

## AMUQ VALLEY REGIONAL PROJECTS

K. Aslihan Yener

### Tell Atchana (Alalakh) 2002

Over the last three seasons (2000, 2001, and 2002), the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP) teams from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago conducted multi-disciplinary investigations at Tell Atchana, ancient Alalakh, prior to the resumption of excavations in the fall of 2003. This preliminary work served to comprehensively document the status of the site and finds excavated for the British Museum and Oxford University by Sir Leonard Woolley from 1936 to 1949 with a gap during World War II. I will be greatly aided in the newly formulated Oriental Institute Expedition to Alalakh by the expertise of Associate Director, David Schloen of the Oriental Institute, who has written extensively on Late Bronze Age socio-economic history. David's long years of experience excavating in Israel at Ashkelon complements, and will potentially build conceptual bridges with, my own northern Anatolia focus.

While Alalakh was the Middle and Late Bronze Age capital of the Mukish kingdom, as the Amuq was known at that time, Tell Atchana is only one of several Amuq sites that are now targeted for reinvestigation. The AVRP was conceived in 1995 as a series of coordinated excavations and field projects located in the most southern state of Turkey, Hatay. The original path-breaking University of Chicago "Syro-Hittite" Plain of Antioch surveys, led by Robert J. Braidwood, recorded Tell Atchana as site no. 136. It and subsequent Oriental Institute excavations at Tells Chatal Höyük, Judaidah, Kurdu, and Ta'yinat, established a sequence that has played a fundamental role in defining the archaeology of this and neighboring regions. The eighth season of the broad-based AVRP concentrated on four main operations:

1. Field operations included the continuation of map making at Atchana mound with the total station. In addition, Tony Wilkinson (AVRP survey director) and Jesse Casana (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Ph.D. candidate) continued the geoarchaeological and archaeological sweep of the Amuq valley and its surrounding hillsides;
2. Yener and NELC students resumed the inventory of collections from Tell Atchana and the 1930s Oriental Institute excavations (Tells Ta'yinat, Kurdu, Chatal Höyük, and Judaidah) housed in the Hatay Archaeological Museum in Antakya. The inventory also integrated the Atchana collections with the depot of Sir Leonard Woolley's dig house, reopened in 2001, into the database;
3. Important infrastructural issues were addressed prior to the excavation of Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh). Attention was focused on establishing the excavation headquarters on land in proximity to the mound; and
4. Ta'yinat and Kurdu excavation teams resumed their survey and study seasons.



*Figure 1. Egyptianizing ivory box. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by K. A. Yener*

### Operation 1: Mapping Atchana

A small rump team finished shooting the last surveying locations to clarify gaps in the Atchana topographical map. In 2001 and

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**Figure 2.** Horseshoe-shaped copper based ingot. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by K. A. Yener

2002, our mapping teams completed shooting in a combined total of 3,725 points. Almost the entirety of the mound was covered, with special emphasis in the old Woolley excavation areas in the northeastern tip of the mound. This coverage allowed us to superimpose digitized images of the excavated architecture for a composite map — something lacking in the Woolley publications (see forthcoming AVRP monograph). The referenced points were mainly anchored on architecturally prominent nodes, such as the Level VII gate stone blocks, as well as the columns and staircase cornerstones of the *Bit Hilani* Style Level IV palace.

Both published and newly obtained archaeological evidence were utilized to create scale models of the capital, Alalakh, level by level, spanning most of the second millennium B.C.

The eight composite settlement layouts encapsulate the spatial organization of the city and provide a powerful tool with which to resolve many architecture-related questions prior to excavation. These questions will be answered by first setting out the historical framework and then comprehensively reviewing the archaeological evidence and literature for both. The reconstructed city plans provide benchmarks from which future excavation trenches will be targeted and a range of other specialized problem-oriented research designs can be based.

### Operation 2: Documenting Finds

An important 2002 activity focused on documenting shelf-loads of finds left in storage originating from the Woolley excavations over fifty years ago. Back in 2001, our Oriental Institute teams had found bags of these study materials stored in the long-inaccessible and dilapidated dig house depot on top of Tell Atchana (see *2001/2002 Annual Report*, pp. 16–17). Eighty-six crates of study materials, probably from the post World War II seasons, were subsequently moved to safer storage at the Mustafa Kemal University in Antakya. The sherds, seals, glass, faience, ivory (fig. 1), metals, and other artifacts were photographed and entered into a workable database in anticipation of additional finds from upcoming excavation seasons. The Turkish collections are being scanned and photographed, and efforts are being made to make them available through our XML system for Textual and Archaeological Research database, XSTAR: <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/PROJ/XSTAR/XSTAR.html>



**Figure 3.** Lion-shaped stone weight. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by Necmi Burgaç

Given my enduring interest in metals, the storage depots at the Hatay Archaeological Museum and Woolley dig house provided ample research materials. A five kilogram horseshoe shaped copper ingot (fig. 2), slag, molds, crucibles, and the disk-shaped ingots (see *ibid.*, fig. 6) found last year increased the evidence of metals processed and housed in the Alalakh palaces. Alalakh's proximity to vital mineral and timber resources in the Amanus and Taurus Mountains gave rise to questions regarding the pro-

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curement, shipping, processing, and distribution of raw materials and finished products. For example, what production and exchange systems underlay local metal smiths, woodworkers, ivory workers, and others engaged in specialized manufacturing? Was there a major specialized production of bronze supported by the palace or were they private entrepreneurs? What are some of the systems of weights and measurements used at the site (fig. 3) and can they provide information on regional and international commercial practices? These and other related topics on specialized craft production are now the focus of several doctoral dissertations on Atchana based materials.

Atchana ceramic specialist, R. Koehl, pointed to several important Anatolian and Aegean issues stemming from the stored sherd collections. Among several items of archaeological interest we encountered in the depots were unpublished fragments of a Mycenaean pictorial style amphoroid crater depicting horses (fig. 4).

Small stirrup jar (fig. 5) and vertical globular flask sherds were also found in abundance, which reflects a distribution pattern typical of the imported Mycenaean pottery found in Levantine contexts. Koehl noted that, in the Levant, only Ugarit had yielded a larger number of Aegean pottery and that its relative frequency at Tell Atchana might suggest that trade between the Aegean and the Levant was organized to reflect local preferences for specific Mycenaean commodities stored in these vessels. Also, numerous sherds of so-called red lustrous wheel-made ware brought to mind issues regarding their provenience and whether they are Hittite, non-Hittite Anatolian, or Cypriot. Equally important is a number of Hittite artifacts such as a clay model of a liver used for omens (fig. 6) and a stela with a hieroglyphic inscription identifying the figure as Tudhaliya who is now thought to be a nephew of Hittite Great King Mursili II (fig. 7) and perhaps the royal governor of Alalakh. The relationship of the capital of the Hittites, Hattuşa, with this distant sector of their empire is an intriguing avenue which we will explore more fully.

While the processing of artifacts from the Woolley dig house depot continued, the Hatay Archaeological Museum was in the throes of reinstalling its pre-classical galleries. Urgently invited to aid in their efforts, our teams helped reorganize, redesign, and reinstall the display cases, selecting from thousands of finds stemming from the early twentieth century excavations in the Amuq. Marble statues from the Princeton excavations at classical Antioch, ritual altars and sculpture from Alalakh (figs. 8–9), cylinder seals from Tell Judaidah and Chatal Höyük, gold and sophisticated bronzes from Tell Ta'yinat, and countless exquisite ceramics from all periods and from all areas of the Near East were all part of these museum collections. A preliminary selection of artifacts was

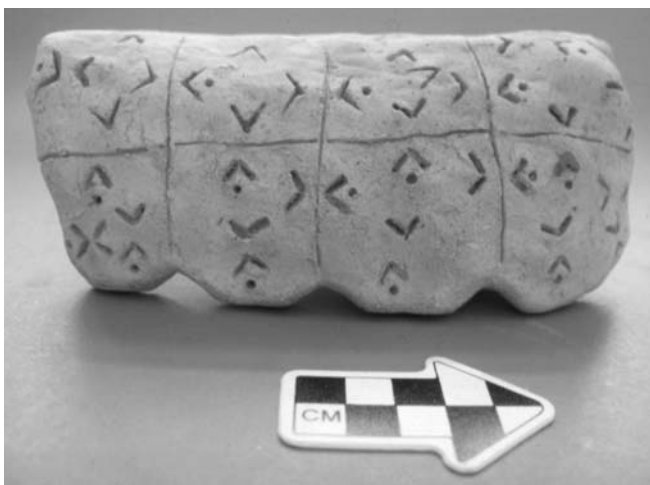


*Figure 4. Horse painting on a sherd from a Mycenaean pictorial style amphoroid crater. Tell Atchana, Woolley Dig House Depot. Photograph by R. Koehl*



*Figure 5. Mycenaean stirrup jar. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by Necmi Burgaç*

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**Figure 6.** Hittite clay liver omen model. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by K. A. Yener

completed and decisions about display layouts were roughed out for the interior designers in a “virtual gallery” created by Steve Batiuk. A large-scale poster to display in the galleries was composed for each site excavated in the state of Hatay (Atchana, Tell Ta’yinat, Tell Kurdu, Orontes Delta and Al-Mina, and Kinet Höyük). Copious photographs and text in English and Turkish on the poster provided information about the excavation, the finds, and the relative chronologies.

Jacob Lauinger (NELC Ph.D. candidate and staff philologist) studied the tablets from Atchana and other sites housed at the museum. Having provided

translations for a large selection of important cuneiform tablets (fig. 10), he was asked to design the layout of the tablet display case. A cursory inventory of Alalakh-related publications revealed that 274 tablets had already been published as copies or translations, but that 519 tablet fragments found were as yet unpublished. Over a thousand digital photographs were taken of the tablets, and a month was spent in the museum and Woolley depots documenting the tablets and other collections.

### Operation 3: The AVR P Dig House Compound

With generous funding from the Oriental Institute, three prefabricated buildings had been purchased last year from a first-rate company in Ankara, PreKons. The first building is a staff dormitory unit capable of sleeping twenty-four and is provided with four bathrooms. The second is a laboratory building with dining room and kitchen facilities. The third is a two-room container for use as the director’s office.

Our new headquarters were well on their way to being completed when events related to the impending Iraq War, as well as massive floods, destruction of crop fields in the Amuq, and denial of a permit to erect our buildings on top of the mound intervened. By a stroke of good fortune, we narrowly missed losing all three buildings



**Figure 7.** Stele depicting Tudhaliya. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot (Woolley 1955)

to an extensive flood in the Amuq plain that drowned several people and caused widespread loss of property during winter. Unusually heavy rainfall and the emergency release of the dam floodgates on the Orontes River, over the border in Syria, inundated the valley, turning the mounds into an island archipelago in the recreated Lake of Antioch. But the apocalyptic clouds had a silver lining. Luckily, the prefabricated dig house panels had been waiting in a warehouse in Ankara until a location for our excavation compound had been established. The floods (fig. 11) caused unforeseen scheduling delays and various



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heroic efforts to finish projects before excavations began were recounted by team members. To meet a critical deadline, Arslanoğlu and Temiz rowed a canoe out to the island(!) of Atchana in order to complete the architectural drawings of Woolley's dig house, slated for a permit for restoration as a historical heritage site. Fortunately, for the two women, the Black Sea folk living in the village of Tayfur Sökmen knew all about boats and where to find them, and came to their rescue by providing a canoe from the Mediterranean coastal city of Iskenderun.

Concerned by our dig house predicament, the regional governor (*kaymakam*) of the Reyhanlı area finally found us a plot of land, located three kilometers to the east of Atchana and far from the threat of floodwaters to rent. Accordingly, the expedition compound will be a beacon of three, brightly-colored buildings in burgundy and yellow set in a background of green cotton fields. Two additional rented houses provide storage for the collections from the expeditions of Atchana, Ta'yinat, Kurdu, and the AVRP survey, thus making them accessible for research during study seasons. Our neighborhood of archaeologists is now situated on the eastern edge of Tayfur Sökmen village, so-named after the first and only president of the Republic of the Hatay in 1938. A townhouse located in downtown Antakya across the street from the museum will also serve as a visitors' center and city headquarters.



*Figure 8. Diorite bust, perhaps of King Yarim Lim. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by K. A. Yener*

### Operation 4: AVRP Surveys and Excavations at Other Amuq Sites

Recent surveys at Tell Ta'yinat were directed by Tim Harrison from the University of Toronto. A parallel inventory program proceeded to document artifacts excavated from the previous Oriental Institute excavations at the site. This massive Iron Age capital, perhaps Kunulua, located 700 meters away from Atchana, is slated for excavations in 2004.

Similarly, a study season was scheduled for Tell Kurdu, to be led by its new field directors, Fokke Gerritsen, former NELC Masters Degree student, and Rana Özbal, of Northwestern University. Teams working on this important Halaf and Ubaid period Chalcolithic site (ca. 5700-4300 B.C.) continued processing finds from previous excavation seasons and will resume excavations in the near future.

Every effort is being made to share resources and dovetail schedules in AVRP's busiest excavation seasons. To that end, excavations at Tells Atchana and Ta'yinat will be staggered so that only one site will be excavated per year, while the other will process finds. Given the differences in university academic systems, the Ta'yinat team will usually be in the field during the summer months and Atchana teams will excavate during the fall months. By so doing, visitors to the Amuq will find an excavation in progress every year.



*Figure 9. Lion sculptures from temple entrance. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by K. A. Yener*

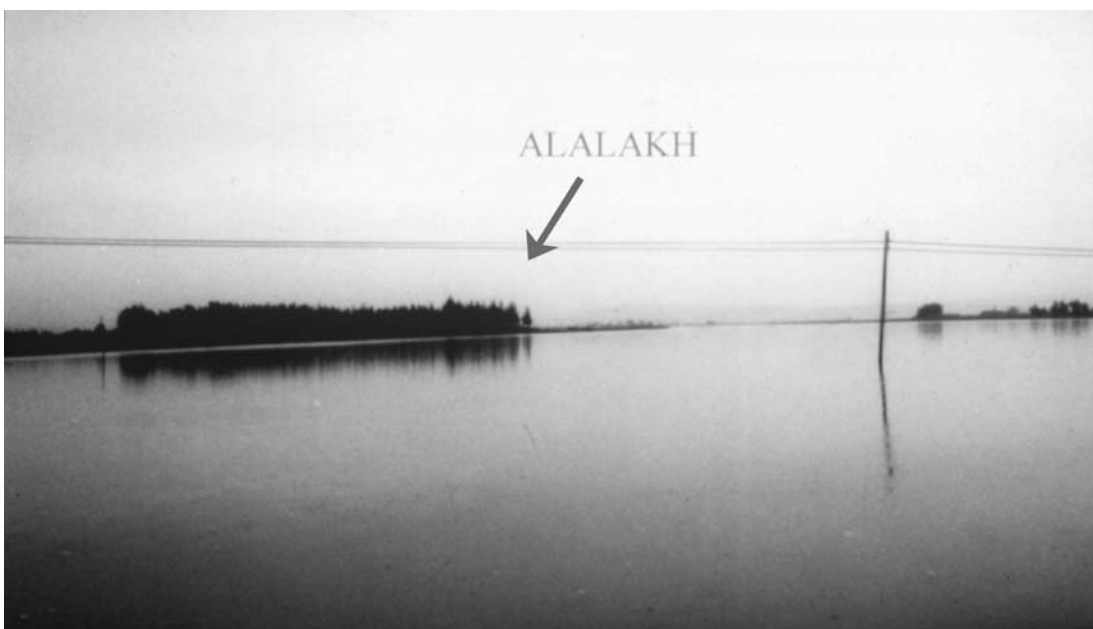
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**Figure 10. Cuneiform tablet. Tell Atchana, Hatay Archaeological Museum Depot. Photograph by C. Klinger**

In conclusion, the AVRVP program is poised for the simultaneous excavation of three major sites, building on its origin as a regional survey in 1995. Attention has now turned to the full-scale investigations at Tell Atchana, Tell Ta'yinat, and Tell Kurdu. Not to be outdone, the regional survey will redirect attention to the mountain resource areas and the highlands. The higher elevations hold great potential for research, given the multitude of copper and gold mines, forests, rock quarries, and summer pasturage for pastoral nomads. The results of these surveys and excavations will have compelling implications for other regions. Especially important are the transitions from early state formations, as well as important shifts from the Early Bronze Age and its regional states to the empires of the second and first millennium B.C.

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**Figure 11. Floodwaters surrounding Tell Atchana, ancient Alalakh, winter 2002. Photograph by T. Arslanoğlu**

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