"THE 1998 AMUQ VALLEY REGIONAL PROJECT SURVEY"

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During the 1998 season, the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP) survey, as part of its ongoing effort to document archaeological sites, investigated seven previously recorded sites damaged by bulldozers as a result of the current expansion of irrigation agriculture on the plain. Earlier seasons of the survey have highlighted the extent of this problem, and have emphasized the urgent need to more fully document threatened sites before they are irreparably damaged, or disappear entirely. Six sites were selected initially: Acarkoy (Halil Agha Hoyuk, AS 12), Tell Malta (Matta, AS 28), Doshasan (Tell Wasle, AS 31), Tell Misir (Misri, AS 76), Tell 'Imar al-Sharqi (AS 101), and Tutlu Hoyuk (AS 105). A seventh, Tell Dhahab (AS 177), was included during the course of the season when it became apparent that the site had sustained recent damage. The documentation team consisted of Timothy P. Harrison and Sarah Graff, and was assisted by the larger archaeological survey team (Simrit Dhesi, Hatice Pamir, and Jan Verstraete). The government representative was Asla Tutuncuoglu, and later Yauvz Ozdemir.

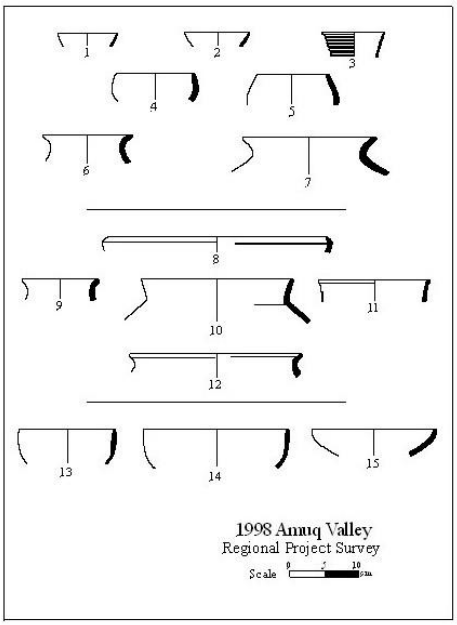
In addition to their severely damaged condition, the sites were selected for their potential to reveal remains from early cultural horizons. While the Amuq Plain presents a remarkable cultural landscape shaped by intensive and sustained human settlement, this rich cultural record has tended to impede research of prehistoric and early historic periods, with lengthy occupational sequences (and dynamic alluvial activity) obscuring access to earlier cultural levels. The exposed sections left by bulldozing activity, however, offer a valuable "window" into these earlier levels. Consequently, as part of a new initiative to investigate the development of complex regional communities in the Amuq, the damaged sites also were chosen for their potential to produce archaeological remains from the third millennium, specifically Amuq Phases G-J, and begin the process of constructing a refined sequence for the region.

Strategically situated at the juncture between the eastern Mediterranean seaboard and the Anatolian Highlands, the Amuq Plain clearly played a pivotal role in the early development of complex cultural networks in the ancient Near East. By the late fourth millennium, indigenous Syro-Anatolian ceramic traditions, such as Black Burnished Ware, occur together with widely distributed Mesopotamian Uruk wares (Amuq F). This pattern is repeated in later third millennium levels with the introduction of Red Black Burnished Ware. Notably absent at

Cilician sites, but well-represented in the Amuq (Phase H), Red Black Burnished Ware can be traced to earlier traditions in northeastern Anatolia and the Kur and Araxes Valleys of Transcaucasia, and later in the southern Levant. Historical sources also attest to the complex mosaic of regional cores and sub-regions that had emerged by the third millennium, and the prominent role of the Amuq in these regional developments.

This shifting cultural landscape is also evident in the settlement pattern data available for the Amuq Plain. During the Chalcolithic period and early phases of the Early Bronze Age, the largest sites appear to have been Tell Kurdu (AS 94) (Amuq Phases C-E) and neighboring Tell 'Imar al-Sharqi (AS 101) (Amuq Phases E-G), located near the center of the valley. After an apparent hiatus in the early part of the third millennium, settlement on the plain seems to have shifted toward the southern fringes, where Tell Ta'yinat (AS 126), and possibly Tell Atchana (AS 136), emerged as important sites along the main east-west route linking the Aleppo region with the Mediterranean coast. The alternating nature of occupation between these two dominant sites appears to have been a key feature of the settlement history of the plain during the Bronze and Iron Ages, and clarification of their occupational histories will be crucial to understanding the broader cultural and socioeconomic development of the region.

In order to ensure compatibility, each of the selected sites was resurveyed following the established methods of the AVRP survey, including the recording of site-size information, visible features on the site, and the collection of surface pottery. To document the bulldozer cuts, meter tapes were used to form a north-south horizontal line, and a vertical intersecting line that ran down the face of the exposed section. A total station was employed to establish relative datum points, and, in the case of the more extensive sections (some reached 15 m in height), to map the parameters of the profile. To assist with the longer cuts (30-60 m), flag markers were placed every two meters along the horizontal north-south line, and the section drawn at 1:100 scale. In a number of cases, erosion had effectively obscured the section and it was therefore necessary to scrape the surface to re-establish a profile. These smaller profiles, generally between 2-3 m high and 1-2 m wide, were drawn at 1:25 scale. Once a section drawing was complete, carbon, ceramic, and clay samples were collected from each discernable depositional layer (whenever possible), provenience information marked on the section plan, and the sample saved for further analysis.



The site of Acarkoy (Halil Agha Hoyuk, AS 12) forms a steep-sided, prominent mound (225 [N-S] x 145 [E-W] m at the base and 140 x 80 m at the summit; with a height of ca. 23 m) at the entrance of the Kara Su into the Amuq. The 1996 survey reported Late Chalcolithic, Early Bronze (Amuq G-I), and Middle Bronze material, with Roman/Islamic remains on the summit. Sometime in the early 1980s a deep cut was made in the SW portion of the mound (approximately 54 m long, and 15 m high). Our investigation of the section

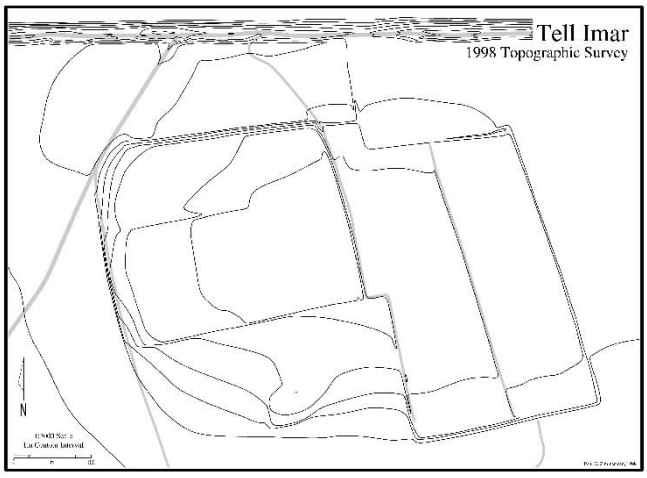
indicated at least nine distinct architectural phases, and closely mirrors the 1996 survey results. The associated pottery (left: 1-7) indicated a sequence beginning in the Chalcolilthic (Amuq F/G?), reached in the lowest portion of the northern extent of the section, followed by Amuq G, H, and I material, primarily evident in the southern portion of the cut, with carinated Middle Bronze bowls recovered from the upper portion of the section. Surface collection on the summit suggested the presence of Late Hellenistic/Early Roman remains in the undisturbed upper levels of the site.

Tell Malta (Matta, AS 28) was visited only briefly. The site had been bulldozed extensively along its north, south and west sides, and there was evidence of extensive clearance (or lowering) on the summit of the site. Part of a substantial brick wall was visible protruding from the western end of the north cut. Pottery from the vicinity suggested a Late Bronze/Iron Age date.

A small site (ca. 70 x 70 m, or about .5 ha in size, in its original extent) on the northeastern edge of the plain, Doshasan (Tell Wasle, AS 31) had been cut virtually in half from north to south, forming a 65 m long and 7.5 m high section along its eastern face. Examination identified at least four (and possibly six) architectural phases. Ceramic evidence suggested a late third (Amuq I/J) to early second millennium (MBA) sequence. The upper most phase produced substantial amounts of Roman pottery (including significant quantities of terra sigillata). A deep irrigation ditch had been cut along the northern and western edges of the site, and pottery collected from its northern extent indicated the existence of Early Bronze (Amuq G/H) strata below the level exposed in the eastern section.

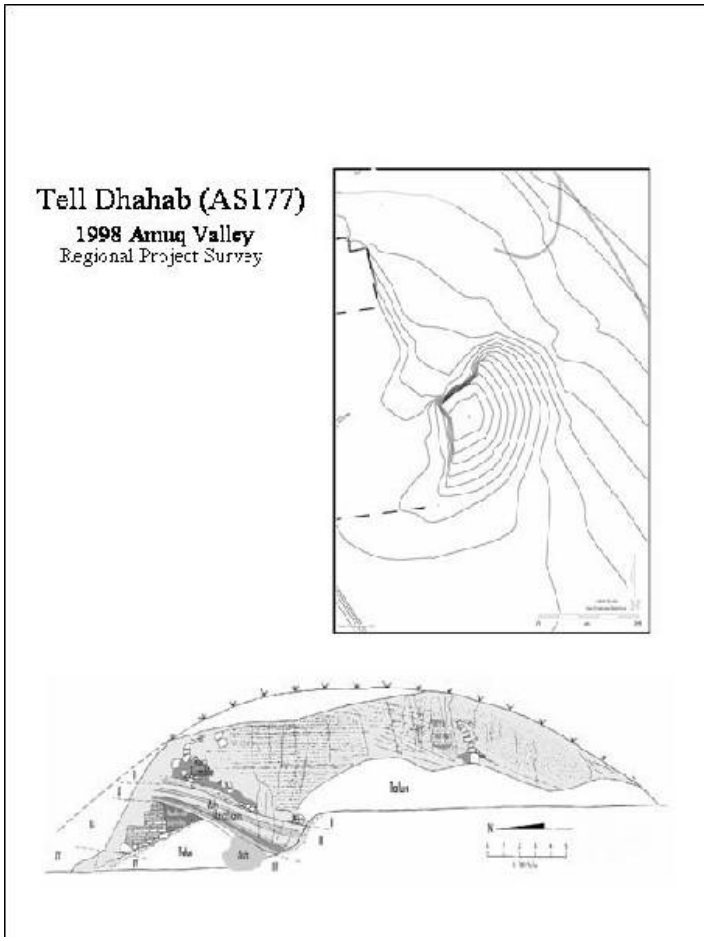
A moderately sized site (240 x 150 m) northwest of Ta‘yinat in the southern part of the plain, Tell Misir (Misri, AS 76) had been bulldozed extensively along its eastern and southern perimeter, and an irrigation ditch cut along its northern slope. Erosion had obscured the resulting sections, effectively preventing any reconstruction of a profile without substantial clearing. Consequently, only a surface sherd collection was made. It produced a substantial quantity of Red Black Burnished Ware (Amuq H), and a limited number of Roman sherds.

A large, low-lying site (500 x 350 m) near the center of the plain, Tell 'Imar al-Sharqi (AS 101) had received a 3.5 m deep cut along its western edge, as well as substantial plowing or clearing activity on its summit. Concentrations of large stone boulders along its northern face, and in the southeastern corner, suggest the possibility of a stone perimeter (fortification) wall. A 3 x 2 m portion of the large cut was drawn in profile, and carbon and ceramic samples



collected. Although no architectural remains were evident in the section, a sequence of eight depositional loci was delineated. The ceramic evidence pointed to a late fourth-early third millennium (Amuq F[?]-G) occupational sequence (see pottery plate above: 8-12), further supporting the view that Tell 'Imar al-Sharqi was the principal site in the Amuq during this period.

Approximately 5 km northeast of Ta'yinat, Tutlu Hoyuk (AS 105) forms a small low-lying mound (100 x 80 m in size, and 5-8 m in height), with an extensive bulldozer cut along its southern face. A 1 x 1,5 m profile was drawn of a further incision which had been made into the center of the larger cut. The section revealed a sequence of three depositional loci. The intermediate layer consisted almost entirely of slag and ceramic waste, and appeared to be a trash deposit of ceramic production waste. The associated soil layers contained large quantities of Red Black Burnished Ware (Amuq H) (see pottery plate above: 13-15), suggesting a mid-third millennium date for the site.



Tell Dhahab (AS 177) was the scene of excavations in 1938, conducted in conjunction with the original Chicago expedition to nearby Tell Judaidah. Reports of ongoing damage to the site prompted a visit by Scott Branting during the 1995 AVRP field season. Evidence of the continued (and active) destruction of the site motivated an unscheduled return during the 1998 season. A small circular mound, originally measuring 60 m in diameter and 10 m high, our investigations indicated that little more than a third of the site remains. The surviving profile (left), effectively a cross-section of the entire mound, preserved four distinct stratigraphic phases loosely corresponding to Amuq Phases A (Dark Faced Burnished Ware and Washed Impressed Ware), F (?), G (Plain Simple Ware, Reserved Slip Ware, and an absence of Red Black Burnished Ware), and H (appearance of Red Black Burnished Ware).

While not systematic, nor comprehensive, our effort to document endangered or damaged sites on the Amuq Plain achieved a number of important objectives. By non-intrusive means, and with minimal effort and resources, a substantial body of data was compiled on the third millennium Amuq, laying the groundwork for more systematic investigations into the cultural horizons associated with this time period. On a methodological level, comparison with previous, less

intensive AVRP survey visits consistently produced complimentary results, validaing both the effort and the approach. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, sites in danger of destruction from agricultural intensification and expansion received more thorough documentation.