BUILDING XVI AND THE NEO-ASSYRIAN SACRED PRECINCT AT TELL TAYINAT

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Excavations during the 2008 and 2009 seasons of the Tayinat Archaeological Project revealed the heavily burnt ruins of a Neo-Assyrian temple on the site's citadel mound. Preserved *in situ* within the inner sanctum of the temple were the charred but intact remains of an assortment of cultic objects and eleven cuneiform tablets and fragments. The accumulated evidence indicates that the temple, Building XVI, formed part of a larger religious complex, or sacred precinct, constructed in the late-eighth/early-seventh century B.C.E., as part of an Assyrian effort to transform the former Syro-Hittite royal city of Kunulua into the administrative capital of an Assyrian imperial province. This paper will summarize the archaeological remains of the Late Assyrian settlement at Tayinat excavated to date, with a primary focus on Building XVI and the sacred precinct. Our aim is to provide an archaeological context for the cuneiform tablets, including the large oath tablet with the Esarhaddon Succession Treaty presented in the accompanying article by Jacob Lauinger, in the hope of facilitating a better understanding of the broader social context and meaning of these documents.

Historical Context

The earliest Neo-Assyrian references to the North Orontes Valley region date to the reign of Ashurnaṣirpal II. The kingdom of Patina is mentioned twice on his Banquet Stele (ca. 879 B.C.E.; Grayson 1991b: A.0.101.30, lines 35, 144), and is included in the description of a campaign to subdue a series of kingdoms in northwest Syria (ca. 870 B.C.E.; Grayson 1991b: 216–19, text A.0.101.1, col. iii, lines 55–92a; Harrison 2001).[1] This latter account provides a detailed itinerary of the campaign route that clearly situates the kingdom of Patina (^{kur}*pa-ti-na-a-a*) in the North Orontes Valley, or more specifically the Amuq Plain, and its capital Kunulua (^{uru}*ku-nu-lu-a*) on the southern edge of the plain, just north of the Orontes River, leaving little doubt that Kunulua should be associated with the large Iron Age mound of Tell Tayinat. Later Assyrian sources, culminating with Tiglath-pileser III's conquest and annexation in 738 B.C.E., confirm the existence of a small territorial state, referred to alternatively as Patina or Unqi, which controlled the North Orontes Valley during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E., with Kunulua, its royal city, located at Tell Tayinat. Other candidates have been proposed for Kunulua, including ʿAin Dara (Orthmann 1971: 198), Tell Jindaris (Olmstead 1918: 248, n. 67), Çatal Höyük (Gelb 1935: 189), and Tell Kunaʿna (Elli-

1. For the growing body of Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions and archaeological evidence that cumulatively suggest the presence of an eleventh- and tenth-century polity, "the Land of Palistin," also likely to have been based at Tell Tayinat and therefore the political ancestor to Patina, see Harrison 2009a and 2009b; Hawkins 2009.

ger 1947: 71). However, the reference to "Kunalia" in the Esarhaddon Succession Treaty (T-1801) discovered in Building XVI (see further below, and Lauinger this issue; 2012) confirms conclusively its location at Tell Tayinat.

Tiglath-pileser III launched his assault on the Syro-Hittite states of northwest Syria in 743 B.C.E.,[2] directing his attention to the North Orontes Valley and the kingdom of Unqi in 738 B.C.E. As a pretext, Tiglath-pileser accused Tutammu, king of Unqi (^{kur}*un-qi*), of breaking his loyalty oath with Assyria. The consequences of this breach, we are told,[3] were that Tutammu "disregarded his life,"[4] Kinalia (^{uru}*Ki-na-li-a*), his royal city, was captured and many of its citizens were deported. Tiglath-pileser declares that he then reconstituted Kinalia as the capital of a new Assyrian province by the same name, and installed a eunuch (*ša rēši*) as governor (*bēl pīḫāti*). In a separate fragment of the royal annals (Tadmor and Yamada 2011: RINAP 1 Tiglath-pileser III 14, ll. 4–5), 600 captives from the city of Amlatu and 5,400 captives from the city of Der are said to have been settled in several cities of Unqi. Kinalia, or Kullania, as it appears alternatively in a variety of imperial administrative records, remained under Assyrian control until the reign of Assurbanipal (Hawkins 1982: 425; 1983; Millard 1994: 51; Radner 2006: 61).

Previous Investigations

Tell Tayinat forms a large, low-lying mound on the northern bend of the Orontes River, at the point where the river turns west and runs along the southern edge of the Amuq Plain (see fig. 1). The site is comprised of an upper mound, or citadel, and an expansive lower settlement, with the lower settlement now buried by the thick alluvial accumulation of the Orontes floodplain. Tell Tayinat sits just north of the modern Antakya-Reyhanlı road, and measures approximately 500 m (E–W) by 700 m (N–S), or roughly 35 ha in area.

Large-scale excavations were conducted at Tell Tayinat by the University of Chicago's Syrian-Hittite Expedition over four field seasons between 1935 and 1938. The primary goal of the expedition, as formulated by James Henry Breasted, was to identify and excavate Kunulua (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 1). In addition to several stratigraphic soundings that exposed prehistoric remains, especially the TT 20 step trench at Tell Judaidah (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960), substantial horizontal exposures were made of the first-millennium levels at the sites of Çatal Höyük and Tell Tayinat. The Iron Age architectural features discovered at these sites were published some years later by the expedition's architect (Haines 1971).[5]

The Syrian-Hittite Expedition's excavations at Tell Tayinat focused primarily on the West Central Area of the upper mound (see fig. 2), although excavation areas were also opened on the eastern and southern edges of the upper mound and in the lower settlement. In all, the Chicago excavations achieved large horizontal exposures of five distinct architectural phases, or building periods, dating to the Iron II and III periods (Amuq Phase O, ca. 875–550 B.C.E.; see table 1; Haines 1971: 64–66). Since Haines's report, several scholars have revisited his architectural phasing scheme, and have made a number of minor, though significant, modifications to the phasing of particular buildings and levels (Pucci 2008; Osborne 2011; Snow in press). However, the basic framework of the Chicago sequence remains intact.

2. For a more detailed account of these events, see Hawkins 1982: 410–11; Weippert 1982: 395–96; Grayson 1991a: 74–76.

3. For the precise references, see Tadmor and Yamada 2011: RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 12 (= Ann. 25), ll. 3–12; see also Tadmor and Yamada 2011: RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 46 (=Summ Insc. 6), ll. 20–21; RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 49 (= Summ. Insc. 9), ll. 26–27. Tutammu's breaking of the oath is a suggested restoration of the poorly preserved line 3 (Smith 1869: 92; Tadmor 1994: 56; Tadmor and Yamada 2011: 39).

4. Tadmor, following Smith, transliterated the passage in line 3 as ⌜*i*⌝*-miš nap-šá-ti-šú*, translating it as "forfeited his life," partially on analogy with Proverbs 25:32, ושפנ סאומ "despises his own soul" (Tadmor 1994: 56–57). The most recent edition transliterates ⌜*i*⌝*-šiṭ nap-šá-ti-šú* and translates "disregarded his life" (Tadmor and Yamada 2011: 39). In either case, the implied death of Tutammu is possibly questioned by the appearance of one "Tutamu" in a letter from Nimrud, confirming the delivery of spoil, including Tutamu and his officials, to Assyria (Saggs 1995: letter XV). If this is the same individual, the Nimrud letter indicates deportation, not execution.

5. The final excavation reports for Tell Tayinat, Tell Judaidah, and Çatal Höyük, including architecture, ceramics, objects and other small finds, are currently being prepared by H. Snow, L. Swartz-Dodd, and M. Pucci respectively, and are scheduled to appear in the near future.

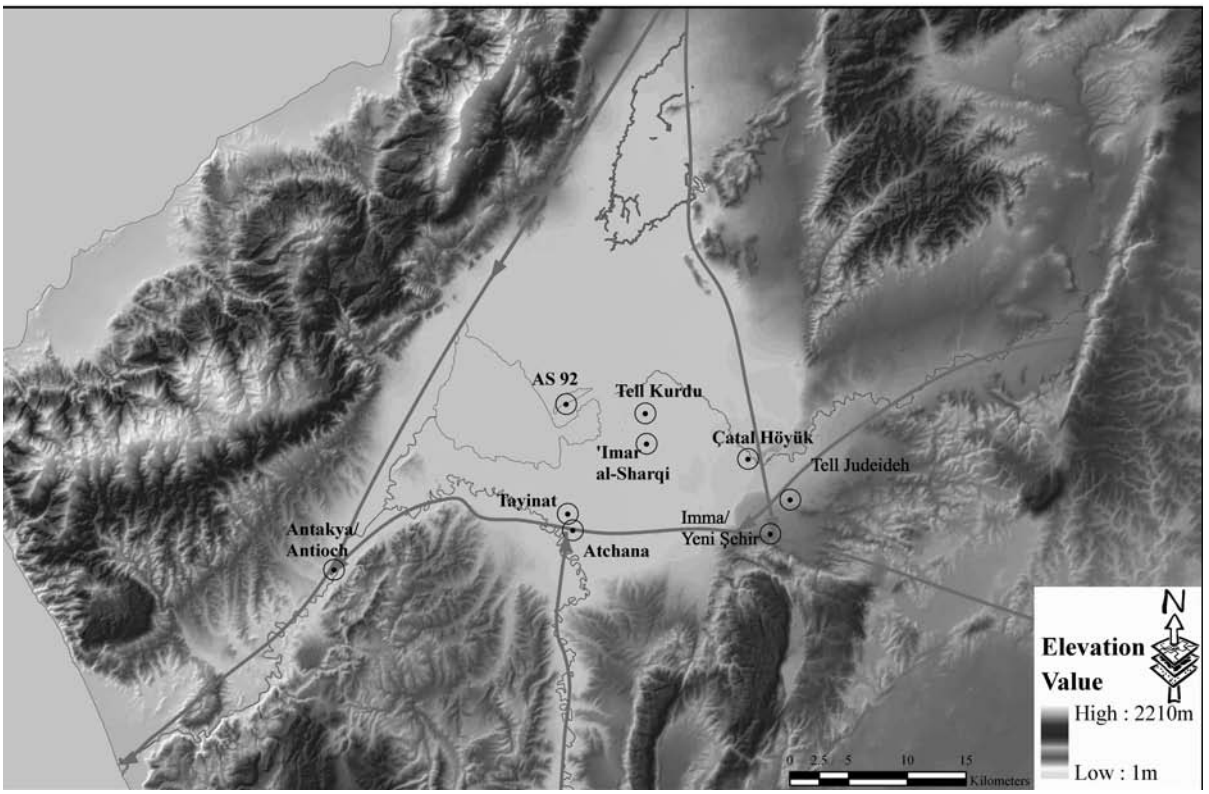

Fig. 1. Map of the Amuq Plain showing the location of Tell Tayinat and other principal settlements (created by S. Batiuk).

According to the excavators, Building I, the most famous of Tayinat's *bīt ḫilāni* palaces, and the adjacent tripartite temple (Building II), graced by a beautifully carved double-lion column base, were constructed during the Second Building period (for detailed descriptions of these structures, see Haines 1971: 44–55), the most extensive and best preserved building period they encountered in the West Central Area. Building I had an annex, Building VI, to the northeast, and a second *bīt ḫilāni*, Building IV, enclosed a paved central courtyard on the north. A gateway immediately to the west of Building I provided access to this citadel area, opening onto a partially preserved street that connected to the central courtyard (fig. 3; Haines 1971: plates 70–72, 74–81, 96–97, 99, 100, 103, 106).[6] The Second Building period was dated to the late-ninth and eighth centuries (ca. 825–720 B.C.E.), based largely on the presence of Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments that were found on or below the floors of Buildings I and II (Haines 1971: 66). Recent analysis of the pottery associated with the floors of the Second Building period is consistent with this dating (Osborne in press), although the conquest by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 B.C.E. would appear to be a more logical date for its end than Haines's proposed date of 720 B.C.E.

Renovations to this elite area accounted for most of the activity assigned to the ensuing Third Building period, which the excavators dated to the latter part of the eighth and early-seventh centuries (ca. 720–680 B.C.E.; Haines 1971: 65–66), or the period of Assyrian occupation. Platform XV, a large elevated rectangular structure (see further below), approximately 46 (E–W) m by 87 (N–S) m, which flanked the east side of the West Central Area

6. The reconstruction presented here follows Pucci (2008: 137–38, plate 32), who assigned Gateway XII to the First Building period and a later structure in Area V to the Second Building period on the basis of recorded elevations and construction techniques, in contrast to the excavators, who placed Gateway XII in both the First and Second Building periods, and the Area V structure in later building periods (Haines 1971: plates 106–107).

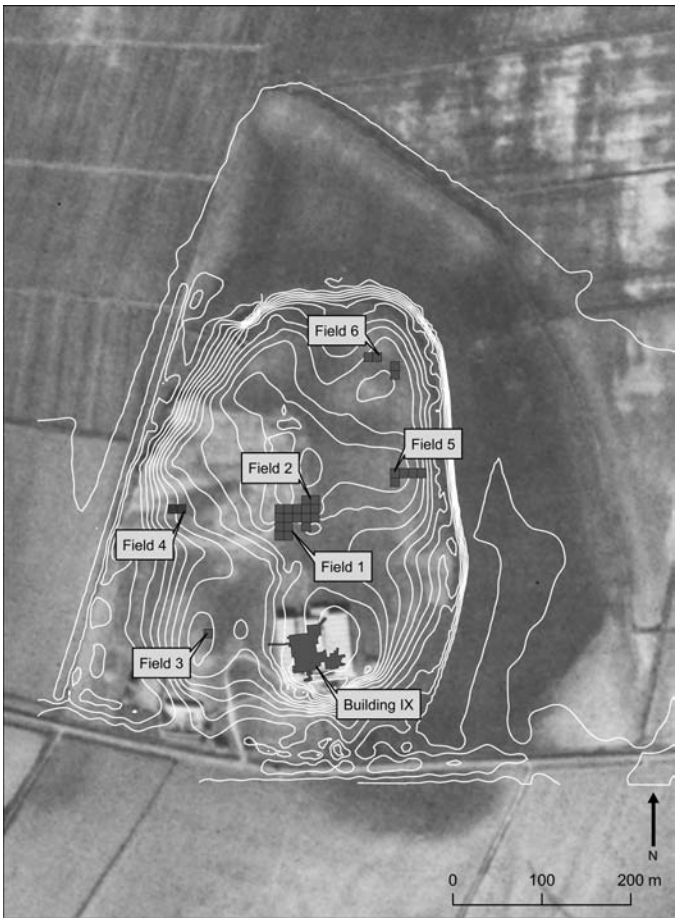

Fig. 2. Topographic map of Tell Tayinat overlaid on a CORONA satellite image of the site, showing the principal excavation areas (created by S. Batiuk).

complex (Haines 1971: 43–44), represented one of the most significant additions during the Third Building period. The Fourth Building period appears to have coincided with substantial Assyrian construction activity.[7] According to the excavators, the Fourth Building period witnessed the continued occupation of the *bīt ḫilāni* in the West Central Area, but apparently the abandonment of the adjacent temple (Building II; Haines 1971: 65). They also assigned the construction of a new complex, Building IX, to this phase (see fig. 2). Uncovered during the 1936 and 1937 seasons on an isolated knoll in the southeastern quadrant of the upper mound, Building IX might well have been constructed earlier, during the Third Building period. Unfortunately, a modern cotton processing factory precludes any further archaeological investigation of this structure.

The rooms of Building IX were arranged around two large courtyards paved with mudbrick tiles. The principal room of the building (Room C) was located on the southern edge of the excavated area (Haines 1971: 62; plate 84). It was rectangular in shape, 8.05 × 26.30 m in size, and was paved with small pebbles laid on edge in a lime plaster bed. The walls of Room C were made of unbaked brick, and appear to have been supported by a wood

7. Pucci (2008: 142) has combined the Third and Fourth Building periods in her Period III, but agrees with their attribution to the Assyrian occupation; see also the further stratigraphic discussion in Snow (in press).

frame, a technique similarly employed in the construction of the West Central Area buildings. Pieces of blue-painted plaster found in the room debris indicate its walls were once painted. Room C also produced two intriguing installations: a rectangular limestone slab with a hole in its center was found partially recessed into the south wall of the room, and two parallel rows of flat-lying, grooved stones were embedded in the center of the room's floor (Haines 1971: plate 84:B).

Despite its poor preservation, as first noted by the Chicago Expedition (Haines 1971: 61), the architectural elements and layout of Building IX identify it as an Assyrian-style palatial complex. The typical layout of these palaces consisted of a series of central courtyards, which neatly segregated the various functional units of the complex, including their administrative and residential areas (see Turner 1970). The main reception room typically was equipped with a variety of stone fixtures, including a running track for a brazier in the center of the room, a flat rectangular slab (usually with a plugged hole in the center) set in the floor against a wall, and various cultic niches (Turner 1970: 181–88). The addition of a "bathroom" for ritual ablutions, usually directly adjacent to the throne dais, appears to have been a unique feature of the larger palaces constructed during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. (Turner 1970: 190–93). The modular replication of the reception suite is well-attested throughout the royal cities of Assyria, and at numerous Neo-Assyrian provincial centers during this period (see further in Harrison 2005).

A series of large walls, identified as Building X (Haines 1971: 61; plates 88, 110), located to the northeast of Building IX, appear to have functioned as retaining walls for an elevated platform or enclosure that supported the sprawling palace of Building IX. They therefore must also date to this period, although their excavators tentatively assigned them to the terminal Fifth Building period, which the Syrian-Hittite Expedition dated to the end of the Iron Age, or the late-seventh/early-sixth century B.C.E. (Haines 1971: 66).

The Chicago excavators also assigned the uppermost pavement (Floor 1) of the adjacent Gateway VII to the Fourth Building period (Haines 1971: 66; plate 110). However, there is reason to believe that this terminal phase of the gateway should be reassigned to the subsequent Fifth Building period. In particular, seven limestone orthostats (T-1253-59; see Harrison 2005: 26, fig. 1; also McEwan 1937: fig. 10; and Gerlach 2000: Taf. 5), carved in an Assyrian provincial style, were found reused as flagstones in this uppermost pavement (Haines 1971: 60–61), suggesting that the Assyrian phase should be linked to one of the earlier pavements, presumably Floor 2, which the excavators tentatively assigned to their Third Building period. The orthostats, which depict Assyrian soldiers carrying decapitated heads while trampling over vanquished foes, appear to be part of a single decorative scheme. The soldiers are dressed in attire consistent with depictions on reliefs from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III and the latter decades of the eighth century B.C.E., including funnel-shaped helmets and short fringed tunics.

The Syrian-Hittite Expedition also recovered a number of miscellaneous finds, unfortunately largely from poorly preserved contexts, which speak to the Neo-Assyrian presence at Tell Tayinat (see further in Harrison 2005: 29; Snow in press). These included several Neo-Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions (both stone monument fragments and clay tablets), cylinder seals, a composite metal roundel inscribed with the royal name of Tiglath-pileser III, and small quantities of the distinctive Assyrian Glazed and Palace Wares.

The Building XVI Excavations

Field investigations were resumed at Tell Tayinat in 1999 by the University of Toronto's Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP). Preliminary field seasons were devoted in 1999, 2001, and 2002 to topographic and surface surveys of the site (see further in Batiuk et al. 2005). Excavations recommenced with a two-week exploratory season in 2004 and full-scale excavations in 2005, and they have continued on an annual basis since (for yearly reports, see Harrison 2006; 2007; 2008; Harrison et al. 2009; Harrison and Batiuk 2010; Harrison et al. 2011; Harrison et al. in press). The Late Assyrian settlement, or Iron III horizon (ca. 725–600 B.C.E.), has been encountered principally in four of the TAP excavation areas: Fields 1, 2, 5, and 6 (see fig. 2).

In composite, the TAP excavations indicate an extensive Assyrian presence that encompassed Tayinat's entire upper mound, or citadel. Moreover, the layout of buildings appears to have followed a well-organized plan, dominated by large, "public" architecture. Although investigations are ongoing in each of the excavation areas, and the interpretation of their results therefore necessarily preliminary, they nevertheless have consistently revealed the remains of large—indeed monumental—building complexes, constructed using distinctly standardized building methods and materials. Together with the palatial structures uncovered by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition, they portray a carefully planned Assyrian administrative complex that replicated the various functional units of a typical royal citadel in the Assyrian heartland, albeit on a smaller scale.

In this context, perhaps most striking have been the results of the excavations in Field 2 (fig. 2). In 2007, excavations were initiated to the east of a large structure, identified as Building XIV by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition and assigned to their First Building period (ca. ninth century B.C.E.; see Haines 1971: 64 and 66), with the goal of identifying surfaces that might help better date this structure. Although no coherent surfaces were found between the structure's large wall foundations, these excavations revealed an external stone pavement, which in turn sealed a densely packed sherd-strewn surface, comprised predominantly of Red Slipped Burnished Ware pottery. Unfortunately, the Syrian-Hittite Expedition had trenched along the exterior face of the wall, obliterating any stratigraphic connections that might have existed between these surfaces and the east wall of Building XIV. Consequently, in 2008, a new area was opened further to the east in the hopes of avoiding this disturbance. The ensuing excavations, which continued through the 2009 season, revealed the burnt remains of a small temple, Building XVI (see figs. 3 and 4).

Architecture and Phasing

Building XVI measured 9 × 21 m in size, and was approached from the south by means of a wide limestone staircase. The bottom of a small basalt column rested on the western edge of the uppermost step, in front of the southern end of the building's west wall. The staircase led to a porch, which supported an ornately carved basalt column base set deeply into its floor. The column base is decorated in three engraved registers, of which only the uppermost was damaged in the destruction of the building: a sequence of alternating ornamental palmettes and vertical rope patterns on the top, a running guilloche and rosette pattern in the middle, and an inverted and schematic repeat of the upper register on the base. The column base is virtually identical in size, shape, and design to the column bases found in the portico of the Second Building period phase of the nearby *bīt ḫilāni*, Building I. However, its lowest carved register was largely hidden from view, obscured by a baked brick-paved surface, suggesting that an earlier floor, or phase, of the building still lies unexcavated below. The porch was separated from the central room of the building by two brick piers that bonded with the exterior walls of the building. A thick deposit of burnt brick, apparently collapse, covered much of the floor between the two piers. This material, in turn, sealed three heavily charred wooden beams, at least one of which appeared to have been set directly into the floor, and therefore possibly part of a threshold for this doorway.

The floor of the central room, though badly burned, was covered with a layer of plaster. The room was largely devoid of pottery or organic remains, but it did produce a quantity of bronze metal, including riveted pieces and several fragments of carved ivory inlay. Though heavily burned and damaged, these remains suggest the central room had been equipped with furniture or fixtures, perhaps for a door (see further description below). The room also produced fragments of gold and silver foil, and a piece of carved eye inlay. A thick layer of collapsed burnt brick sealed the entire room, and in some places had fused with the brickwork of the temple's outer walls, vivid evidence of the intense conflagration that had consumed the structure. A limestone roof roller, used to maintain the consistency of the roof's outer layers, was found in the debris against the eastern wall, suggesting that the building was only one story in height.

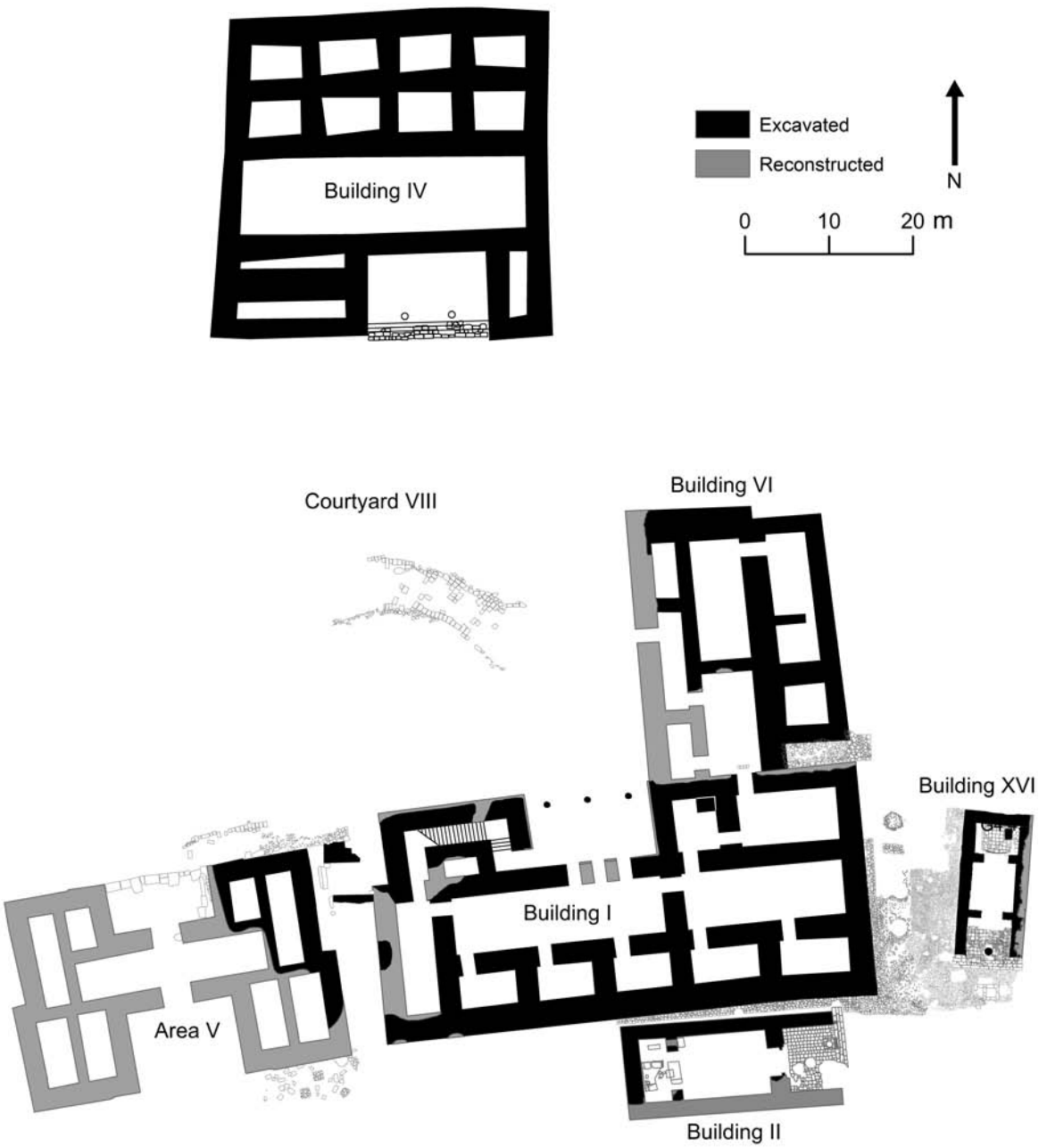

Fig. 3. Plan of Second Building period complex in the West Central Area (created by J. Osborne).

A second set of piers and a wood-lined threshold separated the central room from a small back room, the inner sanctum of the temple. This northernmost room contained an elevated, rectangular platform, or podium, that filled almost the entire room. The podium was made of fired brick, similar in shape to the bricks that paved the portico, and its sides were coated with a white plaster. The podium was accessed by four steps in each of its two southern corners, and a free-standing, plastered mudbrick installation, possibly an altar, stood on its eastern side. This room had also been burned intensely by fire, preserving a wealth of cultic objects found strewn

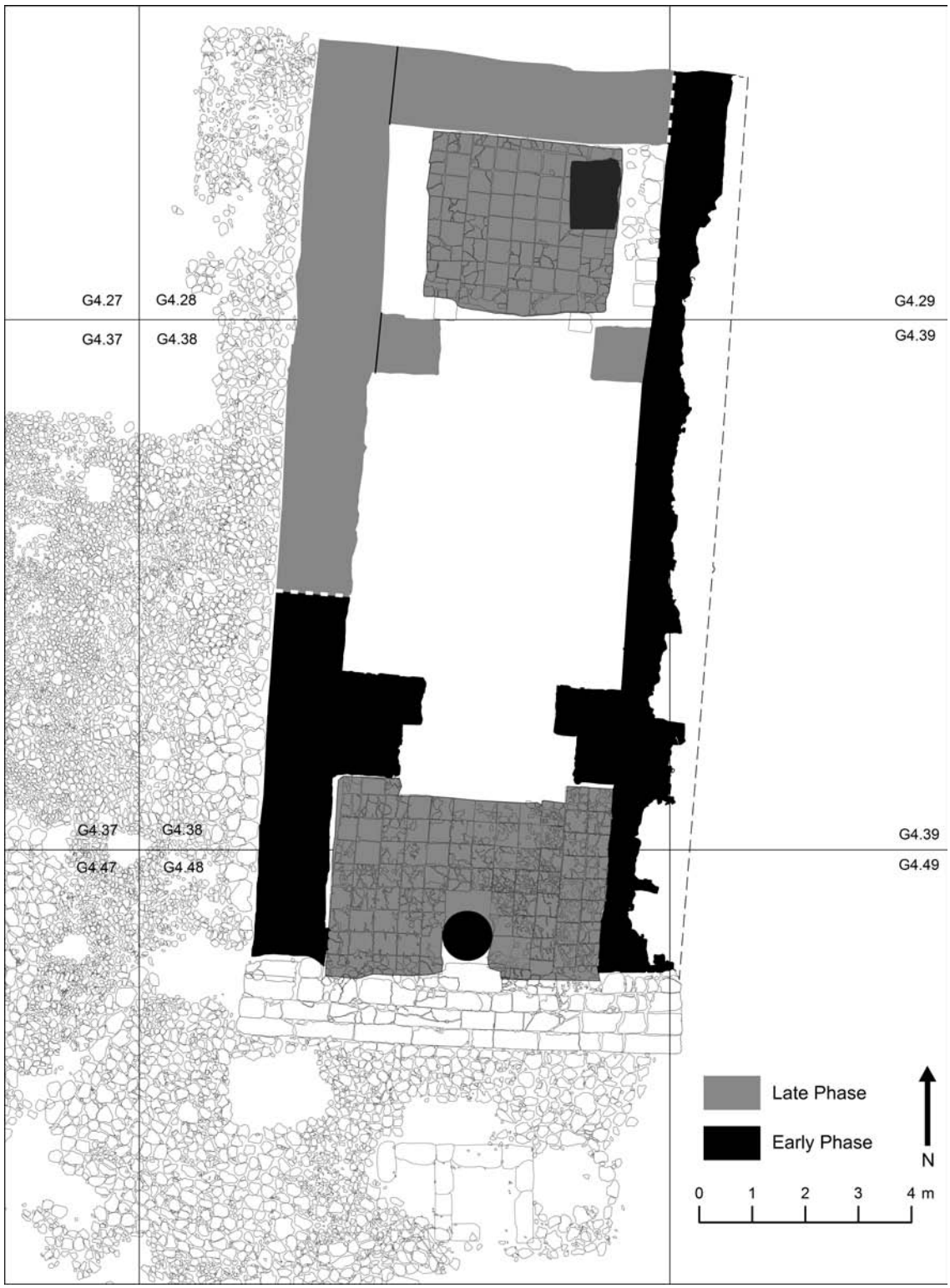

Fig. 4. Plan of Building XVI (created by J. Osborne).

across the podium and around its base, including gold, bronze, and iron implements, libation vessels, a large Assyrian Glazed Ware jar and other ornately decorated ritual objects, and a collection of cuneiform tablets (fig. 5; see further description below).

The construction methods used to build the exterior walls of Building XVI are identical to those typically found in the other public buildings of the West Central Area, including use of the distinctive "wood-crib" construction technique (for more detailed description, see Haines 1971: 45–46). In addition, the exterior face of the temple's west wall was decorated with a bright white painted plaster. Building XVI was surrounded on its west and south sides by a cobblestone pavement, the same pavement that was cut by the Chicago excavations, and clearly part of an expansive open courtyard, or plaza.

In 2011, a probe was excavated in the northwest corner of the central room to determine the construction sequence of the temple, and to establish whether earlier floors or phases of the complex might exist. A cross-section was also cut through the west wall of the building (fig. 6). Although no earlier floors were found, the probe and section produced clear evidence of two discrete construction phases to the west wall of the temple. A solid mudbrick construction that extended across the bottom of the entire section was all that remained of the earlier of the two phases. This feature is reminiscent of the large mudbrick foundations that supported the walls of Building II excavated in Field 1, and very likely provided the same structural function for this earlier phase of Building XVI. This mudbrick feature, in turn, was cut by a sharply delineated line marking a later foundation trench, which was filled with mudbricks containing nari, or crushed limestone, a construction technique commonly used in the buildings of the Iron III, or Neo-Assyrian, settlement.

Since the construction methods used to build the west wall of the temple differ sharply from the "wood-crib" technique used in the production of its east wall, these two outer walls appear to preserve different phases in the temple's construction history. The pier walls that separated the central room from the inner sanctum abut the temple's outer walls and therefore clearly belong to the later phase. The temple's north wall, which abuts the northern end of the west wall rather than bonding with it, appears also to have been built (or rebuilt) as part of the later complex.

In summary, by the time of its destruction, Building XVI was a palimpsest of modifications and additions that belonged to at least two primary phases of construction. The earlier phase included the stone staircase approach, the basalt column base, and the front piers and eastern exterior wall (delineated in black in fig. 4). The later, terminal phase (highlighted in gray in fig. 4) witnessed the addition of the baked-brick floor in the portico, the piers or partition wall between the central and inner rooms, the baked brick podium in the inner room, and the replacement (or repair) of at least parts of the western and northern exterior walls. Portions, if not all, of the cobblestone courtyard, sections of which sealed against the west wall of Building XVI, must also belong to this later phase. The date of this later construction phase almost certainly coincides with the Neo-Assyrian occupation of the site (i.e., late-eighth/seventy century B.C.E.), in light of the artifact and epigraphic remains recovered from the destruction debris found within the building.

Significantly, both the Syrian-Hittite and TAP expeditions have found numerous Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments scattered on the surface of the cobblestone courtyard. Moreover, some of the stones in the pavement directly in front of Building XVI have been linked to a section of pavement uncovered by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition in a probe they excavated at the end of their final season in 1938. The Chicago probe also uncovered a series of finely-dressed limestone orthostats arranged in a square (depicted in the lower part of fig. 4), which appears to have served as a foundation, or platform, for a free-standing monument (see Haines 1971: 45, plates 74B and 103). The Syrian-Hittite Expedition also reported finding Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments in the immediate vicinity of the orthostats, including parts of a block-shaped inscription, Tell Tayinat Inscription 2 (see detailed description and commentary in Hawkins 2000: 367–68), and it is tempting to conclude that this inscription formed part of a monument that once stood on this platform (cf. Pucci 2008: plate 27). Unfortunately, nothing of the original structure remains, having been removed, or destroyed, following the Chicago excavations.

Fig. 5. Photograph of the artifact assemblage from the inner room of Building XVI (taken by J. Jackson).

Pottery and Relative Chronology

The pottery recovered from Building XVI was concentrated primarily in its inner room. A single three-handled krater (fig. 7:11), with its base apparently deliberately removed in antiquity, was found lying smashed in the northeast corner of the portico. The central room was completely devoid of pottery, with the exception of a few isolated sherds, including some Red Slipped Burnished Ware. By contrast, the inner room preserved a rich collection of complete vessels that had been broken during the destruction. These included several oil lamps (figs. 7:1–3), a pot stand (fig. 7:7), and a small jug (fig. 7:4) that were distributed across the northwest quadrant of the podium, and a large pithos that had been deposited in the southwest corner of the room (fig. 7:10). The heat of the fire was sufficient to melt the rim of the small jug, which likely would originally have stood in the pot stand. Each of these vessels have parallels with pottery from seventh century assemblages at sites in the Assyrian heartland, including Nimrud (Lines 1954; Oates 1963; Hausleiter 1999), Nineveh (Lumsden 1999), Khirbet Qasrij and Qasrij Cliff (Curtis 1989), clearly dating the final use phase of Building XVI to this period.

This seventh-century date is most vividly confirmed by an elaborately decorated Assyrian Glazed Ware basin (fig. 7:9) that was found on the top step of the small staircase at the southwest corner of the podium. Although heavily burned and damaged during the destruction, the exterior of the vessel displays an alternating sequence of crouching bulls and rosettes between two horizontal yellow stripes, and was glazed in bright green and blue hues

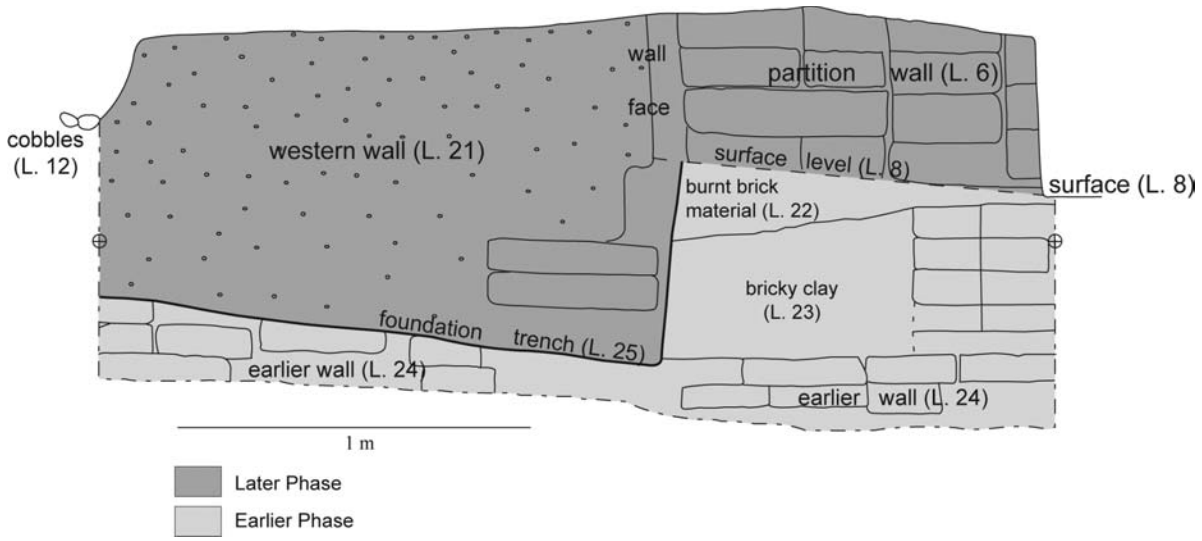

Fig. 6. Stratigraphic cross-section of the west wall of Building XVI (drawn by J. Osborne).

over a yellow base. The plain interior glaze is also yellow. A close stylistic parallel has recently been found in the renewed excavations at Tell Halaf (Martin and Novák 2010: 13). As with the krater in the portico, the base of the basin had been removed in antiquity.

The Small Finds

As already noted, the portico and entry way to Building XVI produced few artifactual remains. However, the central room of the building was slightly different. In addition to the limestone roof roller found in the collapsed brick fill, the northeast quadrant of the central room contained over two dozen fragments of heavily damaged bronze, including thin pieces of warped plating, and four small pieces of gold leaf (fig. 8). The central room also produced two faience beads, one near the center of the room, and the other in front of the threshold into the inner room, as well as an iron fibula.

In contrast to the relatively sparse contents of the central room, the inner room contained the remains of numerous cultic objects, both on the floor of the room and on the podium (fig. 8). A round and concave iron object 50 cm in diameter was found lying in front of the podium, straddling the threshold between the central and inner rooms. Although this object, like many of the metal pieces found in Building XVI, still requires detailed conservation, preliminary examination indicates that it was a shield, replete with handle, straps, a central omphalos, and a number of bosses and nails for attaching components to the main body of the shield. Layard (1853) reported discovering iron shields at Nimrud that he was unable to preserve, otherwise only bronze examples are known (see Barron 2010 for a full discussion).

One of the more striking small finds was an intact black cylindrical stone box, or pyxis, with engraved decoration around its side (ca. tenth–eighth centuries B.C.E.; see Mazzoni 2001). The pyxis was found lying upside down on the bottom step of the west podium steps. The engraved scene depicts two seated figures on either side of a table laden with food items, with two additional figures slaughtering a supine bull, and clearly represents an ancestral feasting scene. The imagery of the scene is decidedly Syro-Hittite in style, with close affinities to the wall reliefs at Karatepe (Çambel and Özyar 2003), and stands in stark contrast to the Assyrian Glazed Ware vessel found on the adjacent step. Interestingly, pyxides are frequently portrayed as part of the tableware on Syro-Hittite funerary

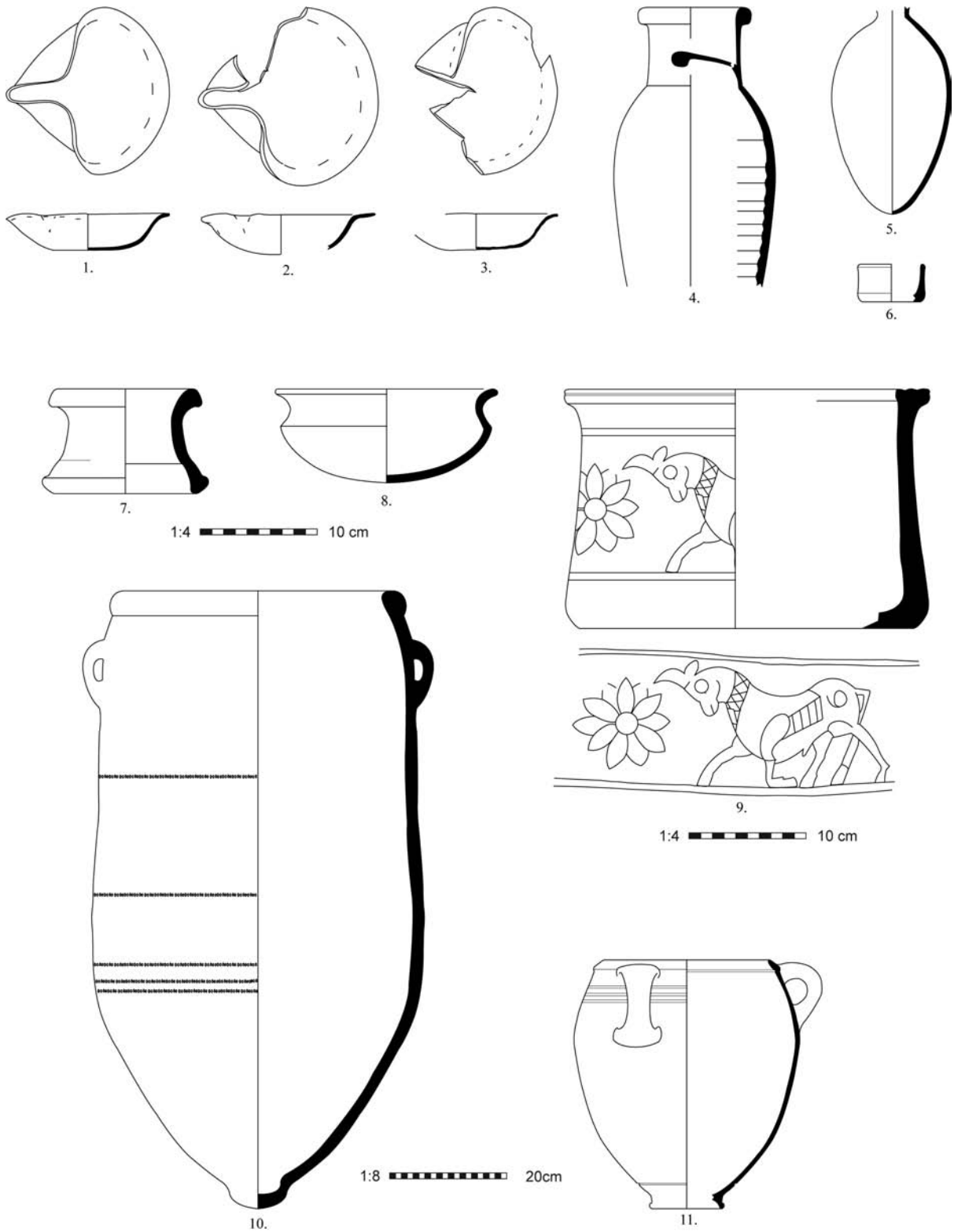

Fig. 7. The pottery assemblage from Building XVI (drawn by F. Haughey).

stelae (Bonatz 2000), including the recently discovered Zincirli KTMW stele (see Struble and Herrmann 2009: 26–28).

A concentration of metal objects, including damaged pieces of bronze sheet metal similar to those found in the central room, littered the surface of the podium immediately west of the altar-like installation that stood on the east side of the podium. The assemblage also included both large and small nails, bosses, and four cotter pins (displayed in fig. 5), and closely resembles a collection of bronze artifacts found in a late-seventh century context at Fort Shalmaneser (Curtis, et al. 1993: figs. 11, 13, 15, 18). These metal fragments, together with the sheet metal found in the central room, appear to have been part of wall or doorway fixtures, or fittings for wooden furniture such as altars or thrones (see Curtis 1988: 87–89).

The Cuneiform Tablet Collection

The surface debris on the temple podium also included a concentration of fragmented cuneiform tablets. The analysis completed to date has identified at least eleven discrete texts, all except one preserving literary or historical documents. The most notable document, T-1801, records an oath imposed by Esarhaddon on the governor (*bēl pīḫāti*) of Kunalia in 672 B.C.E. (see further Lauinger 2012, and this issue), which provides a *terminus post quem* for the destruction of the temple. The text of the Tayinat "oath tablet" closely parallels the 674 lines of the so-called Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon, eight copies of which were found in the throne room of a building adjacent to the Temple of Nabu in the Assyrian royal city of Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) during British excavations at the site in 1955 (Wiseman 1958).

The Building XVI discovery context fits well with evidence from the Assyrian heartland. In addition to the vassal treaties found at Nimrud, a collection of tablets was discovered in the Ezida (or Temple of Nabu) itself, in a room directly opposite Nabu's shrine (Postgate and Reade 1980: 309, fig. 2; Oates and Oates 2002). The Nabu Temple at Khorsabad, located adjacent to the Ziggurat Temple complex, contained two rooms (Rooms 5 and 15) with pigeonholes very likely for storing texts, which probably had been removed when the city was abandoned; in the case of Room 5, several tablet fragments were discovered among the debris inside the room (Loud and Altman 1938: 46, 60, 62, plates 19C, 24D). Tablets were also kept in the vicinity of the Temple of Nabu at Nineveh (Fincke 2004: 55).[8]

Even more intriguing, however, is the possibility that these vassal, or succession, treaties were deliberately kept in places that their oath takers were expected to visit on a regular basis (Steymans 2006: 343). As Lauinger (2012) notes, the other tablets found with the Tayinat oath tablet help to establish the broader social context for this remarkable collection of cuneiform documents. In particular, two tablets (T-1923 and T-1927) preserve markings that suggest they belonged to a class of amulet-shaped tablets that served a primarily votive function (Reiner 1959). In addition, one of these tablets (T-1923) was pierced horizontally, as was also the oath tablet, indicating that both were intended to be suspended or mounted. The tablets recovered from the inner sanctum of Building XVI, in other words, were intentionally designed for exhibition and display (Lauinger 2012). Their provenance, distributed across the western part of the elevated podium, facing the altar-like installation positioned on the podium's eastern side (fig. 8), provides further evidence of their cultic function. Moreover, the position and condition of the oath tablet, which exhibits a break pattern that radiates out from an initial contact point along its base, suggests that the tablet was found precisely where it fell when the temple was destroyed. The tablet was uncovered lying face down on the podium, with its back reverse facing up, and clearly had fallen forward during the conflagration that engulfed the building.

8. We are grateful to Lauinger for drawing these parallels to our attention.

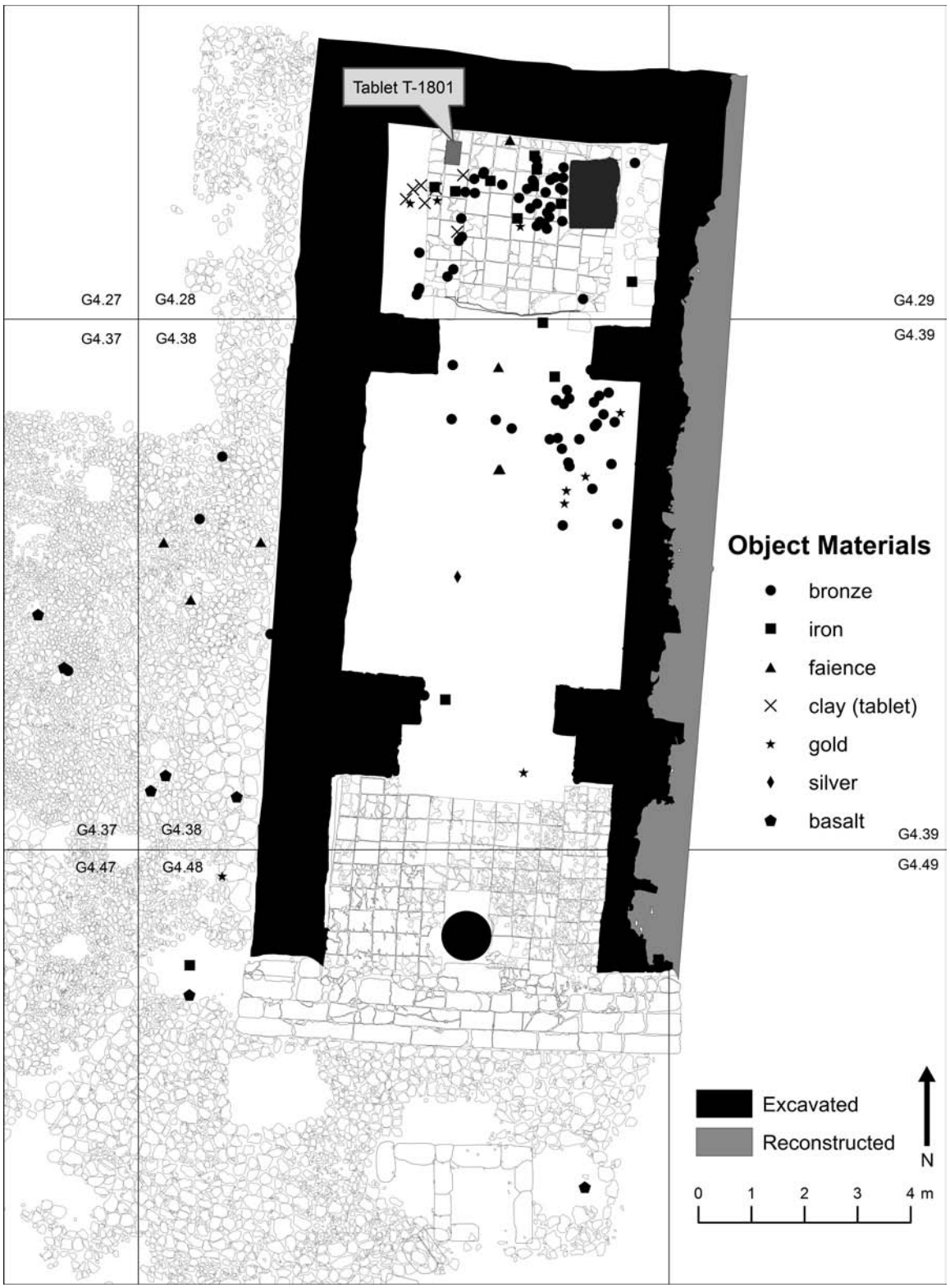

Fig. 8. Plan showing the artifact distribution in Building XVI (created by J. Osborne).

The Neo-Assyrian Sacred Precinct at Tayinat

The Tayinat Archaeological Project's investigations, when combined with the results of the Syrian-Hittite Expedition, most notably their Building II, indicate the existence of an extensive religious complex in this area of the Neo-Assyrian city. Building II has been upheld as an exemplar of Iron Age Levantine religious architecture ever since its discovery in 1936. Many scholars, including its original excavators (see Haines 1971: 53), have identified it as a *megaron*-style temple, part of a long-standing West Semitic religious tradition. Biblical scholars have largely favored this view, drawing visual inspiration for the various components of the Solomonic temple described in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Wright 1941; Busink 1970: 558–62). Others, however, have emphasized the building's similarities with Neo-Assyrian religious architecture, most notably its *langraum*-like plan, and the magnificently carved double-lion column base(s) that supported its portico (cf. Frankfort 1954 [1996]: 289–90).

The TAP excavations now offer an opportunity to clarify the lingering stratigraphic and chronological questions that concern this intriguing complex, while clarifying the broader functional role of the Tayinat temples. As we have seen, the existing evidence points to at least two distinct phases of construction and use. Since the case has been detailed elsewhere (Harrison in press), only a summary of the relevant points are given here. In short, the Tayinat temples exhibit the characteristics of a religious architectural tradition, the temple *in antis*, indigenous to West Syria and the Levant, with antecedents that can be traced back to the third millennium B.C.E., though not to be confused with the *migdal*-type common in the second millennium B.C.E., or its often wrongly assumed correlate the Aegean *megaron*. The salient feature of the *anten* temples were their distinctive columned-porch entryways, or façades, and flanking *antae*, the projecting, or pilastered, ends of the lateral walls that framed the long central room of the building. Access to the central room was restricted by two large piers, or dividing walls, with the cultic sanctum, or *adytum*, centered at the back of the room, often further secluded by a second internal dividing wall (see the convenient summary in Mazzoni 2010). The construction methods employed, in particular the "wood-crib" technique, but also the almost identical size, shape, and design of the basalt column bases in Building XVI and Building I, clearly link the temples architecturally to the adjacent *bīt ḫilāni* palaces, and mark them as an integral, though subsidiary, component of the Second Building period complex (fig. 3). The Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments found in association with these buildings furnish further evidence that they were constructed sometime in the ninth–eighth centuries B.C.E.

Nevertheless, the architectural renovations, such as the baked-brick floors and elevated podium that were installed, and the artifacts associated with their terminal phase of use, most notably the Late Assyrian cuneiform tablets found in Building XVI, indicate that at some point in the late-eighth or early-seventh century B.C.E. both buildings were renovated and incorporated into an Assyrian religious complex, or sacred precinct, replicating a well-established Assyrian double temple tradition best exemplified by the perpendicularly oriented twin temples in the Ziggurat complex on the citadel at Khorsabad (Loud 1936: frontispiece).

In light of this, it is tempting to speculate that Platform XV, assigned by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition to this period, might have served as an elevated platform for an Assyrian cultic monument, perhaps even a small ziggurat-like structure, given its alignment immediately to the north of Building XVI. During the 2011 season, excavations succeeded in uncovering the southern edge of Platform XV, including portions of the stone enclosing wall, and an L-shaped section (2 × 20 m N–S and 2 × 9 m E–S) of the platform itself. In the area between Platform XV and Building XVI to the south, the excavations uncovered an expanse of poorly preserved mudbrick pavement. Two square-shaped concentrations of fired bricks, clearly the platforms (or floors) of small room-like installations, were found in this presumably open courtyard space. The westernmost of the two had an intact drain hole made of interlocking ceramic pipes embedded in its center.

Although a full understanding of the architectural relationships of the various structures and installations that comprised the Tayinat sacred precinct must await further investigation, they would appear to have belonged to a single sprawling complex erected by the Assyrians during their occupation of the citadel in the late-eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. While those responsible for its ultimate destruction are not yet known, the remarkable

discoveries preserved in Building XVI promise a richly textured view of the cultural and ethnic contest that has long characterized the turbulent history of this region.

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