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Urkish and the Hurrians
Studies in Honor of Lloyd Cotson

edited by
Giorgio Buccellati and
Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati

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Urkesh and the Hurrians



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of Mesopotamian civilization and its influences from
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Editor: *Giorgio Buccellati*

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**Urkesh and the Hurrians
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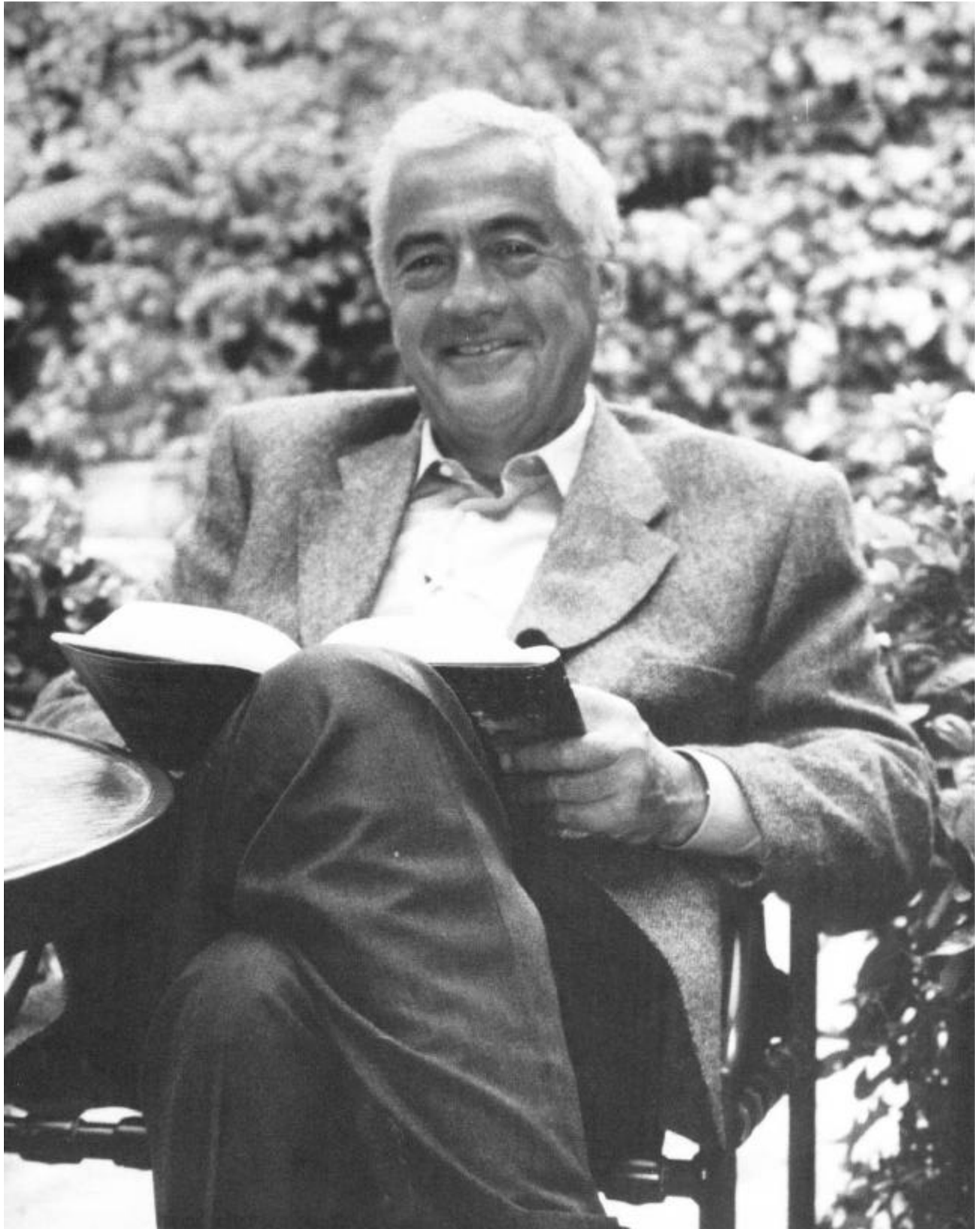
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Preface

Giorgio Buccellati

The venture of editing a volume in honor of a friend is as gratifying to the editor as, one hopes, to the honoree. The convergence of personal and scholarly trajectories blend in such a way that any introduction becomes autobiographical as much as topical, for the avenues we have walked together are those of life as well as of a shared intellectual search. I may thus be allowed to encase the venture of my collegial friendship with Lloyd Cotsen within the frame of two events that for me mark, autobiographically and emblematically, this walk and this search we have happily shared since some very early beginnings.

In 1967, Marilyn and I had just returned, newlyweds and newly embarking on a joint professional life, from our first long trip to the Near East. The high point of that trip had been a month-long survey in the Syrian steppe, centering around Palmyra. We had joined skills and enthusiasms, looking for traces of semi-nomadic populations in the glare of the August sun. Back in Los Angeles, we met Lloyd. President of the local chapter of the American Institute of Archaeology, he invited us to give a lecture on our survey: "On the Footsteps of the Amorites in the Syrian Steppe." It was our first joint public lecture, and two curious memories still linger in our minds. First, a map of the territory surveyed, some four by four feet in size, which I had painted with oil colors (!), from which came the slide we used as a basis for the lecture. And, second, Lloyd's grin that combined disbelief, amusement, and yet approval for this fanciful approach to graphic documentation.

In the Winter of 1995, almost thirty years later, I returned to the Palmyrene, under the terms of a Guggenheim Fellowship, which had as its aim the exploration of that same steppe during the Winter season, looking at the changing features of the landscape and the lifeways of the modern shepherd populations that inhabit it. This time, Marilyn could

not join me: our son Federico came instead. And, with us, Lloyd came as well. I knew that his sensitivity for the archaeology, the history, the geography, would match my own interests very closely. And so it was. The grin of some 30 years earlier was with us yet, beaming across the landscape as it had upon the map. With Lloyd at our side, the word “interdisciplinary” acquired its fullest meaning: alive as I thought I was, already, to the interaction of settlements and landscape, of people and events, Lloyd could still elicit ever new challenges, new vistas.

It is this special capacity for insight that I would like to celebrate with our volume. I have learned much, over the years, from Lloyd, as I know many others have. Not just on the human level, but on the level of scholarly understanding. The confrontation with the data is always alive and fresh, whether in the steppe or in his library, whether probing in response or provoking in anticipation. If scholarship can be viewed as the conspiracy of shared discovery, Lloyd is indeed a great co-conspirator. And if scholarship, almost as much as Horace’s poetry, can claim to produce those *monumenta aere perennia* that serve as signposts along the path of culture, then I hope that Lloyd will share in the conviction, and joy, that this volume will indeed remain a lasting monument honoring his love of culture.

* * *

The stepping stones along Lloyd’s archaeological path have been identified by Ernestine Elster with the grace and insider’s knowledge of a scholar-friend. The “conspiracy” of which I just spoke has, in this case, brought us to a fuller realization of the scope and depth of Lloyd’s involvement in a field to which he has contributed so much in the first person.

The first part of this volume consists of four chapters by staff members of the Mozan/Urkish project. With Lloyd, I visited Tell Mozan during our 1995 trip, but it was in the Winter: not only were the excavations backfilled, we could not even reach the site on the first day we were there, so deep was the water between the road and the site! When eventually we managed to cross the great waters on a tractor, we had a rare view of a very wet house and site, but could not quite do justice to Lloyd’s archaeological dimension (though we did benefit from his architectural skills in identifying the causes of a nagging structural problem in the form of a perennially leaking roof!). The first part of this volume, then, will make up for the missed opportunity, so far, of having Lloyd with us during the excavations as he had participated in our earlier excavations in Terqa.

The fact that Marilyn, Federico, and I are adding our scholarly voice to that of friendship and affection should indeed not be considered accidental. The chapters by Marilyn and myself present an overview of the major finds to date, from a stratigraphic and a typological point of view. In addition, Marilyn's contribution inaugurates the search for the professional and human setting within which alone we can understand the growth of skill and craft—those workshops which, in the service of patrons and in response to specific concerns, developed expressive programs and stylistic schools.

Federico's chapter serves a triple purpose. First, he addresses theoretical concerns which have guided our choices for technological support over the years: only a methodological perspective can do justice to even the most advanced technique, and we must not let state-of-the-art mystique lead us myopically into cultural wastelands. This has been my contention and my effort, and I know Lloyd will share with a special joy the gratification of seeing these goals so well internalized, and expanded, by the next generation. The second contribution is, on the other hand, the deft control of the technique as such: the production of three-dimensional renderings of the Urkesh architecture, in a way that makes it possible for us to monitor the progress of the excavation as it unfolds in the field. Finally, there is an exposition of reasons why computer animation serves more than the incidental needs of providing adequate visuals for a film, and can instead be part of the archaeologist's overriding intellectual task.

Rick Hauser gives here for the first time a detailed account of an innovative approach he has pioneered in the study of animal figurines, of which we have a vast corpus preserved in the Royal Building AK. He has in preparation a comprehensive publication of the entire corpus, of which he uses a section here, that of the equids, both to illustrate the nature of his documentation and to provide, in the process, a figurative counterpart to Ivanov's chapter. The identification of clear distributional patterns in the proportions of body types, and the potential correlation to known animal morphologies (developed in part under the stimulus of Sandor Bökönyi), sets the whole question of identification on the basis of a clearly articulated formal analysis. The implications for function and use are many: the coherence of formal choices, the skill in manufacturing, the spatial distribution within a Royal Building of great significance (whether a palace or not), all of this will add immeasurably, and objectively, to our understanding of a ubiquitous cultural inventory.

* * *

The second part of the volume presents five interpretive studies by colleagues who have graciously lent, since the early stages of the identification of Mozan as Urkesh, their great insight and knowledge towards gaining a better sense of perspective with regard to the whole issue of locating our finds within the purview of Hurrian studies. In particular, Salvini, Steinkeller, and Wilhelm provided a detailed response to an in-house paper in which Marilyn and I first proposed the identification: their corroboration of our argument and their corrections to points of detail lent the encouragement we needed at a moment when everything seemed unexpected and new. Two of our authors, Steinkeller and Hoffner, first presented their views as part of a course offered by UCLA Extension in December 1995—and I wish to express here my gratitude to them for their readiness to participate first in the course and then to keep the text “on hold” while waiting for publication of this volume. Also, my thanks go to Dr. Elizabeth Brooks for organizing a course which, like others within Extension, succeed so well in bridging the gap between scholarship and public fruition.

Piotr Steinkeller sets the basis for an understanding of the historical framework in Upper Mesopotamia in the late third millennium, the period to which we can assign most of the finds that are connected with ancient Urkesh. His thorough control of the Mesopotamian data is matched by his keen sensitivity for both the historical and the archaeological dimensions: as a result, the picture he paints is rich in both information and interpretation, and points to the horizon which bounds our Urkesh perspective. As we commit ourselves to continued excavation within the boundaries of the site, we need to maintain our sights trained on that horizon in order to make sense of what new evidence is coming to light. It is also of special consequence for us, working at Mozan, that some of Piotr’s students have been regular participants at our excavations, and that through his initiative the Semitic Museum of Harvard University was the first American Museum to dedicate a case to the Urkesh finds, as part of an exhibit honoring Harvard’s long-standing involvement with Hurrian civilization through its excavations at Nuzi. (An earlier exhibit including material from Tell Mozan/Urkesh was featured in the *Der ez-Zor* Museum at its first opening in April 1996.)

Mirjo Salvini looks at third millennium Urkesh specifically from the point of view of Hurrian history. His long-standing involvement with the epigraphy, the history, and the geography of the area makes him the best spokesman for this perspective, which he presents here with a great richness of detail. His many travels to the Near East have allowed us to meet often in the field, ever since our early days at Terqa, and it is fitting that we may now also share a home, as it were, in a publication dedicated to a field and

a period to which he has devoted so much of his energies. It is in fact not accidental that the corpus of Hurrian texts, which he, Gernot Wilhelm, and others are editing, bears as an emblem the lion of Tish-Atal from Urkesh.

Gernot Wilhelm's chapter provides a critical edition of the most archaic Hurrian text, the inscription of Tish-Atal of Urkesh. Such an in-depth presentation of the philological and linguistic dimensions of the text is supported by the publication of a new photograph of the stone tablet in the Louvre, which we owe to the courtesy of its Curator, Dr. Béatrice André-Salvini (who had earlier done us the honor of an invitation to the Louvre for a presentation of our findings). As a result, this will serve as the new *editio princeps* of what, in retrospect, may now be considered as the first epigraphic document originating from Tell Mozan. It is also especially significant that, at Gernot's initiative and under his supervision as president of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, we will benefit from a new German presence at our excavations. As a result, Peter Pfälzner, of the University of Tübingen, will join us with some associates during the 1998 season.

Vyacheslav Ivanov adds a special dimension to our volume, that of a linguistic analysis which is as much in the forefront of general linguistic theory as it is sensitive to the evidence of material culture. As described briefly in Ernestine Elster's chapter, Lloyd had joined Ernestine, Marilyn, and myself in planning a project of excavations in what was then Soviet Georgia. Vyacheslav was not then directly involved, but his role in defining, with Thomas Gamkrelidze, the scope of historical and linguistic developments in Anatolia and the Caucasus contributed to our interest in extending our work that far north. Upon his joining the faculty at UCLA, our contacts became more frequent and his interest in our project ever more insightful. No one familiar with his prodigious scholarly output ought to be surprised to learn how carefully he was reading our reports, and yet it was unexpected to hear him talk with such enthusiasm about some evidence we had published for the presence of horses at our site. From this developed the idea of a chapter that would discuss the linguistic evidence, and the consequent historical implications, deriving from the words for horse in Hurrian and Indo-European.

Harry Hoffner presents a sweeping picture of the impact that Hurrian had on later Hittite culture, in all its aspects. On the one hand, he highlights influence, and on the other, survival. Each aspect is indicative of the vitality of earlier Hurrian traditions, and, at the same time, of their originality. For many of the traits that are either echoed (and transformed) or reproduced (more or less in their original status) are quite distinctive from those common to Southern Mesopotamia. (This is being progressively documented for the visual arts by Marilyn's work, as partly reported in her own article in this

volume.) The role of Urkesh is particularly significant. It is not a common occurrence to have a concrete, historical city mentioned as a divine residence, and in the case of Urkesh the association is with the father of the gods, Kumarbi, who from this residence exercises a special judicial role over the inhabited world. This, in conjunction with the knowledge of Urkesh as a political capital and, now, as a concrete settlement, shows that the myth had strong roots in the ground and in history.

Clearly, it is emblematic of this volume that it shows the wide-ranging collaboration our work at Tell Mozan/Urkesh has elicited with regard to the field of Hurrian studies. What the future may hold in store with particular regard to Hurrian epigraphy from Urkesh is of course unpredictable. To the extent that we can make projections on the basis of current findings, I opt, frankly, for a certain dose of pessimism. On the one hand, Hurrian seems to have been used primarily for political inscriptions, such as the one on the lions of Tish-Atal, and if so they would have been limited in number. On the other hand, we have found, so far, few traces of widespread destruction at the site, of the type that would favor the preservation of cuneiform archives. But should this foreboding prove wrong, should we, in other words, be fortunate enough to find Hurrian texts in our excavations, we would certainly be poised to extend an efficient and established pattern of scholarly, international collaboration to the study of such a corpus.

* * *

One of Lloyd's abiding interests in archaeology has been for the needs and problems of publishing. With a change of roles, as it were, his children have graciously adopted the publication of this *Cotsen Volume*, by helping to defray the costs of printing. In this way, too, Corinna, Tobey, and Eric have come to share in their father's interests and in his scholar-friends' tribute.

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