

EXPEDITION TO ALALAKH (TELL ATCHANA)

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Team members from the Oriental Institute as well as a combined student and specialist force from universities all over the United States, Europe, and Turkey continued work at the Late Bronze Age capital city of Mukish (the Amuq Valley), Alalakh. Excavations in 2004 concentrated on the craft quarters located in Area 2 which had initially been exposed in 2003. A total of 840 sq. m were exposed in 2003, and in 2004 another 200 sq. m were added in an attempt to get a broad horizontal exposure of Late Bronze Age neighborhoods at the site (fig. 1). Our dig headquarters, long on the drawing board, are now successfully located in the village of Tayfur Sökmen, three miles from the site.

One of the surprises during the 2003 season was a very impressive, multi-chambered kiln suggesting the use of this part of the mound as a craft sector rather than the habitation areas we had anticipated. In fact by the 2004 season, the complex, two-story kiln became a harbinger of several more pyrotechnological installations which lined the southeast slope of the mound (fig. 2). Representing a diversity of shapes, sizes, and materials, these structures all had differing “furniture,” that is, internal components perhaps indicating a variety of thermal functions. One impressive square kiln (fig. 3) had twelve hot air flues leading to the lower chamber, while others were oval and contained only one chamber.

Stratigraphically the kilns were cut into thick mudbrick walls of multi-roomed buildings dating to the Late Bronze Age, and thus clearly postdated the large mudbrick walls of our Phase 2

(fig. 4). It became obvious that at one point in the Late Bronze Age, this area was abandoned to habitation and used for the specialized production of pottery or other crafts and burials. The exact date of the earlier large mudbrick buildings has as yet not been determined since radio-carbon dates are not finished, but one working hypothesis is that the site may have been diminished in size not at the end of the Late Bronze Age as previously thought, but immediately after the take-over by the Hittites, leaving only the “Fort” or Hittite governor’s palace (Levels III–I) in the royal precinct as a garrison. Red-burnished pitchers with parallels to Woolley’s Level IV and Tell

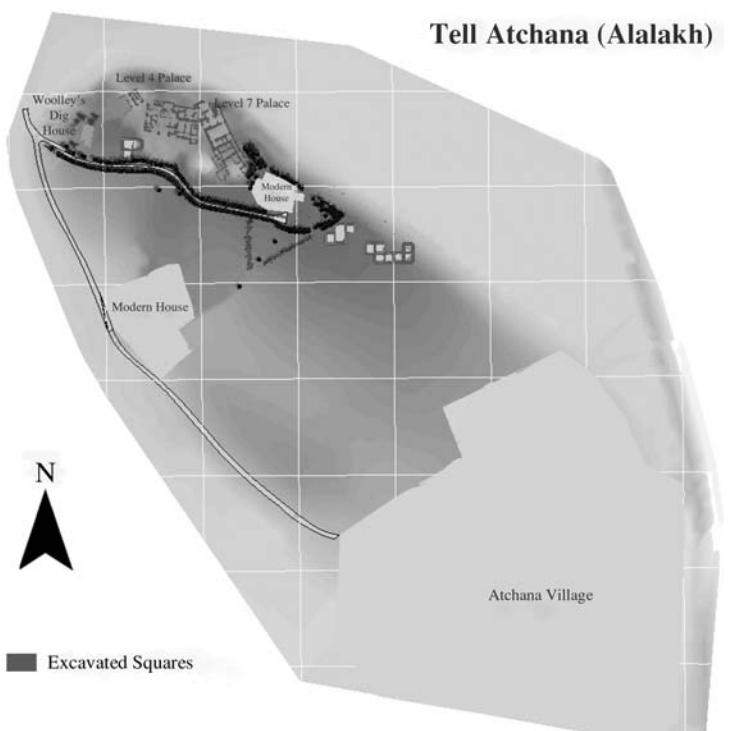


Figure 1. Tell Atchana (Alalakh) 2004 squares. Graphic by Eudora Struble

Brak Mittanian levels and “Nuzi Ware” examples tentatively suggest a fourteenth or fifteenth century B.C. date for these floors. Our Aegean specialist Robert Koehl also informs us that none of the Aegean wares post-dates Late Helladic IIIA:2.

Interestingly, excavations are rapidly changing our view of Alalakh from that of an important Late Bronze Age site within the Hittite Empire’s realm to

one of an even more important Middle Bronze Age site of considerable size and strategic placement. In the seventeenth century B.C., Alalakh was apparently a prosperous city along the Orontes River, straddling the trade routes between Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Mediterranean Sea. The artifacts found at Alalakh are examples of high culture, and as such, one might expect them to have been produced by specialists or craftpersons working to produce particular goods for restricted distribution, usually so-called high-prestige or valuable objects. Indeed, Woolley identified numerous workshops and servants’ quarters in the palace. Our previous excavations have found a workshop with a Middle Bronze Age horseshoe-shaped hearth, and the possibility of an earlier pyrotechnological installation in Area 3 — a harbinger of the later mid-second millennium craft sector of multiple installations in the 2003 and 2004 seasons. Furthermore, this year glimpses of the Middle Bronze Age city include several examples of “Syro-Cilician Ware” specifically with painted designs, basket handles, and applique decorations (figs. 5–7). Parallels of this ware range from neighboring excavations at Kinet Höyük on the Mediterranean coast to Cilicia (Tarsus) and the well-known princess tomb at Ebla, all of which demonstrate the extent of these cultural ties.

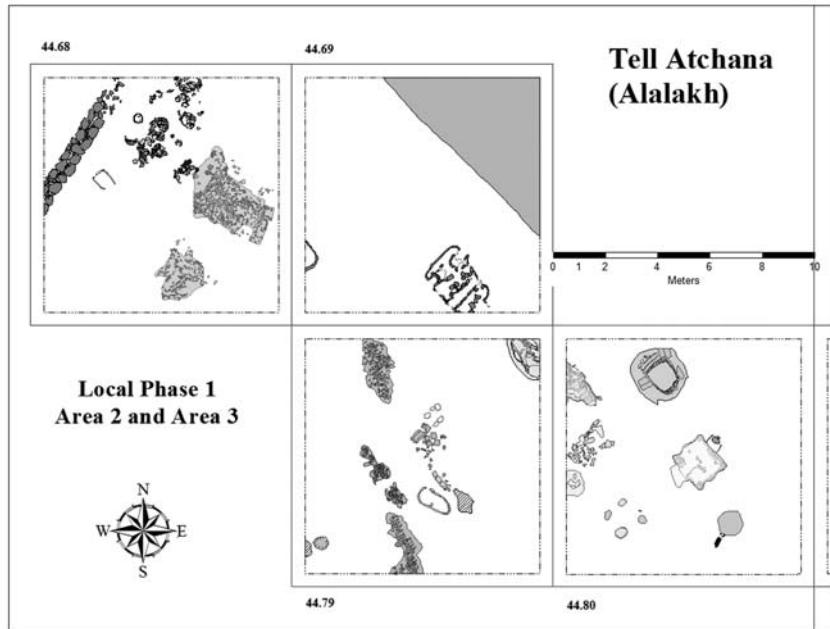


Figure 2. Squares in Area 2. Local Phase 1 installations. Graphic by Eudora Struble



Figure 3. Pyrotechnological installation in Square 44.80, Local Phase 1. Photo by Murat Akar

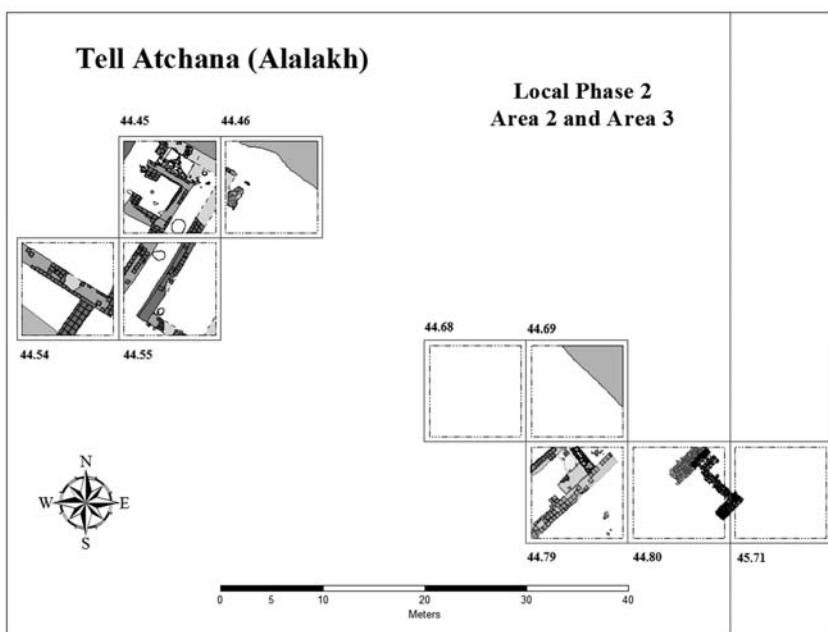


Figure 4. Squares in Areas 2 and 3. Local Phase 2 multi-roomed buildings. Graphic by Eudora Struble

We were pleased to host several groups of visitors to the excavations this year. Director Gil Stein led a large Oriental Institute Travel Program group through eastern Turkey and visited us during our season. We were also pleased to host Lawrie and Anthony Dean, the winners of the auction at the 2004 Oriental Institute Annual Gala, "Romancing the Past." Lending us a hand in laboratory post-excavation pro-

cessing, as well as participating in the excavation trenches on top of the mound (fig. 8), Lawrie and Tony helped unearth a grave of a young woman. Lying in a northeast-southwest position, an imported painted Cypriot Base Ring Ware II juglet (fig. 9) was found as a grave gift, which is slightly later than the one excavated in the plastered tomb (03-3017) with multiple interments from 2003. Now that the human remains have been given a preliminary analyses by our mortuary data team leader Alexis Boutin, we can say that the special tomb contained the skeletal remains of a 24–29 year old female, a 13–17 year old female, a 35–50 year old male, and a 15–22 year old female.

The 2004 season was a resounding success and Alalakh lived up to its reputation in terms of compelling finds. In conclusion, the Oriental Institute Expedition to Alalakh will be addressing



Figure 5. Syro-Cilician ware Middle Bronze Age. Animal-shaped applique. P04-44.80 no. 237



Figure 6. Syro-Cilician ware Middle Bronze Age. P04-44.80 no. 227



Figure 7. Basket handle, Syro-Cilician ware, Middle Bronze Age. P04-44.79 no. 13

problems that were missing in the earlier excavations there. Some of these issues have implications for other regions of the eastern Mediterranean, including the important transition from regional states to empires (such as the Hittite) and the elusive connections between central Anatolia and the Amuq Valley in the Middle Bronze Age. In summer 2005 the construction of a new laboratory building generously funded by the Deans at the Tayfur Sökmen dig house compound was completed.

Acknowledgments

The 2004 Tell Atchana/Alalakh team members consist of the following participants: K. Aslıhan Yener, director; J. David Schloen, associate director; Amir Sumaka'i-Fink, senior field supervisor; Sabrina Sholts, G. Bike Yazıcıoğlu, Virginia Rimmer (University of Chicago); James Phillips (University of Illinois at Chicago), Can Ercan, (Mustafa Kemal University, Antakya); Stine Rossel (Harvard University); Susan Helft, Alexis Boutin, (University of Pennsylvania); Murat Akar (Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara), Tuğrul Çakar; Simone Riehl, Katrin Hieke, Özgür Çizer (Tübingen University); Brenda Craddock, Franca Cole (U.K.), Ayşe Bal, Yağmur Sarıoğlu (Bilkent University, Ankara), Niels Lynnerup, Marie-Louise Jørkov (Copenhagen University), Irit Ziffer (Israel), Hanan Charaf, Robert Mullins (USA), Simone Arnhold (Marburg University), Ekin Kozal (Çanakkale University), Robert Koehl, (New York Hunter College), and a labor force of thirteen from local villages. The ministry representative from the Antalya Archaeological Museum was Akan Atilla.

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Figure 8. Tony and Lawrie Dean in front of Late Bronze Age burial, Square 44.80, Local Phase 1



Figure 9. Base Ring II juglet from the burial ca. fourteenth century B.C., Local Phase 1