

Nomination letters for the Balzan prize
on behalf of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati

(please see bookmarks)

<i>research area</i>	<i>institution</i>	<i>signed by</i>
Art history	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	Max Hollein, Director Daniel Weiss, President and CEO
Conservation	Getty Conservation Institute Los Angeles	Tim Whalen, Director
Digital analysis	Open Context, Berkeley (CA)	Eric Kansa, Director
Institutional commitment	Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA	Willeke Wendrich, Director
Theory	Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Wang Wei, President
Field work	Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus	Nazeer Awad, Director General
Public archaeology	Museo Egizio, Turin (Italy)	Christian Greco, Director
History	Center for Ancient Mediterranean and Near eastern Studies, Florence	Stefano Valentini, Director



[see bookmarks](#)

March 9, 2021

Professor Luciano Maiani
Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi
International Balzan Prize Foundation
Piazzetta Umberto Giordano 4
20122 Milano
Italy

Dear Professor Maiani and Members of the Balzan Prize Committee,

We write to nominate Professors Giorgio Buccellati, Professor Emeritus of the Ancient Near East and of History at The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, Professor Emerita at California State University Los Angeles, for the Annual Balzan Prize in the field of Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East. Professor Buccellati and Professor Kelly-Buccellati have long been close colleagues of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, for which they have served on the Visiting Committee since 2005. The Buccellatis have worked together for many years in the Near East, especially in Syria, Iraq and Turkey. They directed excavations at Terqa, Tell Qraya and Tell Ziyada in Syria, and they served on the staff of the excavations at Nippur in Iraq and Korucu Tepe in Turkey. They are at present co-directors of the archaeological expedition to Tell Mozan/Urkesh in northeastern Syria—excavations that The Met has supported since 2006 both financially and with participation by staff from the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art. The Buccellatis work closely together both in the field and on the publication reports from their excavations, of which several volumes, plus four audio-visual presentations, have appeared so far. They lead an international staff comprising colleagues and students from the US, Europe, and Asia. Since the start of the war in Syria, they have been actively involved in what has become the Urkesh Extended Project, aimed at the active preservation of the site. For this work, the project has received medals from the Archaeological Institute of America, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and from the European Union.

The Metropolitan
Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

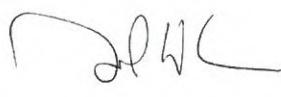
The Buccellatis' research activity has been characterized by the development and application of rigorous criteria of formal analysis in the study of ancient material culture, especially in their extensive work on the art objects and on architecture. Their longstanding association with The Met is particularly fortuitous, as the museum's collection includes a remarkable object from the site in northeastern Syria where the Buccellatis have directed excavations since 1984: Tell Mozan, the ancient city of Urkesh. A copper alloy foundation peg in the form of a lion, inscribed with the name of Tish-atal, ruler of Urkesh, was purchased by the museum in 1948, long before official excavations began at Tell Mozan. Thanks to the Buccellatis' careful work, we now know a great deal about the original context of this remarkable object. They have frequently revisited the lion peg in their publications, in particular in the catalogue of the 2003 Metropolitan Museum exhibit *Art of the First Cities*. Other publications on the Urkesh lion have proposed an original location for the object in the city's ancient temple, and more recently presented a stylistic analysis in a 2016 article on the "Semiotics of the Hurrian Sacred."

While the Buccellatis work closely together, each scholar is characterized by their own interests and focus. Giorgio Buccellati founded the Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, of which he served as first director, and where he is now Research Professor and Director of the Mesopotamian Lab. He is currently Director of IIMAS, the International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies, and president of AVASA, Associazione per la Valorizzazione dell'Archeologia e della Storia Antica. In addition to archaeology, his research interests include the ancient languages, literature, religion, and history of Syro-Mesopotamia. His publications cover a wide range, including site reports, text editions, linguistic and literary studies, and historical essays. He has published a major grammar of ancient Babylonian, two volumes on the political and religious history of Mesopotamia, and a volume on the theory of archaeology. As a Guggenheim Fellow, he has travelled to Syria to study modern ethnography and geography for a better understanding of the history of the ancient Amorites.

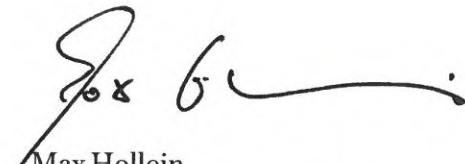
Professor Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati began her career with a focus on the third millennium B.C. in the Caucasus. After her retirement from California State University Los Angeles, where she taught archaeology and art history, she is now Visiting Professor at the Cotsen Institute of Archeology, UCLA. Her research interests have centered on the art and significance of seal images in ancient Syro-Mesopotamia and third millennium ceramics in the region. In addition to extensive publications on these topics, she has also published on architecture found in the Urkesh excavations. A key publication argued for the function of the necromantic pit excavated in Urkesh, a structure unique in its monumentality and significance. With the interruption of excavations in Syria due to the war, she has returned to the Republic of Georgia to work with an Italian team excavating a third millennium B.C. site.

Even this brief overview of the accomplishments of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati in the field of art and archaeology of the ancient Near East vividly attests to these scholars' remarkable careers and creatively generative partnership. We at The Met are proud to be colleagues and ongoing collaborators of these outstanding specialists in ancient Near Eastern art and thus honored and pleased to nominate them for the Annual Balzan Prize. We recommend them without reservation.

Best regards,



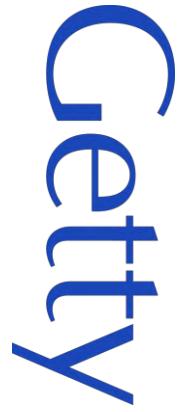
Daniel H. Weiss
President and CEO



Max Hollein
Marina Kellen French Director

**The Metropolitan
Museum of Art**

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org



February 19, 2021

Professor Luciano Maiani
Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi
Fondazione Internazionale Premio Balzan
P.tta Umberto Giordano 4
20122 Milano
ITALY

Dear Professor Maiani,

I am delighted to present this letter of nomination from the Getty Conservation Institute in support of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati for the distinguished Balzan Prize.

In addition to the letter below, please find the following documents attached:

- A select list of publications of the nominees
- A full bibliography of the nominees
- The CVs of the nominees
- A photo of the nominees

I wish you, and the other eminent members of the committee, valuable and fruitful deliberations over this consequential prize.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Whalen".

Timothy P. Whalen
John E. and Louise Bryson Director
Getty Conservation Institute

Timothy P. Whalen
John E. and Louise Bryson
Director

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Conservation
Research
Foundation
Museum

A letter from the Getty Conservation Institute supporting the nomination for the
Balzan prize regarding the work by

Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati

on archaeological conservation and community archaeology

The work of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati for over 30 years at the site of Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh) in northern Syria stands as an exemplar of a new development in the conservation ethic. At Tell Mozan the Buccellatis have woven a beautiful tapestry, integrating archaeology, conservation and community from their deep attachment for the place and people.

THE BUCCELLATI MODEL

In 2003, Giorgio Buccellati was invited to give two presentations in the week-long Conservation theme at WAC-5 in Washington DC, organized by the Getty Conservation Institute. The purpose of the Getty's theme was to seek to draw archaeology and conservation into a closer relationship, in fact to endeavor to move the two fields toward better integration. It had long been archaeological field conservators' observation and complaint that conservation at archaeological sites was an after-the-event activity and the same was true for the excavated artefacts. Giorgio's presentations were exactly on target and, as we at the Getty have followed the work at Tell Mozan since that time, it has remained on target as the circumstances have changed in the field, and dramatically so on account of the war. His elegant title for the first presentation, "Conservation qua Archaeology," embodies Giorgio's philosophy that conservation is the precept whereby archaeology is conducted at Tell Mozan.

Following up on the Buccellatis' invitation to advise on aspects of conservation, particularly regarding their methods of protection of the excavated mudbrick walls, two senior professionals from the Getty Conservation Institute, Neville Agnew and Martha Demas, went to Mozan for a study visit. On site it was apparent that there were multiple facets to the work, in technical conservation protection and through involvement of the local community. Community archaeology and conservation mean to the Buccellatis the participation and involvement of all members of the community, men and women, in the many functions required by excavation, conservation, interpretation, and protection. Giorgio and Marilyn cast their net wide: they have an intuitive grasp of the notion and importance of inclusiveness. This philosophy affords a very practical approach to success, but unfortunately it is one that is put into practice too infrequently in all manner of endeavors that depend upon committed and sustained participation.

CONSERVATION

At Mozan, measures have been set in place for protection and interpretation of the excavated mudbrick and stone ruins and for methods of monitoring. Giorgio had developed his now well-known system of protective covers on a scaffolding of steel piping (iron trellises, as Giorgio called them) that display the form of the mudbrick walls, and yet are low-cost, renewable, constructed by skilled local workmen in local workshops. Monitoring (photographic and visual inspection) of the condition of the

walls, which has been carried on throughout the war years by the local community, coupled with meteorological data, have proven the effectiveness of these measures that have protected the site from some very severe winter storms. The covers are easily opened to allow inspection of the condition of the walls.

In addition to the primary purpose of protection, the covers allow the buildings to be more easily understandable and interpreted to the visitor in quite compelling ways; especially in an early iteration using colored materials to reflect building periods. Although the site was not visited by many tourists, Giorgio's other presentation in the WAC-5 publication – “Presentation and interpretation of archaeological sites: the case of Tell Mozan, Ancient Urkesh” – addresses the importance of presentation at all levels of society, from the local to the professional and political, both within Syria and beyond. With the community they had developed simple means of providing interpretive signage on the site and they have been indefatigable in promoting the site to an external audience, including in China where their work at the site received *a research award by the Chinese Academy of Sciences* at the Third Shanghai Archaeology Forum in 2017.

Giorgio's creative mind had thus developed new ways of protecting the walls and interpreting them at the same time. His approach stands in contrast to the encasing and partial reconstruction of excavated mudbrick structures, as is commonplace throughout the region. The Buccellati innovation, utilizing local, inexpensive materials, like burlap, canvas, galvanized sheet steel, and piping, may not be appropriate for all sites, but it works for Tel Mozan, and that is its brilliance – Giorgio sees the problems, is aware of the solution being used elsewhere, questions whether there might be a better way to achieve protection of these ancient walls, and finds an alternative. And like all good preventive measures, this solution does not preclude a different approach in the future: the intervention is reversible and has not changed the ancient fabric. Giorgio's innovative approach was recognized by the Archaeological Institute of America in 2011 when he was given the award for *best practices in site preservation*.

COMMUNITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The most recent award is the *European first prize for Heritage-led International Relations* (2020), and it is indicative of another aspect that so closely characterizes the Buccellatis' approach to the wider social context within which archaeology is intrinsically set. The success of their work is all the more impressive in that it has survived what are now ten years of war: theirs is the only foreign project, out of more than one hundred that were present in Syria before the war, that has not only remained active, but has broadly expanded its reach. The emphasis on community relations and on utilizing and enhancing community based skills has paid off handsomely with sustained commitment of the community to the site through the turbulence of the war. The community connects with the site, identifies with it, values it, protects and sustains it. The Buccellatis have imbued in the people of the villages within the area of the site a connection across three millennia. The voice of the community reflects a strong, prevailing connection because, in a country ravaged by war and riven by fundamentalist groups, in reduced circumstances, ancient Urkesh acts as an anchor.

The Buccellatis' extraordinary network, a gossamer web of communication, has held for ten years of war though excavation in their absence has not, of course, been possible. Instead, the emphasis has shifted to maintenance, condition monitoring

backed by a constant flow of photographs, data processing, publication, and continuing research and analysis on the ceramic collection from past excavations. Being aware of the danger to the site, the Buccellatis took all necessary steps to keep up the momentum of the work. Cycles of weeding and repointing the monumental staircase with mud, and repairing the protective covers. When one ponders the extraordinary resilience of their approach, all conducted by remote control, so to speak, one can only stand in awe. We can learn from this. The project did not collapse, though war came within 60 kilometers, it was not even put "on hold" – it has continued even in their absence, sustained by the earlier investment in community participation. Nor has there been looting, an all-too-common occurrence in the region. Indeed, Tell Mozan the site, and its survival as an ongoing success story, is borne out by the commitment to community, which has become another means of the site's survival. As Giorgio wrote about their response to the challenges of war: "We were ready, though we had clearly not been expecting war. And yet it was as if we had." They had already laid the foundation of preparedness and resilience in the community.

Where Tell Mozan sets the standard is in the comprehensive approach to archaeology and conservation as one close-knit activity. It is not possible to put site maintenance and monitoring aside; there is a tipping point in the life of an excavated site where beyond a certain point of delayed protection or treatment a cascade of deterioration becomes irreversible leading to utter ruination and, eventually, abandonment. Too often archaeologists on site have been concerned with the excavation and the finds and less with what remains behind and issues like preservation and presentation – they come later, or sometimes not at all. The environment of Tell Mozan is severe: summer heat, rain and wind, winter freeze-thaw cycles and snow affect weak and friable mudbrick and mortar drastically. A site in its setting, the landscape, is inherently an integral component and is worthy of careful thought in the planning for presentation. If not so considered, the excavation is merely a mine for the extraction of resources, following the exploitative model of archaeology.

THE RECORD

An important component of the work was to set in place a record of the conservation system, with two purposes: the first was to maintain a full record of the events and of the environmental conditions, and the second was to monitor the progress of the system in order to assess its effectiveness. They immediately set up this recording system, which has been in full operation for twenty years now: it thus provides an unparalleled documentation of the "biography" of a complex architectural system such as the Tupkish Palace at Urkesh with its 400 linear meters of mud brick walls set on stone foundations. Following discussions with the GCI, two parallel systems were designed, which can be visited online – and this concern for prompt public digital access to the data is another major characteristic of the Buccellatis' approach.

The first is a record of temperature and humidity (urkesh.org/temp-hum), which gives a continuous record since 2001, on a daily basis, month by month (urkesh.org/temp-record), with monthly averages (urkesh.org/temp-av) and graphic tabulations (urkesh.org/temp-graphics). A signal advantage of the system is that readings are taken daily at the precise location of the Palace, so that they are calibrated precisely to the needs of conservation. When considering the project, a discussion took place as to whether one should plan for an automatic reading system or a manual one,

and the choice was made for the manual option: this has proven to be extremely beneficial, considering that the maintenance of an automatic system would have been well nigh impossible during the conditions of war that have intervened. As a result, we have now in Mozan the best such record in existence for any excavated mud brick structure in Syria.

The second was a record of the walls themselves. This developed into a very ambitious project, which has, again, resulted in the most complete documentation anywhere in Syria for any such architectural complex. This, too, is fully available online, and it also covers the full extent of the last two decades. It can be viewed in full at urkesh.org/wall-cons. For any given wall (see for example urkesh.org/wall-C5-5) there is a complete sequence of photographs of the two faces of the wall (clicking on the photo one gets an enlarged view that allows study of the details of preservation), and, at the top of the page, a descriptive statement taken professionally by a conservator midway through the process (2010 in this case), accompanied by a detailed drawing produced at the same time under the conservator's supervision. A full synopsis (urkesh.org/wcons-synopsis) brings together the entire documentation, with full transparency: for instance, the views of some of the walls are missing, particularly for the earlier years, but as the system developed the coverage became more and more complete.

These two records attest once more to the very remarkable commitment that the Buccellatis have shown for the task at hand. If one thinks of all the damages and looting at archaeological sites that has taken place in Syria, so much in front of our own eyes, it seems nothing less than miraculous that at Mozan not only is the site preserved, but also that it should be documented with such precision and accuracy. It is ironic that in comparison to the dramatic destruction at so many other sites due to violence, and to the even more widespread ruination due to neglect and abandonment, at Mozan we should only be noticing that some walls have not been fully documented in the synopsis we have just seen!

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Buccellatis' progression has been from practical needs to a theoretical understanding – not the other way round. This is what has proven to be a triumph of commonsense in the face of the war's recent daunting setback to their work. And from this they are now developing a theoretical assessment of their particular model. What they have been already proposing, and what they will undoubtedly expand further, is the full-fledged theory of archaeological heritage. They put emphasis on two main aspects. The first is that the territory is the reality that serves as a bond between the ancient and the modern. The culture being excavated may indeed belong to a broken tradition, one that has no living carriers today; but the deep dependence on the territory has not been broken, it is the same today as it was yesterday. The second point of their analysis, which they have begun to articulate in their recent work, is that heritage is not a thing to be handed down, it is part of the life to be lived: there is no heritage if there are no inheritors. The archaeologists are to serve as midwives through whom the inheritors become aware of what is there in the first place. They do not abdicate their role as archaeologists; rather they frankly retain their identity and they use it to their full advantage to point to values that are indeed already there, and not fabricated.

Always thinking ahead, Giorgio and Marilyn have conceived plans for an eco-archaeological park encompassing the site and some 50 square kilometers of the surroundings. This, of course, must await felicitous times for realization. If this were to transpire and one must remain sanguine in the face of events in Syria, an eco-archaeological park serving the region might conceivably also nucleate a measure of economic and social benefit beyond the confines of the park itself. It would also be another feat of integration with the intent to incorporate the bio-diversity of the region.

There are yet further aspects of the holistic approach pursued at Tell Mozan. The economic aspects and potential for the site have been addressed through the support and encouragement of local women who produce for sale traditional handicrafts. Education of students from the local university through site visits have been addressed and scholarships for local students have been provided. They have sought funding for digital implementation with the primary purpose to complete publication in order to make accessible the total record of excavation for the period 1984 to the present time. Is there anything lacking? From our many decades in the field of archaeological site conservation and management, we, at the Getty, think not.

What then has characterized the Buccellatis' approach to Tell Mozan? To sum up, their work reflects an extraordinary blend of scholarly erudition and pragmatic commonsense. They see near and far. Practicing archaeologists who have embraced both site and artefact conservation, innovators and experimentalists, brilliant networkers across multiple disciplines with the ability to engage help effortlessly from others with different expertise – these are the attributes of Giorgio and Marilyn. Their contribution to the integration of preservation, archaeology, and community comprises a milestone. Their record of accomplishment is stellar. We stand in admiration of their inventive ways of harnessing the benefits of archaeology for a larger purpose and in ways they never would have imagined – as a bulwark against the ravages of war.



OPEN CONTEXT

a service of the ALEXANDRIA ARCHIVE INSTITUTE

March 12, 2021

Professor Luciano Maiani, Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi
Fondazione Internazionale Balzan "Premio"
P.tta Umberto Giordano 4
20122 Milano
Italy

Dear Professor Maiani and the members of the General Prize Committee,

We are writing on behalf of The Alexandria Archive Institute and Open Context to nominate Professors Giorgio and Marilyn Buccellati for the Balzan Prize in Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East. Our nomination speaks specifically to the advances that the Buccellatis have made in digital technology.

We co-founded (in 2001) and direct The Alexandria Archive Institute, a non-profit that develops and supports Open Context, a data publishing service for archaeology. Sarah Whitcher Kansa is the Executive Director of the Alexandria Archive Institute and Eric Kansa is the Program Director for Open Context. We first met Giorgio and Marilyn 15 years ago when we presented a paper in a symposium at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA about our work with Open Context. We are both active advocates for professionalism in research applications of digital data. Sarah is currently President of the International Council for Archaeozoology and Eric received recognition from President Barack Obama in 2013 for his contributions in promoting scientific uses of research data. Since our presentation at the Cotsen Institute, we have engaged in a years-long, ongoing discussion about archaeological data creation, description, and dissemination.

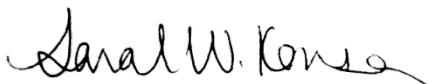
Giorgio and Marilyn Buccellati are pioneers in digital approaches to archaeology. In the 1980's, when many people only used computers for word processing, the Buccellatis had the foresight to recognize the profound intellectual and theoretical implications of using computational approaches to model archaeological information. One of the greatest strengths of their contributions to digital methodologies comes from their deep understanding of the practice of archaeology. Their decades of experience and self-reflection inform insightful understanding on how archaeological knowledge is constructed. What is also clear is that Giorgio and Marilyn have a great passion and love for their chosen discipline, as well as a keen insight into the shortcomings and short-cuts archaeologists often take in using field observations to build interpretation. Their unmatched and nuanced perspective informs their approach to using computation to put archaeological interpretation on a firmer foundation.

Thus, the starting point for how the Buccellatis engage with digital data comes from their deep and insightful assessment of excavation—its purpose, methodologies, and recording challenges. While databases are now commonplace and digital tools are ubiquitous in archaeological data collection, many other projects engage with digital technologies superficially, without deeper consideration of how digital data challenges normative practice and theoretical assumptions. Many other projects emphasize glamorous and showy technical “wizardry” without meaningfully engaging with how these technologies may or may not inform our understanding of the past. As demonstrated by their remarkable text *A Critique of Archaeological Reason: Structural, Digital, and Philosophical Aspects of the Excavated Record*, the contributions of the Buccellatis stand apart and will have lasting significance. Their holistic and deeply thoughtful approach to all aspects of archaeological knowledge creation—from initial observations and production of archaeological data in the field, through various levels of synthesis, modeling, and interpretation, all networked to various types of publication—ensures a lasting and intellectually rigorous legacy for their contributions.

In their work, Giorgio and Marilyn have demonstrated respect for the archaeological process and the ancient materials they are excavating, as well as a deep commitment to the local communities where they work. The community archaeology aspects of their work are not nearly as common as they should be, and their approach serves as an example of excellent practice that other projects should aspire to.

This pioneering work in digital archaeology and their long commitment to the archaeology of the Ancient Near East and the local people who steward that heritage, makes Giorgio and Marilyn Buccellati stand out as particularly strong nominees for a Balzan Prize.

Sincerely,



Sarah W. Kansa
Executive Director



Eric C. Kansa
Open Context Program Director



Professor Luciano Maiani
 Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi
 Fondazione Internazionale Premio Balzan
 P.tta Umberto Giordano 4
 20122 Milano
 ITALY

Los Angeles, February 19, 2021

Dear Professor Maiani,

It is with the greatest pleasure and enthusiasm that I write in support of the nomination of Professors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati for the Premio Balzan. I have known Giorgio and Marilyn for twenty years as colleagues at UCLA, both in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, as well as in the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology.

The scholarly reputation of Professors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati should not need any introduction. Among their recent significant publications are two books: *A Structural Grammar of Babylonian*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. xxxiv, 512 (1996) in philology; *Urkesh and the Hurrians. Studies in Honor of Lloyd Cotsen*. Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 26. Malibu: Undena (1998). Additionally, they have published more than 25 articles relating to the site of Mozan (ancient Urkesh) and several more on the innovation, conservation and digital projects linked to his excavation. The diversity of their publications reflect the breadth of their activities and the energy with which they pursue them.

To illustrate the pioneering spirit of Professors Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati: they not only take great care in recording, analysis and publishing, but also have taken innovative and very effective measures for the preservation of the ancient mud-brick remains at Tell Mozan. For this they were granted the Best Practices in Site Preservation Award by the Archaeological Institute of America. Most importantly, from the very beginning of their work in Syria, they have involved the local population in all aspects of the archaeological and conservation work, thus embedding the project in its present day social and cultural context. I had the privilege to visit the excavations at Tell Mozan, Syria, in September 2008 and was greatly impressed by the full integration of theory, method and archaeological practice within the social fabric of the regional population. Giorgio and Marilyn are far ahead of developments in the field, such as integrated research, site management and presentation; digital asset management, online publishing and community archaeology.

The online archaeological archive and publication platform that Professor Buccellati mostly designed and programmed himself is ahead of the curve. There are many discussions and initiatives on how archaeology in the digital age should benefit from the new possibilities that web-based

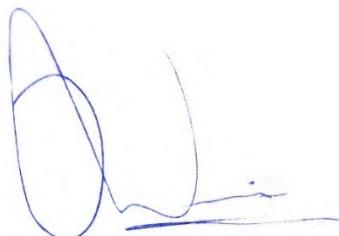
technology brings us. One of the great advantages of online publication is that the article or excavation report can refer directly to the database, and enable the reader to check in real time whether the analyses and conclusions are done properly and consistently. It is as close as archaeology, which by definition destroys its evidence by excavating it, will ever come to a laboratory situation in which experiments can be duplicated. Several initiatives within archaeology are just beginning to explore this potential, while such a system exists since approximately six years for the Tell Mozan / Urkesh records.

What is truly exceptional, and a testimony to the mutual trust that Giorgio and Marilyn built in their time at Tell Mozan, is the fact that they continue to be in close (almost daily) contact with their team members in Syria and that these local connections continue taking care of the invaluable archaeological remains of the ancient city of Urkesh. Despite the war in Syria, which has made it impossible to continue their field work in person, interventions for the protection of the invaluable ancient remains continue. Despite the fact that the project's headquarters on the highest part of the Tell (mound) has been taken over by the military as convenient housing at a strategic point in the landscape, the site is being protected by the people that have worked with the Buccellatis for decades.

Professors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati are, furthermore, great educators. They have trained students from UCLA, several Italian universities, the University of Damascus and school children from the nearby city of Qamishli. They are fundamentally concerned with the safety and well-being of their Syrian counterparts, and support a large community by helping to develop economic opportunities. Central to their work are the deep historical roots of the region, at the forefront of their minds are the living communities.

I, therefore, enthusiastically support the nomination for the Premio Balzan of these two exceptional persons and their exceptional work.

Your sincerely,



Willeke Wendrich
Professor Egyptian Archaeology and Digital Humanities
Joan Silsbee Chair in African Cultural Archeology
Director Cotsen Institute of Archaeology
wendrich@humnet.ucla.edu

中国社会科学院考古研究所



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13 March 2021

Professor Luciano Maiani
Chairman of the General Prize Committee
International Balzan Foundation "Prize"
Piazzetta Umberto Giordano 4
20122 Milano
Italy

Dear Professor Maiani,

Warm greetings from Beijing!

On behalf of the Chinese Society of Archaeology and the Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, I am very honored to nominate Professors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati at the University of California, Los Angles for the 2021 Balzan Prizes that will be awarded in the fields including Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East.

My colleagues and I got to know Professors Buccellatis and their scholarship when their work at ancient Urkesh was selected for the Research Award at the 3rd Shanghai Archaeology Forum held in December 2017 in Shanghai, China. Founded in 2013, Shanghai Archaeology Forum (SAF; <http://shanghai-archaeology-forum.org/>) is a global initiative dedicated to promoting the investigation, protection and utilization of the world's archaeological resources and heritage. It serves as an international platform for the illumination of archaeological research and its significance and relevance to the world today. The forum is fully committed to excellence through innovation and cooperation, and to the sustainable development of human society. The forum has been held biennially since 2013. On average 250-300 eminent archaeologists from more than 40 countries participated in each Forum. Among them are two Balzan Prize winners, Professors Colin Renfrew and Mario Torelli. Included attachment #1 is a brochure about the Shanghai Archaeology Forum.

The SAF Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have achieved distinction through innovative, creative, and rigorous works relating to our human past, and have generated new knowledge that has particular relevance to the contemporary world and our common future. It aims to promote excellence and innovation in archaeological research, advance public awareness and appreciation

of archaeology, foster the protection and conservation of the world's archaeological resources and heritage, and encourage international collaboration and partnerships between scholars and others from different countries. The SAF awards must be nominated by the corresponding members of the SAF Advisory Committee composed of over 200 renowned scholars in various fields of archaeology and cultural heritage from all regions of the world. The nominated works must be original and directly derived from legal and scientific archaeological excavations or surveys or from other rigorous archaeological research. According to the highest international standards of excellence and impartiality, the nominations are reviewed and adjudicated by the Selection Committee (comprising top international experts representing various regions in the world) on the basis of the quality and originality of the research, innovativeness and effectiveness of methodology, timeliness, creativity, and lasting significance of the research, accuracy of information, general contribution to the field of archaeology, locally and/or globally, as well as its significance and relevance to the contemporary world. The SAF Award recipients are honored and invited to present their research at the Forum.

The research award Professors Buccellatis received from the SAF is titled "*Archaeology for a Young Future: the New Syrian Life of the Ancient City of Urkesh*." It is in recognition of the contribution they have made to the field of archaeology in general, and in particular, with regard to cultural heritage and the way in which a theory of cultural heritage may be developed from the actual work being carried out in the field. Attachment #2 is a summary of the SAF research award for their project.

Urkesh (modern Tell Mozan) was an urban settlement founded during the 4th millennium BC in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains, northeastern Syria. It was an ally of the Akkadian Empire. After preliminary surveys by late Professor Max Mallowan in the 1930s, an international (Syrian-US-Italian-German) team headed by Professor Giorgio Buccellati began a comprehensive excavation of Tell Mozan in 1984. Fieldwork campaigns were conducted on an almost yearly basis until the Syrian civil war forced their interruption in 2011.

The Buccellatis' excavations at Tell Mozan are well known for their interest in pursuing the uses of modern technology in an archaeological context. Professors Buccellatis and their colleagues developed a new system of archaeological documentation named 'Global Record', which combines journal entries into a hypertext based output. This system marries the advantages of both the database and prose type approaches, in that elements are individually linked across both stratigraphy and typology, and yet remain tied in a more synthetic whole through the narrative of the archaeological record.

The core of the Buccellatis approach is to be found in the book entitled "A *Critique of Archaeological Reason. Structural, Digital and Philosophical Aspects of*

the Excavated Record (Cambridge University Press, 2017)," which has been praised in reviews as a "magnum opus" and as "an impressive theoretical treatise," and in the articles that are listed in the attachment #3. The major aspects that distinguish their work are the ones highlighted in the subtitle of the book: *Structural, Digital and Philosophical Aspects of the Excavated Record*. This innovative and revolutionary approach emphasizes the priority of emplacement as a the fundamental "given" in archaeology, and one that poses a special documentary problem in that the fact of emplacement is lost at the very moment it is discovered. As practiced normally, archaeology pays attention primarily to the inference based on emplacement (especially deposition and function), and in so doing it often omits to provide the only objective datum that can be properly called archaeological.

This theoretical emphasis by the Buccellatis has an important bearing on the other two aspects to which their research has pointed. The first is the digital dimension. In this regard, the Buccellatis have shown how a full exploitation of the digital medium can make it possible to achieve the kind of control of emplacement that is impossible with other means. In this they point to the methodological value of digital analysis as different from a technical interest that is concerned primarily with state of the art mechanical results, however valuable these may be. The second is the philosophical aspect. The Buccellatis point to the fact that the excavated record, by giving evidence of a "broken tradition," highlights a fundamental limitation of hermeneutics, namely the difficulty at reaching meaning when no native carrier of that tradition is available to interpret it. This is a limitation that in some ways extends to hermeneutics in general, even one that deals with living traditions, and they show how it is through the objective tools of grammar and semiotics that one can bridge the gulf and "mend the brokenness."

Second focal point of Professor Buccellati's research at ancient Urkesh is the application of conservation. The mud brick architecture which comprises the majority of the structures found to date has been preserved over the years though an innovative system of light metal structures covered by cloth, which makes use of locally available and easily replaceable materials. This system protects the monument while still allowing a detailed inspection of the primary document as originally unearthed. The same system affords an overview of the architectural volumes as perceived by the ancients. A sizeable lab in the field research facility allows the conservators to give the best possible on-site care while interacting with the excavations. An extensive storage facility has been established where more than 10,000 objects and samples of insufficient quality to be displayed in a museum are available for further study. Special emphasis is placed on documenting the concrete types of contact which are observed in the ground. This is done with great detail at the level of each individual feature. From this evidence is automatically derived a complete depositional history of all

elements in contact. The strata are conceived as segments of this continuum in which a single depositional moment can be reconstructed. The phases are periods that are culturally identifiable on the basis of typological and functional analysis. Horizons are the broad chronological subdivisions based on comparative material and as they can be linked to the general historical understanding.

Another aspect that strongly characterizes the archaeological commitment of the Buccellatis is their involvement in community archaeology. The Urkesh project stands out for its exemplary engagement with the local community that from the very beginning has been actively engaged in the research and preservation effort. This has miraculously been achieved without any intellectual compromise, and without undue emphasis on the site's economic potential as a tourist site (although this does, of course, come into consideration). Instead, this multi-year international project and its serious effort at honest intellectual inquiry have become, for the inhabitants of the area, a source of local pride that transcends that population's own ethnic diversity. As a tangible result of this, the inhabitants of the neighboring villages have been taking care of the site ever since access to the site by international researchers has become impossible as a result of the Syrian Civil War. Contacts are maintained by electronic media; a few times it has been possible to get some material aid in the hands of the local caretakers, but for the most part the villagers are expending their own resources. In this way, in the face of all odds it has been possible until now to preserve Tell Mozan intact. This remarkable achievement - a result above all of the high work ethics of Professors Buccellati and their team - deserves the utmost admiration and the recognition of the international cultural heritage community. This was a feature that greatly impressed the audience of the 2017 Shanghai Archaeology Forum. Professors Buccellatis have remained extremely active throughout the long period of the war, developing a variety of new projects, all aimed not only at preserving the site, but also at keeping its significance alive in the consciousness of the local stakeholders. This is a model that is being recognized more and more broadly the world over: in fact, the 2017 SAF award was followed in 2020 by an equally prestigious award from the European Union (avasa.it/image).

Professors Buccellati's work at Urkesh and their theories have also had very encouraging impacts on the practice of archaeology and cultural heritage studies in China. Considerable interest has been raised in China for their theoretical work as a result of a course held by Prof. Lothar Von Falkenhausen (UCLA) at Northwestern University (Xi'an, China), which was attended by students from various other universities in China. Central to the course was a study of Professor Giorgio Buccellati's book "*A Critique of Archaeological Reason*", and the students became so interested in the subject matter that there developed the desire for a systemic follow-up. This has taken the form of a close collaboration on the part of the Buccellatis and their staff with two Chinese universities. At the University of Nanjing there is now an ongoing workshop where one of the local students works

on the practical implementation of the Urkesh theoretical system by applying the underlying digital system to data from the excavations: it is hoped that this may lead to a collaboration in the field at a future date, when excavations will resume in Syria. At Northwest University in Xi'an a group of students is working on the cultural heritage program as it is being implemented at Urkesh, and together with Prof. Buccellati they are developing at the same time a study of the theoretical underpinning of the system, looking for possible parallels and applications in China.

Professor Giorgio Buccellati (PhD, University of Chicago, 1965) is currently Professor Emeritus in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and the Department of History at UCLA. He was the founding director of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA. He founded IIMAS (The International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies). A philologist as well as an experienced field archaeologist, Professor Buccellati has published very extensively in the fields of Akkadian philology, linguistics and literature; cuneiform graphemics; history of Mesopotamian political institutions and religion; archaeology of Syria; and digital systems applied to Mesopotamia. Professor Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (PhD, University of Chicago, 1974) is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Art, California State University, Los Angeles where she taught ancient art and archaeology. She is currently the Director of the Mozan/Urkesh Archaeological Project and Associate Researcher at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA. Her research interests include the archaeology of Syro-Mesopotamia and connections with Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus region. Aside from studies on ritual, ceramics and seal iconography, her publications have focused on site reports of the Mozan/Urkesh excavations. Attachment #4 are their curricula vitae; and attachment #5 is one of their pictures working together at Urkesh.

With no hesitation at all, I recommend in the highest possible term that Professors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati be considered for the 2021 Balzan Prize.

Respectfully yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring stylized characters that appear to be a combination of Chinese and Western script, possibly reading "Wang Wei".

Wang Wei, Professor

President, Chinese Society of Archaeology
Academician and Director of History Section, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Secretary General of the Shanghai Archaeology Forum
Former Director, Institute of Archaeology at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Honorary Member of the Archaeological Institute of America

REF: 15

DATE: 4/3/2021



الرقم:

التاريخ:

Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi, Professor Luciano Maiani
all'attenzione della Segreteria della
Fondazione Internazionale Balzan "Premio"
P.tta Umberto Giordano 4 - 20122 Milano, Italy

The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums is pleased to nominate Profs. Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati for the 2020 Balzan Prize in the area of the art and archaeology of the Ancient Near East, with special regard to their excavations in Syria. Their work has contributed in unique ways to the development of Syrian archaeology, and they continue to be engaged in very constructive and imaginative ways with our young people who are working closely with them in various parts of Syria.

Prof. Giorgio and Prof. Marilyn have been active in Syria for over half a century, since their first explorations in 1966, and then with their excavations of ancient Terqa (1976-86) and Urkesh (1984 to the present). Their work has left a mark in the first place because of what the results of their excavations meant for the overall history of the ancient Near East: they were fundamental for the study of the region's history.

They also paved the way for new methodologies, in particular with regard to the use of computers, which they introduced for the first time in Syrian archaeology in 1982. It is note worthy that their excavations at Terqa were undertaken at a time when very few foreign expeditions were present in the country. The Terqa excavations brought to light a temple, a large fortification system, and several city quarters that illuminated the history of this provincial capital of the kingdom of Mari, which then became the capital of the kingdom of Khana following the destruction of the city of Mari. The results were published extensively and are now available on line at terqa.org/el. The significance of the Terqa project was such that Prof. Giorgio was invited to give the official speech in the name of the participants at the colloquium organized in 1983 for the 50th anniversary of the discovery of Mari (terqa.org/allocution). On the same occasion, a presentation of the computer work (already very significant even if only in its infancy) was given at Terqa for the participants of the colloquium (terqa.org/digital).

At the same time as they conducted excavations at Terqa, the Buccellatis also undertook a salvage project at the site of Qraya, which turned out to be of great importance for an understanding of the development of urbanism in Syria (terqa.org/TFR4 and terqa.org/2020salt).

The major commitment of Prof. Giorgio and Prof. Marilyn has been to the site of ancient Urkesh, modern Tell Mozan. As one of the very first cities in history, dating back to the early fourth, they have shown the site to be of very major importance for an understanding of the art, archaeology and history of the Ancient Near East. The monumental Temple at the highest point of the tell dates back to the middle of fourth millennium, and it remained in use until the very end of the history of the city, around 1200 B.C., making it one of the longest continuously used monuments in Syria. The palace of Tupkish, dating to the latter part of the Early Bronze Age, is one of the major public structures of this period: the Buccellatis have introduced a

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الجمهورية العربية السورية

وزارة الثقافة

المديرية العامة للآثار والمتاحف

الرقم:

التاريخ:

very innovative system of protection of the mud brick walls of the Palace, which has guaranteed the preservation of the stricture for over 30 years now: their technique has become a standard point of reference in the field.

From the palace, a high number of seal impressions has opened an unprecedented window onto the history of early Syria. Since many of them were inscribed, they have yielded a confirmation of the ancient name of the site, which the Buccellatis had in fact been looking for in this part of Syria. And the figurative style of the scenes on these seals has opened a new chapter in the history of ancient Syria art: the high degree of realism that characterizes them is also found in the two famous bronze lions that came to light before the excavations and are now in the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The iconography and inscriptions on the seals have also given us insight into an unknown chapter in ancient Syria history: at a time when the Akkadian empire was extending its control to all of Syro-Mesopotamia, only Urkesh remained independent, with dynastic marriages linking the royal houses of Urkesh and of Akkad.

The publication record of the Urkesh project is unparalleled, with a unique website (urkesh.org) that has introduced a new approach to archaeological publishing online, and contains the full online version of all the publications that have already been issued about the excavations and their interpretation (urkesh.org/el). A parallel website (avasa.it/en) is dedicated to the exemplary work they have been doing at the site in the period of the war that has made excavations impossible.

Profs. Giorgio and Marilyn are universally known in Syria as Abu Iskandar and Umm Iskandar: this indicates how much they have identified with the local people, especially in the regions of the Jezirah and Der ez-Zor. They have brought a strong personal touch to what they were doing, and this has made possible their implementation of a program in community archaeology which has become a model in Syria.

They have left an imprint in Syrian archaeology which continues to this day with a cadre of young archaeologists who have grown up at their school, both in Syria and abroad. Their presence in our country during these ten years of war has been very significant: they have maintained contacts with a number of our young archaeologists, at the site and in Damascus, and we look forward to a continued cooperation with them over the next years.

General Director Of Antiquities And Museums

Mohammad Nazir Awad





MUSEO
EGIZIO

Fondazione Museo delle Antichità Egizie

Professor Luciano Maiani

Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi

Fondazione Internazionale Premio Balzan

P.tta Umberto Giordano 4

20122 Milano

Torino, 14 Marzo, 2021

Egregio professor Maiani,

In aggiunta alla lettera di motivazione sottostante, si vedano per cortesia gli altri documenti allegati:

1. il Curriculum Vitae di Giorgio Buccellati;
2. il Curriculum Vitae di Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati;
3. una selezione delle pubblicazioni di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati;
4. la bibliografia di Giorgio Buccellati;
5. la bibliografia di Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati;
6. una foto di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati.

Nell'augurare a Lei e agli altri eminenti membri del Comitato Generale Premi un buon lavoro per la selezione delle nomine, la saluto cordialmente,

Christian Greco

Direttore



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Oggetto: Lettera di motivazione per la nomina di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati al
Premio Balzan

Egregio professor Maiani,

Con grande entusiasmo e profonda stima invio, a nome del Museo Egizio, la lettera di nomina per Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati per il Premio Balzan 2021. Ho avuto l'onore di conoscere personalmente Giorgio e Marilyn alcuni anni fa e di apprezzare da vicino il magnifico lavoro da loro condotto. L'attività archeologica che da decenni svolgono in Siria è pionieristica non solo dal punto di vista metodologico e scientifico ma ha assunto un ruolo fondamentale all'interno della comunità in cui operano, insegnando agli studiosi internazionali quale sia l'immenso valore dell'archeologia pubblica.

Il loro lavoro sul campo è la riposta più pragmatica che si possa dare alla definizione di patrimonio fornita dalla Council of Europe Framework Convention (2005): sono le risorse ereditate dal passato che permettono alle persone di definire la loro identità con un'attenta riflessione sui loro valori, credenze, tradizioni e conoscenze in costante evoluzione.

Ci hanno insegnato come lo scavo archeologico non debba costituire solo un'attenta documentazione della cultura materiale che viene riportata in superficie ma stabilisca una significativa rete sociale. Le persone che vi lavorano, gli archeologi che, nel tempo, hanno sottratto all'oblio oggetti e strutture dimenticati e dispersi, gli studiosi, i visitatori che vengono a conoscenza e osservano anche a distanza i reperti, formano infatti quella che potremmo definire *agency* sociale. E questo tipo di impatto continua nei processi di pubblicazione e disseminazione così come in quelli di ricerca, formazione, visita e in tutto ciò che potremmo definire conoscenza. E proprio in questa stretta relazione fra materialità e dimensione sociale si definiscono la vitalità e il ruolo fondamentale di uno scavo e, più in generale, del passato all'interno delle comunità di riferimento. Il lavoro di Giorgio e Marylin ci ha insegnato come l'archeologia sia in grado di creare rapporti che non costituiscono soltanto un fenomeno del passato, ma continuano a svilupparsi nel presente.



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Mentre tradizionalmente gli studiosi si soffermavano sull'*agency* della produzione degli oggetti, Giorgio e Marylin hanno messo in pratica gli insegnamenti appresi dalla sociologia e dall'antropologia, analizzando attentamente l'influenza del manufatto nella vita della collettività. Il loro scavo ha definito un insieme di pratiche sociali e di processi formativi, e ha assunto, quindi, il ruolo di un autentico laboratorio di innovazione; si potrebbe dunque affermare che Tell Mozan sia diventata una zona di contatto, uno spazio in cui i processi culturali vengono creati e contestualizzati.

Il rischio maggiore che corre il patrimonio è l'oblio. Una delle cause principali è sicuramente la distruzione fisica degli oggetti. Malgrado archeologi e restauratori cerchino di fermare il naturale decadimento della cultura materiale e si impegnino per preservarla e consegnarla alle future generazioni, il patrimonio continua a essere in pericolo, e la sua stessa sopravvivenza viene spesso minacciata; indubbiamente, una mancata conoscenza dei monumenti e degli artefatti del passato e un loro scarso radicamento nella comunità di riferimento costituiscono il pericolo maggiore.

Vi sono varie modalità di distruzione dei frammenti di memoria che sono giunti fino a noi: ad esempio, la necessità di nuovi terreni da destinare alla coltivazione per sfamare una popolazione in costante crescita demografica, mette a dura prova il lavoro degli archeologi e il loro tentativo di custodire, documentare e preservare i depositi stratigrafici. Uno sviluppo economico, spesso impetuoso, richiede una sempre maggiore mobilità e la creazione di infrastrutture che intersecano, attraversano, e a volte addirittura distruggono superfici archeologicamente rilevanti.

Vi è poi l'attacco deliberato che mira alla distruzione dei simboli del passato. Le motivazioni possono essere varie e legate alle ideologie, ai fanatismi religiosi, al desiderio di sradicare simboli che costituiscono una matrice identitaria rifiutata da alcuni gruppi della popolazione. Ebbene proprio Giorgio Buccellati e Marylin Kelly-Buccellati ci hanno insegnato che solo un approccio integrato dove il meticoloso scavo archeologico, il restauro, lo studio, il site management, la disseminazione, il coinvolgimento della comunità con lo sviluppo di un piano di sostenibilità anche economico, sia l'unica strada possibile.



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Alla loro profonda conoscenza scientifica si aggiunge un'umanità straordinaria, una passione che traspare dalle loro parole e dal loro indefesso impegno quotidiano. Anche in questo decennio di guerra che ha profondamente colpito la Siria hanno continuato ad avere contatti costanti con il loro collaboratori in loco. La testimonianza più alta di quanto siano stati in grado di ottenere è data dal fatto che, sebbene gli eventi bellici abbiano reso difficile per Giorgio e Marylin recarsi a Tell Mozan è la popolazione locale che continua il lavoro e protegge il sito.

La costante attenzione per la formazione, la consapevolezza che le giovani generazioni debbano essere quelle che raccoglieranno il testimone e sapranno apprezzare le potenzialità dell'archeologia, è alla base dell'attività di Avasa (Associazione per la Valorizzazione dell'Archeologia e della Storia Antica), un istituto di ricerca impegnato nella condivisione di valori radicati nel passato, presieduto da Giorgio Buccellati supportato dal dialogo costante e apporto di idee e di iniziative di Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati che siede nel consiglio direttivo. Ponendo al centro della loro riflessione il passato condiviso, hanno saputo sviluppare un progetto mirato proprio ai giovani studenti delle scuole medie. Questa iniziativa è caratterizzata da un approccio del tutto originale, in cui singoli ragazzi in Italia e in Siria sono entrati in contatto tra di loro, grazie alle nuove tecnologie e alla possibilità di sviluppare dei dialoghi a distanza. La peculiarità del programma non risiede solo nel rapporto "uno ad uno", ma anche dal fatto che un sito archeologico sia stato proposto come focus specifico di interesse con una mentorship unica nel suo genere. Gli studenti, infatti, sono stati seguiti da giovani laureati o post-doc provenienti dalla Siria e dal mondo arabo e attualmente residenti all'estero, in Europa e negli Stati Uniti. E questo progetto, ancora una volta innovativo che mettendo al centro l'archeologia, la formazione che deriva dal passato riesce a superare la lontananza, i confini geografici e culturali ha ricevuto da Europa Nostra nel 2020 il Premio Speciale ILUCIDARE per l'eccellenza nelle relazioni internazionali fondate sul patrimonio. Nell'assegnare il premio, la giuria ha sottolineato: "*Attraverso una visione condivisa del patrimonio culturale, Archeologia per un futuro giovane permette ai bambini, al personale scolastico e alle comunità in*



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Italia e in Siria di stringere legami in uno spirito di comprensione reciproca, rispetto e amicizia. La forte componente educativa e l'impatto transgenerazionale del progetto possono contribuire a mantenere e migliorare le relazioni tra le comunità nel lungo periodo. Questo progetto caratterizzato da un approccio proveniente "dal basso", facilmente replicabile, dimostra che le relazioni internazionali fondate sul patrimonio culturale possono avvenire tra le persone e le comunità sul territorio, e non sono esclusive dei governi o delle organizzazioni internazionali." Il progetto è stato identificato come un "esempio concreto di condivisione del patrimonio, nonché un'ispirazione per i più ampi mondi dell'innovazione, dell'imprenditorialità e della cooperazione internazionale".

Non posso quindi far altro che ribadire con forza e con infinito entusiasmo la totale convinzione per la loro nomina da parte del Museo Egizio che riconosce nella loro attività un elemento di guida per sviluppare un'adeguata politica di radicamento del patrimonio culturale nel tessuto in cui esso è inserito. Grazie al loro lavoro Tell Mozan è divenuto un teatro della memoria dove le identità locali e globali vengono definite, e dove diverse visioni del passato e del presente incontrano il futuro.

Con i più cordiali saluti,

Christian Greco

Direttore

Firenze, 3 Marzo 2021

Alla cortese attenzione del
Professor Luciano Maiani

Presidente del Comitato Generale Premi
Fondazione Internazionale Premio Balzan
P.tta Umberto Giordano 4
20122 Milano
ITALIA

Egregio Professor Maiani,

è con grande stima e piacere che presento questa lettera di nomina da parte del CAMNES (Center for Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies) per Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati per il Premio Balzan 2021, nell'ambito di ricerca Arte e Archeologia del Vicino Oriente Antico. Con grande entusiasmo prendo questa iniziativa, essendo Giorgio Buccellati membro del Comitato Scientifico del CAMNES fin dalla sua nascita nel 2010 ed avendo recentemente edito un volume di studi in onore di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, al quale hanno contribuito da tutto il mondo 51 colleghi, studiosi di arte, archeologia, storia e filologia del Vicino Oriente antico: Stefano Valentini - Guido Guarducci (a cura di), *Between Syria and The Highlands. Studies in Honor of Giorgio Buccellati & Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, Studies on the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean* (SANEM 3), Roma, Arbor Sapientiae, 2019 (<https://camnes.it/pubblicazioni>).

Data la grande varietà e complessità delle aree di ricerca in cui si è svolta la pluridecennale attività di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, altre sette istituzioni, oltre a CAMNES, hanno indicato il loro desiderio di sottoporre delle nomine separate. Qui di seguito ne diamo la lista complessiva in una tabella riassuntiva. Le sette nomine si riferiscono specificamente a un settore distinto e particolare, e mettono in luce, ognuna con la propria motivazione dettagliata, l'eccellenza del contributo scientifico di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, in ognuna di queste aree. Ciascuna delle nomine, provenienti da istituzioni di tre continenti, a dimostrazione dell'impatto e della risonanza internazionale della ricerca di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, è corredata da una bibliografia specifica relativa all'argomento in questione, dai *curricula* e dalla bibliografia generale dei due studiosi.

	AREA DI RICERCA	ISTITUZIONE	DIRETTORE
1	Critica e storia dell'arte	<i>Metropolitan Museum of Art</i> New York (USA)	Max Hollein
2	Scavi e analisi stratigrafica	<i>Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums</i> Damasco (SIRIA)	Nazeer Awad
3	Conservazione e restauro	<i>Getty Conservation Institute</i> Los Angeles (USA)	Tim Whalen
4	Archeologia pubblica	<i>Museo Egizio</i> Torino (ITALIA)	Christian Greco
5	Teoria	<i>Chinese Archaeological Association</i> Shanghai (CINA)	Wang Wei
6	Analisi digitale	<i>Open Context</i> Berkeley (USA)	Eric Kansa
7	Impiego istituzionale	<i>Cotsen Institute of Archaeology</i> <i>University of California</i> Los Angeles (USA)	Willeke Wendrich

In aggiunta alla lettera di motivazione sottostante, si vedano per cortesia gli altri documenti allegati:

- una selezione delle pubblicazioni di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-buccellati;
- la bibliografia generale di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-buccellati;
- i curricula di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-buccellati;
- una foto di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-buccellati.

Nell'augurare a Lei e agli altri eminenti membri del Comitato Generale Premi un buon lavoro per la selezione delle nomine, la saluto cordialmente,



Stefano Valentini
co-Direttore
CAMNES

Lettera di motivazione per la nomina di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati al Premio Balzan

La motivazione della nostra nomina si concentra sul fatto che gli studi di Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati in ambito archeologico, filologico e di storia dell'arte, sulla formazione dello stato nell'Antico Vicino Oriente -declinati nell'indagine delle prime forme politiche di convivenze civile, nel rapporto tra uomo ed il paesaggio, nel concetto di identità culturale ed etnia- dimostrano, con il loro fondamento scientifico, la necessità e l'attualità della conoscenza del passato, anche quello remoto e distante da noi, per la cultura odierna.

Il lavoro compiuto da Giorgio Buccellati e Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati sul campo ad Urkesh/Tell Mozan (Siria), nell'arco di ormai quasi 40 anni, si è concentrato principalmente sulla ricerca di ambito storico-culturale e storiografico. In un orizzonte metodologico di base nel quale la ricerca è strettamente connessa alla dimensione strutturale insita nei dati e quindi nella esplorazione degli stessi. Una dimensione che Giorgio Buccellati ha esposto in maniera teorica, e con ampi riferimenti alle situazioni concrete dello scavo archeologico, nel volume *Critique of Archaeological Reason*¹, il cui sottotitolo, *Structural, Digital and Philosophical Aspects of the Excavated Record*, evidenzia immediatamente la straordinaria quantità di aspetti che emergono dalle indagini sul campo, tutti in stretta relazione fra di loro. La stessa dimensione strutturale che accomuna altri filoni di studio di Giorgio Buccellati: dalla lingua, dove viene applicato in maniera puntuale il modello saussuriano (si veda il volume *Structural Grammar of Babylonian*) alla religione, dove non singoli elementi, ma la spiritualità mesopotamica nel suo complesso viene messa a confronto con quella biblica (si veda il volume *Quando in alto i cieli...*), per arrivare alla politica, dove nel volume *Alle origini della politica*², la formazione dello stato è vista come il risultato di uno sviluppo organico delle istituzioni. Un approccio metodologico che recentemente Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati sta applicando ai suoi studi sulla glittica e la ceramica.³

La storia di Tell Mozan si è costruita nel corso di questi studi come una "storia paradigmatica". Dalle origini della città e la formazione dello stato, tra la fine del IV e il III millennio a.C., passando per il periodo degli archivi di Mari (periodo Palobabilonese) fino al periodo Mitannico e l'abbandono del sito, intorno al 1350 a.C., la storia di questo sito, inquadrata in modo esemplare dagli scavatori nel contesto più ampio della storia mesopotamica, si manifesta come una chiave di lettura per la comprensione delle forme politiche odierne e delle loro trasformazioni. Perché come afferma Giorgio Buccellati: "le origini della politica sono tuttora con noi" e "la Mesopotamia, nello specifico il caso di Urkesh, si impone alla nostra attenzione come un grande laboratorio, per l'esemplarità della sua storia". Attraverso lo studio della cultura materiale, in tutte le sue forme (architettura, ceramica, sigilli, tavolette cuneiformi) l'inanimata evidenza archeologica, scavata meticolosamente, prende vita e ci racconta storie di uomini e popoli che si sono succeduti per millenni su questa terra. Nel progetto Urkesh, la Storia è il vero punto di arrivo dell'indagine archeologica, basata sulla fattualità dell'evidenza.

Il sito di Urkesh/Tell Mozan, collocato geograficamente sul confine tra la Mesopotamia e le Alte Terre dell'Altopiano Anatolico, lungo tutto l'arco della sua storia, è un esempio tangibile di sincretismo culturale e convivenza di culture diverse. C'è tanta modernità nella storia di questa antica città. E come ci dimostra il progetto Urkesh, la ricchezza delle sperimentazioni politiche di questa umanità remota, analizzata attraverso una lente di ingrandimento multidisciplinare -fatta non solo di storia e di archeologia, ma anche di antropologia culturale, fenomenologia delle religioni, linguistica e filologia- è più presente nella contemporaneità della Siria di quanto si possa supporre. La Siria nord-orientale, dove si trova Tell Mozan, è stata in passato, e lo è tutt'oggi, una regione di frontiera. In essa convivono gruppi umani diversi per identità, cultura, religione, lingua, usi e costumi (arabi, kurdi, armeni), tutti accomunati ai loro antenati da una profonda

¹ Il volume è stato definito da D. Meijer "an impressive theoretical treatise", "an extremely rich and thought-provoking treatise", dotato di una "Wittgensteinian precision in defining concepts".

² Marta Cartabia, parafrasando J. Rawls, nella prefazione a questo volume scrive che "ha contribuito sensibilmente a sollevare quel velo di 'rassegna ignoranza' che sembra separare la cultura contemporanea dalle origini della vita politica".

³ Si veda a titolo di esempio: "The Urkesh Ceramics Digital Book", in Paola Corò et al. (eds.), *Libiamo ne' lieti calici. Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Lucio Milano on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, 2016, 721-734.

connessione con il territorio in cui vivono e come dice Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati "dall'amore di vedere il territorio viaggianoci". Un raro caso in cui la nostra percezione di contemporanei si avvicina a quella dell'esperienza degli antichi. Il progetto Urkesh è frutto, e al contempo stimolo, di questa convivenza. In esso sono coinvolti i differenti gruppi umani del moderno villaggio di Tell Mozan, che trovano nel progetto Urkesh le proprie radici, che affondano in un passato comune e la spinta unificatrice contro le spinte centrifughe contemporanee, la recente guerra civile su tutte.

Il progetto Urkesh, per la sua struttura composita (scavo, studio, pubblicazione, comunicazione) si pone come obiettivo primario quello di far impattare l'analisi e la riflessione sulla cultura materiale dei "morti", nella coscienza e nell'esperienza umana dei "vivi". Così i processi della nascita della città di Urkesh e della formazione dello stato Hurrita, possono essere letti dagli occhi dei moderni abitanti di Tell Mozan in un modo nuovo: l'archeologia, divenuta storia, ci dimostra che nelle dinamiche dello sviluppo storico, nella fase creatrice che spinge il progredire della civiltà, la diversità è un valore aggiunto.

Nel progetto Urkesh, il record archeologico viene da un lato indirizzato verso la pubblicazione scientifica, dall'altro, parallelamente, viene rielaborato e reso fruibile alla popolazione locale, mediante iniziative basate sulla comunicazione e disseminazione. In quest'ottica, strettamente legata alla filosofia della *Public Archaeology*, Giorgio e Marilyn Buccellati hanno creato AVASA (Associazione per la Valorizzazione dell'Archeologia e della Storia Antica) che si pone l'obiettivo preciso di fare in modo che l'attività scientifica del progetto Urkesh possa andare al di là di una semplice presentazione accademica di fatti, istituzioni e processi storici, coinvolgendo giovani studenti di diverse età in una visione della realtà storica più profonda, che sia di arricchimento nella loro esperienza umana, per quanto remota nel tempo.

Quando la guerra in Siria ha bruscamente trasformato la quotidianità e interrotto gli scavi, il coinvolgimento degli archeologi del team, degli operai e di tutta la popolazione locale, ha trovato nuove vie. Per certi versi si è rafforzato. Il progetto *Urkesh oltre Urkesh (Urkesh Extended Project)*, ad esempio, dimostra come un sito archeologico, anche non scavato, diventi, per così dire, più grande di sé stesso, quando propone una lettura del suo passato, che si afferma come rilevante per l'oggi. Con il risultato fondamentale del coinvolgimento sempre più attivo delle comunità locali, in particolare delle scuole, con le quali è stato messo in atto un programma attivo e innovativo di formazione e sensibilizzazione, con una ricaduta straordinaria soprattutto sui più giovani, spettatori passivi di questo tragico periodo di guerra, che sono accompagnati nel processo di riscoperta della storia delle loro radici comuni e di acquisizione di una piena consapevolezza del valore e della potenzialità del loro presente, per la costruzione del loro futuro.

Con l'avvento della pandemia globale provocata dal COVID-19, il progetto Urkesh si è trovato ad affrontare un'ulteriore sfida, che è stata superata brillantemente con la formazione del gruppo di lavoro, *Urkesh One-on-One (Urkesh a quattr'occhi)*, che ha fatto tesoro della propria esperienza di distanziamento forzato dal sito per gli accadimenti bellici durati quasi un decennio e di una caratteristica che accomuna tutti gli archeologi. Questi "rompono" di continuo la barriera del tempo che li separa dal passato, annullando il distanziamento fisico. Così il distanziamento sociale imposto nel rispetto delle norme di sicurezza anti-COVID è stato superato. I giovani studenti che vivono oggi vicino all'antica Urkesh, visitano il sito archeologico e ne esplorano la storia, sotto la supervisione di archeologi siriani, per i giovani, loro coetanei, di tutto il mondo (attualmente siriani, italiani e greci). Pur lavorando da soli trascendono il limite del contatto fisico. Sfruttando le potenzialità del web e della connessione online, popolano il cyberspazio globale con le figure dell'antica Urkesh, che vengono riportate, in incontri a quattr'occhi, tra i vivi desiderosi di scoprire sé stessi attraverso il loro patrimonio culturale.

In questo consiste la modernità e l'attualità del progetto Urkesh. Nella sua capacità di adattamento, che rende possibili risposte immediate agli scenari dinamici e alle mutate esigenze della contemporaneità, come dimostrano i molteplici progetti in essere e quelli in programma per il futuro immediato. In particolare, nell'ambito della ricerca sul campo a Tell Mozan/Urkesh è in programma la prosecuzione del lavoro di conservazione del sito, strettamente legato

all'archeologia di comunità, che, come dimostrato dai numerosi riconoscimenti e premi conseguiti negli Stati Uniti, in Cina ed Europa, è ormai riconosciuto dalla comunità scientifica internazionale come un modello⁴. In ambito scientifico è in programma l'estensione della pubblicazione digitale dei dati di scavo, già iniziata da tempo nello *Urkesh Global Record*, un sistema che combina una narrativa digitale con i dati di scavo⁵. Infine, nell'ambito della comunicazione, è in programma un ulteriore sforzo per l'utilizzo dei sistemi digitali innovativi. In particolare sarà ulteriormente implementato il lavoro sui siti web bibliografici inclusi nello *hub 4banks.net*, con una seconda edizione del sito sulla teoria archeologica (*critique-of-AR.net*) relativo all'apporto digitale nell'editoria accademica e saranno finalizzati nella prossima primavera dei siti web specifici (tutti *open access*) sull'arte e l'architettura (*Mes-art.net*), sulla religione (*Mes-rel.net*) e sulla politica (*Mes-pol.net*) della Mesopotamia.

In conclusione, il progetto Urkesh, quasi fosse una figura archetipica presa in prestito dall'espressione introdotta da C. G. Jung, vive e si alimenta di una continua tensione tra il *Puer* e il *Senex*. Dove il *Puer* (eternamente giovane) è rappresentato dal continuo divenire -la ricerca inesausta, la curiosità e l'attrazione per le novità che possono riemergere dal passato, mediante lo scavo, e la sua documentazione- mentre il *Senex* è rappresentato dallo studio della cultura materiale, dalla sua rielaborazione matura. Ma ciascuno dei due, senza l'altro, sarebbe perduto: il *Puer*, preda della sua inconcludenza, non si realizzerebbe mai compiutamente; il *Senex*, per parte sua, si inaridirebbe e, sterile e freddo, confinato nella dimensione accademico-scientifica, scivolerebbe nell'inerzia. Il *Puer* senza il *Senex* fatica a entrare nella storia; il *Senex* ha bisogno del *Puer* per non essere soltanto storia. Perciò nel progetto Urkesh entrambi i poli dell'archetipo sono tenuti insieme affinché dalla sua totalità, frutto di un rapporto dialettico, di compensazione e di integrazione, possa scaturire l'elemento vitale dell'archeologia. Questo fa di Urkesh non soltanto un pezzo di storia, ma un esempio tangibile di archeologia per i vivi, rivolta al futuro, perché principalmente fondata sul lavoro delle giovani generazioni di ricercatori ed archeologi.

⁴ Si vedano i due siti web dedicati a questo settore: urkesh.org/preservation, per una presentazione accademica degli aspetti della ricerca) e avasa.it, per una panoramica del lavoro svolto, più ampiamente accessibile al grande pubblico. Per un'analisi scientifica dell'aspetto dell'archeologia di comunità è in costruzione il sito: urkesh.org/community.

⁵ Si veda il sito: urkesh.org/record. Il programma di pubblicazioni digitali sarà ampliato da Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati per includere contributi specifici relativi non solo allo scavo, ma anche agli aspetti relativi alla tipologia dei materiali, come la ceramica (urkesh.org/c) e la glittica (urkesh.org/g).