

The Workshops of Urkesh

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Introduction

Questions of local production vs. the use of externally manufactured goods are of fundamental importance for the understanding of aspects of the efficient functioning of such a large ancient city as Urkesh. What types of articles were produced within the city and its surrounding hinterland, where were the raw materials for each of the individual types of production obtained, and how can these products be analyzed so as to first separate the moments of production and then identify discrete production units or workshops? From our excavations at Tell Mozan we can begin to answer some of these questions, especially in the area of glyptics, metal objects (tools, weapons, and objects for personal ornamentation), stone sculpture, and ceramics. These latter two categories will be the focus of the first part of this article, since we have in them clearer evidence for production methods combined with a sufficiently large and varied corpus to yield to stylistic analysis indications of the presence of distinct production units within the city. After this discussion the focus will shift to the study of a body of clay cylinder seal impressions, which is the source of major new evidence for seal-carving workshops at Urkesh.¹

¹ The results of the initial analysis of the inscribed seal impressions have already been published and the final publication of the seal impressions excavated in the AK royal building during the 1991 through the 1996 seasons is now in final preparation stage. Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, "The Royal Storehouse of Urkesh: The Glyptic Evidence from the Southwestern Wing," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 42-43 (1995-96), pp. 1-32; "The Seals of the King of Urkesh: Evidence from the Western

In a discussion of ancient workshops two initial points must be addressed that relate to individual creative contributions in the development of an artistic style and to the role of the individual in the creation of specific works of art. Both of these questions can best be taken up after the discussion in Part II below, since it is from the seal impressions excavated in the Royal Building AK that we have the largest body of evidence.

I. The Production of Stone Sculpture

Two objects found in Mozan stand out in this category of stone sculpture.² The first is a stele probably set up in the temple, while the second is a small figure of a lion found in the temple debris. It seems logical to think that both would have been carved for the temple where the stele, if set up there, would have been placed on a freestanding pedestal, given the fact that its two sides were both carved. While the stele only tangentially conveys a religious message, the lion probably was directly connected with temple ceremonies, given the symbolic importance of the lion for the third millennium city of Urkesh.

Round-Topped Double-Sided Stele [Ills. 7A and 7B (PDS 2.12)]

A relief carved in stone (B1.19) in the shape of a round-topped double-sided stele was discovered just outside the temple BA structure.³ This unfinished small stele came from

Wing of the Royal Storehouse AK," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes: Festschrift Hans Hirsch*, 86 (1996), pp. 75-100. M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Nuzi Viewed from Urkesh, Urkesh Viewed from Nuzi: Stock Elements and Framing Devices in Northern Syro-Mesopotamia," *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, 8 (1996), pp. 247-268; *Seal Impressions from the Urkesh Royal Building AK*, forthcoming.

² For the general setting and a preliminary discussion see M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Three Seasons of Excavation at Tell Mozan," in S. Eichler et al, Eds., *Tall al-Hamidiya 2* (1990), pp. 119-132; G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "Tell Mozan," in *Mille et Une Capitales de Haute Mesopotamie, Les Dossiers d'Archeologie*. No. 155 (December 1990), pp. 18-23; "Urkesh, The First Hurrian Capital," *Biblical Archaeologist* 60 (June 1997), pp. 77-96; see also *Mozan I: The Soundings of the First Two Seasons* (1988).

³ M. Kelly-Buccellati, "A New Third Millennium Sculpture from Mozan," in Albert Leonard and Bruce Beyer Williams, Eds., *Essays in Ancient Civilization Presented to Helene J. Kantor*. 1989, pp. 149-154. Two topics will not be treated in this article because they merit a longer discussion than is possible here. One is the recently discovered stone plaque fragment from the AK building. The portion we have depicts Gilgamesh and Enkidu. The second is the comparison between the two bronze lions of Tishatal. Since casts of these lions have been united in the new museum at Deir ez-Zor and in the new exhibit

a disturbed area along the northern parameter wall of the temple BA located near the highest portion of the High Mound. Including its distinctive rounded top, it measures 9 cm in height and 11.2 cm in preserved length. The stone is triangular in section. While a portion of both the top and bottom of this stele is preserved, its full length is missing; this is clear from broken traces on the stone itself and from the iconography. The sides are each carved with a single scene. The portion not preserved probably represents a little less than half of the original stele, based on the design.

On Side A a herd of cattle is carved with two animals clearly shown in movement. Their bodies are crossed but not in the static pattern found in southern crossed-animal designs produced during the Early Dynastic period, rather in an organic design which emphasizes the natural movement of an animal herd. This can be understood not only through the placement of the bodies but also by the fact that the animal legs are all depicted in motion. Additional animals were included in this scene as the head and a portion of the neck of a third animal are shown behind the horns of the second animal. The iconography of cattle herding in Mozan should come as no surprise. In his analysis of the faunal evidence from Mozan, including the data from inside and surrounding this temple, Sandor Bökönyi found that one-seventh of the bones belonged to cattle.⁴

The low relief on Side B depicts a plowman behind his draft animal; above him the hindquarters of a dog, with a straight tail extended over the head of the plowman, are preserved. The hoofed feet and legs of the draft animal are clearly shown in movement, in contrast with the resting position of the dog. The plowman is depicted with a long nose, large eye, short, pointed beard and a short skirt. He holds a plow in his left hand. The remarkable character of this scene comes from the dynamic aspects of the composition. The plowman is carved so that his leg appears to be pushing off from a diagonal line at the end of the scene. Since this diagonal line is unfinished in the carving, it is impossible to know what it represents. However, the diagonal inclination of the body and head of the plowman emphasize the dramatic movement forward.

One of the reasons for considering this piece a local carving is based on the fact that it was left in an unfinished state. Traces of the carving tool can be clearly seen in the chisel marks on the top, bottom, and along the one preserved end of the stone; tool

on the Hurrians in the Harvard Semitic Museum, it is clear that a reconsideration of the style of the two lions needs to be made.

⁴ Giorgio Buccellati, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, Rick Hauser, and Sandor Bökönyi, "The Mozan/Urkesh Archaeological Project (1993-95 Seasons)," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101 (1997) 133-135.

marks are also left on the relief figures themselves. In addition, parts of the scenes are unfinished; this is especially clear at the preserved ends of the two designs. Based on visual observation, the material of the stele can be found locally; it is carved from a white calcareous stone readily available on the nearby southern slopes of the Tur Abdin today. A similar stone is employed in the stone foundations of the third millennium temple, the AK royal building, as well as third millennium tombs. Thus there are clear indications that this stele was carved in the city or at most in the immediate vicinity.

While we have parallels in southern Mesopotamia for the shape of this stele,⁵ there are none for its combined iconography. Fragments of a stone stele were discovered at Halawa on the floors of the late third millennium temple.⁶ The Halawa example also appears to be locally made, because of its unusual iconography and the fact that the stone is available in the vicinity. The single carved side of the Halawa stele is divided into registers with a figure on the bottom register holding a pair of reins behind a draft animal. However, the designs of the two sides of the Mozan stele are very different from the rest of the Halawa stele.⁷ Parallels for our stele are not found elsewhere in the Syro-Mesopotamian area, but it should be pointed out that the motifs are singularly appropriate for the local ecology, with farming and animal herding as the main sources of the ancient diet. Our motifs recall the agricultural and pastoral economic bases, which form a strong portion of the wealth of the city of Urkesh.

Since the stele was found near the northern wall of the temple, it might have belonged to a workshop furnishing sculpture for this same temple. We discovered no evidence for such a workshop, but remains of activities connected with the temple did come from this area, including three weights used in spinning. Along the exterior of the northern wall of the temple we excavated an unbaked brick pavement on top of which were traces of

⁵ Jutta Borker-Klahn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und Vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, Baghdader Forschungen Vol. 4 (Mainz am Rhein, 1982), especially the Early Dynastic inscribed stele from Ur, number 15, on p. 123 although the Mozan stele is too narrow on the ends to contain a relief. The Ur example is larger, being 25x25 cm; however, the Mozan stele may have originally been almost this length.

⁶ Winfried Orthmann, "Tell Halawa 1982," *AfO* 31(1984) 142-146; "Art of the Akkade Period in Northern Syria and Mari," *MARI* 4 (1985), pp. 469-474.

⁷ In the upper register of the Halawa relief one of the presumably female figures is holding a small child. In this connection the Chuera relief of goddesses holding small children and animals should be recalled. A. Moortgat and U. Moortgat-Correns, *Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien* (1976), pp. 51-57. In both the Chuera and the Halawa reliefs the scenes are designed with a row of figures holding small animals or one or more children. Neither of these scenes with children reflect the same type of iconography as the Urkesh royal seals.

reed matting; this matting must have served as a temporary roofing over the pavement. Also on the north were a series of walkways constructed out of small stones and large sherds lying flat. These walkways were deliberately built with a border along the sides made from broken jar rims placed upright. It appears that this area functioned as a use area connected with the temple but with no direct access to the interior. The area probably contained small stalls and workshops made from flimsy material.

Direct dating criteria for the Mozan stele are difficult to establish. The main levels of the temple with which the exterior pebble walkways can be associated, are dated on the basis of the ceramics and the few seal impressions found there to the later part of ED III. However, in this entire Khabur area the third millennium ceramic dating for the second half is vague at best.⁸ An additional problem stems from the fact that the iconography has no parallels, either in the surrounding north Syrian region or in southern Mesopotamia. The iconography and style of the stele are close to early Akkadian art, especially in the lack of patterning and the emphasis on naturalistic movement.⁹ The situation is made even more interesting by the startling new and dynamic royal iconography of Urkesh, which is prefigured in this stele. The later royal glyptic style may have been made possible because of innovations in earlier third millennium workshops. Further reinforcing this point is the fact that the over forty seal impressions excavated in a burnt deposit outside the city wall in K1, and dating to the ED III period for the most part, also stress naturalism.¹⁰

Lions (Ill. 1 and *PDS* 2.11)

While the stele is obviously associated with the fruitfulness of the local environment, a small stone statue of a lion found in the destruction level of the temple recalls the mythology surrounding the ancient city of Urkesh. Two beautiful bronze lions are connected with Urkesh and one of its kings, Tishatal.¹¹ The stone lion described here

⁸ Nevertheless, a number of major excavations, of which Brak and Mozan are typical, do permit more precise ceramic connections within well stratified contexts. The Syrian Jezeriah Field Workshop to be held in May 1998 will certainly contribute to the understanding of the ceramic chronology in the region.

⁹ M. Kelly-Buccellati, 1989, p. 154.

¹⁰ M. Kelly-Buccellati, 1988, pp. 67-80.

¹¹ See especially Chapter 12 in this volume. The Louvre lion was first published in A. Parrot and J. Nougayrol, "Un document de fondation hurrite," *Revue Assyriologie* 42 (1948), pp. 1-20. See also D. Parayre, "L'attribution de sculptures aux Hurrites," in M.T. Barrelet et al, *Methodologie et Critiques I:*

was excavated in the red clay platform of the temple.¹² The reclining attitude of the figure¹³ and the naturalistic rendering of the lion mane convey a powerful image.¹⁴ This lion statue was found in a thick collapse deposit, which was compacted following the destruction of an earlier phase, and served as a subfloor for a structure that is poorly preserved. Since it was very near the altar, it may have represented the deity worshiped in the temple. While there is no direct evidence that this statue was carved in Mozan, the naturalism of the rendering of the mane would again be in keeping with the general style seen in many other products of the city's workshops.

II. The Production of Clay Sculpture

The high quality of the production of modeled ceramics is clearly shown by the large number of animal figurines found at Mozan (see Chapter 6 in this volume). Nevertheless figurines are associated with a type and do not as a rule represent an individual figure, be it human or animal. Another kind of clay object is more properly to be associated with sculpture in the round. Two such examples from our excavations represent human heads. One is from the Khabur period; I will not discuss it here, but only publish a photograph (Ill. 6). This cannot be taken in the sense of a portrait but rather a stylized representation of a figure with enough iconographic specificity to indicate that a particular individual was intended to be represented.

The second human head represents a bearded male made of clay and was excavated from directly below the surface on the south end of the AK building.¹⁵ Since it was just below the surface we cannot tell if it is in its original context. It does appear to be *in situ* because it was discovered next to a wall of the AK building, with no evidence of disturbance nearby. While it is made of clay, it does not appear to have been baked and was found with deep cracks, especially in the upper portion (Ills 3-5 and PDS 2.13). The clay on the exterior is fine but in the broken portions small pebbles can be seen. It was broken below the neck with its full beard preserved except for one corner. Hair patterns

Problèmes Concernant les Hurrites. Paris, 1977, pp. 115-190.

¹² Field number B1.164; height 12 cm, width 10.2 cm.

¹³ See reclining lion images on two seals of the king, Ill. 2, discussed below.

¹⁴ M. Kelly-Buccellati, 1990, p. 127.

¹⁵ Field No. A1.23. Height 4.1 cm; 2.6 cm in width measured from the widest portion of the head at the ears.

were lightly incised on the top and back of the head.

The face is prominently highlighted by a high forehead and subtly modeled eyebrows. The deeply set eyes are small pierced holes, very different from the usual large prominent eyes prevalent in this time period in the south. There is no indication that the eyes were ever intended for inlays. Below, the high cheeks are modeled so that they have the bulging appearance of some Mari statues. The deeper modeling around the mouth, the high rounded cheeks, and the inset eyes give to the face an air of specificity and even of "personality." The wide nose is flattened and appears unbroken, while the mouth is small above a somewhat pointed chin. There is no visible break between the ears and head, so that they were formed with the same clay as the head and not added later; they are rounded and pierced with holes in the center. The beard starts on the side of the head at the level of the eyes as lightly incised parallel wavy lines and continues in heavier wavy lines down the beard, which is squared off at the bottom. The proportions of this head are striking in that it is essentially divided into three: the forehead, the face, and the beard.

Since there are no parallels for this head, it appears more than likely that it was made locally, even though the lack of similar material from the site makes this difficult to prove positively.

III. Evidence for Local Workshops Based on the Urkesh Seal Impressions

Introduction

Over 1200 clay seal impressions have been excavated in the AK building; these impressions had been used to seal boxes, baskets, bags, and jars. Most of the sealed containers were in all likelihood sent from nearby farms and places of production to the AK building for storage and redistribution.¹⁶ Inside the building the containers were opened and the clay of the sealing discarded onto the nearby floors. There was no attempt to gather them up for administrative purposes, as is the case in many other sites. For instance, in contemporaneous strata at nearby Tell Brak, probably ancient Nagar, two types of distributional patterns were found: deposits of sealings were both scattered

¹⁶ Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati, 1995-6. In what follows, I will use the abbreviations given in this article, where q stands for the queen's seals, k for the king's, and h for members of the household. The seal impressions from the AK building are all broken and very small. The designs had to be reconstructed from many fragments. The same is true for the identification of the types of containers they sealed.

across floors and found discarded in groups.¹⁷ A number of the Urkesh seal impressions are inscribed, giving us the name of the ruling dynasts and courtiers associated with them (Fig. 1). The majority of the seal impressions were made by seals which were not inscribed; however, some have stylistic and iconographic elements which connect them to the inscribed seals. The Urkesh corpus of seal impressions is also supplemented by a few cylinder seals excavated in the building.

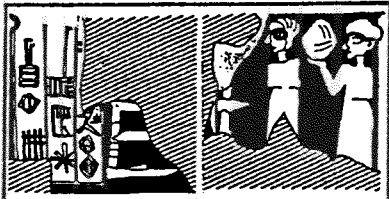
In the inscribed corpus the greatest number of impressions belong to the queen and the royal courtiers specifically connected with her. Out of some 170 inscribed seals, 72 of the identifiable containers were sealed with the queen's seals while 28 containers were sealed by authority of the queen's nurse, Zamena. The queen's chief cook sealed 27 containers and the seals of Innin Shadu, a courtier who does not have a title in his seal inscription, sealed 26 containers (Ill. 8). Since we are still excavating what we are calling the Royal Building AK, the numbers will change, but the proportions found in this section of the building appear to suggest that the queen's administrators utilized these areas for storage and redistribution of goods under their control.

The Seal Cutting Workshop of the Queen

One of the seal-cutting workshops that can be isolated in the stratified seal impressions found in the AK building is associated with the queen, Uqnitum. All her seals were carved in this workshop, as well as the seals of two courtiers directly connected through their inscriptions with her, the nurse, Zamena, and her female cook whose name unfortunately is too worn to read. A number of uninscribed seals can be associated with this workshop through their iconography and stylistic characteristics. The products of this workshop, as well as those of the workshop associated with the seals of the king, are notable for the innovation in the basic themes carved on the seals. This is true in the themes concerning the dynastic program carried forward by motifs on these seals, in the symbols utilized connected with the power and prestige of the dynasts. New or rare figures could also be placed under the seal inscription; see for instance the boar in q3 (Ill. 17).

¹⁷ David and Joan Oates, "The Akkadian Administrative Buildings at Tell Brak," *Iraq* 51 (1989) pp. 193-211; "Excavations at Tell Brak 1990-91," *Iraq* 53 (1991), pp. 127-145. Joan Oates, "An Akkadian Administrative Device from Tell Brak," in M. Frangipane et al., Eds. *Between the Rivers and Over the Mountains* (1993) pp. 289-305. See also R. J. Matthews, W. Matthews, and H. McDonald, "Excavations at Tell Brak, 1994," *Iraq* 56, (1994) pp. 177-194.

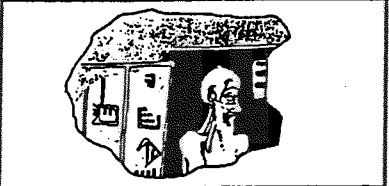
k1



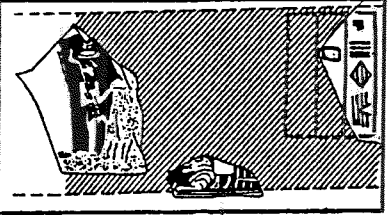
k2



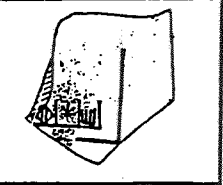
k3



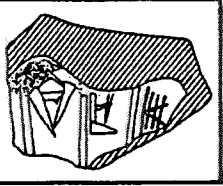
k4



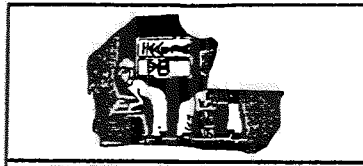
k5



k6



q1



q2



q3



q4



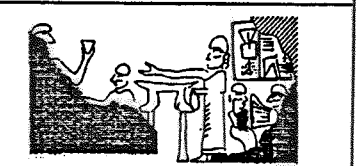
q5



q6



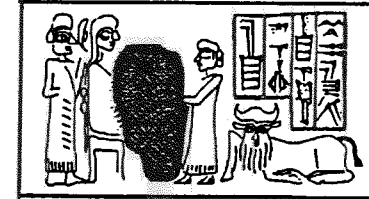
q7



q8



h1



h2



h3



h4



Fig. 1. Inscribed seals of the king (k), the queen (q) and the royal household (h).

The inscribed seals produced by the queen's workshop all exhibit the major theme of dynastic succession, including images which emphasize and enhance her prominence. Typical of this program is the scene showing both rulers and their children found on one seal of the queen (q2). The other scenes of the queen all connect a rendering of the queen herself with her children (q3-8).¹⁸ Therefore all of the inscribed seals carved in this workshop depict various groupings of the royal family. All these figures are portrayed with an emphasis on intimacy among family members. The intimate relationships are expressed through gestures that suggest touching shown by both the son and daughter who touch the lap of the queen and the king (Ill. 9-10).

The queen's nurse Zamena uses the same gesture while holding the wrist of a small child sitting on the lap of the queen.¹⁹ The sense of intimacy can be further noticed in the two seals of Zamena. In them the queen is shown wearing the same dress, a fringed garment, that her nurse Zamena and her other attendants wear; in her own seals Uqnitum wears the more regal pleated garment. The intimate relationship was mirrored in the seal inscriptions of both Zamena and the female cook of the queen. These two inscriptions identify the cook and the nurse by saying that they are servants of Uqnitum without, however, specifying her royal title. In contrast the titles of NIN and DAM are clearly indicated on the seals belonging to Uqnitum. Small details help to create this familial atmosphere and connection on the seals, for instance the queen and her daughter both wear their hair long and in braids decorated with the same shape braid ornaments (Ill. 10).

Formal relationships are expressed in part through size. The children certainly are all depicted as small, but the nurse Zamena is also smaller on her own seals even though the servant standing behind Uqnitum is shown with her head at the same height as the seated queen (h1-2). Therefore a certain hierarchical scale is preserved in these seals which may reflect the relative importance of the various figures. If this is indeed the case, then the butcher would be a more important figure than the assistant cook depicted

¹⁸ q1 is not sufficiently preserved to determine the main theme of the iconography.

¹⁹ An inscribed stone bowl from Ur depicts a goddess holding a seated child placed sideways on her lap. A small figure appears to be touching the lap of this goddess. The bowl is dated to the Ur III period. L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations: IV, The Early Periods* (1956), p. 52 and Pl. 36:U232. I am very grateful to J. V. Canby for this reference. In Akkadian and Ur III presentation scenes the presenting deity, when standing between the main deity and the worshiper, holds the worshiper by the wrist. The position of the arm held back and the elbow raised, reflects the emphasis on gestures, at times awkward in their execution, both in these seals and in the Urkesh seals carved in the queen's workshop.

on the cook's seal. Another aspect of the formal relationships shown in the seals carved in this workshop is the seated position of the royal couple. They are the only important figures to sit in these scenes; all other figures stand.²⁰ This is the usual position for the figures of the deities and the king on later third millennium Mesopotamian seals. In some Early Dynastic and Akkadian banquet scenes an attendant may be greeting the seated figures; however attendants are shown with their heads at the same height as the banqueteers.²¹

A second theme, or in this instance perhaps a sub-text, is that of working. In the case of the products of this workshop the theme of working also contributes to the fundamental message of power and dynastic succession which the queen projects. The two seals of Zamena show her holding by the wrist a royal child, seated on the lap of Uqnitum, as would be appropriate for the royal nurse. The cook of Uqnitum has depicted on her seal a butcher and a woman churning. One of the queen's seals, q1, is incompletely preserved. It shows two servants bending, one obviously making something in a large basket while the opposite bending figure is engaged in an activity which is unclear.

The working theme connects the inscribed seals of the queen and her servants to others in the corpus which are not inscribed. From the same workshop came seals portraying a number of different craft activities. One, for instance, shows pottery-making (A1.364), with the potter kneeling in front of a jar placed on a stand.²² Two other jars placed on stands are sitting above. The larger standing figure wears a fringed garment and soft hat characteristic of other scenes from this workshop; for instance the soft hat is similar to those worn in the banquet scene (Ill. 14), A5.91.²³

Yet another characteristic of some of the seals carved in this workshop is the placement of the inscription. In q1 the inscription box is being held up, on the backs, as it were, of the two working servants. These two figures are not the same size, so the box

²⁰ In the seals belonging to the queen, q4,6-8, two seated figures are placed under her inscription. Since they can be identified as a singer and a lyre player, they are obviously not major figures. In q2 a small child sits on the lap of the queen. None of these three seated figures are major elements within the overall scheme of the queen's seals but all contribute to the image of power which she projects.

²¹ Pierre Amiet, *La Glyptique Mesopotamienne Archaique*, 1961, Pl. 83:1105-7; Edith Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections: The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 1948, Nos. 250-252.

²² Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati, 1995-6, Fig. 9:c.

²³ Idem, pp. 24-26.

is not symmetrically placed above them, as is the case of the placement of the inscription box of the other seven seals of the queen. It may be that the box, or the bending figure on the left, were added after the rest of the composition was started.²⁴ The message of this image pertaining to the power and prestige of the queen is clearly articulated here as it is in the cook's seal. The cook's seal has the main inscription box, naming her as the female cook of Uqnitum, placed between the two kitchen functionaries engaged in appropriate food preparation activities, the woman churning while the butcher is shown with a small animal. Both are engaged in these activities while facing the inscription box, which contains the name of Uqnitum. This last point is an indication of the various and sometimes subtle ways the dynastic message is communicated. The smaller inscription box, which probably contained the personal name of the female cook, is carved above the small animal of the butcher and the bent back of the woman. In this case too the box is parallel to the other box, but the figures below are uneven in size and placement, in an arrangement reminiscent of q1, above. In the seals of Zamena the inscription box is shortened to accommodate the head of the human-headed bull (Ills. 11 and 12).

Body proportions and hand and arm gestures also reflect the royal intent. In general heads carved in this workshop are large in proportion to the rest of the body (Ill. 13). Hand gestures are prominent conveyors of the royal message. Where needed, the gestures could be further emphasized. So, for instance, in q4-7 both the royal daughter and the attendant behind this girl have elongated arms extended toward or touching the queen. In the case of the seal of the cook, both the butcher and the woman churning have exaggerated shoulders and elbow positions (see also the exaggerated touching gestures the crown prince in K2, who has facial features similar to those on the queen's seals), emphasizing their particular activities (Ill. 15). The large noses and emphasis on the eye combined with the other exaggerated physical attributes give an expressionistic feeling to the output of this workshop.

The products of this workshop are distinctive in the area of style as well. The carving is characterized by fully modeled figures with little interior differentiation typical of the carving in the ED III period in the south. The noses and ankles are essentially triangular in shape with several ellipses enclosing the eyes. A stylistic characteristic, which was striking from the very first in these impressions, is the deep carving of the pleats and the fringe of the garments. This is clearer in some rollings than others, but in the queen's

²⁴ The placement of the inscription and the box are unusual in that both run horizontally, see Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati, 1995-6, pp. 14-16.

seals where she is seated on a stool wearing a pleated garment (q2, 3, 4, 6), the pleats curving under her as she sits on the stool are deeply carved. In the field, when I was trying to make sense of all the fragments of sealings from the excavations, I could easily recognize this characteristic in the various sealings and called it the "Deep Fringe" style. The depth of the fringe and especially the pleats curving under the seated figure contribute to a sense of movement and rhythm, especially as the deep shadows of the pleats and the fringe are in contrast to the smooth undifferentiated aspects of the clothing or the chair seat. The deep carving is also evident in the detailed rendering of the coat of the ram placed under the inscription in q2 and in the obvious spikiness of the upright hair along the spine of the boar in q3 (Ill. 17).

This aspect of the carving style is clearly found in the uninscribed seals carved in this workshop. So, for instance, in the banquet scene (A5.115), where the floppy hat is similar, but not identical, to the hat of the large standing figure in the seal with the pottery-making motif (A1.364), we see the same emphasis on the carving of the pleats as they curve under the seated figure (Ill. 14). Some animal combat scenes are also carved in this style.

The overriding emphasis on the secular concerns of projecting images of power and the dynastic succession appears to overshadow any reference to divine help or approbation. One iconographic aspect of the queen's seals, which could refer to the divine, is the star delicately carved in the field in q2, h2, and found also in k2. In the queen's seal, q2, and also in k2, the crown prince is shown paying homage to his father. Zamena's seal, h1, shows a small child seated on the lap of the queen with a star between the two. It may be that the star had a dual function, that of signifying a royal successor and also divine approbation.²⁵ The human-headed bull in h1-2 and h4 could also be a symbol of Shamash (Ills. 11-12). However, given the absence of evidence indicating an intended symbolism, the significance remains unclear.

The King's Workshop

In the inscribed corpus of seals belonging to the king, the impressions are far fewer than those of the queen. Only eleven impressions have been found for the king,

²⁵ In this regard too it should be remembered that Near Eastern monarchs sometimes called themselves children of the gods; see J. V. Canby, "The Child in Hittite Iconography," in *Ancient Anatolia, Aspects of Change and Cultural Development: Essays in Honor of Machteld J. Mellink*, J. Vorys Canby, et al., Eds. 1986, pp. 54-69.

belonging to five of his seals. As a result, the composite renderings are much less complete than those of the queen. However, some conclusions can be drawn as to the output of the workshop in which his seals were carved.²⁶ A number of characteristics clearly connect the two workshops. This is especially true in the fundamental aspect of the subject of the dynastic program. It is equally true in the many new iconographic motifs invented for this Urkesh dynasty and unknown previous to our excavations at Urkesh. In both workshops the concern for the placement of the king and queen in scenes emphasizing their power and prestige is very evident. In the case of the king's seals, reclining lions are found on two seals (k2, 4) (Ill. 2 and *PDS* 2.14). In one well preserved example, a lion is strikingly placed at the foot of the throne of the king (k2). This lion is even more emphasized since the position of the crown prince touching the lap of his father makes him appear visually to be standing on top of the head of the lion. The naturalism of the figure, plus the fact that a standing figure pours a liquid that falls toward the lion's trough, suggests that this is the representation of a live animal and not a statue.

The dynastic program is clearly referred to in k2 where the intimate touching gesture is found along with the exaggerated elbow position. The significance of the crown prince touching the lap of his father is clear, as it is on the queen's seals. Another striking innovation is the motif of the ball of thread held in the hand of one of the king's attendants (k1). In this seal, too, the heads of the attendants are similarly large, with the hat of the figure on the right reflecting hats worn in the seals carved in the queen's workshop. But this seal of the king is a good example of the differences between the two workshops also. The figure on the right has poised on the palm of his outstretched hand what appears to be thread²⁷ (Ill. 16 and *PDS* 2.15). Striking, too, is the balance of design elements with the ball being an inverted reflection of the basic shape of the heads on either side of it. Even before the inscription was read in the field, it was clear that an artist with an unusual sense of design had carved this. The best preserved of the

²⁶ Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1996. For third millennium symbols of prestige, see Susan M. Pollock, *The Symbolism of Prestige: An Archaeological Example from the Royal Cemetery of Ur*, PhD diss. Michigan 1983.

²⁷ See an Achaemenid example of the offering of yarn by the Twelfth Delegation of the Apadana reliefs. While the shape of the ball of yarn is different in the Urkesh example, in both the lightness of the weight is emphasized by the placement on the outstretched palm. See G. Walser, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis*. Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann (1966), pp. 86-88. I wish to thank Erika Bleibtreu for suggesting this parallel.

king's seals, k2, shows a finer rendering of the figures, especially the profile of the figure preserved on the left. It is this emphasis on harmony and balance, combined with the quality of the carving, that differentiates the products of the king's workshop from those of the queen.

Conclusion

It is difficult to determine how many seal carvers would have been working for the Urkesh dynasts and their courtiers. Given the evidence for the queen's workshop, it appears that the inscribed seals could have been produced by a single seal carver and the non-inscribed seals by one or more additional carvers. With the number of seals and seal impressions increasing with every new season of excavation, it may be that in the future we will be able to isolate the seals carved by single individuals.

In any discussion of the royal workshops of Urkesh the question of the role of the patron must be raised.²⁸ This question is ultimately connected with the problem of who constituted the audience for the glyptic of the dynastic program and the power of these images on the intended audience, questions that will not be taken up here. In the case of the artists employed in the two glyptic workshops identified above it is important to note that aspects of their work can be attributed to their artistic training as members of a craft-oriented profession. In other words, they would have brought to their work in Urkesh an impressive knowledge of seal carving styles and techniques prevalent in Syro-Mesopotamia, both those of their contemporaries and those preceding them.²⁹ The fact that certain elements of their figural style and technique resemble those of ED III and early Akkadian in Mesopotamia should not surprise us.

At the same time it is clear that this artistic heritage was not determinant. The specificity of the message of the dynastic program and the fact that such a focus is new to ancient Near Eastern art, at least as conveyed here, lead us to postulate a significant role for the patrons, Uqnitum and Tupkish (and perhaps the nurse Zamena) in the formulation of this program. The fact, too, that so many other aspects of the art of

²⁸ For an analysis of the role of the patron in Achaemenid art see M. C. Root, "Circles of Artistic Programming: Strategies for Studying Creative Process at Persepolis," in Ann C. Gunter, Ed. *Investigating Artistic Environments in the Ancient Near East*. Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (1990), pp. 115-139.

²⁹ See in this regard M. B. Garrison, "Seals and the Elite at Persepolis: Some Observations on Early Achaemenid Persian Art," *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991), pp. 1-20.

Urkish are new and unprecedented indicates a significant creative aspect within its artistic circles.³⁰ In other words, the artistic climate within some Urkish workshops stimulated innovative thinking³¹ on the part of both artists and patrons. The unity of the program and the infused message in the seals of both the queen and the king is striking. The detail to which the artists went to convey the dynastic message is also impressive and must reflect the very real concerns of the patrons. The official ideology as expressed through their seal designs must have been formulated by the patrons in conjunction with the artists in their workshops. Given the coherence of the program it would not be surprising to discover, in our continuing excavations at Urkish, an expression of these same concerns in other artistic monuments made in the city. Evidence for this type of creativity and intense collaboration is otherwise rare in the ancient Near East.

³⁰ This is also seen earlier on the seal impressions excavated in the K1 burnt deposit. See *Mozan 1*, pp. 67-80.

³¹ In terms of the alternative proposed by J.-M. Durand, "L'insertion...", in Barrelet 1977 (cited above, n. 11), between "originality at the source" (*originalité primitive*) or "at least a de facto particularism," the balance would seem to swing towards the former.