

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia

Cultures in Contact

From Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean
in the Second Millennium B.C.

Edited by

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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

DISTRIBUTED BY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, NEW HAVEN AND LONDON



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When Were the Hurrians Hurrian? The Persistence of Ethnicity in Urkesh

An important result of our excavations at Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh) has been a radically new understanding of the earliest history of the Hurrians: they can now be recognized as having established a major urban entity for certain by the early third millennium B.C. and most likely already by the middle of the fourth. The ethnic identity of the city remained in the foreground until it was abandoned with the arrival of the Assyrians in the late fourteenth century B.C. This essay will present the evidence for both a definition of this identity and its remarkable continuity over time.

ETHNICITY AS A SEMIOTIC SYSTEM AND THE URKESH CLUSTER

The concept of ethnicity has, we might say, a bad reputation, but the fault would seem to lie, not with the concept but with the way it is used. On the one hand, it is freely invoked, in an oblique way and without using the ethnic qualifier, for example, when referring to “Sumerians” or “Babylonians” as coherent entities so identified apart from a political configuration, or when applying adjectives that transcend territorial boundaries and provide a unifying attribute (as when speaking of “Amorite kingdoms”). On the other hand, one is wary of using explicitly

the concept and the term of “ethnicity” when referring to these groups.

The first important task in this regard is to identify clearly the concept. I developed my thoughts in this regard in a recent article in which I emphasized the semiotic aspect of the phenomenon: ethnic identity relies on the interrelationship of a complex set of signs, and thus a study of the valence of these signs is the determining element that helps us to recognize the presence and indeed the nature of the ethnic bond.¹ It is in this light that I will look here at the data pertaining to Urkesh, that is, following the semiotic principles described in the earlier article, and considering the signs in terms of their progressive degrees of transparency, from language and religion (more opaque) to art and customs (more transparent).

The second major task is to face directly the problem inherent in a treatment of broken traditions, those where self-perception is absent given the lack of responsive live informants. How can we predicate value to signs when we do not have interpreters who can vouch for the interpretation? This is of course the case for ancient Urkesh. The answer lies in the identification of distributional classes that—by virtue of their very complexity—exclude an accidental clustering as the reason for their existence.

I will, therefore, propose the existence of an Urkesh cluster of cultural traits that can best be explained in terms of a group self-awareness not linked to organizational factors, and yet sufficient to maintain a profound bond of solidarity over a long period of time. Such a cluster, in other words, would be specifically ethnic. It is necessary, in this respect, to place the data of second millennium B.C. Urkesh against those of their third (and even fourth) millennium B.C. backdrop, as the foundational moments of a deeply rooted amalgam that fostered cohesiveness across time.

LANGUAGE: THE SIGN AS CIPHER

Being a native speaker of a given language is, in most cases, the primary hallmark of

ethnic identity. The reason for the distinctiveness of native fluency is that it is the least transparent of signs: it is a true cipher, one that can be de-ciphered by those who share the code. It is especially the native dimension of language acquisition that defines the relationship between competence and ethnic identity. Subsequent learning through schooling is of course possible, and this may in some ways come to serve as a form of “legal” ascription in the ethnic group, but it is the exception. Instinctively sharing the “code” is, in fact, what it means to be a native speaker. There emerges almost a sense of complicity, which emphasizes the barrier between “us” and “the others,” especially in a multiethnic (and multilingual) setting. It should be noted, in this regard, that signs are meaningful not only in themselves, but also, and often especially, because of their oppositional value to other signs, whereby a certain type of mutual exclusivity emerges.

In the case of Urkesh, we have very significant evidence of the central role played, in the Akkadian period (ca. 2300–2159 B.C.), by a Hurrian linguistic identity. In our case, we have the inscriptions connected with the two lions of Tish-atal² and the recurrence of the Hurrian term *endan* used for the king.³ It is the political dimension of both occurrences that is especially important. The linguistic specificity that is proclaimed by both the texts and the title affirms a sense of identity that is all the stronger as it is set against the dominant political dimension of Akkadian supremacy. In other words, the trend would have been—opportunistically perhaps—to write in Akkadian and to avoid the title *endan*, loaded, by virtue of its very distinctiveness, with non-Akkadian (if not outright anti-Akkadian) overtones. That this did not happen lends an even greater significance to the insistence on the use of Hurrian in contradistinction to Akkadian.

New evidence introduces an element of great importance into the discussion of the Hurrian linguistic dimension of Urkesh. Massimo Maiocchi’s analysis of tablet

A7.341 shows that this small administrative tablet, written in a beautiful Akkadian script,⁴ was in fact understood (that is, written and read) as a Hurrian text, on account of Hurrian morphemic elements embedded in the text. The reason this is so significant is because it points to Hurrian being the language used in the administration of the Palace, a fact not immediately apparent, because the few other administrative texts we have are written exclusively with Sumerograms and Akkadograms.

Hurrian personal names are common at Urkesh, but what is especially telling is their distribution. Thus, in the court of Tupkish, it is not only the name of the king that can be explained as Hurrian. Even more suggestive is the fact that two servants of the queen (who has an Akkadian name, Uqnitum) also have Hurrian names: Zamena, “the nurse of the queen,” and Tuli, “the chief cook of the queen.” The distribution suggests that naming practices do indeed correspond, in this case, to an underlying ethnic reality. On the model of Tar’am-Agade (who followed Uqnitum),⁵ it is plausible to assume that Uqnitum also belonged to the royal house of Akkad, or at least that she came from outside Urkesh. The two courtiers who are in her service and who bear the Hurrian names Zamena and Tuli are associated with functions that are especially significant. The nurse “of the queen” is the nurse of her children; the chief cook “of the queen” is in charge of preparing banquets that are important for ceremonial purposes, both political and religious. That they have Hurrian names implies that they did not come with the queen from her country of origin, but were assigned to her after her arrival in the city. Given the importance of the two tasks for which Zamena and Tuli were responsible—rearing the royal children and projecting the proper public image at state banquets—the Hurrian dimension emerges all the more starkly. Were the royal children raised speaking Hurrian? Were the banquets in keeping with Hurrian lore and traditions?

All this evidence belongs to the third millennium B.C. We have no comparable, specifically Hurrian linguistic evidence from the second millennium B.C. But this need not be interpreted as an indication that the language was no longer in use at Urkesh. A suggestion to the contrary is provided by the letters sent by the “man of Urkesh” (first Terru and then Haziran) to the overlord, Zimri-Lim of Mari.⁶ Written, appropriately, in Akkadian, the letters speak quite openly of a constant antagonism on the part of the “men of Urkesh” toward the Mari-appointed governors. It seems plausible that such antagonism was due as much to a persistent sense of ethnic diversity as to other factors, whether political⁷ or religious (see next section). If so, the linguistic “cipher” might have continued to serve as a bond for the social group, which seems, indeed, to have founded its solidarity on nonorganizational traits. The terms used to support this interpretation are as follows:

- “the city of Urkesh” *a-lum Ur-ké-eš^{KI}*
(44bis:21)
- “the sons of my city” *DUMU.MEŠ a-li-ia*
(44bis:8)
- “the men of Urkesh” *LÚ.MEŠ Ur-ké-ša-yu^{KI}* (69:9, a letter from Ashlakka; 105:7; 107:4, from Ashnakkum)
- “the elders of Urkesh” *LÚ.ŠU.GI.MEŠ Ur-ké-eš^{KI}* (45:12)
- “the *hābiru*” are assembled in Urkesh
(100:22–23, from Ashnakkum)
- “assembly” *puhrum* and related verb (69:9, from Ashlakka; 99:12’–13’, from Ashnakkum, used as a collective, with the verb *īpulū* in the plural; 100:23, from Ashnakkum; 113:10–11, from Shuduhum)
- “Urkesh” alone, referring to the population of the city as a whole, is found in 48:ii, from Ashlakka; 98:17, from Ashnakkum, used as a collective, with the verb *īlqū* in the plural in line 20; 105:4’, 30’, from Ashnakkum; possibly 140:17, from Qa’a and Ishqa, though here the name of Urkesh may refer simply to the place, not the inhabitants.

While the letters found in Mari are so far the only texts known to have originated in Urkesh in the second millennium B.C., it is not unlikely that we will find second millennium B.C. tablets in the area above the Palace, where we hope to resume excavations. We are currently in the Mitanni levels that, in our understanding, correspond to the service wing of the Great Temple. Like the area east of the Temple in the third and early second millennia B.C., this area shows no sign of destruction, and this may lessen our chances of discovering complete archives. But if our interpretation of the structures as buildings used for the administration of Temple affairs is correct, there may be at least isolated epigraphic finds in both areas. These may in turn be relevant to the question of a possible use of Hurrian as the main local language down through the second millennium B.C.

RELIGION: THE SHARED INTANGIBLE

Religion proposes, to the attention of a social group, intangible phenomena that act as powerful bonding mechanisms in two ways. First, the very fact that the phenomena are intangible means that sharing in the perception of them as real heightens the feeling of solidarity in the members of the group. Like language, religion is a cipher, albeit a more transparent one. The individual phenomena are given concrete embodiment in the form of buildings, objects, and actions, all of which are tangible in their external appearance, and as such understandable by outsiders, even if their deeper semiotic valence may remain obscured.

Second, the individual phenomena are all the more effective as bonding mechanisms because of the way in which they are structured within a complex system, where each individual part depends on the other, thereby strengthening their reciprocal import. A functioning system means accepting as real the close and structured interrelationship of a number of discrete elements: a temple, the objects within it (statues, altars, cultic paraphernalia), the actions that link all of this

into a single whole (the rituals). One accepts the reference of the entire system of tangible phenomena to a higher, intangible plane, and this creates a stronger bond of solidarity, almost a sense of complicity, especially to the extent that some of the semiotic references remain less transparent (“mysterious”).

At Urkesh we have clear indications of a very distinctive sacral system, of which three particular elements may be singled out.

The one that is most directly relevant to our present discussion is the subterranean shaft, known in Hurrian as *ābi* (fig. 1).⁸ The archaeological finds match perfectly the information from the later Hurrian texts, in particular the shallow pits (identifiable in the centuries-long accumulations within the monumental frame of the *ābi*) where the rituals took place; the prevalence of piglet and puppy bones; a small jar in the shape of a naked woman with distorted lips (possibly representing a spirit of the Netherworld whose speech is “like the chirping of birds”; the miniature jar would have been used for pouring small quantities of perfumed oil, as mentioned in the texts); silver or lead rings; the spout of a theriomorphic jar in the shape of a pig’s snout. The Urkesh structure serves as a monumental frame for the performance of the rituals described in the texts for evoking the spirits of the Netherworld, and it is thus one of the most definable religious structures of Syro-Mesopotamia, just as a baptistry is reserved for a single type of ritual in the Catholic tradition. Not only are the texts written in Hurrian, they describe rituals that are wholly at odds with the Mesopotamian traditions. Now, although the core of the Urkesh *ābi* belongs to the third millennium B.C., it continued in use throughout the second, albeit in a less monumental fashion. The area adjacent to the *ābi* appears to have retained a specific functional coherence, with a platform to the immediate northwest remaining in continuous use alongside the *ābi* (although this requires further excavation in unit A14).

The great Temple complex, which includes the Terrace on which the Temple stood and the Plaza facing its southern edge, is also very distinctive, although a definition of its Hurrian character is more inferential than in the case of the *ābi*. The structural distinctiveness, described in several publications,⁹ applies to all aspects of the complex, in particular the high stone revetment wall with its peculiar triangular pattern; the asymmetric organization of the sacred space, enclosed by a stone temenos wall; the monumental staircase, also placed asymmetrically and obliquely; an “apron” flanking the staircase that may have served for seating; and a triple escarpment—one in stone and two in clay—against floodwaters at the base of the wall. This is the classical formulation as we know it for the Early Dynastic III period. It was preceded by a very similar structure dating back to Late Chalcolithic 3,¹⁰ and it remained in use

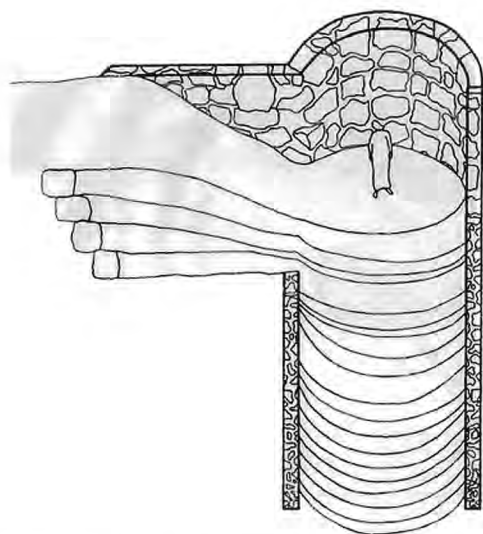


Fig. 1. Drawing of section through the subterranean shaft (Hurrian *ābi*), showing accumulations rising to a height at which the roof became an impediment. It was removed to allow the accumulations to continue, until they covered both the circular shaft and the antechamber.



Fig. 2. The eastern staircase and the “apron” flanking it. Urkesh, Temple Terrace complex



Fig. 3. The western, five-step staircase that replaced the eastern, thirty-step staircase at the end of the Mitanni period. Urkesh, Temple Terrace complex

unchanged for more than a thousand years (fig. 2), until the last century of Mitanni rule. At that point, there was a considerable retrenchment of the entire settlement, and a new staircase was built to the west, replacing the more monumental one of the third millennium B.C. (fig. 3). What is significant is the extraordinary continuity in the definition of the sacral space, which remained topologically the same for more than two millennia.¹¹ For our current argument, two points are particularly relevant. There are reasons for suggesting that the Tish-atal lions belonged to the foundation deposit of one of the temples at the top of the Terrace and that the god mentioned in the text may be Kumarbi (referred to with the Sumerogram ^{DINGIR}KIŠ.GAL), the main god of the Hurrian pantheon.¹² If so, the entire Temple

complex would be not only structurally at variance with the patterns of Mesopotamian religious architecture, but specifically linked to the Hurrian tradition of Kumarbi, a recurrent protagonist in the Hurrian mythological texts found at Hattusa.

A third element of the religious practice of Urkesh that is of interest for the question of Hurrian ethnicity pertains to the domestic sphere.¹³ While andirons are common household items that at most indicate a northern sphere of influence,¹⁴ two elements stand out in the Urkesh evidence. First, the location of one of these andirons is very significant. It is in the courtyard of a grave that was built as a miniature house (fig. 4), which links the andiron to both a domestic and a religious setting. Second, the incised decorations on the front of several andirons

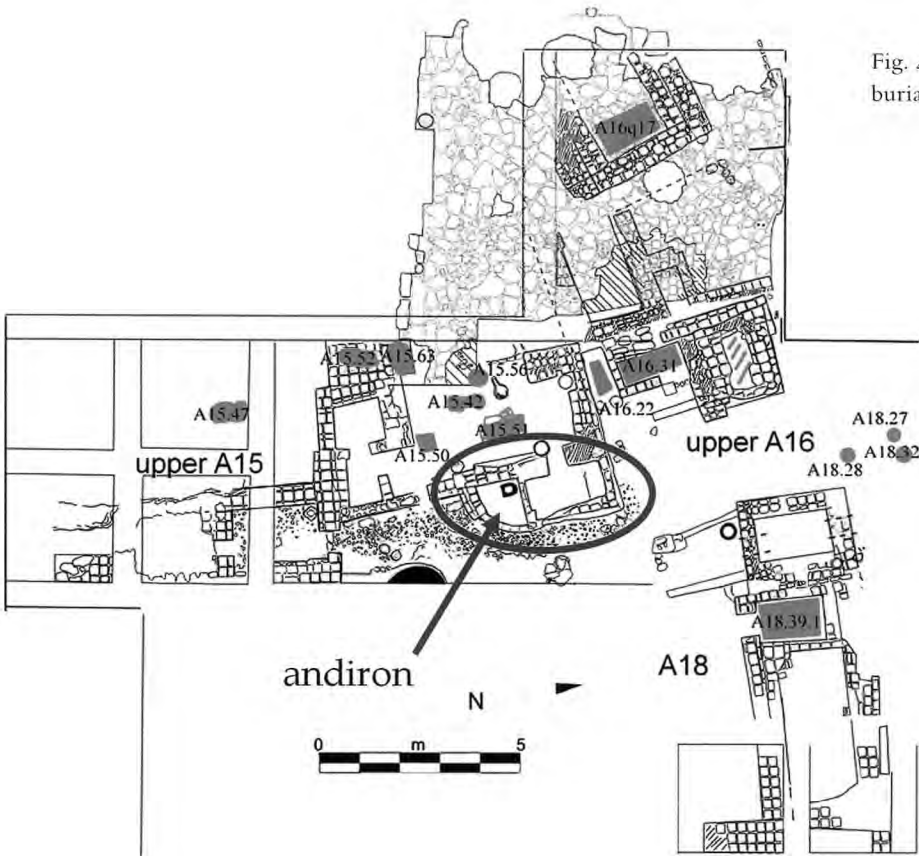


Fig. 4. Plan of Khabur-period burials at Urkesh



Fig. 5. Clay andiron with decorations on the front. Urkesh. Khabur period

(fig. 5) appear to be schematic renderings of religious symbols. The andirons found in situ date to the Khabur period (1800–1600 B.C.), while others are scattered surface finds.

What is particularly impressive about the two architectural elements, the *ābi* and the Temple Terrace, is the remarkable continuity over time—one millennium in the case of the *ābi* (but certainly future excavations will show that its use extended much earlier in time) and more than two millennia for the Temple and its Terrace. Also significant is the fact that this continuity was brought to a sudden halt with the end of the Hurrian

presence in the area. By about 1300 B.C. the site was completely abandoned, with, as of yet, little indication of Middle Assyrian presence. Such abandonment, in a region that has otherwise yielded evidence of a pervasive Middle Assyrian presence, may be due to the unambiguous identification of Urkesh as a Hurrian religious sanctuary, one that could not easily be absorbed within Assyrian ideology and might best be left untouched.

ART: THE SHARED VISION

Progressing in the direction of ever more transparent signs, we should consider the sharing of distinctive stylistic traits as a factor in establishing a bond of solidarity within a human group. These signs are transparent because any outsider can not only immediately identify them as signs but can also discern the meaning that lies behind them. This meaning, or signified, is not semiotically hidden. Rather, it proclaims itself by virtue of the simple coherence of those traits and their distinctiveness vis-à-vis other stylistic choices. The strong asymmetry of the Temple Terrace is already indicative of such distinctiveness, and by inference we associate it with the ethnic background of its makers. One did not need to be Hurrian to notice it and appreciate its aesthetic import. It is by virtue of its association with other factors—specifically the presumed dedication of the Temple to Kumarbi—that I attribute an ethnic valence to this factor. Beyond architecture, we notice characteristic features in the other avenues of artistic expression, and these, by implication, may also be assumed to have value as ethnic factors. I will mention two such features: realism and expressionism.

It is especially in third millennium B.C. sculpture and glyptic that the realism of Urkesh art emerges. Of the lions of Tishatal it is especially the one in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection that is remarkable in this respect: besides the fine quality with which the details of the lion's body are rendered, we notice in particular

the twist of the neck and face relative to the torso and paws, which gives the statue a strongly dynamic sense of movement. The same dynamic sense is to be seen in the plaque found in the vicinity of the Temple,¹⁵ where on one side is an image of a man pushing a plow deeply into the furrows in front of him, and on the other there is a herd of quadrupeds shown in a circular movement. The latter theme is echoed in a seal impression from the Palace; the glyptic is also unusual because of the unique attention it pays to scenes from daily life in ways that are unparalleled in Mesopotamia. We may call to mind a second millennium B.C. figurine representing a man with a turban, where paint is used to highlight the physiognomy of the individual, suggesting an attempt at a real portrait (fig. 6).¹⁶

Alongside this realism, there are stylistic traits that we may call expressionistic in the exaggerated emphasis on gestures and physiognomic traits of the individual figures. The glyptic from the Palace of Tupkish embodies some of these traits, for instance the long arms extended to emphasize the posture of a servant reaching out in an offering gesture. From the second millennium B.C., a small stone sculpture represents a human head, presumably male (fig. 7).¹⁷ The flatness of the cheeks, the very straight nose placed immediately above a barely identifiable mouth, the absence of ears, the wide holes for eyes, the broadly incised forehead, and the large conical top (a hat?) so placed as to emphasize the broad base that seems to preclude a neck—all these features combine to project a very stark geometric volume that is not unlike the impression we get from the contemporary statue of Idrimi (see p. 149, fig. 11) or those from the Mitanni palace at Tell Brak.

CUSTOMS: THE SHARED ICONS

The final set of traits to be considered includes customs that, in and of themselves, are very simple and unassuming but may be thought of as tags marking a differential status because of their distinctiveness vis-à-vis



Fig. 6. Baked clay head of a man. Urkesh. Khabur period A15.226



Fig. 7. Stone head of a man. Urkesh. Probably Mitanni period A9.149

other customs, however simple in typology. In this regard, then, customs become like icons that are shared because of what they signify beneath their appearance. A flag is the most provocative of such icons, being a simple piece of cloth, which, however, symbolizes the entire community. We have no indication of flags for Urkesh, but other icons stand out as potentially significant in this respect.

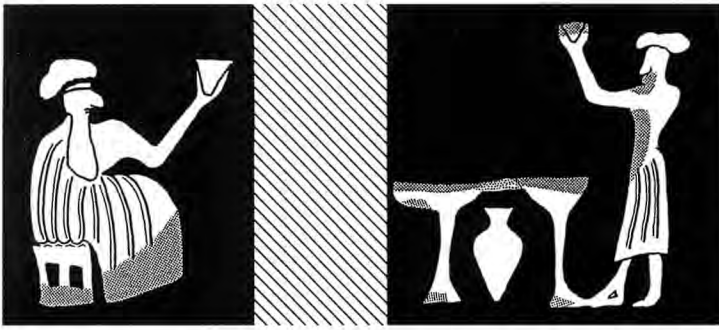


Fig. 8. Drawing of cylinder seal impression. Urkesh, Palace of Tupkish. Akkadian period



Fig. 9. Drawing of cylinder seal impression; the figure on the right brings tribute (a skein of wool?) to the king. Urkesh, Palace of Tupkish. Akkadian period



Fig. 11. Drawing of cylinder seal impression from the first seal of Tuli, the female chef of queen Uqnitum. Urkesh. Akkadian period

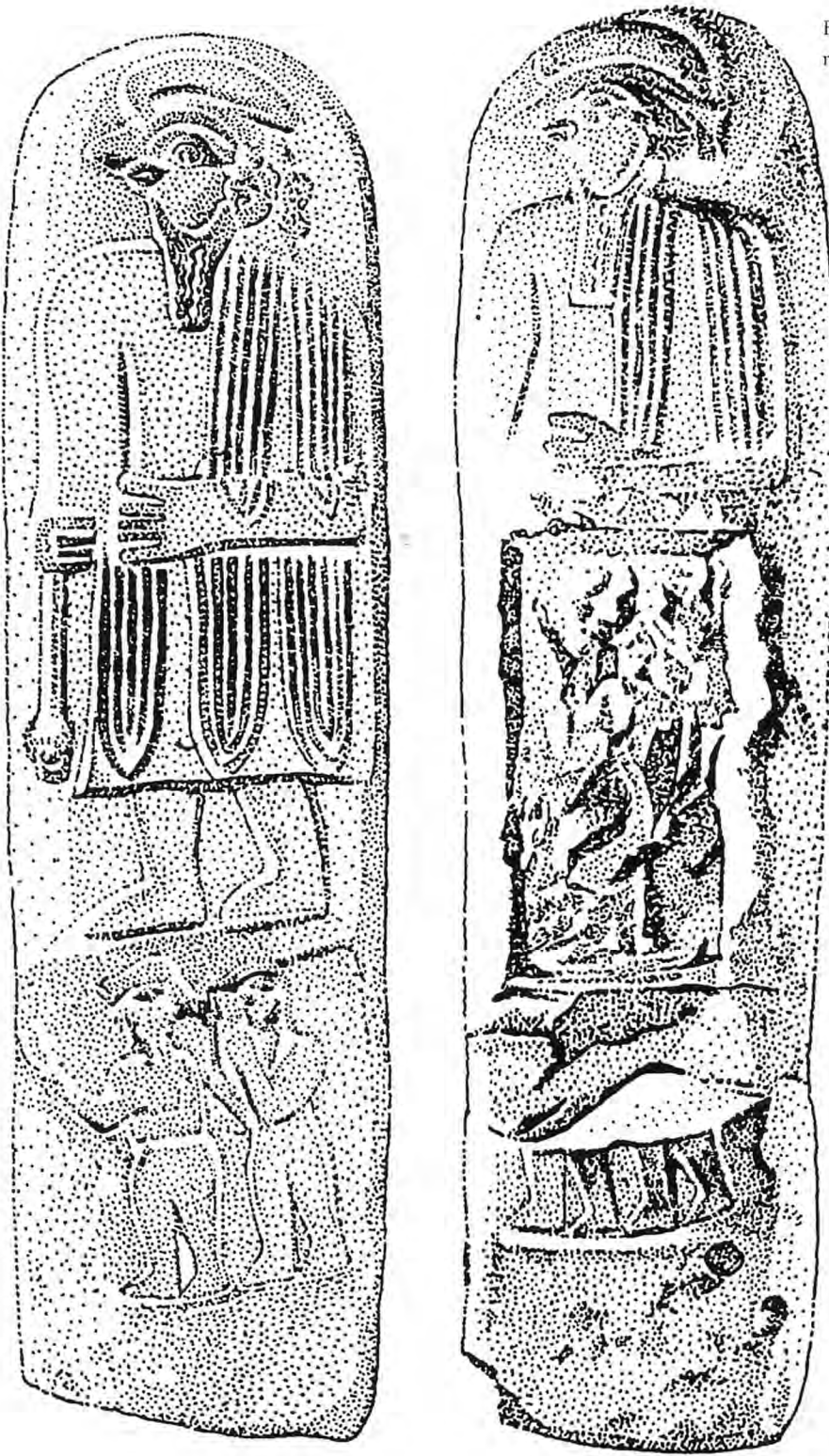


Fig. 12. Drawing of cylinder seal impression from the second seal of Tuli. Urkesh. Akkadian period

The first set of traits pertains to fashion in dress, with particular regard to head coverings. The Khabur-period figurine wears a headdress (fig. 6), the shape of which is shown in considerable detail on the side and in the back of the head. It resembles a modern kaffiyeh in the way it is draped in several overlapping strands, and even the painted stripes suggest a similar ornamental pattern. Another peculiar headdress is a hat resembling a Basque beret, found on seal impressions from the Palace of Tupkish (figs. 8, 9) and on four figures on the Jebel el-Beidah stele, possibly dated to the second half of the third millennium B.C. (fig. 10).

A suggestion for another distinctive element that may have an iconic value belongs to the culinary sphere. The two seals of the cook Tuli (figs. 11, 12) share a similar iconography, with one showing a butcher leading a sheep to the block and a woman making butter in a churn, and the other a butcher with a kid and a woman making bread. The cook is certainly not a low-level servant, but the administrator of the kitchen, and especially in charge of important ceremonial

Fig. 10. Drawings of obverse and reverse of stele. Jebelet el-Beidah



banquets. It is therefore likely that the similar themes of the two seals reflect one of these important occasions, in which the meat of a lamb or a kid was prepared with cream and served with butter. The use of butter in itself, rather than oil, may be a northern peculiarity, and the combination of the two (meat possibly stewed in cream) may represent a distinctive northern recipe.¹⁸

THE URKESH CLUSTER

My title, “When Were the Hurrians Hurrian?,” was intended to highlight the dichotomy in the discipline whereby ethnic terms are on the one hand used easily when understood in a generic fashion, while on the other there is a widespread resistance to using such terms to imply a truly ethnic categorization. In other words, it is acceptable to speak about “Hurrians” in a generic way, as long as we do not really think of them as “Hurrian.”

The thrust of my argument has been to develop a framework within which it seems proper to think, instead, of the “Hurrians” as properly “Hurrian,” at least in the case of Urkesh. The theoretical aspect of this framework is the definition of specific criteria—the adherence to certain signs as the center around which a nonorganizational solidarity pivots. The historical aspect has been the articulation of a cluster of such signs, which, taken together, allow us to identify a concrete Urkesh reality as properly ethnic. At Urkesh, then, it is legitimate to think of the “Hurrians” as “Hurrian.”

The Urkesh cluster, as I have outlined it, is unique in its totality. A site like Tell Chuera in the third millennium B.C. has striking similarities to the Temple Terrace, but none of the other distinctive traits apply. The peculiar beret-like cap of Urkesh glyptic is also found on the Jebelet el-Beidah stele. The flat representational style on the Urkesh stone head may be compared to the statue of Idrimi, thus widening the comparable regional range. The important aspect of a cluster that aims to establish ethnic identity is the distribution of the elements

under discussion. What marks the Urkesh cluster as Hurrian, rather than just northern, is the bracketing of the traits I have analyzed into a semiotic complex, a bracketing that includes explicit factors, namely the linguistic evidence and the specificity of the religious traditions embodied in the *abi* and in the Temple Terrace.

The title “Beyond Babylon” refers to both a geographical location and an intellectual construct. It encourages us to look beyond the narrow limits of local history and to seek to understand a globalization process that was fully underway in the Near East of the second millennium B.C. Within this perspective, I have sought to point out how ethnic realities, clearly defined and properly understood, were part of this process. They were real historical forces in that they provided a bond of solidarity for a given human group that, while it paralleled the cohesive power of political institutions, also differed from it in many respects. While this bond lacked organizational mechanisms, it broadly overarched time and space, retaining its efficacy longer and more widely than any territorially based state institution. There are plausible reasons, I believe, to trace back the Hurrian identity of Urkesh over a period of two millennia, and certainly for a period of some thirteen centuries, from 2600 B.C. to its final demise around 1300 B.C. Thus, ethnic identity gives us an important historiographic handle, an interpretive key, for a better understanding of the forces that shaped the world—beyond Babylon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This essay follows closely the presentation at the “Beyond Babylon” symposium, except that I include the results of two seasons of excavation (2009 and 2010) that have taken place since then and have added important new evidence for our theme. Work in these two seasons has been made possible in part through the generous support of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is here gratefully acknowledged. Major funding was provided by Gulfsands Petroleum Plc.

1. G. Buccellati 2010a. On Hurrians at Urkesh, see recently G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2007; G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2009, esp. pp. 66–69. For a full bibliography and an online publication of most of the titles, see the website www.urkesh.org.
2. See the edition by Wilhelm 1998.
3. Besides Tish-atal, the rulers who used the term were Tupkish (for whom the term LUGAL is also attested), Ishar-kinum, and, possibly, the husband of Tar'am-Agade. For Tupkish, see G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995–96; G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1996. For Tar'am-Agade, see G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002b, esp. p. 17. For Ishar-kinum, see G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2005, pp. 39–40.
4. Maiocchi 2011. The tablet comes from an Ur III context immediately above the Palace of Tupkish, but the paleographical considerations place it squarely in the period of Naram-Sin.
5. See Kelly-Buccellati 2010b.
6. Kupper 1998, letters 44–46 and 98:24ff. (Terru); 69 (Haziran); see also letters 100, 105, 107, 113, 140.
7. See Fleming 2004.
8. Kelly-Buccellati 2002; G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2004; Collins 2004.
9. G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2005; G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2009; F. Buccellati 2010; G. Buccellati 2010b; G. Buccellati forthcoming.
10. Kelly-Buccellati 2010a.
11. On this, see G. Buccellati forthcoming, sec. 1.6.
12. G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2009, pp. 58–66.
13. Kelly-Buccellati 2004; Kelly-Buccellati 2005.
14. For arguments in support of a religious aspect to the andirons, see Takaoğlu 2000; Trufelli 2000. On the other hand, Anna Smogorzewska (2009) does not consider the andirons sufficiently specific to have either Hurrian or religious associations.
15. Kelly-Buccellati 1989.
16. G. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002a, pp. 123–25.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–29.
18. I thank Dr. Alexis Martin for this suggestion.