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New Discoveries at EBLA

The Excavation of the Western Palace and the Royal Necropolis of the Amorite 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 bc.). This decade also witnessed the discovery, outside of its original context, of the headless royal statue whose cuneiform in-

scription 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 bc.). 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.

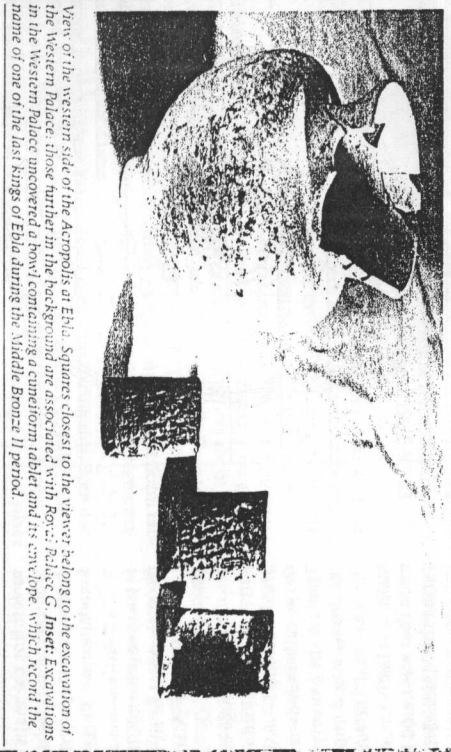
It is a huge building. With a length, running north-south, of slightly less than 115 meters and a width that varies between 60 and 65 meters, it forms an irregular rectangle nearly 7,300 square meters in area. The plan shows the use of a unit, freely adapted and repeated throughout, consisting of two, 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 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 bc. 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 basic ideological institutions of the Middle Bronze II Amorite dynasties. We see here a cult dedicated to illustrious royal ancestors, *ipum*—well known from Ugaritic texts—who guaranteed prosperity in this urban center.

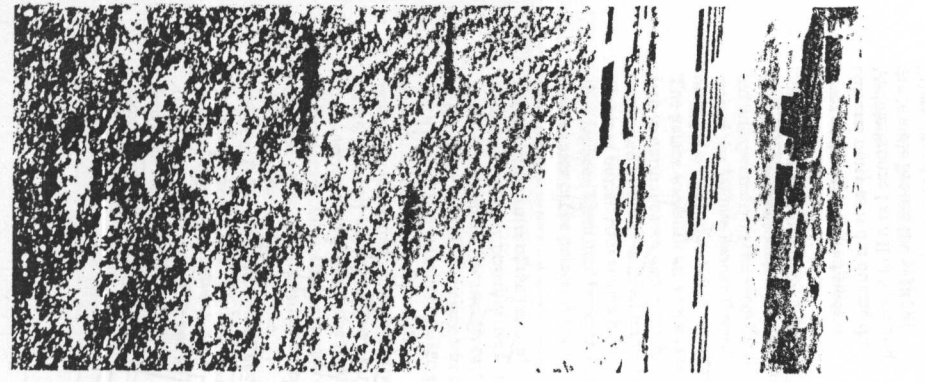
The architecture of the Western Palace is particularly helpful in identifying the peculiar characteristics of the Archaic Old Syrian culture. In fact, it follows some basic criteria of the period concerning the distribution of space. The inner courts are quite small and rectangular in shape and are usually 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).

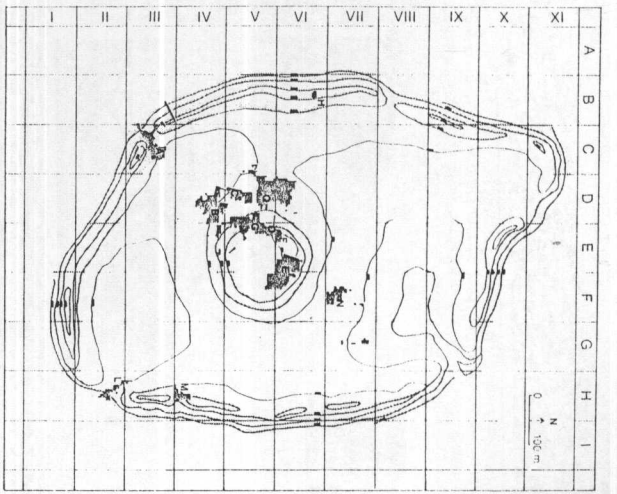
**The Western Palace:
A New Administrative Building of the Old Syrian Period**
The Western Palace was built during Middle Bronze I—that is, during a

period that dates between 2000 and 1800 bc. (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.



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.





Simplified topographical map of Tell Marthai showing the areas of excavation at the end of the 1982 season. The letters denote various sections of the city; the grey 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).

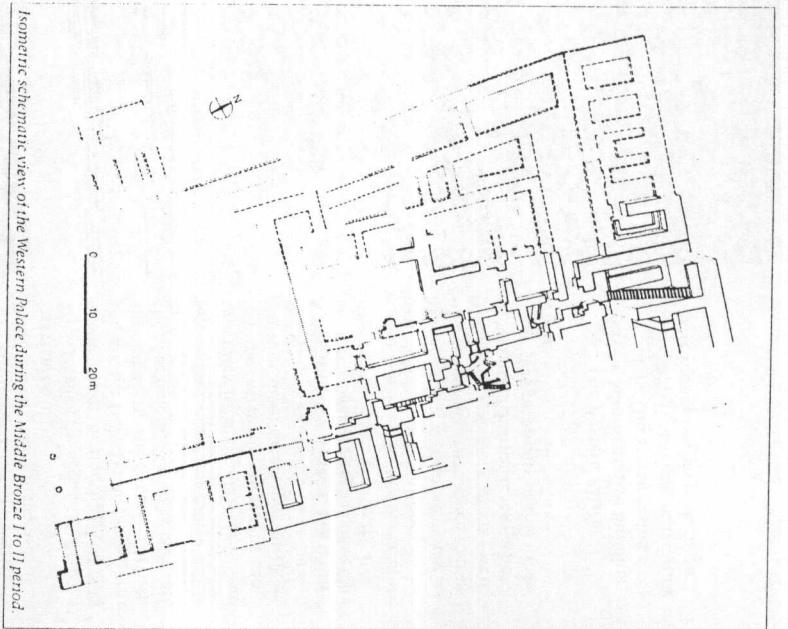
Although the Western Palace at Ebla differs greatly from Mesopotamian architecture from the Old Akkadian to the Old Babylonian periods, it does contain elements of the Old Syrian style. Thick, massive foundations using large blocks with a high socle for mudbrick superstructures, frequent coverings of 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 (Woodley 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 *bir hiltani* (an Amorite term for the entrance portico) of the first millennium BC (Woodley 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 (Marthae 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 Carthmish contributed greatly to defining the main monumental architectural styles that distinguished the urban image of cities in Syria-Palestine. These centers marked settlements from northern Syria to southern Palestine with basic elements of architectural and urbanistic unity (Marthae 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 revetment that was found in Palestine during the Middle Bronze IIC (Part 1975: 19-36; Seger 1975: 42-45; Koohavi, 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 (Kushke 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 I and II (Kaplan 1973: 12-14). Most likely, the vast region between the Taurus mountains and the Arabian desert



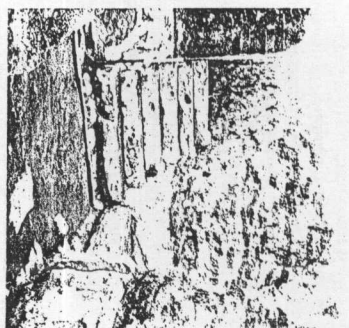
Isometric schematic view of the Western Palace during the Middle Bronze I to II period.

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.

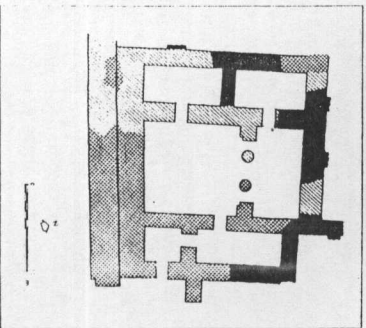
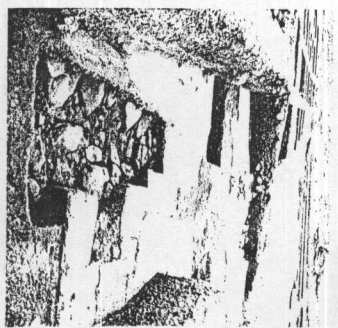
Artifacts from the Western Palace
Soundings made below the floors of both the east and north sections of the Western Palace revealed the presence of a still earlier floor containing typical pottery of Middle Bronze I Syria (phase II). This pottery assemblage included a number of open-carinated bowls 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

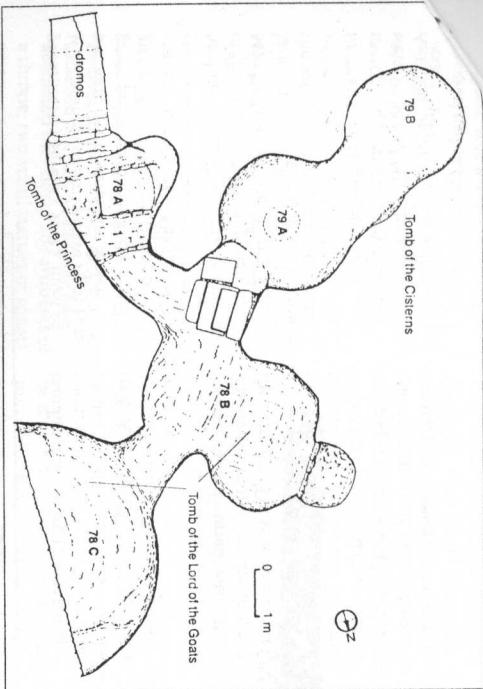
specimens of uvular or biconical jars with horizontal rims turned outward and combed bands on the shoulders (Marthae 1982a: figure 24).

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 (Ib) modifications led to the sealing of some doors and to the restoration of the or-

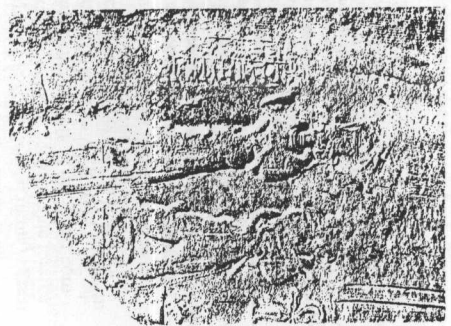


Above: The northern staircase and entrance to the northeastern quarter of the Western Palace. View is from the south. Below: Photograph of the eastern wing of the Western Palace's reception suite viewed from the north and schematic plan of the reception suite.





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 *domos* of 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 Indlilingur of Ebla.

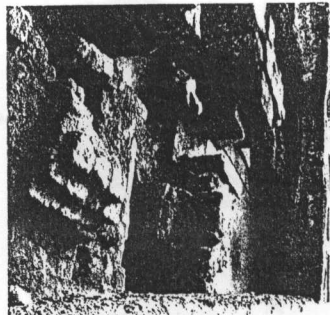


thostats [Marthae 1979a: 148-49, 1980c:10]. This work was apparently still going on when the complex was finally destroyed.

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 paired 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 bc. 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



[Marthae 1980a: 116-17, Kupper, in press]. The fragment contains part of a dating formula, which mentions a person named Indlilingur. He almost certainly was the last - or one of the last - kings of Ebla at the end of Middle Bronze II [Marthae 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; Marthae 1980b: 116-18). This corresponds quite well with the diffusion of the Hurrian ethnic element, which probably took place during the eighteenth century bc following the reigns of Hammurabi of Babylon and Yam-Lim of Aleppo. Such diffusion is evident when one compares the Mari texts, around 1800 bc, and the Alalakh tablets, dating between 1700 and 1650 bc (Wilhelm 1982: 17-19).

Several fragments of provisions jars which had cylinder seal impressions on their shoulders were found in the same section of the Western Palace. In each case the cylinder 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 Indlilingur. 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 Yamhad milieu [Marthae 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/ Yamhad (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 [Marthae 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, Indlilingur, who reigned at the time of the Old Hittite kings Hattushili I and Murshili I.

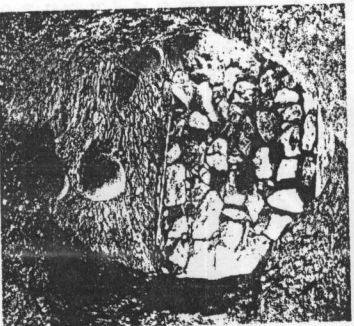
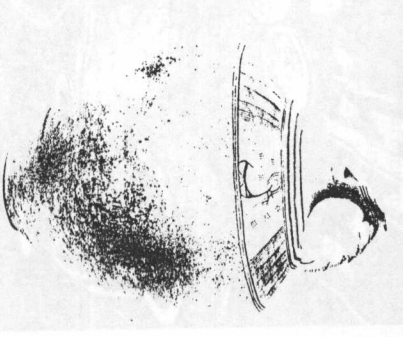
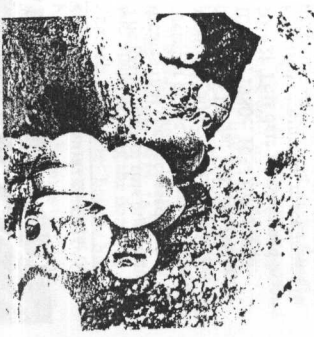
Three Royal Tombs from the Middle Bronze II Necropolis

The excavations of Maradikh levels IIIA and IIIB of the Western Palace led unexpectedly to the identification of the Middle Bronze II royal necropolis [Marthae 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 [Marthae 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 [Marthae 1980a: 100-02, 1982d: 6-8]. The Tomb of the Princess included a short *domos*, 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 bc, 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 hypogean (number Q 78 B2), a short gallery (number Q 78 B1), and a semicircular hypogean (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 bc 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 hypogean number Q 78 C of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, showing how it was excavated. The cave belongs to the north. Tomb of the Princess. Left: Painted monochrome vase with paired decorative motifs in the Tomb of the Princess. The vessel is made of ceramic clay and belongs to the Middle Bronze II period.

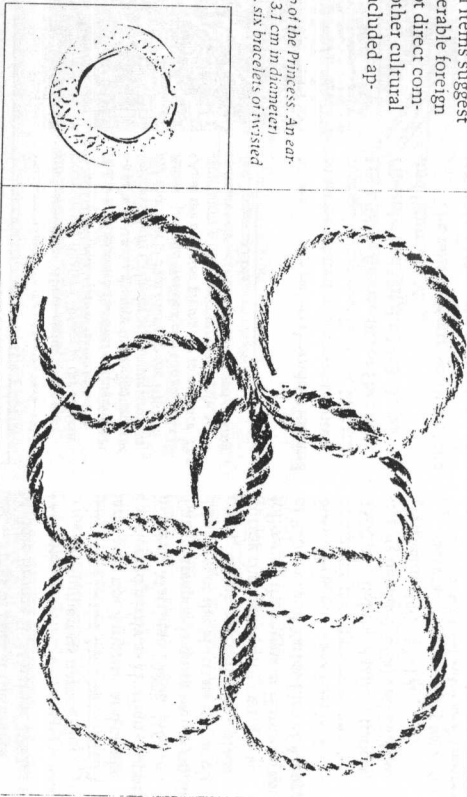
east, that was adapted as a staircase. The Tomb of the Cisterns was used sometime around 1700 BC. The three royal tombs explored to date correspond to the classic tomb type of the Middle Bronze II in Syro-Palestine which had a funerary chamber and entrance shaft; the short staircase dome of the tombs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

sartonyx, 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 "Monnet jars" found at Byblos and Tepe Hissar (Marthaie 1979a: 161-62, 1980d: 8). Evidence for interconnections between Ebla and Anatolia is provided by a falience vase with two

Ugaitic and Tell el-Ahjul (Shanheni). The only comparable example of a gold bracelet produced in a similar fashion is from the Royal Tomb II of Byblos (Marthaie 1981c: 210-11, figure 46; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 115; Monnet 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 starhead of Old Syrian workshops, which are artist-

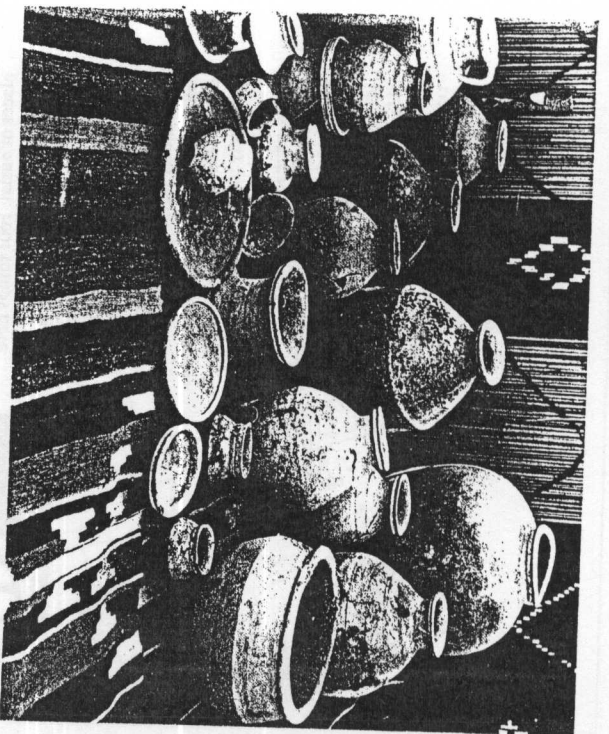
Gold jewelry from the Tomb of the Princess. An ear- or nose-ring (approximately 3.1 cm in diameter) with granulated decoration; six bracelets of twisted gold strands decorated with granulation; and a toggle pin with twisted shaft and star-head. All of the jewelry and objects shown in this article are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



proximately 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 melope decoration. They probably were imported from the area around Antioch. Stone vases of alabaster,

handles and pointed base that apparently belongs to the same morphological class as a rock crystal vase from Achenbolyuk (Marthaie 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,



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-Ahjul (Marthaie 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 (Marthaie 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 BC, or slightly later (Marthaie 1979a: 162-78, 1980a: 102-07, 1980c: 195-202, 1982d: 10-12). This date is reinforced by an Egyptian ceremonial mace found in the tomb. The mace belonged to the

pharaoh Heteribre Harnedjibretef, probably the ninth king of the Thirteenth Dynasty, who briefly reigned around 1760 BC. 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 Immeva." Unfortunately no title accompanies the name (Archi and Marthaie 1979). Nothing else is known of Immeva 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 Mandikh acropolis in the Middle Bronze II debris (Kupper, in press). Although there is no proof, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Immeva 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 BC (Marthaie 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 Mandikh.

Mandikh I	c. 3300-2900	Protohistoric Period
Mandikh IIA	c. 2900-2400	Early Protosyrian Period
Mandikh IIB1	c. 2400-2250	Early Bronze IVA
Mandikh IIB2	c. 2250-2000	Early Bronze IVB
Mandikh IIIA	c. 2000-1800	Middle Bronze I
Mandikh IIIB	c. 1800-1600	Middle Bronze II
Mandikh IVA	c. 1600-1400	Late Bronze I
Mandikh IVB	c. 1400-1200	Late Bronze II
Mandikh VA	c. 1200-900	Iron I
Mandikh VB	c. 900-720	Iron II
Mandikh VC	c. 720-535	Iron III
Mandikh VIA	c. 535-325	
Mandikh VIB	c. 325-60	
Mandikh VII	3rd-7th cent.	

*Taken from page 52 of Marthaie 1981a.

or
Aramaean and "Neo-Hittite" Age
Hellenistic Age
Late Roman and Byzantine Age

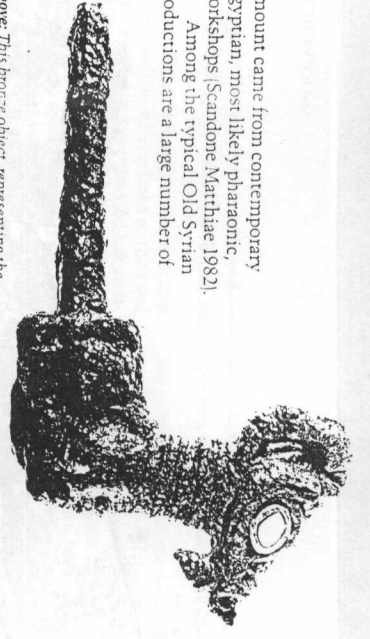
...ons, gold jewelry, ceremonial
vases, and ivory amulets. Unlike the
Tomb of the Princess, this tomb con-
tained some globular bowls with
flaring rims, typical of the middle
and final phases of the Middle
Bronze II period.

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"
revertment plaques, probably belong-
ing 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 squat-
ting 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
femurated axes of the long narrow
or duckbill type that are typical of
Syria during the Middle Bronze II
period (Marthiae 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 con-
firmed by recent finds from the ex-
cavations in the region of Hamrin 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).

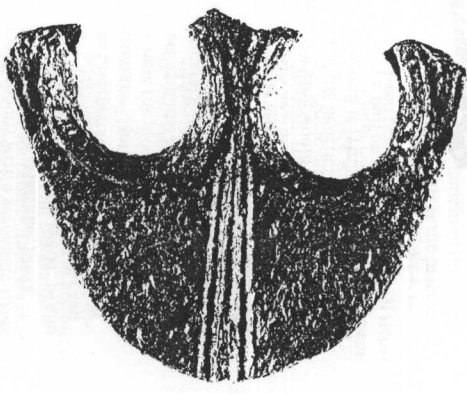
The extraordinary original
wealth of the Tomb of the Lord of the
Goats can only be surmised when
one considers what must have been
plundered during the sack of the
Western Palace at the end of the
seventeenth century B.C. The gold
jewelry which was left behind was
largely of Syrian and probably
Eblaitic production, while a smaller

amount came from contemporary
Egyptian, most likely pharaonic,
workshops (Scandone Marthiae 1982).

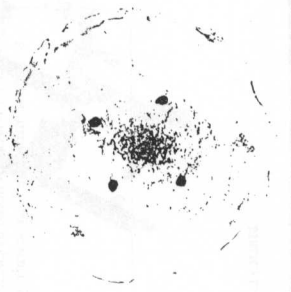
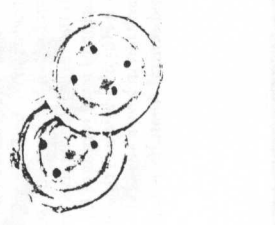
Among the typical Old Syrian
productions are a large number of
beads which, in the case of the rare
pseudobarrel type with central
square sections, are made of gold,
lapis lazuli, and carnelian. The other
types are more interesting for their
parallels to beads found in other
parts of the ancient Near 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
(Marthiae 1981c: 216-17; Monnet
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, al-
though uncommon, hammered gold-
leaf beads of Middle Bronze II C
Palestinian sites like Tell Beit Mir-
sim, Tell el-'Ajjul (Shanuben), Tell
Far'ah S, and Megiddo (Marthiae
1981c: 214-15; Maxwell-Hyslop
1971: 125-26). The wonderful cast
melon-shaped beads with plain col-
lars belong to a class of beads known



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 arm-
rest of a throne. Below: A bronze femurated
axe with axial moulding also from the Tomb of
the Lord of the Goats.



from Larsa to Assur and Shanuben.
Many round, gold-leaf studs, each
having four holes, were also found in
the tomb. They certainly once be-
longed to ceremonial garments. A



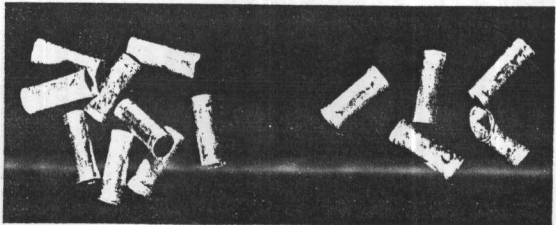
similar stud was found at Kultepe Ib,
where it was probably imported from
northern Syria, while rosette-shaped
types from Megiddo and Shanuben
are imitations dating to the begin-
ning of the Late Bronze I (Marthiae
1981c: 220-21; Maxwell-Hyslop
1971: 134; Loud 1948: 164).

The jewelry collection also in-
cluded 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 (Marthiae 1981c: 217-18).
The granulation of this Ebla neck-
lace is of comparable high quality to
the celebrated Dilhat necklace now
in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
The six-pointed star in Eblaitic
jewelry, however, is a typical Old
Syrian pattern (Maxwell-Hyslop
1971: 88-91).

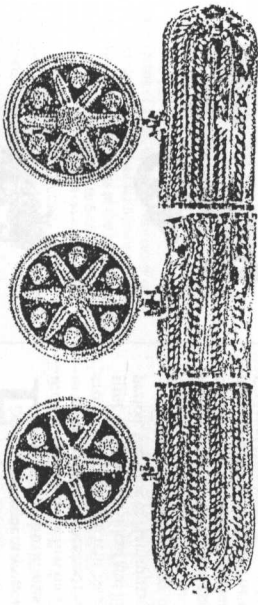
Among the gold jewelry of Egypt-
ian production from the tomb are a
beautiful finger ring with a cloi-
sonné decoration of two filices flank-
ing a scaraboid, and a fragmentary
necklace in the shape of a lily (Mar-
thiae 1981c: 224-25). The lily is sym-

boic 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 pro-
ducts of the late Twelfth Dynasty.

Two splendid limestone maces
with handles of ivory, silver, and gold
are certainly ceremonial pharaonic
objects (Scandone Marthiae 1982). In
each mace a segment of the handle
was made of a silver cylinder covered
with thick gold leaf. One unin-
scribed mace had a lozenge-shaped
pattern pierced into the gold leaf,
resembling in technique and decora-
tion a knife handle from tomb II at
Byblos (Monnet 1928: 160). The sec-
ond mace, bearing the name of
Pharaoh Hefephre, has the hiero-
glyphic 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 glyptic
(Scandone Marthiae 1979; Marthiae
1981c: 222-24). The hieroglyphs
were incorrectly repaired at Ebla in



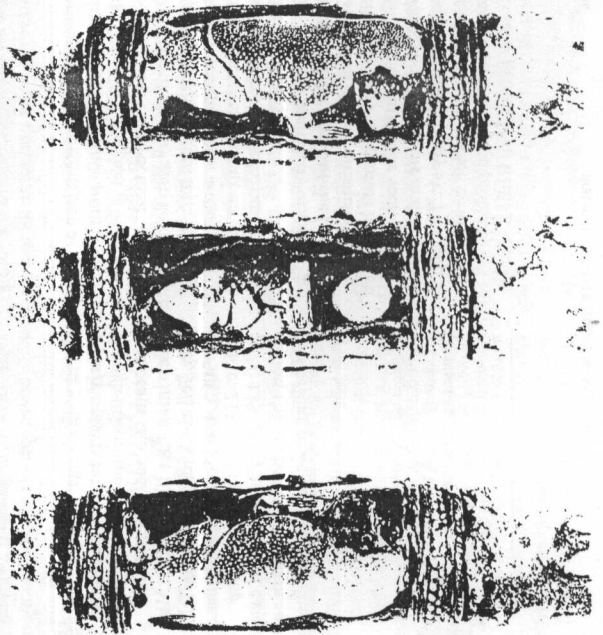
Gold artifacts found in the Tomb of the Lord
of the Goats. Shown clockwise from upper
left are two sizes of studs, melon-shaped
beads (approximately 1.1 cm in diameter), an
lapis lazuli, and two groups of tubular and one
group of pseudobarrel beads.



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



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



Three views of an Egyptian mace of the Thirteenth Dynasty pharaoh Heterphie. Hammerhead, discovered in the Tomb 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 Heterphie 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

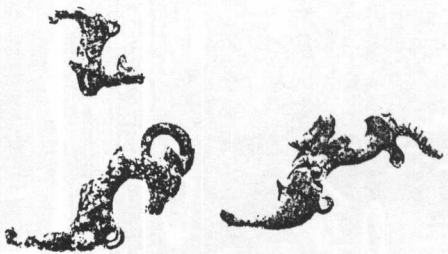
thin ivory pieces set back to back so that only their outer faces were visible. This was attached to two ivory rods at the top and two at the bottom. Small bronze pegs were used to attach human figurines onto the outer faces. A serpent, lion, and bear, all carved in the round, were fixed similarly to 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

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 stasis. 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



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

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 Marišk, 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 Hammurabi of Babylon and Šamsi-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 Marišk.

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 Marišk 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.

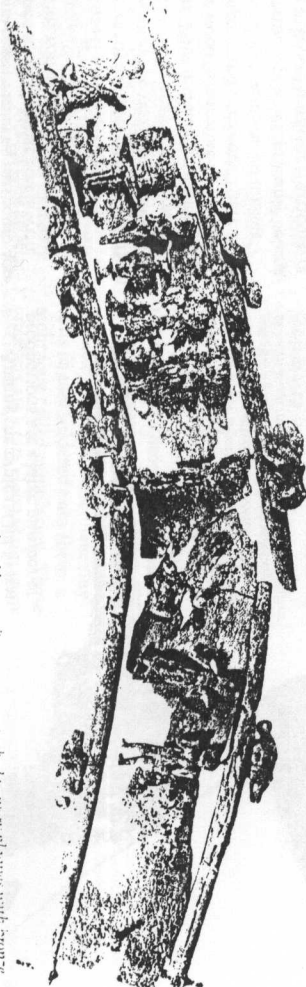
The discovery of over 15,000 clay tablets from the Early Bronze Age palace at Tell Marišk, and the claims made regarding the historical and biblical references and allusions contained in those tablets represent a scholarly controversy that has been featured in the pages of BA as well as every journal 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. E. 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.

James D. Muhly



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.

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 II C at Tell el-'Ajjul (Sharhen), the relation between the tombs and a funerary cultic building and a palatial edifice at Tell ed-Dabaqa (Avaris), the Hyksos capital city in the eastern Delta, is certain (Tuhnell 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 factors 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 II C 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 sculptured ritual basin found in this temple depicts not only a banquet scene—which is a typical representation for this class of monumental structures—but also two series of soldiers. The soldiers are appropriate to Rashaph's role as god of war (Marthiae 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 (Marthiae 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 (Marthiae 1981a: 128-30; Yadin 1972: 95-98). This building is also topographically related to a burial area and is oriented towards the

The Old Syrian period, the age of the Amorre dynasties, ended around 1600 B.C. after about fifty years of struggle provoked by the Old Hittite kings Hattushili I and Mursili II. 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 Ebla itself, and afterwards Aleppo, the center of the powerful kingdom of Yamhad. Lastly, Mursili II took Babylon, where the last king of Hammurabi's dynasty reigned.

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 (Marthiae 1979b: 567-69).

Thus we believe that the three buildings at Ebla are related to the royal necropolis and that it is possi-

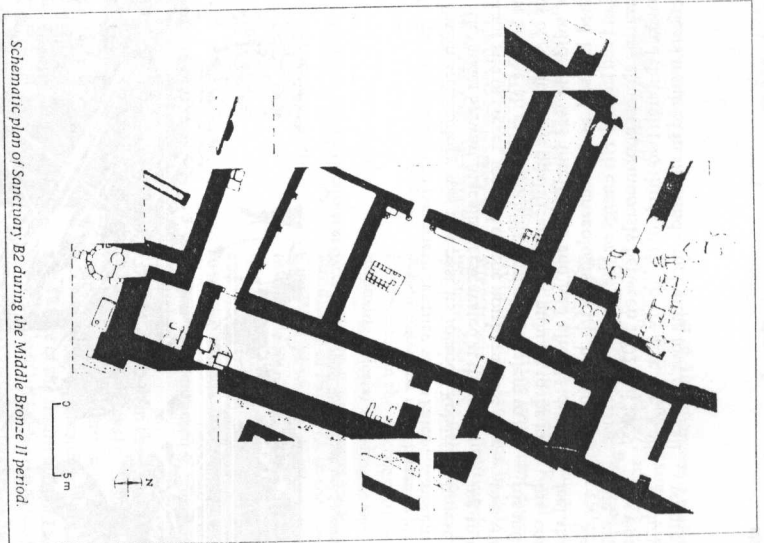
ble to view the Western Palace, which is clearly related to kingship, the temple dedicated to the god of the netherworld, and the sanctuary used for the cult of the royal dead as a unitary monumental complex.

This is the first organic archaeological evidence for one of the basic ideological institutions of the period of Amorre 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 *ri'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 Sammartin 1976; Healey 1978: 85-88; Pope 1981: 174-79). The text documenting Hammurabi's reign indicates that it was also practiced in Mesopotamia during the Middle Bronze II period.

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, *ri'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 Sammartin 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, Marthiae, and the present author, visited twenty universities and institutions. At the University of Pennsylvania the presentations of the Italian scholars were part of a sym-

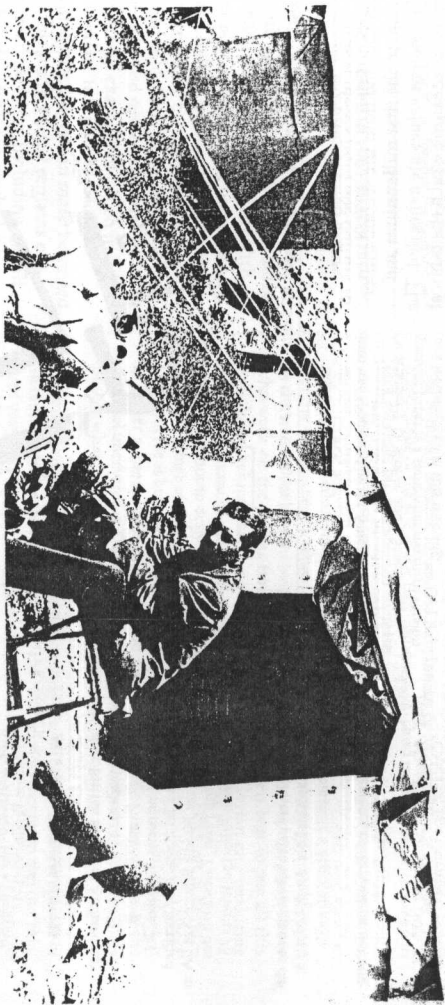
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BA PORTRAIT

The Success and Failure of Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister

by Page A. Thomas



Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister at Gezer around 1905. Photograph used courtesy of David Ussishkin and William G. Dever.

In the first years of the twentieth century, when Palestinian archaeology was just past its infancy, Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister excavated at the important site of Gezer, located on the northernmost edge of the Shephelah at the foothills west of Jerusalem in the valley of Aviaion. The qualifications he brought to the job were solid. He was intelligent and had already distinguished himself as an archaeologist with his work in England and Ireland. His energy on the job was impressive: Excavating almost continuously between 1902 and 1909, he worked through two-thirds of the thirty-acre site. And his efforts resulted in rich finds, including four city-wall

systems, the famous "Gezer calendar" (a small piece of limestone inscribed with a mnemonic Hebrew poem having to do with the agricultural activities of the twelve months of the year), and a large amount of pottery. Despite his industry and the high regard in which he was held by his contemporaries, however, many authorities now feel that most of what he did at Gezer was wasted. Macalister's failure at Gezer may at first seem surprising, especially when one considers that after he finished his work in Palestine he returned to Ireland to become the leading figure in Irish archaeology. Why did this able man, whose other work was successful, including other work

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