

ANDIRONS AT URKESH:  
NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE HURRIAN IDENTITY  
OF THE EARLY TRANS-CAUCASIAN CULTURE

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Extending from its homeland in Georgia and Armenia the Early Trans-Caucasian culture (ETC) dominated Eastern Anatolia for much of the third millennium B. C., but had relatively few links with the Khabur region to the south and through this region to the wider Syro-Mesopotamian world beyond.<sup>1</sup> It is only toward the end of this period (in ETC III), when urban sites develop in Eastern Anatolia (at places like Malatya, Tepecik, and Norşuntepe), that more evidence for north-south contacts can be adduced. Trade and gift exchange of raw materials and finished products, through exchange mechanisms barely understood, can now be approached. New evidence connecting this culture with the Khabur region to its south comes from the excavations of the Hurrian city of Urkesh (Tell Mozan). The finding of horseshoe-shaped hearths and andirons in Khabur period houses at Mozan was the starting point for these reflections on the interactions between the later Early Trans-Caucasian culture and cities along its southern border.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is indeed a pleasure to dedicate this article to Charles Burney whose early and sustained contributions to research on this culture stimulated my own work on the subject as well as that of many others. In addition to family members, I wish to thank Anthony Sagona and Gregory Areshian for their comments and William Shelby for all his help and invaluable support. For an overview of the Early Trans-Caucasian culture see Burney and Lang 1971, Kelly-Buccellati 1979, and Sagona 1984. A recent review of the Late Chalcolithic transition to the beginning of the Bronze Age can be found in the articles by Kiguradze, Frangipane, and Mazzone in Marro and Hauptmann 2000. See also articles by Dzharidze 1993 and Sagona 1993. The evidence for the later developments in this culture is considered in Edens 1995 and Sagona 2000. For sites related to this culture in the north Caucasus see Gadzhiev *et al.* 2000 and Smith and Rubinson forthcoming. Iconographic motifs and seal designs that I think are typically Hurrian and survived into the Nuzi period are discussed in Kelly-Buccellati 1996; these motifs, it now appears, are typically ED IIIb and early Akkadian in the Khabur region. They furnish earlier links to what I have identified as typically Hurrian.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the Urkesh/Mozan excavations to date see Buccellati 1998.

## RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT TELL MOZAN/URKESH

Urkesh is the only third millennium site that can be securely associated with the Hurrians. The identification of the site as Urkesh came from the excavation of a large number of inscribed seal impressions found on floors of the royal palace AP.<sup>3</sup> The seal inscriptions give us evidence for a city ruler with the Hurrian name of Tupkish, his queen with the Akkadian name of Uqnitum and court officials with Hurrian names directly connected with the queen (her nurse Zamena and the head of the queen's kitchen, a woman by the name of Tuli).<sup>4</sup> Only after the large majority of the seal impressions were excavated and more rooms and courtyards were uncovered could the building be identified as the palace of which only the service wing has been so far fully excavated.<sup>5</sup> Most of the seal impressions from the service wing (AK) were affixed to jars, boxes or bags; only a few were identified as door sealings.

We now know that a second important woman was in Urkesh possibly as its queen. What is remarkable about this figure is her identity. She is Tar'am-Agade, a previously unknown daughter of Naram-Sin.<sup>6</sup> It is unlikely that she is in Urkesh in any minor role and it would rather seem that she was married to the *endan* of Urkesh whose seal impression was found in the same cache. Her seal inscription mentions only her father and not her husband while several of Uqnitum's seals identified her as being the wife of Tupkish. It has been argued elsewhere that Tar'am-Agade follows Uqnitum as queen of Urkesh.<sup>7</sup> We thus have a chronological connection showing that the early Hurrian rulers at Urkesh were contemporary with Naram-Sin.<sup>8</sup> Later Akkadian tablets, dating to the reign of Sharkalisharri, have been previously excavated.<sup>9</sup> In them we have several names of Hurrians living in the city or nearby villages.

In the Ur III period three Hurrian kings of Urkesh are mentioned in the texts (Shatar-mat, Atal-shen and Ann-atal). Evidence for a settlement during this period

<sup>3</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995–6, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1996, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1999 our excavation reports have appeared regularly in the annual issues of *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft*.

<sup>6</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002. Arguments for her being a queen of Urkesh and not a high priestess in service of an occupying Akkadian presence are given in this article. While we have consistently dated the levels of Uqnitum and Tupkish to the Akkadian period, and the epigraphic documents now give an incontrovertible proof, scholars still persist in quoting an Ur III date, see most recently Astour 2002, p. 153 with n. 641; Stein 2001, p. 151; see also Lebeau 2000, p. 192 and Bretschneider 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati, 2000 especially pp. 136–141. The arguments are both stratigraphic and typological.

<sup>8</sup> It is probable that they were contemporary with the early years of the 37 year reign of Naram-Sin, while his daughter's accession to the throne of Urkesh came somewhat later. Naram-Sin's name is written with the divine determinative in the seal inscription of Tar'am-Agade, which may indicate that it is to be dated somewhat later in his reign.

<sup>9</sup> Milano 1991 pp. 18–26.

above the old palace remains has recently come to light. Elsewhere on the site a large establishment of a figure with the Hurrian name of Pussham, dating to the Ur III period, has also been excavated recently.<sup>10</sup> One small Ur III tablet was discovered in A7.

During the Khabur period various small private houses have been excavated. There may well be an Old Babylonian palace elsewhere on the site since we do have indications of a building with substantial mud brick walls in the strata above what turned out to be the Akkadian palace of Tupkish and Uqnitum, but the present exposure is too limited to allow us to consider this a palace.<sup>11</sup> Textual evidence for Urkesh includes an Old Babylonian itinerary that describes the route from Assur to Harran and shows the caravan stopping only once at Urkesh. This can possibly be interpreted as a recognition that the city of Urkesh was not as important as other nearby cities. For instance, a city in the neighborhood, Ashnakkum, presumably the site of Chagar Bazar, was visited on both the out-bound and in-bound portions.<sup>12</sup> Royal letters have recently been published written by kings of Urkesh to the king of Mari, Zimri-Lim.<sup>13</sup> These letters indicate that Urkesh was on the northern border of the kingdom of Ashnakkum which was in turn one of the principal capitals of Idamaras.<sup>14</sup> Two local rulers of Urkesh, Terru and Haziran, write to Zimri-Lim, their overlord. It appears from these letters that the local people in Urkesh are hostile to these kings who may have been perceived as foreign.<sup>15</sup>

This short review of what we know of Urkesh from stratigraphy and texts shows that while the fortunes of the city may have declined to some extent, it continued as a kingdom fully into the Old Babylonian period. The question remains as to whether or not there is any evidence of a connection between this Hurrian city and the Early Trans-Caucasian culture in the second millennium. Recent excavations at Urkesh have begun to give evidence for a positive answer to this question. In Khabur period private houses we have uncovered decorated andirons and hearths of a type typical for the Early Trans-Caucasian culture. These objects suggest just the kind of link in material culture that we are seeking. In what follows, I will first examine briefly some of the Early Trans-Caucasian evidence, then present the new examples from early second millennium Urkesh and finally draw some conclusions based on this new evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2001 p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft* forthcoming in 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Hallo 1964, Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Kupper 1998, pp. 55–62.

<sup>14</sup> Kupper 1998, pp. 55–62 letters from Urkesh and pp. 141–3, 158, letters from Ashnakkum.

<sup>15</sup> Terru writes directly to Zimri-Lim, and in his letters he calls himself simply his servant. But in another letter he is referred to as ‘man of Urkesh’ (LÚ Urkesh) a title that is regularly used for local kings. Haziran is an Amorite name and Terru is possibly Amorite but in any case not Hurrian. I am grateful to Gernot Wilhelm for this information concerning the name Terru.

## EARLY TRANS-CAUCASIAN ANDIRONS

A prominent cultural indicator for the Early Trans-Caucasian culture is the presence of both permanently fixed horseshoe-shaped hearths and smaller portable andirons. Three sites immediately come to mind when discussing the horseshoe-shaped hearths and andirons. The excavations of H. Koşay at the Elaziğ region site of Pular (Sakyol) are exceptional in that they revealed a number of small private houses with remarkably well-preserved interior household installations.<sup>16</sup> A fire destroyed the buildings in Level X leaving three of them in a good state of preservation (79, 80, 83). In them horseshoe-shaped hearths had been placed toward the back of rectangular rooms. These hearths are decorated with designs of schematically rendered human faces placed often in the upper triangle of a large X shape. It may be that this X shape was conceived as a head flanked by two raised arms above two spread legs; in other words we may have here their depiction of a complete body. In this case then the applied eyes, nose, and mouth would be framed by the two arms which come together to form the chin. The example in Room 83 has a large face on the raised portion at the back, two others at the ends of the arms and two smaller ones jutting out from the arms. Only the large central example has the face framed by the triangle, which is in the upper portion of a large X. This type of decoration was also found on two pottery objects identified as altars by Koşay in Room 80.<sup>17</sup> These objects had holes on the interior, that Koşay interpreted as being for hanging, and a rectangular face with relief applied all along this frontal portion; it is on the raised ends that the faces are found, made with applied relief and impressed circles. Along the rectangular base either a wavy line with pendant crescents or a row of discrete designs vaguely resembling animals were applied. A number of relief decorated vessels found in connection with these rooms have similar schematic faces.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, relief decorations on ceramic vessels resembling these designs are also found in a number of Armenian sites.<sup>19</sup>

Koşay interpreted these rooms as shrines. The placement of the hearths, with the additional finding in Room 80 of the altars and a large relief decorated vessel, give the impression that they were places of ritual activity even if the plans of the structures were the same as nearby houses.

Also in the Altınova, Korucutepe yielded, among a number of horseshoe-shaped hearths placed on hearth platforms, a complex of three andiron-type hearths of a graduated nature with one placed inside the other on a low, smooth, circular

<sup>16</sup> Koşay 1976, pp. 145–6, 164–5.

<sup>17</sup> Koşay 1976, pl. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Koşay 1976, pls 19–20, 48–9.

<sup>19</sup> This material was collected by Sagona 1984, figs 119, 122: nos 232–237. Many of these applied designs came from the excavations of G. Areshian at Mokhra Blur, the most important Early Trans-Caucasian site in Armenia; see references to his publications of this material in Sagona 1984.

hearth platform.<sup>20</sup> Their only decoration is a series of grooves around the exterior of the triangular hearth fronts. Interestingly the front portions are triangular-shaped with the narrow, pointed end of the triangle downward. While this gives the impression of instability, these triangles clearly reflect the triangular face shapes from Pulur.

At the site of Kvatskhelebi/Urbnisi in Georgia excavated by Alexander Djavakhishvili and his wife Lilly Glonti,<sup>21</sup> in Level C1, hearths with quatrefoil or trefoil openings were sunken in the main room of the houses in line with the main entrance. They are of a different shape from the horseshoe-shaped andirons found in regions farther to the west. Despite this fact, the Kvatskhelebi examples are important here because they demonstrate a context for activities connected with these hearths beyond simple domestic use.<sup>22</sup> What is remarkable about this site is that the excavators reconstruct the destruction of the settlement at the precise time that a religious ritual unfolded in a number of private houses. This ritual centered around the central hearth. On the basis of this evidence we can suggest with more certainty what we suspected in the case of Pulur (Sakyol): while these permanent installations are in most instances part of a domestic setting they can in addition be the prime focus for ritual activity.

Horseshoe-shaped hearths continued into the Middle Bronze period in the Early Trans-Caucasian eastern highlands. The best evidence comes from Sos Höyük where Kura-Araxes traditions lasted for a millennium and a half.<sup>23</sup> At this site in addition to typical burial practices and ceramics, a large horseshoe-shaped hearth impression was found on the burnt floor of a rectangular house from the Early Trans-Caucasian culture dated by Sagona to Middle Bronze I (2200-2000 B. C.). The same cultural traditions extend into MB II at the site and can be linked with part of the Trialeti sequence.<sup>24</sup>

#### URKESH ANDIRONS

The context for andirons in Urkesh is limited since few private houses have been excavated thus far. The prominent house in Area F1 (dating to the late Akkadian period) and the establishment of Pussham in Area C2 (dating to the Ur III period) are large architectural complexes and belonged to élite inhabitants of the city. They need not be considered as indicative of practices and beliefs of the majority of the city's residents. In Areas AA and C2, on the other hand, we have found evidence of medium

<sup>20</sup> Van Loon 1978, pp. 20–1. pls 22–9, 84–5, Kelly-Buccellati 1979 pl. X

<sup>21</sup> Djavakhishvili and Glonti 1962.

<sup>22</sup> See Kelly-Buccellati 1979 pl. IX, for a view of two andirons inside one of the hearths in a C1 house.

<sup>23</sup> Sagona 2000, pp. 336–40.

<sup>24</sup> Sagona 2000, p. 340.

and small private houses. In some of these Khabur period houses we have discovered andirons and horseshoe-shaped hearths of a type related to the ones so prominent in the third millennium Early Trans-Caucasian culture of eastern Anatolia with its extension as far south as Palestine. These types of fire installations have been excavated in different sectors of the city: in the area of the private houses above the palace AP and near the center of the mound in Area C2.

Within the excavations in strata above the palace AP, in Area A11, we found the best preserved permanently placed horseshoe-shaped hearth and the only complete example with its decoration intact (Figs 1–2).<sup>25</sup> When the excavator (Federico Buccellati) saw from the top, which had just been exposed, that the whole shape was unbroken, he decided to leave the matrix intact so as to eventually remove it as a block and thus take it back to the expedition house to be excavated by the conservators in a more controlled environment. This turned out to be the decision that saved it since its extremely fragile condition meant that excavation and conservation had to proceed simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> After excavation we discovered that this andiron had in fact the whole shape preserved with the decoration on the front of the two arms almost intact.<sup>27</sup>

The hearth has a taller portion at the back that is narrower than the walls and tilted diagonally back; this part is not decorated. The two arms have wider front portions decorated with incised lines and impressed holes (Fig. 3). Toward the base the arms are joined by a thick bridge, which forms an arch below. The upper part may have been flat originally but it has become distorted over time. The bridge is decorated on the exterior with shallow relief that follows the form of the bridge over the empty space but is raised at the two upper corners, forming thick projections similar to horns. The decoration of the lowest part of the bridge on the left side of the andiron extends parallel to the hearth base in a type of elongated foot. The corresponding portion on the right side is not preserved. Above the bridge both arms are decorated, the decoration on the left arm being the better preserved of the two. In the center of both arms are two incised triangles placed so that the narrowest angles touch at the center of the arm. In the upper triangle of the right arm a large deep circular hole was cut after the clay was dry, possibly for an inlay of a different material. Inside the base of the lowest triangle three small holes were impressed with a sharp tool. Above the

<sup>25</sup> See Kelly-Buccellati 2001.

<sup>26</sup> When we discovered this andiron and realised how delicate was its condition and the many hours it would take to excavate and preserve it, I sent a fax from the field to Joan Oates asking for her opinion which she immediately sent back. I am extremely grateful for her prompt help; Urkesh and Nagar cooperate in both the ancient and modern time frames!

<sup>27</sup> The arduous task of restoring this andiron was taken on by our restorers Beatrice Angeli of the Opificio della Pietra Dure in Florence and Sophie Bonetti, the Ukkesh Director of Field conservation. For a description of its conservation see Angeli and Bonetti 2001.

upper triangle two curved diagonal lines appear to indicate horns. On the left arm of the andiron a similar decoration appears, but without the large hole. In this case there are four impressed holes inside the base of the lower triangle, one inside the upper right corner of the upper triangle and one near the right portion of the possible horn.

This hearth was clearly used in connection with fire as all around the inside there were traces of burning as well as above and under the bridge portion of the object. Its fragile condition was in large part due to this continued firing inside.

Portions of comparable permanent hearths have been found in private house contexts in A15 (Fig. 4:1) and A16 (Fig. 4:2). The placement inside nearby houses of such decorated hearths indicates that the complete example from A11 is not unique even though we have not found as yet other examples of the same type of decoration. It is interesting that no permanent hearths of this type have been found in Area C2.

A portable andiron shape (Figs 5 & 6:1a) found near these houses supports a shallow bowl and is decorated with two animals, one on either side of a less clearly defined horseshoe-shaped base.<sup>28</sup> Heavy traces of burning were present inside the bowl indicating that it may have functioned as a lamp. An andiron fragment found on the surface in the same area exhibits the same double triangle with a large shallow hole in the center and small deeper holes on the sides (Fig. 6:1b).<sup>29</sup>

From an area of private Khabur period houses in the central portion of the mound (Area C2) a number of small portable andirons with traces of burning have been excavated.<sup>30</sup> They have a flat rectangular base with three 'legs' holding up a shallow bowl at the top and some may have been used as lamps. The front is decorated with a combination of incised lines and rows of small impressed holes. The example shown here (Fig. 6:2-3) has the typical alternation of rows of impressed holes and incised lines with curving lines at the top reflecting in reverse the curvature of the upper ends of both arms. Both the interior and exterior of the base are burnt; the bowl portion is heavily burnt both inside and outside. These traces of burning on the exterior indicate that the andiron was used inside a hearth.

The Khabur period andirons and horseshoe-shaped hearths excavated in Urkesh have their closest typological parallels with eastern Anatolia, the Amuq region, western Syria and Palestine.<sup>31</sup> The portable andirons from the Caucasus are earlier and are decorated with either anthropomorphic motifs or schematic depictions of the heads of horned animals. It is possible that a connection may be made between the horned

<sup>28</sup> This object was excavated near the surface in an area of houses belonging to the late third or early millennium (our late Phase 4 or early Phase 5).

<sup>29</sup> De Miroschedji 2000 fig. 5:7 (Tabara-el-Akrad) and fig. 14 (Pulur).

<sup>30</sup> I wish to thank Peter Pfälzner and Heike Dohmann-Pfälzner for providing me with this information from their excavations in Area C2.

<sup>31</sup> De Miroschedji 2000, p. 262. Braidwood and Braidwood 1960, Phase H, fig. 290, especially no. 6, reproduced in a photo in fig. 291:2, which may have inlaid eyes and mouth. Fewer andirons were found in Phase I, see fig. 307:21-2.

animals on these Caucasian examples and the Urkesh ones, but the importance of horns in Mesopotamia in distinguishing deities through their horned crowns starting from very late in ED III or early Akkadian, must be kept in mind. If in both areas the figures depicted on the andirons were divine, their depiction probably stemmed from different reasons in the two areas.

It is difficult to interpret precisely the symbols connected with these hearths. Clearly the examples from the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia are linked with schematic representations of human figures. The Urkesh hearth example with place for an inlay and incised decoration can vaguely be connected with a human form. Our hearth appears to have horns on the top of the figure, which would be consistent with the Mesopotamian representation of a deity. But they are not present in the semicircular, incised lines at the top of some Early Trans-Caucasian hearths, nor on the other portable andirons which have a comparable decoration with andirons from eastern Anatolia, the Amuq western Syria and Palestine.<sup>32</sup> Could this be an Urkeshean iconographic interpretation of a mountain deity connected in some way with fire? The fact that both schematic human figures and representations of horns are found on the same type of object lends a certain amount of credibility to the possibility of their connection and to their mutual association with fire.

The date of the Urkesh andirons is certain because they have been found well stratified in Khabur period houses thus dating from about 1900 to about 1600 B. C.. It was generally agreed that the Early Trans-Caucasian culture lasted until about 2000 B. C. though recently the dates of its end have been pushed back.<sup>33</sup> From the excavations of Sos Höyük, as well as Urkesh, we can see that Early Trans-Caucasian traditions lasted into the mid-second millennium.<sup>34</sup> I have previously expressed my opinion that its ending date was around 1800 B. C.<sup>35</sup> This new data from Urkesh supports such a late date. Additionally I think that the Urkesh evidence from the Khabur period is an indication of continued contact and not a new relationship. The parallels of the andiron shape, decoration and the context of both permanent and portable andirons support this conclusion.

#### TRADE ROUTES AND THEIR CONTROL

The natural hinterland for the city of Urkesh is the mountainous area immediately to its north. It can be easily accessed by a good route which traverses the Mardin Pass through the Tur 'Abdin mountains and onward toward the Early Trans-Caucasian sites

<sup>32</sup> Braidwood and Braidwood 1960, fig. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Edens, 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Sagona 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Kelly-Buccellati 1979.



in the Altinova. Once in the eastern Anatolian highlands, the east-west route was well established along the Araxes and Kura rivers and westward to towns such as Malatya. Urkesh was a gateway city controlling north-south trade from its location in the narrow arc in the piedmont area just to the south of the Tur-Abdin called by us the Urban Ledge.<sup>36</sup> This ledge included cities from Chuera to Nineveh with Urkesh at its center. Urkesh is the closest city along this urban ledge to the Mardin Pass and as such could control caravans or traders coming and going to the north. Raw materials and some partially worked resources such as copper and obsidian<sup>37</sup> traveled this route. The interchange may also have included goods such as wood and semiprecious stones. The specific trade mechanisms are not clear but it seems unlikely that people from the north controlled this trade since we have so few traces of their presence in Urkesh or Chuera. There is more evidence of Metallic Ware, a type of pottery produced along the northern Syrian urban tier to the west of Urkesh, in eastern Anatolian sites especially in the Altinova relatively close to the Mardin Pass.<sup>38</sup> Trade connections between Urkesh and the more central areas of Anatolia did exist at the end of the third millennium. Evidence for this comes from the discovery at Urkesh of a lead nude female figure, a ritual vessel in the shape of a nude woman carrying a miniature jar on her head,<sup>39</sup> and in connections in seal iconography between the Akkadian seals found in the royal storehouse (AK) and the seals from Kültepe II (especially in scenes connected with the bull cult). In Kültepe itself imports from north Syria intensified during the second half of the third millennium.<sup>40</sup>

The cities along the piedmont Urban Ledge were powerful enough to retain substantial control over the north-south trade routes leading to the urban markets along the Euphrates and into southern Mesopotamia. The term 'ledge' is used to refer precisely to the fact that these cities provided, from the point of view of the essentially rural populations in the highland, the cultural interface and the commercial outlet to the further urban world in the south. In this view, both the few cities along the piedmont area and the towns and villages in the highlands were essentially Hurrian. Only the cities were large urban centers in the Mesopotamian sense, with sufficient infrastructures to carry on a sustained long distance trade, while the mountain area to the north constituted essentially the hinterland for these same cities. At Urkesh, in particular during the late Akkadian period, there was a king ruling the city, a king concerned with Hurrian identity and one who envisioned the continuity of his dynasty. Cuneiform writing was

<sup>36</sup> Kelly-Buccellati 1990; Buccellati 1999 p. 241, Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2000, pp. 153–55. See also chapter by C. Marro in this volume (ed.).

<sup>37</sup> For the metals trade see Kelly-Buccellati 1990. A fragment of an obsidian bowl was recovered near the surface of the site next to Temple BA.

<sup>38</sup> Pruss 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2001, pp. 78–80.

<sup>40</sup> Mellaart 1982; Özgüç 1986; Tessier 1993, p. 607; Maxwell-Hyslop 1996, especially pp. 209–11.

a tradition in the city where schools passed on this knowledge.<sup>41</sup> Documents were written both in Akkadian and Hurrian there; the scribes also knew Sumerian. Cylinder seals were carved for the king Tupkish and the queen Uqnitum and the courtiers closest to her.<sup>42</sup> Some seals carved in southern Mesopotamia were used to seal containers that may have been shipped to Urkesh from cities in the south. The rulers of Urkesh certainly were cosmopolitan in their culture and familiar with that of southern Mesopotamia. And it is clear that they had longstanding and close contacts with the Mesopotamian cities in the south. Early Trans-Caucasian sites in the Highland, on the other hand, were much smaller and had a more restricted range of material goods, indicating a basically rural culture. And since they were in any case connected, I think culturally and ethnically, with the cities of the Hurrian Ledge, they had no reason to develop mechanisms of their own to bypass these cities in northeastern Syria in order to trade directly with the Sumerian and Akkadian cities further south.

The ethnic situation within a city like Urkesh was not monolithic. From names of seal owners and the personal names in the Urkesh texts<sup>43</sup> we know that individuals with Hurrian and Akkadian names lived there. Burney has pointed out the complicated ethnic situation in eastern Anatolia during the second half of the third millennium when Indo-European groups were entering into a presumably Hurrian dominated area.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Portable and permanent andirons were present from the beginning in the fourth millennium as a fundamental cultural indicator of the Early Trans-Caucasian culture. They continue throughout the vast cultural and geographical span to be an essential cultural signifier in the material cultural inventory, even as late as the first quarter of the second millennium as exemplified by Urkesh and Sos Höyük. Questions can be asked about what these andirons and hearths signify. The answer lies, in all probability, in the area of ritual. Our evidence for this stems from the fact that,

- (1) they are the only type of object from this culture decorated with anthropomorphic or theriomorphic designs;<sup>45</sup>
- (2) they are found in prominent locations in houses and in other types of structures;

<sup>41</sup> School tablets have been found in the excavations of part of the palace called the royal storehouse (AK).

<sup>42</sup> Kelly-Buccellati 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Milano *et al.* 1991.

<sup>44</sup> Burney, 1989, 1990 and 1993, especially p. 314.

<sup>45</sup> Amiran discusses an object that may have a ritual function connected with the Early Trans-Caucasian culture from the monumental building in Beth Yerah, Amiran 1989.

- (3) what are interpreted as cultic structures are not identified by distinctive architectural plans but do give evidence from their inventory of a ritual or cultic function;
- (4) many of the ceramic designs have been interpreted as male or female representations (although most are nonspecific) which assigns to them a more specific character even if we cannot identify these figures;
- (5) the presence of what appear to be horns on the Urkesh examples may indicate that deities are represented on some andirons.

Ritual activities can last over very long periods of time and be influential over vast geographic areas. In the case of the andirons their quantity and prominence in the architecture, their continuity in space and time, and their specific shape and anthropomorphic decoration can lead only to an interpretation as part of a set of artifacts connected with ritual activity specific to the society. The existence of these andirons in the Hurrian city of Urkesh does not in and of itself prove that andirons and horse-shoe-shaped hearths are definite cultural indicators of a Hurrian presence, but does take us further along the road of connecting Hurrians with the Early Trans-Caucasian culture. It may well be that the retention of this cultural signifier linking the inhabitants of Urkesh with their traditional patterns of cultural behavior came at a time when their ethnic identity and political independence were being contested by the arrival of non-Hurrian kings, vassals of Zimri-Lim.

Perhaps it would be useful at this point to project a historical reconstruction of the early development of the Hurrians, which will by its nature be conjectural although predicated on the evidence presently at hand. From the linguistic contacts with North Caucasian languages, it appears that the Hurrians originated in the Caucasus in the late fifth and early fourth millennium. From there, part of the population spread to nearby areas. The majority spread to various locations in and near eastern Anatolia and remained an essentially rural society for fifteen hundred years, with a few exceptions late in ETC III. However some of these Hurrians went south to the northern limits of the Fertile Crescent during the fourth millennium, and there they established some urban centers, of which so far Urkesh is the only one that can be so identified. In these cities (where both Hurrians and other population groups lived<sup>46</sup>), they retained their language which they wrote in the cuneiform script, and they kept their religious customs and myths, while being influenced by the customs of the Sumerian, Akkadian, and other population groups in Syro-Mesopotamia. While they assimilated some of the customs of these peoples, they were able to integrate them with their own,

<sup>46</sup> Burney has been exploring both the movements of other population groups into the area as well as the regional cultural differentiation, especially at Malatya and the Elaziğ area, see Burney 1993 and references to earlier research cited there.

forming a unique Hurrian urban culture. We have concluded on the basis of our excavations that in the second half of the third millennium Urkesh material culture is similar in many ways to other Khabur cities. Nevertheless, its ideology is clearly Hurrian and this Hurrian ideology separates Urkesh from Khabur cities further to the south, such as Nagar. Not only is Urkesh the home of the Hurrian chthonic god Kumarbi, but recently a monumental underground structure has been excavated that is in all probability connected with rituals described in later Hurrian/Hittite texts relating to a ritual shaft (in Hurrian *abi*) used to communicate with spirits and deities of the Netherworld.<sup>47</sup> Moreover the art produced in Urkesh during the ED III and Akkadian periods has a different iconography than that made elsewhere in Syro-Mesopotamia and at least the art connected through seal inscriptions with Tūpkiš and Uqnitum is focused on dynastic concerns. For example, the seal inscriptions are systematically correlated with the iconography to depict professions in Urkesh; this does not happen in the south or in any other Khabur city. At Urkesh an early temple terrace existed under temple BA and can be dated to the Ninevite V period.<sup>48</sup> It is more than likely that the Hurrians founded Urkesh in the late fourth millennium. In this way they would have been settled there with enough time to integrate many Sumerian religious ideas and consolidate their own economy in order to build such a massive structure.

One possible scenario for the relations between the urban Hurrians living in the cities located along the urban ledge and the rural Hurrians living to the north can be reconstructed by way of analogy with the later Akkadian-Amorite relationship.<sup>49</sup> The Amorite language can be understood as a rural dialect of Akkadian. As pastoralists and people who did not live in cities, the Akkadians thought of them as being uncultured, uncivilised peasants. At the same time the Akkadians had regular contact with them; this is why we can see Akkadian negative attitudes through their texts. Hurrians who settled in urban settings may very well have had the same attitude toward the populations living in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. If they were all ethnically Hurrians, they may well have spoken a different dialect of Hurrian given their development in different regions. Urban Hurrians living in cities like Urkesh must have felt superior since they could write and carry on trade with a wider and much more sophisticated world. A negative attitude of the urban Hurrians toward their rural counterparts could then have been one of the factors leading to the spread of rural Hurrians from eastern Anatolia, not directly south, but to the southwest, eventually ending up in Palestine. We have reconstructed the historical situation during the late third millennium in the

<sup>47</sup> I presented this in our lectures inaugurating the new Faculty of Theology and Philosophy in Lugano, April 2002 and then at the 65<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association in Cleveland, August 2002. My article on the subject appeared in the *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientalgesellschaft* 134; see also Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2000, p. 146; see also Collins 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1999; Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Buccellati 1992.

Khabur region and the southern part of eastern Anatolia as one in which the Akkadian king Naram-Sin preferred to conquer some cities (Nagar/Brak) and to conclude alliances with others (Urkesh through his daughter Tar'am-Agade and her presumed marriage to an *endan* of Urkesh). We have explained Naram-Sin's preference for alliances (as opposed to conquest) north of Nagar as being due to difficulties in controlling such a mountainous region. The force of an ethnic bond linked to organised administrative mechanisms allowed, we think, Urkesh to have a certain amount of influence and even possibly control in this area.<sup>50</sup> Although the political situation in the Khabur region had changed by the early second millennium, the evidence of the Urkesh andirons allows us to continue to link a Hurrian city with the north and thereby shed some light on the complex cultural interactions which led eventually to the very lively Hurrian influence on Hittite culture.

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<sup>50</sup> Buccellati 1999; Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2000, pp. 153–55.

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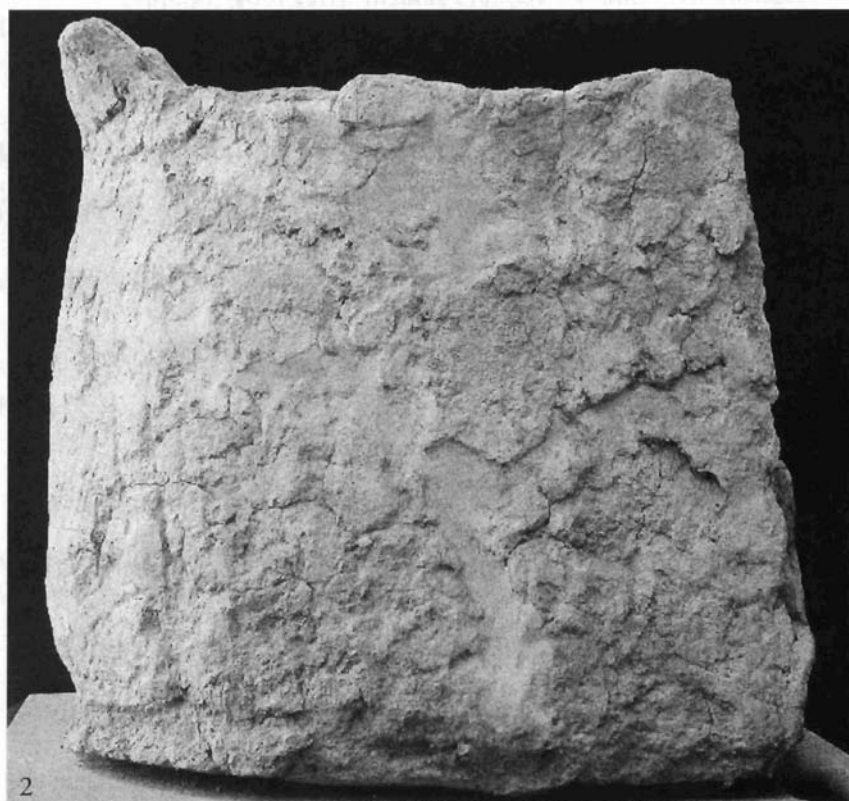


Figure 1. 1. Hearth (A11.34) with incised and impressed decorations on the front and the bridge across the lower portion. V14d9503; 2. Side view of hearth (A11.34). V14d9516.  
Photos: M. Stancavage



Figure 2. 1. Hearth A11.34 from back. V14d9515;  
2. Side view showing raised portion at the back. V14d9512.  
Photos: M. Stancavage

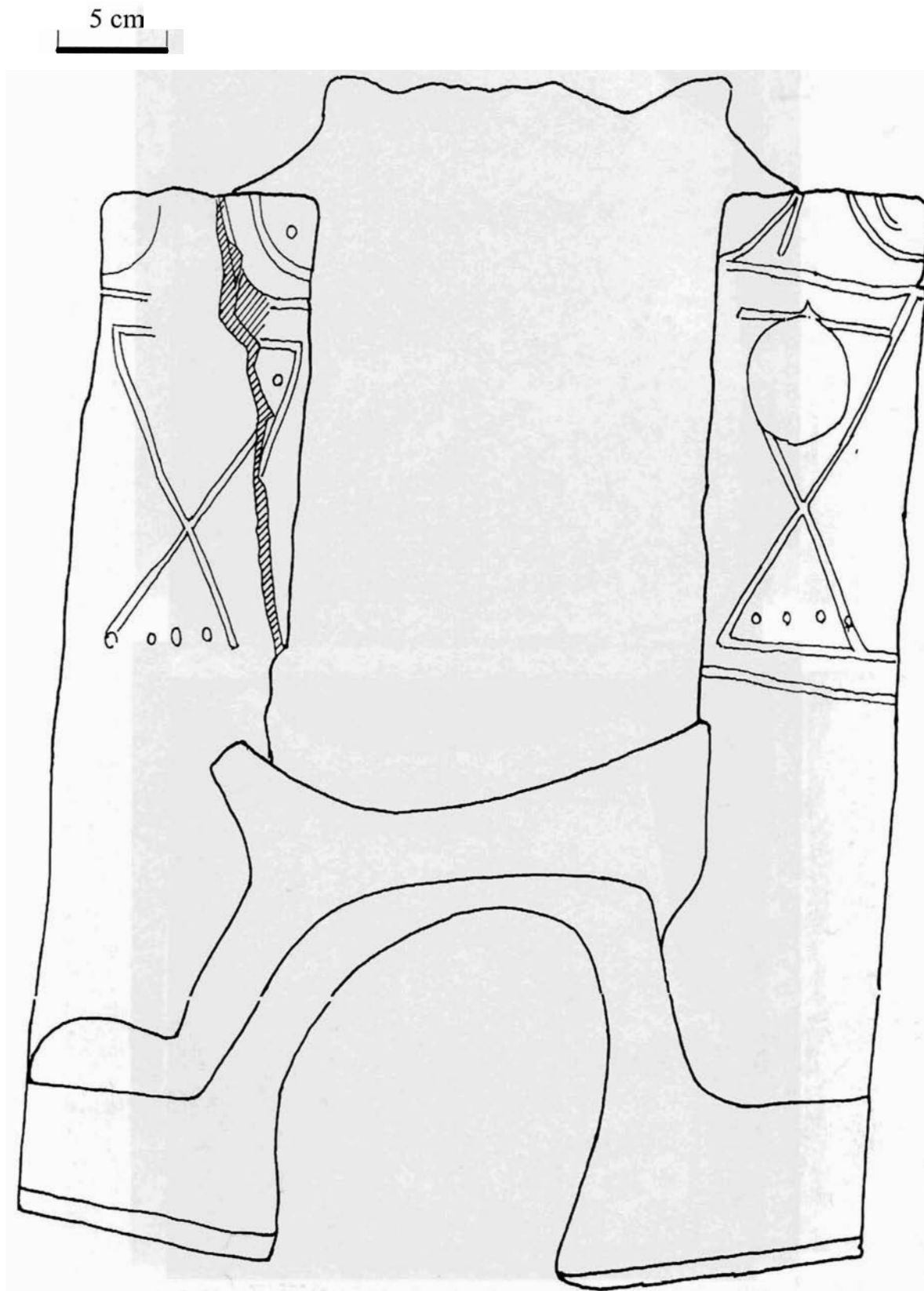


Figure 3. Hearth A11.34, front view (W12o100c).  
Drawing: C. Wettstein.

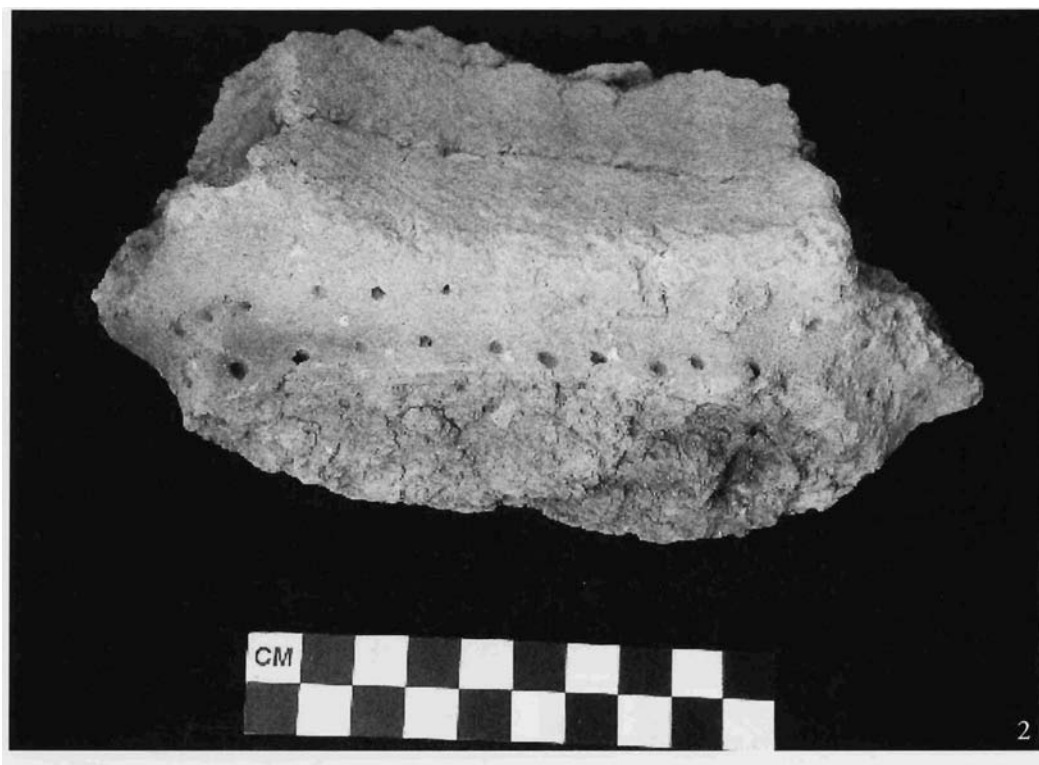


Figure 4. 1. Horseshoe-shaped hearth *in situ* (A15v11a) with traces of burning inside and around the exterior below the bridge. V14d3036, photo: J. Forde; 2. Fragment of a permanent andiron with impressed holes (A16. 19). V14d4538, photo: M. Stancavage.

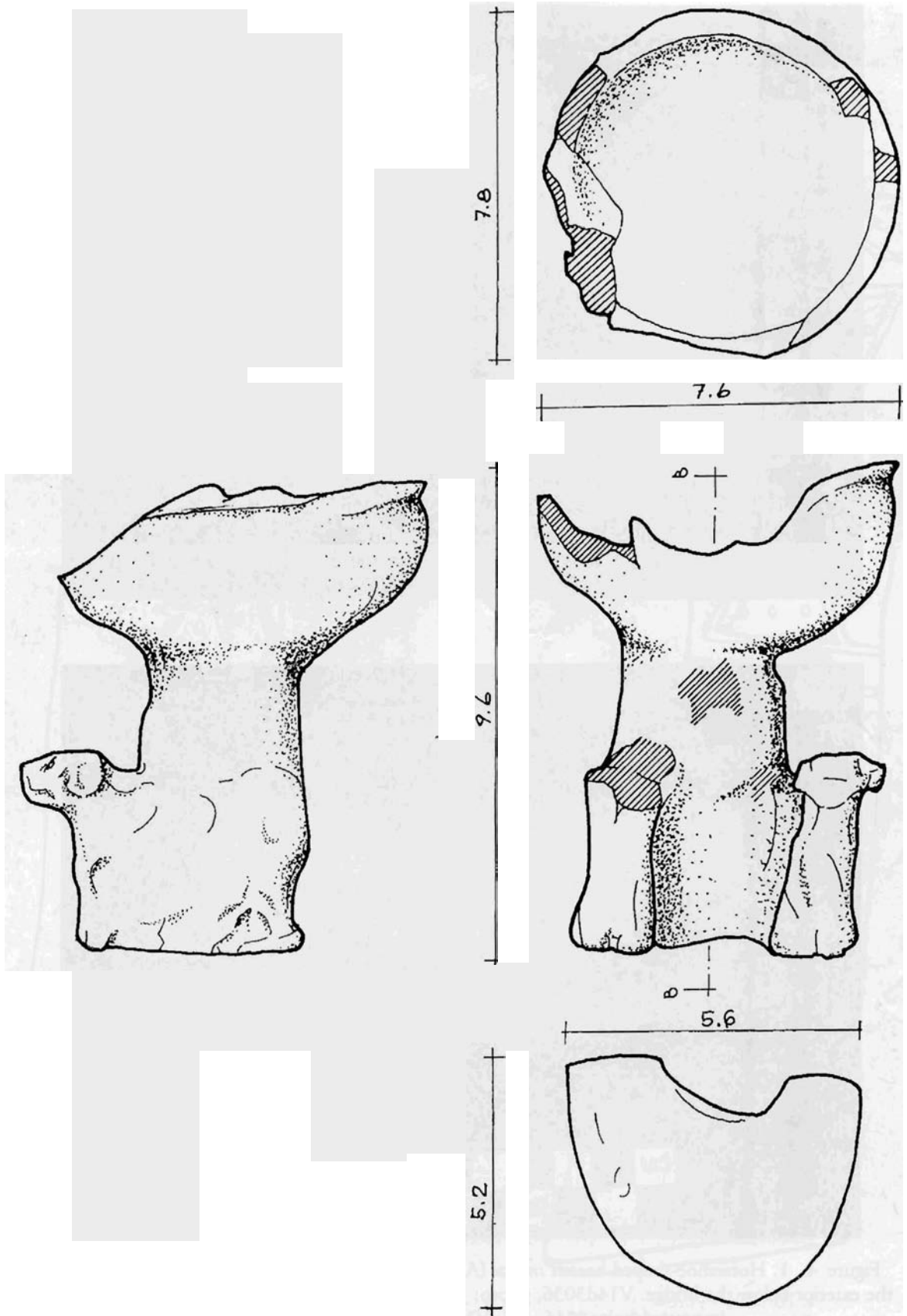


Figure 5. Views of andiron-shaped lamp (A10q719.1) with two animals at the base.  
Drawing: C. Wettstein

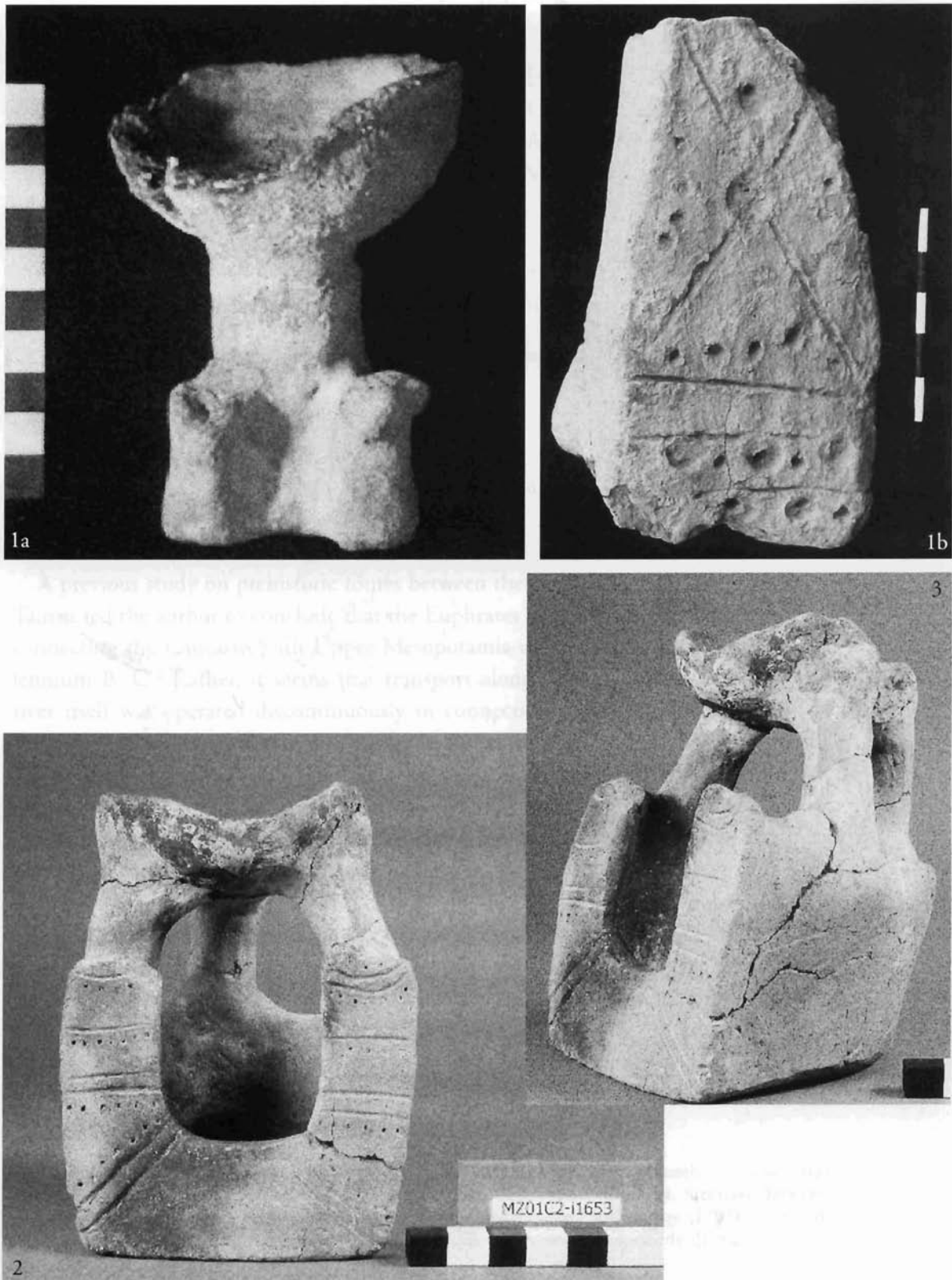


Figure 6. 1a. Portable andiron-shaped stand supporting a small bowl (A10q719-1) V12d5930, seal A15.321 and modern impression. Photos: R. Hauser; 2. Front of a portable andiron supporting a small bowl (C2.1653); 3. Side view of C2.1653, Photos: K. Wita.



# ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SUPPLEMENT 12

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ADVISORY BOARD

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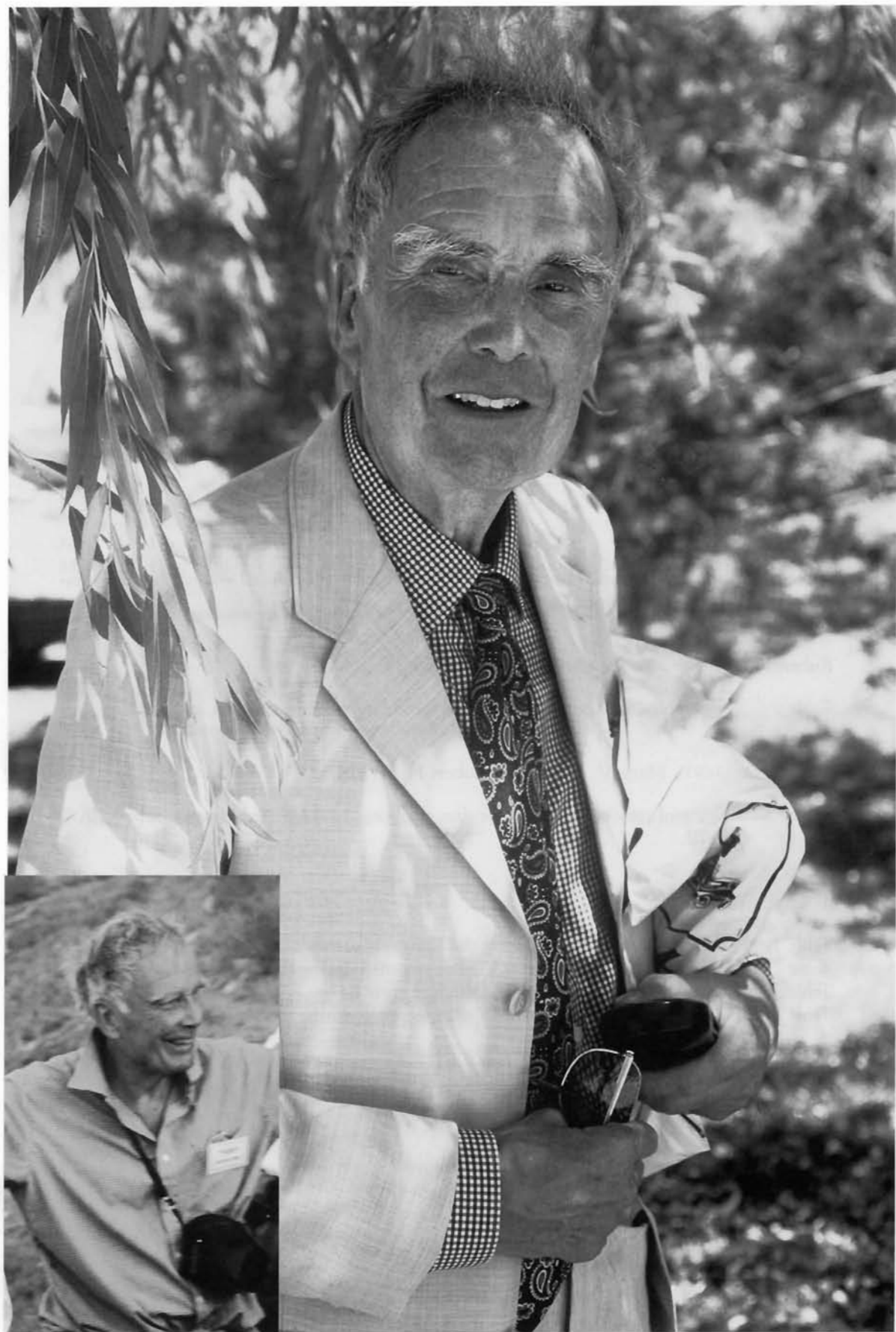
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Charles Burney Van, Turkey, August 2001 (photographs by A. Sagona)

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The essays gathered in this volume are reflections of an archaeological community that wishes to pay tribute to a scholar whose panoramic vision of the past is rivalled only by the wide extent of his generosity, expressed in so many ways, to fellow workers in the field. Always probing and speculative, Charles Burney has been a source of inspiration since the 1950s for archaeologists working in the highlands of east Anatolia, Trans-Caucasus and north-west Iran. Though this is a substantial volume of essays, written by pupils, friends and colleagues, the contributors are merely representatives of a much larger number who join us in honouring him.

Charles managed, before the age of sophisticated gadgetry and the soul searching that accompanies much contemporary archaeology, to prepare solid foundations for future study and to point us all in the right direction. A breadth of vision accompanies his empirical approach in the field that is represented by pioneering surveys and excavations. Charles has always been adamant that sequences of sites or regions should not be merely parochial and his determination to set the highlands in the context of the wider Near East is reflected in the range of contributions in this volume.

Producing a well-balanced *Festschrift*, one that combines festive tributes with more conventional studies that do justice to the honorand, is no easy task. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to a number of people who have assisted me in this undertaking. To Altan Çilingiroğlu, Marcella Frangipane, Roger Matthews, Mary M. Voigt and the late Tamaz Kiguradze, I express my thanks for providing sound advice in the early stages. A most appropriate theme for this volume, one that has engaged Charles' curiosity through the decades, seemed to us to be cultural contact and diversity in the highlands that fringe Syria and Mesopotamia. A glance at the papers will reveal not only their relevance to this theme, but also a coherence and originality that I am sure will give Charles much pleasure. My thanks are also extended to Jennifer O'Neill, Claudia Sagona and Lorenne Wilks whose attention to detail lessened considerably my editorial tasks. I am very grateful to the staff of Peeters Press for their customary care and efficiency in the production of the volume. Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the authors for their enthusiasm and co-operation.

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