

The Urkesh Global Record: Theory and Practice

A seminar presentation by

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1 Theory

Archaeological theory has developed into a field of its own in recent decades. It is actually a series of different theories. What they have in common is that they all are theories of inference: they deal with what can be extracted from the data. But there has been practically no theory at all about the procurement of the data. In other words, no theory of excavation. This is what I have been developing, and I call it a *Grammar of the Archaeological Record*. This *Grammar* rests on a fully articulated set of principles, in particular a sharp differentiation between emplacement and deposition and a rigorous definition of categories and of processes. This approach yields substantial results which affect deeply the very concept of archaeological publishing. The first part of the presentation will give a concise presentation of these theoretical principles.

2 Browser edition

The main result is a new type of archaeological publication, the *Global Record*, which replaces the very notion of a Final Report. This is an interactive record that makes accessible the totality of the information ever recorded for any given excavation unit. The presentation utilizes the browser format which is by now second nature to everyone. The second part of the presentation will illustrate how this works, by showing on the computer the publication in progress of some of the excavation units from Tell Mozan.

3 Field operations

A major aspect of the browser edition is that it is updated on a daily basis in the field, so that the establishment of the Global Record is contemporary in real time with the progress of the excavation. This is of paramount importance for the formulation of the ongoing excavation strategy, and for the goal of obtaining an immediate publication of the excavation results. The third part of the presentation will show on the computer how the data are structured and how they are processed by our in-house programs that make this possible.