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Reviewed work(s):
Source: *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Mar., 1984), pp. 18-32
Published by: The American Schools of Oriental Research
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3209873
Accessed: 07/06/2012 09:42

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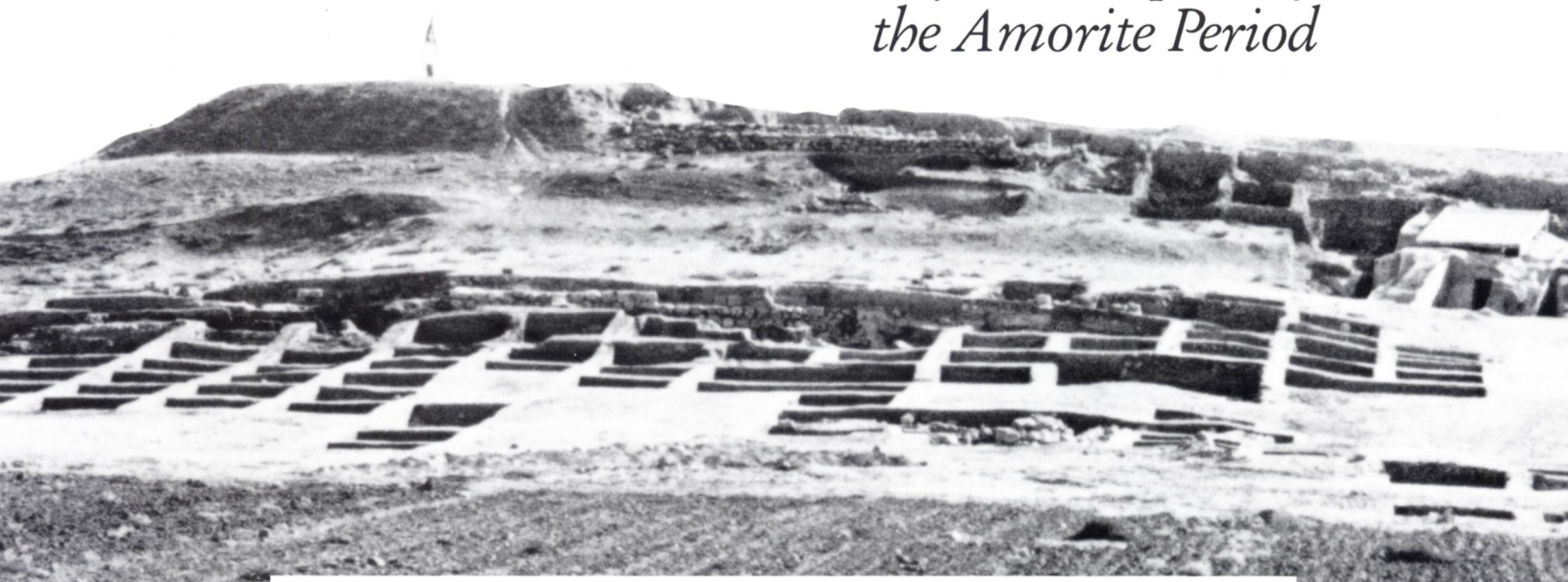
New DISCOVERIES *at* EBLA

The Excavation of the Western Palace and the Royal Necropolis of the Amorite Period



View of the western side of the Acropolis at Ebla. Squares closest to the viewer belong to the excavation of the Western Palace; those further in the background are associated with Royal Palace G. ***Inset:*** *Excavations in the Western Palace uncovered a bowl containing a cuneiform tablet and its envelope, which record the name of one of the last kings of Ebla during the Middle Bronze II period.*

By Paolo Matthiae

The work done at Tell Mardikh by the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Syria of the University of Rome has taken place in three main phases. The first, from 1964 to 1973, was largely given to excavating the Middle Bronze I–II city (circa 2000–1600 B.C.). This decade also witnessed the discovery, outside of its original context, of the headless royal statue whose cuneiform inscription in Akkadian was a major factor in identifying the site as Ebla. Between 1974 and 1977 activity concentrated on the Royal Palace of Early Bronze IVA (circa 2400–2250 B.C.). This phase was highlighted by the definite identification of Royal Palace G and the important discovery of the State Archives. In 1978 an attempt was made at limiting the western edge of the great Court of Audience of Palace G. This was the beginning of the third phase, which has resulted in the discovery of the imposing palatial building of the Western Palace, previously called Building Q or Palace Q, in the Lower City West, as well as the identification of the royal necropolis of the last two centuries of the great city and the excavation of the first princely tombs. The present paper reports on the work conducted in this phase through 1982.

The research in the Western Palace and in the royal necropolis has made a basic contribution to our knowledge of the second and last great stage of the flourishing of Ebla, the so-called Old Syrian period—the age of the Amorite dynasties, which ended around 1600 B.C. The contents of the royal necropolis and the proximity of the tombs to the palace, to Sanctuary B2, and to Temple B1 lead to some extremely interesting conclusions about topography, ideology, and religious institutions of the Amorite period. We can, as a result, interpret the unity of the Lower City West of Old Syrian Ebla as the first archaeological evidence of one of the basic ideological institutions of the Middle Bronze II Amorite dynasties. We see here a cult dedicated to illustrious royal ancestors, *rp'um*—well known from Ugaritic texts—who guaranteed prosperity in this urban center.

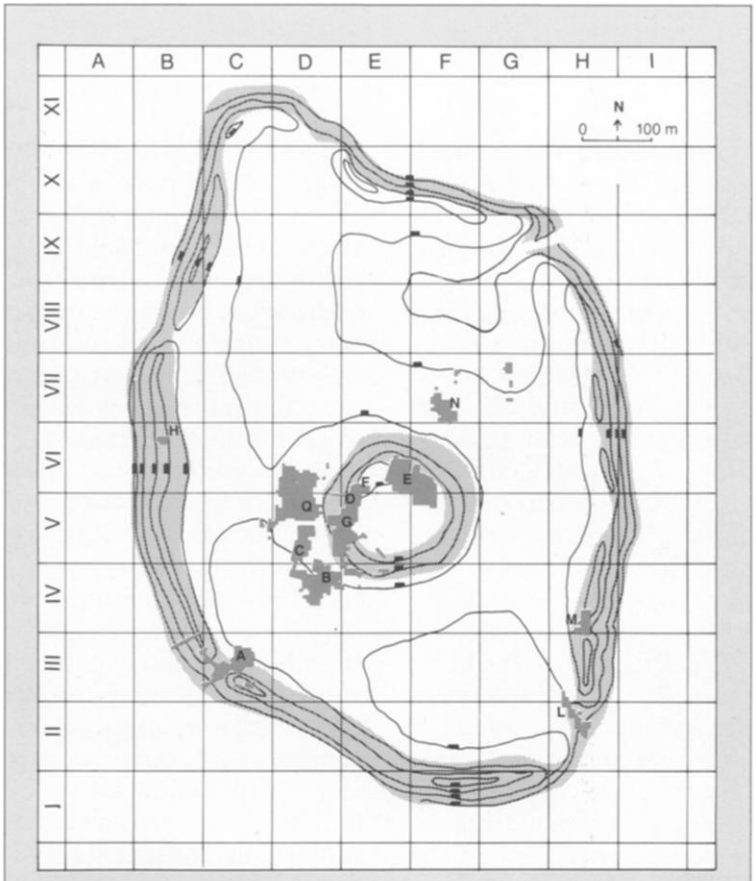
The Western Palace: A New Administrative Building of the Old Syrian Period

The Western Palace was built during Middle Bronze I—that is, during a period that dates between 2000 and 1800 B.C. (Matthiae 1980a: 113–14; 1982a: 52–54, figure 24; 1982b: 125) and which corresponds to the dynasties of Isin and Larsa in Babylonia. Currently it is impossible to discern autonomous architectural units so that successive stages in the construction of the palace can be identified. It is likely that most of it was built in a short time. It is also probable that it went through a series of restorations and rebuildings in order to preserve it.

It is a huge building. With a length, running north-south, of slightly less than 115 meters and a width that varies between 60 and 65 meters, it forms an irregular rectangle nearly 7,300 square meters in area. The plan shows the use of a unit, freely adapted and repeated throughout, consisting of two, and occasionally more, rooms and a court (see Naumann 1971: 368, figures 292 and 498 through 501). Also, blocks of rooms have often been juxtaposed, as evidenced by the frequent abutting of parallel walls (Matthiae 1982c: 308–09; in press).

The architecture of the Western Palace is particularly helpful in identifying the peculiar characteristics of the Archaic Old Syrian culture. In fact, it follows some basic criteria of the period concerning the distribution of space. The inner courts are quite small and rectangular in shape and are usually parallel to the outer walls of the building. Between the courts and the outer walls are some orthogonal rooms. There is a reception suite in the central area of the palace, and movement within the palace was semiperipheral via a chain of small inner courts. Several staircases of three or four ramps, set against outer walls, led to a residential area on the second floor (Matthiae 1982c: 313–14, figure 10; 1982b: 122–24; in press).

These architectural elements contrast sharply with typical Old Babylonian buildings, whose basic units consist of a central court with



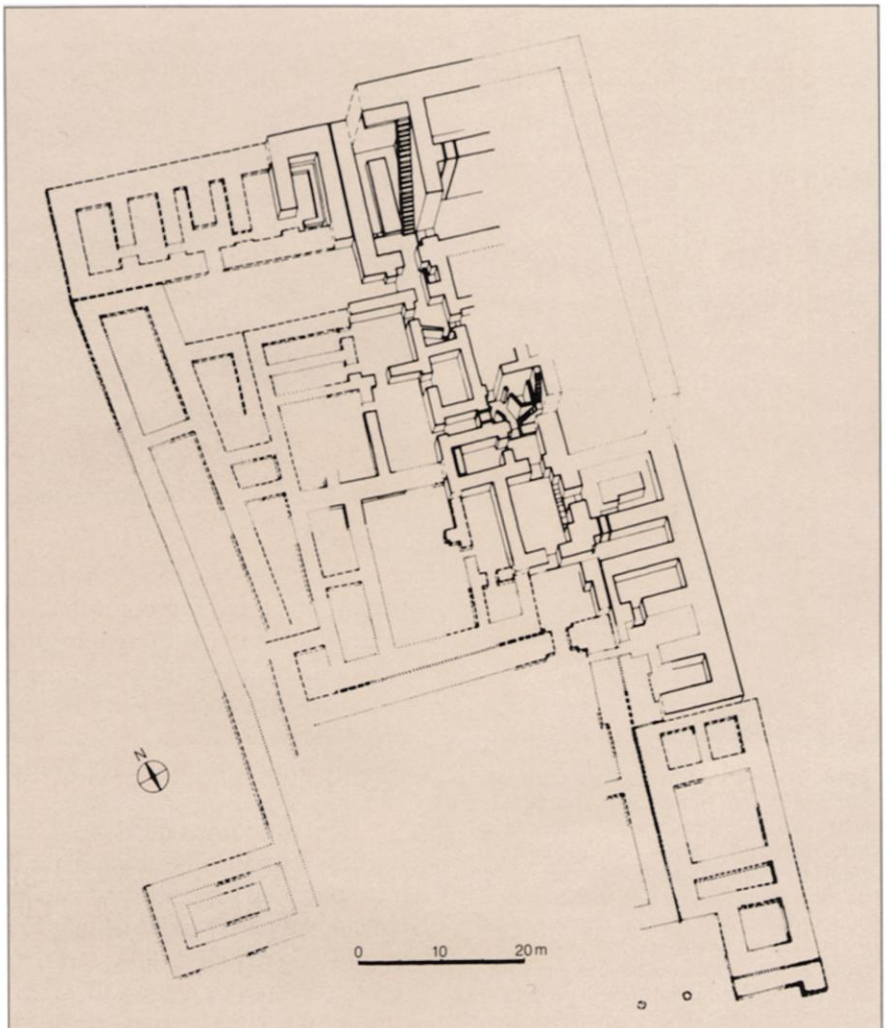
Simplified topographical map of Tell Mardikh showing the areas of excavation at the end of the 1982 season. The letters denote various sections of the city; the gray areas indicate a rapid change in elevation.

long rooms parallel to both the sides of the court and to the outside walls. In the Mesopotamian palaces, traffic radiated out in multiple directions from the central court; moreover, staircases are less frequent (Margueron 1982: 465–98, 531–83).

Although the Western Palace at Ebla differs greatly from Mesopotamian architecture from the Old Akkadian to the Old Babylonian periods, it does contain elements of the Old Syrian style. Thick, massive foundations using large blocks with a high socle for mudbrick superstructures, frequent coverings of limestone and basalt walls, doorways made of monolithic slabs—usually made of basalt and sometimes marked by niches—all compare very closely with the techniques used in contemporary palaces of Alalakh VII and Tilmen Hüyük IIC3 (Woolley 1955: 91–106, figure 35; Orthmann 1966: 165–66, figures 47 and 48). The Western Palace's entrance portico (which perhaps had two columns) directly antedates the portico of the later palace of Alalakh IV and the so-called *bīt ḫilāni* (an Amorite term for the entrance portico) of the first millennium B.C. (Woolley 1955: 107–13, figure 37; Frankfort 1952: 126–31; Margueron 1978: 170–76). The reception suite in the Eblaite building, with its latitudinal tripartite structure and two central rooms separated by a portico, is a typical Old Syrian plan that appears at Alalakh VII and IV and, with some variations, at Tilmen Hüyük and at Qatna (Matthiae 1982c: 313–15).

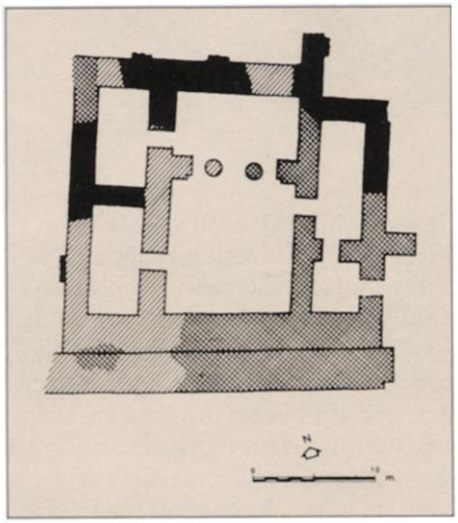
The distinctive architectural characteristics of Ebla's Western Palace and the similarity of these to characteristics of other palatial buildings of the Old Syrian culture provide an important confirmation of the autonomy and peculiarity of the architectural tradition of Upper Syria during Middle Bronze I and II, the period of Amorite prevalence and Hurrian expansion. Certainly, the great urban centers of Ebla, Qatna, and Carchemish contributed greatly to defining the main monumental architectural styles that distinguished the urban image of cities in Syro-Palestine. These centers marked settlements from northern Syria to southern Palestine with basic elements of architectural and urbanistic unity (Matthiae 1981a: 199–208).

Thus, the huge earthen ramparts of Upper Syria were built after Middle Bronze I—as at Ebla—with the so-called sandwich technique. They are the prototypes that led to the diffusion and improvements of the inner wall, the earthen basement, and lastly the stone revêtement that was found in Palestine during the Middle Bronze IIC (Parr 1975: 19–36; Seger 1975: 42–45; Kochavi, Beck, and Gophna 1979: 161–65). The typical Old Syrian temple plan with single cella and long room, which occurs in Temple B1 and Temple N of Ebla's Lower City, is similar in concept to the Long Temple of Hazor, area A, and to the great fortress temples of Megiddo and Shechem (Kuschke 1977: 336–39; Ottosson 1980: 53–62). The large palatial temples with longitudinal tripartite structure, like Temple D of Ebla and the Temple of Alalakh Stratum IV, are the forerunners of a long tradition that spread over Upper Syria to the Euphrates Valley and over northern Palestine, as shown at Hazor in the Orthostats Temple, area H, during Middle Bronze IIC and Late Bronze I and II (Ottosson 1980: 27–37). The long city gates with three buttresses, two gateways, and two pairs of siderooms, which are so frequent in Middle Bronze II Palestine from Gezer and Beth Shemesh to Hazor, Shechem, Tell Farᶜah, and Yavne Yam, were modelled after those of the great centers of Upper Syria from Ebla to Alalakh and Tell Tuqan, as well as Carchemish and Qatna (Matthiae 1980b: 158–67; Kaplan 1975: 12–14). Most likely the vast region between the Taurus mountains and the Arabian desert



Isometric schematic view of the Western Palace during the Middle Bronze I to II period.

***Above:** The northern staircase and entrance to the northeastern quarter of the Western Palace. View is from the south. **Below:** Photograph of the eastern wing of the Western Palace's reception suite viewed from the north and schematic plan of the reception suite.*

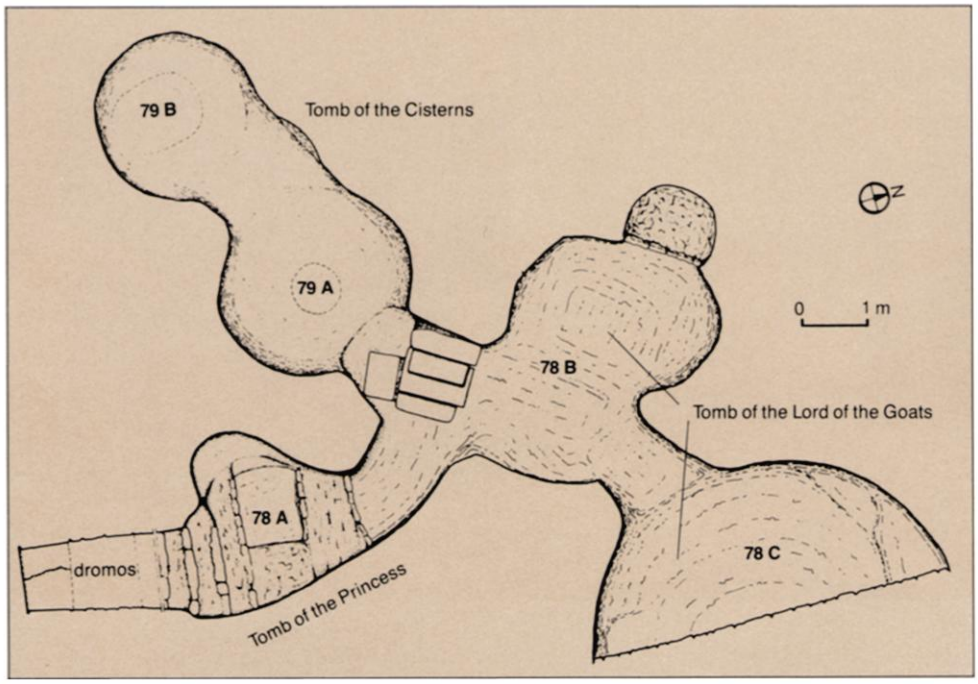


never again experienced such cultural unity as it did during the Middle Bronze I and II of Syria and the Middle Bronze IIA to IIC of Palestine.

Artifacts from the Western Palace

Soundings made below the floors of the final phase of the building in both the east and north sections of the Western Palace revealed the presence of a still earlier floor containing typical pottery of Middle Bronze I Syria (phase I). This pottery assemblage included a number of open carinated bowls with high and sharp carination and rims folded outward; many uvular jars with outturned rims having two sharp edges; and traditional carinated bowls with short, thin vertical rims and outer moldings. There were also several specimens of uvular or biconical jars with horizontal rims turned outward and combed bands on the shoulders (Matthiae 1982a: figure 24).

Wherever the floor of phase I was reached, the fill contained only fragments of broken bricks, never any ashes or traces of destruction. This leads us to believe that the Western Palace went through a series of restorations and rebuildings, not as a consequence of destruction, but in order to preserve the building. It is likely, although the data is somewhat speculative, that the second phase of the Western Palace, (phase IIa), which is represented by the last floor of the building, belongs to the beginning of the Middle Bronze II period. Late in this phase (IIb) modifications led to the sealing of some doors and to the restoration of the or-



Above: Schematic plan of tombs from the royal necropolis. ***Above right:*** *Court and rooms of the Western Palace in the eastern staircase quarter; view is from the north. Discovered beneath the floor of this court was the entrance dromos to the Tomb of the Princess.* ***Left:*** *Cylinder seal impression on the shoulder of a jar found in the Western Palace. The god Haddad and the goddess ᶜAnat are depicted giving life to a prince. The cuneiform writing accompanying the scene indicates the seal belonged to a son of King Indilimgur of Ebla.*

thostats (Matthiae 1979a: 148–49; 1980c:10). This work was apparently still going on when the complex was finally destroyed.

Two vases in the ceramic horizon of the end of the Middle Bronze II period at Ebla are unique: These are two important monochrome kraters with painted decorations of birds facing each other on either side of plants. They probably belong to a North Syrian palatial production and must be related to the rare painted monochrome sherds of the Palestinian Middle Bronze IIC of Shechem (Toombs and Wright 1963: 51, 63, and figure 26).

The northwestern section of the Western Palace was well preserved, despite extensive sacking during the final destruction around 1600 B.C. Several important finds in this area at the level of the destruction gave unexpected information about the last years of this Middle Bronze II city. Among the most important finds were a complete cuneiform tablet with its envelope, and fragments of another tablet found in a globular bowl with thin flaring rim. Both documents date to the Old Babylonian period and give the text of a legal document concerning a loan of silver (Matthiae 1980a: 116–17; Kupper, in press). The fragment contains part of a dating formula, which mentions a person named Indilimgur. He almost certainly was the last—or one of the last—kings of Ebla at the end of Middle Bronze II (Matthiae 1982c: 125–26).

The numerous names of witnesses in the documents are in large part not Amorite, and can be considered partly as Hurrian (Kupper, in press; Matthiae 1980b: 116–18). This corresponds quite well with the diffusion of the Hurrian ethnic element, which probably took place during the eighteenth century B.C. following the reigns of Hammurapi of Babylon and Yarim-Lim of Aleppo. Such diffusion is evident when one compares the Mari texts, around 1800 B.C., and the Alalakh tablets, dating between 1700 and 1650 B.C. (Wilhelm 1982: 17–19).

Several fragments of provision jars which had cylinder seal impressions on their shoulders were found in the same section of the Western Palace. In each case the cylinder was rolled in a vertical direction. Two important seals are documented by the jar impressions. One beautiful cylinder depicts the god Haddad and the goddess ᶜAnat giving life to a prince; it has two lines of cuneiform writing, revealing that it belonged to a son of Indilimgur. This would explain the seal's high artistic quality. The ceremony it represents, the bestowing of life by the goddess ᶜAnat,

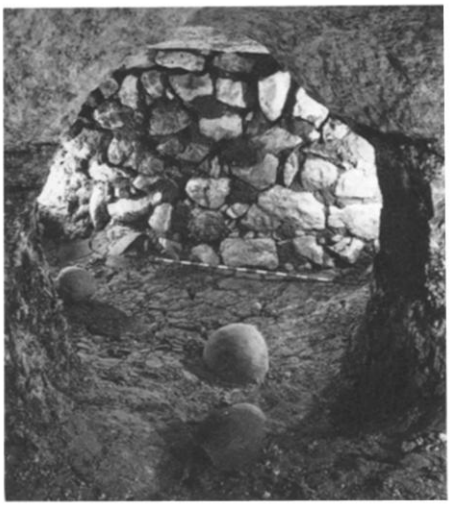
is certainly related to the idea of kingship in the Yamḫad milieu (Matthiae 1969: 35–41; Collon 1975: 146–48). The seal is exceptional for its height of 7.5 centimeters and is certainly a masterpiece without stylistic parallel in the Mature Old Syrian glyptic production even in comparison to those of Aleppo/Yamḫad (Collon 1975: 146–52; 1981: 33–43). The second cylinder is smaller but of similar high formal quality. It bears a representation of a dignitary faced by the god Haddad (Matthiae 1980a: 114–16, figure 14). It is probable that the combined evidence of the legal tablet and of the seal impressions gives us the name of the last ruler of Ebla, Indilimgur, who reigned at the time of the Old Hittite kings Hattushili I and Murshili I.

Three Royal Tombs from the Middle Bronze II Necropolis

The excavations of Mardikh levels IIIA and IIIB of the Western Palace led unexpectedly to the identification of the Middle Bronze II royal necropolis (Matthiae 1981b: 62–65). The palace was built on a rock layer rich in natural caves, some of which were used by the Ebla inhabitants for places of burial. Four tombs have thus far been identified beneath the central area of the palace. A fifth cave, located under the pavement of the reception suite of the palatial complex, was only possibly used as a tomb. Discovered a few meters east of the outer wall of the palace was a sixth cave that certainly was used as a tomb. A seventh tomb was also positively identified while two other caves, probably having funerary functions, were found south of the main palace facade. Only three hypogea of the nine previously identified below the best preserved area of the Western Palace were fully explored (Matthiae 1979a: 149–78; 1980c: 11–20; 1980d; 1982d: 5–14). A partially excavated cave to the south had been reemployed as a waste deposit for animal bones.

The three royal tombs identified below the floors of the east-central area of the Western Palace were originally part of a complicated system of caves; they were artificially connected to each other during the Middle Bronze II period. At that time the caves were prepared for funerary use.

Although minor uncertainties do exist, we believe that the Tomb of the Princess, located to the south, was the oldest, followed by the larger Tomb of the Lord of the Goats to the east, then by the more recent Tomb of the Cisterns to the west (Matthiae 1980a: 100–02; 1982d: 6–8). The Tomb of the Princess included a short *dromos*, or entranceway, with steps descending from the south to the north plus a small burial chamber (number Q.78.A). The tomb was closed to the north by a thin mudbrick wall which probably collapsed as a result of water infiltration. It most likely dates to the beginning of the Middle Bronze II period, around 1800 B.C., or slightly before. The Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, in contrast, had a vertical entrance shaft to the north. It included a square hypogeum (number Q.78.B2), a short gallery (number Q.78.B1), and a semicircular hypogeum (number Q.78.C) sealed by a massive wall of large stones. This tomb was originally the richest. It belonged to a king who died around 1750 B.C. or slightly later. The Tomb of the Cisterns received its name from two ancient cisterns whose openings in the ceiling boss had been blocked when the caves were converted into tombs. It too had a funerary shaft, here located to the

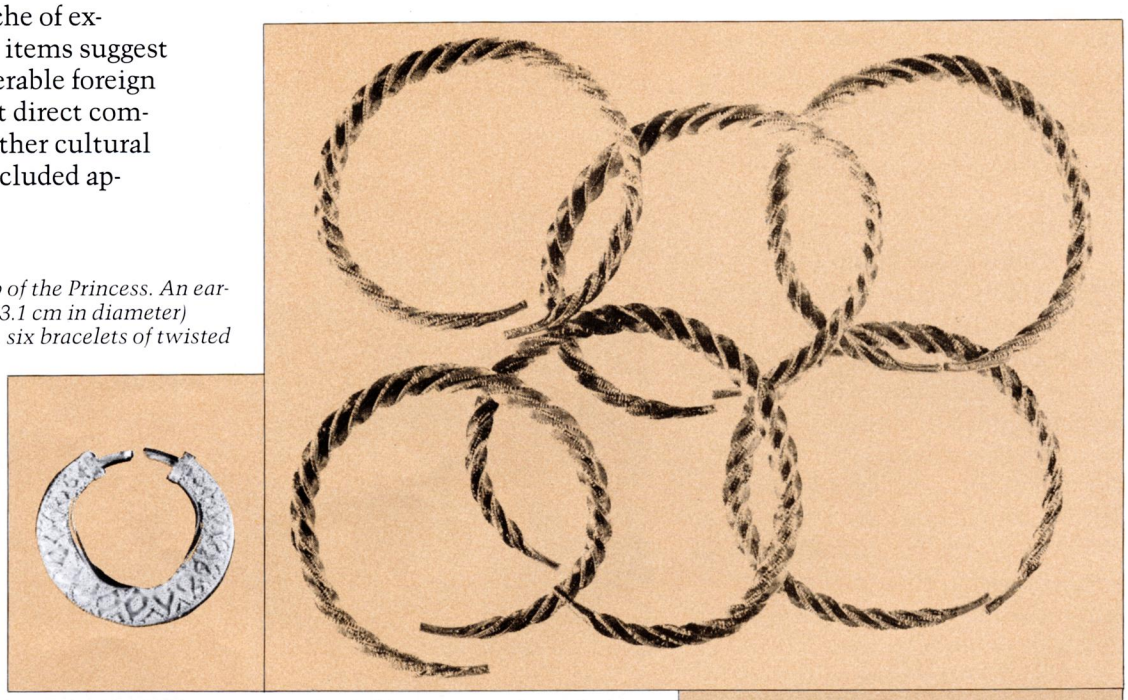


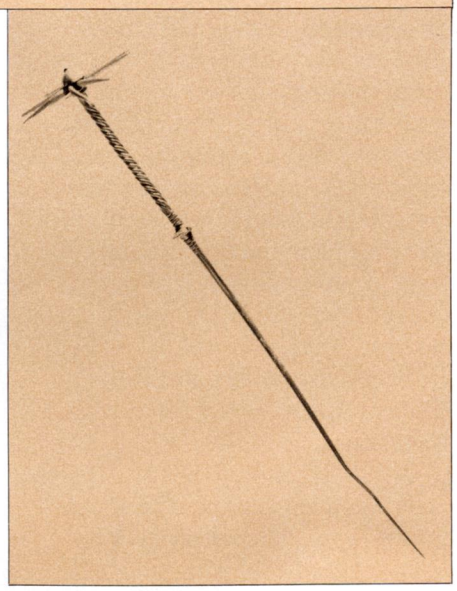
Upper left: The northern section of the burial chamber (number Q.78.A) in the Tomb of the Princess containing Middle Bronze II pottery. Upper right: The semicircular hypogeum (number Q.78.C) of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats shown before it was excavated. The jars belong to the nearby Tomb of the Princess. Left: Painted monochrome jug with metope decoration found in the Tomb of the Princess. The vessel is made of white clay and belongs to the Middle Bronze II period.

east, that was adapted as a staircase. The Tomb of the Cisterns was used sometime around 1700 B.C. The three royal tombs explored to date correspond to the classic tomb type of the Middle Bronze II in Syro-Palestine which had a funerary chamber and entrance shaft; the short staircase dromoi of the tombs of the Princess and of the Cisterns are partial exceptions to this type (Kenyon 1964: 167–477; Montet 1928).

Tomb of the Princess. A variety of objects was found in the Tomb of the Princess including ceramic and stone vessels plus a cache of exquisite jewelry. Several items suggest the presence of considerable foreign influence at Ebla, if not direct commercial contact with other cultural centers. The pottery included approximately seventy vases, most of which were constructed of light simple ware, with some rare brown-green polished dishes and a small group of jugs of painted monochrome brown ware. The jars of the simple ware belong to the end of the Middle Bronze II; typical specimens of the middle and final phases of Middle Bronze II are absent. The large painted jugs certainly belong to the same workshop that produced some fragments of Alalakh X ware, for they have the same typical metope decoration. They probably were imported from the area around Antioch. Stone vases of alabaster, sardonyx, and gypsum from the tomb are sophisticated palatial productions and indicate Ebla's close contact with other ancient Near Eastern peoples. The elegant stone vases with sharp profiles are identical in shape to a fragmentary bronze vase of the Lord of the Goats and are similar to the rare bronze "Montet jars" found at Byblos and Tepe Hissar (Matthiae 1979a: 161–62; 1980d: 8). Evidence for interconnections between Ebla and Anatolia is provided by a faience vase with two handles and pointed base that apparently belongs to the same morphological class as a rock crystal vase from Acemhöyük (Matthiae 1980c: 13–14, figure 14; Ozguc 1966: 48, figure 4).

A very important set of jewelry was discovered buried with the female skeleton from the Tomb of the Princess. These jewels are of Old Syrian and perhaps Eblaite production. They include six bracelets of twisted gold strands that have tiny balls of gold soldered onto them, a technique called granulation. These bracelets are a rare elaboration of an earring type known from Cyprus, Ugarit, and Tell el-ᶜAjjul (Sharuhen). The only comparable example of a gold bracelet produced in a similar fashion is from the Royal Tomb II of Byblos (Matthiae 1981c: 210–11, figure 46; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 115; Montet 1928: 170). The princess' golden toggle pin is a masterpiece of jewelrymaking. It belongs to the same tradition as the well-known toggle pins from Palestine that have twisted shafts. The Ebla pin, however, has the typical star-head of Old Syrian workshops, which are attest-





Gold jewelry from the Tomb of the Princess. An ear- or nose-ring (approximately 3.1 cm in diameter) with granulated decoration, six bracelets of twisted gold strands decorated with granulation, and a toggle pin with twisted shaft and star-head. All of the jewelry and objects shown in this article are presently in the Archaeological Museum of Aleppo. Relative sizes are not maintained.

Simple ceramic vessels from hypogeum number Q.78.B of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats.

ed in bronze examples from Alalakh and central Syria. An ear- or nose-ring, discovered among the jewelry, was made with two thick leaves of gold soldered together and decorated with remarkable granulation. It also is of Syro-Palestinian production and is similar to gold examples, of somewhat inferior quality, from Middle Bronze IIC Tell el-ᶜAjjul (Matthiae 1980d: 14–15; 1981c: 211–14; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 116–18). The last piece in the set is a necklace, whose centerpiece is a lapis-lazuli scaraboid surrounded by a lost cloisonné design. Its beads are of the collared melon-shape type which are widely attested throughout the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze II period (Matthiae 1981c: 212–13).

Tomb of the Lord of the Goats. Of all the tombs, that belonging to the "Lord of the Goats" was the richest, yet it did not escape violation. The body buried there had been disturbed; only human long bones, which are now being analyzed, remained scattered on the tomb floor. The grand scale of this burial indicates that the deceased was a member of the royal family who died around 1750 B.C. or slightly later (Matthiae 1979a: 162–78; 1980a: 102–07; 1980e: 195–202; 1982d: 10–12). This date is reinforced by an Egyptian ceremonial mace found in the tomb. The mace belonged to the pharaoh Ḥetepibreᶜ Harnedjḥeriotef, probably the ninth king of the Thirteenth Dynasty, who briefly reigned around 1760 B.C. It is even possible that the name of the buried person is known, for an engraved cuneiform inscription on the rim of a silver bowl from the semicircular cave reads "belonging to Immeya." Unfortunately no title accompanies the name (Archi and Matthiae 1979). Nothing else is known of Immeya except that this same name appears as the apparently nonroyal addressee on an Old Babylonian letter. The letter was found intact on the slopes of the Tell Mardikh acropolis in the Middle Bronze II debris (Kupper, in press). Although there is no proof, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Immeya of the letter and of the bowl inscription are the same person, perhaps a king or a prince of Ebla in the second half of the eighteenth century B.C. (Matthiae 1982c: 125–26).

All of the ceramic vessels from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, including nearly sixty vases of simple ware, were found in the first hypogeum where the funerary shaft opened. In this same area were remains of what probably was a chariot covered with bronze plaques. In the semicircular cave were bronze

Archaeological and Historical Phases of Tell Mardikh*

Mardikh I	c. 3500–2900		Protohistoric Period
Mardikh IIA	c. 2900–2400	Early Bronze I–III	Early Protosyrian Period
Mardikh IIB1	c. 2400–2250	Early Bronze IVA	Mature Protosyrian Period
Mardikh IIB2	c. 2250–2000	Early Bronze IVB	Late Protosyrian Period
Mardikh IIIA	c. 2000–1800	Middle Bronze I	Archaic Old Syrian Period
Mardikh IIIB	c. 1800–1600	Middle Bronze II	Mature Old Syrian Period
Mardikh IVA	c. 1600–1400	Late Bronze I	Early Middle Syrian Period
Mardikh IVB	c. 1400–1200	Late Bronze II	Recent Middle Syrian Period
Mardikh VA	c. 1200–900	Iron I	Neo-Syrian Period
Mardikh VB	c. 900–720	Iron II	or
Mardikh VC	c. 720–535	Iron III	Aramaean and "Neo-Hittite" Age
Mardikh VIA	c. 535–325		Persian Age
Mardikh VIB	c. 325–60		Hellenistic Age
Mardikh VII	3rd-7th cent.		Late Roman and Byzantine Age

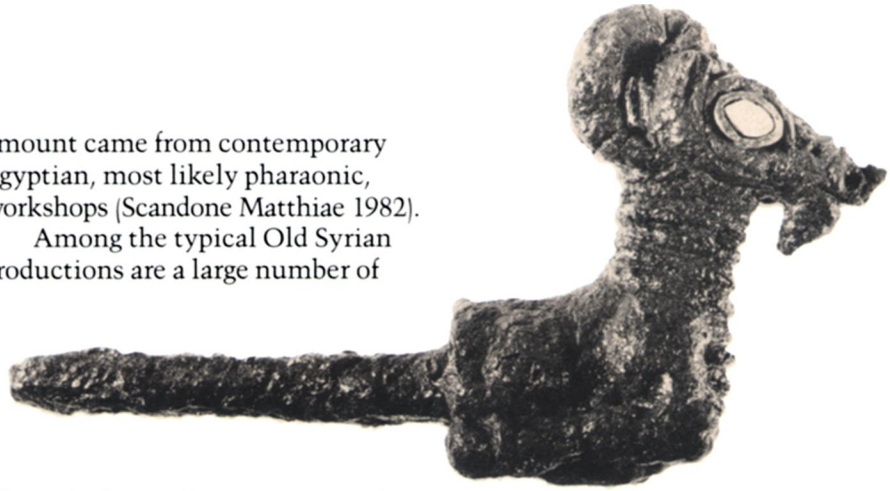
*Taken from page 52 of Matthiae 1981a

weapons, gold jewelry, ceremonial dresses, display emblems, stone vases, and ivory amulets. Unlike the Tomb of the Princess, this tomb contained some globular bowls with flaring rims, typical of the middle and final phases of the Middle Bronze II period.

Many of the bronze objects from this tomb are very poorly preserved because of repeated water infiltration. They include decorations of lost wooden furniture as well as weapons and emblems. There are several fragments of "en torsade" revetment plaques, probably belonging to legs of furniture. Particularly interesting are two goat heads, each attached to a peg, which may have decorated the ends of the armrests of a throne; two small statues of squatting goats appear to have decorated the top of the throne's back. These pieces are unique and it is difficult to identify their place of manufacture, although they are probably of North Syrian production. Weapons from the tombs include spearheads and fenestrated axes of the long narrow or duckbill type that are typical of Syria during the Middle Bronze II period (Matthiae 1980f: 58–62). A few bronze artifacts from the tomb, however, point undoubtedly to a connection, and possibly an actual provenance, in western Iran as confirmed by recent finds from the excavations in the region of Ḥamrin in eastern Iraq. Four peculiar "bells" from the tomb may also demonstrate contact with western Iran, for their closest comparisons, although of inferior craftsmanship, are found in tombs from Tepe Giyan IV (Pinnock 1979).

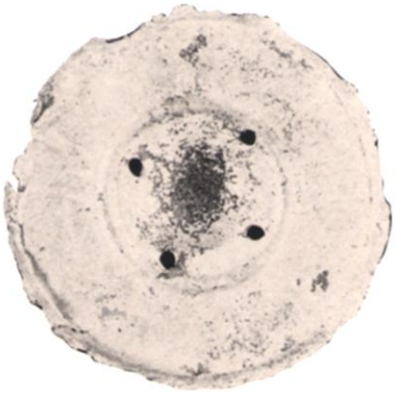
The extraordinary original wealth of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats can only be surmised when one considers what must have been plundered during the sack of the Western Palace at the end of the seventeenth century B.C. The gold jewelry which was left behind was largely of Syrian and probably Eblaite production, while a smaller amount came from contemporary Egyptian, most likely pharaonic, workshops (Scandone Matthiae 1982).

Among the typical Old Syrian productions are a large number of beads which, in the case of the rare pseudobarrel type with central square sections, are made of gold, lapis lazuli, and carnelian. The other types are more interesting for their parallels to beads found in other parts of the ancient Near East. The gold tubular beads from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats have been found in palatial contexts in royal tomb III of Byblos and in the treasury hoard of the palace of Megiddo VIII (Matthiae 1981c: 216–17; Montet 1928: 169–70; Loud 1948: 25 and 173). Seven spindle-shaped beads are quite important. They are cast and fluted with elongated collars and are clearly models for well-known, although uncommon, hammered gold-leaf beads of Middle Bronze IIC Palestinian sites like Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell el-ᶜAjjul (Sharuhen), Tell Farᶜah S, and Megiddo (Matthiae 1981c: 214–15; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 125–26). The wonderful cast melon-shaped beads with plain collars belong to a class of beads known from Larsa to Assur and Sharuhen. Many round, gold-leaf studs, each having four holes, were also found in the tomb. They certainly once belonged to ceremonial garments. A



Above: *This bronze object, representing the forepart of a goat, was found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats. It is attached to a peg and may have originally decorated the armrest of a throne.* ***Below:*** *A bronze fenestrated ax with axial molding also from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats.*

A lapis-lazuli and gold pendant (approximately 3 cm wide) in the shape of an eagle and an Egyptian finger ring (approximately 2.2 cm wide) with cloisonné decoration from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats.

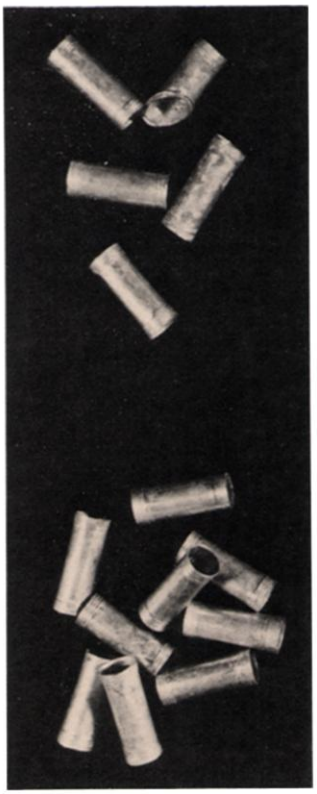


similar stud was found at Kultepe Ib, where it was probably imported from northern Syria, while rosette-shaped types from Megiddo and Sharuhen are imitations dating to the beginning of the Late Bronze I (Matthiae 1981c: 220–21; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 134; Loud 1948: 164).

The jewelry collection also included a lapis-lazuli pendant in the shape of an eagle and a complete necklace with three sections having a coiled or "en torsade" decoration and three disks with granulated star patterns (Matthiae 1981c: 217–18). The granulation of this Ebla necklace is of comparable high quality to the celebrated Dilbat necklace now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The six-pointed star in Eblaite jewelry, however, is a typical Old Syrian pattern (Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 88–91).

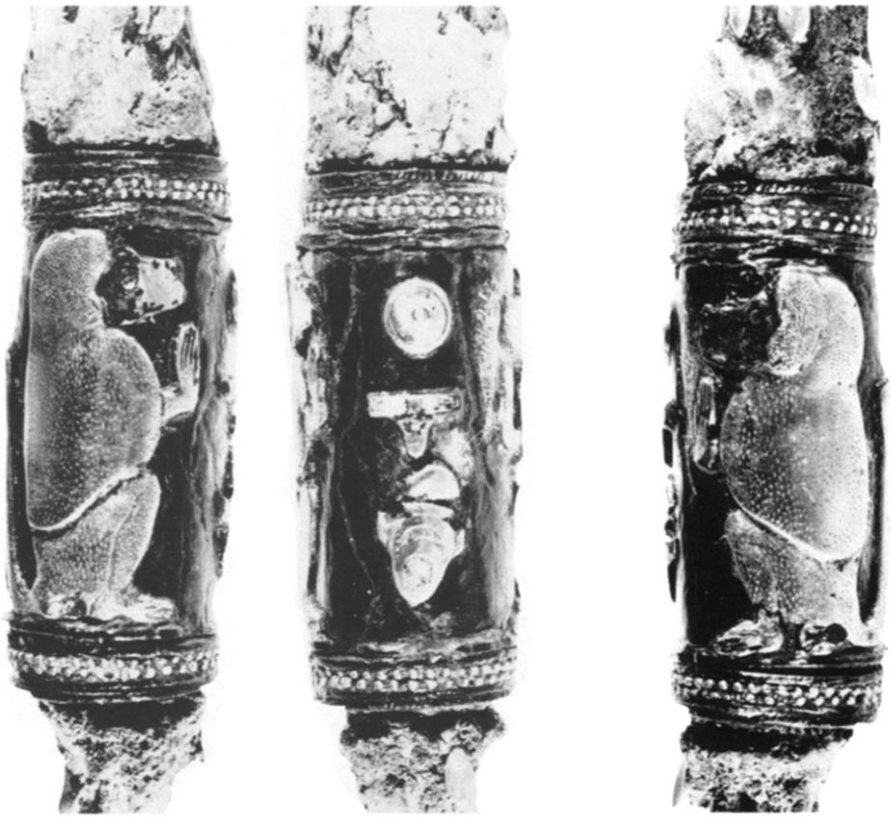
Among the gold jewelry of Egyptian production from the tomb are a beautiful finger ring with a cloisonné decoration of two lilies flanking a scaraboid, and a fragmentary necklace in the shape of a lily (Matthiae 1981c: 224–25). The lily is symbolic of Upper or southern Egypt and is a popular motif in Egyptian art. Both the ring and the necklace were worked in a reddish-colored metal—quite different from the light-colored gold used in Old Syrian jewelry—and their quality is comparable to products of the late Twelfth Dynasty.

Two splendid limestone maces with handles of ivory, silver, and gold are certainly ceremonial pharaonic objects (Scandone Matthiae 1982). In each mace a segment of the handle was made of a silver cylinder covered with thick gold leaf. One uninscribed mace had a lozenge-shaped pattern pierced into the gold leaf, resembling in technique and decoration a knife handle from tomb II at Byblos (Montet 1928: 160). The second mace, bearing the name of Pharaoh Ḥetepibre^{c} has the hieroglyphic royal name flanked by two baboons. The baboon is well known in Egyptian scenes of the adoration of the sun; in Syria they frequently appear in ritual contexts in glyptics (Scandone Matthiae 1979; Matthiae 1981c: 222–24). The hieroglyphs were incorrectly repaired at Ebla in



Gold artifacts found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats. Shown clockwise from upper left are two sizes of studs, melon-shaped beads (approximately 1.1 cm in diameter), an object with granulation and inlaid lapis lazuli, and two groups of tubular and one group of pseudobarrel beads.

This gold necklace from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats has three sections with "en torsade" decoration and three disks featuring the typical Old Syrian six-pointed-star motif.



Three views of an Egyptian mace of the Thirteenth Dynasty pharaoh Ḥetepibreᶜ Harnedjheriotef, discovered in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats. Made of ivory, silver, and gold, these details show a traditional Egyptian scene of two baboons in adoration of the sun.

antiquity when at least three signs became detached. These two maces from the Tomb of the Lord of Goats should be considered as gifts from the Egyptian pharaoh to a king of Ebla. It is significant that the Pharaoh Ḥetepibreᶜ adopted the unusual title of "Son of the Asiatic" or, according to another translation, "Son of the farmer," among his royal names (Scandone Matthiae 1979: 122–23).

Two ivory amulets were also found in the tomb. One very fragmentary amulet included at least three goatlike figures carved in ivory. The other was in very good condition in spite of its fragility, perhaps because it was protected by jar fragments. It was made of two series of thin ivory pieces set back to back so that only their outer faces were visible. This was attached to two ivory rods at the top and two at the bottom. Small bronze pegs were used to attach human figurines onto the outer faces. A serpent, lion, and bear, all carved in the round, were fixed similarly to the rods. The compositions on both sides of the amulet are very intriguing. On one side a funerary banquet scene is depicted with the protagonist sitting before an offering table covered with loaves of bread. The man is bareheaded and holds a shepherd's crook. In front of him are servants and two peculiar figures, a male and a female, shown frontally in the nude. These two frontal figures appear on the other side of the amulet that features a scene of the adoration of a bull by two baboons with a secondary figure holding an axe (Matthiae 1979a: 173–75; 1980c: 17–18; 1980d: 14 and 17). The scenes on this amulet can be interpreted in light of a passage from the Ugaritic poem of Keret, where the oldest son and daughter are responsible for taking care of the funerary ceremonies for their dead father, the king. On the basis of the poem, the two scenes of the amulet depict the main funerary rite and the king's death. In the banquet scene the king would be the protagonist and the beneficiary of the feast while his soul is symbolically represented by the bull on the other side in a

An ivory amulet from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats. Small carved animal and human figures were attached to ivory plaques with bronze pegs. This side of the amulet depicts a banquet scene.

Ivory goatlike figures from a fragmentary amulet found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats.

scene attested in the ritual of Dumuzi, a Mesopotamian divine shepherd king.

Tomb of the Cisterns. The third tomb was clearly autonomous since it had its own funerary shaft with stairs. It suffered most from the pillage. In fact, it contained only some fragmentary bronze objects, scattered gold studs, some ceramic vessels, and stone vases, one beautiful example of which may be Egyptian. It is possible that the uninscribed Egyptian mace belonged to this tomb. Partial remains of a human skeleton, including a skull which is now being studied, were scattered on the floor of the first cistern.

The Ancestor Cult in an Amorite Capital City

The royal necropolis of the Amorite period is situated in the center of the urban settlement at Ebla. Such a location was probably already an Eblaite tradition in the Early Syrian period, and it can be observed elsewhere in the region during this time. The location of royal tombs of Ur and Alaca Hüyük indicates that it was a tradition in lower Mesopotamia and central Anatolia as early

Following the spectacular discovery of the Royal Archive in Palace G in 1975 and 1976, dating to the mid or third quarter of the third millennium B.C., subsequent work at Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla, has concentrated upon the buildings and underground tombs of the Middle Bronze Age, from the first half of the second millennium. The Italian Mission to Syria has now established that Ebla was a site of major importance during two crucial periods of ancient Near Eastern history: the Old Akkadian period, the time of Sargon of Akkad and his grandson Naram-Sin, and the Old Babylonian period, the time of Hammurapi of Babylon and Šamši-Adad I of Assyria.

Curiously there is as yet little trace in the archaeological record of settlement at Ebla during the transitional period represented by Gudea of Lagash, the Third Dynasty of Ur, and the Isin–Larsa period. Yet the abundant textual evidence surviving from the late third and early second millennia B.C. contains many references to Ebla. The references to Ebla in the various inscriptions of Gudea of Lagash are of special interest, yet difficult to relate to anything presently known from the excavations at Tell Mardikh.

Perhaps future work at the site will help to clarify this problem which, as it stands, is a good example of a cardinal rule in archaeology that one does not always find what one is looking for. Paolo Matthiae and his colleagues went to Tell Mardikh looking for an Old Babylonian or Middle Bronze Age site. The importance of the site in the Early Bronze Age (third millennium B.C.) proved to be a pleasant but unexpected surprise.

The discovery of over 15,000 clay tablets from the Early Bronze Age palace at Tell Mardikh, and the claims made regarding the historical and biblical references and allusions contained in those tablets represent a scholarly controversy that has been featured in the pages of **BA** as well as every journal devoted to the study of the ancient Near East, to say nothing of the popular press. Those who work on the tablets from Ebla are now doing their best to put all this hullabaloo behind them and to look upon Ebla as a Syrian city producing material relevant to the culture and history of Bronze Age Syria.

This is not to deny the importance of contacts with Palestine or Egypt—the significance of those contacts and the archaeological and historical evidence they provide is brought out very well in the present paper by Paolo Matthiae. It is rather a question of emphasis and primary focus. The importance of the material uncovered at Ebla is not to be seen in terms of its bearing upon the Bible but for what it reveals about Bronze Age Syria.

The present controversy over Ebla and the Bible should not be seen as something new in the history of Assyriology but rather as the latest episode of an ongoing debate that has dominated the field from its inception over one hundred years ago. Various attempts have been made to "secularize" the field and to establish Assyriology as an independent discipline, free from any direct associations with Old Testament or biblical studies. The foremost scholar associated with such developments in the United States would be Albrecht Goetze who, during the course of his scholarly career, carried on a running battle with scholars such as W. F. Albright and E. A. Speiser who, according to Goetze, practiced what he referred to as "Levantine Assyriology."

That phrase was spoken with a tone of voice used also for "biblical archaeology." In light of the current debate over terminology, carried on in **BA** and other publications as well as at the plenary session of the recent meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Dallas, Texas, it is important to keep in mind the long-standing and far-ranging history of this controversy.

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as the middle of the third millennium B.C. At Byblos the royal tombs of the dynasty contemporary with the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats at Ebla were in the central region of the city, and were perhaps also related to some monumental buildings. And although an unclear stratigraphic situation does not permit us at present to make a definite connection between the tombs and the palace of the Middle Bronze IIC at Tell el-ᶜAjjul (Sharuhen), the relation between the tombs and a funerary cultic building and a palatial edifice at Tell ed-Dabaᶜa (Avaris), the Hyksos capital city in the eastern Delta, is certain (Tufnell 1962: 28–37; Stewart 1974; Bietak 1970: 24–29; 1979: 247–63).

At Ebla, it is probable that the Western Palace, Temple B1, and Sanctuary B2 are specially related to the royal necropolis. Their proximity to it is certainly one thing that strongly suggests this, and there are other facts that support this idea. Consider, for example, Temple B1—which is built according to the typical Old Syrian plan, with a long room, which appears also in Temple N at Ebla, in the Long Temple of Hazor, and in the major temples of Middle Bronze IIC of Palestine at Shechem and Megiddo. There is evidence that Temple B1 was dedicated to Rashaph, the god of the netherworld, plague, and war, who corresponds to the Mesopotamian god Nergal. A sculpted ritual basin found in this temple depicts not only a banquet scene—which is a typical representation for this class of monumental fitting in Ebla—but also two series of soldiers. The soldiers are appropriate to Rashaph's role as god of war (Matthiae 1965). In addition, according to texts found in the Archives, one of the four gates and one of the four quarters of the Early Syrian city were named after Rashaph (Matthiae 1981a: 184). There is no doubt that the quadripartite pattern of Early Syrian Ebla was preserved in the Old Syrian city, and it is likely that the divine names given to gates and quarters of the city reflected the major temples in their regions.

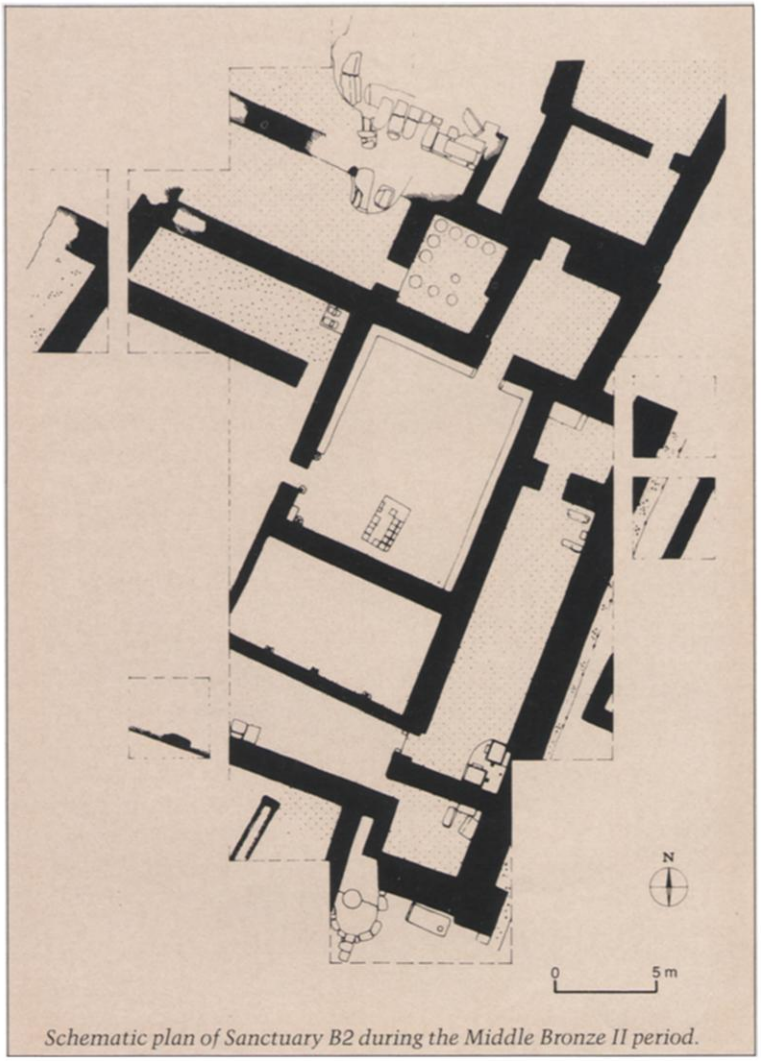
There are also indications that Sanctuary B2 is related to the royal necropolis. Sanctuary B2 has an irregular plan; there is a big central cella with a podium that requires a bent-axis approach, small square cellas, and long rectangular cellas. This plan is virtually unknown in the classical typology of the Syro-Palestinian temples dedicated to deities, and it corresponds in some typological characteristics to the so-called Double Temple F of Hazor (Matthiae 1981a: 128–30; Yadin 1972: 95–98). This building is also topographically related to a burial area and is oriented towards the west, the direction of the dead (Yadin 1972: 43–44). It can be proposed that both Sanctuary B2 and Double Temple F fulfilled a funerary cultic function. The articulated organization of the cultic furniture, with altars for small images, perhaps made of bronze, and now totally disappeared, basalt slabs for animal offerings, and daises for vegetable offerings, is quite suitable for the functions of a royal funerary cult (Matthiae 1979b: 567–69).

Thus we believe that the three buildings at Ebla are related to the royal necropolis and that it is possible to view the Western Palace, which is clearly related to kingship, the temple dedicated to the god of the netherworld, and the sanctuary used for the cult of the royal dead as a unitary monumental complex. This is the first organic archaeological evidence for one of the basic ideological institutions of the period of Amorite dynasties in lower Mesopotamia and Upper Syria: the cult of royal, illustrious, and heroic ancestors, who guaranteed the prosperous development of the urban community. This is the practice of the cult of the *rp'um*, which is well known from the Late Bronze II ritual texts from Ugarit and which certainly goes back to, and was typical of, the Middle Bronze II period there (Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartìn 1976; Healey 1978: 85–88; Pope 1981: 174–79). The text documenting Hammurapi's genealogy indicates that it was also practiced in Mesopotamia during the Middle Bronze II period.

The Old Syrian period, the age of the Amorite dynasties, ended around 1600 B.C., after about fifty years of struggle provoked by the Old Hittite kings Hattushili I and Murshili I. Within a few decades beginning around 1650 B.C., these kings descended from Anatolia to Upper Syria, besieged and took Alalakh (in the region of Antioch), Urshu (near Ebla, possibly Tell Tuqan), almost certainly Ebla itself, and, afterwards, Aleppo, the center of the powerful kingdom of Yamḫad. Lastly, Murshili I took Babylon, where the last king of Hammurapi's dynasty reigned.

Conclusion

Important results can now be obtained by a comprehensive historical interpretation of all the available field data for centers like Ebla that are important in the history of the urban civilization of Syro-Palestine. Such a synthesis enables us to draw attention to both the forces of discontinuity and continuity in history thereby drawing attention to what is truly distinctive in a culture. As a consequence, it is possible to perceive the significant differences between the Old Syrian culture of Upper Syria and the cultural world of biblical Palestine. For instance, the very ancient designation of the royal ancestors, *rp'um*, in the first millennium B.C. loses the deep meaning of a religious ideology and ritual practice, which had been basic in the urban culture of Middle Bronze II in the second millennium (Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartìn 1976: 50–52; Pope 1977). A radical semantic change, therefore, is evidenced in the



Schematic plan of Sanctuary B2 during the Middle Bronze II period.

term as it moves from one culture to another and from the second millennium to the first millennium and the ancient values are cancelled. The opposite meaning which the biblical term *rephaim* takes—designating, on the one hand, the shadows in the netherworld and, on the other hand, the mythical beings of a remote past—is the most eloquent proof of the cultural distance between these two worlds.

In the spring of 1983, upon the initiative of the International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies, five members of the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Syria of the University of Rome traveled throughout the United States presenting lectures and seminars. The team, which included A. Archi, S. Mazzoni, F. Pinnock, G. Scandone Matthiae, and the present author, visited twenty universities and institutions. At the University of Pennsylvania the presentations of the Italian scholars were part of a symposium on the Ebla discoveries. The symposium was sponsored by the American Schools of Oriental Research. Also attending were S. N. Kramer, J. D. Muhly, and J. Sauer. The present paper is a somewhat modified version of a lecture given at this meeting.

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