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URKESH AS A HURRIAN RELIGIOUS CENTER*

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1. Introduction

The seventeenth season of excavations marked the twentieth anniversary of our presence at Tell Mozan: excavations started in the Fall of 1984, and there were no excavations during the four study seasons of 1991, 1993, 1994 and 1995. During the years 1999-2003 we also benefited from the work of a team of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft under the direction of Peter Pfälzner of the University of Tübingen. A small contingent of this team remained in residence at Mozan throughout the Winter 2003-2004 to complete their study of the material for publication. Having in the meantime fully completed the construction of the Expedition House, and having thoroughly reorganized the space for the most efficient use of the house as an effective research center, we plan now to be in residence for several months each year, devoting adequate time after the excavations for the study of the material. The DOG project added immeasurably to our understanding of the site, and we are delighted to have had the opportunity to implement this collaboration. It is with great regret that, due to space limitations, it became impossible for our two large teams to effectively share the same facilities, so that it was no longer feasible to prolong their activity at Tell Mozan past the initial projected length of three seasons. For the years of harmonious and productive collaboration, and for their contributions that are currently in the process of publication, we are very grateful.

As always, it is with a great sense of appreciation that we wish to acknowledge the support of all who have made our work possible. In the first place, the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr. Tamam Fakouche, and the Director of Excavations, Dr. Michel al-Maqdissi, whose welcome was again particularly meaningful to us this year, when ominous clouds continued to darken the broader political horizon. At the local level, we are grateful to the Director of the Hassaka Department, Mr. Abd el-Mesiah Bagdou; to the Director of the Qamishli division, Mr. Ibrahim Murad; and to Salem Isa (Hassaka) and Hikmat Awwad (Homs) who alternated as representatives of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums. On July 3 we had the pleasure of an official visit by Dr. Michel al-Maqdissi, accompanied by Dr. Antoine Suleiman and Mr. Abd el-Mesiah Bagdou: even though we were only at the beginning of the excavations, we were able to show our visitors the scope and goals of our overall work at Tell Mozan, and we were delighted to be able to benefit from their comments.

Once more and with undiminished generosity, the following Foundations made our work possible: the Catholic Biblical Association, the S.H. Kress Foundation,

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the L.J. and M.L. Skaggs Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, Syria Shell Petroleum Development B.V., the Urkesh Founders and various donors. Also, we benefited from a new grant from the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology specifically designed to make it possible for a graduate student in a different field (in our case, Chinese archaeology) to gain field experience in a field outside the student's specialization.

For the second year, we were fortunate to continue our institutional collaboration with the Istituto per le tecnologie applicate ai beni culturali of the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle ricerche, represented by Dr. Maurizio Forte: to him and his three collaborators who joined him this year goes our heartfelt gratitude for their dedication and splendid results. Our institutional base was further expanded to include the participation of staff emmebrs from the Istituto di Studi sulle Civiltà dell'Egeo e del Vicino Oriente (formerly Istituto di Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici, also of the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche) and from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. To the Director of ICEVO, Prof. Miroslav Salvini, and the Curator of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, Dr. Joan Aruz, we wish to express our special gratitude for their personal interest and support.

The field season lasted from June 7 to September 18, 2004. Besides Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (director, glyptics, ceramics) and Giorgio Buccellati (co-director, field director, epigraphy), the staff included (in alphabetical order), Federico Buccellati (assistant field director and systems), Alessandro Canci (physical anthropology), Dennis Cecchin (J2), Sarah Comelli (A18), Daniela Crasso (A12/A14), Nicolò Dell'Unto (GIS), Silvana di Paolo (A18), Rasha Endari (A17), Maurizio Forte (GIS), Fabrizio Galeazzi (GIS), Giuseppe Gallacci (photography), Minna Haapanen (J2), Jeffrey Jarmakani (photography), Bruna Mariani (conservation), Giada Minisini (A14), Jamal Omar (A14 and ceramics), William Orrange (assistant curator), Alexia Pavan (J2), Fonda Portales (curator and drafting), Barbara Pritzkat (surveying), Laura Ramos (A18 and physical anthropology), Valentina Santi (A17 and paleobotany), Mary Stancavage (A17), Carmen Valdes Pereiro (A17), Hans-Peter Uerpmann (paleozoology), Vincent van Exel (A18), James Walker (A12/A14). It was a special pleasure to be able to welcome Profs. Uerpmann who not only contributed with his great expertise to the immediate goals of the season, but also helped us plan for a comprehensive research program in the area of bio-archaeology. The overall coordination of this program is in the hands of Prof. Gregory Areshian, whom it was also our pleasure to welcome in the field for an extended working visit.

2. A NEW UNDERSTANDING

It is seldom that we can gain an insight into the larger architectural context of a third millennium city. At Urkesh, we have succeeded in obtaining not only just such an insight, but to discover a unique nexus that combines, in a monumental way, the religious and the secular spheres. What is more, this complex can be seen to have a very specific ethnic valence, since it is related to uniquely Hurrian traditions in ways that no other site in Syro-Mesopotamia can even approach.

The two focal points of this nexus are the sacral and the royal. The sacral component is earlier – a large temple at the top, resting on a massive terrace, and, at the

base, a deep underground structure. The Temple Terrace was defined by perimetral walls that reached a height of some five meters, and was accessed by a stone staircase, for now visible only in part through a narrow trench. The underground structure, called *ābi* in Hurrian, was incospicuous in terms of visibility from the outside (by definition, since it was hidden below ground level), but was built on a massive scale, and was pregnant with a powerful ideological meaning. It seems likely that the god worshipped in the High Temple was Kumarbi, the ancestral god of Hurrian religion whom we interpret to have been a chthonic god. If so, there was an ideological, as well as a spatial, bracketing between the *ābi* and the High Temple.

An early version of the temple and its terrace dates to at least 2700 B.C. For the *ābi* we know that it was in existence as an open pit by at least 2400 B.C., but it is very likely that it, too, goes back to much earlier times. Within the space so bracketed by these two sacral structures, there came to be built, around 2300 B.C., a royal structure that linked the two and provided, as it were, a physical and, we may well imagine, an ideological bridge. The royal structure consisted of a vast royal palace and, attached to the east, an open plaza leading to the base of the Temple Terrace. We are not certain at this point whether the Palace consisted of three or only two levels, but in any case it seems certain that it was built at this location and with this orientation so as to match the impact of the huge templar structure at the top.

What is highly remarkable, then, about this Urkesh monumental urban complex is the organic link that seems to have clearly existed among all its component elements. We assume it to have been the result of deliberate urban planning on a vast scale, measuring some 250 m from east to west. Partly because of the extensive use of stones as building material, and partly because the Temple Terrace remained in use until the city was abandoned, this monumental urban complex has come down to us with a remarkable degree of preservation, that makes it quite unique within Syro-Mesopotamian architecture. The importance of this overall complex has caused us to change the focus of the excavations from the Royal Palace as such to its larger urban environment.

This change in focus goes along with a change in our overall strategy as well. While the Temple continued to function until the abandonment of Urkesh, the Palace remained in use for its main official purpose for only about one generation, after which it came to be used for secondary functions, even though it retained its structural integrity. About one century after its construction, the palace was abandoned, and it came to be gradually overlaid by settlements with private houses, graves, and public open spaces. We have distinguished five distinct phases in a sequence that goes from 2100 B.C. to about 1400 B.C. (from Ur III through Old Babylonian and down to Middle Babylonian, in Mesopotamian terms). While by no means as imposing architecturally as the Palace had been, these settlements are important for what they tell us about the city. Accordingly, we reached the decision, last year, to aim for the horizontal exposure of a full settlement stratum one after the other rather than descending vertically in each area of excavation directly to the level of the Palace.[1]

[1] For a full bibliography of earlier research and a digital version of most of our publications please refer to http://www.urkesh.org.

3. The architectural layout of the Mittani period

3.1. *The settlements*

At the top of area AA (Fig. 1) we had encountered, last year, a thin deposit of the Mittani period (no more than 50 cms in depth), which included mostly a small open area with a pebble floor, a small one room structure (A18a1) and some tannurs (Fig.2). As we expanded this year the excavations to the east, it appeared that the Mittani settlement in area AA is in fact considerable. After the Khabur period, the tell sloped, at this point, to the south and to the east, and it is here that the houses of the Mittani period were placed.

We infer that the Mittani period houses were located in an area to the west which has now disappeared, as a result of erosion in modern times due in part to the use of the slope, before the beginning of our excavations, as an access road to the top of the tell. To the east of the missing houses, we can recognize two phases. The earlier one (6a) had a stone pavement that, we assume, bordered the plaza at its western end (this is reflected in the reconstruction in Fig. 4). In the later phase 6b there was a storehouse to the north (A18a21) and a work area to the south (A17a9). Here, the depth of the deposit reaches almost 2 m, and a coherent architectural layout may be discerned, which we will now briefly describe.

Along a north-south trajectory, we have a series of rooms that can be understood as constituting a storehouse. We assume this to be the case on account of the space arrangement and circulation pattern (the rooms are small and aligned along the vertical axis). Two distinct strata can be discerned. In the earlier one (stratum 12, see Table 1) the entrance was from the north, and led from one room to the next. The earliest floors of room A18a7 have yielded a small group of bronzes (see below, 6.2).

In the later stratum 11, the middle room A18a6 was split in two by a thin partition, and two new entrances were opened, from the northwest and the southeast respectively (both leading down through a series of steps). In room A18a10 another small partition created a sort of bin, which may have been outdoors, in which a heavy deposit of vegetable fibers was found, which may represent little more than simple grass.

The storehouse was protected by a retaining wall from the considerable spillage originated from the houses to the west. The (now missing) houses were built over an area where there probably were no houses in the preceding Khabur period, because we found here only evidence of a wide open space, of burials and of extramural activity, in particular a series of pottery kilns. Still, the houses were slightly higher in elevation than both the stone pavement of phase 6a and the storehouse of phase 6b. This is indicated by the downward slope (to the east) of the spillage (which created the need for the retaining wall), and by the fact that entrance to the storehouse was through two sets of downward steps, from the west the northernmost room (A18a7) and from the east to the southernmost room (A18a10).

Perhaps straddling both strata in phase 6b, room A17a9 is a small square space with two entrances, to the north and the south, which seem to have been in use at the same time. At the center of the room there is a shallow basin, constructed with a heavy cement-like base, in which a series of overlaid burnt pebble and clay circles are found. Two other installations of a similar type were found in previous years at

a very short distance (in area A15), though earlier in date – one belonging to phase 5 (in an open area) and the other to phase 4 (also in a small square room). All three are not far from each other as to their horizontal location, and in a similar context, i.e., at the edge of the settlement. The function of these basins escapes us. The simplest hypothesis is that they served as some sort of hearths, with the pebbles and small stones helping to retain the heat. But why were they self-standing, and not serving any single domestic structure, as if they were meant for some communal purpose? Whatever the explanation, the continued presence over time of the same feature in an analogous location and context suggests that it had some particular importance the nature of which escapes us at present.

3.2. *The Temple Terrace*

The reconstruction of the Temple Terrace is given here in the visualization of our architect, Chiara Fornari (Fig. 3). While only a very small portion has in fact been exposed (as identified in the drawing), we feel confident that the reconstruction is essentially accurate because enough clues are available to justify the inference. Here we will describe briefly the different structural elements, especially those that have emerged from this year's excavation, which one will find highlighted in Fig. 3.

1. *Primary apron*. – A large stone railing flanked the main staircase, trapezoidal in shape, with the sides flaring out towards the bottom. Presumably this continued all the way to the the bottom of the staircase, though it could also have stopped at some height above the ground level.

2. *Retaining wall*. – A retaining wall was placed along the side of the primary apron. Of this, we have at present only the very top course of stones.

3. *Secondary apron*. – A secondary apron flanked the top gate. This apron acted as a frame to the terrace, and may have sloped slightly upwards. As drawn in Fig. 3 it is shown as being present only in the southern portion of the Terrace, framing the top of the staircase, but it may have continued all along the inside edge of the wall.

4. *Primary wall*. – The primary wall is the oval wall that flanks and supports the terrace. We had suspected the existence of some sort of terracing back at the time when we first excavated Temple BA, in the mid 80'es, but it was only as a result of the excavations in trench B6 by Peter Pfälzner and Heike Dohmann-Pfälzner and of the subsequent geo-physical survey arranged by them that the presence of the walled terrace was found. The excavation of Trench B6 was planned as a way to provide a stratigraphic link for the research they intended to do on the settlement in area C2.

We assume the height of the wall to be about 5 meters in the late EDIII and Sargonic periods. This is the height shown on Figure 3. The inference is based on the following considerations. (1) The 2003 excavations in area J2 showed that the wall has a height of at least 3 meters. (2) The lowest exposed steps of the staircase are about 3 meters lower than the lowest Mittani strata reached in J2, which are in turn almost two meters lower than the top of the wall. This implies a minimum of 5 meters in height. (3) The elevation of the main floor of the formal wing of the Palace AP is about 5 meters lower than the top of the wall in J2. All indications are that the accumulations above the Plaza are quite level, without substantial slopes. If so it seems logical that the floor of the Palace is at approximately the same elevation as the base of the Temple Terrace wall.

It must also be added that the preservation of the wall in its higher courses is such as to imply almost without doubt that the lower courses are preserved just as well, or even better. This would mean that, once exposed, this will emerge as one of the most spectacular architectural monuments of the third millennium anywhere in Syro-Mesopotamia.

5. *Staircase.* – The staircase was also brought to light by the excavations conducted under the supervision of the Pfälzners in trench B6. Subsequent rains have caused portions of the sections to collapse, and have revealed a wall that looked at first as though it served as a frame to the staircase, which would have dated it to the same time as the original construction of the staircase itself. However, two factors suggest otherwise. First, the wall is not parallel to the axis of the staircase; and second, there is no corresponding wall to the west, at least not to a height of some 50 cms lower than the top of the existing wall. Accordingly, we think that this may be a later retaining wall, possibly from phase 5 (the Khabur period), the purpose of which was to shore up the deposits that had been accumulating to the east, and of which the excavations in C2 have found ample evidence as far back as the middle of the third millennium (see below, 5.4).

6. *Top towers.*– There is no direct evidence for the two towers at the top of the staircase. The proposed reconstruction is based exclusively on the fact that, at that particular location, on the western side of the staircase, the second apron stops, and we find instead the same kind of heavy red packing that we have in the Palace below the main floors. For this reason, we assume that some brick structure, whether a tower or simply a platform, existed at the top of the staircase, matched by a corresponding one to the east.

4. The burials of the Khabur and Mittani periods (by *Laura Ramos*)

Area AA includes a rich burial sequence that spans from the late third millennium to modern Islamic graves (A17), with no known interments present during the palace use and reuse levels (phases 2-3). Deposition of human remains, as visible through excavated areas, first occurs during phase 4 and continues through the Khabur and Mittani levels (phases 5-6), resulting in a multi-generation cemetery with the Khabur level experiencing the highest concentration of burials found to date. The practice of burial interment reflects a deeply rooted tradition possibly influenced through early symbolic structures such as the pre-palace temple complex and the *ābi* whose presumed function served in connecting the living, through divination rituals, with ancestors in the netherworld. The archaeological record indicates that both the temple area and *ābi* were visible and possibly utilized during the Khabur and (at least for the temple) the Mittani phases.

This past excavation season work began on systematically documenting, cataloguing and analyzing the skeletons recovered over the past 17 years at Mozan, a task carried out on an individual basis in earlier years (especially by Dr. Cristina Ravedoni), and estimated to take several years to complete. Currently the laboratory contains over 100 skeletons, representing mixed sex and ages with approximately 50 skeletally analyzed, 27 of which have been further processed with regard to their archaeological context. The purpose of this systematic study is to bridge

the gap between the archaeological and biological record to produce a comprehensive source from which to properly study the societies of ancient Urkesh. These 27 skeletons (20 discrete burials) come from areas A15 and A16, and represent all Khabur level inhumations which were deposited over a prolonged period of time, beginning at elevation 8429 to 8970. The skeletons are divided into early and late Khabur levels based on stratigraphy: 18 skeletons (12 burials) date to the early Khabur (Fig. 5) and 9 (8 burials) to the late Khabur levels .

The Khabur sample reflects several burial styles that were practiced simultaneously, namely: simple pit inhumations of one individual, infant and neonate deposition within ceramic vessels, secondary interments, and communal (multiple) burials. A common pattern of funerary offerings accompany the burials in the form of ceramic jars, bowls, and often jewelry pieces that vary in quantity, layout, and style within each burial with the exception of infants and neonates, which seldom contain grave goods apart from the burial vessel. Most of the skeletons displayed medium to severe enamel hypoplasia of the teeth, an indicator of nutritional stress during tooth development, modification of bone from physical activity, periostitis in infants and neonates (inflammation of cortical bone), high infant mortality rate, and a relatively young age range in the sample with only one skeleton over the age of 50.

The early Khabur contains a higher concentration of females and children, with only one male recovered, interred within a localized space and suggesting burial deposition in association with sex and age. During the later Khabur, both females and males were interred within the same area although the practice appears to shift from simple pit burials to elaborate mud brick funerary structures, where the body was then interred either within the structure or directly below it (15-20 cm below, see floor plan in Fig. 5). Areas above and around the structures suggest ritual activity, where the living placed offerings or took place in a communal meal with the dead, such as the *kispum* ceremony attested in Babylonian and Assyrian texts[2] and possibly attested archaeologically at Mozan through localized animal bones and hearth structures near the graves. One room of note, in area A15, contained the remains of two infants and one sub-adult interred individually under the floor with communal offerings and two hearths within close proximity of the graves.

The presence of fire related structures near, above, or below child graves exists in both early and late Khabur levels. This practice appears frequently in the ancient Near East with similar accounts documented in Neo-Babylonian and Anatolian sites.[3] One possible explanation comes from Hittite and Hurrian sources, which place emphasis on the symbolic nature of the hearth, a place where divine spirits can enter and reside temporarily to form connections to the netherworld.[4] Kiln and kiln related debris may also correlate with burial areas as visible through areas A15 and A7, which contain graves either cut into older kilns or placed near a kiln. Possibly the kiln also held symbolic connotations similar to a hearth.

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[2] M. Bayliss, "The Cult of the Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia", Iraq 35 (1973) 115-25; J.N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamian Society and Economy ad the Dawn of History*. London: Routledge, 1992.

[3] Heather Baker, "Neo-Babylonian Burials Revisited", in Stuart Campbell and Anthony Green (eds.), *The Archaeology of Death in the Ancient Near East*, Oxford: Oxbow books, 1995, pp. 209-221.

[4] Turan Takaoğlu, "Hearth Structures in the Religious Pattern of Early Bronze Age Northeast Anatolia", *Anatolian Studies* 50 (2000), pp. 11-16.

Several interments confirm the practice of secondary burial at Mozan, where the body was processed in multiple stages before final deposition. The most notable cases include an early Khabur grave (A16.60/54) and one Mittani grave (A17.51), each containing the remains of a minimum of six individuals inside a pit. The bones were recovered completely disarticulated and mixed together, suggesting that decomposition had already occurred before the bones were finally deposited in the pit. The Mozan skeletons very rarely retain 100% completeness, with some burials recovered with large bones missing (A16.31, A15.295) or extra human bones next or mixed with a primary burial (A15.236, A17.26). In A16, an infant burial (A16.78) contained a human adult vertebra inside a miniature jar and buried intentionally with the infant, validating further that it was not uncommon to move bones from their primary location, a practice well attested in northern Mesopotamia.[5] It remains unclear why certain individuals were selected for secondary burial treatment. However, as the skeletal sample from Mozan increases, future quantitative and qualitative analysis will no doubt help resolve these and other questions about the funerary traditions of Mozan's ancient inhabitants.

5. The stratigraphic sequence

5.1. *Phases and strata definition*

Last year we had introduced an additional phase to our AA sequence, Phase 6, to include the Mittani period. We can now differentiate two major sub-phases, further subdivided into strata as shown on Table 1 (see already above, 3.1).

This sequence is based exclusively on our current findings in Area AA, except for some correlations to Area J2.

6a: Missing Houses. – The earliest stratum is characterized by houses that we assume were located to the west of the structures of Phase 5b. The reason for this assumption (first proposed by Laura Ramos already last year) is that there is a sharp downward slope from west to east, with large deposits on top of it. Both the slope and the deposits must have a point of origin to the west, and it is only logical to assume that this point of origin consisted of houses. We can explain the disappearance of these structures because they were in the path of a wadi that flowed from east to west. The erosion caused by the wadi favored the development of a road which was still trafficked when we started excavations in 1990. What may have been left of the houses was then most likely removed to make room for this road.

An important feature of stratum 13 is the *stone pavement* that we find in A17, A18 and A19 (the latter was excavated last year in J1 west). Since the walls of stratum 12 are built on top of this pavement, we assume that it formed a border between the phase 6a houses and the plaza (see above, 3.1, and Fig. 4).

The elevation of the stone pavement (9190) correlates well with the levels in J2 (the Temple Terrace in the area of the staircase) that can be attributed to the Mittani horizon. Our 2003 soundings in J1 east showed that there are no structures in the area between the settlements of A17-A18-A19 and the Temple Terrace, even in the

[5] Anne Porter, *Mortality, Monuments and Mobility; Ancestor Traditions and the Transcendence of Space*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000.

topmost levels. We can therefore conclude that the top of the Temple Terrace, or at least what we have termed the "apron" that flanked the ceremonial staircase, was still visible at this time. Thus the center of the site was still characterized by a *wide plaza* that was flanked on all sides by clusters of houses, except for its eastern end, where the stone terrace delimited the open space.

6b: Expansion to the east. – As debris thrown out of the houses in the west began to encroach on the stone pavement, a retaining wall was built along the eastern edge of the houses: this is where Mittani structures begin to be preserved in our excavations. East of the retaining wall, the storehouse A18a21 was built (on top of the stone pavement), as well as the burnt basin structure in A17. Two strata can be discerned, the second being the partitioning and the narrowing of the rooms.

6a or b: Burials. – The burials in A17, as well as some other features, cannot be placed precisely with in phase 6, although indications are that they belong generally in the later phase.

5.2. *Evidence for a short transition from the Khabur to the Mittani horizons*

The fact that the top of a relatively well preserved Khabur period wall (in A18) is abutted by Mittani period accumulations leads to the conclusion that only a short period of time separated the two periods in the occupation of ancient Urkesh. Otherwise the Khabur wall would have been obliterated by erosion, whereas the Mittani accumulation abuts a well preserved face.

To the same conclusion leads the consideration that there is no indication of a tell surface having formed on top of the Khabur deposit, such as one would assume would have occurred had there been a long lapse of time between the two periods.

Also the fact that the burnt basin in A17 is very similar to the one of phase 5 in A15, and situated in the same general location (both of them in turn revealing strong similarities to the one in phase 4 also in A15) suggests that there is a marked continuity of traditions at the site, both as to typology and as to location.

This conclusion does not apply, however, to all Mittani levels. For instance, in the northern portion of A18 the Mittani floors are high and overlay directly a massive brickfall the top of which shows sufficient erosion to indicate that it had remained exposed for a certain length of time.

5.3. *Considerations about absolute chronology*

The quick transition and the lack of a stratigraphic break between Khabur and Mittani suggest both that Khabur lasted late and the Mittani began early.

The late date for the end of Khabur may perhaps provide a minor piece of evidence in favor of the short chronology, since the middle chronology presupposes a gap in the 16th century, for which we seem to have no evidence from Urkesh.

In turn, the fact that Mittani follows immediately Khabur suggests a time period corresponding to the reign of the earliest kings of Mittani. We have indicated this in Table 1, attributing (obviously quite tentatively) phase 6a to Parattarna I, and phase 6b to Saušatar, around 1500 B.C. and 1450 B.C. respectively.

5.4. *The stratigraphic sequence of the Temple Terrace*

We began excavations in area J2 fully expecting to find well preserved monumental architecture in place. But we were not prepared for the scope of the results

and their implications for the history of Urkesh. The monumentality of the Temple Terrace is stunning, even though at this point it cannot be appreciated visually because exposure is limited and the overall reconstruction, while most plausible, depends on stratigraphic connections that are not apparent perceptually. Here we will describe briefly the evidence, the inference and the interpretation.

We have mentioned in connection with the question of the height of the Temple Terrace wall (above, 3.2), the structural reasons why we believe that this wall must stand to a height of at least 5 meters. The height of the wall in and of itself implies an early date for its original construction. This understanding is in keeping with the picture that is emerging more and more clearly of Urkesh as a major religious center from a very early date – which is what has ensured its unique position in Hurrian mythology and its long survival. It is quite likely, in other words, that the original emplacement of the Temple and its Terrace, now standing to a height of some 25 meters above the plain level, might go back to the very beginning of the third millennium.

The architectural reconstruction of the Temple Terrace as given in Fig. 3 reproduces the situation as we presume it occurred in the early part of the third millennium, when the terrace was, it may be presumed, free of other structures other than the temple itself. By the middle of the third millennium, several structures were built in the area to the north and the east of the Temple and directly adjacent to it. In other words, the terrace, which originally was topped by the Temple as a single structure, came to be overlaid, in its northeastern portion, by other structures, presumably service buildings constructed for the benefit of the Temple and its ceremonies, leaving only the southern and western portion of the Terrace free of constructions. This situation lasted then throughout the following centuries. The site developed, as a result, a strong dividing line that ran north south along the axis of the Temple Terrace defined by the monumental staircase, a line that went back to the middle of the third millennium. The western part was left empty and it became linked with the Palace AP at the time this was constructed under king Tupkish.

The reconstruction proposed here explains the vast EDIII dumps found by P. Pfälzner and H. Dohmann-Pfälzner in their excavations in the eastern part of C2, and the lack of occupational remains in the northwestern portion of C2.[6] The dumps, which would have come from the service buildings in use to the east of the Temple, would naturally have accumulated in the open area towards the plaza.

We may accordingly also explain two walls that appear near the northwestern corner of Temple BA and along the staircase in front of the Temple Terrace (Ill. 1). They may have served as retaining walls acting as a boundary between the built-up areas to the north and the east on the one hand, and the open area to the southwest of the Temple. If so, the overall picture that we may form of the city as early as the middle of the second millennium is at variance on this point with what we had imagined,[7] since it would yield a very asymmetrical configuration that privileged the southwestern portion where the Palace and a large open space were found.

[6] H. Dohmann-Pfälzner and P. Pfälzner, "Ausgrabungern der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in der zentralen Oberstadt von Tall Mozan/Urkeš. Bericht über die in Kooperation mit dem IIMAS durchgeführte Kampagne 2001", *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 134 (2002) pp. 156, 183.

[7] G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Das archäologische Projekt Tall Mozan/Urkeš", *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 131 (1999) 7-16.

A surprising result of the season has been the realization that the top 2.5 meters of accumulation in front of the Terrace belong to the Mittani period (phase 6, see Ill. 2). Even more important than the depth of these strata is the fact that they are horizontally aligned, very homogeneous and with practically no disturbance. Not only is there no trace whatsoever of construction, however ephemeral (except for two tannurs at a very high elevation), but there are no intrusions of any sort, such as pits. But the most important consideration is that the stone walls of the Terrace, that were standing in their topmost rows, were not robbed but were respected – and therefore can be safely assumed to have remained in use *as a formal terrace* until the end of the occupation of the site. The relatively few stones found in the accumulation in front of the Terrace (Ill. 2) can best be explained as having rolled down from the Terrace: no substantial gap can be noticed in the wall itself nor for most of the aprons as exposed to date. It is also important to note that the evidence for stones that have rolled down is limited to statum 12, i.e., the very end of the Mittani period, whereas they are missing in stratum 13: this suggests that the wall was in even better state of repair in the earlier phase 6a.

5.5. *The stratigraphic sequence of the access to the ābi*

Excavations in A14 were the only ones this year directly linked to the Royal Palace AP. Situated along the southern wall of the service wing AK, area A14 includes the access to the *ābi*, the underground necromantic structure.[8] Excavations here should also provide a possible link between the *ābi* and the platform that we have tentatively identified as the *kaskal kur*, the "road to the Netherworld" known from Hurrian rituals preserved in the Hittite texts.

We have opened eight squares, and the results have been mixed. Unexpectedly, most of the deposit fronting the *ābi* belongs to phase 3 – and this poses a problem with regard to the link between the lowest of these deposits and the threshold of the *ābi* itself. The nature of the deposit suggests that use of the area was connected functionally to the *ābi*, but we have found no clear evidence of this. Given the delicate nature of the deposit immediately in front of the *ābi*, we have preferred to postpone to a later date the exploration of the possible link between the *ābi* and the presumed *kaskal kur*.

The eight squares opened in 2004 in front of the *ābi* (i.e., to the west) have brought to light a sequence of horizontal accumulations, to a depth of about 1.5 m, all belonging, on the basis of the pottery, to phase 3. The following major aspects define these accumulations.

(1) The accumulations rest on surfaces that can be defined as outdoor walking surfaces, not plastered or otherwise marked, but fairly clearly identifiable. In some instances, good pebble floors exist, but they do not seem to extend over the entire area.

(2) These accumulations were cut to the south by a relatively deep wadi that removed a good portion of the accumulations, to a greater depth as one moves westward.

[8] See especially Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, "Ein hurritischer Gang in die Unterwelt," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 134 (2002) pp. 131-148.

(3) There is no discernible boundary flanking these accumulations. We thought at first that there may be a temenos-like wall surrounding the area: this was suggested by the presence of large stones along the side of the Palace walls, some of which are clearly aligned in a row parallel to the southern wall of the Palace, but no corresponding wall has been found either to the west or the south.

(4) The nature of the accumulation is interesting. In the portion flanking the Palace, two major layers with broken vessels were found, with a total of some 15 jars that could be reconstructed almost completely (see below, 6.3). Their general emplacement suggests that the jars were in their original place, though we have no indication of what agency may have caused the smashing.

(5) In the same area where the jar smashes were found, we also found the sealing with the impression of the seal of Ishar-kīnum, the new *endan* of Urkesh (see below, 6.1).

(6) The accumulations further to the south did not contain whole vessels. This suggests that the vessels were being kept or used in the northern portion of the area, along the Palace wall, while the central portion was generally free, as if to allow circulation leading up to the *ābi*.

(7) Also in the area closer to the wall of the Palace, we found a red deposit in the nature of bricky material. It both overlays, and is overlaid by, grey accumulations. A plausible explanation recommends itself. The red brieky material corresponds to the bricks that were removed from the top of the service wing of the Palace half way through Phase 3, when the walls were raised using the exact same footprint of the Phase 2 Palace. We have this raising of the Palace well documented throughout, and it is clearly discernible because the original building is constructed of red bricks, and the raising of grey bricks. So the red layer in A14 can be interpreted as the dump of the bricky material removed from the rop of the walls when they were leveled to allow for the raising. This is significant, in that it allows us to establish a stratigraphic match, if not exactly a stratigraphic link, between the Palace itself and the open area to the south (A14). It also marks clearly the difference between the early and late moments within Phase 3.

A difficulty arises with regard to the question of the access to the underground structure. In the past, we have interpreted the building of the *ābi* antechamber, which includes a steep staircase, as an addition made during phase 3, when the circular shaft was covered, and thus necessitated a more elaborate access than was possible when the circular shaft was open to the sky. But, if so, how can the horizontal layering of the accumulations in A14 be reconciled with the fact that the threshold to the *ābi* antechamber is about 1.5 m higher than the lowest accumulation in front of it? We do not, as of now, have a direct link between the accumulations and the threshold. We have deliberately stopped the excavations at this point because we felt that the stratigraphy may be too delicate to attempt to clarify it within the time contraints imposed by the closing of the excavations. The problem is of course linked with that of the possible connection between the platform (the presumed *kaskal kur*) and the *ābi*, and we decided to reserve more time in the future to this possibly difficult excavation. For now, then, we can only leave this issue unresolved.

6. Objects

6.1. A sealing with an impression of the seal of king Ishar-kīnum

An important new seal impression (A14.239) was found on the last day of excavation while removing a baulk (Fig. 6 and Ill. 3). It was rolled on a door sealing, found in the accumulations immediately to the south of the Palace walls in aera A14. Excavations on either side of the baulk had yielded accumulations with a considerable number of sherds and jar smashes (see above, 5.5), but no sealings. Generally, door sealings come in batches, as they were discarded together after being stored upon the opening of the door. So we decided to continue the excavation of the baulk for another day, in order to remove it slowly and search for additional sealings or fragments thereof. The fact that none had been found before made it unlikely that we should be able to find them now in the baulk, but still it was clear that the importance of the find warranted extra caution. But no other sealings or fragments were found. It is remarkable, then, that this sealing should have been so perfectly preserved in isolation. We have no cogent explanation for this, but there seems to be little doubt that this was its original emplacement, i.e., the spot were it was first deposited in antiquity, since otherwise the sealing would not have been so well preserved.

For all its simplicity, the inscribed legend on A14.239 has unexpected implications of considerable significance. The text reads: *I-šar*-GI / *endan* / *Ur-kèš*.KI

Each line requires a separate commentary.

(1) The name *I-šar*-GI is attested in the Ur III period as *I-šar-ki-in* and perhaps *I-šar-ki*[?]*-ni*,[9] and may be read *Išar-kīnum* "the just one prospers".[10]

(2) While the personal name is Akkadian, the royal title is Hurrian, *endan* being the standard form for "ruler", used so far only in Urkesh. In the seal of the throne-bearer (A7.341), the Sumerian logogram LUGAL is used for Tupkish, whose title is otherwise always given as *endan*.

(3) The name *Ur-kèš*.KI occurs here for the first time in its entirety in any of the epigraphic finds made during our excavations. All other occurrences of the word found previously were broken. In particular, the sign *Ur-* was never found in its entirety. The distinctiveness of the sign *kèš* was such that no doubt ever existed about the reading of the name. However, it is gratifying to now see the complete and unbroken writing of the name. In fact, since the seal is rolled three times and is well preserved, the name can now also be read three times. The form of the sign *kèš* is the more frequent one of two that are otherwise attested.[11]

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[9] See I. J. Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian*. Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary, Vol. 3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 78; M. Hilgert, *Akkadisch in der Ur III-Zeit*, Imgula, Band 5, Münster: Rhema, 2002, p. 324 n. 24 and 325; see pp. 387-390, 472 f. n. 109, for a discussion of alternative possibilities in the understanding of analogous onomastic elements. If read *Išar-kīn*, the name could be understood as meaning either "(The god) Ishar is just" or "he prospers, he is just".

[10] J. J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung*, Leipzig 1939, p. 121f., interprets the subject in the name as referring to the king. – I am grateful to Piotr Steinkeller and Gernot Wilhelm for their comments on the reading of this legend. In particular, G. Wilhelm notes that "a Hurrian interpretation can safely be excluded" even though in principle "the rich Hurrian morphology makes many explanations possible" (G.B.).

[11] It is given as the sequence ABC in the synopsis published in G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "The Seals of the King of Urkesh: Evidence from the Western Wing of the Royal Storehouse AK", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 86 (1996) p. 97.

A full publication by F. A. Buccellati of the iconography and style of the seal will appear elsewhere. Here we may simply call attention to the striking similarity between the iconography of the Ishar-kīnum seal and one of Tupkish.[12] In the Tupkish seal the seated person is the king and the young person appears to be standing on a live lion, whereas here the seated person is a deity and the smaller (young?) person is standing on the sculptural representation of two lions. The similarity suggests the continuity of the same ideological motif, and presumably of an analogous ceremonial setting.

The matrix within which the sealing was found is the grey accumulation above the red bricky material that we have associated with the collapse of the top of the walls of phase 2. This grey accumulation, then, can safely be dated to the late phase 3 (see above, 5.5), i.e., after Tupkish and Tar'am-Agade. On the assumption that the arrival of Tar'am-Agade, the daughter of Naram-Sin, took place still at the time of her father's reign over Akkad, we have placed Tupkish either at the very beginning of Naram-Sin's reign, or more likely earlier, and we can now place Ishar-kīnum later. The chronological correlations can be summed up as follows:

Manishtushu/early Naram-Sin	Tupkish and Uqnitum
Naram-Sin	? and Tar'am-Agade
Shar-kali-sharri	Ishar-kīnum and ?

Purely on the basis of the stratigraphic sequence, we may surmise that Ishar-kīnum may be not only the successor, but possibly also the son of Tar'am-Agade.[13] If so, this would lead to the conclusion that we have in Ishar-kīnum an *endan* of Urkesh who is at the same time the grandson of Tupkish on his father's side and of Naram-Sin on his mother's side (see below 7.2). But obviously we cannot sufficiently stress the tentative nature of this suggestion.

6.2. *Other objects*

A number of copper based objects were excavated in the Mittani period strata in A18. These include a number of straight pins for clothing either with a solid globular, straight or round head with a hole in the center. A small dagger was also excavated (A18.45).

From the same area came a gold hair ornament (A18.63, Ill. 4a) in the typical shape of a circular hollow tube, narrower where the ends meet and wider in the center. In addition we discovered a hollow gold object (A18.60, Ill. 4b), possibly a bead or pendant, with a globular head decorated with parallel ribs; its lower part is hour-glass shaped and also hollow. No attachments are preserved on this object so its exact use is unclear.

[12] The tupkian sealing was first published as k2 in G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "The Royal Storehouse of Urkesh: The Glyptic Evidence from the Southwestern Wing," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 42-43 (1995-96), Fig. 2a.

[13] See G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Tar'am-Agade, Daughter of Naram-Sin, at Urkesh," in L. Al-Ghailani, J. Curtis, H. Martin, A. McMahon, J. Oates and J. Reade, *Of Pots and Plans. Papers on the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria Presented to David Oates*, London: Nabu Publication, 2002, pp. 11-31, for a discussion as to why Tar'am-Agade is in Urkesh as queen. And were she to have borne a male child, it is nearly inconceiveable that the grandson of Naram-Sin would not be the crown-prince of Urkesh.

A group of interesting objects was found in the access area to the *ābi*, the function of which remains uncertain. They are approximately one hundred oblong clay artifacts, about 11 cm in length and 5 cm wide, three sided, with finger grooves on all three sides (Ill. 5). They are larger than sling balls, although they may possibly have served a similar function. They were all found together but without any apparent clue as to their function.

6.3 *Ceramics*

Within the continuing program of the analysis of the ceramics from our excavations an emphasis is placed on the pottery found in primary contexts, such as living floor accumulations. The goal is to employ ceramics not only to answer questions of chronology and style (form and fabric analysis), but especially for an in-depth analysis of the immediate architectural contexts that might answer questions concerning the functions of these architecturally defined spaces.

In the case of A14, while we do not understand as yet the specific architectural perimeter, we do have well defined floors, some with broken whole vessels *in situ*. This is the case of A14a20, a floor with 37 whole vessels or significant portions of whole vessels lying on it. The shapes are typical of our Phase 3 ceramics and include conical cups both of a normal height and the tall variety, medium jars with rounded bases and egg shaped bodies, deep bowls with a line of rope decoration just below the rim or decorated with combed incised lines, and some deep bowls with both these types of decoration. Medium and small bowls were fewer in number and include for the most part round profile bowls. Two jars with an unusual shape were found associated with this floor (A14.122 and A14.218, Fig. 7); they had straight necks and two pierced handles placed vertically on either side of the widest part of the globular bodies. Close by, a medium size bright red painted jar (A14.116) with a low ring base was found. While most of the ceramics discovered on this floor fit well into the standard typology of Phase 3, the shapes and fabric of these three jars are unusual within the ceramics found at the site; their discovery on this floor may point to a distinctive use of this area in front of the *ābi*.

7. New insights into the history of Urkesh

7.1. *The origins and early history of Urkesh*

Since our earliest excavations we had postulated the existence of a high terrace below Temple BA, given the fact that we could safely exclude the possibility of a natural hill underlying the temple. And since Temple BA was dated to late ED III, the terrace had to be even earlier. The work of P. Pfälzner and H. Dohmann-Pfälzner,[14] aimed at investigating the existence of a possible residential quarter in area C2, began with a trench the purpose of which was to establish a statigraphic link with our excavations at BA. These excavations confirmed our hypothesis and pointed to the existence of an oval perimetral wall that dated back at least to EDII. Our current excavations have shown that the topmost portions of the Terrace were still in

[14] Besides the article cited above, n. 6, see the reports by P. Pfälzner and H. Dohmann-Pfälzner in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 131 (1999) 17-46; 132 (2000) 185-228; 133 (2001) 97-139.

use in the last centuries of occupation of Urkesh, but at the same time they confirm the fact that the terrace must have been built at a very early period.

At the time Temple BA was in use on top of it, the Terrace was already at least 25 m above the level of the plain. It seems most likely that some version of the terrace would have been built even earlier, and that it might have been of similar proportions. Accordingly, it seems most probable that already in the early part of the third millennium Urkesh was a prominent religious center. Given the structural uniqueness of the Terrace, and the continuity that we otherwise observe in the material culture at the site, it seems just as probable that this religious center was Hurrian since its inception, i.e., since the early third millennium.

We have suggested elsewhere[15] that the two lions of Tish-atal may have come from a foundation deposit for Temple BA, and that the use of the term Nergal (written DINGIR.KIŠ.GAL) for the deity to whom the Temple was dedicated may be understood as a logogram for Kumarbi. While tentative, this inference is sufficiently reasonable to allow us to consider at least the possibility that the Terrace and its Temple may have been from the beginning the seat of the Hurrian father of the gods.

We do not know at what point in time or where a royal palace was first built in Urkesh, and in particular whether Palace AP, built by Tupkish around 2250, had a predecessor in the same location. Thus it is only to this particular time that we can safely attribute the presence at Urkesh of the monumental urban complex that brackets into a single organic entity the sacral and the royal spheres. Both in terms of the built environment and in ideological terms this complex affirms a vision that we can consider properly Hurrian on account of the many singular traits that characterize it.[16]

7.2. *The significance of Ishar-kīnum in the Urkesh endan sequence*

The sequence of seven rulers of Urkesh that we published in 2001[17] can now be augmented with the name of Ishar-kīnum and also with the name of Haziran,[18] bringing the total to 9. The list is given on Table 2. This is the longest sequence of rulers for any third – early second millennium kingdom in northeastern Syria.

The use, in the new sealing A14.239, of the Akkadian name Ishar-kīnum together with the Hurrian title *endan* is surprising, since every other ruler of Urkesh in the third millennium bears a Hurrian name – even Atal-shen, whose inscription is otherwise written in Akkadian (and whose title is given as LUGAL). The sensitivity for the political implications of the titulature was quite evident in ancient times, particularly with Naram-Sin himself. He had, in particular, introduced the term *šar kibrātim arba'īm*, which is generally interpreted as 'king of the four quarters of

[15] G. Buccellati, "The Monumental Urban Complex at Urkesh. Report on the 16th Season of Excavations, July-September 2003," *SCCNH* 15 (2005) p. 11, n. 5.

[16] G. Buccellati, *ibid.*, sections 2 and 3.

[17] G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Überlegungen zur funktionellen und historischen Bestimmung des Königspalastes AP in Urkeš Bericht über die 13. Kampagne in Tall Mozan/Urkeš: Ausgra-bungen im Gebiet AA, Juni-August 2000," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 133 (2001) p. 91.

[18] Jean-Robert Kupper, *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim*. Archives Royales de Mari 28. Paris: Éditions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1998, text 69:4. For Terru see now *ibid.*, texts 44-46 and 98:24f.

the world,' but which, in our estimation, means instead "king of the four river banks", i.e., properly, "king of Mesopotamia". That the Hurrian title *endan* should continue in use at Urkesh during Naram-Sin's reign over Akkad, is in itself significant. He would hardly have allowed such an indigenous title, certainly resonant with political implications pertaining to ethnic identity and corresponding autonomy, had he retained direct control of the political institutions of Urkesh. Thus the continued use of the title *endan* even after Naram-Sin, i.e. with Ishar-kīnum, seems almost more important precisely because it is placed alongside a royal Akkadian personal name.

Two suggestions may help explain the choice of an Akkadian name with a Hurrian title. First, there may have been a dual name, Akkadian and Hurrian, borne by the same person, as is the case for example with later Assyrian kings. Even though this looks rather improbable, it bears mentioning as a possibility. Second, it is possible that Ishar-kīnum may be the son of Tar'am-Agade. The chronological sequence (sketched above, 6.1) would favor such a possibility, and the emphasis of Uqnitum on establishing her own dynastic program in favor of the succession of her son would support the notion that the son of the highest ranking wife (Tar'am-Agade) would succeed his father on the throne. And if so, this would would mean that Ishar-kīnum was the grandson of Naram-Sin! Such an awesome ascendancy could have justified, even in a Hurrian context, the fact that the ruler of Urkesh should have an Akkadian name. On the other hand, the strident association of the Hurrian title *endan* with the Akkadian name Ishar-kīnum would have lent even greater significance to the political valence of the title. That even a grandson of Naram-Sin (if that he was indeed) would bear such a distinctly Hurrian title would show that the continuity of the Hurrian political identity was equally as important, or possibly even more so, than the adoption of Akkadian onomastics.

There is one more important observation that casts light on the ideology of royal power in Urkesh, and possibly even its influence on the royal house of Akkad. The iconography of the Ishar-kīnum seal echoes closely that of one of the seals of Tupkish – except that with Ishar-kīnum, the seated person is a deity, whereas with Tupkish the seated person is the king (see above, 6.1). The near identity of the setting suggests that we are dealing with a time-honored ceremonial situation. But if so, then the seated king in the seal of Tupkish holds a position that is reserved for a deity in the seal of Ishar-kīnum. In other words, Tupkish is placed on the same level as the gods. The same was true of Naram-Sin. A stone mold recently published[19] shows Naram-Sin seated atop a tiered platform across from Ishtar, sharing with her a position of clear prominence. The setting on the seals of Tupkish and Ishar-kīnum equates as well the king of Urkesh with a deity, and since Tupkish slightly pre-dates Naram-Sin, one may even wonder whether it was the Urkesh situation that influenced Akkad rather than the other way around.

Note also how there is a star in both the Tupkish and the Ishar-kīnum seals. The same star is found in other seals where the crown prince (in this case, Ishar-kīnum's son) is present, so it may be understood as being his emblem. If so, the Ishar-kīnum

[19] D.P. Hansen, "Through the Love of Ishtar", in L. Al-Gailani Werr *et al.* (eds.), *Of Pots and Plans. Papers ... Presented to David Oates*, London: Nabu, 2002, pp. 91-112.

seal may represent a scene of investiture of the crown prince, whereby he is seen as receiving his power directly from the divine world within which he is subsumed and from which he receives his legitimacy.

7.3. *The end of Urkesh*

The only explanation for the situation described above (5.4) – i.e., the continued use of the Plaza as an open space and the lack of any quarrying of the stones of the Temple Terrace – is that Urkesh was still, in its last century of existence, a sacral center. That it waned in importance is obvious from the size of the site and settlement. But it appears now that it was not simply a rural village. The results of this year's excavations in A17 and A18 already suggest something along these lines: the stone pavement, the storehouse, the number of bronze objects, and perhaps the two gold objects – all of this gives us pause. But what we know about the Temple Terrace clínches, in our minds, the argument. Urkesh ended, as it had begun, as a religious center. It is the sacrality of the structures that explains the continued use of the Plaza as an open space and of the Terrace as a platform for a Temple. The fact that we did not find a temple from the Mittani period (or even from the Ur III to the Khabur periods, for that matter) may reasonably be attributed to the fact that the location of the temple as a structure was too high to be preserved. It was, in other words, eroded. But the respect for the open space and stone structures is sufficiently indicative.

Why, then, did not such a persistent sacral institution continue beyond the Mittani period? We believe that the answer lies in a consideration of the ethnic nature of the temple constituency. Hurrian religion was in many ways at odds with that of Mesopotamia. It was not just a matter of names and biographies of the individual deities. It was, more fundamentally, a different conception of the divine, one that saw the gods, in particular, as speaking along unpredictable channels of communication (the *ābi*). With the collapse of Mittani as a political power, Urkesh and its area came under the dominance of the Assyrians. The Hurrian demographic base had always been quite limited, and it seems to disappear altogether from the area under the sway of an incipient Assyrian imperialism which was not only political and military, but cultural as well. Assyrian religious ideology did not have the means to absorb a conception as different from its own as that of the Hurrians, and with no longer an indigenous Hurrian population, Urkesh had no more audiences to which its rituals could any longer meaningfully speak. Hence it came to an end, without destruction, but also without the implantation of any subsequent cultural tradition. It was as if the whole site had turned into an enormous *favissa* – protecting the earlier traces of a different religious ethos under the collapse of its own debris. Which has proven to be our good fortune, because its last breath was thus sealed and kept untouched for us to find. And to preserve.

8. Conservation program

Excavations at Tell Mozan started in 1984, and the first major structures to be excavated were the Temple BA and a residential quarter in F1. Given the poor preservation of their walls, no attempt was made at conservation. In 1990 we be-

gan excavations at what turned out to be the Royal Palace of Tupkish. Here we had sizable and well preserved mudbrick walls, with a stone substructure. Even though we could not anticipate at the time that this was going to be an important building, we decided to set in place some temporary protection by covering the walls with plastic sheets over which we placed a quilt-like blanket made of jute bags, of the type available in the region for the storage of wheat. The system worked well, and it eventually evolved into a more elaborate one, consisting of a metal trellis covered with tailored tarp. The goal was to both preserve the walls as documents and at the same time to render the sense of volumes inherent in the architectural layout.[20]

While originally developed as a stopgap measure without any particular conservation expertise and using only a common sense approach, our system proved to be effective enough to warrant using it as a permanent mechanism for both conservation of the ruin and restoration of the architecture. In fact, fourteen years after efforts along this line first began, the walls remain in excellent condition.

Over the years, including our 2004 season, funding for our conservation program and for the attendant training has been generously provided by the S. H. Kress Foundation. In 2004, we also undertook a special program on behalf of the Getty Conservation Institute, aimed at monitoring the effectiveness of our approach, and in particular at building a test wall where a variety of related techniques would be applied side by side. We chose for this purpose the western and part of the northern walls of the Temple, where only the stone foundations were discovered in place. The test project was designed following a protocol established by Neville Agnew and Martha Demas, whom it was our pleasure to welcome at the site for a short working visit, during which they supervised the final details of the test wall set up. A fuller report on this project will appear separately.

Here we will only illustrate briefly some substantial changes made in the design of the protective system, as well as the approach followed in protecting the stone structure of the Temple Terrace.

Two problems had emerged with the protective covers set in place in earlier years. First, the tightly tailored covers were more prone to being torn by winds because they created an undesirable sail effect, and second, lifting the tarps to show the walls was time consuming. In 2004 we set in place a new experimental system that uses material that lets air through; does not consist of tarps tailored as a single whole; and allows each segment to be pulled sideways like a normal curtain, held in place by springs that can easily be unhooked. This arrangement (for which see Ills. 6-8) was set in place in two rooms of the service wing, with some variations that will allow us to test their respective effectiveness.

The massive stone construction of the Temple Terrace presented us with a new set of problems. The protective system used for the walls of the palace would be wholly inadequate in this case, on account of its size and shape. Even reburial

[20] These goals differ substantially from other approaches currently being followed in Syria. A recent trend has been to leave the core but reconstruct the face, and in some cases, this happens so late after excavation that the walls have largely collapsed. This results in structures that are quite pleasing aesthetically, and have considerable value in terms of architectural history, but do not preserve, in fact often obliterate, the original evidence.

would be difficult, apart from the desirability of keeping the structure fully exposed because of its sheer monumentality. Upon careful consideration, it appears that the only immediate danger is that the earth between the stones may be either eroded by the rain or intruded by animals. Accordingly, we chose to cover the seams between the stones with a strip of tarp that overlaps part of the stones as well, and which is in turn covered by a layer of mud with a small amount of cement mixed into it (see Ill. 9). This ought to protect the cohesiveness of the structure, leaving almost the entirety of the stones visible.

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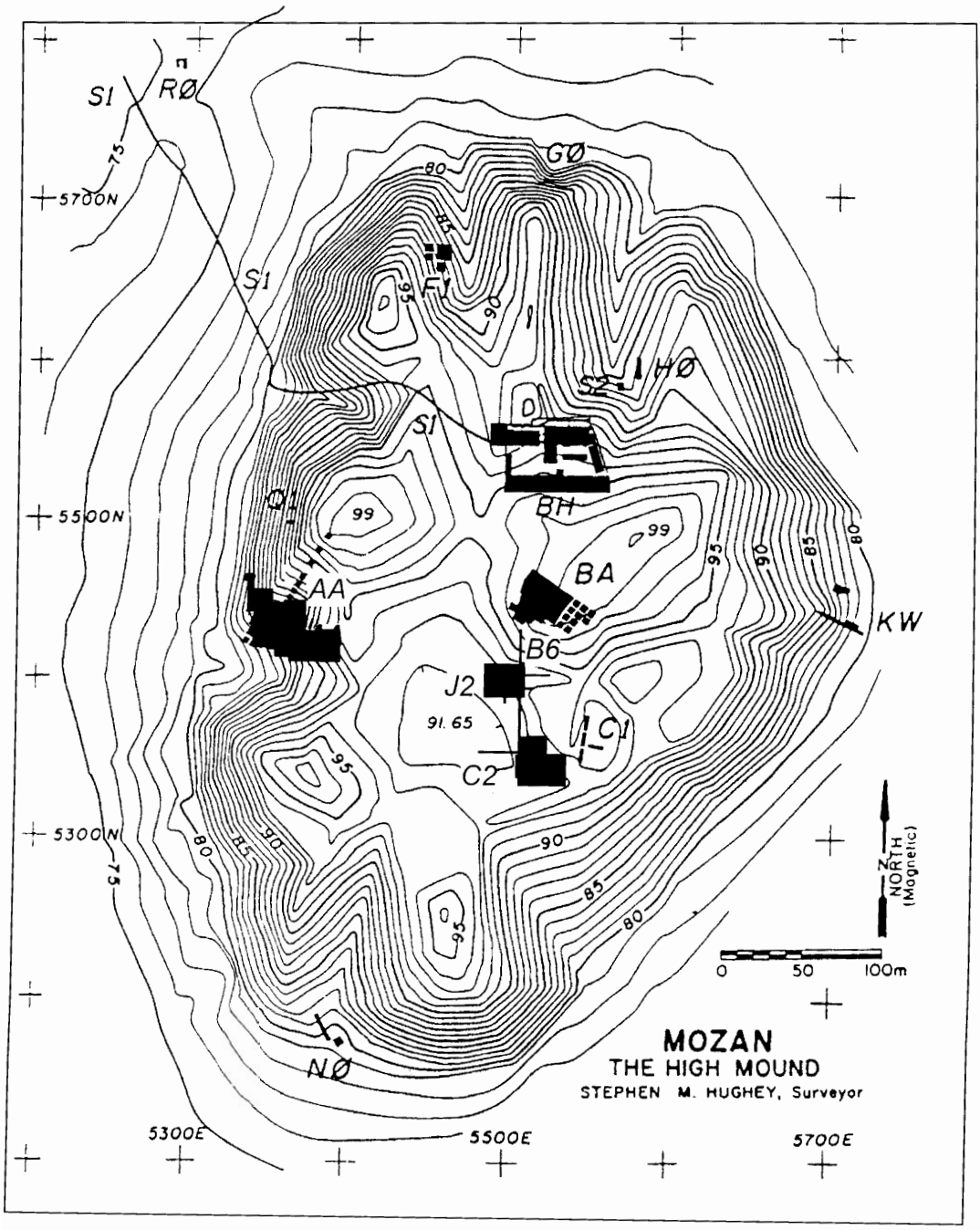
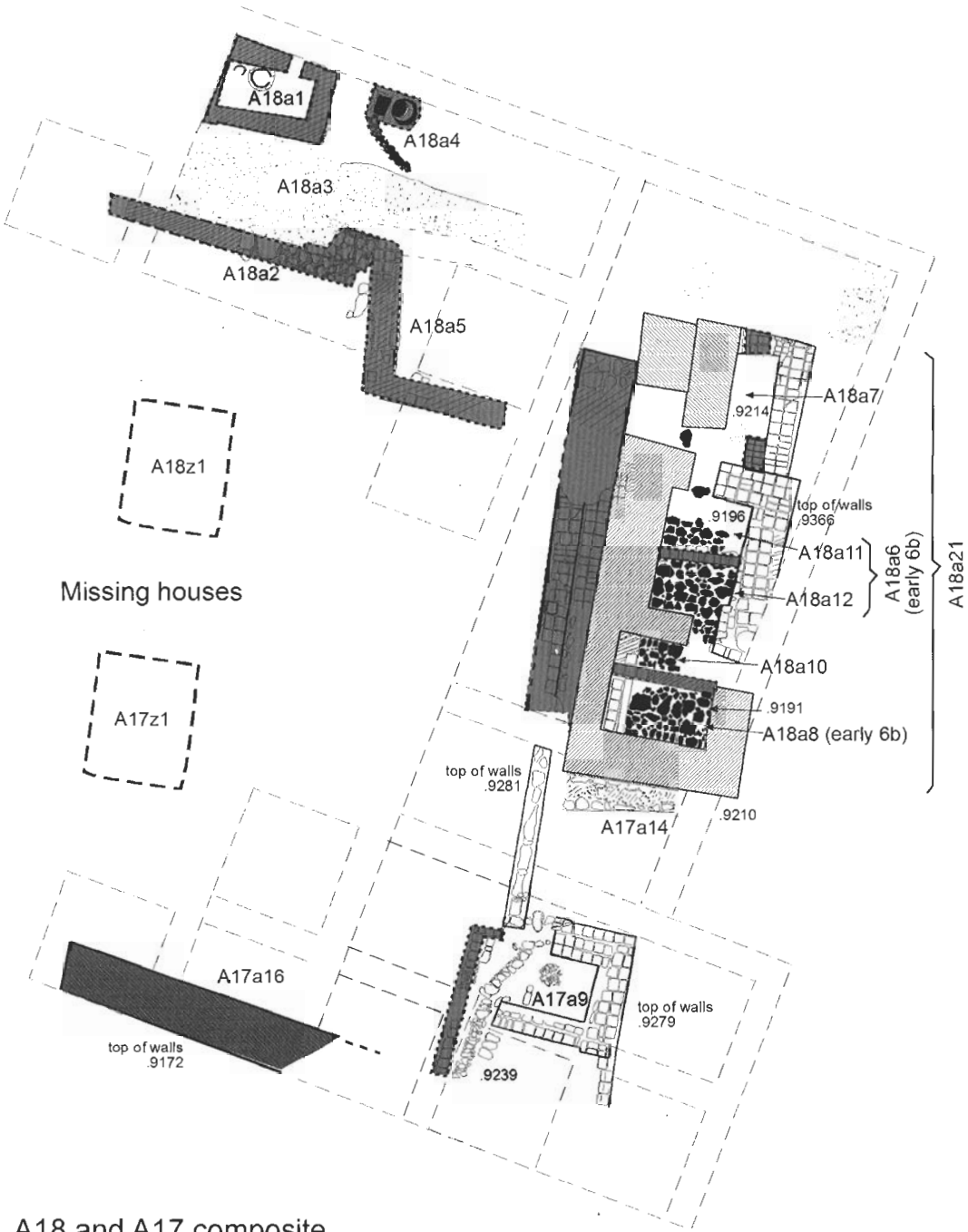


Fig. 1 – Tell Mozan/Urkesh: site plan with excavations as of 2004.



A18 and A17 composite
Mittani phase

late phase 6b
early phase 6b
early phase 6b (reuse of phase 5 wall)
phase 6a?
.9239 elevations in cms

Fig. 2 – Areas A17-A18: composite plan of phases 6a and 6b (Mittani)
Drawing by Laura Ramos (A18) and Mary T. Stancavage (A17).

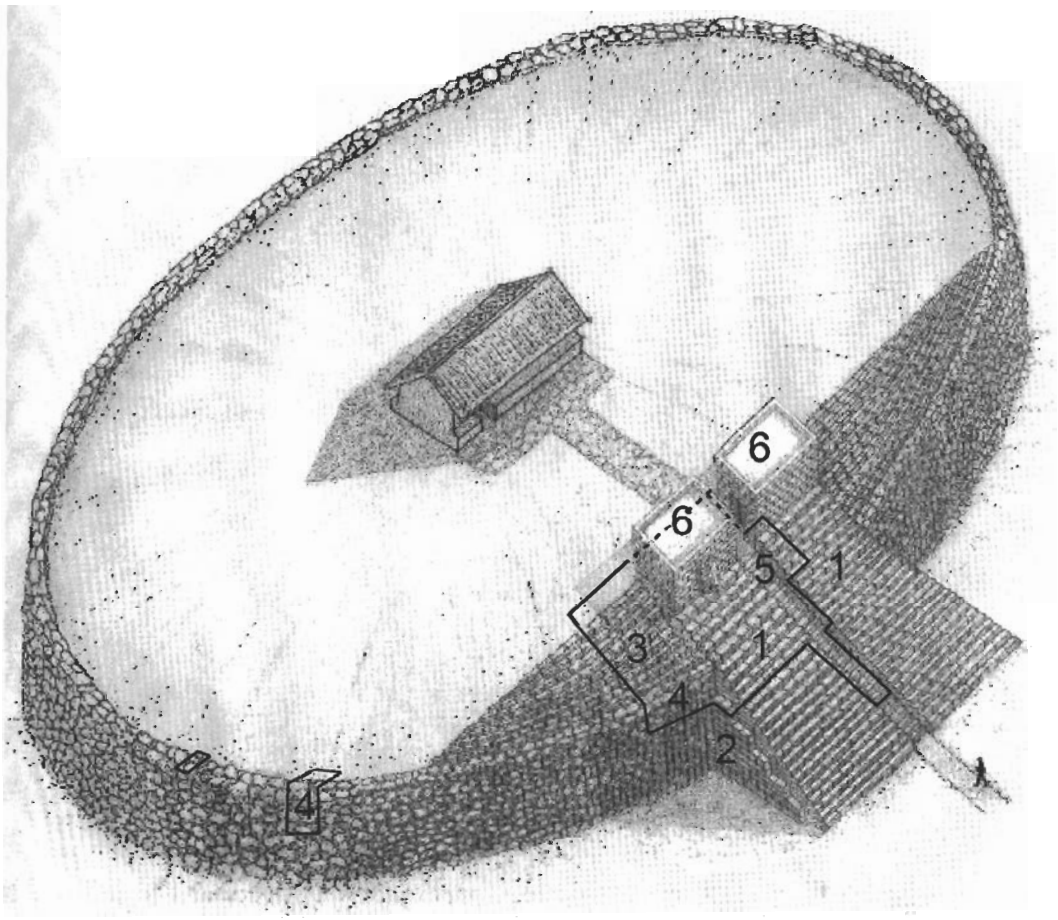


Fig. 3 – Reconstruction of the Temple Terrace
Drawing by Chiara Fornari.

The reconstruction is based on soundings (approximately shown by the heavy line) and by the results of the geo-physical survey conducted at the initiative of P. Pfälzner and H. Dohmann-Pfälzner.

The elements of the Terrace complex, discussed in the text under 3.2, are as follows:

1: Primary apron (only partly preserved in the east)
2: Retaining wall (only the very top is showing at the moment)
3: Secondary apron (it may have continued along the outer edge of the main wall)
4: Primary wall (its height is assumed on the basis of the soundings along its face and of the lower extent of the staircase as excavated by the Pfälzners)
5: Staircase
6: Towers (totally reconstructed, on the basis of red packing assumed to serve as foundation).

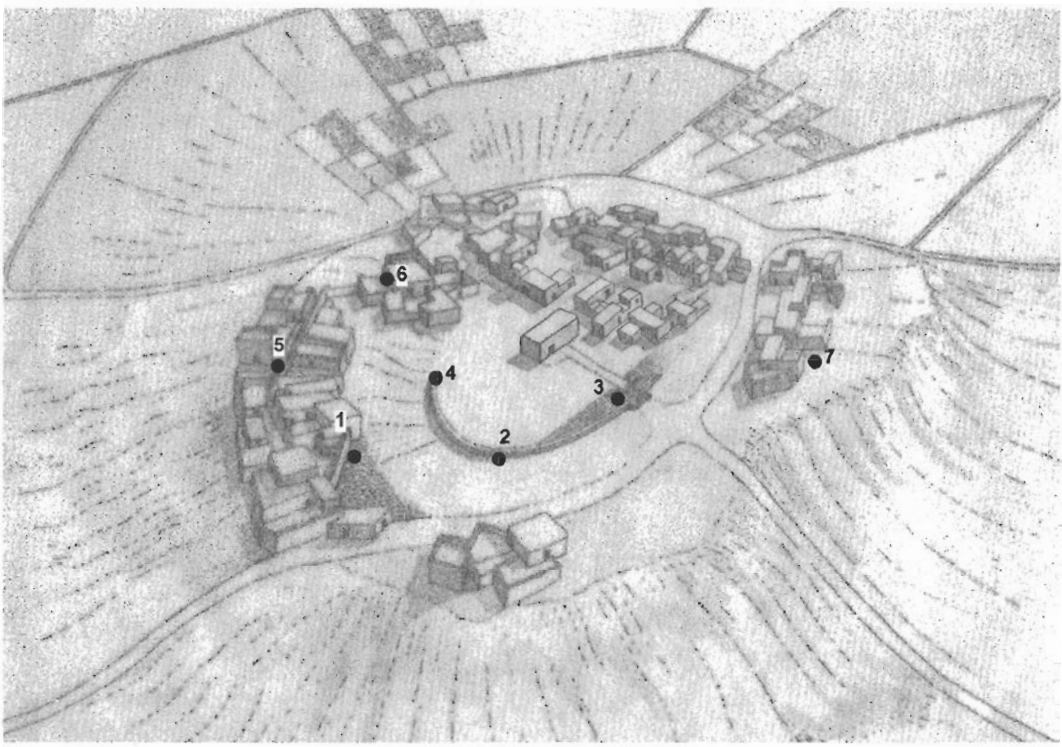


Fig. 4 – Reconstruction of the Temple Terrace and settlements in phase 6a (early Mittani)
Drawing by Chiara Fornari.

This is a broadly based reconstruction, particularly with regard to the buildings.

Actual evidence for phases 6a-b (for which see the text under 5.1 and 5.4) has been obtained only where marked by a number as follows:

1: stone pavement and structures in A17 (excavated in 2004), A18 (2003-4), J2 west (2003)
2: perimetral wall of Temple terrace in J1 (excavated in 2003)
3: perimetral wall in J2 excavated in 2004 and staircase excavated (by the MDOG team) in 2000
4: perimetral wall identified by the geophysical survey (organized by the MDOG) in 2001
5: structures found in limited soundings in A4 (excavated in 1990) and possibly in A9 (2001)
6: structures in BH (excavated in 1986-88)
7: isolated finds in C2 (excavated in 1999).

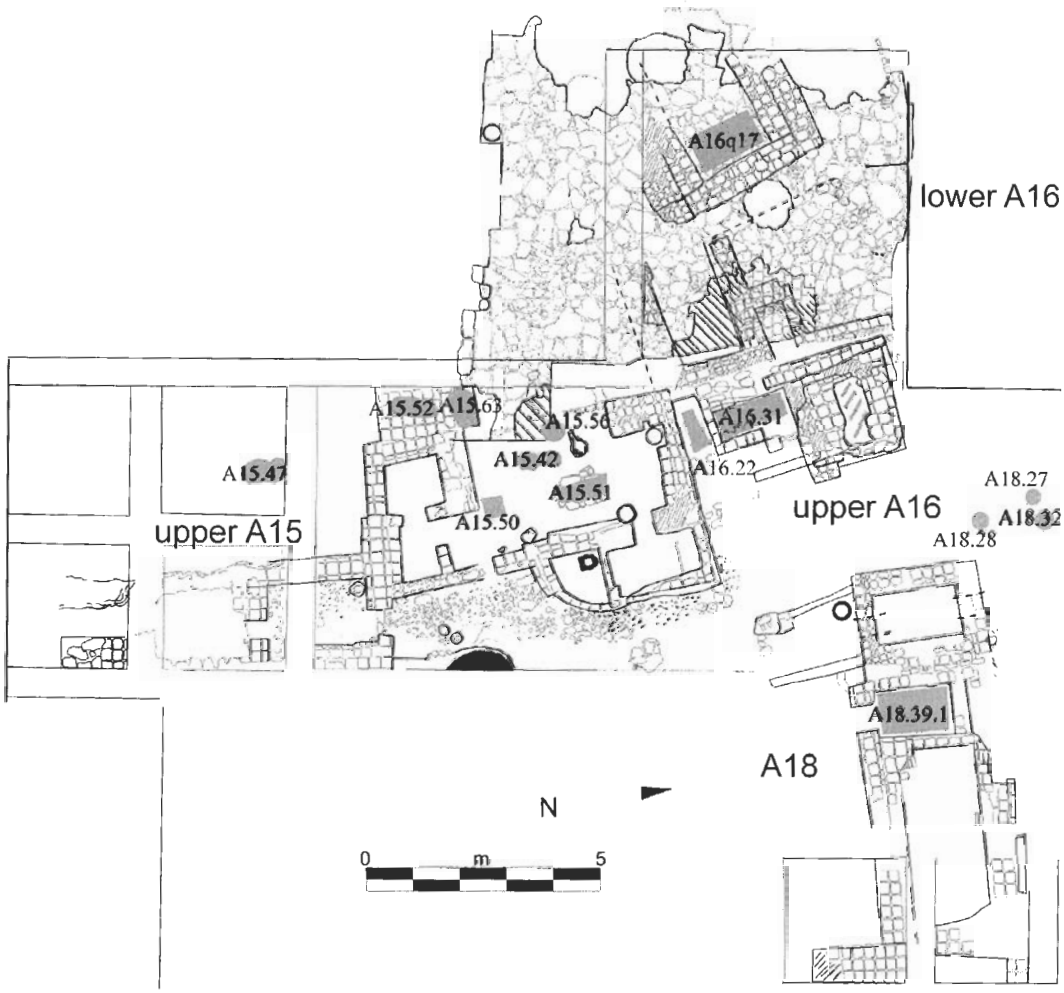


Fig. 5 – Floor plan of late Khabur cemetery in Areas A15, A16 and A18
Drawing by Laura Ramos
Individual labels refer to burials or areas where human remains where recovered.

Fig. 6 – Composite of three impressions of the seal of king Ishar-kīnum
Drawing by Fonda L. Portales (W17d2501).

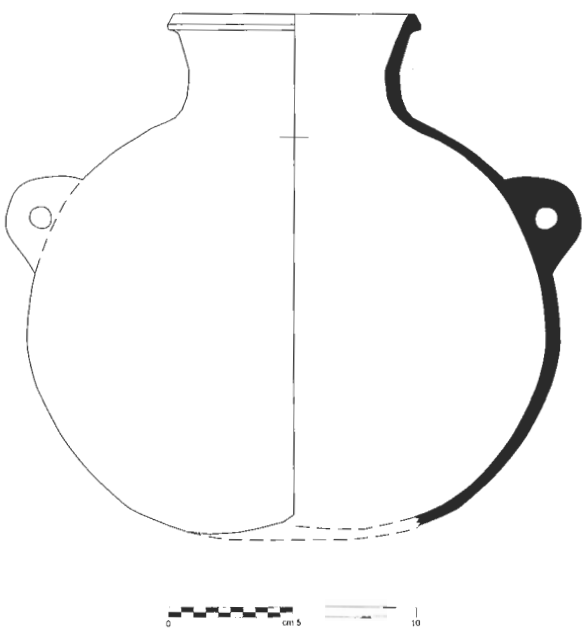
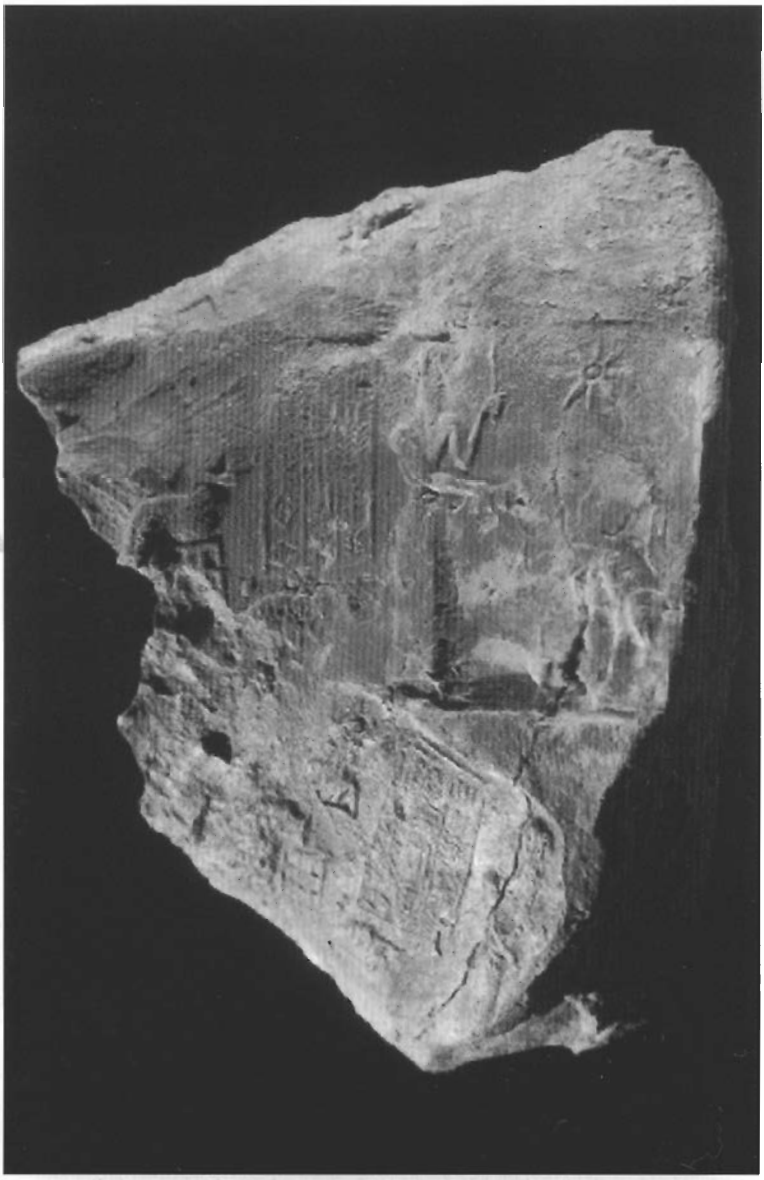


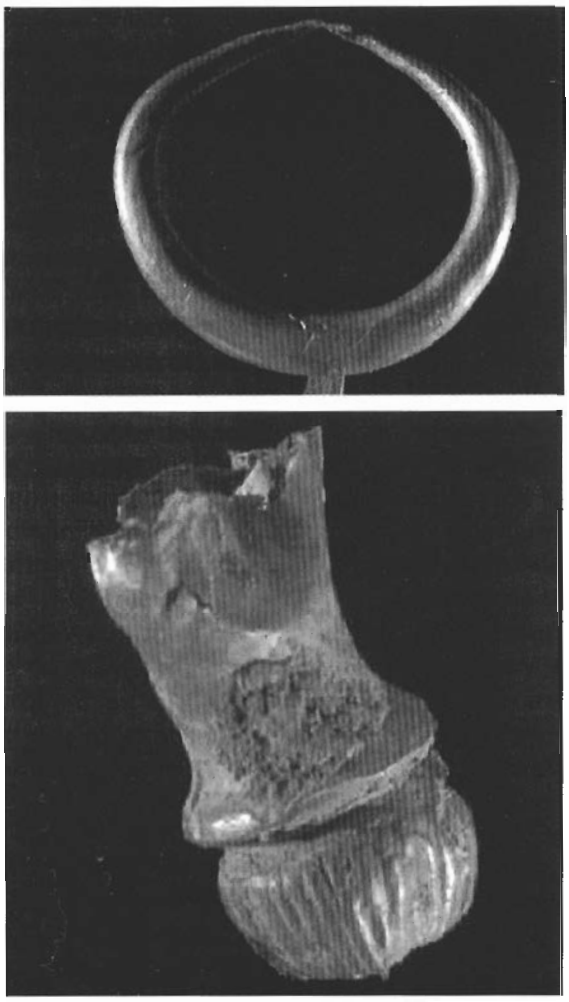
Fig. 7 – Jar from the sacral area A14
Drawing by Dennis Cecchin (item A14.218; drawing W17d7503).

Ill. 1 – Temple Terrace and staircase in area J2
Photo G. Gallacci (V17d0217).
Looking north, with a view of the two aprons and the staircase. The strata removed to the south of the terrace (in the foreground) are all dated to the Mittani period (phases 6a and 6b), indicating that the aprons and upper part of the staircase were still in use at that time period.

Ill. 2 – Horizontal levels in front of the Temple Terrace
Photo J. J. Jarmakani (V17d0143).
Stratum 6b, showing the horizontal layering in front of the Terrace as it was at the very end of its use (in the last Mittani phase, 6b).

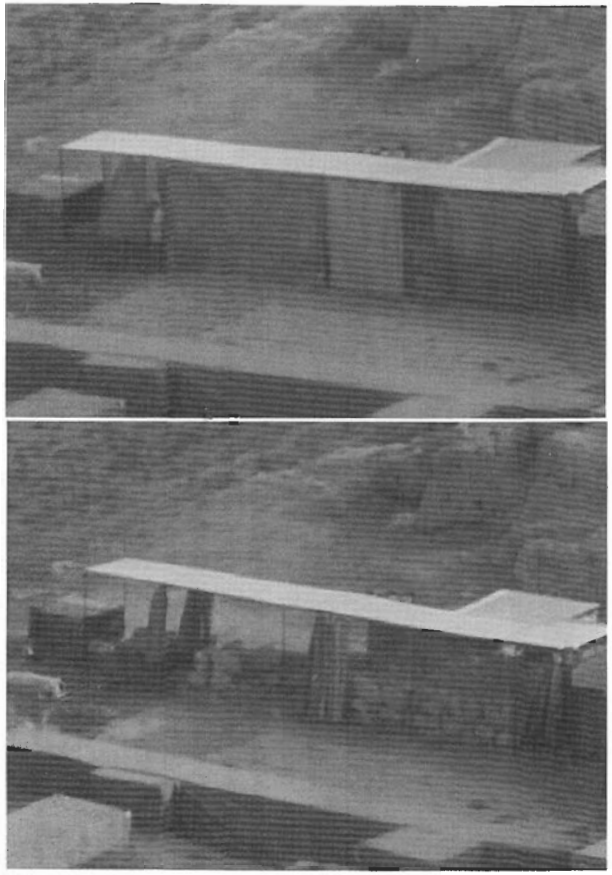


Ill. 3 – Sealing with three impressions of the seal of king Ishar-kīnum, from the sacral area A14 (late Akkadian period)
Photo G. Gallacci (V17d2823).

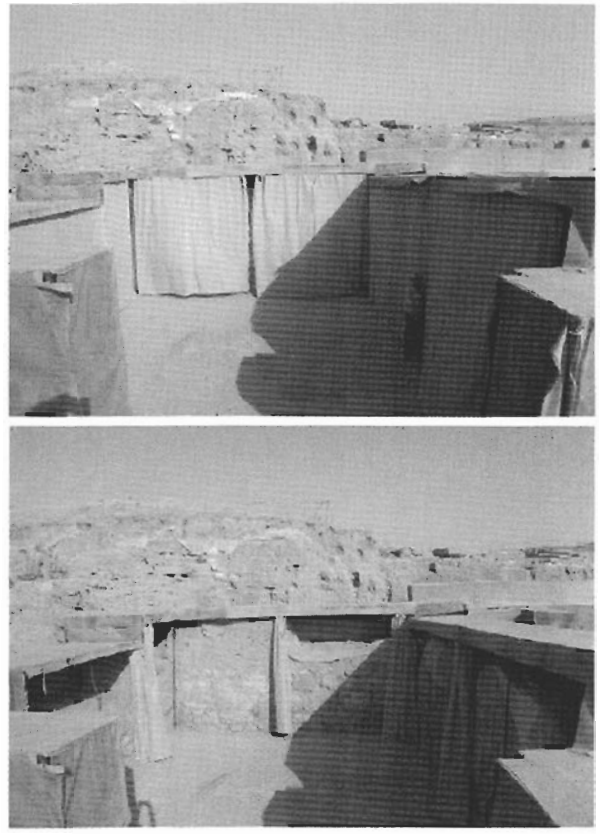


Ill. 4 – Gold objects from Mittani strata
a. Circlet A18.63 (photo G. Gallacci V17d2157)
b. Pendant (?) A18.60 (photo G. Gallacci V17d2134).

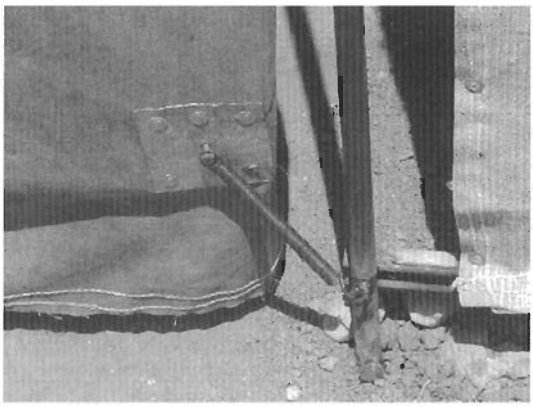
Ill. 5 – Oblong object from the upper strata in the sacral area A14
Item A14q430.1 (photo G. Gallacci V17d2821).



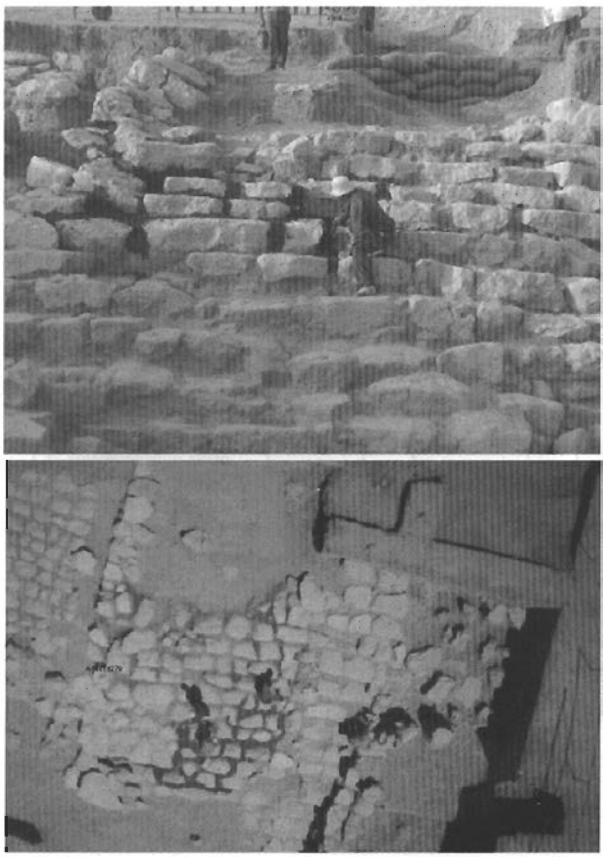
Ill. 6 – The new system of wall covering in AK, room B1
a. with tarps drawn shut (photo D. Mustafa V17d9202)
b. with tarps drawn open (photo D. Mustafa V17d9203)
Looking north, with metal roof and different experimental types of tarps sliding horizontally.



Ill. 7 – The new system of wall covering in AK, kitchen D1
a. with tarps drawn shut (photo D. Mustafa V17d9204)
b. with tarps drawn open and plastic loosely draped on top of walls (photo D. Mustafa V17d9205)
Looking east, with overhanging tarp at the top and breathe-through tarp on the sides.



Ill. 8 – Detail of spring holding in place the lower corner of the protective tarp. Design of Sabah Kassem (photo G. Buccellati V17d9201).



Ill. 9 – Conservation of the stone joints on the Temple Terrace (J2)
a. looking north, with workman laying strips of tarp and mud over joints (photo D. Mustafa V17d9401)
b. kite photo showing fresh mud laid over joints (photo F.A. Buccellati V17p0118).

horizon			phase		sub-phase	stratum	sub-str.	definition
Mesopot.	Syria	Urkeš						
		Mozan	7	modern		**1**		surface wash and erosion road building in A17-A15
						2		sod layer; top soil
						3		disturbed upper layer
						4		removal of ancient stones; gully wash; laminations
						5		modern burials
Mittani – Early Middle Babylonian/Assyrian	OJ III	Saušatar (?) 1450 (?)	6	final village	6b expansion to the east and abandonment	**10**		erosion
						11		narrowing
							a	collapse (A18)
							b	accumulations within divided storehouse (A18)
							c	repairing, partitioning
						12		first construction & retaining walls
							a	[abandonment]
							b	later accumulations within s12c
							c	structural build-up of A18 storehouse (walls, first floors) and of room with burnt basin in A17
							e	north-south retaining wall
		Parattarna I (?) 1500 (?)			6a establishment south of phase 5	**13**		missing houses
							a	[collapse and erosion of houses?]
							b	[accumulation within houses] large extramural dumps to the east (A17-18)
							c	extramural stone pavement to the east
							d	[structural build-up of houses (walls and first floors)]
							e	re-use of phase 5 walls (A17)
					?	**11-13**		scattered occupation
							a	bins (A14), plaza with remnants of Temple terrace and tannurs (J2)
							b	pits (A14)
							c	burials (A17)
							d	extramural open areas (A17, A18)
Amorite kingdoms – Old Babylonian	OJ II	no overlord?	5	town	5c expansion to the south	**20**		topmost houses
							a	abandonment and scattered occupation
							b	collapse of houses and brickfall
							c	accumulation within houses
							d	structural build-up of houses (walls and first floors)

Table 1. Mittani/late OB strata definition for area AA with correlations to J2
(Version AAsE)

		Date known	Date uncertain
2300?	1		**Tish-atal** *endan* Urkesh
2250	2	**Tupkish** *endan*/LUGAL Urkesh ~ ***Uqnitum***	
2225	3	[ ] *endan* Urkesh ~ ***Tar'am-Agade*** (?)	
2200	4	**Ishar-kīnum** *endan* Urkesh	
2100?	5		**Shatar-mat** LUGAL
	6		**Atal-shen** LUGAL Urkesh u Nawar
2050	7	**Ann-atal** LÚ Urkesh LÚ-kin-gi_4-a Urkesh	
1800	8	**Te'irru** LÚ Urkesh	
	9	**Haziran** LÚ Urkesh	

Table 2. Sequence of Urkesh rulers (Middle Chronology)