

Report on WMF Three Part Course
Archaeological Preservation in the Eye of the Storm

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Introduction

The course involved an integrated presentation of our conservation, site presentation, site management activities along with an exposition of our efforts to preserve the physical and cultural landscape of the site and its surrounding area. The site, modern Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh, is located in the northeastern corner of Syria, bordered by the modern countries of Iraq and Turkey. Our team has been excavating the site for over 25 years and have been involved in the issues of conservation, presentation and cultural heritage almost from the start of the work. In effect we have experience and a track record unparalleled for any large third millennium site in Syria.

Characteristic of our work at Tell Mozan over the years has been the emphasis on simplicity at all levels of the work including the design of the shelters, the local materials utilized in the construction of the shelters, and finally the involvement at all levels local individuals from architects and archaeologists to the workmen who constructed the shelters. Characteristic too has been the preservation of the primary evidence, in the case of the architecture the walls and important floors, so that the primary document is accessible to the interested visitor even though the shelters are covering them.

Our aim has been to utilize as much as possible local materials and to train the local assistants to carry out the work under our supervision. We have used these ideas both in the initial construction phase of the shelters and as part of our annual maintenance program. Since the conservation project has such a long history, at points over the years when the canvas materials needed complete renewal, we have again chosen to use local materials and local workmen.

The emphasis on local materials and on the local workmen we have trained over the years has been fundamental for our being able to continue the work since 2011 during the war in Syria when we are unable to excavate or even go to the site (our last visit was December 2011). In effect it was our crisis preparedness that has enabled the conservation program to continue, even though, of course, we did not anticipate that a crisis would indeed come!

The subjects covered by each of us in the three days of the course are presented in the table below:

		Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati	Giorgio Buccellati	Federico Buccellati
1	General introduction		The project as a case study	
	History & philosophy	Conservation	Site presentation	The <u>eco-archaeological park</u>
2	The audience	Communicating volumes	Relationship to visitors	Spaces and villages
	The narrative	Understanding the ruin	A challenging sequence	Tying the modern with the ancient
3	Dealing with the crisis	Creative responses	The awakening of awareness	Our shared motivation
	Beyond field work	The Urkesh Global Record	The wider audience Conclusions: A moral presence	Comparative evidence

Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati discussed the nature of site conservation and the necessity to conserve. The work on conservation in Mozan is seen as part of the excavation strategy with its concomitant impact on the excavator and the conservator. The conservation of the mud brick architecture in Mozan began in 1990 when significant mud brick walls began to be uncovered in what subsequently turned out to be the royal Palace dating to ca 2250BC. Conservation of stone structures became necessary when a substantial stone revetment wall and monumental stone staircase were discovered surrounding what we came to understand as a 4th millennium temple terrace and surrounding wall.

Conservation efforts started in 1990 by constructing wall shelters over the stone founded mud brick walls. Over the years various types of shelters were used, always with local materials and employing the local workmen who are among our primary stakeholders. With the on-site visit from Neville Agnew and Martha Demas of the Getty Conservation Institute we obtained valuable insights and advice on our conservation methods. They have continued their interest in the project and are ever ready to help us with their advice. We initiated a detailed photographic documentation program of the state of each wall in the palace and continued this documentation through our last field season in 2010. Through the work of our local assistants this documentation continues to this day (2014). Additionally in 2009 a graduate student from the UCLA-Getty Conservation Program made a detailed description of all the palace walls and suggestions for their continued conservation.

In the Philosophy and Methods section of the course our philosophy of conservation as a form of communication was presented. This communication is aimed at the primary stakeholders, casual visitors to the site, and academic colleagues. In addition we see conservation as a form of publication where the "original document" is presented to the visitors. It is imperative in the conservation especially of mud brick architecture that the initiation of conservation efforts in a collaboration of archaeologists and conservators start very early in the excavations and in an on-going basis. Emphasis must also be placed on training local stakeholders to share in the initial conservation and in the subsequent maintenance, fundamental to any long-term conservation program. With our experience we see the success of our emphasis on using local materials where possible and on using local knowledge and skills; skills that has been gained through the maintenance of village mud brick and stone

architecture.

The audience and their education is a primary interest in our project. To this aim we emphasize the presentation of the original document and not a falsified document or even a hidden document. Through our conservation efforts we emphasize to the visitor the ancient volumes and the ancient building process. We are able to do this because the shelters both protect the ancient walls, and therefore the architectural volumes, but also the ancient floors are protected. In the case of the walls all the shelters can be easily set aside, as with curtains, so that any visitor can see the original. Detailed systems of recording and monitoring allow us to check the conservation but also have put on our website (www.Urkesh.org) all the data and photos of this extensive process.

The challenges of continuing aggressively our conservation efforts in this time of crisis are of course great. One of the successes is the response of the local assistants to the new responsibilities placed on them. They had been trained in our site conservation methods but never had to carry them out on a long-term basis without a direct face-to-face input from us. They have succeeded in taking up seriously this responsibility in a very admirable way. We are still involved as we monitor the site through photos and verbal reports they send us frequently. We can answer their questions and can interchange ideas with them on the best methods of facing one of the current problems. But they too have met the challenge by working on a daily basis to solve the large and small problems that arise on such a large and important archaeological site.

One of the continuing ways we report on our conservation efforts and document them is through the Urkesh Global Record on our website. Within this website the book on Conservation has an extensive documentation of our ongoing activities including architectural and object conservation. For example, all the photos of the conservation history of each wall through 2014 are published here as well as a detailed temperature and humidity record taken daily at the site.

Giorgio Buccellati focused on the Urkesh project as a case study of archaeological preservation over a long period of time. While he gave a brief background of the history and results of the excavations from the beginning in 1984 through 2010 he stressed the fact that site preservation was a fundamental factor in the planning stages and during the execution of the project for each excavation season. In this way preservation was an integral part of the project, not an afterthought. He discussed the general principles behind our conservation and site presentation project including such topics as staging the past, the scholarly dimension, ideas behind various forms of signage produced for the site presentation system, the organization of space so that the visitors became aware of and even experienced the ancient view of their own city, and the idea that contemporary colonialist attitudes should be avoided. He made an in-depth presentation of the long history of site presentation. Since the project has such a long history he discussed what the various stages and ideas behind them including the production of fliers in Arabic and English and then booklets. At the present stage with the continuing crisis the emphasis is on the booklets which have now been translated into English, Arabic

and Kurdish. He emphasized the concept of "the site as a book" with a variety of ways to present information to the visitors including panorama views which have several panels of text and photos to signposts and reading stands which emphasize one aspect of the site and are placed in front of a good example of that characteristic of the site.

He also emphasized the initial and ongoing sharing of a common past with the "stakeholders" at every level: local, national and international. In his discussion of the relationship of the site presentation system to visitors of the site he included workmen, children, other local individuals, Syrian tourists and foreign tourists. In the section on visiting archaeologists he stressed the presentation system as a form of publication and added the vast on-site storage facilities as a resource for all archaeologists. Correlation of the Urkesh excavation results with the museum exhibits comes from having photos of the objects in the museum displayed on the site and photos of the excavations in the museum. His presentation of this aspect of the project focused on seeing culture as a continuum within which respect on the part of archaeologists elicits respect in the visitors for ancient peoples and the achievements of their culture. Feedback from site visitors is gratifying and reading the comments in the Urkesh/Mozan Guest Book shows how much the many efforts at site presentation are appreciated. The response of children is equally gratifying and comes usually from their teachers in the form of the children's drawings and short essays.

While the visitors to the site may be few, especially in these years of war, the wider audience is also included in the Urkesh site presentation program. One of the main vehicles is the Urkesh website which is a multi-audience website presented in various levels so that the interests of the audience can be met in a number of ways. While this website is open to a large extent, we are developing the website into a multi lingual site with Italian, Arabic and Kurdish being envisioned at this point. Additionally a book on site conservation at Urkesh is being prepared with publication envisioned in early 2015.

Federico Buccellati outlined our initiatives for the establishment of an eco-archaeological park in the area of Mozan/Urkesh. As an introduction to the park idea he outlined the modern conditions in the area of Mozan stressing the weather, village life, and the multicultural nature of the local population that includes Kurds, Arabs, and Yasidis. He pointed out that the area today has a need for work opportunities which would allow young residents to stay in their homes and contribute to the viability of even the small villages in the park area. He compared and contrasted the modern conditions with the ancient environmental and cultural characteristics of the region. With this as a background he discussed the aims of the park project which include the preservation of the landscape, and the enhancement of the area as a meaningful cultural unit with its center on the ancient city of Urkesh. The audience, both local residents and visitors, was discussed with an emphasis on the development of a park-wide economic sustainability plan that has a multifaceted approach to sustainability. This approach would include the establishment of bed and breakfasts in a number of villages which would avoid the necessity of large hotels within the park and especially would allow the visitors to experience the

typical local village hospitality. This emphasis on the "local" would offer the visitor something special, a combination of ancient and modern. This can especially be seen in the projected ancient and modern focus of each village within the park. For instance one village would have a visitor display area focusing on ancient cuneiform writing including the casts of tablets found in the Urkesh excavations with reference to the originals on display in the local museum. As a modern activity connected with writing we are proposing the printing and binding of books and have the intention of printing our own paper publications on the excavations and associated studies in this facility and will encourage others to do the same. Crafts are an important aspect of ancient culture and village display areas will highlight a number of them, such as the production and decoration of various types of cloth, pottery production, or jewelry making. He discussed the efforts of contemporary women to produce crafts, in part motivated and trained by a team assembled by the Department of Antiquities who went to the villages specifically to help the local women to produce high-quality crafts. They have since produced a number of scarves, blouses, pillows and dolls which we have purchased. They designed their own packaging and made their own logo which is included in each package. We are now looking for available paths to facilitate the sale of these craft products.

In his concluding remarks to the three day program Giorgio Buccellati emphasized that our motivations encompass a loyalty to the human dimension of our relationships in Syria, from the Department of Antiquities at all levels to our local assistants. They also include what we see as our responsibility towards protecting the cultural dimension because we see culture as a continuum and also as a powerful social glue. Our presence is a moral presence through actions that stem from an abiding sense of social connectedness. We also believe that preserving the past helps to preserve the future.

As in the previous year, we were extremely impressed with the quality of the program, the commitment of the participants, and the efficiency of the staff. This was all the more significant as this year there were serious security concerns, and some of the participants, coming from southern Iraq, went to considerable trouble to take part in the course (Mosul was taken by ISIS during our stay in Erbil). The fact that we could all work together efficiently in such circumstances is a tribute to the participants, and in particular to the staff that was able to maintain everything going smoothly and with a full measure of success.