

# The Early Bronze Age of the Levant

ca. 3600/3400-2400 cal BCE

# What's Happening in the NE?

Levant situated in between two already urbanized region – Egypt and Mesopotamia

Dates cal BC	Levant	Egypt	Mesopotamia	North Syria & SE Anatolia	SW Anatolia
3600/3400  3100/3050	EB I	Archaic Period First Dynasty (Old Kingdom)	Uruk Expansion	LC3-4 (North) Chaff-Faced Horizon (West)	Amuq F-G
3100  2700	EB II	End of First to Second Dynasty	Jemdet Nasr Early Dynastic	LC5/post-Uruk	Amuq G-H
2700  2300	EB III	Second to Fifth Dynasties	Early Dynastic Nineveh (N)	Multiple competing	Amuq H-I
2300  2200	EB IV- MB I	Sixth Dynasty	Early Dynastic to Akkadian	Multiple competing	Amuq I-J

Map of relevant Early Bronze Age Sites in the Levant



# The Early Bronze I

- Do your readings!
- Although called “Bronze Age”, it is not widely used yet
- Bronze an alloy of copper (80%) and tin (20%)
  - Makes metal stronger, holds an edge longer
- However, copper still dominant metal and still a rare, prestige item
- The issues:
  - Degree of continuity from preceding period?
  - Homogeneity and centralisation? (as seen in classification of the finds, especially pottery)
  - Migrations and origin of populations?
  - An urban society???

# Internal Chronology

- Tripartite division of Bronze Age into EB I, II, III (G.E. Wright, 1937)
- Amiran & Kenyon proposed dividing EB I up into Proto-Urban A, B, & C (based on Jericho and appearance GBW)
- Division accepted, but now use EB Ia, EB Ib, EB Ic
- Big mess, but for our purposes its all EB I !

# Site Location and Settlement Patterns

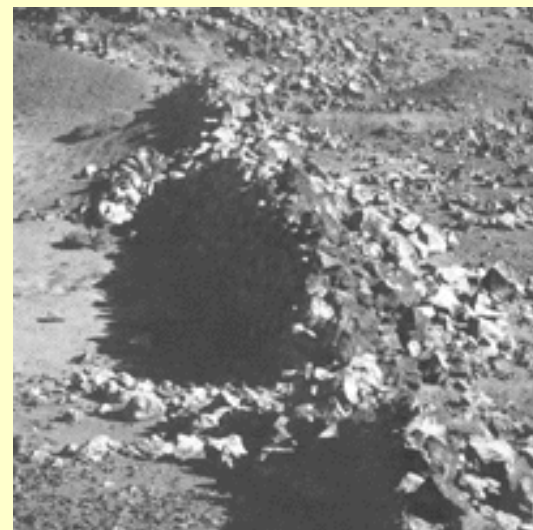
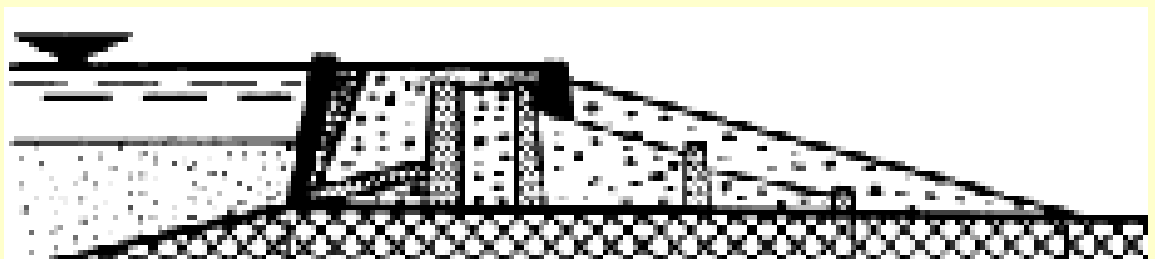
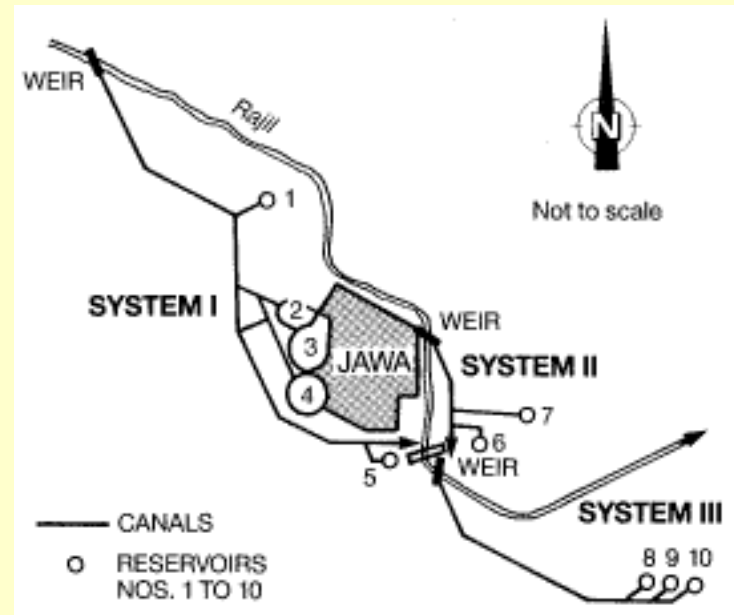
- Combination of continuity and change
- Settlement continues to be modest, unfortified farming villages – tells
- Major changes in settlement patterns
  - Areas densely settled in Chalco largely deserted
  - EB I sites in different locations even if in same area, only 20% reoccupation
  - New EB sites located fertile areas and focused near major water sources and trade routes
  - Many new sites became major urban centres in EB II
- End of EB I sees many sites abandoned, probably due to urbanization process

# Megiddo tell



# Jawa

- 15 ha site in the middle of the Basalt Desert
- Elaborate water supply system of dams and reservoirs – demo knowledge local environment
- Origin of population – Levant or Mesopotamia?
- Collapsed end of EB I





# Site Plans and Architecture

- Limited excavations – Megiddo, Yiftahel, Beth Yareh, Tel Erani, Arad, Bab edh-Dhra'
- Northern Levant
  - Curvilinear, apsidal or round structures
  - Unknown in Chalcolithic and may be foreign tradition from north
  - Also associated with Grey Burnished Ware from north
- Only known public buildings are temples – hints at importance of priests and religious institutions

# Apsidal Houses – Yiftahel



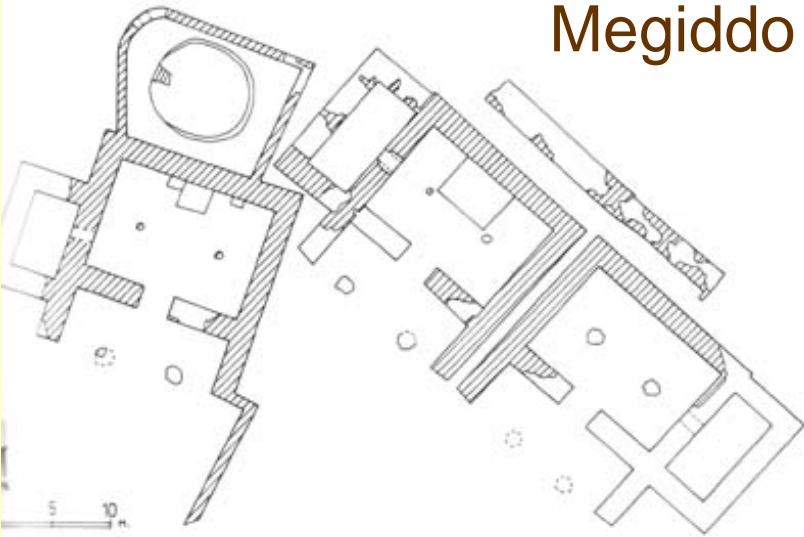
# Economy

- Agriculture and sheep/goat herding, with focus on former over latter (different from Chalcolithic)
- New crops – figs, pomegranates, grapes (wine)
- Processing of olive oil (Tell Rakan)
- Semi-arid regions continue to be occupied by pastoralists, associated with vast cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra' and *nawamis* in Sinai

# Temples

4.16 Megiddo: plan of Early Bronze Age III sacred area, including three temples and a rounded altar (Stratum XV).

Megiddo



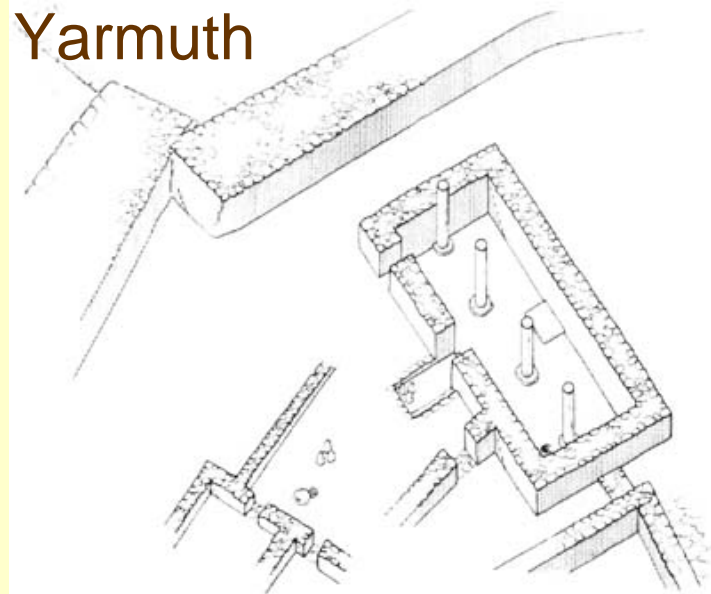
Stratum XIX double temple

Pillared broad rooms with paved courtyard (rare art on stones)

Raised dais/platform for deity

Like 'Ein Gedi

Yarmuth



4.17 The "White Building" at Yarmuth, probably an Early Bronze III temple.

Megiddo



# Megiddo Temples



# Other Temples



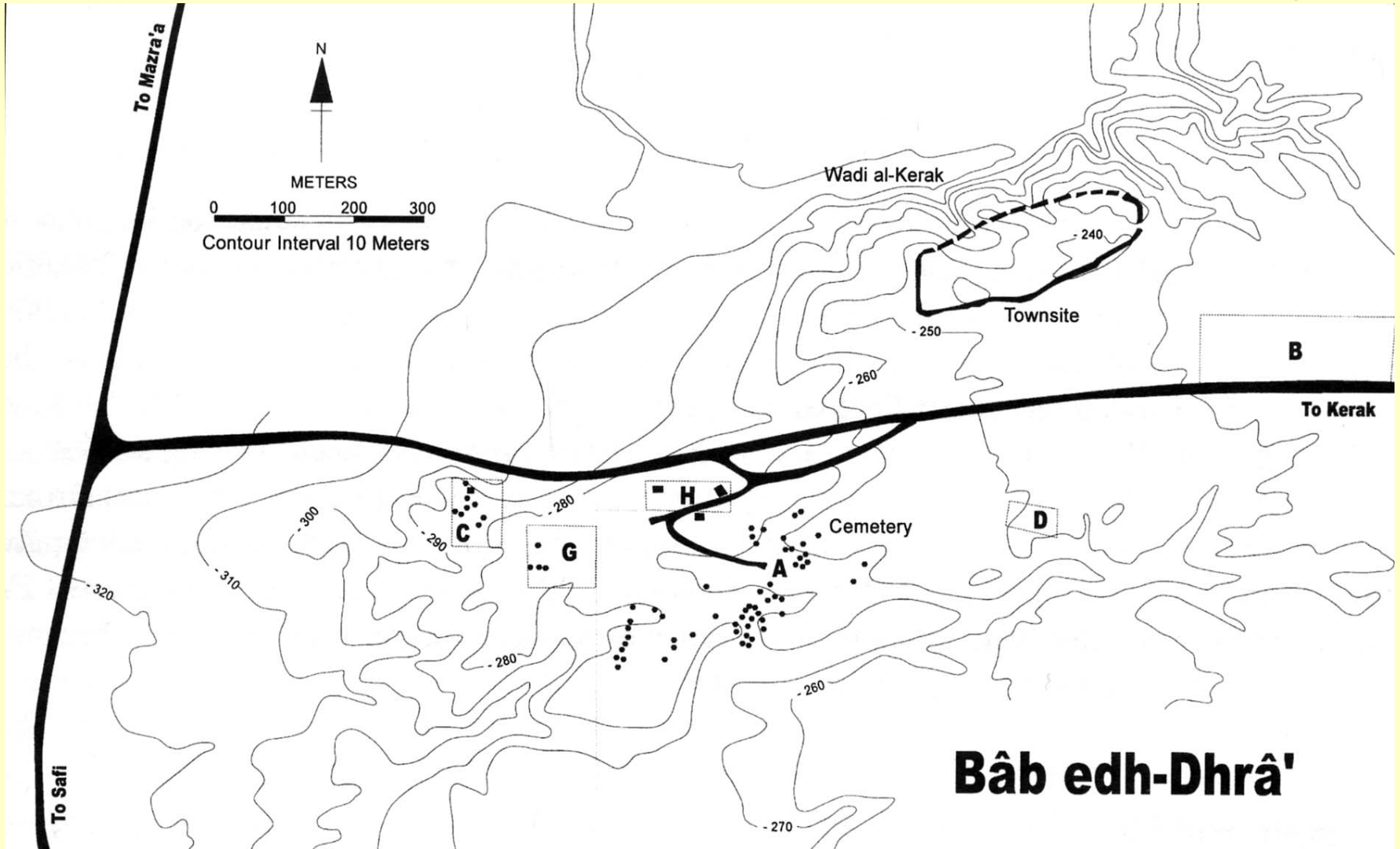
'Ai EB Temple

Also found at  
Tell el-Far'ah

# Mortuary Practices

- Multiple burials in artificial or natural caves (or rock-cut tombs) with pottery, metal, jewellery most common (generations?)
- Skeletons disarticulated, long bones and skulls arranged in rows (order out of chaos?)
- Bab edh-Dhra' cemetery: 2 phases
  - EB Ia 1000's shaft tombs, no settlement (pastoralists), 6-7 interments, disarticulated with bones arranged
  - EB Ib mudbrick circular burial structures for primary articulated multiple burials, family tombs built by occupants permanent village

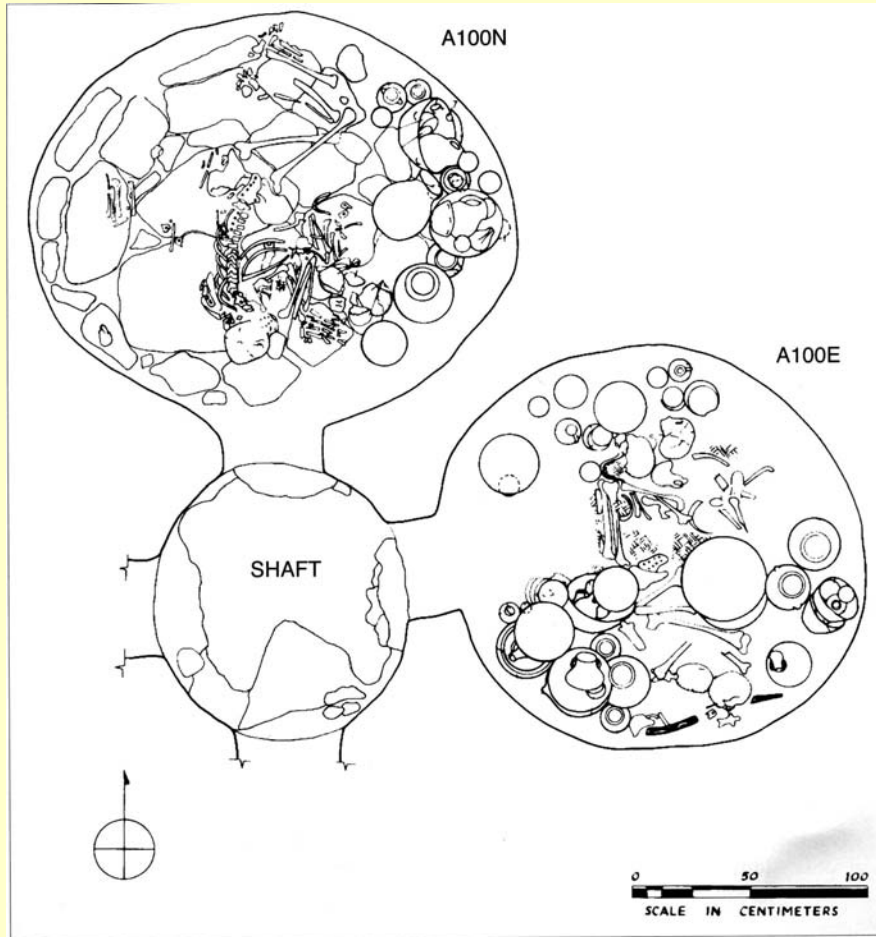
# Burial Customs: Bab ed-Dhra' dedicated cemetery



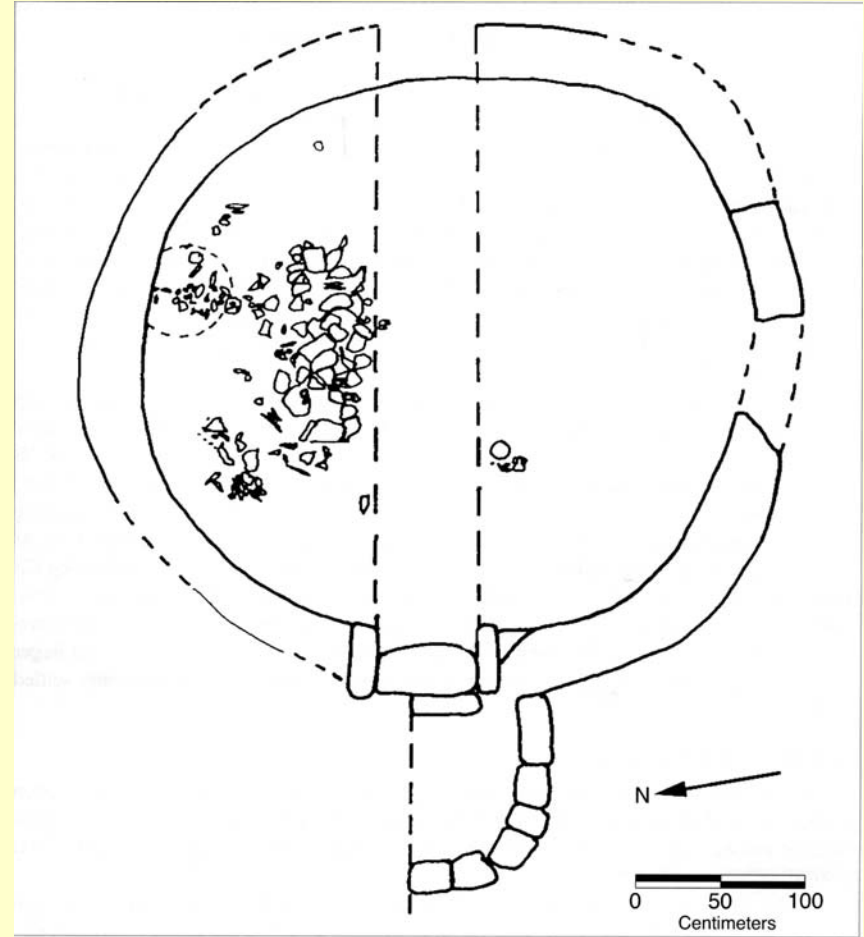


# Bab edh-Dhra' Burial Structures

## Shaft Tombs



## Charnel Houses



# Bab edh-Dhra' Cemetery



Unique pottery forms and decoration  
Local tradition  
Early unpainted  
Later painted

Shaft tomb entrance  
Cave approached through  
vertical entrance



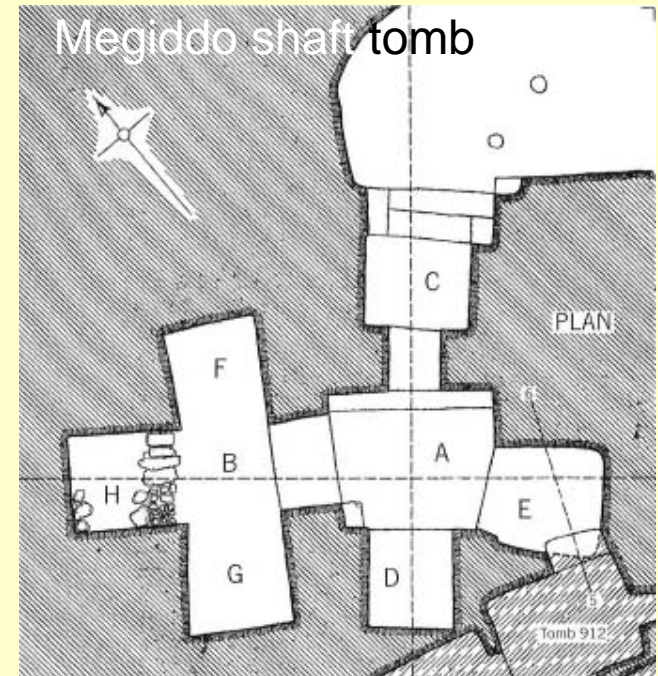
# Other Burial Practices – Dolmens, Cairns and Cists



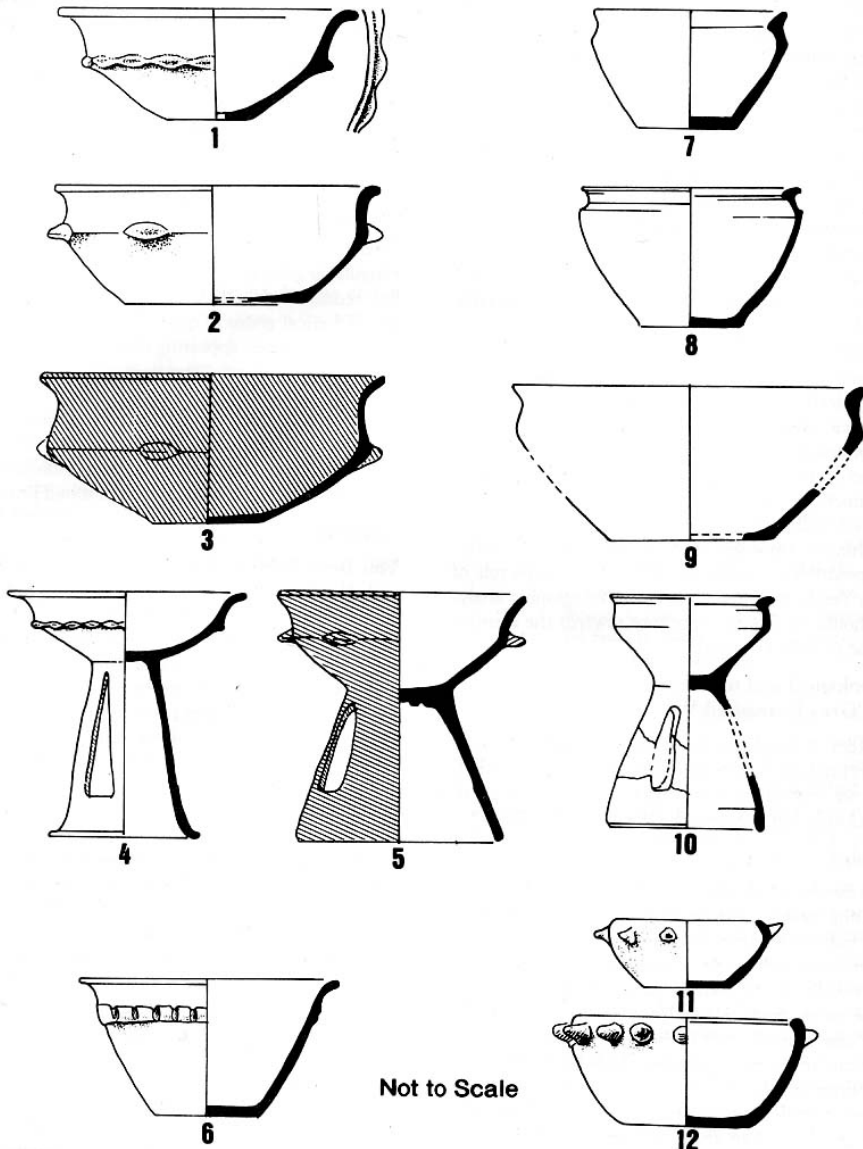
Common to  
Jordan  
Plateau

E.g., Tell al-  
'Umayri

Finally proof  
of dolmen  
use in EB!



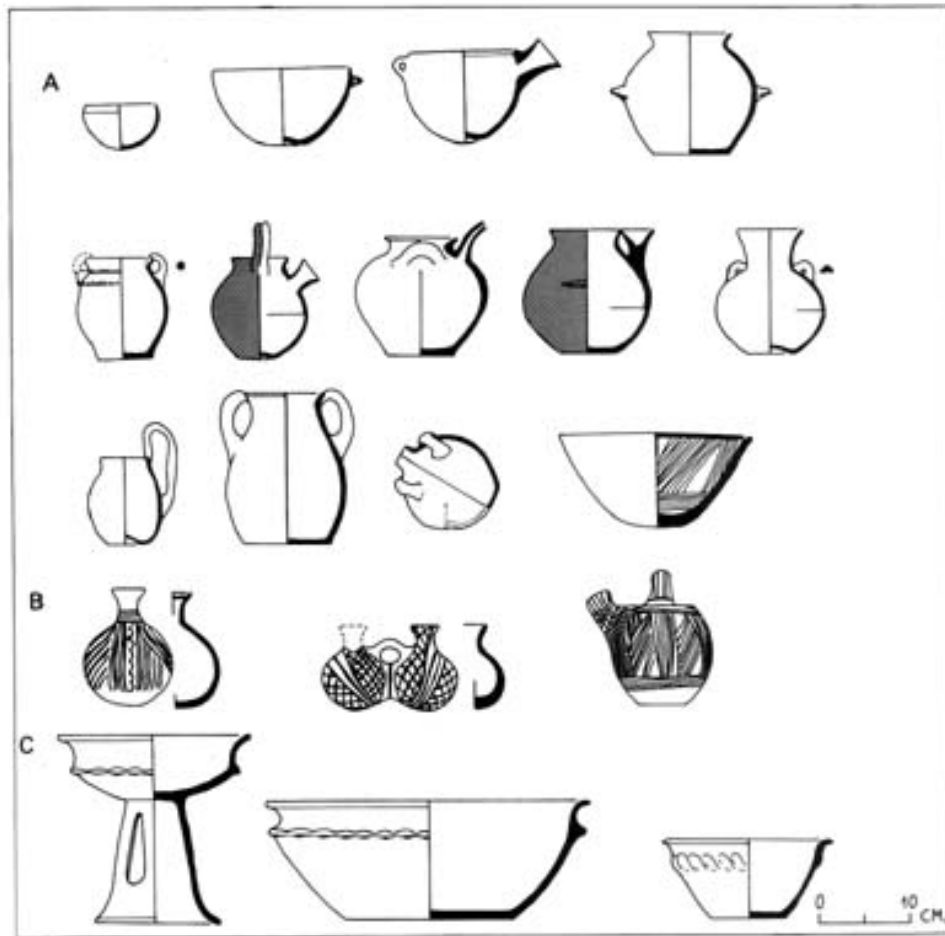
# EB Pottery



- Intact pots in tombs
  - Small painted jars as burial gifts
- Pottery groups: north vs. south and early vs. late
- Few stratified deposits
- Hole-mouth jars from Chalco
- Ledge handles – hallmark
- North
  - Large “grain-washed” jars
  - Red burnish
  - Grey Burnished Ware
    - Esdraelon ware
    - Carinations, rope decoration common

# EB Pottery

GBW locally-made but forms and decoration originate from north (movements of people)



4.4 Selected pottery of Early Bronze I: [A] red slipped pottery; [B] painted pottery of central hill country sites; [C] Gray Burnished Ware.

# Hacinebi, Turkey



- Contemporary occupation of Syria and Turkey by Late Chalcolithic/EB groups and Uruk outposts and colonies – contact with Levant
- Parallels in pottery, metal objects, other trade goods
- Influence for urbanism?

# Technology and Art

- Art rare (decorated pillars, incised stones)
- Cylinder seals
  - Adopted from Mesopotamia
  - Impressed into jars before firing – denote ownership of pot (vs. goods in Meso)
  - Designs parallel Syria and Mesopotamia
- New flint technology – Canaanean blade
  - Long blades from single platform cores
  - Sickles and knives
  - Produced in specialized workshops
- Basalt vessels common, figures rare



# Egyptian Connections: The Sinai Evidence

- Major movements of people and trade goods over very long distance – Egypt & Sumer
- Trade routes established over land through Sinai
  - 200 km of desert, 14 clusters of settlements and campsites connect Egypt to Negev, especially at Arad and Tell Erani (centre of trade network)
  - Tell Erani large settlement, urban city, dense mudbrick architecture, mix of local and Egyptian artifacts
- Sites in Delta contain EB I pottery (held oil, wine)
- Egyptian artifact rare in north

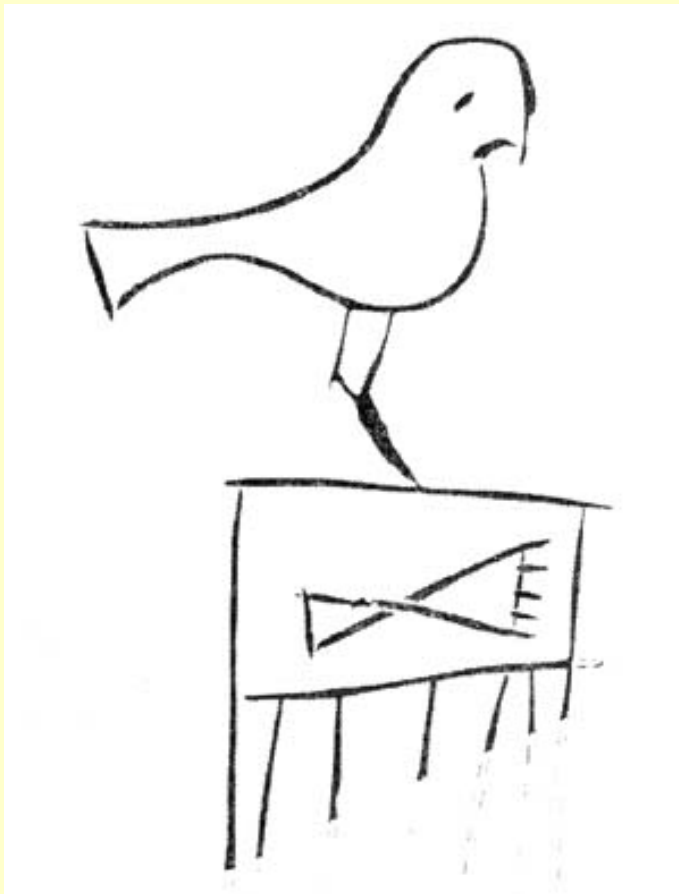


# Egyptian Connections: Economically Motivated

- Agricultural products as main exports to Egypt
  - Grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates
- Production of wine and olive oil coincides with settlement increase in cultivable areas of Levant (central highlands, JV, coastal plain)
- Trade with Egypt generally seen as impetus for urbanization
  - Trade connections, Egyptian colonization to protect trade, Egyptian invaders with military force???
- Later in EB II new route by sea with Byblos as main port, Egyptian interest in Sinai abandoned (pottery decreases)

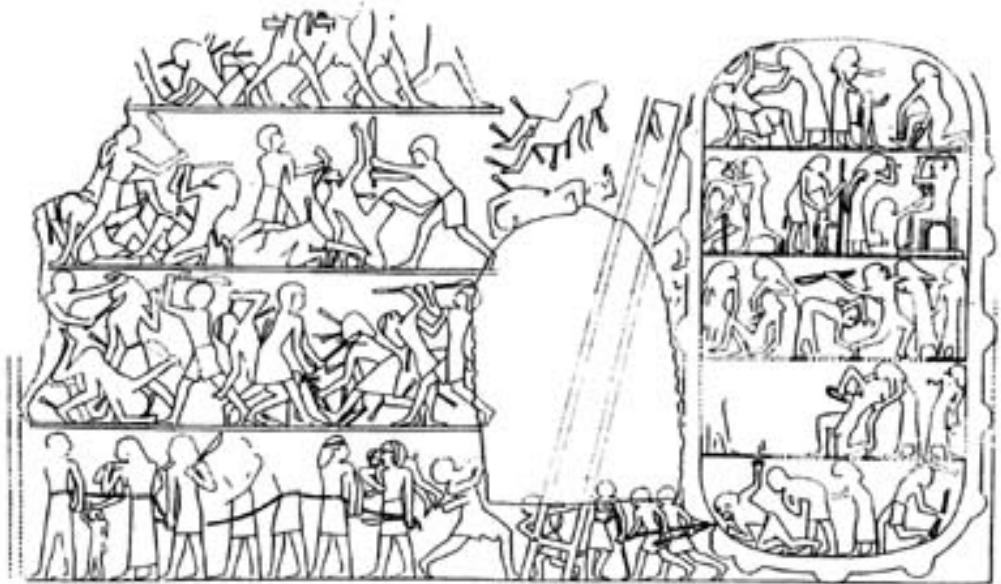
# Connections with Egypt

Narmer – first Pharaoh  
Inscriptions on jars from Tel Erani

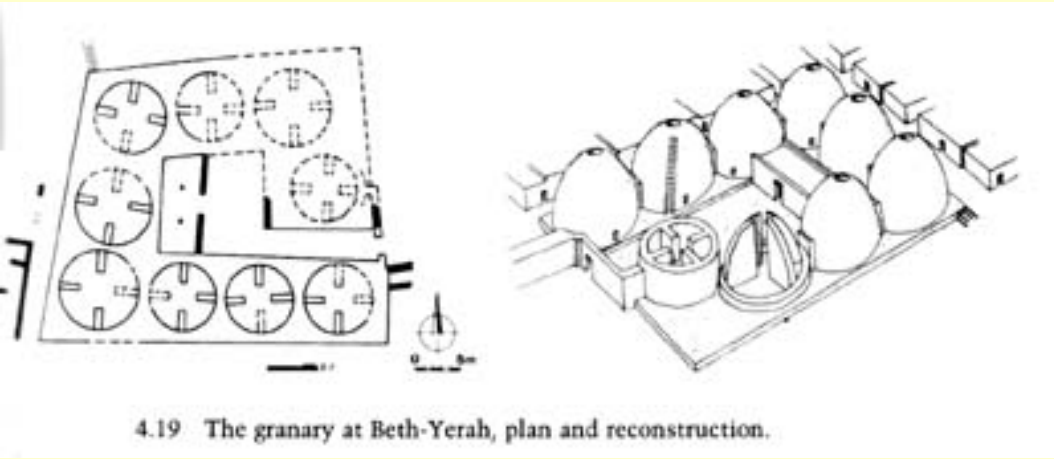


Smiting the Asians –  
fortified city being raided

4.26 Egyptian troops lay siege to a fortified city in Asia. A relief from a tomb at Dashasheh (5th Dynasty, 24th century B.C.E.; see page 141).



# Urbanism in EB II-III?

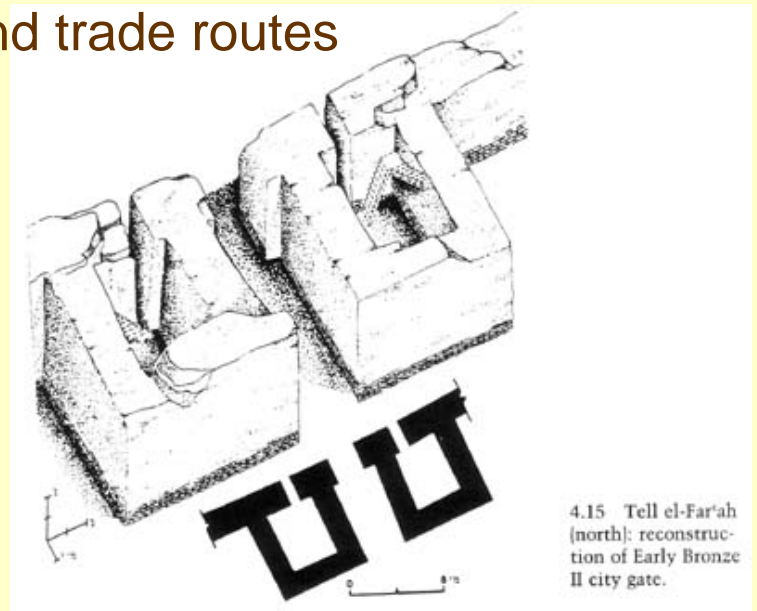
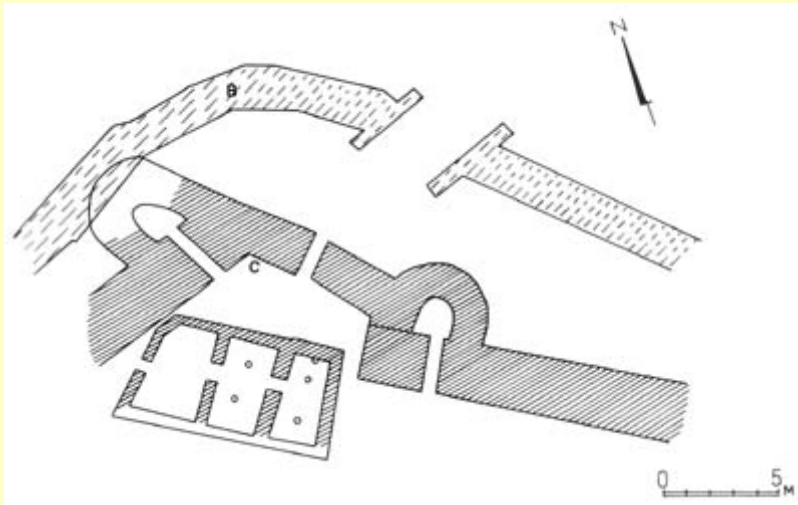


4.19 The granary at Beth-Yerah, plan and reconstruction.



Beth Yarah granary, 'Ai water reservoir, temples

Fortified cities along major water sources and trade routes



4.15 Tell el-Far'ah (north): reconstruction of Early Bronze II city gate.

# EB II-III

## Influences from the North



Khirbet Kerak Ware

Tell el-Marra  
Royal Tomb  
Gold and Silver

Like Uruk:  
Central authority  
Surplus  
Organization



# Origins of EB I Culture

1. Local continuity from Chalcolithic
  2. Immigration of people from north (Hennessy)
  3. Immigration of people from Mesopotamia (Kenyon)
  4. Contact and exchange with Egypt and Mesopotamia
- Combination of all these!
  - Generally acknowledged as Proto-Urban, but not to the extent as we see in Mesopotamia

# Summary of the EB I

- Period whose cultural features represent an integration of a) continuity from local Chalcolithic, along with b) new features from immigrating groups in north and east and from Egypt
- Pressure from all sides to catch up – foundation for further developments culminating in “urbanization” of EB II-III

# The Origins of Urbanism

The Early Bronze Age?

# Characteristics of Complex Societies:

1. Social Stratification (at least 2 levels of social status)
  2. Settlement hierarchy (centralization)
  3. Craft specialization
  4. Integrative and complex cultic/ritual activities
  5. Historical trajectories of an unstable nature, invariably leading in collapse
- A re-enforcing feedback mechanism that allow the society to sustain itself – Ideology/Religion



# V. Gordon Childe:

## The 5 Characteristics of Urbanism

1. Great enlargement of an organized population with a much wider level of social integration
2. Full time specialists: craftsmen, labourers, merchants, priests, officials
  - specialized production was institutionalized as was the system of distribution and exchange

# V. Gordon Childe:

## The 5 Characteristics of Urbanism

3. Concentration of surplus – a social means for the collection, management and redistribution of surplus products from farmers and workers
4. Class-structured society – a ruling class of religious, political and military functionaries who absorb the surplus
5. State organization – social organization based on residence rather than kinship

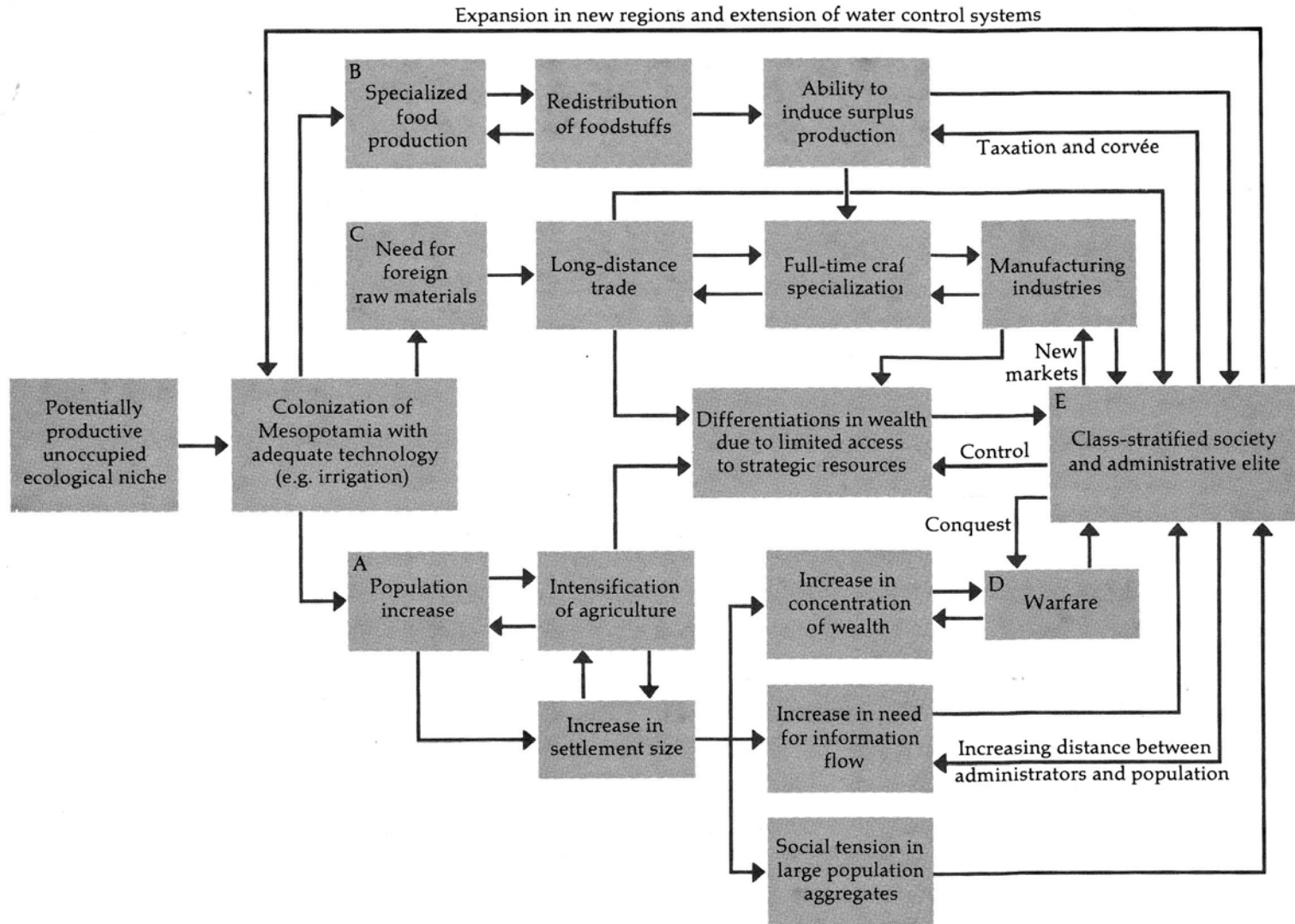
# The 5 indicators found in archaeological record

1. Monumental public works
  2. Long distance trade
  3. Standardized monumental art
  4. Writing
  5. Arithmetic, geometry, astronomy
- Push to see these in EBA of Levant???

# Theories on the Origins of Urbanism

- Water hypothesis (Mesopotamia)
  - Collection of surplus water, technology and organization to control it (irrigation), monopoly of power (central authority to coordinate)
- Craft Specialization and Irrigation
  - Irrigation allows surplus – allows craft specialists – allows technological developments and surplus – allows trade – allows interregional control of resources and elites who coordinate it – allows development of writing, art, science
- Population pressure
  - Increased population – leads to subsistence intensification – leads to desire to control resource access – leads to surplus – leads to elite to control surplus and administration to redistribute
- Multivariate

# Multivariate Hypothesis



# Five characteristics of a city:

1. Large and dense population
2. A high degree of complexity and interdependence – diverse populations with different vocational strategies
3. Formal and impersonal organization
4. Many non-agricultural activities
5. A diversity of central services for both inhabitants of city and surrounding communities

# EBA Urbanism?

- Mosaic of urban and rural systems following independent trajectories
- 20 non-unified city-states who control only immediate towns and villages
- No writing, administration, bureaucracy
- Transition from chiefdom to emerging urbanism
- Collapse of the EBA – MBA rural settlements