

ART OF THE FIRST CITIES

*The Third Millennium B.C. from the
Mediterranean to the Indus*

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WITH RONALD WALLENFELS

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to serve as pivotal links in the exchange network between southern Mesopotamia and the areas to the north.

J-FL

1. For an example from Tell Brak, see Mallowan 1947, p. 71. For an example from Ur, see Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, pp. 23–24.
2. See the discussion by Benzel concerning this type of earring in Harper et al. 1995, pp. 55–57. As noted there, the lobes of the Ashur earrings were made separately. Whether or not this is also the case with Mari earrings is not known, as they have not been examined by this author.
3. For Mari Tombs 809 and 1048, see Marylou 1999, pls. 149, 218.
4. Zettler and Horne 1998, p. 107.
5. Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, pp. 47–48.

153a, b

Foundation pegs

*Cuneiform inscriptions in Hurrian
Syria, possibly from Urkesh (modern Tell Mozan)
Akkadian, ca. 2300–2159 B.C.*

*a. Lion with an inscribed plate and a stone tablet
mentioning Urkesh*

Copper alloy and limestone

Lion: H. 12.2 cm (4 1/4 in.); W. 8.5 cm (3 1/8 in.)

Tablet: W. 9 cm (3 1/2 in.); L. 10 cm (4 in.)

*Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités
Orientales, Paris; Gift of the Société des Amis du
Louvre, 1948 AO 19937, AO 19938*

*b. Lion with an inscribed plate mentioning Urkesh
Copper alloy*

H. 11.7 cm (4 5/8 in.); W. 7.9 cm (3 1/8 in.)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1948 48.180

In the first example (cat. no. 153a), a lion places its front paws on an inscribed copper plate. Only the upper half of the lion is shown; its mouth is open, and its hindquarters end in a thick peg. The cuneiform text, composed in the Hurrian language, is repeated on the stone tablet beneath the copper plate: "Tishatal, ruler (*endan*) of Urkesh, has built a temple for the god Nergal. This temple, may the god Lubadag protect it. For the one who would destroy [it], may Lubadag destroy [him]; may his god not listen to his prayer. May the Lady of Nagar, Shimiga (the sun god), and the storm god [curse ten thousand times] the one who would destroy it."¹



153a

The Hurrians, whose language was neither Semitic nor Indo-European, appear in written Mesopotamian sources beginning about 2400 B.C. They seem to have occupied the piedmont region of the Taurus and Zagros Mountains, a vast area bordering the Mesopotamian plain to the north and east and extending between the upper courses of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Their country was called Subir in Sumerian, Subartu in Akkadian. The tablets placed under the claws of the lion of Urkesh apparently bear the oldest known Hurrian text. The Hurrians were in close contact with Mesopotamian culture, from which they adopted the custom of depositing

foundation documents in their constructions. The combination of the large feline with the tablets in a homogenous whole, however, is an original application of the conventional iconography and layout of the foundation deposit as developed by Sumerian rulers in southern Mesopotamia (see cat. nos. 27, 39).

The image of the lion as a guardian animal is well attested throughout the history of Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions. It is depicted here roaring to frighten off the enemy and to protect the dedicatory inscription of the sanctuary. A virtually identical figurine (cat. no. 153b) is housed at the Metropolitan Museum. These twin foundation pegs were



153b

deposited in the earth—probably in brick enclosures during the construction of the temple—and were intended to preserve the name of the builder prince and to guarantee the stability and timelessness of the temple of Nergal in the city-state of Urkesh. The political and religious center of the Hurrian region in the first centuries of its history. Urkesh was recently identified as the site of Tell Mozan in the Khabur basin, in the Syrian Jazira (see “Tell Mozan [Ancient Urkesh],” by Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, in this catalogue).²

Nergal, god of the underworld, was the object of especial veneration by the ancient

Hurrian rulers. Lubadag is an ethnic deity who in the second millennium B.C. is found, under the name of Nubadig, as far away as Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast. The great gods invoked in the curse, which was intended to reinforce the dissuasive and threatening role of the peg figurine, are major deities in the Hurrian pantheon.

BA-S

The top half of the Metropolitan’s peg consists of the forepart of a snarling lion with forelegs outstretched over an inscribed plaque. Although the inscription on the plaque is largely lost to corrosion, enough remains to show that it most likely duplicates an inscription found on the

almost identical peg, with an accompanying inscribed stone tablet, now in the collection of the Louvre. If a similar stone tablet accompanied the Metropolitan’s peg, it is now lost.³

While it is probable that they served as foundation deposits for a temple at Urkesh, neither was obtained from controlled excavations. As noted above, the lions represented on the pegs most likely served an apotropaic function, protecting the pegs from displacement and, by extension, preserving the integrity of the temple in which they were placed. While this leonine form is unique in the corpus of known foundation pegs, it is difficult to discern in this figure a distinctive style that can be ascribed specifically to the Hurrians.⁴ The Hurrians appear to have assimilated rapidly to the prevailing Akkadian cultural milieu, and a full understanding of their stylistic contribution to the art of the late third millennium B.C. has yet to be elucidated.

The Metropolitan peg, despite its modest scale, evidences in its fabrication some interesting technical features. The peg was hollow cast using an arsenical copper alloy containing less than 2 percent arsenic.⁵ During casting the core was supported by at least three metal supports, visible in X-radiographs. While the presence of a core enabled an economical use of metal, its primary function may have been to provide a quick distribution of metal in order to reduce the possibility of casting flaws, particularly in the projecting limbs. The inscribed plaque appears to have been made separately and attached to the wax model of the peg before it was invested and cast.

J-FL

1. Parrot and Nougayrol 1948, pp. 1–20; Amiet 1976b, pp. 42ff., 132, fig. 64; Whiting 1976, pp. 173–82; Muscarella 1988b, pp. 93–99; Frayne 1997, pp. 463–64; Buccellati 1998, pp. 28–29; Salvini 1998, pp. 106–8; Wilhelm 1998, pp. 117–43 (and bibliography); André-Salvini 2000, pp. 69–71.

2. See Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995, pp. 65–70; and Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995–96, pp. 1–36.

3. For a complete discussion and bibliography, see Muscarella 1988a, pp. 374–77.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 376–77.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 377, n. 2.

Tell Mozan (Ancient Urkesh)

Visited and briefly excavated in the 1930s by Max Mallowan and his wife, the renowned mystery writer Agatha Christie, the site of Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh) remained untouched until 1984, when we began excavations. The first major building that came to light was a temple. Although at the summit of the tell, it dates quite early, to about 2400 B.C. We assumed that it had stood on a high terracing, and this has been borne out by recent excavations under the direction of Peter Pfälzner. A high mud-brick platform, lined with stones and oval in shape, supported an even earlier phase of the temple dating to about 2700 B.C. The deity to whom the temple was dedicated is not known, but its symbol may have been a lion because the statue of a lion was found within the temple. It is possible the Tishatal copper-alloy lions (see cat. no. 153) also come from this temple. Contemporary with one of the earlier phases of the temple was a city wall around what is now the High Mound. The moat around this wall was filled in about 2450 B.C., when the defensive

system was probably extended to the outer edge of the settlement to encircle a vast urban area comprising some 130 hectares.

The most important building at Tell Mozan is the Royal Palace. To date only the service wing of the palace has been fully excavated, and it covers more than a thousand square meters. It is from the earliest floors of this building that we have recovered about a thousand seal impressions belonging to a previously unknown king named Tipkish, his wife, Uqitum (see cat. no. 154), and several members of their court. Tipkish is a Hurrian name, and his royal title is also Hurrian: endan Urkesh. During the third millennium B.C. speakers of the Hurrian language, a member of the Northeastern Caucasian family of languages, were settled on the eastern Anatolian plateau. From the evidence provided by the seal impressions we were able to identify Tell Mozan as the site of Urkesh, the ancient religious and political center of Hurrian civilization known from historical, mythological, and ritual texts.



Fig. 65. Royal Palace, Urkesh. Akkadian, ca. 2300–2159 B.C.

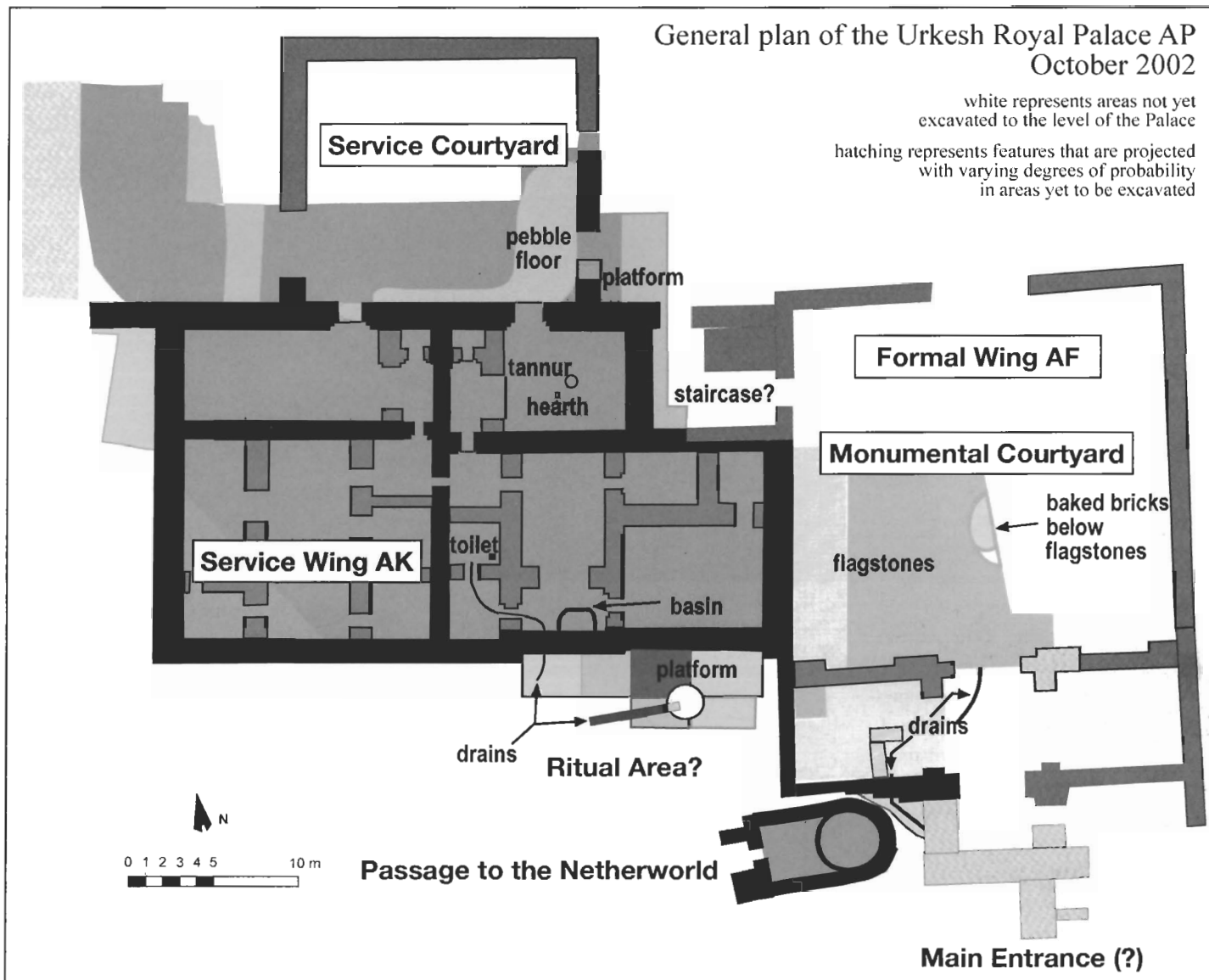


Fig. 66. Plan of the Royal Palace, Urkesh. Akkadian, ca. 2300–2159 B.C.

Judging from the small portion of the formal wing of the palace that has been excavated and from what has been exposed thus far, we project a total area of at least 3,500 square meters. Shortly after the reign of Tupkish, the formal wing was damaged and the palace came to be used only by royal administrative officials. To this period belong a group of door sealings that include the impressions of Tar'am-Agade (see cat. no. 155), a heretofore unknown daughter of

the Akkadian king Naram-Sin. Her presence in Urkesh allows us to date firmly the construction of the palace to about 2200 B.C. All indications are that Tar'am-Agade, like Uqitum, was married to an endan of Urkesh, which would suggest that this northern Hurrian kingdom had an alliance with the royal house of Akkad and therefore was of special political significance.

GB/MK-B

Sealing with a cylinder seal impression depicting royal family

Cuneiform inscription

Clay

H. 3.6 cm (1 3/8 in.); W. 4.7 cm (1 7/8 in.); Thickness 1.5 cm (9/16 in.)

Impression of seal: H. 2 cm (3/4 in.)

Syria, Urkesh (modern Tell Mozan), Royal Storehouse, A1. 162

Akkadian, ca. 2300–2159 B.C.

Museum of Deir ez-Zor, Syria 13657

Impressions from inscribed cylinder seals from the royal court of Tupkish and Uqnitum, the king and queen of Urkesh, offer a glimpse into the third millennium's only known Hurrian city and its rulers. The imagery and inscriptions on the seals of these royal figures present us with information not only about them but also about some of the courtiers closely connected to the queen.

Catalogue number 154, known from several fragmentary impressions, is Uqnitum's most important seal. She appears to be seated on the left holding a small child on her lap. The figure seated opposite, holding a cup, must be her husband, Tupkish. Another fragmentary sealing (A1.406),¹ with either the same impression or one of a similar seal, shows the head of a man who wears a feathered crown and whose raised arm holds a cup (fig. 67, left). On catalogue number 154 the crown prince, wearing a similar crown, stands before the king, touching his lap in a gesture of both homage and filiation. The gesture communicates an important political message: that it is this particular son of Uqnitum who is to follow his father on the throne. Uqnitum is shown in impressions of this seal and others wearing a long braid with a distinctive ornament near the end. A three-line inscription panel, positioned behind the king and above a ram, identifies the seal owner as "Uqnitum, wife of Tupkish." Other seals of Uqnitum and Tupkish, as well as the seal of the courtier Zamena, reflect the same dynastic iconography.

As evidenced by impressions of their inscribed seals, Zamena, the wet nurse, and Tuli, the head of Uqnitum's royal kitchen, are among the most important figures associated with the queen. Both have Hurrian names, even though Uqnitum herself has an Akkadian name, perhaps reflecting their respective ethnic affiliations. Their seals relate the queen's name in

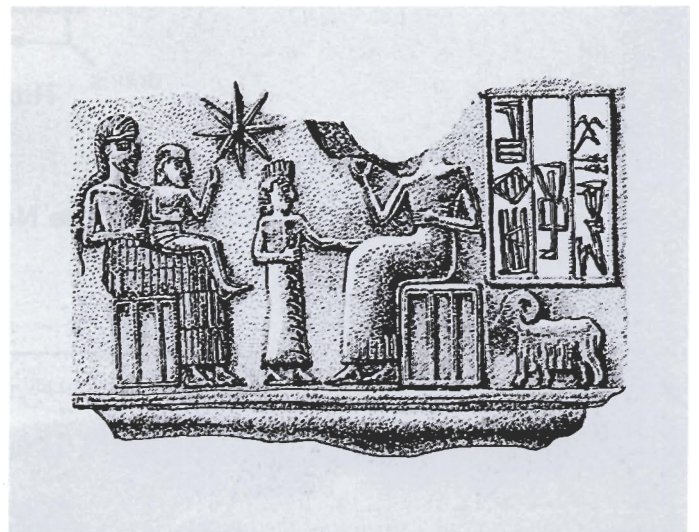


Fig. 67. Drawing of sealing fragment (A1.406); composite drawing of impressions from catalogue number 154.

addition to their own. What is startling about these impressions is that their respective iconographies reflect their owners' professions. Zamena's seal shows her standing before the queen holding onto the wrist of a small child seated on her lap; Tuli's depicts a butcher at work and a maidservant churning butter.

These appear to be the only third-millennium seal impressions with closely linked texts and iconographies.²

MK-B

1. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1997, p. 82.
2. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1995–96, pp. 21–24.

Sealing with a cylinder seal impression depicting a hero and bull-man combating a lion and water buffalo

Cuneiform inscription in Old Akkadian

Clay

Impression of seal: H. 3.9 cm (1½ in.); W. 3.1 cm

(1¼ in.); Thickness 2.5 cm (1 in.)

Syria, Urkesh (modern Tell Mozan), A13.99

Akkadian, ca. 2300–2159 B.C.

Museum of Deir ez-Zor, Syria 21078

Seal impressions of Tar'am-Agade, a royal figure of the house of Akkad in Mesopotamia and a previously unknown daughter of king Naram-Sin, have recently been uncovered at Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh). Although other daughters of Naram-Sin are known to have been appointed priestesses in important temples in southern Mesopotamia,¹ we speculate that Tar'am-Agade was in Urkesh as the wife of the ruling *endan*. This conclusion is based in part on the study of the iconography of the royal house of Akkad, especially that of Tar'am-Agade's sisters, who were priestesses in several Akkadian-controlled cities.² Servants connected with these sisters have an iconography based on religious scenes, but the seal of Tar'am-Agade displays a more politically oriented contest scene, as found on seals of one of her brothers and royal officials.³

In Tar'am-Agade's contest scene, a bull-man fights with a lion on one side of the inscription, while on the other side a nude hero fights a water buffalo (fig. 68). The water buffalo is an important animal in Akkadian royal seals (see cat. no. 135). Most significant for the two contest scenes in the Urkesh cache is the personal seal of Ukin-Ulmash, a son of Naram-Sin, showing a contest involving water buffaloes. All other water buffaloes on Akkadian royal seals belong to servants of the royal family. There is no doubt that Tar'am-Agade herself was in Urkesh, as all her impressions come from sealings used to close storeroom doors, indicating her active involvement in the internal administration of the palace. MK-B

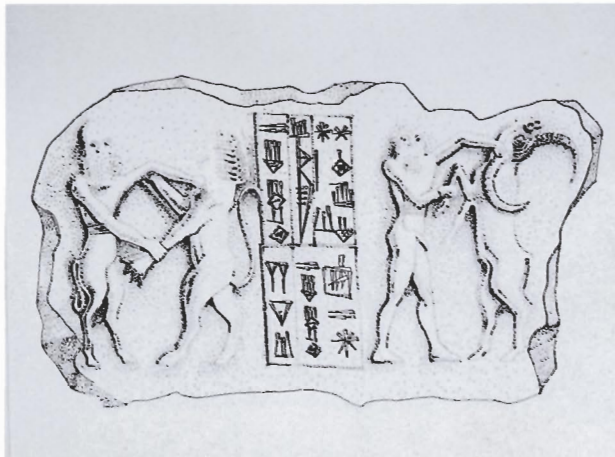


Fig. 68. Composite drawing of seal impressions depicting a contest scene (cat. no. 155).

1. Frayne 1993, pp. 145–46, 157–60, 175–77.

2. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2000, pp. 136–40, 153–55; Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002, pp. 13–18; Kelly-Buccellati forthcoming.

3. Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002, pp. 16–18.