

Towns and Palaces in the EBA Levant

HPAR4005

What/Where is the Levant?

- Ancient Canaan
- Coast of Syro-Palestine
 - Syria
 - Lebanon
 - Palestine
 - Israel



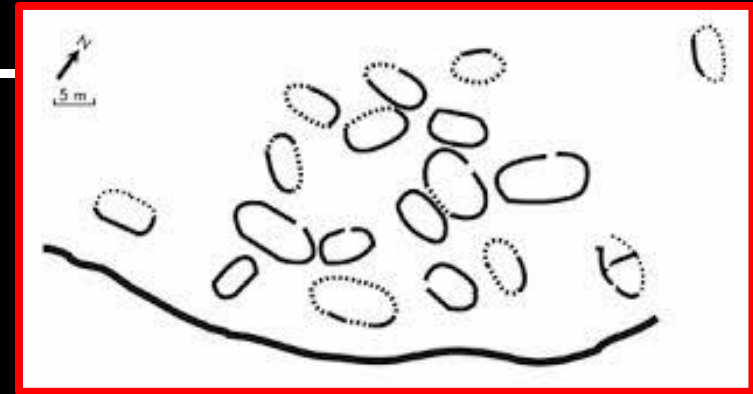
Aerial of the Near East

Chronology

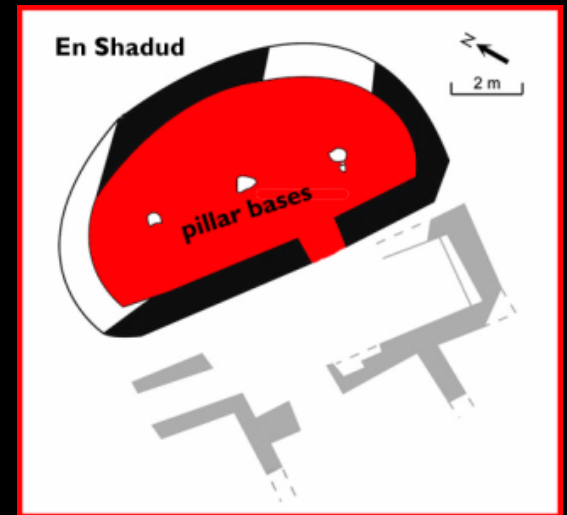
- Southern Levant / Palestine:
 - EB I c.3500-3100: Egyptian colonies
 - EB II c.3100-2700 BC: first urban period (Albright 1935)
- Western Syria:
 - 2600-2000 BC = “urban Revolution”
 - Fortified cities with satellite communities
 - Monumental building projects
 - Writing

Southern Levant in EB I

- Small settlements (1 ha)
simple architecture
- Joffe: slow process of
increasing social
complexity
 - Control over copper
resources
 - Semi-sedentary pastoral
communities



Site plan, Sidon-Dakerman



Plan of house, En Shadud

Egyptian Colonies EB I

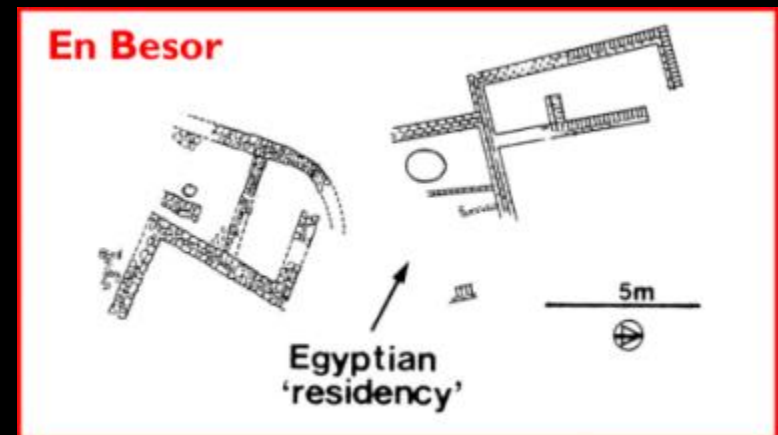
- Trade: cosmetic palettes, copper, wine
- Evidence for Egyptian occupation?
 - Egyptian residences: En Besor, Tell Sakan
 - **Serekh**: Tell Sakan, Arad
 - Locally made Egyptian pottery: el-'Arieni



Egyptian jar



Serekh



EB II c. 3100-2700 BC

- **First urban period** in southern Levant
 - Major tell sites are fortified
 - Distinctive leap in socio-political organisation?
 - Higher level of inter-site competition & intra-site organisation
- Expansion of settlement & larger sites:
 - From 6-10 hectares up to 20-25 hectares



Arad

Fortifications

- Arad: stone circuit wall 2.5m wide traced over 1100m
 - 11 (semi)-circular towers, two gates & two postern gates
- 'Ai: stone wall 4-5m thick
- Jericho: mudbrick wall with structural cavities built on sloping earth glacis
 - Semi-circular towers & gates protected by external tower



Arad walls



Interpreting Fortifications

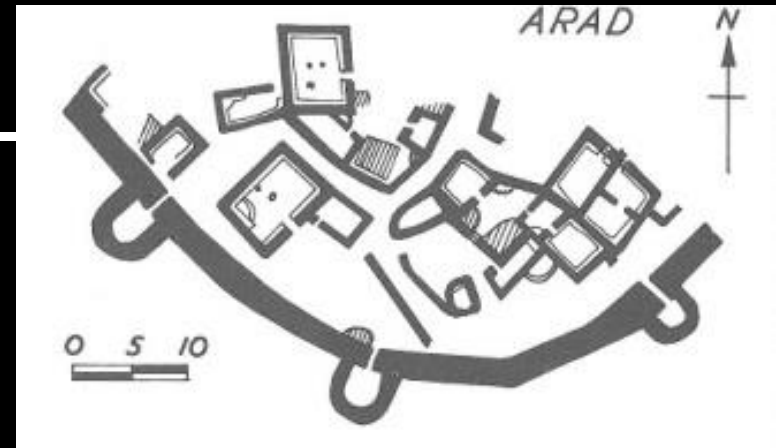
- Defensive & control
- Ability to plan, organise & administer construction projects
- Centralisation of economic activities?
- Define a new social, political & symbolic landscape



Jericho walls

Inside the Towns

- Any evidence for centralised organisation & planning ?
- Houses organised into compounds or insulae
- Arad & 'Ai: houses built in alignment with the fortifications



Plan of Arad



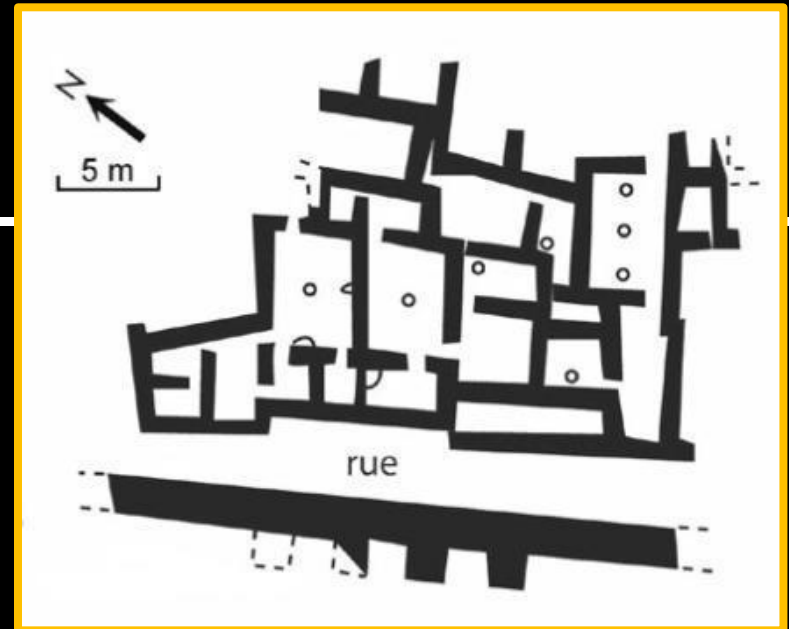
Model house from Arad

Household Objects

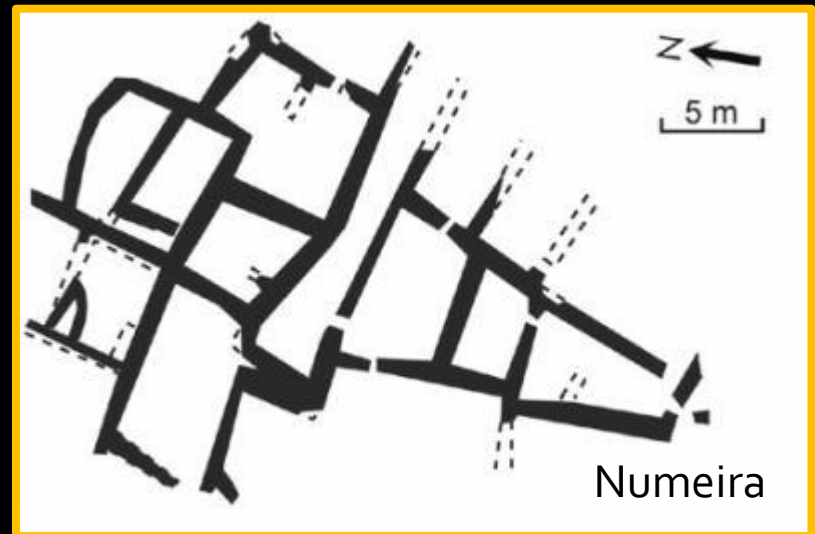


EB II Palaces?

- Large “patrician houses”
- Occupied by people of special status?
- Specialization of space & activities?
 - Centralised storage?
 - Instruments of political & economic control
 - Evidence for the first local monarchies in Canaan
- But no apparatus of administration...
- No elite burials



Yarmouth, palace



Numeira

EB II c. 3100-2700 BC

- Are these towns?
- Why do these sites develop in the southern Levant at beginning of third millennium BC?
 - “the outcome of a long process of social evolution, resulting in the emergence of complex society” (Gophna 1998: 273).
 - Joffe: state formation/urbanisation grew up following the withdrawal of Egyptian presence & end of direct overland trade with Egypt

Syria: 2600-2000 BC

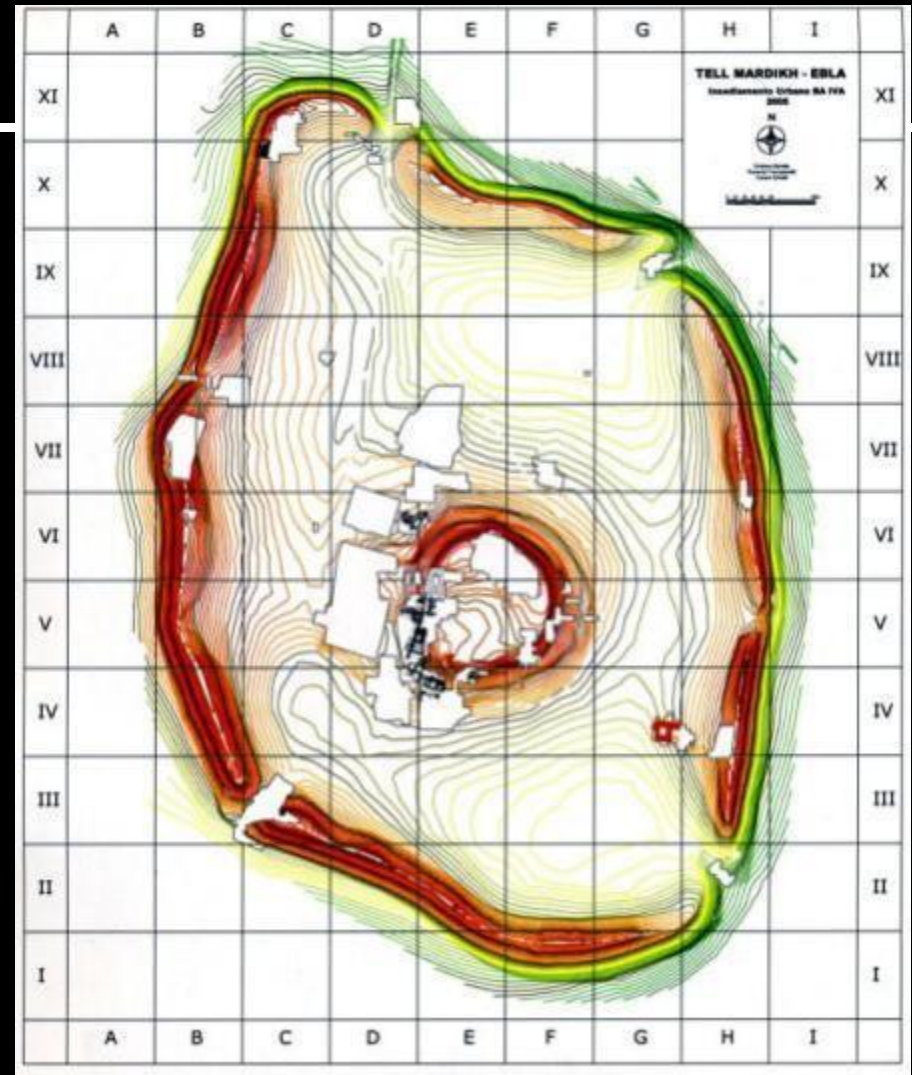
- Urban communities (60-250 ha):
 - Fortified cities with satellite communities
- Hierarchical political organisation
 - Numerous wealthy burials
 - Craft specialisation: using luxury goods derived from long distance trade
 - Monumentality: palaces & temples
 - Adoption of cuneiform
- Culturally part of Mesopotamia



Ebla

Fortifications

- Increasing wealth & territorial expansion of towns: defensive
- Textual evidence for military aggression
- **Citadel cities:**
 - Upper town walled
 - Second wall surrounding lower town: with towers, fortified gates, buttresses, rampart & **glacis**



Plan of Ebla

Craft Specialisation

- Movement of craft specialisation away from the household
- Wheelmade pottery:
 - Mass-produced
 - Elaborate forms
- Bronzes
- Attached specialists:
 - Standard of Ebla



Standard of Ebla



Tomb group from Carchemish

Royal Burials

- Rich & varied funerary record
- Wealthily furnished elite tombs with stone built shafts & chamber tombs
 - Monumental scale: a considerable investment of labour
 - Multiple inhumations



Umm el-Marra Tomb 8



Silver vessels: Umm el-Marra

Wealthy Grave Goods

- Stylistic parallels with Ur
 - Gold beads strewn over body
 - Ostrich egg inlaid with mother of pearl & lapis lazuli
 - Gold pendants
 - Lapis lazuli beads in form of fly
- Long distance trade & acquisition of luxuries
- Deliberately removed from circulation



Gold jewellery: Umm el-Marra

Palaces

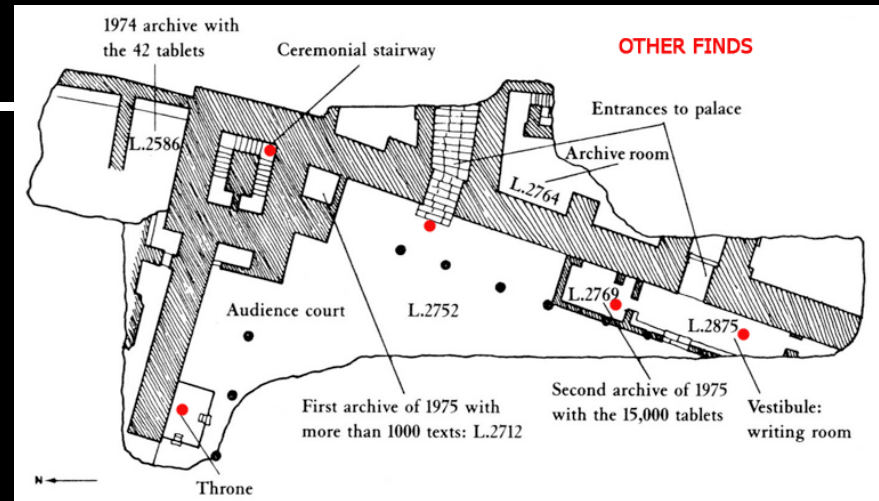
- Appearance of monumental buildings
- Central location
- Function:
 - Elite residences
 - Economic, bureaucratic centres
- Two key palaces in the region:
 - Mari (on the Euphrates)
 - Ebla
- Key development: adoption of writing



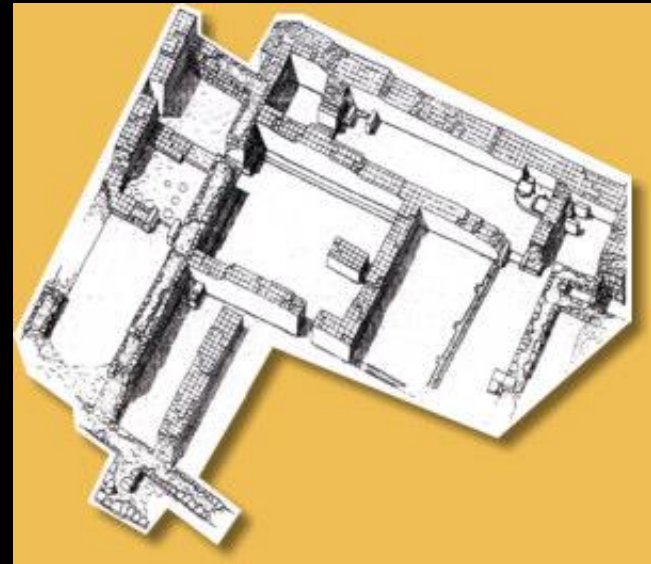
Palace at Ebla

Ebla: Palace G

- Complex & massive architecture & corbel vaulted tomb
- Two wings around central court
 - Raised mudbrick dais against north wall of court
- Specialist activities
 - Rooms to north: storage
 - Upper storey (residential)
 - East wing: ground stone tools
 - Administrative rooms
- Destroyed c. 2300 BC



Plan of palace



Ebla Archives

- Most significant find = c.17000 clay tablets
- Covered short period of 40-50 years & reigns of three kings
- Cuneiform script used to Eblaite
- Used Sumerian words & ideograms:
 - Cultural contact with the literate city states of Mesopotamia



Cuneiform tablet

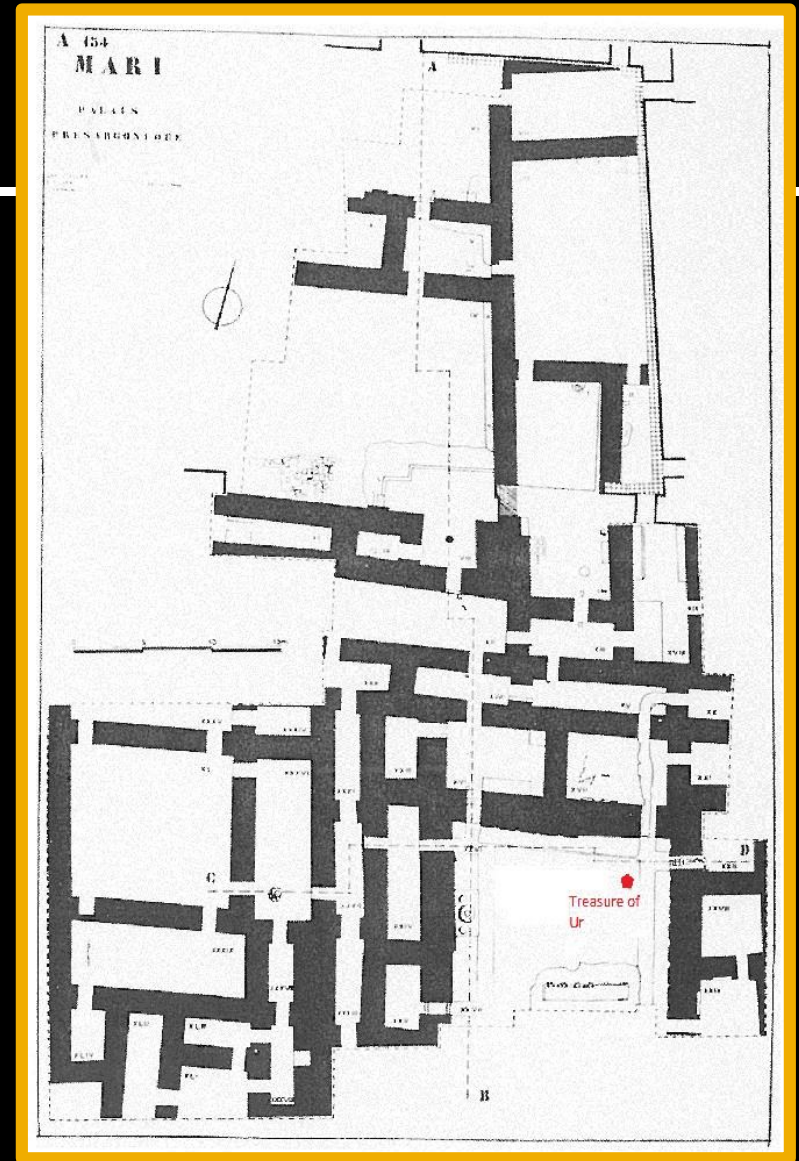
Ebla - Wealth

- Considerable material wealth
- Evidence for trade:
 - c.22kg of unworked lapis lazuli
 - Egyptian diorite & alabaster vessel fragments
 - Inscribed Pepi I vase
- Finished art objects – made by attached specialists



Mari Palace P1

- Mudbrick architecture with niched facades
- Built around central courtyard
- Salle aux piliers with dais: throne room
- Destroyed by fire



Plan of palace

"Treasure of Ur"

- Hoard placed in large jar in courtyard
 - Objects of lapis, gold
 - Lapis bead inscribed with name of **Mesannepada**, king of Ur



Temples

- Monumental sacred complexes segregated from domestic areas
 - Institutionalised control of religious practices
 - Economic & political role?
- Luxury crafted objects dedicated in temples



Statuary from Temple to Ishtar, Mari

Summary

- Significant changes in settlement organisation in Levant during 3rd millennium BC
- Appearance of fortified central places in the landscape – dramatic modification of landscape & peoples' experience of space
- Significant evidence for mobilisation of labour
- Elaborate architecture: palaces & temples
- Craft specialisation & control of wealth in Syria
- Emergence of elite group controlling access to imported wealth