

# Archaeology for a young future



An exhibit at the  
American University of Beirut

Giorgio Buccellati  
Yasmine Mahmoud

How can an archaeological site in Syria come to stand as a symbol of pride in the past and of hope for the future?

The catalog of an exhibit held at the American University of Beirut, November 15-22, 2017, this small book aims to answer this question. It tells the story of how the site of Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh, has become a rallying point for archaeologists and for the local communities in their common fight for a shared past in which we can all find a new sense of purpose and the will to unite for a peaceful future.

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The Urkesh Press is also part of the young future of which this small book speaks.

It is meant to serve as the publishing arm of the Urkesh Extended Project. Within the framework of a projected Urkesh Eco-archaeological Park, it is planned that the village of Mozan will have a printing and binding establishment, alongside a permanent exhibit about ancient writing, particularly regarding the scribal schools of ancient Urkesh.

This publication is available online at [www.uep.arkesh.org](http://www.uep.arkesh.org).

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with contributions by  
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# Foreword

The Cariplo Foundation has celebrated, at the end of 2016, twenty-five years of philanthropic activities. It is in fact since 1991 that the Foundation has devoted its efforts to supporting and promoting projects in the field of arts and culture, environment, scientific and social research. During these twenty-five years, the Foundation, with its philanthropic actions, has made it possible for more than 30,000 nonprofit projects to come into existence, investing over 2 billion and 800 million euros.

Many of these initiatives are linked to the Foundation's commitment to protecting the environment and the territory, and the support of intellectual and artistic endeavors.

The publication you have in your hands is an important testimony to what we mean when the Foundation engages in supporting projects for the preservation of works of art and monuments of the past. The project described here, realized by the Buccellatis and their team, carries in itself many elements: study, science, concrete intervention with effort and passion.

With this initiative – the merit goes entirely to those who set it in motion – our Foundation has given coherence to its mission, contributing to the preservation of a heritage that holds enormous value and is in danger of being lost, making an exception to the rules that normally keep us committed to supporting projects in Italy, mainly in Lombardy and in the provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola.

The project was so beautiful and rich in symbolic meanings that the Foundation agreed to do its part in an enterprise that seemed impossible.

Therefore we are proud and happy to be able to read the results of our efforts, which this publication abundantly shows.

Giuseppe Guzzetti

President , Cariplo Foundation

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# Preface

Archaeology deals with a distant past. But it holds today, in Syria, a promise for a young future.

It is a young future because the youth are at the core of the dynamics that propels Syria forwards.

It is also a young future because archaeology walks into it with a new vigor. It is archaeology as such that also finds itself young.

The exhibit tells a particular story about this young new archaeology, about its new young future. It is the story of an archaeological site that has withstood the test of war accepting it as a challenge. It is the story of the extraordinary synergy between archaeologists and the stakeholders, all finding a strong commonality in a firm sense of shared values.



We are proud that the monumental staircase of the main temple of Urkesh, now 43 centuries old, stands in perfect shape today as it was when we first excavated it.



We are proud because this did not just happen: it happened because of the care we lavished on it – we, the Mozanians on the ground and the Mozanians far away.



The staircase may be 43 centuries old. But it is young because it still can, today, embrace the vigor of the Syrian youth, just as they, in turn, embrace us with their upraised arms. They greet us today enthusiastically showing us that they participate with us in a shared past and in a future yet to be shared.

It may seem strange, then, but it is fair to say that this exhibit has been more than 25 years in the making. When we first excavated temple BA and the third millennium palace at what turned out to be the ancient city of Urkesh we wanted immediately to preserve their mudbrick walls. Many simple experiments were made, some shown in the exhibit panels, that would finally evolve into a system to protect the walls even from the extreme climate variations felt in the landscape of ancient Urkesh.

Education was another major goal – beginning with our work-men. We needed them and the more they were educated the more identified they were with our common goals. An educated team of workers did make a fundamental contribution to the efficiency of the work. But not only that – the education of the local people to identify with the ancient site and the historical and artistic richness it has to offer has imbued the whole community with an intelligent pride in preserving the site even in such harsh times as these.

None of us expected a war. But given this tragedy, all of us have reacted in a very positive way. The site has been protected from the weather and from looters who could have damaged the site for their own personal advantage. Fortunately the direct effects of the war have been few at the site itself; and the war has not been a barrier to visitors to the site – students and families. Only through maximum diligence and hard work on the part of us all have we the very positive results you see documented in the exhibit.

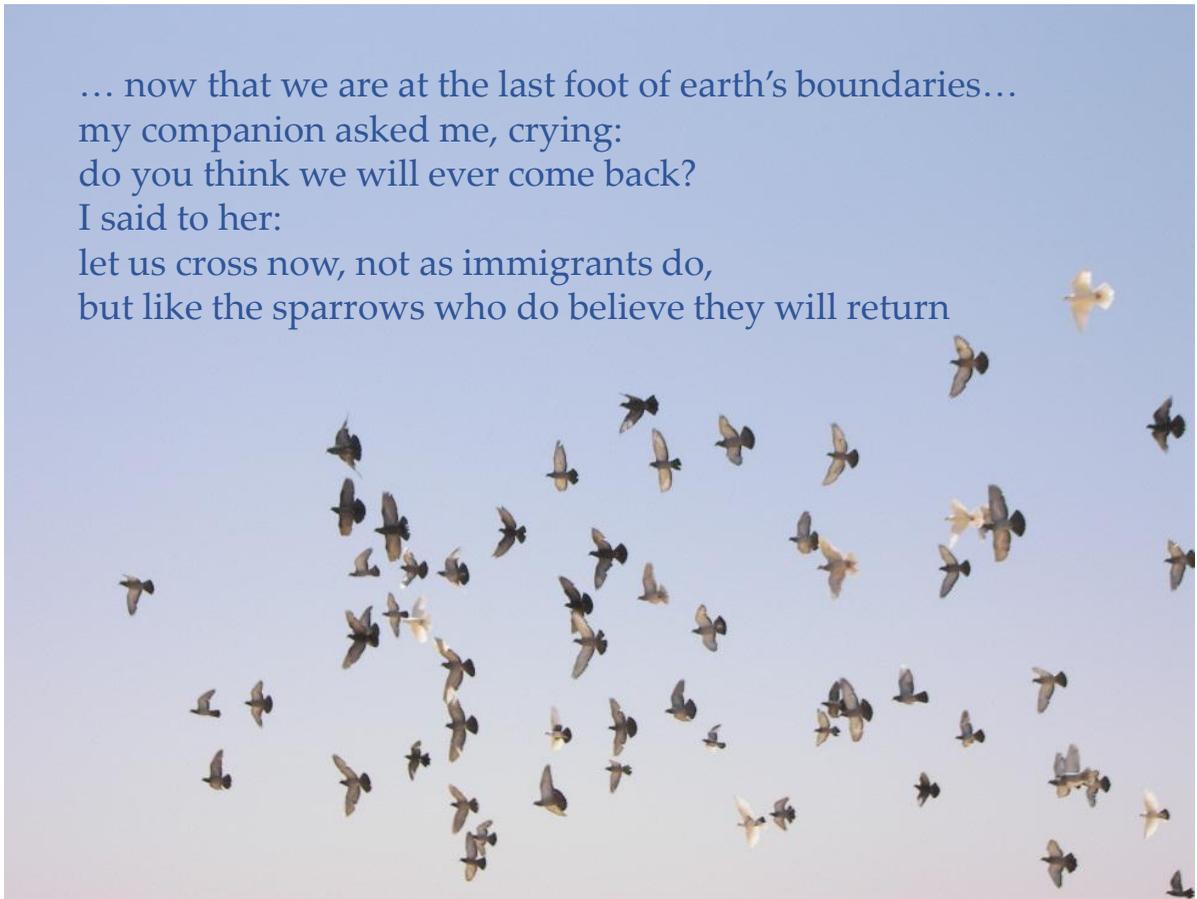
And we have all worked together. We could never have overcome the challenges except by functioning as a team with common goals and common methods. When there were problems the internet bubbled with ideas for solutions going back and forth east to west and west to east. And we have all shared in the pride of success! We hope that you, the visitors, can see, through our efforts, one of the most successful cultural heritage efforts anywhere. We view our work as a beacon and a model for the future.

Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati  
Director, Mozan/Urkesh Archaeological Project

Giorgio Buccellati  
Director, Urkesh Extended Project



... now that we are at the last foot of earth's boundaries...  
my companion asked me, crying:  
do you think we will ever come back?  
I said to her:  
let us cross now, not as immigrants do,  
but like the sparrows who do believe they will return



The poem of the Syrian poet Adel Mahmoud  
will accompany us throughout the exhibit

His refusal to admit defeat and exile  
reflects the inspiration behind our effort at Mozan.  
It is the effort to keep the faith,  
the faith in a past we share,  
a past that narrates our future

The millennia for today,  
and for tomorrow



# Provocations



*A peaceful archaeology, and an archaeology for peace.*

*We always believed that archaeology has a greater purpose than finding nice objects for museum display. Its purpose also transcends the understanding of the past as only a series of past events.*

*Archaeology in its larger scope, is a very powerful tool. One that promotes peace and peaceful coexistence amongst all of us as humans who share a common past. The value of this past which we are trying to re-embed in our present, is what gives us a sense of belonging, not just to a land, but to a larger community.*

*This is why we understood from the very beginning, that we cannot allow this past to be just a past, if we did not want to have a fragile future.*

*In this lies the provocation. The provocation to understand that archaeology has deeper roots than even the deepest level of buried monuments. It is the depth of social consciousness. This has been the provocation for us – which we want you, the visitors, to face in this exhibit.*



### *Facts, not obstacles*

Urkesh, for our good fortune, is not in a war zone, but it is very close. Danger is all around it! No one could predict what will happen in a war. But we did not see this as an obstacle. We saw it as a fact, just a fact.

And this fact did not soften our strong will to keep this city alive. We were frustrated at times, and worried that, at any second, all the effort we made to preserve it could be in vain. But it is worth doing, because we were always hopeful that Urkesh will remain a peaceful oasis and not a conflict zone.

If seen as an obstacle, the war would have eliminated our presence, as the image below symbolically shows. Were we going to be eradicated from the site? Instead, we fought against the danger of being crossed out of Mozan. This is the story we show in the exhibit.



## *A conflict of prides*



Are these men *proud* as they destroy theirs, and our, past?

*We are certainly proud to preserve our shared heritage. It is a conflict of prides...*



Men, women and even children around Mozan relate deeply to the past of the area, and feel a great deal of responsibility towards the land and its values. We, too, the archaeologists share with the local communities their strong conviction.

They help us give a fuller meaning to the archaeological work, to the role archaeology plays in developing a sense of unity and belonging.

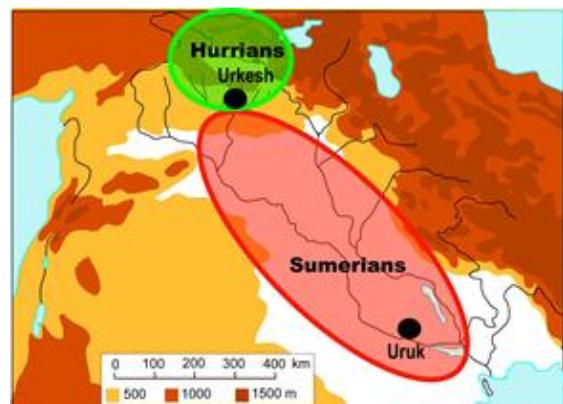
What we present to you in this exhibit, is the result of the collaboration between people from all around the world and the local communities. It is the triumph of the past over the violence of the present, to ensure a peaceful future.

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## *The millennia are for us*

At Urkesh, archaeology fulfills its larger cultural goal, by uniting people from different ethnicities.

Our *Hurrian* city is proudly a *Syrian* city.





## *A parallel war*

The violence that we are witnessing today is aimed at erasing our cultural identity, and we are standing in the face of that violence, just like Urkesh stood for many years against all threats.

And the most immediate threat was the weather.

So, when war struck Syria, it provoked us into shifting site conservation to the top of the priority list. This entailed hard work to keep the communication alive between all team members, in order to ensure the survival of the city and most importantly, the survival of what the city represents.



## *The ever threatening weather*

Weather elements pose the biggest threat on any archaeological site. Rain, wind, snow and heat are all damaging elements, which could potentially make an irreversible damage to the monuments.

Our strategy in facing these threats is effective and simple. And we continued to follow this strategy despite the distance that separates us from Urkesh.

We monitor the site through photos and videos that we receive from our local collaborators, we assess the damages and intervene in the proper manner when necessary.

In addition, our local collaborators perform maintenance tasks all year round to keep the exposed structures from damage and deterioration.

2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2016





# The dignity of the past



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*Protecting what we unearth is a very important aspect of our work. It is a matter of respecting the past, and honoring the pride of the ancestors.*

*The method we use is not high tech, and it does not require much in the way of materials. But it is effective, and this proved to be especially important in the past six years.*

*We are relying on the skills and experience of our local collaborators, and on local materials.*

*What we are preserving is today's testimony of what the past was, and of what it is for us today. It reflects our strong belief in the role that this past plays in shaping the future.*

*The investment in protecting our heritage, speaks volumes about who we are as humans, and the legacy we are leaving for the next generations. It speaks to scholarship. But it also speaks to the society in which it is embedded.*

*We affirm the dignity of the past.*

*The past has an inherent worth which we, the archaeologists, must unveil and protect so that it may speak with its own voice to the communities in whose present it continues to live.*

# The temple

## *The ascent to the heavens*

Located on the highest point on the Tell, the temple of Kumarbi, built around 2600 B.C, was a very sacred place in the Hurrian religion.

A magnificent monumental staircase leads to the temple, making you feel while climbing these steps, as if you were ascending to the heavens.

And it is a sacred task to us to ensure that this monument lives on for generations to come.



## *Our watchful eye*

Monitoring the condition of the monumental staircase plays a major role in its protection. We receive photos periodically, that document the effects that hot weather and rain have on these steps. Two operations are carried out each year.

This *first operation* consists of filling the gaps between the stones with mud.

On the one hand, the heat causes the mortar between the stones to dry, crack and become friable.

On the other hand, heavy rain causes the mortar to wash away. This leaves the stones in a vulnerable condition, subject to the danger of being loosened, and in the worst case scenario, being displaced and lost!

Filling the gaps between the stones in the monumental staircase and in other stone structures, ensures the safety of this beautiful monument, and honors its presence and role.





## *Back to a sandy shade*

Green is beautiful, but in the case of our archaeological site, yellow is the color we want. This is *the second yearly operation*.

All year round, vegetation grows all around the site and between the structures. This vegetation includes thick shrubs and bushes that compromise the integrity of the structures. If not removed, the roots can penetrate deep into the soil, causing the destruction of archaeological layers and rendering the structure weak

In Mozan, these shrubs are periodically removed, collected, and disposed outside the Tell's parameter.

So, even though the site looks beautiful when it is all green, it is a relief for us when we receive the photos after the shrubs' removal, and we see that Urkesh is back to a sandy shade!



# The necromantic shaft

## *The descent to the netherworld*

This cylindrical underground structure, excavated down to its construction phase around 2400 B.C, is the most spiritual place in Urkesh.

It was called Abi in Hurrian, and it was the place where the spirits of the netherworld were summoned and spoken to, through a medium who interpreted their words.

And just as Hurrians kept the spirits of their ancestors alive, we as well, are striving to have the Hurrian culture and wisdom known.

Protecting this structure is about more than protecting stones.



It is about protecting what this monument represented in the course of the Hurrian human experience.



## *Against all odds*

The Abi endured years of weather changes and stood its ground, all thanks to the protective dome we placed above it, which prevented water and dirt from accumulating inside and placing it at risk.

The dome was a metal grid structure, covered with thick burlap. And although it served its purpose, it was not a durable solution. It required constant monitoring, fixing, and changing the burlap cover, which was not very resistant to weather elements.

For all these reasons, we decided to make a commitment for the long run.



## *A commitment for the long run*

By the end of 2013, we decided to embark on a big mission, by covering the metal grid dome with overlapping metal sheets.

We wanted to protect the structure. But we also wanted to let our Mozan Mozanians know that we were committed for the long haul. It was not just a matter of repeating what we had done, but even of innovating.



The dome was covered with the metal sheets, and the gaps between the sheets were filled with silicon to maximize the protection.



## *The journey of the Abi*

Ventilation openings were cut into the metal sheets to ensure the proper ventilation of the inside, and the top border of the vent was bent upwards to form a small drain, leading the water away from vent opening.



The next stage was in 2014, when we turned our attention to the Abi entrance. The entrance was then also covered with a metal grid that was fixed and welded, then covered with overlapping metal sheets.

The edges of the metal sheets of the dome and the entrance were both tilted upwards, forming a drain that would channel the rain water away from the Abi shaft.



The final step, is one that reflects our strong commitment to the ancient landscape.

The shiny metal surface did not blend well with the rest of the site. Thus the new Abi dome was covered in turn with burlap and dirt, to make sure that the dome would be unobtrusive in its beautiful surrounding.

The glory of the Abi is restored, standing strong against weather, war and all odds.





## The royal palace of Tushkash

### *Honoring a king's ambition*

The royal palace built by king Tushkash around 2250 B.C, is another splendid aspect of ancient Urkesh. And just like we are sure that king Tushkash defended his palace against all dangers, we are defending the palace now. His ambition in building it is our ambition in preserving it.

It is a daunting task: 400 linear meters of very fragile mudbrick, incapable of resisting rain, snow, heat.

Having freed the palace from the grip of the soil, we had exposed it to many dangers: unprotected, it would have melted in no time at all.

Therefore, we had to come up with a solution that was effective, economic and durable, hence the idea of building protective shelters around the walls. This served a double purpose: the metal structures around the walls give a sense of the ancient volumes and perception, and at the same time they protect the walls from deterioration. It is like having two sites in one.



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## *Sleeping walls*

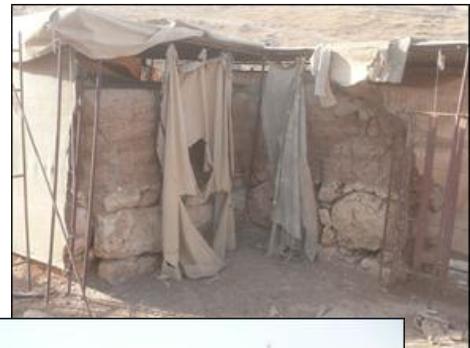
The protective shelters built around the walls are a metal structure with a grid like roof, covered with tarp and a thick layer of mud. The sides are all accessible, with burlap curtains covering them all. The curtains are easily opened and closed, allowing at any time a check on the wall's condition.



The burlap curtains require maintenance, however simple. The curtains are repaired on a regular basis, by patching torn spots and sewing it back together.



But sometimes, the curtains get too damaged to be fixed. In this case, the curtains are replaced with new ones, tailored and measured to fit perfectly.





## *Monitoring*

The best partner for our maintenance method, is monitoring.

A periodic monitoring of the walls pays off well. The curtains are opened on a regular basis, to check on the condition of the walls, to see if the plastic cover on top of the wall needs replacing, to record any damages or changes, and to intervene in case some parts of the mud brick crumbles.

The intervention is usually done by re-plastering the vulnerable spots, or strengthening the wall by adding sand filled braces.



Even though we are far away from the site, the many photos we receive each month, makes us feel as if we were there, watching the situation closely. Monitoring photos allows us to have a closer look at the damages and collaborate with our local team to fix the damages in a proper and durable manner.

In the past six years, we received more than 12,000 digital photos, documenting the situation and the maintenance process. This communication is achieved using simple tools like Dropbox and WhatsApp.





# A site alive



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*Interpreting what the monuments mean, and what was their purpose, gives these monuments a voice. Urkesh is not silent anymore, it narrates its story to its visitors.*

*And even though this war is trying to silence its voice, we are standing by our city preventing that from happening. Urkesh will not be silenced!*

*If you visit Urkesh now, the city itself will tell you her story, through a set of panels and sign posts.*

*A guided tour is also great. But there is a very emotional bond that forms between the visitor and the site when there is no medium. When it is just you and Urkesh. For this reason, site presentation matters a great deal to us.*

*And for this reason, we spared no effort in making Urkesh transparent in what it has to offer, to scholars and children alike.*

*The site opens itself up to the visitor like a book. And we have many visitors who still come to enjoy it.*



### *The “high” of the ancient view*

Two panorama views in high spots on the Tell, give you a view of the space and a sense of history.

These “panoramas” take our place in our absence, and narrate the story of the palace and temple. They take you on a journey through time.

And because the panoramas are our representatives, they are a subject of constant maintenance, whether it is replacing the laminated papers inside, replacing the glass sheets, fixing and welding the iron body or even a simple paint job to protect it from rust.



## *They are everywhere*

While the panoramas paint a large picture as seen from above, these other signs tell you the story of what you see in front of you. They are everywhere, and contain rich information about details of what you see as you walk along a leading path.

Each sign is numbered. The design is very simple but hard to miss while on your trip. They are also easy to open and close, and make your trip much more enjoyable

But unfortunately, this does not mean that they are indestructible. Sometimes the weather wins the battle, for the panels break in the face of wind, lose their color in the sun or get rusty in the rain. The informational content gets blown in the wind or swept away in the heavy rain.



## *Facing mighty nature*

Our strategy regarding signs and site presentation is like that for conservation: extremely simple, relying on local resources, regular monitoring and easy maintenance.

In the first years of the war, we gave precedence to conservation, and several of the signs fell into disrepair and we removed them.

In the beginning of 2017, we wanted to reopen this window through which you can see ancient Urkesh, so we decided to repair all the signs and panels and put them back on the site where they belong.

All the signs were fixed, welded and cleaned. A simple paint job brought back their beautiful color. Then the information was printed again, laminated and glued back.

Thus each sign returned to its spot on the Tell, reunited again with the protagonist of its story.



## *Parasols in a time of war*

This is the fruit of our effort and hard work: visitors in the time of war!

There are people who believe in what we are doing: the beauty and the larger meaning of Urkesh can indeed be a ray of hope in a very dark time!

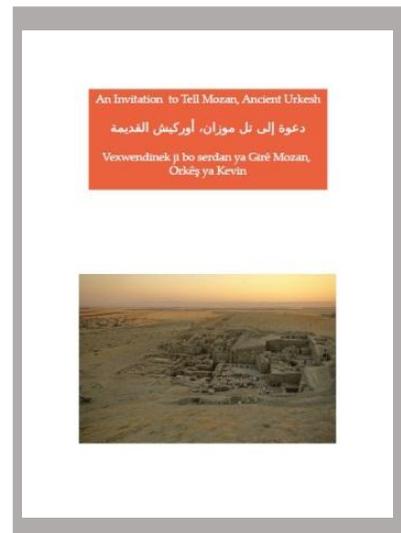


## *For a broader outreach*

In December 2106, we issued a guide book to the site in Arabic, Kur-dish and English.

It is the first of its kind, and it was also the first title of a publishing venture which we hope to develop fully at Mozan in the future – the Urkesh Press.

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# The vigor of the women



*Women of Urkesh and women of Mozan are very similar, as they both play a role in their society.*

*The women of Mozan and neighboring villages have set to work, keeping an old craft alive. It happens in many places in Syria, but ours has the particularity of being associated with an archaeological site.*

*They came forward when we had proposed the project of an Urkesh Eco-archaeological Park, within which they would produce items in keeping with both the modern folk tradition and what we know about analogous activities in ancient times.*

*The hands of these crafty women are creating smiles, warmth and sustainability.*



In 2009, we launched the idea of an Urkesh Eco-archaeological park project, aimed at preserving the beautiful landscape around Mozan, and to develop sustainable economical projects in Mozan and in the 22 villages around Mozan spreading over an area of 54 square kilometers.

A step further was made when a team from the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums went to Mozan to make plans for the implementation of the park.

One of the projects of the Urkesh eco-archaeological park is the atelier of the handicrafts made by the women of Mozan and Um al rabiya villages. The idea was that these women would make handicrafts inspired by the traditions of the area.



The items produced were attractive, with imagination and character. Then many of the young members of the group left the village because of marriage or other family events.

But this did not mean the end of the atelier. We started a school!



The school started in October 2016, with Amina, from the original group, teaching other young women and helping them master their craft.

Here are the yarn and the hands with which they work!



These simple yet characteristic dolls are some of the interesting items. With their traditional garments and their sweet smile, they put a smile on our face as well.

They made their first trip to Italy in 2013, in this unexpected packaging with a logo that proudly says: Urkesh atelier of handicrafts.



# Of sherds and Men



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*Our commitment to research is as strong as ever, despite war and distance. And we have 65,000 sherds to prove it – the number of sherds analyzed by our local pottery expert Hammade,*

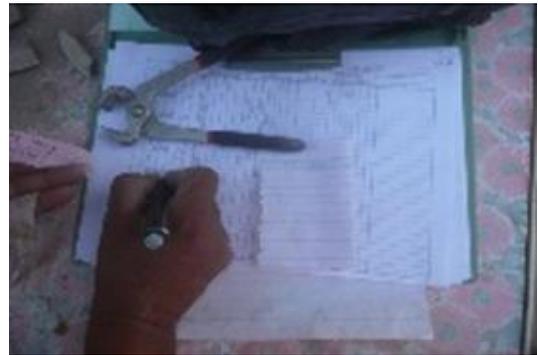
*These sherds tell the story of the soil, in which they were embedded for a long time, helping us complete our data base and better understand the full picture.*

*We, the archaeologists, have an intense publication program which we carry out from our homes in the USA and Europe. But what we show here is how our research rests on work still done today, very actively, in Mozan itself.*

*It is as if we had a global campus, with Mozan being fully integrated with Damascus, Los Angeles, Milan, Paris or Copenhagen. A research community undaunted by war and distances.*

## A human time machine

We present to you Hammad, the man responsible of the analysis of 65,000 sherds in the past 6 years.



The next step is photographing special items, like this beautiful sherd with a bird on it.



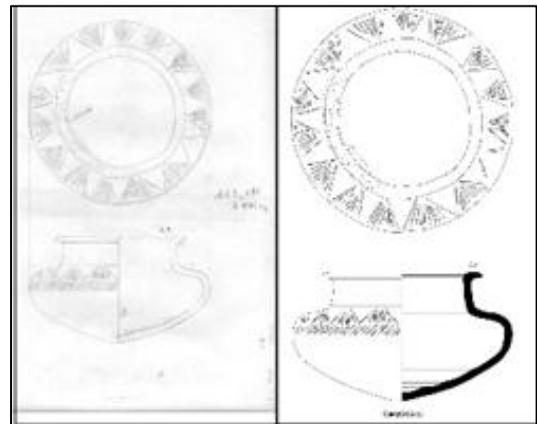
The process begins by sorting the sherd bags according to excavation units.

Then Hammad analyzes each sherd according to a complex set of standards, where he identifies the shapes and manufacturing material.



He then enters this information by hand on a detailed log, which is entered in turn in the computer and sent to us via the internet to be included in the central database on the server in Los Angeles.

We also have hundreds of drawings of objects and ceramics from earlier years. These were scanned and sent to us during these last six years. Many of them have been digitized in vector format by Kamiran Beg and Amer Ahmad



## Passing the torch

A pottery analysis workshop took place in October 2016. The teacher was Hammade, and the students were young archaeology students in Qamishli.

This is the continuity that we take pride in at Mozan. Young generations learning through materials from Urkesh.



Amongst the graduated students is Hamrin, the daughter of Mohammed Omo, the guard of Urkesh. She grew up with the expedition, taking her own steps in becoming an archaeologist, and we look forward to working side by side in Mozan. And here below is her diploma!



## Technologies



The collaborative work on the Urkesh ceramic was made possible during these years of absence by relying on simple technologies like the Internet.

The same approach was used to monitor the palace walls, and the temperature and humidity levels which is now a major data base that started on 2001. Every wall is recorded on a yearly bases and the result posted on our website. This is what allows us to keep a close eye on any changes or damages that occur over the years.

As for temperature and humidity, it is recorded by hand twice a day by one of our local assistants in Mozan. These records are then entered in the computer, sent to us via the internet, and placed on the server in Los Angeles.

Relying on these simple technologies is what allowed the uninterrupted continuance of the project.



# The power of ideals



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*“The center for the revival of civil society”: this is the name of the cultural center in the small town of Amuda, the nearest town to Tell Mozan. And here is where we mounted a photographic exhibit on Urkesh!*

*“We” refers to all of us – from Mozan and its region and from abroad.*

*Thus it is that in a small town in northeastern Syrian ideals are standing in the face of fanaticism.*

*Urkesh and its remote past are giving society a common purpose. This common past is uniting different communities to defend its values against the forces of destruction.*

*And these values and ideals, are what is giving these communities a deeper sense of identity. These ideals are our legacy to next generations.*

## Exhibits



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In 2014, the story of Urkesh was told in a major exhibit at the “Meeting” of Rimini.

The directors of the antiquity departments from the regions of Idlib, Aleppo and Qamishli came to Rimini.

The director from Qamishli, Dr. Suleiman Elias, suggested having a similar exhibit in Qamishli and its region.

And in December 2014 the exhibit on Urkesh opened in Qamishli, and toured the region in early 2015.

Dr. Suleiman Elias and the local cultural association called Subartu, are fighting their own battle to say:

*Here there is life.*



## Outreach



We have learned the real meaning of the term “outreach” as we have seen the ripple effect of great ideas: The past, explained, becomes a motor for growth.

The wider reach of Urkesh is a factor in making it possible to really have a “revival of civil society.”

## Values and not

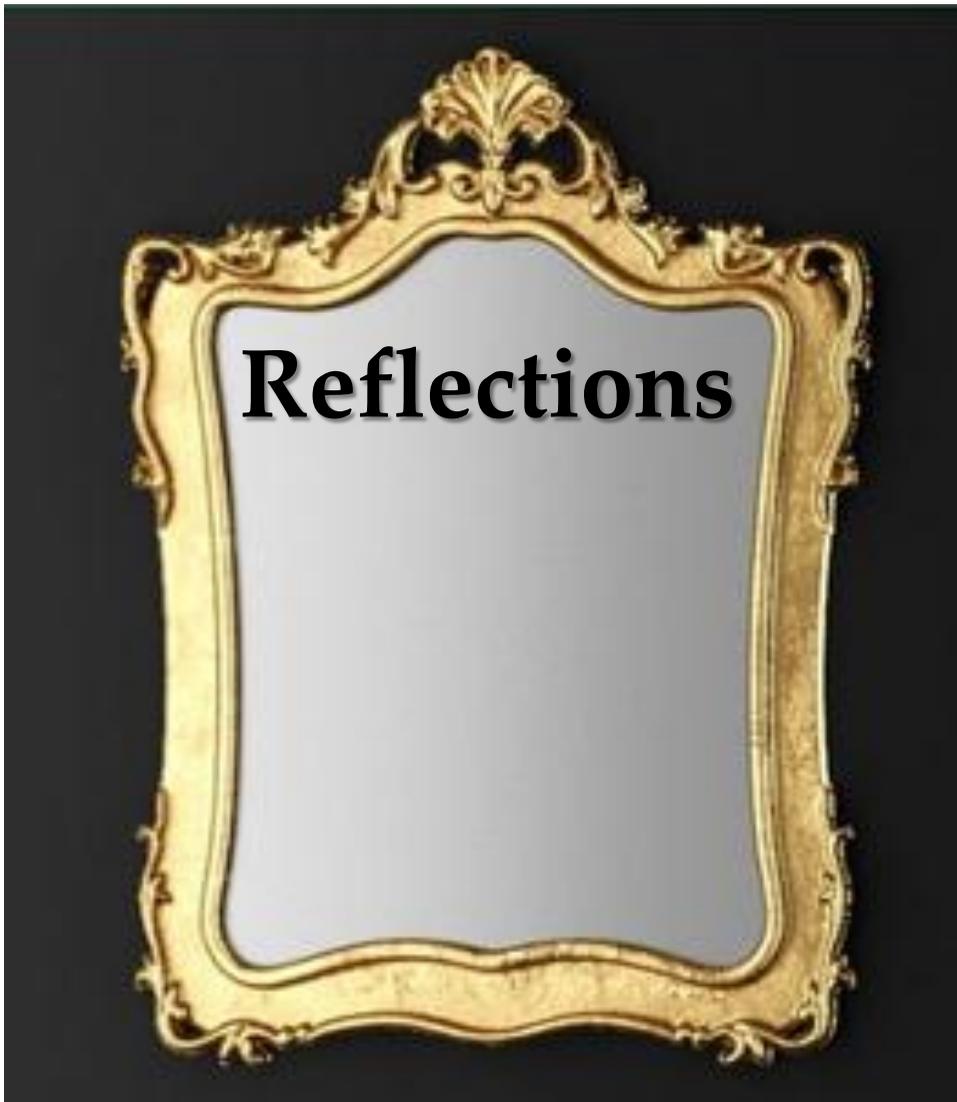
We can cross out not only the images, but the reality of a fanaticism that perverts ideals.

The images of Isis destroying cultural heritage may well be powerful, but the images of these young people from our region preparing for the exhibit in Qamishli is even more powerful.

This is the archaeology for a young future that our exhibit wants to celebrate.







*If you were to look at yourself in an imaginary mirror, and reflect on what the exhibit has meant to you, would you see a different “you” from when you started?*

*It is, in a way, about ancient Urkesh. But an Urkesh that seems to have found a new life as it ponders to the future. Not only a young, but a very young future! The children must be the first ones to absorb the values we see in this past we bring back to life.*

*It is from them that we can learn to listen. With awe and joy. They, too, raise their hands to welcome us into their world.*



## *Storytelling*

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The main story that archaeology tells us is continuity. The continuity of our identity, the space in which we live and the continuity of our rooted tradition that make each place unique and special.

These children are too young to have been on a field trip to our excavations, which stopped shortly after they were born. But in the meantime a story-teller came to Mozan to tell them the tale of Urkesh.





### *From organizer to interlocutor*

During our absence from Mozan, a young woman, Yara Moualla, came with a group from the DGAM to help explain the concept of the Eco-archaeological Park we had in mind. She is now working on her PhD in Scotland on some of our material, and with some support from our project. She writes:

I am from Damascus, I went to Mozan in 2012 to build a cultural pilot project that was to be community based.

What could I expect from these remote villages, far away from the capital, in the “Jezirah”, this forgotten “island” in northeast Syria?

Well, reality was very different from the expectation. Moving in between yellow landscapes of the most fertile area in Syria was a moving experience.

A sense of connection was very loud and the minute I reached Mozan, I felt more Syrian than ever. As a woman from the capital I thought I had it all figured out, and that my identity would be so different from my fellow women from a rural area. Again, I was completely mistaken. Going to the “periphery” made me understand what it means to belong to the center!”

If we were to look in our imaginary mirror, we should come away with feelings similar to these. Think of it this way: studying Urkesh we go to the periphery of time, at the very beginning of urban life. What have you learned from coming face to face with Urkesh, as seen through the eyes of our Mozanians of today?



If birds in Mozan had mirrors,  
they would recognize  
themselves in  
the birds of yore...



Oh stranger... how long have you been in this street,  
looking for addresses you knew once upon a time?

The face of the city changed in your long absence:  
prepare for yourself a seat in the garden of the past.

And sit, as if but waiting for the ones you love...  
be careful not to get into the oriental boredom.

They will come, for sure, they will come.  
The bird does not forget the window of the house,  
the branches on which he lived an old spring.

Adel Mahmoud

# Acknowledgments

We explained in the preface the reason for our title hailing a new archaeology for a young future. Because of the spirit that animates our project, our acknowledgments go well beyond formalities.

Yasmine Mahmoud is part of this young new Syrian future. Working on the exhibit and the catalog in Damascus, she has truly co-authored it with her passion as much as with her skills.

Hannibal Saad has come to Syrian archaeology from Syrian music. He was the one who had the vision of an exhibit in Beirut, and brought together latent energies that also speak to the promise of a new future.

Samer Abdelghafour, Hiba Qassar and Yara Moualla share in a different way in the young future that beckons: they have assisted with their enthusiasm and knowledge from a diaspora that they help make Syrian at the core.

While we all feel Mozanians at heart, the real Mozanians are the ones who have weathered the storm in the trenches: Muhammad Omo, Ismail Musa, Ibrahim Khello, Muhammad Hamza, Ibrahim Musa, Diadin Mustafa, Kameran Beg. We owe them the possibility of this exhibit more than to anyone else.

Our consultants have become, with us, adopted Mozanians – whether from childhood or, for now, still *in pectore*. Federico Buccellati lent his insight into the archaeology, Elena Croci into the how, and Ruggero Spagliarisi into the what of communication.

The organizations acknowledged on the copyright page are the ones that have supported the exhibit and this catalog. They became partners in what they feel, with us, to be a challenge truly worthy of the future, of the new young future to which the exhibit points. This is eloquently expressed by President Guzzetti of the Cariplo Foundation in his Foreword to this catalog. The same enthusiasm came from the Director of the UNESCO Observatory of Syrian Cultural Heritage in Beirut, Cristina Menegazzi, who shared our vision of archaeology as capable of bringing communities together. And in Beirut we are guests of Leila Badre in her Museum at AUB, where we had first come as her guests at a troubled moment in the history of Lebanon, and where she now welcomed us once again, at a troubled moment in Syria's history.

Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati

Giorgio Buccellati

# Archaeology for a young future



An exhibit at the  
American University of Beirut

Giorgio Buccellati  
Yasmine Mahmoud

How can an archaeological site in Syria come to stand as a symbol of pride in the past and of hope for the future?

The catalog of an exhibit held at the American University of Beirut, November 15-22, 2017, this small book aims to answer this question. It tells the story of how the site of Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh, has become a rallying point for archaeologists and for the local communities in their common fight for a shared past in which we can all find a new sense of purpose and the will to unite for a peaceful future.

Giorgio Buccellati is Research Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles and Director of the Urkesh Extended Project.

Yasmine Mahmoud is a doctoral student at the University of Pavia, Italy, and a staff member of the Urkesh Extended Project.

The Urkesh Press is also part of the young future of which this small book speaks.

It is meant to serve as the publishing arm of the Urkesh Extended Project. Within the framework of a projected Urkesh Eco-archaeological Park, it is planned that the village of Mozan will have a printing and binding establishment, alongside a permanent exhibit about ancient writing, particularly regarding the scribal schools of ancient Urkesh.

This publication is available online at [www.uep.arkesh.org](http://www.uep.arkesh.org).