

We may venture a hypothesis as to the specific setting of the scene on the Urkesh seal. Since the prancing equid shows no evidence of male genitals, we may assume that the animal is a mare. Recent observations by R. Hauser suggest that the figurines from the Urkesh royal palace document a marked interest in experimental breeding techniques, and a recent paper by Nagel, Bollweg and Strommenger (1999) notes the important breakthrough in animal husbandry that would have occurred in our region of Syria when it became possible to achieve successful breeding between hybrids. On the basis of these considerations, we may hypothesize, however tentatively, that the Ishar-beli seal celebrates a female hybrid that has given birth. If so, we would have a mare prancing in front of the seated god, and the baby animal being carried by an attendant god to be presented to the main deity. However, we must stress the hypothetical nature of this suggestion. Alternative interpretations are certainly possible, for instance, the prancing equid may be understood as connected with what we know about equestrian specialists, for whom the word for jumping, HUB, is used.<sup>5</sup> What remains certain is that this is a clear example, together with the Brak seal just discussed, of an equid placed directly within the confines of the divine world.

That a high official in the Urkesh court would have a seal with such an unusual scene is significant. He has an Akkadian name, and may therefore be an official who came north

with Tar'am-Agade. However, his seal bears what can only be characterised as a northern motif. Given the high artistic quality of the design and the carving, are we to assume that the seal cutter came from the south and plied his trade in Urkesh? Or may we postulate the existence of northern workshops on a par with those in the south? If the seal-cutter came from the south, would he have come with the retinue of Tar'am-Agade? We hope that future excavations will answer some of these tantalising questions.

The general picture within which these questions may be posed is made even more interesting when we consider the person who owned the seal. The name written *I-šar-be-lí* occurs in two southern contexts which may be pertinent (see Michalowski 1981): first, as a recipient of goods along with other members of the royal house of Akkad, and second, as a steward of the estate (ŠABRA.É) of queen Tuta-šar-libbiš, wife of Šar-kali-šarri.<sup>6</sup> While not infrequent (the name occurs also in Gasur), it is generally assumed that the name Ishar-beli refers to the same individual when mentioned along with members of the royal house. If so, it is tempting to assume in turn that our Ishar-beli may be the same individual. In this case, he would have followed Tar'am-Agade to her new northern residence, presumably before having served as the steward of the estate of her sister-in-law, Tuta-šar-libbiš. This is inferred on the basis of three considerations, all admittedly entirely hypothetical. First, the accession of Šar-kali-šarri to the throne would seem to post-date the time when Tar'am-Agade appears in Urkesh as the 'daughter of Naram-Sin'. Second, the position of steward of the queen of Akkad would presumably represent a promotion in the career of a court official. Third, since the information about Ishar-beli as steward of the queen comes from his seal, which may have come from his grave, it would follow that this was the latest stage in his career. Again, all hypothetical. In support of the view that a name linked with the royal house of Akkad may refer to the same individual despite the far-flung geographical distribution reflected in the texts mentioning him (Umma, possibly Akkad and Urkesh), one may refer to the case of Tutanapshum, who is mentioned in texts from Girsu, Umma, Nippur and Eshnunna.

An analogous case may possibly be made for Innin-šadu. References to an individual by that name occurring as a witness from Girtab in the Obelisk of Manishtushu (add also C xvi, where the son of an individual by that name is mentioned as a witness from Marda) and as the recipient of an additional payment in the Sippar Stone are cited in Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995–96, 24. In the case of the Obelisk of Manishtushu, the link with the Royal House is much more tenuous than is that of Ishar-beli, but the possible correlation merits mention. The suggestion then would be that Innin-šadu is to Uqnitum (about whom, however, we know of no links with the royal house of Akkad) as Išar-beli is to Tar'am-Agade. The stratigraphic sequence of the two pairs at Urkesh fits with the chronological sequence of the written sources.

### **The seals of Unap-[ ] (A1.144;A13.70)**

Since it was first excavated a few years ago, we had been aware that sealing A1.144 might contain a reference to the king Tupkish, but neither the title endan nor the name of the official to whom the seal belonged could be read. Thanks to the special techniques used by our conservator, Sophie Bonetti, the full text of the inscription became clear during the summer of 2000 (Fig. 6), when it could finally be read as: *Tup-ki-iš / en-da-a[n] / [U]r-kēš.[K]I / Ú-na-a[p- ?] / [x] x x / [x] x [x]*: 'Of Tupkish, the endan of Urkesh, Unap-[ ], the [official title broken], [his servant].' This legend in itself was of particular significance, since this was the first Urkesh seal to give the name of a king as a referent (see Fig. 7). It is also significant that



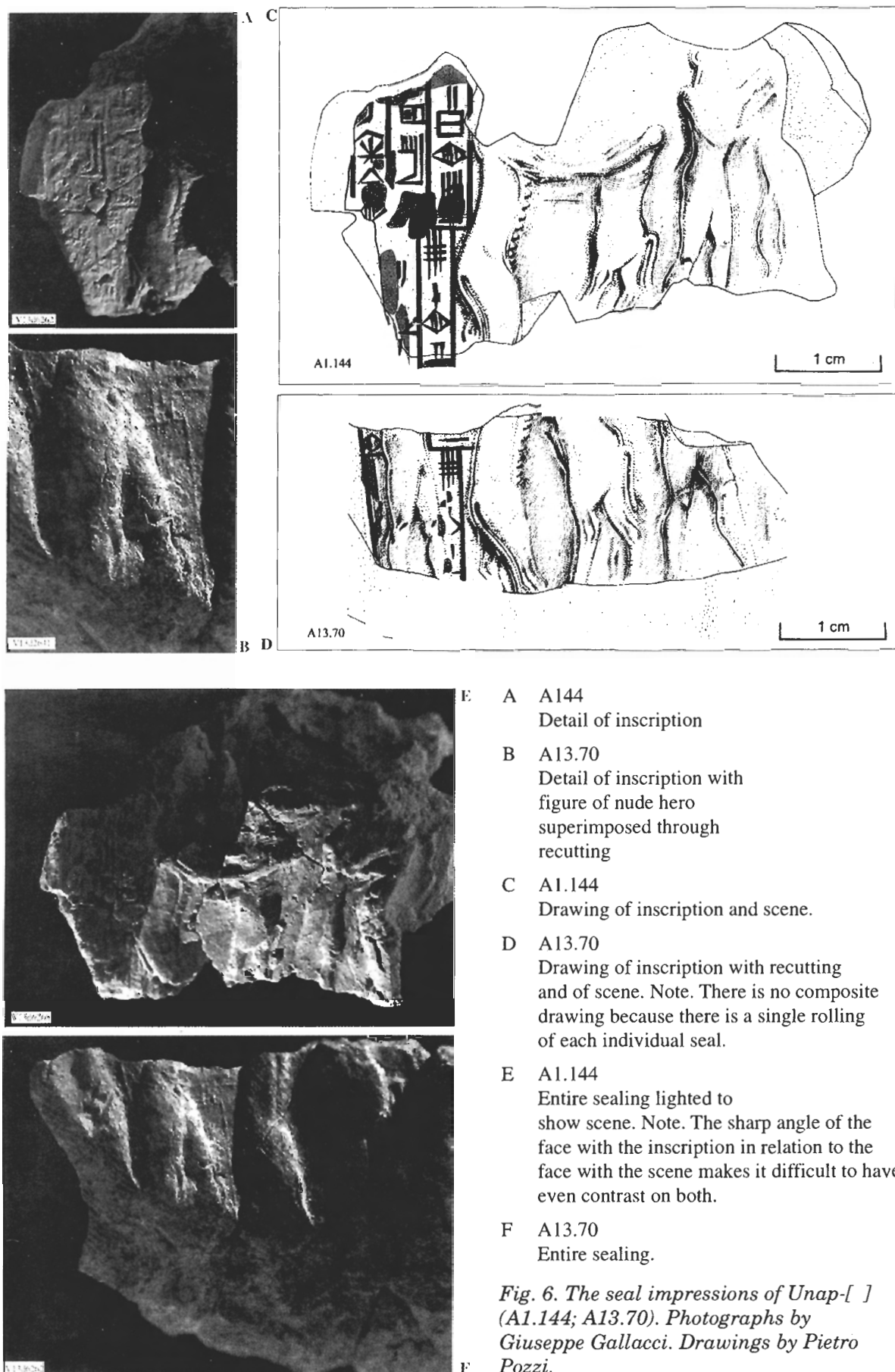


Fig. 6. The seal impressions of Unap-[ ] (A1.144; A13.70). Photographs by Giuseppe Gallacci. Drawings by Pietro Pozzi.



the name of this court official contains the Hurrian element Unap-, which occurs in the name Unap-shenni known from another Urkesh text (Milano 1991, 18, 25f). Unap-shenni was a work unit supervisor, who was mentioned alongside another individual with the Akkadian name Belum-ahi. The text came from the residential area F1 and has been dated on palaeographic grounds to the period of Šar-kali-šarri or later in the Akkadian period (Milano 1991, 21f). It seems therefore excluded that the Tupkish official Unap-[ ] might be identified with the Unap-šenni from F1.

However, the full implications of this new reading became apparent only when the conservation techniques described in note 4 were applied to A13.70, a sealing found in 1999 in the Tar'am-Agade cache (Fig. 6:B,D,F). Both impressions (A1.144 and A13.70) had been singled out for special treatment because of their iconography – an animal combat scene with a nude hero fighting an unclear figure and a lion versus a bullman contest on the other side of the inscription, a scene comparable with that on the seal of Tar'am-Agade. There was, however, no indication whatsoever that these two sealings might be linked until, following Bonetti's cleaning, Giuseppe Gallacci took close-up digital pictures and Pietro Pozzi began drawing the sealings. It then became clear that the figures on A13.70 (Fig. 6:B, D, F) were the same as those on A1.144, except for one additional figure carved over the inscription. Allowing for the distortions that derive from the rolling, the scenes on both seal impressions could be attributed to the same seal. What clinched the argument was the survival of sufficient traces of the cuneiform signs underneath the figure (.KI / Ú-n[a]-[p] / [x x x] / [x] x [x]) (see Fig. 6:D, F) to leave no doubt that the seal used for A13.70 was a recut version of the one rolled on A1.144. We exclude the possibility that A13.70 may be the result of over-rolling of the same seal for two reasons. First, the figure which overlies the inscription is sharply defined, as are the two figures on either side; they are also perfectly aligned along the same baseline. It is hardly conceivable that an over-rolling could have yielded such a precise result. Second, in over 2,000 seal impression from Urkesh, we have not yet observed any case of over-rolling where a seal is rolled precisely over a previous rolling, as if to erase it. There are many over-rollings, but these never yield the result observed here. It is of interest also that the sharp outline of the figures and of the cuneiform signs in the recut seal indicate that the original was not badly worn when it was recut, suggesting that it had not been heavily used before being recut.

One major consequence of this correlation immediately became apparent: the stratum of Tar'am-Agade (from which came the recut version, A13.70) was undoubtedly later than the stratum from which sealings of the original seal derived. This provided uncontrovertible proof of the stratigraphic sequence we had proposed following the 1999 excavations, that Tar'am-Agade's cache was deposited in a stratum of the formal wing of the palace (AF) which post-dated the first floors of the service wing AK. If we can assume that Tar'am-Agade came to Urkesh while her father was still alive, as seems logical from the presence of his name on her seal, then Tupkish must be dated to the reign of Naram-Sin or possibly even slightly earlier.

### **A note on the concepts of seal entitlement and use**

The corpus of seal impressions from the Royal Palace of Urkesh is significant not only for the wealth of typological information it contains but also for what it tells us about the use of the seals. Insights of this type emerge from the stratigraphic setting in which the seal impressions have been found, from the evidence they give us of the objects to which they were affixed,

	referent	owner	user
referential	Naram-Sin	Tar'am-Agade	(doorkeeper ?)
		Tar'am-Agade	
	Naram-Sin	Ukin-Ulmash	(?)
		Ukin-Ulmash	
	Tupkish	Unap-[ ]	(?)
		Unap-[ ]	
non-referential		Tupkish	(farm supervisor)
		Uqnitum NIN	(farm supervisor)
		Uqnitum DAM	(farm supervisor)
		Uqnitum DAM Tupkish	(farm supervisor)
		Zamena UM.ME.DA Uqnitum	(farm supervisor)
		Tuli SAL.MU Uqnitum	(farm supervisor)
		Innin-shadu	(farm supervisor)
		Ewrim-atal	(doorkeeper)
		Ishar-beli	(doorkeeper)
		Shu-ilim	

*Fig. 7. Typological categorisation according to seal ownership and attribution (shaded areas indicate personal seals). Referential refers the use of the name of a higher-ranking person, denoting dependency. The referent is the individual whose name is so used. The 'user' is, of course, not necessarily the owner.*

and from their contexts. With the insights gained from the Urkesh situation, it is useful to define clearly the categories to which the various seals belong (Fig. 7). Some considerations along these lines were anticipated in an earlier article (Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995-96, 26-29). In Figure 7, shaded areas refer to personal seals, where the owner and user are the same person. The seal of Ukin-Ulmash is a cylinder seal of unknown provenance and is included here as a possible example of a personal seal. Similarly, without knowing more about the Unap seal, it is difficult to gauge whether this was or was not a personal seal. The seal impression of Shu-ilim, A12.8, from phase 3, is unpublished, and is cited here as an example of a probable personal use of the seal.

#### *Acknowledgement*

The twelfth season of excavations at Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh, lasted from June 15 to October 20, 1999. The writers served as field directors in Area AA during the first half of the season, from June 15 to August 10, and returned for a brief study season from September 20 to October 20. Peter Pfälzner and Heike Dohmann Pfälzner served as field directors in Area C2 during the period from August 10 to September 30. Excavations in Area AA were carried out with the support of the National Geographic Society, the Catholic Biblical Association, the S.H. Kress Foundation, the L.J. and M.L. Skaggs Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, Loyola-Marymount University, Syria Shell Petroleum Development B.V. and various donors. The additional study season in September/October was made possible through a special grant from the S.H. Kress Foundation. As always, we are most grateful to the Syrian authorities for their support and assistance, in particular to the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr. Sultan Muhesen. We also wish to acknowledge the assistance of the staff in the regional office of the Directorate, in particular the Director Mr. Abd el-Mesiah Bakdou and our representative, Mr. Ali Ali. We wish also to thank our colleagues Rita Dolce, Rick Hauser, Maynard P. Maidman, Wolfram Nagel, Piotr Steinkeller and Gernot Wilhem for suggestions given on the material presented here, though none of them saw the text in its final form.

## Notes

1. Cf. Taram-Uram, daughter of Apil-Kin and daughter-in-law of Ur-Nammu (Civil 1962, 213). Two major differences with respect to Tar'am-Agade are that (1) in the case of Taram-Uram, it is the city of destination rather than of origin that appears in her name, and (2) that her royal connection is given explicitly as daughter-in-law of Ur-Nammu. Could this be taken as an indication that Tar'am-Agade had not been in Urkesh for long? Or as an indication that she was there to affirm Akkadian supremacy – against our suggestion that she was there as queen?
2. Of the 24 examples illustrated by Boehmer (1965) of the standard contest scene of the specific type used by Tar'am-Agade (standing figures holding front leg and neck of opponents), 17 have the bull-man and nude hero immediately flanking the inscription. Only two have the same sequence as the seal of Tar'am-Agade with the inscription box flanked by the lion and the hero (see Boehmer 1965, figs. 189, 193). The composition of the Ukin-Ulmash seal is discussed below.  
The typology of the royal Akkadian contest scenes is discussed in Kelly-Buccellati, forthcoming. While the significance of the contest scene is difficult to interpret, we do know that the curly-locked nude hero may represent a number of different figures (see Frankfort 1996, 86–91; Ellis 1995). In Urkesh the lion certainly represents the local dynasty. It is possible that the lion in the southern contest scenes could represent the north. An extension of this idea would be that the water buffalo represents the south-east. If these hypotheses are valid, we could then interpret the contest scene in the Akkadian period as one of the visual forms used by the dynasty to represent their domination (or projected domination) over these two geographical areas.
3. Other known daughters of Naram-Sin are Shumshani, an entu priestess of the god Shamash in Sippar, and ME-Ulmash. Evidence for them comes from inscriptions on two bronze bowls found in Mari. This does not necessarily mean that they were themselves in Mari, since they could have sent the bowls as offerings; moreover, Shumshani's inscribed bowl clearly identifies her as an entu priestess at Sippar (Frayne 1993, nos. E2.1.4.51 and 52; see also Nagel and Strommenger 1968, 145). Other sons of Naram-Sin, in addition to Šar-kali-šarri, his successor, include Nabi-Ulmash, governor of Tutub, whose daughter's name also survives (Lipush-ia'um), Lipit-ili, and Rigmush-alshu (Frayne 1993, nos. E2.1.4.54, E2.1.4.13 and E2.1.4.2025). Earlier in the dynasty the name of the wife of Sargon, Tashlultum, and two sons, Shu-Enlil and Ilaba'is-takal, are known, in addition to Enheduanna (Frayne 1993, 36–37).
4. As in the case of the Unap-[ ] seals (p. 25), a reading was possible only as a result of our additional work in the summer of 2001, and specifically because of the intervention of our conservator, Sophie Bonetti, and our photographer, Giuseppe Gallacci, whose work we wish to acknowledge in a very special way. Cleaning the fragments under the microscope, Bonetti was able to distinguish dirt accretions from authentic writing in a way impossible with the naked eye. Using digital advanced macrophotography, Gallacci produced a series of plates that were immediately available for study and provided a much steadier and clearer point of reference than a direct autopsy of the original. As will be clear from the drawings on Fig. 3, there is a single sealing with three rollings: the designation A13.15 refers to the sealing, and the label AFc4 to the composite drawing.
5. Archi 1998, especially 8–12. In this article he quotes the evidence for horse-riding in the region during the early 2nd millennium and concludes, 'It is likely that, in these regions, riding was already in use during the 3rd millennium'. For equestrians in Ur III Sumer, see Owen 1991. An unpublished seal impression from the Urkesh royal palace seems to document an equestrian figure similar to that published by Owen.
6. Along with the LUGAL, the NIN, and a ŠABRA.E2 in CT50 172 and ITT 1 1472. In RA 9, 82, an unnamed ŠABRA.E2 is mentioned along with the LUGAL, the princes Šar-kali-šarri and Bin-kali-šarri, and the princess Tuta-napšum; the second occurrence is from the inscription on his seal (Boehmer 1965, no. 560), as corrected in Zettler, 38, n. 5; see also Michalowski 1981. For the reading of the name of the queen as Tuta-šar-libbiš(a), see Frayne 1993, 198.

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