

جامعة دمشق
كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية
قسم الآثار

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تاريخ الفن والعمارة

د. سوزان ديبو

northeastern Syria during this period such developments can be seen with the fire wares. Fast production strategies are usually associated with specialized production.

Traditionally North Mesopotamian sites have been dated according to technological phases of Early Bronze Age I, II, III and VI or Southern Mesopotamian historical developments (Dynastic Archaic I, II, III, Akkad and Ur III). A new chronology, divided into Early Jezireh 0 (3000-2900) and EJ I (2900-2700), EJ II (2700-2600), EJ III (2600-2300), EJ VI (2300-2175) and EJ V (2175-2000) was recently proposed by Lebeau and is essentially based on characteristics of pottery from northeastern Syria, particularly Ninevite and Metallic wares. Pottery from the middle Khabur valley, recovered from sites like tell Melebiya, Raqa'I and tell Bderi, were used to establish this chronology, in addition to studies of pottery from sites to the North and Northeast of the middle Khabur valley, such as tell Chuera, tell Leilan and tell Brak.

References:

M.-C. Boileau, Pottery production and distribution in third millennium Northeast Syria (Edition de la maison des sciences de l'homme/Edition Epistèmes, Paris 2005).

Relevant Questions:

- 1-When was the pottery appeared? And what was its Importance?
- 2-What were the most important changes in the history of Syria?
- 3-What was the pottery culture which characterize the third millennium North Mesopotamia? What were its phases and types?
- 4-When the intense urbanization begin to appear? Explain this theme.
- 5-What is the second kind of pottery which had appeared in the second half of the third millennium?
- 6-What was the relation between the pottery and the rise of urbanization?
- 7-What was the North Mesopotamia chronology proposed by Lebeau?

Lecture No. 2: "Wall painting" المحاضرة الثانية

From Neolithic times, paint was applied not only as decoration on pottery but on walls of houses, temples and palaces. Colour was used on mudbrick walls surfaced with mud, lime or plaster. The most common technique was distemper, painting on a dry surface; painting on a damp surface (fresco) does not appear to have been used before the second half of the second millennium B.C.

The basic colours were red (iron oxide), white (gypsum), black (bitumen), and later blue (copper oxide, lapis lazuli) and, rarely, green (malachite), but these could be mixed, for example to produce yellow or grey. The colours were mixed with water, probably with a binding medium such as egg white or casein from milk.

The earliest wall painting discovered so far is at Mureybet in Syria, dating to the eighth millennium B.C., consisting of black and red chevrons on a white background. Wall paintings

are thereafter found in most areas of the ancient Near East, for example at Alalakh, Anshan, Aqarquf, Beidha, Çatalhöyük, Tepe Gawra, Nippur, Nuzi, Qatna, Tell Sheikh Hamed, Teleilat Ghassul, Tell Uqair and Uruk. The most common decoration was geometric motifs such as chevron triangles and lozenges in friezes, sometimes with human and animal figures, often in procession.

Wall paintings were discovered at Tell Halawa B in Euphrates Valley of Syria. Here some Early Bronze Age houses had been excavated and dated to the earliest centuries of the third millennium B.C. One of those paintings was found on the southern wall of Room 312, it portrays a central, large face with eyes, nose and mouth. The face is framed by two red and black concentric circles and an intervening zigzag line. Rectangular forms filled with geometric motifs project from the top, bottom and sides of the face. They neatly divide the outside space into four separate quadrants, each of which

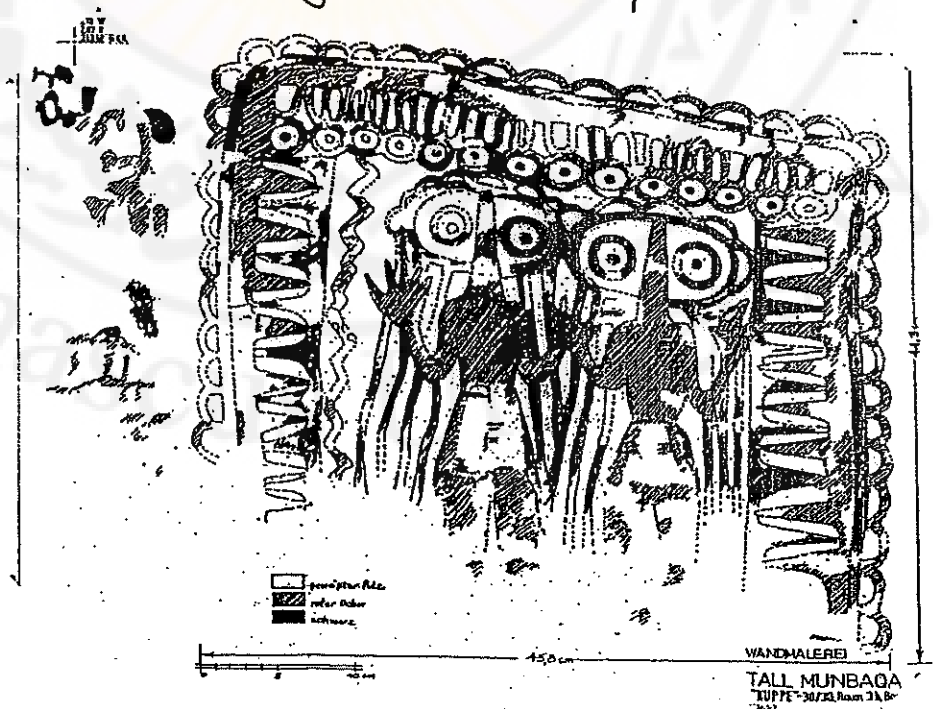
contains representations of what appear to be people, animals, plant and mythological creatures. While it is difficult to be certain of the meaning of the painting, it is very possible that a religious scene is portrayed here.

Wall painting
from Room 312,
Halawa Tell B.



Another wall painting with standing anthropomorphic figures came from an EB building at Tell Munbaga near Tell Halawa.

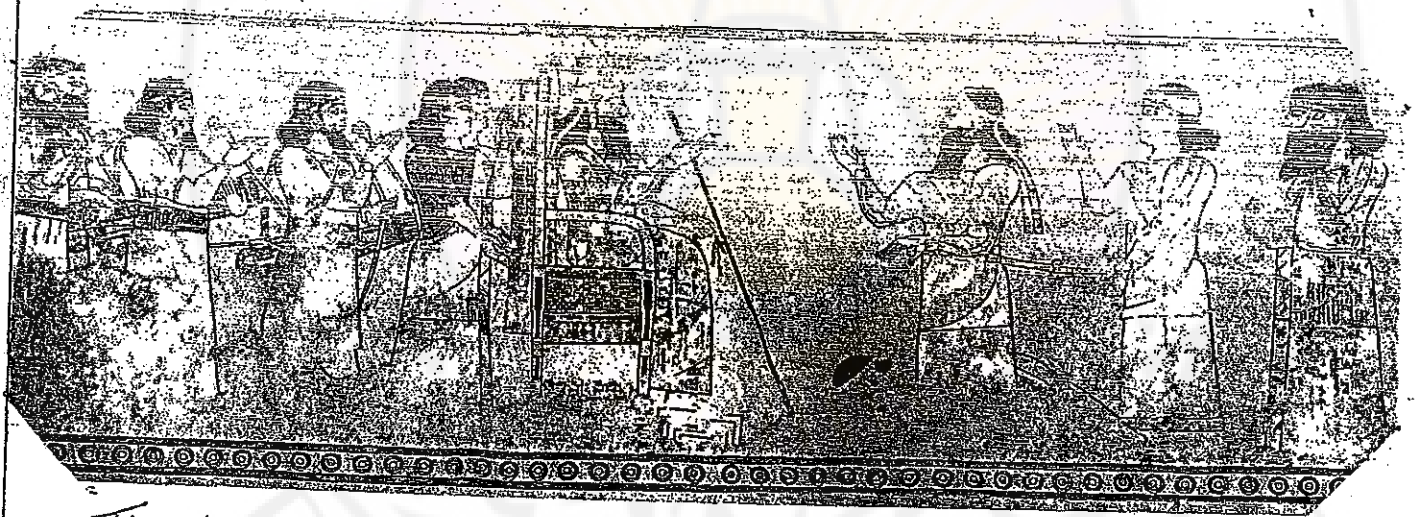
Wall painting in
Room 3b in a
structure at
Munbaga



No site has produced more wall paintings than the eighteenth-century B.C. palace at Mari, where twenty-six rooms or courtyards are decorated. Internal walls and door frames were plastered and painted, sometimes with plain red dados with black bitumen for the skirting, or with scenes of ceremonial and mythological action, each scene framed with a decorative border. The largest composition shows the king before Ishtar, taking an oath with his hand upon the divine symbol in the presence of other deities; below are two figures of the "goddess with flowing vase", sacred trees and other symbolic figures.

The Assyrians regularly painted their palace walls, from the thirteenth century B.C. at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta north of Ashur, and later at Nimrud and Khorsabad. The best-preserved Assyrian wall paintings are in the provincial palace at Til Barsip, dating to the eighth century B.C. The scenes are similar to those found on Assyrian reliefs, which were also

originally painted. The throne room was decorated with horses led by soldiers, including galloping horses never painted in. In another room, the largest scene is 22m wide, showing the enthroned king with his soldiers, chariot and horses, and in front of him officials, soldiers and prisoners. Other scenes show fantastic beasts and prisoners. The drawings were outlined in black or red. Scenes were framed with friezes of geometric and floral decoration.



The Assyrians also decorated their walls with coloured enamelled bricks, known from Ashur and Nimrud. This type of decoration was used by Nebuchadnezzar II for the lions, bulls and dragons adorning the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way at Babylon, and was later imitated by the Persians at Susa.

References:

- D. Castriota, "Wall paintings", The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East 5, ed. E.M. Meyers, (New York, 1997), pp. 325-350.

Relevant Questions:

- 1: What was the most common technique of wall painting?
- 2: What were the basic colours and their sources in the ancient times?
- 3: When and where was the wall paintings started? and what were the earliest motifs?
- 4: Which archaeological sites had produced wall paintings in Syria during the Early Bronze Age? Give examples for those paintings.
- 5: Why is Mari regarded the most important city in relation to wall painting?
- 6: "Wall painting had been given special attention by the Assyrians". Explain this theme.

The first sculptures in the ancient Near East were small clay figurines of humans and animals found on Neolithic site as well as larger plaster statues of human (at Ain Ghazal) and over-life-size stone sculpture from Nevalı Çori in Anatolia, alabaster statuettes of women (at Tell es-Sawwan), and gypsum reliefs mostly of bulls' heads (at Çatalhöyük). Larger scale stone statuary appeared in Mesopotamia only at the end of the fourth millennium B.C. Popularity of sculpture was always dependent on the availability of good quality stone.

Sculpture in the round and in relief, like all ancient Near Eastern art, was not made for its own sake but was functional and symbolic. Statues were never portraits, but communicated a message, although when discovered out of context their function is not always clear. Sculptural conventions seen already in the Hunt Stela from Uruk of the late fourth millennium B.C., depicting a king hunting a lion in two registers, remained essentially the same

until the Hellenistic period. In relief sculpture, head, pelvis, legs and feet were shown in profile, chest normally frontally, face in profile but eye frontally.

In Syria, simple clay models of animals and humans were made, together with occasional objects that aspired to art such as the delightful tiny carving in granite of a gazelle's head found at Abu Hureyra from about 6500 B.C. This miniature work of art is a superb example of Neolithic craftsmanship. Other figurines came from Mureybit, Phase III (8000-7600 B.C.) and Bouqras where a head of a small human figure made of dark burned terracotta was discovered in addition to a head of a gazelle made of bone. Both of these pieces are dated from 6400-5900 B.C.

The Mari excavations have already documented the religious and political centers of the city's third-millennium wealth: the richly decorated statue-filled temples of Ishtar, Nini-zaza, Ishtar-at, Ninkhursag, and Dagan and the successively rebuilt

Early Dynastic palace. This palace had included the well-known statue of the "goddess with the flowing vase" in the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1800-1750 B.C.). In fact, statues of divinities survive from the beginning of the second millennium B.C., with characteristic headdresses decorated with horns. Such statues have been found in many major sites.

Animals most frequently represented by statues were bulls, lions and sphinxes in stone, copper or bronze, or occasionally in clay baked in sections, often guarding gates to cities or palaces in Assyria, Anatolia and Syria. Porches of "bit-hilāni" buildings were sometimes supported by caryatid statues representing gods mounted on their animal attributes. In Assyria, guardian winged genies were a mixture of sculpture in the round and high relief, with the body of a lion or bull and the head of a bearded human.

References:

- P. Amiet, Art of the Ancient Near East, (London, 1980).

H. Frankfort, Art of the Ancient Near East, rev. ed.,

(Harmondsworth, 1977).

Relevant Questions:

- 1: How was the beginning of the sculptures in the ancient civilization?
- 2: For what purpose were the sculptures of the ancient Near East used?
- 3: How was the statue carving developed from the time of Abu Hureyra till the Middle Bronze Age Mari time?
- 4: How can the connection of Mari with sculpture carving be described?
- 5: Any animals were represented by statues? and How?

Lecture No. 4: "Cylinder Seals" الحاضرة الرابعة

There are two types of seals used in the ancient Near East: cylinder and stamp. Their use was either decorative and/or functional where the impression in clay acted as a mark of authority or of ownership. Generally, the design was carved in intaglio so that when it was impressed the design in reverse appeared in relief. Some seals were made of wood, bone or ivory but few of these have survived. The majority were made from stones of various kinds (fashion and availability of exotic stones dictated their use). Dynastic and royal seals have been found, as have the seals of individuals and institutions, for example government departments.

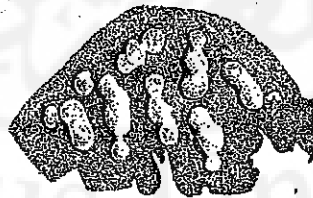
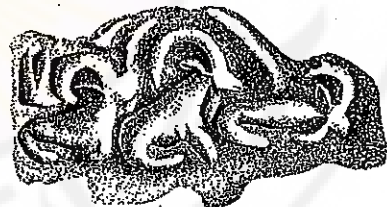
Changes in the design of seals can be traced through excavation of the seals themselves or more generally through the sealings (impressions) made on

datable styles of pottery or clay tablets and envelopes.

The earliest archaeological evidence for cylinders carved with designs comes from impressions found at the small site of Sharafabad in south-west Iran dating to the Middle Uruk Period (c. 3600 BC). Recently impressions of a similar date have been discovered at Tell Brak in north Syria. Cylinder seals appear slightly later at Uruk and Susa, where they are used to mark clay which covered cords securing doors and containers.

The designs on cylinder seals varied from region to region and over time, and often individual seals can be quite closely dated according to their design or inscription. Cylinder seals fell out of favour only when the Aramaic script, using ink on papyrus, parchment or leather, began to replace cuneiform towards the middle of the first millennium BC.

Early cylinders appeared at the northern Syrian sites in the period called Protohistoric, corresponding to the Late Uruk period in Mesopotamia, and remained in general use in Syria until the thirteenth century B.C., after which they were replaced by stamp seals. Most important was probably the fact that cylinder seals had some amuletic value like the stamp seals that preceded them in Syria, northern Mesopotamia, and Iran. Some of the Syrian stamp seals were contemporary with the cylinder seals, and they are often in the form of animals in folded poses.



In the earliest phases the Syrian seals and sealings are clearly dependent on Mesopotamian glyptic traditions but sometimes contain certain local features. Most of the

Wood was used for a variety of functions, including roofs, lintels and doors. While mud plaster was used as a weatherproof coating for mudbrick walls, a harder white lime plaster was favoured for the coating of internal walls and floors in many areas during the Aceramic Neolithic. Preparation was a costly procedure, which involved burning limestone at 900°C in order to produce lime, which was then mixed with water to form plaster. In prehistoric Mesopotamia, gypsum and mud plasters were preferred, with bitumen employed for water conduits during later periods. Reeds were used for roofs and in ziggurats.

In the basalt areas of south Syria, entire structures were built from stone. The widespread of stone architecture is a characteristic of the Hellenistic period. In Mesopotamia, with the exception of its use for doorsockets, stone when used in building had a decorative rather than a structural role. The Neo-Assyrian reliefs which decorated the walls of palaces were frequently, though not exclusively in local gypsum. The same applies to the use in

second-millennium B.C. public buildings in the Levant of a row of dressed limestone and basalt orthostats (standing stone slabs) to provide a frieze of contrasting colours along the lower face of mudbrick walls. Defences at major Assyrian sites included sections built of dressed stone.

Outside Mesopotamia fieldstones were also employed structurally as foundation courses for mudbrick walls and as actual walls. Ashlar masonry, stone blocks dressed so that they could be fitted together without mortar, appeared at Late Bronze Age, and was particularly characteristic of Iron Age architecture in the southern Levant. Larger buildings in this area featured carved stone capitals, a technique which was to become particularly associated with Greek architecture.

References:

- H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, 5th ed., (New Haven, 1966).
- G. R. H. Wright, Ancient Building in South Syria and Palestine, (Leiden, 1985).

Relevant Questions :

- 1: What was the building material most characteristic of the ancient Near East ? When and how was it made?
- 2: What do you know about the sorts and use of mud bricks in ancient Mesopotamia?
- 3: How were the following materials used in building during ancient times : wood, mud plaster, white lime plaster, gypsum, bitumen and reeds?
- 4: What was the role of stone in the architecture of the ancient civilization in Syria and Mesopotamia?
- 5: In which way were ashlar and stone blocks used in ancient Syrian architecture ?

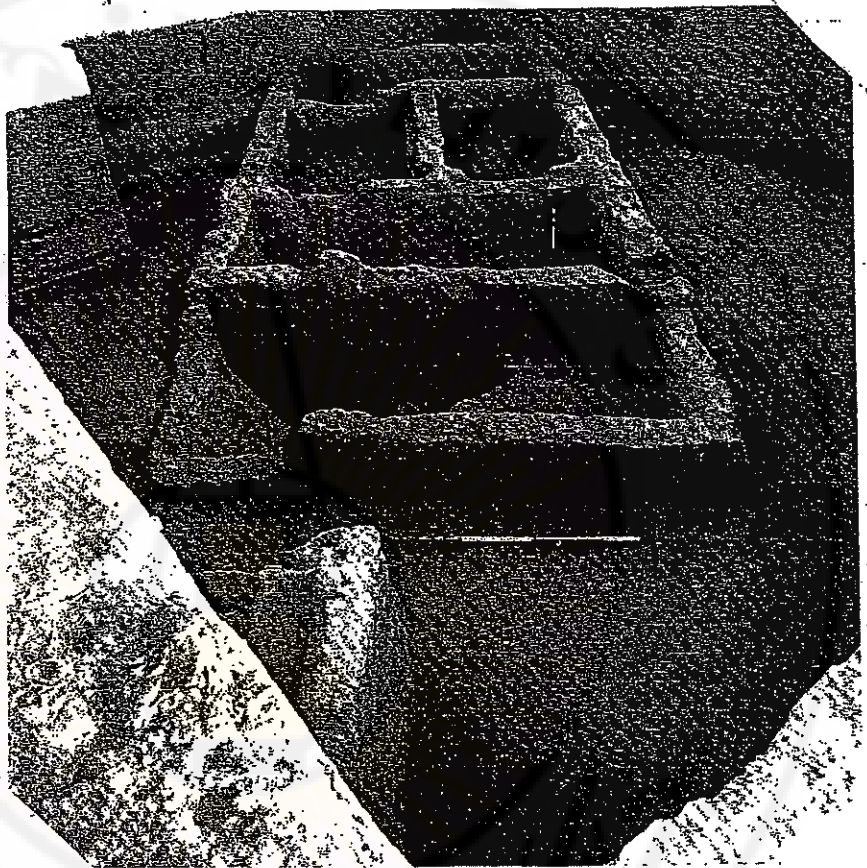
Lecture No. 7 "Prehistoric Architecture" المحاضرة السابعة

During the Neolithic the normal form of settlement was a village of mud-brick houses. These were inhabited over many centuries, indicating how stable the new sedentary, agricultural way of life was. Neolithic villages were more numerous and substantially larger than Epipaleolithic settlements. Abu Hureyra, the largest of them all, covered 11.5 hectares and was big enough to have served as a regional center. It is clear that by the seventh millennium the population of Syria had increased dramatically as a consequence of the development of agriculture.

Early in the Neolithic the houses of these villages were circular in shape, best seen at Mureybit, another village on the Euphrates. These were simply mud-brick examples of the huts built during the Epipaleolithic. Then, during the eighth millennium, people started to build rectangular mud-brick houses, relatively large, with several rooms. Each house was free-standing and probably lodged a single family. These dwellings often had plaster floors inside with hearths, ovens, and sleeping platforms for additional comfort. The walls and floors of some room

might be decorated with painted designs, as were those found at Abu Hureyra and Bougras. These large Neolithic villages were densely packed settlements. The houses tended to be aligned in a single direction with narrow lanes and courts between them.

Abu Hureyra, Neolithic, ca. 6500 B.C. The walls of a rectangular mud-brick house with five rooms. The corner of another house is visible in the lower part of the photograph. These two houses were separated by a narrow lane and surrounded by open spaces. (Scale: 2 and 0.5 m.)



At Tell Halaf, in the upper Khabur region, two main periods were investigated, the first belonging to the sixth to fifth millennia B.C., the second to the Iron Age. The prehistoric Halaf period, c. 6000 - 5000/4500 B.C., is named after the discoveries at Tell Halaf. No convincing architecture of this period was recovered at Tell Halaf, but at other sites the Halaf period is characterized by the use of

Circular structures, or "tholoi", as well as by rectangular buildings Ubaid period lasting from c. 5500 to 4000 B.C., and, in northern Mesopotamia, from c. 4500 to 4000 B.C. This period witnessed the earliest human settlement on the alluvium of the south Mesopotamia plain, lying between and around the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Material of prehistoric date excavated at Ubaid includes modest houses built of pisé (pressed mud), of Late Ubaid date around 4000 B.C.

Uruk is one of the most important archaeological sites. It was occupied from the late fifth millennium B.C. Its real predominance started with the Uruk period, named after the site. During this thousand-year timespan. The fourth millennium B.C., Uruk developed into the most important city-state and sophisticated centre of cultic and administrative capability in the whole of Mesopotamia.

Architecturally the Uruk period is best known at Uruk from a series of immense religious buildings excavated in two cultic areas of the city, the Eanna precinct and the Anu-ziggurat, also

known as Kullab. Some of these buildings, including those known as the Limestone Temple, the Stone Building and the Stone Cone Temple probably date to c. 3600 B.C. Many new monumental buildings were constructed during the Late period, the late fourth millennium B. including the Riemchen Building, Building A-E and the Great Court. Architectural decoration included the use of coloured wall cone in mosaic patterns and engaged pillars.

References:

- G. Algaze, The Uruk World System, (Chicago, 1993).
- J. Mellaart, The Neolithic of the Near East, (New York, 1976).

Relevant Questions:

- 1: What were the characteristics of early Neolithic architecture at Mureybit and Abu Hureyra?
- 2: How was the architecture developed during the Halaf and Ubaid periods?
- 3: What do you know about architecture in Uruk period?

Lecture No. 8: "The Architecture of Houses" المأوى القديم

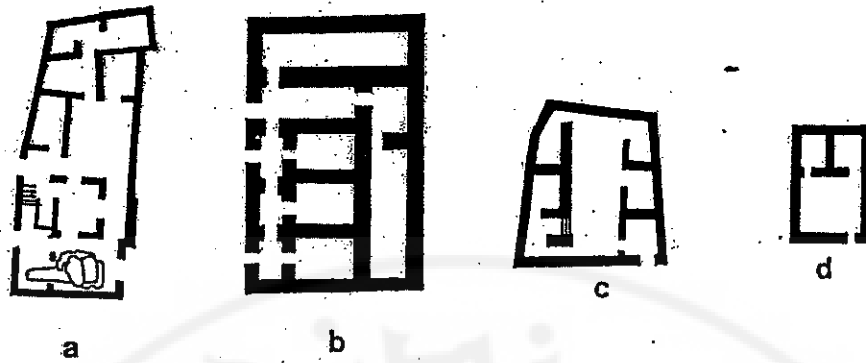
The earliest houses so far discovered in the Near East date to the eighth millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia and the Levant, and are round or oval single-room structures built of mud and stone. Caves or rock shelters were also used as houses throughout antiquity, although often little evidence remains inside them. There is a great variety of house plans, from round to rectangular, single to multi-room, with some subterranean, but in the fourth millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia the courtyard house was introduced. This has an open central courtyard with rooms on one, two, three or four sides. Buildings with courtyards soon became the basis for most ancient Near Eastern architecture, including houses, temples and palaces. Later they formed the basis for Islamic architecture and are still used in the Near East today.

The enclosed courtyard provided light, air and a shady place during the long hot summers. Larger houses had more than one

court. Many houses probably had an upper storey, which does not often survive archaeologically and so its plan is unknown. Stairs of wood or brick led to the upper storey or the roof, where occasion-
occasionally rituals were performed. There is evidence that often the ground floor was used for shops, workshops, storage and livestock, with the upper storey for dining, sleeping and entertaining. Kitchens can be identified by ovens, and in Mesopotamia and occasionally elsewhere the houses of the rich had bathrooms and toilets, sometimes with pottery drains. One room occasionally served as a sanctuary, and tombs are found under the floors of houses at Ugarit, Ur, Mari and throughout Mesopotamia.

Most houses were built of sun-dried mudbrick on two or three layers of stone foundations; in stone-rich areas, like southern Transjordan, houses were often entirely of stone. A typical floor was trodden earth, occasionally plastered or paved with stone. Walls were often plastered. The ceiling and flat roof were made of wooden beams and reeds packed together

with earth and straw.



Houses from (a) Ugarit (with tomb on lower right), (b) Alalakh, (c) Munbaqa central-room, and (d) Emar front-room (scale 1:600).

References:

— K.R. Veenhof (ed.), Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia, (Istanbul/Leiden, 1996).

Relevant Questions:

- 1: How was the plan and shape of the earliest houses in Syria and Mesopotamia?
- 2: What was the role of the courtyards in the ancient houses?
- 3: What do we know about the parts of the ancient houses?
- 4: Of what materials were the ancient houses used to be built?

Lecture No. 9: "The Architecture of Palaces" المباني القصور

The word for "palace" throughout most of the ancient Near East derived from the Sumerian term meaning "big house". Like a house, a palace served a variety of functions: it was the residence of the king, his family, and their personal servants; a place of storage for the royal household's needs and for the royal treasure; a workshop for domestic activities as well as weaving and perhaps other crafts; a place for state ceremonies; and a centre of government and administration. It is often difficult to distinguish true palaces from the residences of governors (who in the eyes of the local population were in practice kings), and any monumental building which appears to have served both residential and administrative functions tends to be identified as a palace.

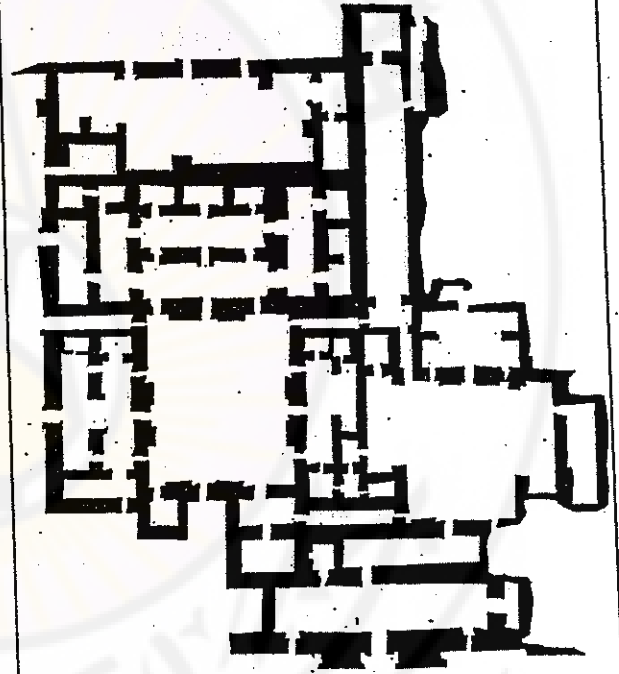
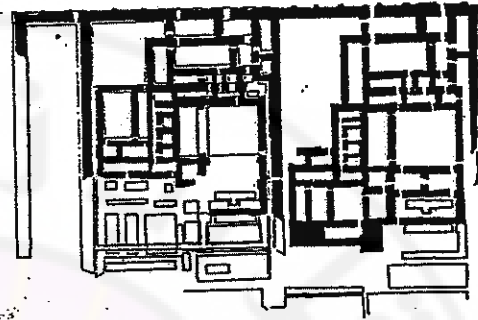
The characteristic features of most Near Eastern palaces developed in Mesopotamia. Although there are earlier monumental buildings which were clearly centres of power,

such as third-millennium B.C. structures at Kish and Eridu, the essential features of most later Mesopotamian palaces first appeared c.2000 B.C. at Ur and Eshnunna. These features were a division between an outer courtyard, where public affairs were conducted and which included administrative offices, service quarters and storerooms, and an inner courtyard used for more private functions. Connecting the two courtyards was the throne room, used by the ruler as an audience hall. This was the room of greatest ostentation, and already in Early Dynastic times, at Kish and Ebla, throne rooms were decorated with propaganda scenes, eventually culminating in stone slabs carved with religious, ceremonial, hunting or military scenes in the Assyrian palaces. Palaces were also usually demarcated from the rest of the town by a solid defensive wall.

This arrangement is the classic layout of later Mesopotamian palaces, even if they are more extensive complexes built over

several centuries, such as Mari and later the Southern Citadel at Babylon with its series of five courtyards. The palace of Ugarit in Syria had more in common with these than with the smaller Levantine Bronze Age palaces which tended to have a single courtyard surrounded by small rooms, and extended for two or three storeys.

The Assyrian palaces at Nimrud, Khorsabad and Nineveh are the culmination of the Mesopotamian type, sometimes with the addition of a portico (*bīt hilāni*) borrowed from north Syrian palaces. Assyrian and north Syrian palaces were situated on citadels at the edges of the cities, together with the main



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Palaces at Eridu, Sennacherib's South-West Palace at Nineveh, and Alalakh.

temples. Most Iron Age palaces in the Levant are fairly small in comparison and seem to follow the basic courtyard plan, though some may have been the residencies of Assyrian governors.

References:

— J. N. Postgate, Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History, (London, 1992).

Relevant Questions:

- 1: What were the functions of the palaces in the civilizations of ancient Near East?
- 2: What were the features of the ancient Near Eastern palaces?
- 3: Define the characteristics of the Assyrian palaces.

