



14th International Congress on the Archaeology
of the Ancient Near East

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

City Invincible: Middle Bronze Age Urbanism in the Levant

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Abstract

Middle Eastern origins for urban life have been assumed in historical literature, but criticised in revisionist studies more recently. Mesopotamian ur-cities are often seen as exemplars for all that came after, but whether all subsequent 'urbanisms' were the same, even within the confines of the Middle East, has been a subject of debate for some time now (Philip & Chesson 2003; Philip 2008). In this workshop we wish to re-consider the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) urban world of the Levant, and whether it is easily viewed as a seamless continuation of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) Syro-Mesopotamian koine that came before.

In the southern Levant, the current view would tend towards the negative. South Levantine scholars have advocated for a different organising principle in the southern EBA, and not merely scalar differences, when comparing the EBA cities of the northern and southern Levant. The apparent 'collapse' of southern urbanism at the end of the EB III period, and the 're-introduction' of Syrian urban culture into the south in the early Second Millennium BCE begs the question of what exactly was being 're-introduced'? When turning to Syrian MBA urbanism itself, with its (arguably) unprecedented rampart enclosed settlements (Qatna, Aleppo, Ebla), one might posit that this system is not assuredly a seamless continuation of the EBA urban past, but something new, both in concept and in form.

We want to question the various definitions/explanations on offer for Levantine MBA urbanism, as well as the origin states for same, seeking to identify the chief characteristics of the Levantine MBA urban phenomenon. It is hoped this workshop might take first steps in clarifying how we conceptualise the MBA urban form, identifying appropriate datasets to be employed in any such novel formulations, and how one might meld together the historical and archaeological datasets.

Keywords

Middle Bronze Age, urbanism, Levant

Program

Full day workshop, with the following individuals having accepted to present:

- Glenn Schwartz (John Hopkins University) - *"Reinventing Urbanism at Middle Bronze Age Umm el-Marra"*
- Frances Pinnock (Sapienza University of Rome) - *"Middle Bronze Age Ebla: Change and Continuity in Urban Patterns in North Inner Syria"*
- Graham Philip, Durham University - *"The later 3rd and earlier 2nd millennia BC in western Syria: the evidence from Tell Nebi Mend and surveys in the Orontes Valley"*
- Peter Pfälzner (University of Tübingen) - *"The politically shaped urban landscape of Middle Bronze Age Qatna (Syria)"*
- Holly Winter (University of Sydney) - *"Cities of Power: Great Yamkhad and Syrian MBA Urbanism"*
- Michel de Vreeze (Durham University) - *"Byblos: sacred urbanism and how it came to define a town"*
- Felix Höflmayer (Austrian Academy of Sciences) - *"Shifting boundaries: some thoughts on the south-western extent of Middle Bronze Age urbanism"*
- Stephen Bourke (University of Sydney) - *"The God's Land of Pella: Temple and Society in the MBA Jordan Valley"*
- Katja Soennecken (Luxembourg School of Religion & Society; German Protestant Institute of Archaeology Jerusalem) and Dietrich Vieweger (University of Wuppertal) - *"Of small city-states and large natural catastrophes - Tall Zira'a in the Middle Bronze Age and transition to Late Bronze Age"*
- Matthew Adams (Center for the Mediterranean World) - *"New Insights into the Beginnings of Middle Bronze Age Megiddo"*
- Susan Cohen (Montana State University) - *"Middle Bronze Age urbanism in the southern Levant: assessment and analysis"*
- Assaf Yasur-Landau (University of Haifa) and Eric Cline (George Washington University) - *"Tel Kabri and Trajectories of Middle Bronze Age Urbanization in The Galilee"*
- Nina Maaranen (Bournemouth University) - *"Urban health in the Middle Bronze Age Levant"*
- Tina Saupe (Uppsala University) - *"The Levantine-Egyptian Nexus from a Genetic Perspective"*

Type of paper

Workshop