

Excerpted from:

“University of Chicago, Oriental Institute 2000 Yili Hatay Açana, Tayinat Hykleri ve Samandagi Yzey Arastirmalari”

Aslihan Yener,* Timothy Harrison,** Hatice Pamir***

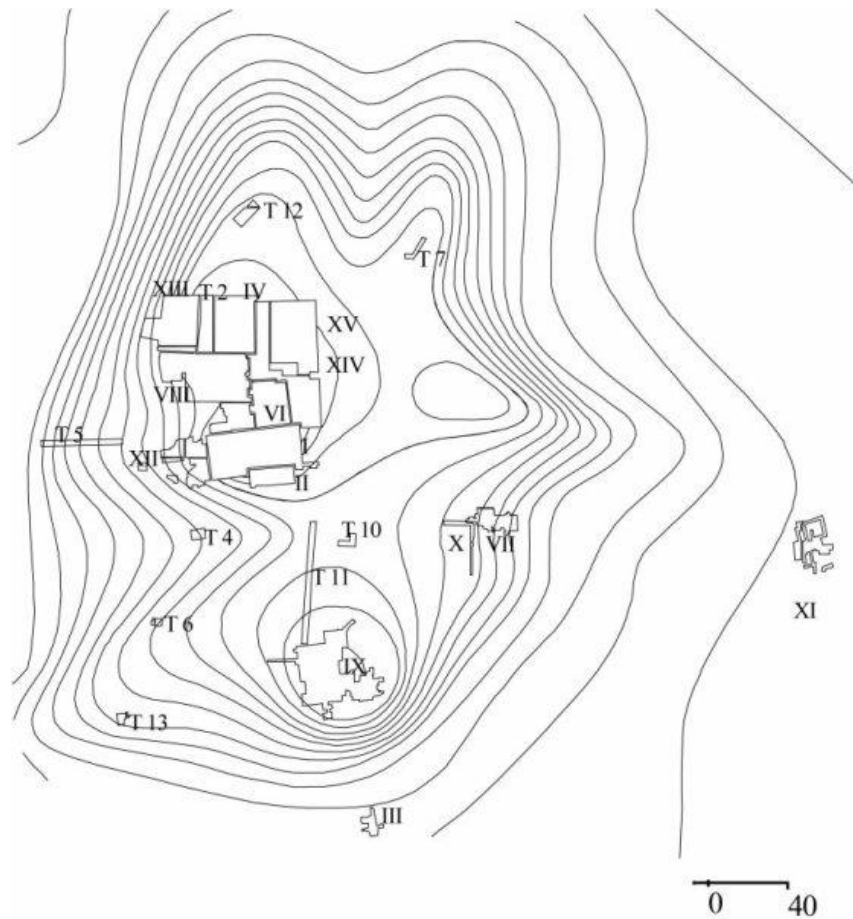
Tell Ta‘yinat Survey (T. Harrison)

As noted in previous reports, the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP) survey has documented a distinct transformation in settlement patterns that occurred towards the end of the fourth millennium B.C. During the fourth millennium (particularly Amuq Phase G), sites were distributed loosely across the central part of the plain. After a possible hiatus, there was a decisive shift in settlement (corresponding with Amuq Phase H) towards the southern fringes in the early part of the third millennium, with Tell Ta‘yinat (AS 126) emerging as the largest settlement on the plain at approximately 20 ha. Its position along the main east-west route linking the Aleppo region with the Mediterranean coast suggests a concurrent shift in the economic and political organization of the region. In addition to the introduction of Red Black Burnished Ware (RBBW), Phase H witnessed a dense distribution of predominantly small (1-2 ha) sites which replaced the dispersed pattern of moderately sized Phase G settlements that had preceded it. These sites were heavily concentrated in the southern part of the plain, and at all the principal entry points into the valley.

In order to examine further the economic and political reorganization reflected in these patterns, set within the broader context of the emergence and development of early state-ordered societies throughout the Near East, a focused survey of late fourth and third millennium sites was initiated in 1998 as part of the ongoing field documentation efforts of the AVRP survey. This effort continued during the 1999 field season, and included an extensive surface survey of Tell Ta‘yinat. The results of this survey indicate that significant damage has been caused by intensive, ongoing agricultural activity (including removal of portions of the upper mound perimeter), and that the site should receive prompt archaeological attention and protection before it experiences further irreparable damage and loss of the valuable cultural heritage that it preserves.

Previous Investigations at Tell Ta'yinat

Large-scale excavations were conducted by the University of Chicago at Tell Ta'yinat over four field seasons between 1935 and 1938 as part of the Syro-Hittite Expedition. The excavations focused primarily on the west central part of the upper mound, although areas were also opened on the eastern and southern edges of the upper mound and in the lower city (right). In all, the excavations achieved large horizontal exposures of five distinct architectural phases, or "Building Periods," dating to the Iron Age (Amuq Phase O, ca. 950-550 B.C.). A series of isolated soundings (see particularly T4 and T8, right) below the earliest Phase O floors produced remains dating to the third millennium (primarily Phases I-J, but also H), indicating that a lengthy period of abandonment occurred between the Early Bronze and Iron Age settlements at the site.



The Tell Ta'yinat excavations unfortunately are still largely unpublished, despite the remarkable finds made by the Syro-Hittite Expedition. In addition to well-preserved architectural remains, the excavations also produced an extensive corpus of Akkadian, Aramaic and Neo-Hittite (or Luwian) inscriptions. Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions accounted for the largest number, a total of 85 fragments, 32 of which have been shown to come from seven distinct monumental inscriptions. One of these, preserved as six basalt fragments, had been carved on a colossal statue seated on a throne. The inscription makes reference to Halpapa-runta-a-s(a), very probably a Neo-Hittite ruler of the Kingdom of Patinu/Unqi, whose capital was Kunulua (almost certainly Tell Ta'yinat), and who is listed in the royal annals of Shalmaneser III as having paid tribute to the Neo-Assyrian king during the mid-ninth century.

If this historical correlation is correct, it provides a secure date for the remainder of the Luwian inscriptions found at the site, and raises the possibility of isolating the Building Period, and

cultural horizon, in which they were erected. With only a few exceptions, all of the fragments appear to have been found in the fill or foundation trenches of structures dating to the Second Building Period; in other words, in secondary and tertiary contexts. Moreover, with only one exception (an altar in obvious secondary reuse in the temple, Building II), all of the inscriptions clearly had been smashed and destroyed before being discarded. The Qalparunda inscription therefore dates the Luwian epigraphic remains at Tell Ta'yinat to the mid-ninth century or earlier, while their stratigraphic context places this material in the First Building Period.

Site Morphology

Today, Tell Ta'yinat forms a large, low-lying mound 1.5 km east of Demirköprü on the Orontes River. The site consists of an upper and lower mound, with the lower mound now hidden by a thick alluvial accumulation characteristic of the Orontes floodplain within the Amuq. The upper mound sits just north of the modern Antakya-Reyhanli road, and measures approximately 400 m (E-W) by 500 m (N-S).

Sherd density distributions, recorded by means of walking transects conducted during the 1999 field season, delineated the parameters of the lower mound, and indicate that it extended north of the upper mound approximately 200 m, and east approximately 100 m, bringing the overall size of the site to 500 x 700 m (or 35 ha). These measurements differ slightly from those of the original excavators, who estimated the size of the site at 500 x 620 m, but match the figures given by R. Braidwood. The surface sherd collection indicates that settlement expansion

occurred in the lower mound during the Iron Age, most likely corresponding with the Second Building Period identified by the Chicago excavations.



A Corona satellite image of the site obtained during the 2000 season confirms the settlement pattern delineated by the 1999 survey, with a clearly discernable “shadow” documenting the northward and eastward extension of the lower mound. Moreover, when the survey results are overlaid, a clear correspondence is evident (left). The high sherd densities recorded by the pedestrian transects decline at almost the same point delimited by the shadow reflected on the satellite image.

Analysis of Surface Finds

Analysis of the 1998 and 1999 surface survey collections continued during the 2000 season. The preliminary processing and analysis of the ceramic assemblage was completed, and samples were taken for petrographic analysis. This analysis, which is being conducted by Stephen Batiuk of the University of Toronto, to date has focused on the Red Black Burnished Ware tradition. While still in progress, the preliminary results thus far reveal a remarkably diverse mineralogy, with no single petrofabric predominating.

In addition, a series of carbon samples collected from the exposed sections mapped during the 1998 and 1999 seasons have been analyzed, and a range of radiocarbon dates established. These results currently are being correlated with the ceramic and stratigraphic evidence as part of the ongoing effort to refine the Early Bronze Age regional sequence for the Amuq Plain.