



## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

# Ritual Commensality Practices at Ebla? An Assessment of the Archaeological Evidence

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## Abstract

The site of Tell Mardikh/ancient Ebla is highly renowned for the richness of its material culture, especially for what concerns the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Indeed, this abundance of data has made possible, since the beginning of the excavations in 1964 by Paolo Matthiae, to offer detailed reconstructions of many aspects of the Eblaic society and material culture. Thus, in this contribution, building upon published data and presenting new evidence, it will be offered an assessment of what could be termed *ritual commensality practices* at Middle Bronze Age Ebla. Such objective will be pursued through the examination of a variety of sources, among which are stone sculpted basins, steles and obelisks, clay figurines, cylinder seals, pottery vessels, burials and a series of copper/bronze perforated tubes, interpretable as strainers for drinking beer. This way, combining the analysis of different kinds of artefacts, their distribution and their retrieval contexts, together with the information that can be glimpsed from iconographic sources, new light will be thrown on ritual drinking and eating practices, which undoubtedly functioned not only as a potent tool of social regulation and community role definition, but also constituted a fundamental expression of the Eblaic religious beliefs.

## Keywords

Ebla, Syria, Banquet, Ritual, Bronze Age

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