

Mozan as Urkesh: Archaeology in the making

Welcome to Tell Mozan, the site of ancient Urkesh. We invite you to see how the hill you saw from the road is, in fact, a glorious ancient city. You will see the *monuments*, and we will explain how they served to enrich the life of the ancient people who lived here.

Who were these people? They constitute one of the oldest civilizations of ancient Syria, that of the *Hurrians*. Our evidence suggests that Urkesh had developed as a full-fledged city already by about 3500 B.C., and that it was already then the site of the major temple which characterizes its later history. Its history ends at the time when the Hurrians completely disappear from history, about 1200 B.C.

We also want to explain to you how *archaeology* can reach these conclusions. It is through archaeology that we can give voice to the otherwise mute witness of buildings and objects long since buried in the ground. You will find a number of panels that illustrate important concepts and special techniques we use.

You can spend several hours, and come back for more. You can also take but a quick tour. The *itinerary* (clearly marked with sequential numbers) will help you make the most of your visit, and you can open the panels you will encounter as if you were turning the pages of a book. This leaflet will serve as the introduction and the table of contents.

There is a logic to the itinerary, which unfolds as if a *continuous narrative*. You can best appreciate this if you allow enough time to reflect on what is written, and to compare the information on different panels.

The *full content* of all the panels is available online at www.urkesh.org/panels, where you can find exhaustive additional information about the site. There, you can also find the address where you may send any comments you have on your visit.

The *large boards* situated atop the vista points give you a synthesis of what you see below you respectively in the Temple and the Palace.

Like footnotes in a book, the *smaller panels* give you the information you need if you wish to learn the details of what is in front of you. Some of the panels are more technical than others, and occasionally smaller insets in the lower right of each panel, in italics, address issues of a slightly more specialized nature.

Since 2011, we have not been able to continue our excavations, but we have otherwise remained more active than ever, with a very extensive, and expansive, community archaeology project. Thus we are showing how an archaeological site can become, so to speak, larger than itself when it offers a new reading of its past, which is recognized as relevant for the present times. The main result has been the increasingly active involvement of local communities, with whom we have put in place an intense and innovative education and awareness program, ensuring in the first place the conservation of the site on a daily basis, against all possible potential damages to the monuments.

To keep up with our activities please visit us, "beyond Urkesh!," at www.avasa.it/en.

We wish you a happy and productive visit!

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THE ITINERARY

TEMPLE

1. Facing the centuries
2. A bird's-eye view
3. Facing the transcendence
4. The great ascent
5. The Temple of the lion

8. Walking through the service wing of the Palace
9. The reception suite of the Palace
10. The Palace asleep

THE LAST DAYS OF URKESH

11. The great Mittani shift –
northwestern closure of the great Plaza
12. The service areas of the Temple
13. The city from the top
14. Back to the present (the Mozan/Urkesk Center)

PALACE

6. Projecting the Palace
7. Descent to the Netherworld

THE MAIN PERIODS

<p>3500 B.C. Late Chalcolithic 3</p>	<p>By about this time, Urkesk is already a large religious center, with a Temple Terrace that rose like a hill, some twenty meters above the level of the plain</p>	<p>Tell Brak, ancient Nagar, is another important center in this period</p>
<p>2500 B.C. Early Dynastic 3</p>	<p>The huge Temple Terrace of Urkesk we see nowadays is built at this time above the earlier one. A large city wall encircles a city of about 130 hectares.</p>	<p>Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla, reaches the peak of power.</p>
<p>2250 B.C. Akkadian</p>	<p>King Tupkish builds the large Royal Palace. His dynasty is allied with Akkad, and his successor marries the daughter of Naram-Sin.</p>	<p>The kings of Akkad conquer most of Syria, but not Urkesk.</p>
<p>1800 B.C. Khabur period</p>	<p>During this period, the settlement shrinks, but Urkesk retains a sense of independence vis-à-vis the regional power of Zimri-Lim of Mari.</p>	<p>Tell Hariri, ancient Mari, controls most of the Jezirah.</p>
<p>1400 B.C. Mittani period</p>	<p>Urkesk is by now a small sanctuary, still exclusively Hurrian in nature. Between 1300 and 1200, it is abandoned at the same time that the Hurrians disappear from history.</p>	<p>The kingdom of Mittani extends from the Jezirah to the Mediterranean sea.</p>

Urkesh beyond Urkesh

The new face of archaeology

We take great pride in the fact that we have been able to keep the site of ancient Urkesh active during the current crisis. Since 2011, we have not only maintained the community archaeology programs we had set in place long before the war, but we have even been able to expand them. This shows how archaeology goes well beyond the recovery of the past. It shows how the territory is a fundamental dimension in shaping the identity of a people.

This we have learned from our close interaction with all the Syrians who recognize Urkesh as a constitutive element of their past and, therefore, of their present as well. As archaeologists, we are guests of their history, at the same time that we feel we can offer them the insights that our study of their past contributes to our shared awareness of a rich and meaningful past.

Here are the main activities that have characterized our Urkesh beyond Urkesh project.

Conservation. Constant maintenance that relies on local resources has insured that Urkesh remains in optimum conditions. The conservation operations include simple tasks, such as the repair of our unique system of localized shelters for the protection of the ancient walls. More complex maintenance operations have replaced the dome of the *Abi* and the walls and sections of the Temple Terrace with overlapping metal sheets.

Educational activities. We have also kept the signage system at the site in excellent conditions, and this encourages local tourism. We have also arranged for a number of bus tours for local villages and schools. – We have organized three exhibits in Qamishli that explain to the local communities the wider reach of our work. – We activated a one of a kind exchange by putting in reciprocal contact students from middle schools in Syria and Italy, thus contributing to widening the youngsters' horizons, encouraging their capacity to re-appropriate the value of the past.

Community archaeology. As part of an enterprise named the “Urkesh gate” atelier, local women produce handicrafts with a view to establishing a sustainable economic program. To encourage a shared commitment in protecting the site and its pristine landscape, the local members of our staff have started an awareness campaign in 22 villages around the site, explaining the history of the ancient city of Urkesh and its unique value for the present.

Research activities all over the world. Given its excellent state of preservation, Urkesh is the only site of this region where it is still possible to have direct exposure to fieldwork, thus we have supported surveying and ceramic workshops for local universities. – The local specialist of our staff has processed about 70,000 sherds from our previous seasons. – The Expedition has a wide international network of researchers working on various aspects of the project, and it carries on an intensive publication program. It also supports Syrian students working on our material for their doctorate.

Urkesh beyond Urkesh has expanded our project to show a new face of archaeology, and yet one that has always been present. For, wherever archaeologists have touched the ground, people have been affected by it, whether or not an active effort was made to include them. One way or the other, the face of archaeology does encounter the face of the local stakeholders, those who in this ground sink the roots of their communal identity. A past we have learned to share.

Please read more about our work at www.avasa.it/en.

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Tell Mozan / Urkesh: the royal palace of Tupkish and Uqnitum

