The Great Interface

Report on the 14th Season at Tell Mozan/Urkesh: Excavations in Area AA, June–October 2001

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Dedicated to Dr. Herman L. Hoeh

1 Introduction

1.1 The 14th Season of Excavations

With an aim towards implementing a comprehensive publication program of our excavations in the Royal Palace, we decided to conduct a longer field season than usual, for a period of five months from June to October. The second half of this period coincided with the concluding season of excavations in area C2 by the DOG team under the direction of Peter Pfälzner and Heike Dohmann-Pfälzner. The overlap of the two teams was as productive in terms of scholarly results as it was rich in human experiences. This has been a most rewarding collaborative effort, which has broadened the horizons of our knowledge of the site, stimulated our methodological awareness, and brought much delight to our personal interaction. It was especially inspiring to be able to confront together the different aspects of our excavations, discussing in much greater detail than it is ever possible during occasional visit to other sites the broad range of stratigraphic and typological issues that arise during the field work.

During the course of the season, we were delighted to receive the visit of the former Minister of Culture, Dr. Najah Attar, and her husband, Dr. Majid Azmeh, who have followed with close interest our work over the years. And among the many colleagues who also visited the site, it is fitting that we remember in particular on these pages the one by the members of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, led by the current and past presidents, Profs. Jan-Waalke Meyer and Gernot Wilhelm.

As always, we are most grateful to the Syrian authorities who make our work possible, and in particular the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr. Abd el-Razzaq Moaz, the Director of the Department of Excavations, Dr. Michel Maqdissi, the Director of the Office in Hassaka, Mr. Abd el-Mesiah Bakdou, and the Representative of the Directorate, Mr. Abd el-Rahman Kusa, from the Directorate's office in Qamishli.

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Excavations were under the direction of the writers, with the participation of Beatrice Angeli, Sophie Bonetti, Federico Buccellati, Lanfredo Castelletti, Dennis Cecchin, Carlo Corti, Daniela Crasso, Elena Devecchi, Rateb Dibs, Silvia DiMartino, Max Farrar, Kamiran Feysal, Lawrence Feysal, Riyad Feysal, Jamie Forde, Giuseppe Gallacci, Sveta Gennai, Geveen Hassan, Rick Hauser, Ibe Hneidi, Ong Kar Khalsa, Abd el-Rahman Kusa, John Lynch, Silva Matossian, Cristiana Molfese, Joong Sun Moon, Valeria Paoletti, Alexia Pavan, Barbara Pritzkat, Laura Ramos, Cristina Ravedoni, Travis Rohrer, Nicola Salvioli, Donato Scapati, Mary Stancavage, Yoko Taniguchi, Chiara Valcepina, Salvo Viaggio, Jim Walker, Claudia Wettstein, Geeath Zahwa. To all goes our gratitude for their effort and dedication.

1.2 Strategy and results

We had set four major stratigraphic goals for the season.

(1) Along the *southern facade* of the Palace we wanted to link the platform X with the underground structure W (please refer to Figs. 1 and 2). This new area was designated as A14. A connection between platform and underground structure seemed likely, and conditions seemed favorable to its retrieval. We had planned only a minor intervention inside the underground structure itself (A12). Our plans changed because of some damage that had occurred inside the underground structure, due to the winter rains: the water that entered the structure caused the collapse of part of the southern section, which we had left standing for future analysis. This forced us to spend extra time cleaning the debris, and then in turn to excavate deeper inside the circular portion of the structure – thereby reducing the scope of the work in A14. Both operations were under the supervision of John A. Lynch.

(2) Within the *service area AK* of the Palace there remained a small portion to be excavated, in Area A10 (under the supervision of Rick Hauser). Well defined by walls that had already been identified, we expected this to be a minor operation that would take us rather quickly to the first floors of AK. We were instead slowed down by the presence of a large number of burnt logs, preserved largely as charcoal. As a result, we did not reach the floor except in a small area to the west.

(3) The main effort was to be in the area to the east of the Palace, in the two new areas designated as A15 (under the supervision of Federico Buccellati) and A16 (under the supervision of Ong Kar Khalsa). Here we had three subsidiary goals in mind.

(3a) It had become clear that, after the abandonment of the Palace, several *settlement strata* developed above what had been the formal wing of the Palace itself. The area above the service wing AK had remained outside the settlement proper, serving as the talus of the mound. As a result, we could expect to be able to distinguish a more clearly defined stratigraphic sequence, corresponding to the major phases of the settlement. The clarification of such a sequence was to be a major goal, and this we were able to achieve fully. We can confirm the three major phases already identified in our previous report (*MDOG* 133, p.62), and can further differentiate the latest of these (phase 5) into three sub-phases. A massive brickfall, which marks the end of the latest phase 5c, coincides with what must have marked here the end of the settlement, since there is at this location no trace of a mid-second millennium occupation (please refer to Fig. 3).

(3b) Below the settlements, we wanted to obtain lateral definition for the *flagstone courtyard*, since we assumed a northern wall in line with the wall dividing sectors C and D in the service wing AK. As it turned out, the courtyard is much larger than expected, and because of the

complexity of the stratigraphy we could not even reach the level of the pavement throughout the relevant area in A16.

(3c) South of the flagstone courtyard, we were seeking definition of what we assume to be the *entrance sector* to the formal wing of the Palace. Here, too, the complexity of the stratigraphy prevented us from reaching the levels of the first floor of the palace, in spite of a very intensive deployment of staff and workmen. Of particular interest was the recovery of a series of pottery kilns, contemporary with the Khabur period settlement to the north.

(4) The fourth overall goal of the season was to regularize the physical excavation grid in Area A9 (under the supervision of James L. Walker), and especially to *clarify the link between the settlement strata* that had been uncovered earlier in A7 and A11. This operation was brought to a successful issue, and it showed that there was a gap, at least in the later periods, between the western and the eastern settlements: this may be attributed to a depression in the ancient mound that was conditioned by the existence in the Royal Palace of the large courtyard F.

1.3 The "great interface": an overview

In our presentation we will follow the chronological sequence, with an aim to highlighting the stages in the development of the topography of the mound. One of the important results is our clearer understanding of the continuity and change that characterize the some six centuries from the first construction of the Palace to the complete abandonment of this part of the tell. Briefly told, the story unfolded as follows (please refer to Fig. 3).

The Palace was used for its initial purpose during the reign of only one king, Tupkish, after which it continued as a Palace dependency for about one century. Nothing new was added to this understanding of the events during the 2001 season.

The abandonment of the palace coincides approximately with the end of the Akkadian dynasty. The abandonment was long enough to allow for the structural remains of the building to become irrelevant for subsequent building activities, but not so long that they had completely disappeared. It is this abandonment which we qualify as the "great interface," because it marks a profound change in use of this section of the city – from palace to settlement. But it appears that such interface is "great" only in functional, and not in chronological, terms. Because of lack of evidence to this effect, we do not add a distinct phase corresponding to the abandonment, but only two strata (13 and 12).

This "mounding" process resulted in a topographic profile that matched what had been the architectural volumes of the Palace: on the one hand, a large depression corresponding to the service wing AK and the courtyard F; and on the other, a higher ledge, L-shaped, corresponding to the terraced portions of the formal wing AF. The lower areas formed a talus to the mound proper, from which it was clearly differentiated in use: for here we have no houses, and instead we find a typical scattered occupation with open working areas, tannurs, graves, and pottery kilns. The settled area, with houses, exhibits a regular growth over a sequence of five distinct phases (labeled as 4a-b and 5a-c in our present chart). These phases reflected a progressive "reclamation" of those portions of the mound that had developed above the abandoned palace.

The last phase (5c) is characterized by a massive brickfall, which is very instructive because of its stratigraphic layout. What we learn is that nothing more happened in this part of the mound after this episode – other than its final abandonment. This is, in a sense, the second great interface – from Urkesh to Tell Mozan.

1.4 The chronological horizons

We have distinguished two major horizons in Area AA – the palace and the settlements. They are separated by what appears to have been a brief abandonment period, and the last settlement is in turn followed by a definitive abandonment of this part of the site, documented by the untouched massive brickfall.

It is useful to correlate these horizons with those that we know now from other areas of the site, with particular reference to area C2. Using the information that is presented below in the article by P. Pfälzner and Heike Dohmann-Pfälzner, as well as that known from our earlier excavations, we can summarize the relevant data as shown in Fig. 4.

Two major conclusions emerge. First, there is considerable difference in elevation between the Palace and the contemporary Akkadian levels in C2: these are some 5 meters higher than the general floor level of AK, and 2.5 meters higher than the general floor level of AF.

Second, the rise in elevation during the early second millennium is greater in AA than in C2 (with a depth of some 5 meters for phases 4 and 5 in AA). This is in line with the general model of urban growth which we proposed in *MDOG* 131 (1999) Abb. 4-5, and may possibly be explained as follows. When first built by Tupkish, Palace AP stood to a considerable height (possibly with further terracing within AF), so that the roof line might have been not much lower then the top of the temple terrace. Note, in fact, that the general elevation of the AF floor is 8500,[1] and the bottom of the stone steps in B6 is about 8700. Only after the palace is no longer used as a palace, the construction of houses begins in C2, as it does in AA: at this point, the general elevation in AA is lower than in C2 (the floors of House IX, of Puššam, are about 9000, and the corresponding levels in AA are as low as 8600), but by the end of the Khabur period the respective elevations are roughly equivalent.

2 The palace AP and its southern facade (Phases 1-3: Tupkish and Tar'am-Agade)

2.1 Along the southern facade: platform and underground structure

In our previous report (*MDOG* 133 (2001) 89), we proposed that the monumental underground structure W might be connected with the ancestral cult which is known from the texts of Ebla to have taken place in a building called the É *ma-tim*, though we did not exclude the possibility that it might have been originally a well. Three important new factors have emerged that force us to reconsider the nature of this structure. (1) The removal of the mud plaster that adhered to the northern edge of the circular stone wall shows a very uneven vertical line, which cannot be considered intentional and thus cannot be attributed to the original building moment. The best assumption is that there was a pre-existing circular structure that was cut open on the western side at a time when a square chamber was added (this observation was first advanced by Claudia Wettstein). (2) The accumulation within the same circular structure continues to a much deeper level than expected. We had assumed that a 50 cm step might bridge the difference in elevation between the floor of the square chamber and a presumed floor in the circular structure, but at 80 cm the accumulation continues without any trace of such a step. (3) The analysis of the animal and botanical remains confirmed our initial conclusion (also voiced in our earlier report) that the accumulations were of a type similar to that of a domestic setting, but with two major differences: first, many of the animals were piglets and puppy dogs, whose *entire* skeleton was found in the

[1] Figures for elevations are in centimeters, and they all omit the initial figure 4. Thus 8500 stands for 485.00 m above sea level.

deposit, including parts that were not normally eaten, like the head, and, second, the plant remains included poor quality seeds that would also not be suitable for food preparation.

Following a long period of great puzzlement about these facts, a puzzlement we shared repeatedly with the staff and the many colleagues who visited the site, and upon review of later Hurro-Hittite texts, one of us (M. K.-B.) was able to propose a solution that accounts for all the facts as observed, and seems not only fully convincing but also of great significance for the history and the institutions of ancient Urkesh. Because of the importance of this argument, it is presented separately in the article that follows below.

Our original plans for the season were, as indicated earlier, to link the platform X with the underground stone structure W (excavation unit A14), but the damage resulting from the winter rains forced us to shift our attention exclusively to the underground structure W. Nevertheless, two important results emerged even from the partial excavation that was carried out in A14. (1) On the eastern side there was a consistent build-up of bricks, not properly forming a wall, but laid horizontally in a fashion that seems to serve a purpose similar to that of the platform, while at the same time protecting the western wall of the Palace, almost in the nature of a retaining wall. In front of it, extending to the west, there is a series of long accumulations, sloping evenly down towards the west, belonging to phase 3 (i.e., the phase during which the Palace was still standing). (2) Having removed the fill of a large phase 4 pit, we found at the bottom a large stone drain, which continues beyond the edge of the pit (where we could not follow its course). The original inlet was removed when the pit was dug: since the drain does not otherwise continue to the east of the platform, it seems inescapable to assume that the original inlet was built into the platform itself. If so, then the purpose of the platform would appear to be tied to its use for a function connected with the usage of some liquid. That a platform should frame, as it were, a stone drain, suggests that the whole installation served a ceremonial function of some sort, possibly linked with the underground structure – as is proposed in the article below by M. Kelly-Buccellati.

2.2 The burnt remains in the royal storehouse AK

Excavations in Area A10 were clearly contained in terms of architectural definition: there was a limited amount of Phase 4 and 3 materials to be removed before reaching the accumulations of Phase 2. We expected to be able to do this with relative ease, and indeed so it was in terms of the actual excavation, for no major new features emerged. The only slight deviation from our expectations was that the depth of Phase 4 intrusions was greater than anticipated: a fairly large depression had developed within C1, where water stagnated for a while, after collecting from the higher ground corresponding to room C8. A badly disjointed human skeleton gave witness to the amount of dislocation that took place as a result of erosion.

Once we reached the accumulations of Phase 2, no particular installation was discovered, except that we came upon the thin white plaster floor that is characteristic of the first AK floors. However, something else posed a real puzzle: what had first been considered as an isolated occurrence turned out to be a regular pattern. We had found during the last season long segments of burnt beams in both C1 and C4. No evidence of destruction (such as burnt artifacts or burnt roofing pieces) accompanied them, and we assumed they were isolated remnants of some unexplained event. But this season we realized that this was no isolated phenomenon. Almost 20 more such pieces of wood were found scattered in C1, C4 and C8. Several were more than 1 m long. They were all carbonized, without having turned to ash and without any trace of burning around them: no burnt soil, no burnt bricks or brick fragments, no roofing pieces of any sort. Only one thin layer of black ash was found at an elevation of some 10 cm above the white floor. Otherwise,

the depth of the deposit above the white floor is of some 40 cm. The distribution of the wood pieces is rather haphazard, without any clear discernible pattern. They tend to be at an inclination of between 20 and 30 degrees, though a few are also horizontal or almost so.

Our puzzlement derives from the fact that no sign of destruction accompanies such a large quantity of burnt wood, as well as from the fact that the wood is thoroughly carbonized without any trace of ash. Since the pieces of wood are found at different elevations in three different rooms, the implication is that the burning of the wood was stopped half way through in each individual case. This might have been done either by pouring water on the wood, or by covering it with dirt. It would appear, therefore, that this was the result of a planned operation that took place throughout this sector, at least in the three eastern rooms C1, C8 and C4. What might such an operation have been? We are at a loss to say. While at first the situation may seem similar to that of Palace B at Tuttul,[2] the context is quite different – for in Urkesh we have none of the burnt bricks and plaster and none of the ash that accompanies the Tuttul beams, which are also considerably larger in diameter (20 to 35 cm in contrast with an average 10 cm for those at Urkesh). Considering the difficulty at arriving at a proper interpretation, and in the interest of assuring a better excavation of the whole accumulation, we decided to stop excavations for this year, close though we are to reaching the very first floor of AK throughout the building.

2.3 The flagstone courtyard

A surprising development in this season's excavations of the Palace was the discovery that the floor plan extends to the south past the area of the Underground Structure W. Two factors have made it impossible for us to arrive at an architectural definition. (1) There is evidence of substantial rebuilding in the Palace Dependency period (Phase 3). This is unlike anything we had seen previously in the Service Wing AK (see presently, section 5), and it yields a more complex stratigraphic situation. (2) The sheer size of the building is such as to make it necessary to extend the excavation even further than we had originally envisaged. Even with the additional squares opened to the South (see the floor plan, Fig. 1), we do not seem to be able to include the full extent of the Palace's south-eastern corner within the boundaries of the current excavations. A conservative estimate would place the total area of the Palace at some 5000 m^2 of which only about 1700 have been exposed.

Quite hypothetically, we are suggesting that the entrance door may be in the extreme southeastern square shown on the plan; that from here a zigzag approach would lead to the large stone paved courtyard H3; that the well in room H6 may have served the purpose of this reception suite by providing fresh water for the individuals who were entering the Palace (a number of large jar smashes in the area may be connected to this general custom); and that the rooms H2/H1 may have been the place were such water was utilized, for either one of both functions – lustration and libation.

Less of a surprise, and quite gratifying, was the confirmation that the stone paved courtyard continues to the limits of the excavation. The portion showing in Fig. 1 is not fully excavated yet, but soundings along the edges indicate very clearly that the paving is not localized to the south. To the north, we did not find the wall we had projected as a continuation of the perimetral wall of AK, which means that the total surface of the courtyard is even greater than anticipated. At this point we are projecting such surface to be in the neighborhood of 15 x 25 ms,

[2] E. Strommenger and K. Kohlmeyer, *Tall Bi`a/Tuttul – III. Die Schichten des 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr. im Zentralhügel E*, Saarbrücken 2000. The major finds of burnt beams are in rooms 6, 5 and 12, see especially Beilage 3, and pp. 25, 30f., 37.

which is similar to that of the Court of the Palms in the Zimri-Lim Palace in Mari.

In the approximate center of the courtyard, opposite the large doorway between H1 and H3, a large Phase 5a pit cut just below the level of the flagstones, to highlight a baked brick surface. We assume this to be the cover of a large drainage system, into which the drain visible in room H4 would have flowed. If so, the magnificent aesthetic appearance of the paved courtyard would be matched by an equally impressive feat of hydraulic engineering.

The fact that the flagstone courtyard H is considerably larger than anticipated means that its northwestern corner was not far from the southeastern corner of the service courtyard F – about 12 m. While no concrete evidence came to light in the 2001 excavations, we still assume that there was a stairway, in the space labeled G2, bridging the 2.5 m difference in elevation between the two courtyards (see *MDOG* 133, 2001, pp. 88f.).

3 From palace to mound (Phase 4: Šatar-mat and Atal-šen)

3.1 A Palace no more: The "mounding" of the Palace

The important issue which we faced in the 2001 excavations was the question of the interface between Phases 3 and 4. Specifically: what kind of depositional process must be envisaged to account for the transition of Area AA from a single and recognizable unified architectural unit (the Royal Palace) to an amorphous sloping surface – i.e., to a mound? Two issues in particular are worthy of notice. (1) Did the abandonment take place at a single moment for the entire structure, or was it a gradual process? (2) Did the abandonment last long enough to leave a visible trace in the form of a solidified "crust," as it were, i.e., a surface acting as an interface between Phase 3 and Phase 4? The answer to the first question seems now to be that, indeed, different parts of the Palace underwent different transformation processes at different times. What we have of the formal wing seems to have been first destroyed and then re-occupied according to a different footprint than the Palace itself. There may even have been a second destruction (i.e., a destruction of Phase 3 as there had been one in Phase 2) – being evidenced by considerable brickfall in the center of the courtyard H3. Under these circumstances, the "landscape" of Area AA would have changed rather gradually and naturally: we need not postulate a single moment when the building was vacated as a whole, following which it would have remained uninhabited for any length of time.

Nor have we found any trace of such a temporal gap in the stratigraphy. The accumulations of Phase 4 are superimposed quite gradually on top of those of Phase 3, without any indication of a hardened layering in-between. The main difference is the gradual change in use, whereby from semi-domestic functions (accumulations contained by walls, tannurs, localized use areas) one goes over to what we have called "scattered occupation," i.e., broad open areas, dumping hollows, and graves. From all this we assume that there was no significant interval between Phase 3 and Phase 4.

This is the period that goes from "Post-Imperial Akkadian (for this term see *MDOG* 133 (2001) p.61, n. 2) to Ur III, in Mesopotamian terms. During this time, three Urkesh rulers are known, two of them with the title LUGAL (Shatar-mat and his son Atal-šen), the other (Ann-atal) only with the title LU_2 (*ibid.,* p. 91f., and see Fig. 4). We now have a possible correlation between Shatar-mat the father of Atal-šen, and the person whose name appears on the seal of Puššam from area C2 as *Sa-dar-wa'(*ŠI*)-at*.[3] Konrad Volk's proposed emendation (see in MDOG 133 (2001)

[3] The reading ma_9 for the sign WA is late and presents a problem. This is especially the case since both the writing on the Puššam seal and the writing (with *ma*) on the bronze tablet of Atal-šen derive presumably from the same Urkesh milieu. Inter-

p.137) seems quite plausible, and one may further consider it reasonable to assume that the name refers to the king rather than to a trader.[4] If there is any merit to this chain of assumptions, then we would have a stratigraphic peg for king Shatar-mat that fits with the general chronological assignment into the Ur III period.

3.2 Pottery production in the southern slopes

On the slope to the south of the settlements, we have brought to light the remnants of three distinct pottery kilns, following each other in time, and belonging to phases 4b and 5a. They are particularly significant for several reasons. (1) The fact that these pit kilns are clustered in the same general area suggests a fairly intensive specialization that goes beyond mere occasional use. (2)The kilns' location outside the area of the settlement proper, at the southern slope of the settlement itself, gives evidence for a specialized definition of space that recurs over an extended period of time. Also, the fact that the settlement expands in phases 5b and 5c over the area of the kilns shows how the "reclamation" (about which see presently) took place. (It should be noted that another kiln was also found at the northwestern edge of the settlement, in A7, in earlier excavations.) (3) One of the kilns contained a number of painted Khabur vessels and fragments of painted figurines (see below, section 6.1) and plaques. The simple nature of these kilns is interesting in this respect in that it shows how these relatively fine wares were produced in a modest craft setting. (4) The presence of typologically similar, yet not identical, vessels in the same kiln sheds light on the potter's production processes: the vessels are not only perfectly contemporary, they are also part of a chain of production that does not seem to have aimed for particular stylistic differentiation, and yet resulted in clear-cut variability. These variations may be considered as allomorphs of a single template.

4 From mound to settlement (Phase 5: Terru and Haziran)

4.1 Large scale operations (Phase 5A)

The earliest phase of Khabur occupation in the southern settlement is documented primarily by the fill within large pits and hollows and, south of them, by the later pottery kilns. The perimeter of the settlements seems to remain the same as in phase 4, with the houses being limited only to the northern sector. It is important to note that at no time were there any houses built on top of what had been the service wing of the Palace – either in phase 4 or in phase 5.

The use of the extra-mural occupation seems different. (We use the term "extra-mural" to denote the occupation beyond the perimeter of the houses, obviously without any implication that

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estingly, they both render an Akkadian text.

[4] Instead of "Puššam, | the servant of the trader Šatar-mat from GN" I would read "Puššam, | the servant of (king) Šatar-mat, | the trader from GN." In other words, the trader (*ka'ešše*) is Puššam, not Šatar-mat. It is difficult to find conclusive arguments that would support such a syntactical understanding of the legend. For instance, in the legend "Sur-sukkal, son of Lugal-itida, the merchant" (D. Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British* Museum, London 1982, N. 250) the title "merchant" could refer to either the father (as it is generally suggested by the punctuation given in the translations), or to the son (as my punctuation suggests). Logic would seem to suggest that the title applies to the seal owner, not to his father. And, at least in one case, it can be shown conclusively that the syntax entails a string of parallel appositions (X, | son of Y, | the merchant) rather than an apposition embedded in a noun phrase (X, | son of Y the merchant). Such syntactical definition may be expected when there is gender differentiation, as in the following example (Old Babylonian): "Namirtum, | daughter of Šubula-naşir, | the female servant of Amurrum" (E. Porada, *The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Washington 1948, N. 436): obviously the female servant is Namirtum, not her father. The parallel may be highlighted as follows:

Namirtum,	daughter of Šubula-naşir,	female servant of Amurrum
Puššam,	servant of Šatar-mat,	trader of/with GN. [G.B.]

there existed a city wall at this location.) In phase 4 we have a regular build-up of horizontally layered accumulations, with several limited areas of pebble floors and occasional retaining walls. Burials seem to be primarily within the built-up areas (such as those found in Area A7, excavated in earlier years). In phase 5, on the other hand, there are two major differences. First, large pits are dug within this earlier phase 4 extra-mural occupation: they were presumably destined to storage at first, but when this primary function was discontinued, they served simply as dumping places, characterized especially by large quantities of ash. In some cases, the perimeter of these dumping areas is so uneven, that we prefer to call then "hollows" rather than pits. Two such very large such hollows (up to 6 ms in diameter and 2.5 ms in depth) straddle areas A16 and A8, and areas A16, A13 and A15, respectively.

It is possible that some of these massive ash deposits might be related to the pottery kilns to the south, although it must be stressed that no particular concentration of kiln waste was found in these dump (as it was instead found in the immediate vicinity of the kilns). At any rate, a distinguishing feature of phase 5a is the large scale and relative uniformity of the operations that seem to be presupposed by the nature of the deposition.

4.2 Expansion of the settlement proper (Phase 5B)

Houses begin to appear in the southern settlement in phase 5b. We consider this to result from an expansion that shows two interesting aspects. On the one hand, the houses are built directly on top of pits and hollows of phase 5a, and several burials are found immediately to the south of these houses. On the other hand, both houses and burials are severely damaged by the rebuilding activity of phase 5c. From this we conclude that there was a certain time lapse between each of the three phases (a, b, and c) – enough, that is, to allow for the memory of the pits in one case, and of the burials in the other case, to be lost. The expansion is possibly indicative of a growth which can be explained on the basis of what we know concerning the position of Urkesh in the period of the so-called Amorite kingdoms (see below, 4.6).

The house in the western portion of A16 is the only one that we have fully excavated (see Figs. 5-6). It shows a simple plan, with walls that are 2 brick thick, and a partial substructure in stone. To the east, there is an outdoor corner bin, with a semicircular wall with an andiron in the corner. One large and one small Khabur type jars were found on the floor. The walls were severely cut by the later Phase 5c houses.

4.3 Monumental architecture in the western settlement?

Even more suggestive of the presumed importance of Urkesh in the period of the Amorite kingdoms (i.e., the Khabur period) is the presence of architectural elements which may be considered monumental. In the original sounding of 1990, in area A3, we had already noticed the existence of massive brickwork which might be indicative of structures other than domestic in nature and function. We were however hampered by the narrow limits of our horizontal exposure (a single 4x4 square) which might perchance have revealed simply the corner of four different private houses.

The work done this year in A9, on the other hand, shows beyond doubt the existence of very sizable walls, up to 3.5 ms in width that can properly qualify as monumental. The building is of such proportions that the nature of its floor plan still eludes us, as it extends beyond the limits of excavation.

4.4 The great divide between eastern and western settlements

An interesting result of the excavations in A9 has been the identification of a significant solution of continuity between the western settlement (already documented by our excavations in A7 and A2 as well as A9) and the eastern settlement (A11). The stratigraphy shows an area without any architecture in the middle, and it is from this area that the Mittani style seal (described below in section 6.3) comes. This find, isolated though it is, suggests that material was washed down from the top of the (latest, Mittani period) settlement, unto what had become a tell with a contour substantially similar to the one we have today.

It is possible that such a break goes back to the early periods of occupation, and that there was some topographic feature that separated the two. (In turn, this topographic feature may go back to some structural aspect of the underlying Palace – as would have been for instance the case if the formal wing was raised even further to the East, thus causing an open gap to develop between it and the remainder of the Palace complex.)

It is also possible, however, that the gap developed simply as a result of the larger Winter runoffs after the abandonment of the site, resulting in part from the discards coming from the Mittani period houses which we know (from earlier excavations in A4) to have been located at the top of zone A.

4.5 The wadi interface at the southern edge

A large wadi developed in later times at the extreme southern end of the settlement. The floor plan of Area A16 given in Fig. 6 shows clearly the contour lines of the wadi. This topographic feature was conditioned by pre-existent features, i.e. the pottery kilns which have just been mentioned. The wadi thus became the interface between the edge of the settlement and the later development in the history of the site formation.

4.6 Urkesh under Zimri-Lim

The publication of royal letters dealing with Urkesh and found in the royal archives of Mari[5] sheds light on the period. Terru and Haziran appear as the local rulers (identified by the title LU_2 *Ur- ke₂-eš₁₅*-KI,[6] 69:4 and 98:24). They both declare allegiance to Zimri-Lim of Mari. Terru appears at the same time to be a subordinate of Šadum-laba, the ruler of Ašnakkum (Chagar-Bazar, 44bis:16). Analogously, Haziran appears in a subordinate position to an envoy of Zimri-Lim by the name of Yanşib-Hadnu (69:5. 8). At some point, Terru seems to be in control of Ashnakkum (44:30f; 98:24-34), but probably only on a temporary basis and on behalf of the eventual legitimate local ruler.

In contrast with the names of the Urkesh rulers of the third millennium, Terru and Haziran are not Hurrian, but rather Amorite, names. But this does not necessarily mean that Urkesh had become by the early second millennium an Amorite city. On the contrary, the texts indicate that

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[5] J.-R. Kupper, *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim*, Archives Royales de Mari 28. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations 1998. An analysis of these texts was offered by D. Fleming at the 212th meeting of the American Oriental Society in Houston in March 2002. For an early assessment of this Mari evidence see G. Buccellati in *Mozan 1*, Malibu 1988, p.34.

[6] Note that in these letters the writing of the geographical name Urkesh occurs 20 times with the sign GI, and only once with the sign KI (113:10). The following sign is either IŠ or ŠA. Contrary to what might seem at first, this writing confirms the reading "Urkesh" rather than "Urkish," because in Hurrian orthography (as known from the Mittani letter found at Amarna) the two signs KI / GI render the phonemic opposition /Ki/~ /Ke/ (see M. Giorgeri, "Schizzo grammaticale della lingua hurrica," *La civiltà dei Hurriti. La Parola del Passato* 55, 2000, p. 181 and 182). Accordingly, we transliterated *Ur-ke₂-eš₁₅*-KI. This implies that even in letters written in Akkadian, the scribes respected Hurrian conventions when referring to Urkesh.

the people of Urkesh retained a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis Terru and Haziran: these two rulers fit more the image of foreign appointees who are often at odds with the indigenous population. The terms used to refer to this local population are: "the city of Urkesh" *a-lum Ur-ke$_2$-eš$_{15}$*-KI (44bis:21); "the sons of my city" DUMU.MEŠ *a-li-ia* (44bis:8) "the men of Urkesh" LU$_2$.MEŠ *Ur-ke$_2$-ša-yu*.KI (69:9, a letter from Ashlakka; 105:7'; 107:4' from Ashnakkum); "the elders of Urkesh" LU$_2$.ŠU.GI.MEŠ *Ur-ke$_2$-eš$_{15}$*-KI (45:12'); "assembly" *puhrum* and related verb (69:9 from Ashlakka; 99:12' from Ashnakkum, used as a collective, with the verb *īpulū* in the plural; 100:12' from Ashnakkum; 113:10 from Shuduhum). The name of "Urkesh" alone, referring to the population of the city as a whole, is found in 48:59 (from Ashlakka); 98:17 (from Ashnakkum; used as a collective, with the verb *ilqū* in the plural); 105:4'. 30' (from Ashnakkum); possibly 140:17 (from Qa'a and Ishqa, though here the name of Urkesh may simply refer to the place, not to the inhabitants). Finally, note how "the *hābirū"* are said to be assembled in Urkesh (100:22f, from Ashnakkum).

This independence is often expressed as outright hostility, against Terru and others, using the expressions *nakrū* "to be enemy" (48:61), *ittīya ul idabbubū* "they do not speak with me" (105:8'), *lemnētim idabbubū* "they speak evil things" (107:7). Most telling of all is a passage where Zimri-Lim is quoted as writing the following to Terru: "I did not know that the sons of your city hate you (*izērū* 44bis:20), on my account. But you are mine, even if the city of Urkesh is not*."*

We cannot place exactly Terru and Haziran in the stratigraphic sequences being excavated at Tell Mozan, and we are including them here only tentatively under phase 5b. It is interesting to note that aspects of the material culture suggest the possibility of a Hurrian ethnic identity, in particular the presence of a number of andirons, some of which decorated.[7]

5 Death of a settlement (Phase 5)

5.1 The great brickfall

In Area A16, we encountered a massive brick fall which covers the entire area. It appears immediately below topsoil, and is characterized by two distinct layers. The lower layer contains large chunks of brick, with much space in-between: they reflect the actual moment when the brickfall occurred, and do not show any sign of either compaction or disturbance. The upper layer consists of decomposed brick, not heavily compacted, and very granular in texture. The total height of the two layers averages 1 to 1.5 m. The bricks from which the brickfall came are uniformly 10 cm thick, and apparently 40 cm on the side. They are all grey in color, and fairly well made.

There is no sign of fire anywhere in the brickfall: hence it would appear that the walls fell because of natural causes, i.e. following the abandonment of the structures, rather than through deliberate destruction. Nor is there any trace of subsequent leveling, hence we can further infer that the fall was not the result of intentional demolition. There are, on the other hand, several indications that the brickfall occurred after portions of the accumulations on which it came to rest had already been eroded. From these observations, we derive the following two conclusions. (1) The houses were abandoned and left empty for a certain period of time, during which erosion of the accumulation occurred. This erosion eventually affected the base of the walls, which accordingly fell of their own accord. (2) The destruction was the last event in the history of the tell in this particular area. This explains why the depth of the layer is so considerable, why no leveling

[7] See M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Andirons in Urkesh," forthcoming in the Burney Volume.

and compacting took place above it, and why only the top portion of the brickfall melted, protecting the lower portion where many broken individual bricks are preserved with considerable empty spaces in-between.

We do not as yet have any good indications of the walls from which the fall came – with the possible exception of a thin 1½ brick wide wall that seems to be showing in uppermost northeastern square, running in an east-west direction. We anticipate the existence of transversal north-south walls, which we assume would have conditioned the step-like direction of the brick fall. It would appear as though the houses were terraced with floors on several distinct split levels, and we consider this to be evidence of walls that would have marked the edge of these steps. It is apparent that this event resulted in an excellent stratigraphic seal, which caps the entire lower area of the earlier settlements.

5.2 Graves

An interesting burial complex was brought to light in A16 (Fig. 8a). There are two chambers, contiguous to each other. The one on the north retains a well formed arch structure that has only partly collapsed in the center (Fig. 8c). No human bones were found within it, nor any offerings. While the collapsed roof did not leave enough room for someone to have entered the tomb, the bricks which must have blocked the entrance to the east were missing. We assume that the grave was opened in order to remove both the body and the offerings at a time when the family left. This moment did coincide with the general abandonment of the settlement as evidenced by the massive brickfall from the surrounding houses which fell on the two burials, and covered them completely.

The grave to the south, on the other hand, was smaller and it was not emptied in antiquity. The body of a young woman was found inside (Fig. 8b), with offerings in place. Two silver ear-ring were found on her skull, just where the earlobes would have been. Considering the relative poverty of the domestic setting to which the grave belongs, the presence of precious metal attests to both the care for the dead and the safety of the grave.

The roof of the southern grave was damaged. Where it would have been, we found a bronze bucket, of the type that we know to have served ritual purposes as we see it depicted on our seal impression depicting ritual scenes (A6q385.3) and in Assyrian reliefs. The bucket is in a very bad state of preservation, and it will take a long time for it to be fully restored. We cannot say that the bucket was definitely associated with the burial.

Both graves were originally free-standing tumuli, set in an open space between private houses. We should also note that both graves were particularly well built, the northern one being plastered with a fine calcar plaster on the outside. Also, the construction of the graves was of particularly good quality, better, in fact, than that of the surrounding houses in the settlement. This, plus the fact that the northern burial had been emptied of its contents when the inhabitants left shortly before the collapse of their houses, indicates a high level of respect for, we might even say of interaction with, their dead.

An exception is a silver crescent found not far from the burial of the young woman just referred to. It was found on the floor of a house adjacent to the grave, which was inhabited at the same time the grave was standing. There is of course no immediate connection between the silver crescent pendant and the silver ear-ring found in the grave, although they both attest to a certain degree of wealth in the community– in spite of the otherwise relatively poor quality of the objects found here.

6 *Important objects*

6.1 Two painted Khabur heads (A14.7 and A15.226)

A painted miniature head (A14.7, see Fig. 9) was excavated from the fill of a Phase 5 pit (A14f25). The typical dark red Khabur period paint decorates both the head covering and either side of the face. The face is modeled with the nose, attached eyebrows, and cheeks emphasized. The pointed chin is small and the mouth only hinted at. The head cover is a wide smooth band around the front and sides of the head extending down to the level of the ears. The top of the head is also covered but the front band rises higher than the piece covering the top of the head. The eyes are made of applied round disks that are in proportion to the rest of the face. However they are emphasized not only because they are the only applied feature but also because of the depressions to the side and below the disks. While the modeling of the cheeks is more naturalistic, she does reflect the face of the clay statuette from Phase 4 found in a nearby pit (A12.30) because the depressions below and to the side of the eyes give a greater sense of relief to the cheeks (see *MDOG* 132, pp. 156-161).

Although this head has a small broken portion at the neck, it does not appear that it was attached to any other piece. However it is difficult to determine its function if this is the case.

From a Khabur period pit kiln in A15 a series of small painted vessels, a painted plaque and a small painted head (A15.226, see Fig. 10) were excavated. Both the plaque and small head are painted with dark brown thick paint, characteristic along with a dark red paint, for the Khabur period. This clay head is broken at the base of his long neck. He has a slightly elongated face with a small nose, large painted eyes which are in the shape of rectangles, and a painted moustache but no indication of a mouth. His head covering appears to be in the nature of a scarf which is piled up on the top of his head and does not extend down the back of his head. The upper folds of this scarf are painted as are the folds that come down along the side of his face and cover his ears. The head was made and painted carelessly as evidenced by the pinch lines in the clay at the back of the head and the fact that the paint is unevenly applied in the area of the eyes. The folds of the head covering are made with rolled pieces of clay.

The level of care exhibited by the production of the piece is similar to the clay plaque found in the same kiln. However this head, with its painted details, especially his moustache and unique head covering gives an immediacy to the figure not found in the relief of the nude female from the plaque.[8]

6.2 A bronze bucket (A16.29)

A bucket (A16.29, see Fig. 11) measuring 14.4 x 8.18 cm was found in A16f104 just above a Khabur period burial but not clearly associated with it. Since the bucket was found in a very fragile condition, it was decided to remove it with its matrix so that it could be excavated and conserved in the controlled conditions of the excavation house. The bucket was made in two pieces, so that the base was attached to the walls by folding over part of it. The handle, not found in the excavation, was attached on either side by a circular flange attached to the bucket wall by four nails. Similarly shaped buckets are depicted on seal impressions from the Akkadian period on

[8] For a similar distinctiveness in the rendering of a Khabur period painted head see M. Kelly-Buccellati, "The Workshops of Urkesh" in G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, eds. *Urkesh and the Hurrians: Studies in Honor of Lloyd Cotsen.* Malibu: Undena Publications, 1998, pp.35-50, esp. Ill. 6.

and appear prominently in Neo-Assyrian reliefs of ritual scenes. One seal impression of a ritual scene from the Urkesh palace, dating to the Akkadian period, depicts such a bucket.

6.3 A Syrian style seal (A9.138)

In a mixed context near the surface of A9 we discovered a cylinder seal (A9.138, see Fig. 12) carved out of hematite. The scene displays two winged figures on either side of a stylized tree with a worshipper behind them holding a small version of the same tree. As filler motifs a griffin and an ibex complete the scene.

The first winged figure is a bearded creature with a human upper body; his legs and feet are lion-like. His torso is rendered frontally with the rest of the figure shown in profile. Two thick but short vertical horns are placed at the front of his head. Extending diagonally from the back of his head is another horn. His wings spread diagonally upward from his shoulders and are composed of four "feathers" with a horizontal element toward the base. His right hand holds, slightly behind him, the long tail of an unclear animal. The figure is wearing a belt and has a diagonal pattern on his right hip, which may be a fur pattern or part of a kilt-type garment. No tail is shown. This lion-demon faces a schematic tree. The tree has a straight pole-like trunk with four pair of thin branches with short downward pointing ends extending from it. At the top of this highly stylized tree is a small ball-like terminal. The base of the trunk does not rest on any visible element. Facing the tree on the opposite side is a second winged creature with a partly human lower body with unclear feet and a long lion tail extending downward with an upward curl at the end. He has a bird head shown in profile with a long feather extending backward from the top of the head. His arms are bird-like with his right talon holding a long vertical snake. While his feet are unclear they may be that of a lion because his lower left leg is carved with the same type of boney structure as the figure of the lion demon opposite him; his right leg looks human with the musculature articulated. He is wearing a belt with thin diagonal lines of fur or cloth extending down from it. Behind this griffin-demon is a human worshipper holding a short version of the tree in his right hand. This figure is wearing a rolled brim hat and a fringed garment that has clear diagonal folds across the chest. Two filler motifs are placed behind him and next to the lion demon. The upper one is a griffin with the upper portion being a bird body and the lower portion lion-like. Below is an ibex.

Neither of the winged creatures is interacting with the tree even though they are facing it. The worshipper appears to acknowledge that the tree is important; not only is he facing it but he is also holding a smaller version of it. The carving is finely detailed with well-modeled and evenly proportioned figures. The figure of the worshipper is slightly larger than the two winged creatures and is placed on a somewhat higher plane. The dress of the worshipper is carved in linear detail, especially seen on the border of his garment; he has none of the delicate anatomical rendering of the winged figures. His nose is disproportionately large with an elongated chin and neck that are not well articulated. All these stylistic and iconographic characteristics place this seal in the group of high quality Syrian seals produced during the period between ca. 1850 and 1620 B.C.[9]

6.4 A stone human head (A9.149).

From near the surface in A9 came an unfinished stone head (A9.149, see Fig. 13) that is

[9] Beatrice Tessier, *Ancient Near Eastern Seals from the Marcopoli Collection.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 72-96. She is of the opinion that the modeled seals of this group are connected with an early north Syrian "aulic tradition." *Ibid.* p. 74.

vaguely pyramidal in shape. It is broken just below the mouth. He is wearing a tall hat which is somewhat flattened at the top and has a wide sunken band below in the front and both sides. This band does not appear at the back of the head although the lower edge of the hat can be approximated there by the termination of the horizontal striations covering the hat. These striations give the appearance of folds or the texture of the material the hat was made out of; however since the piece is unfinished they are difficult to interpret further. The sunken band below the hat defines the upper part of the face with its nose, continuous eyebrows and beard in relief. The mask-like face has a square outline contributing to the geometric appearance of its style. The nose is rectangular in shape, slightly flaring at the nostrils, and flat on the top. Both the nose and the continuous eyebrows frame the deeply cut round hollows for the eyes. It does not appear that they were ever inlaid. These eyes can be compared to the small clay head found just above the palace in a disturbed area that we think was part of the palace main floor.[10] In this case the deeply round holes for the eyes were never inlaid and probably never were intended for inlays. Parallel to the nose are two straight grooves that run down the face from the lower part of the eyes to approximately the end of the nose. The mouth is indicated by a very shallow horizontal line. Just below it is a small portion of a beard made with three short parallel grooves. The sides and back of the head have been left flat in this unfinished piece The place for the ears is indicated by two shallow round holes which are only drilled and not finished. On the right side of his head a number of chisel marks can still be seen.

The geometric style of the head is indicated by the pyramidal shape, the flat face with no modeling of the cheeks and the deeply drilled round eyes. The impression of this geometric style is heightened by the two straight lines parallel to the nose and by the small portion of the beard. There is no indication that his beard ever extended further along his face. Although he has no modeled cheeks, his face is widened in the lower part so that cheeks are implicit even though not indicated as such.

It is interesting that the nose is worn flat and has a slight polish as if worn from rubbing. This must be the result of rubbing only in that area because this is not found on the rest of the head. The head is broken at the base making it impossible to determine the shape of the rest of the piece.

There are no close parallels for this head, however some comparisons can be made. A small stone statue excavated in the Tell Rimah temple, dated to the mid second millennium, has a head approximately the same shape as our head.[11] The details of the face are different in style but the beard in the chin area is incised and the fact that the details on the body are incised reminds us of the incisions on the face of our figure. The Rimah example has a central division on the top of his head, which our example does not have. While none of these details makes a very convincing parallel, it must be kept in mind that the Urkesh example is unfinished and so would have looked somewhat different, especially in the sides and back of his head.

7 Bioarchaeology

7.1 Human bones

Physical anthropologist Dr. Cristina Ravedoni examined the remains of a total of 79 individuals from most excavation units within Area AA. They all belong in phases 4 and 5 of our

[10] A1.23, in Kelly-Buccellati, "Workshops," Ills. 3-5.

[11] David Oates, "The Excavations at Tell Al Rimah, 1967," *Iraq* 30 (1968)pp. 115-138, esp p. 117 and Pl. XXXV:d; Agnes Spycket, *La Statuaire du Proche-Orient.* Leiden: Brill 1981, pp. 302-3. Theresa Howard Carter, "Excavations at Tell Al-Rimah, 1964," *BASOR* 178, pp. 40-69.

basic stratigraphic sequence, i. e., the period of the scattered occupation outside the boundaries of the settlements proper. The burials are scattered evenly throughout all areas, except for areas A7 and A10 which have the highest incidence of burials (18 individuals each). Just a little more than half of the individuals studied were children. These figures may be interpreted in a variety of different ways: (1) there was a higher incidence of child mortality, or (2) the children were more easily buried within, or near, the settlements, while the adults were buried elsewhere, (3) or else the adults were removed when the site was abandoned. It may of course be that all three factors played a role. A few of the graves we have excavated over the years were in fact empty (see above, section 5.2). Since the human bones were absent, along with the modest offerings or ornaments that characterize most of these burials, we conclude that the removal was motivated by specific societal customs (known from other sites as well).

Of the adults, half were of undetermined sex, while the other half included a majority of males over females. The majority of children were very young, with 19 individuals being younger than 3 years of age. No adult whose bones were recovered reached an age older than 45 years. This figure may be influenced by the possibility that the bodies taken away might have been those of the older adults, the "elders" who commanded special respect and contributed to maintain the sense of solidarity and commonality within the social group or the family group and perhaps the neighborhood.

A study of the pathologies evidenced by the human bones indicates a high incidence of disease and, to put it in layman's terms, gives us an intimation of a rather harsh life. The highest factors of disease were degenerative events (usually associated with old age – but no individual in our sample was older than 45 years of age), and stress, such as damage to the lower vertebral column indicating the carrying of heavy loads. A curious ware pattern evidenced by teeth in one individual can be explained by assuming repeated threading in the mouth, as if in spinning.