

# The Amuq Region during the Iron Age I–II: Formation, Organisation and Development of a Community

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**Abstract:** The Amuq region, located at the crossroads between Cilicia, Anatolia, Syria and Mesopotamia has always played a crucial role in understanding interaction and acculturation processes between different cultural groups. The archaeological discoveries of the last twenty years in Aleppo, Tell Tayinat, and in the Amuq provided important elements on the Iron Age I, proving that at least since the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC the region was the core of an independent polity; its material culture, known from old and recent excavations at Tell Tayinat, Tell Atchana, Chatal Höyük, Sabuniye, and Tell Judeidah, shows Anatolian, Mycenaean and north-Syrian (local) features mixed and melted to shape a new horizon of material culture. This article provides a short summary on the historical evidence at our disposal and an overview on the archaeology for the Iron Age I–II in the Amuq; it focuses on the processes of formation of a community, whose material culture seems to be a balance between Late Bronze Age legacy and Iron Age innovations, and investigates the geographical spread of this material in the neighbouring regions with a special focus on the Iron Age I and II, before the Assyrian conquest of Tell Tayinat (738 BC).

**Keywords:** Amuq, Syro-Hittite, State Formation, Wa/Palastin

## Introduction

The Amuq<sup>2</sup> region has to be understood as a well-defined geographic area bordered to the west by the Amanus mountains, to the east and southeast by limestone uplands and to the south by Jebel al-Aqra; the rivers Kara-Su (channelled in modern times), Afrin and Orontes flow into the plain and connect it to the Islahiye region, the Qoueiq plain and inland western Syria (Idlib province) respectively. Thus, the area is characterised by an abundance of water, marshes in some periods, and a central lake in ancient times, which was drained in the 1960s. Moreover, the Amuq opens directly to the eastern Mediterranean following the large valley of the Orontes through the al-Mina/Sabuniye area. The Belen, Bab al-Hawa and Afrin passes connect the area to Cilicia, inland western Syria and the Qoueiq. As a result of these specific features, the Amuq is not only a very fertile and protected area but it is crucial to understanding the connections between Anatolia, northern Syria and the Levant.

Since Braidwood's survey in the 1930s, the renewed AVRPP (Amuq Valley Regional Project) and several new projects, peripheral to the Amuq area,<sup>3</sup> enlarged the number of identified sites in the valley as well as our knowledge on its geographical features and ancient landscape.<sup>4</sup> It seems generally accepted that the lake of Antioch did not exist in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age: the central area, where the lake was located after the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, was probably occupied by dense forestation and localised marshes.<sup>5</sup> According to the survey result, not only did all sites (ex-

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<sup>2</sup> The ʿayn letter in ʿAmuq and in Taʿyinat is here omitted in compliance with the recent spelling in use in archaeological publications from the area.

<sup>3</sup> Matthers 1981; Wilkinson et al. 2007. Cf. also Casana 2017 for a general overview.

<sup>4</sup> Braidwood 1937; Yener et al. 2000; Casana 2003; Casana – Wilkinson 2005; Batiuk 2007; Casana 2007; Gerritsen et al. 2008; Akar – Bulu 2018; Avşar et al. 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Yener et al. 2000; Casana – Wilkinson 2005, 33; Casana 2009; Casana 2017, 175–176; Osborne 2013, fig. 2 reconstructs a large marshy area in the northwestern part of the Amuq Valley during the IA II.

cept for two) with evidence of Late Bronze Age settlement activity, also have an Iron Age occupation, but the number of settlements increased greatly from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

Extensive archaeological research focused on the Iron Age period in the Amuq, mainly at Tell Tayinat, Chatal Höyük and Tell Judeidah, during the first investigations in the area in the 1930s. Furthermore, Braidwood's survey (1937–1938) as well as Woolley's excavations at Tell Atchana (1937–1949) and Al-Mina, contributed crucial data to the scholarly interest on these phases at that time: in fact, archaeological research, started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD in the area of northern Syria and southeastern Turkey, had at that time brought to light monumental evidence of Iron Age occupations, providing scholars with a large quantity of data from these periods and new knowledge on the political assets in the period between the collapse of the Late Bronze Age empires and the territorial spread of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.<sup>6</sup> In the last 20 years, a reappraisal of excavations, mainly at Aleppo (since 1995) and Tell Tayinat (since 1999) together with sporadic findings in the Hatay province (for instance the two Arsuz stele) and recent excavations on Iron Age Tell Atchana (2012–2015), shed new light on this specific region and opened up new research questions. Currently, three excavated sites (Tell Tayinat, Chatal Höyük and Tell Atchana) in the Amuq offer a clear Iron Age occupation. However, while Iron Age settlement activity at Tell Tayinat and Chatal Höyük can be described as intense, it appears to have been rather sparse at Tell Atchana.<sup>7</sup> Aleppo, as well as Iron Age levels identified in excavations in Cilicia (Kinet Höyük, Tarsus-Gözlükule and Sirkeli Höyük) and in the Gaziantep region (Carchemish, Zincirli and Oylum Höyük), although located outside the Amuq plain, are crucial in understanding the Iron Age in the Amuq.

### **Some Notes on Historical and Archaeological Chronology for the Iron Age in the Amuq**

The general division into Late Bronze II or Iron Age I–III is mainly based on archaeological evidence.<sup>8</sup> However, in specific regions it combines certain shifts in the material culture with historical circumstances, ascribing to an historical or political event the motif of a change in the material culture; for example, the passage from Iron Age II to III is related to the appearance of Assyrian pottery material and consequently to the Assyrian conquest of the northern Levant. The Iron Age periodisation for the northern Levant<sup>9</sup> with a division into Iron Age I–III phases has been preferred in this paper when dealing with both historical and archaeological sources for the Amuq region for two reasons: first, there is a general agreement on the major differences between the three Iron Age phases; second, the material culture of the Amuq, but also of Cilicia and neighbouring regions, is strongly related to northern Syria rather than to Anatolia.

The historical chronology for the periods during which the region was under foreign control (the Hittite Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the 8<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) follows the relationship between the texts found and their connection to the royal sequences. The historical sequence of the 12<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, however, is strongly related to the recent epigraphic discoveries in the area and to the ongoing process of establishing

<sup>6</sup> When the first investigations in the Amuq started, the following excavation projects had already published their first results on the Iron Age: Zincirli (started in 1888): v. Luschan 1893; v. Luschan 1902; v. Luschan – Jacoby 1911; Carchemish (started 1878 and reopened in 1911): Garstang 1908; Garstang 1913; Woolley – Lawrence 1914; Woolley – Lawrence 1921; Sakçagözü (started in 1908), Tell Ahmar (started in 1927): Thureau-Dangin 1929.

<sup>7</sup> Tell Tayinat Iron Age periods are well known (Haines 1971; Welton, et al. 2019; Harrison 2016) Chatal Höyük Iron Age levels have been reanalysed in a long project (2007 to 2013) focused on the archaeological materials and excavation documentation from the American excavations at Chatal Höyük (Pucci 2019a). Furthermore, Iron Age levels have recently been identified at Tell Atchana (Montesanto and Pucci in print; Yener 2013c).

<sup>8</sup> Mazzoni 2014a.

<sup>9</sup> Minor differences are visible in dating the Iron Age I–II transition, cf. Mazzoni 2000a; Lehmann 2008; Mazzoni 2014b.

	Braidwood 1938	Swift 1958
M	1600–1200 BC The assemblages from this phase include a few Cypriote imports like milk bowls, spindle bottles, Nuzi ware. Large amounts of combed pottery, few painted monochrome vessels and grey wares characterise the body of the pottery from this phase, the majority of which is made of simple wares.	1550–1400 BC Atchana IV
N	1200–1000 BC Sub-Mycenaean or Late Helladic IV wares. No burnished wares appear	1150–950 BC No Red Slip, Cypro-Geometric I
O	1000–500 BC Red Slipped series. Bichrome painted	Oa: 950–900 BC Red Slip (RS) hand burnished. Cypro-Geometric I–II Ob: 900–800 BC RS hand and wheel burnished, Cypro-Geometric II–III Oc: 800–725 BC: RS wheel burnished increase, hand burnish diminishes, elaborate rims, Cypro-Geometric III Od: 725–550 BC. RS wheel burnished, Cypro-Geometric III, Cypro-Archaic II,

Tab. 1 The Amuq phases and the material criteria employed by Braidwood 1938 and Swift 1958

a dynastic sequence for the local dynasty on the basis of palaeography and connections to the neighbouring royal dynasties.<sup>10</sup> Since the epigraphic evidence is often found on statues, carved blocks or orthostats, art-historical criteria may contribute to the effort to establish a precise date. For this contribution, however, dating of inscriptions will be based on the results of philological and/or historical studies only.

The purely archaeological regional sequence of the Amuq relies on Braidwood's first work on this matter. He based the 'Amuq sequence' (A–O) on 'typological grounds and with respect to the inter mound fabric of stratigraphy succession (...) Those phases show ten distinct assemblages and represent the material manifestations of what must have been ten reasonably distinct and successive cultures. (...) This phase classification has been established arbitrarily, each phase including the range of strata and floors during which a particular assemblage of artefacts was characteristic'.<sup>11</sup> With these words Braidwood introduced the publication of small finds and pottery from the earliest ten Amuq phases (A–J), which also featured a reassessment of the Amuq sequence, moving from a stratigraphy based on Judeidah's periods to a more general regional sequence. Further on, Braidwood states that 'the impression is of development and flow of artifactual materials along with the appearance of new traits and not a succession of completely new assemblages'. He thus implied that even though the cultural materials from each phase differ from one phase to the next, this does not necessarily indicate a separate assemblage nor does it imply a succession of distinctive 'cultures', nor is it related to ethnic or political issues. The authors do not describe the phases later than J (the end of which was dated to 2000 BC) in that publication, nor do they take into consideration any of the materials from the later periods, although the phases K to T were already defined and their features had been sketched provisionally in tables in previous articles.<sup>12</sup> In his dissertation, Swift chose the pottery from the later phases as the main subject for his analysis: in this work, the phase is an artificial construct, which includes artefacts characterised by specific unique features defining it. In theory these features are related both to small finds and to pottery; in practice, however, the criteria defining the phases follow major differences in

<sup>10</sup> Cf. for palaeography, Hawkins 2000, 6–16; d'Alfonso – Payne 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Braidwood – Braidwood 1960, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Braidwood et al. 1944; Swift 1958.

the pottery assemblages.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Swift refined Braidwood's phase table (Table 1) and added some criteria to the phase differentiation. Braidwood's criteria and some of Swift's have been tested and employed in the recent reanalysis of the pottery from Chatal Höyük and the Amuq terminology has been used in the publication of the stratigraphy of the site for the levels from Late Bronze Age II to Iron Age III.

According to the Amuq sequence, phases M to O identify the period from the Late Bronze Age II to Iron Age III, and generally speaking, the equivalence phase M = Late Bronze Age, phase N = Iron Age I and phase O = Iron Age II–III can be generally accepted. However, at Chatal Höyük, the rich and detailed stratigraphy as well as the possibility of correlating assemblages from different areas allowed a further subdivision into three sub-phases for each Amuq period. For this reason, termini such as N\_beginning/ N\_middle or N\_late apply only to the stratigraphy of Chatal Höyük, as transferring them to the entire Amuq sequence would require a detailed study of all sites in the region, which is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>14</sup>

### The Late Bronze Age II Premises

The beginning of the Iron Age in the eastern Mediterranean coincides with the change of the political setting, i.e. the disappearance of the Hittite Empire and the abandonment of its capital, the destruction of several settlements along the Levantine coast, the foundations of new towns and the evident urbanistic change in those settlements, where a continuity from the Bronze to the Iron Age is attested. The traditional interpretation as a 'dark age' of the period immediately following the collapse of the Late Bronze Age towns and before the Assyrian conquest has long been abandoned. Continuity between the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age material cultures is now generally accepted. Historical sources are nowadays more numerous as well as their archaeological contexts, thus increasing our knowledge on the beginning of the Iron Age significantly. Because the Iron Age in the Amuq is strongly rooted in the Late Bronze Age II events, it is necessary to briefly present the Late Bronze Age premises, especially from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BC on.<sup>15</sup>

The Amuq region was part of Mukiš (Fig. 1), a territorial entity known since the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC.<sup>16</sup> It was conquered by Šuppiluliuma I together with Carchemish and Ḫalpa (Aleppo) in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>17</sup> Mukiš was definitely subject to the Hittite Empire in the 1330s BC directly after its 'revolt' against Ugarit together with Niḫa and Nuḫḫašše. It is unclear whether a new ruler was installed in Alalaḫ (Tell Atchana) immediately after its conquest, but archaeological artefacts (a carved reused orthostat and a bulla) found at Tell Atchana witness the existence of a Prince Tudḫaliya,<sup>18</sup> who was contemporary with Mursili II and could eventually be identified with a Hittite ruler sent directly from Ḫattuša.<sup>19</sup> The land of Mukiš was under the control of Carchemish, seat of a Hittite viceroy, and its southwestern territory was probably reduced in favour of Ugarit after the Hittite annexation;<sup>20</sup> however, Hittite letters found at Tell Afis indicate that Alalaḫ continued to administer the region directly.<sup>21</sup> During the Late Bronze Age II, the land

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Braidwood 1937, tab. 1. In this overview, Braidwood already presented a sketch of the pottery and small find which were considered typical for 'cultural periods' VI, V and IV, which correspond to Amuq phases M, N and O.

<sup>14</sup> An ongoing project will try to establish connections for phases M and N to the Atchana sequence.

<sup>15</sup> Hawkins 2000; Lipiński 2000, 31–35; Hawkins 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Klengel 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Bryce 2005, 167.

<sup>18</sup> Niedorf 2002; Yener et al. 2014.

<sup>19</sup> von Dassow 2008, 31–32; Singer 2017. I thank Eva von Dassow for her suggestions concerning the history of Tell Atchana in the 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century BC. Niedorf 2002 suggests that Prince Tudḫaliya was related to the Hittite royal family.

<sup>20</sup> von Dassow 2008, 31–32; Singer 2017.

<sup>21</sup> *Archi* – Venturi 2012; *Archi* 2016. For the landscape of Late Bronze Age Mukiš cf. Casana 2009.

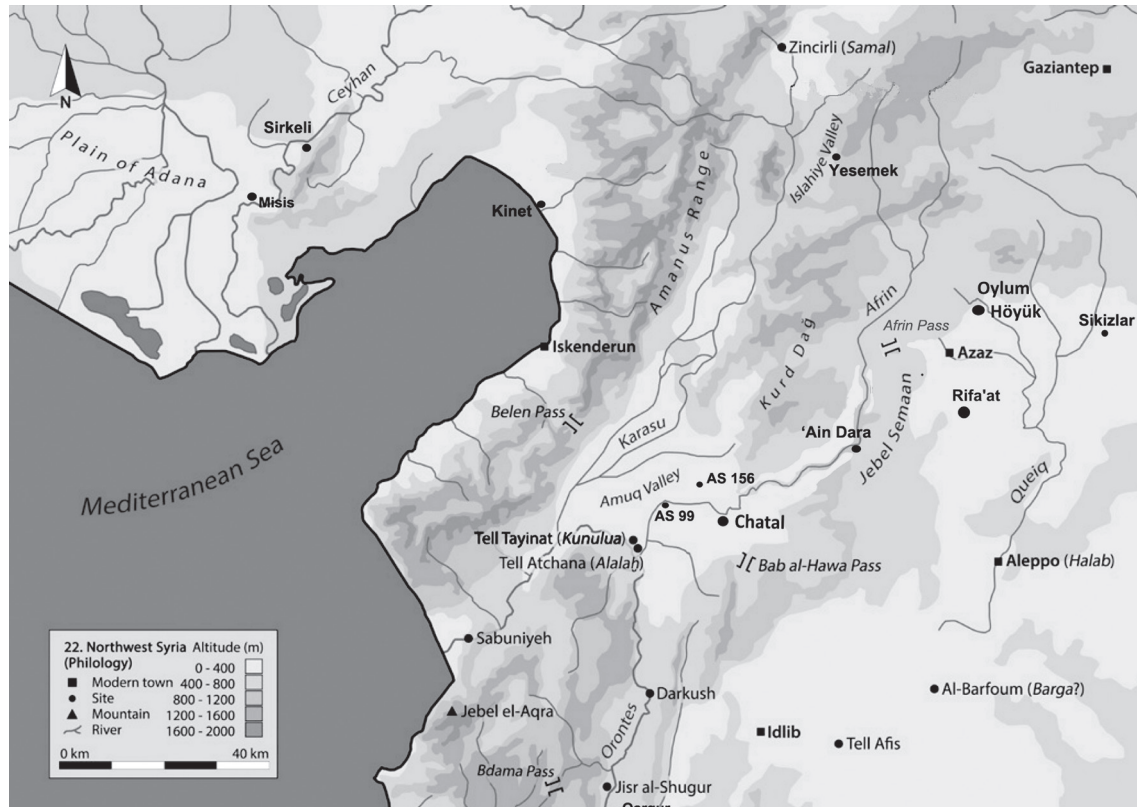


Fig. 1 Map of the Amuq and surrounding areas with sites mentioned in the text (after Weeden – Ullmann 2017, fig. 22.2, modified by M. Pucci)

of Mukiš probably still covered a large area reaching inland western Syria and the area of Hama. It seems to have also surrounded the small territory of Ḫalpa, which was probably a ‘Vatican-like state’, with a religious function. There, the dedicatory inscription of Talmi Šarruma, grandson of Šuppiluliuma I, quoted in the well-known Aleppo treaty (CTH 75) and contemporary to Mursili II and Muwatalli, was found reused in a later structure on the acropolis.<sup>22</sup> The latest epigraphic Late Bronze Age information at our disposal from the Amuq is an oracle text from Tell Atchana (AT 454) dated to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>23</sup> In general, the final stages of Late Bronze Age II are difficult to grasp in the Amuq, as there are only a few written sources and archaeological evidence from this period is difficult to identify as well.<sup>24</sup>

At the site of Tell Atchana, archaeological evidence suggests a strong reduction in the size of the settlement on the acropolis, a process which had probably already started at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>25</sup> For the archaeological evidence of the Late Bronze Age II at Tell Atchana, it is possible to state with certainty that the temple on the acropolis and the open areas around it remained in use during the entire 13<sup>th</sup> century BC as well as in the early stages of the Iron Age.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> De Vecchi 2010 and references for CTH 75; for ALEPPO 1 see Meriggi 1975, 330 n. 306; Hawkins 2000, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Singer 2017, n. 6 with references.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Casana 2017 with references for an overview on the different hypothesis concerning the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC at Tell Atchana. It should, however, be mentioned that it is archaeologically extremely difficult to identify specifically the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC as the material culture from the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC is conservative.

<sup>25</sup> von Dassow 2005; Fink 2010; Akar 2013; Yener 2013b.

<sup>26</sup> Yener 2013c; Yener – Akar 2013; Singer 2017; Montesanto – Pucci in press.



At Chatal Höyük, levels dating to the Late Bronze Age II have been identified in two soundings in II and IVa. If the archaeological evidence of Area IVa is too limited to determine the nature of the Late Bronze Age occupation, the architectural structures brought to light in Area II clearly witness a situation similar to Tell Atchana. The archaeological evidence in this area indicates that in phase M<sub>middle</sub> (end of 14<sup>th</sup>, first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC), larger ‘urban’ structures with storerooms were replaced by more ‘rural’ buildings with large open areas and mudbrick silos to store the grain near the houses. During the 13<sup>th</sup> until the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, this area seems to have been used continuously, as suggested by the repeated renewal of the pebble floors and building of further silos. This disruption in the sequence and apparent change in use of the mound may reflect a decrease in the population on the one hand, and a political instability which obliged the population to keep grain on the mound on the other. This apparent process of impoverishment seems to be confirmed by a consistent drop in imports during M<sub>Late</sub> and the absence of what can be considered local handcraft products, i.e. a centralised production, during the same sub-phase.

If we compare this evidence for the Amuq with the sequences observed at neighbouring sites in northern Levant, we can observe that modest architectural remains, which show a quick reoccupation of the site with a few small rooms, hearths and silos were also found in the most ancient Iron Age settlements at Ras el Bassit and Ras ibn Hani<sup>27</sup> as well as at Tell Afis, where the level Vb (pillared building) was replaced by an open area with silos (Area E phase Va) and later (phase IVc) by scattered structures.<sup>28</sup> Similar phenomena were observed at Tell Kazel,<sup>29</sup> Tarsus (period LB IIb).<sup>30</sup> At Kinet Höyük large pits and scattered domestic units replaced an area of densely built space at the end of the Late Bronze Age period (14–13.1).<sup>31</sup> At Tell Kazel, Area II shows a squatter phase (6 final) at the end of the Late Bronze Age, while the temple area (IV) shows a continuity in function and use (the temple was rebuilt) until the end of the Iron Age I.<sup>32</sup> Thus, a ‘disruption’ identifies the passage from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age at these sites, mirroring a change in the urban occupation parallel to the change in material culture.

By contrast, the sequence at Chatal Höyük, which seems to be in accordance with the archaeological evidence at Tell Atchana, shows a disruption not at the end of phase M, but rather during phase M<sub>Mid</sub>, which was followed by a period of ruralisation of the urban area during phase M<sub>Late</sub>, i.e. during the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. This implies that the change from phase M to N, and consequently the change of the material culture, corresponds neither to a change in the urban organisation nor to a period of destruction or abandonment. It is rather inserted in the continuity of the reoccupation of the area: this change in the material culture is dated to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century BC, while the disruption, i.e. the event which caused a rearrangement at least of Area II at Chatal Höyük, probably took place in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century BC. Therefore, the settlement had already been reorganised and the urban space rearranged many decades before the beginning of phase N and the changes in material culture that came with it.

It therefore seems possible to suggest that the Amuq started a process of de-urbanisation already during the latest stages of the Late Bronze Age; the same phenomenon could also be identified in the Late Bronze Age evidence at Oylum Höyük, located in the northern Qoueiq: a few stone walls and silos dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age occupation were succeeded by an early 12<sup>th</sup>-century BC level characterised by scattered occupation.<sup>33</sup> The material culture from Tell Atchana and from Chatal Höyük shows strong connections to local traditions and at Chatal Höyük

<sup>27</sup> Du Piêd 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Venturi 2008, figs 32–33.

<sup>29</sup> Badre et al. 1994; Badre 2006, 82–90.

<sup>30</sup> Goldman 1956; Mommsen et al. 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Gates 2013; Özyar et al. 2014.

<sup>32</sup> A similar phenomenon also occurs at Tell Atchana, where the temple area apparently continued well after the destruction of the site. See references fn. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Özgen – Helwing 2001, 96–97; Özgen et al. 2010; Ünal 2015.

Ruler, Tell Tayinat (Dincol et al. 2015)	Approx. Date BC	Inscription	Ruler Assyrian text (Bryce 2012)
Taita I	11 <sup>th</sup> century	Aleppo 6 + 7	
Taita II (Toi?)	1000–950	Meharde and Shehizar	
Suppiluliuma I	950–900	Arsuz 1 and 2	
Halparuntiya	900–850	Tayinat 1	Lubarna I (870) Qalparunda (858–857)
Suppiluliuma II (Sapalulme?)	850–800	Tayinat 4	Sapalulme (858) Lubarna II (–831)
			Sasi (831)
			Tutammu (735)

Tab. 2 The royal dynastic sequence of Wa/Palastin

it can be observed that the slow process of ruralisation coincided with the complete disappearance of imported pottery. The Hittite impact on the ceramic inventory of this period should not be discussed here, however, as it would deviate from the scope of the paper. It is sufficient to state that the Hittite conquest did not correspond with an evident change in the ceramic repertoire at Tell Atchana or Chatal Höyük. At Tell Atchana, the arrival of north central Anatolian shapes seems to be limited to specific contexts related to the acropolis, such as the residence of the ‘prince’ or the paraphernalia related to the temple. Furthermore, the seven Hittite tablets that were recovered during Woolley’s excavations at Tell Atchana need to be taken into consideration as well. The language employed in them shows no traces of local influence, thus implying the existence of a centralised administration in these peripheral regions too.<sup>34</sup> The same phenomenon can be observed at Oylum Höyük and Tell Afis.<sup>35</sup> However, the monumental representation of power in the Amuq is limited to two monuments (the relief of Prince Tudḫaliya at Tell Atchana and ALEPPO 1 at Aleppo): these feature both Hittite monumental writing (i.e. Luwian hieroglyphs) and Hittite iconography (i.e. the representation of Prince Tudḫaliya).

### Iron Age I: State Formation Process and Organisation of a New Community

After the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, the epigraphic sources in the Amuq apparently disappear until the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC: from this period onwards a dynastic sequence of a regional political entity called Wa/Palastin has been established thanks to the discoveries at Tell Tayinat, Arsuz, and Aleppo.<sup>36</sup> Although it may require further adjustment in the near future, a sequence of five rulers has been established (Tab. 2). It begins in the 11<sup>th</sup> century with Taita I, who reigned over a new regional political entity and declared himself king of Wa/Palastin with a royal seat in Kunulua (identified with the modern site of Tell Tayinat). Further epigraphic, although not stratified, data provide scattered information on the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC (Tab. 2). Nevertheless, these findings suggest the continuity of a regional political entity in the Amuq under the rule of a local dynasty until at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.

As Osborne correctly pointed out,<sup>37</sup> looking for fixed borders for Wa/Palastin or later Patina, may represent a ‘territorial trap’. However, according to the location of the inscriptions (cf. Tab. 2) as well as their content, the area under the sovereignty of this political entity appears to have covered

<sup>34</sup> Niedorf 2002; von Dassow 2008; Archi 2016; Prechel 2016.

<sup>35</sup> For Oylum Höyük: Ünal 2015; for Tell Afis: Archi – Venturi 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Dinçol et al. 2015 proposed a royal sequence, which is employed here and it is based on the recent publications on this subject. Weeden 2013; Weeden 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Dodd et al. 2011; Dodd 2012; Osborne 2013.

not only the Amuq: it probably reached as far as Aleppo to the east (since the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC) and Hama to the south (since the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC). The extremely scarce number of Iron Age I sites in the Kara-Su valley points towards a process of depopulation in the northern fringes of the Amuq plain; thus, if the Amanus provided a natural frontier with Cilicia, possibly other environmental or natural factors prevented the territorial expansion northwards, as Osborne suggests for the Iron Age II.<sup>38</sup> The other two valleys, the Orontes to the south and the Afrin to the northeast were definitely in use during Iron Age I and II. It should be noted here that Chatal Höyük is located at the beginning of a route connecting the Amuq plain with Aleppo via Tell Gindaris and ‘Ayn Dara to Afrin and through the Afrin pass to the northern Qoueiq and Tell Rifa’at (cf. Fig. 1).

From an archaeological point of view, the evidence dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is limited to very few sites in the valley. At Tell Atchana only the temple structure and the surrounding area remained in use until the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. However, the most recent discoveries suggest that the rest of the acropolis was no longer densely occupied and certainly did not fulfil any administrative role at that time. The site was finally abandoned in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>39</sup>

Tell Tayinat, which was not occupied during the Late Bronze Age, shows a first occupation limited to pits and open areas (Field 1, FP6), approximately dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. Regarding material and archaeological context, it is identical to phase N<sub>1</sub> beginning at Chatal Höyük Area II, or to phase 3 in 42.10 at Tell Atchana,<sup>40</sup> showing that during the 12<sup>th</sup> century both capitals and villages suffered the same fate. As mentioned above, following the phase of progressive decay observed at Chatal Höyük and Tell Atchana in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC shows a gradual densification of the settlement. In this period Tell Tayinat and Chatal Höyük enter a new phase of rebuilding and refoundation activity. The Iron Age I sequence identified on the acropolis at Tell Tayinat suffered damage from later constructions and the reorganisation of the monumental quarter. Several monumental statues and sculptures, such as the statue of Šuppiluliuma, the carved seated lion, and very recently the sphynx proteome, were found in pits underneath the temples area (buildings II and XVI, field phase 6): these statues were probably part of earlier buildings, which were dismantled for the later construction of the temples quarter, activity which is dated after the Neo-Assyrian conquest of the town (738 BC).<sup>41</sup> The construction of the two temples and the destruction of several monuments may be responsible for the poor preservation of Iron Age I archaeological evidence, i.e. the first stages of the occupation of the settlement, which seems to be limited to a series of scattered structures, pits and small buildings (field phases 6–3). For this reason the excavation has not provided any structure in this area which could qualify as the seat of royal power for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Apart from this, the metal production area identified in Field 4 on the western slope of the acropolis, also dated to the early stages of Iron Age I, is noteworthy, as it attests the extent and articulation of the settlement at that time.<sup>42</sup> The large structures XIII and XIV, brought to light in the 1930s, and the first phase of building I could probably be ascribed to the later phase of Iron Age I.<sup>43</sup> However, future archaeological investigations will surely clarify the whole sequence on the acropolis.

Building activity by the first rulers of Kunulua is reported in Aleppo: large carved blocks depict the king of Kunulua in front of the Storm God and witness the building activity of the king outside his capital already during the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. The blocks were probably part of an 11<sup>th</sup>-century BC sacred building which underwent significant rearrangement in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Osborne 2013, 780 suggests the existence of a large marshy area, which separated the lower, densely occupied area of the valley from the Kara-Su valley, preventing access to the valley itself.

<sup>39</sup> Montesanto – Pucci in press.

<sup>40</sup> Harrison 2013; Harrison 2014; Welton et al. 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Harrison 2014; Harrison 2016. For the dating of building II cf. Pucci 2008; Harrison – Osborne 2012; Harrison 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Harrison – Osborne 2012; Harrison 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Pucci 2008, 129–136.

<sup>44</sup> Kohlmeyer 2013.



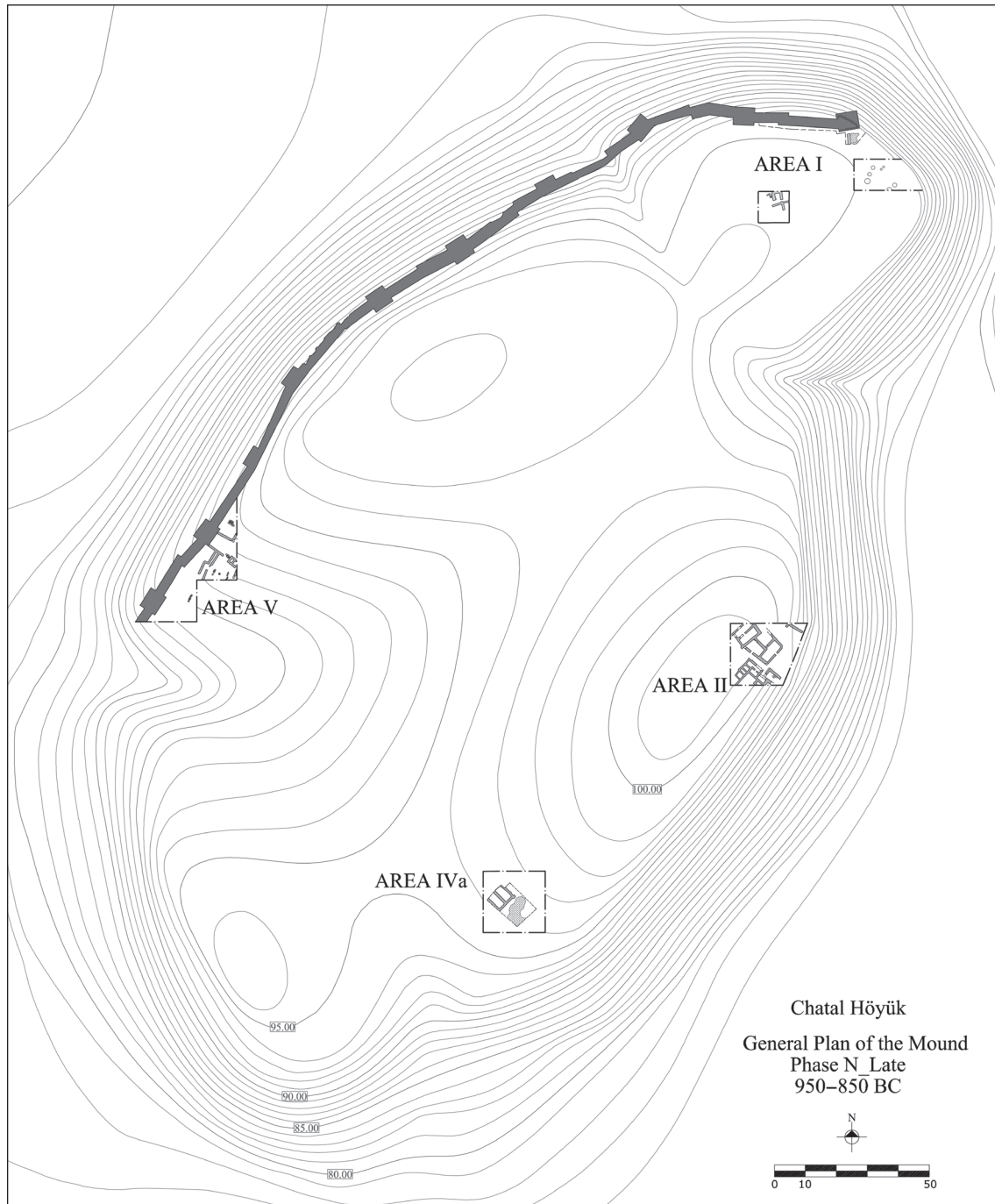


Fig. 2 Chatal Höyük during phase N (graphics: M. Pucci)

By contrast, the dwelling area at Chatal Höyük (Fig. 2) clearly shows a process of densification over the whole of phase N. At this time, the site was fortified with a towered mound wall, which was excavated on the northwestern part of the mound. Although the absence of this fortification during the preceding period M is not certain, it is evident that it was in use during phase N, as several internal structures were built against it. The entrance to the acropolis was probably located in the southwestern part. The whole extent of the acropolis was occupied by buildings (at least in phase N\_Late) although not in a very narrow texture, as indicated by the open areas of Areas V and IV. At the end of phase N, which at Chatal Höyük is dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BC, grain was no longer stored on the acropolis. Furthermore, it can be observed that from this

period on, there were no more burials *intra muros*. The material culture reflects local spinning activities, the manufacture of metal objects, and a non-centralised ceramic production. Moreover, the built space of the mound is not hierarchically organised in terms of either its architecture or the distribution of the artefacts in any of the sub-phases of period N. Thus, during this period, Chatal Höyük again became a densely inhabited fortified settlement with a local pottery production. However, it needs to be emphasised that the latter appears to have been heterogenic. It shows on the one hand a very strong eclecticism, as if it were produced on a household basis, while, on the other hand, it reflects a very strong ‘influence’ of or need to imitate Mycenaean pottery, which creates the impression that this specific marker represented a social status or community identity. The settlement, which probably administrated the surrounding cultivated land, grew and flourished. Its layout is characterised by sparse constructions. However, the internal organisation of the structures does not mirror any hierarchy in the neighbourhoods, possibly indicating that Chatal Höyük was under the control of a larger political entity during Period N.

The Iron Age I material culture at Tell Tayinat, Chatal Höyük and Tell Atchana shows several specific features: the appearance of unbaked cylindrical loom weights/bobbins,<sup>45</sup> and locally produced painted pottery in the LHIIIc style<sup>46</sup> as well as the use of a writing system and an iconographic language that are rooted in Hittite traditions.<sup>47</sup>

Outside the Amuq the situation varies. Strong continuity with Anatolian tradition is attested in the states northeast of the Amuq: King Kuzi Teššub (a descendant of the Hittite royal family) ruled over both Karkamiš and Malatya. This could suggest that the whole area between these two sites was controlled by this dynasty. Furthermore, archaeological evidence at both sites shows a strong continuity from the Late Bronze Age Hittite tradition both in iconography and pottery production; however, the ephemeral nature of the archaeological deposits from this period prevent scholars from assessing the size, nature or urban plan of these settlements during these early phases of the Iron Age.<sup>48</sup> Direct contact between the Carchemish-Malatya area and the Amuq is not evident in the archaeological material.

By contrast, inland western Syria and the upper Qoueiq share more elements in common with the Amuq material culture. Archaeologists at Tell Afis brought to light an Iron Age I sequence, which again reflects a disruption at the beginning of the Iron Age and a slight change in the material culture similar to the one observed in the Amuq.<sup>49</sup> The same situation, at least concerning the ceramic production, appears at Tell Qarqur, Tell Sukas and Hama: the Iron Age I assemblages from these sites show features with strong similarities to the Amuq region.<sup>50</sup> The same seems to be true for the upper Qoueiq especially for Tell Rifa’at, and Oylum Höyük, but it needs to be kept in mind that the amount of published material from the latter site, where excavations started only recently, is still quite limited.

It is not our intention to equate a political entity like Wa/Palastin with a specific material culture, or to investigate the relationship between the distribution of a specific pottery type and the possible migration of populations from the Mediterranean area.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, possible to emphasise two phenomena which may refer to two different spheres of communication: 1. the language of power

<sup>45</sup> In the Amuq, this phenomenon is attested only at Tell Tayinat (cf. Harrison 2013, 70–71). However, it is well known at other sites such as Tell Afis (cf. Cecchini 2000; Cecchini 2011) and in the eastern Mediterranean (cf. Rahmstorf 2011, fig. 7).

<sup>46</sup> For its appearance at Chatal Höyük, cf. Pucci 2013; Pucci 2019a; Pucci 2019b; at Tell Tayinat cf. Janeway 2017; at Tell Atchana cf. Koehl 2017.

<sup>47</sup> On this matter cf. in general Mazzoni 2000b; Mazzoni 2013. On the Aleppo iconography and inscriptions cf. Hawkins 2009; Kohlmeyer 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Hawkins 1995; Hawkins 1998; Hawkins 2002; Manuelli – Mori 2016; Manuelli 2017 for Malatya; Zaina – Pizzimenti 2016 for Carchemish.

<sup>49</sup> Venturi 2007, fig 35.

<sup>50</sup> Riis 1973; Riis et al. 1996; Dornemann 2003.

<sup>51</sup> On this topic, cf. Pucci 2019b.

reformulates iconographically and linguistically a Hittite tradition and, by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, is employed in several regional capitals, such as Carchemish, Zincirli, and Tell Halaf; 2. the material culture, especially the pottery, points towards the existence of a community reaching beyond the boundaries of Amuq to the Orontes and the Afrin valleys, which appears to have also radiated further south (Hama) and east (Aleppo). It is characterised by shared traditions and innovations, while the northern territories (Zincirli or Carchemish area) seem to have followed a different trajectory. The beginning of Iron Age I, i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC can be seen as a period during which the community residing in the Amuq underwent a transformation process: through the introduction of new elements, the domestic material culture, especially the one related to food and drink consumption, underwent a general restyling, while the language of power through monuments was rooted in the Hittite tradition but underwent several changes in order to gain specific regional features and fulfil the need of representing a single community.<sup>52</sup>

### Iron Age II–III: Territorial Organisation and the Assyrian Impact

Scholars suggested that the Šuppiluliuma who is mentioned and represented on the statue found at Tell Tayinat (Tayinat 4), may correspond to the Sapalulme, King of Unqi, quoted in a Neo-Assyrian text dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BC, thus providing an idea of when he ruled. Besides the problems of connecting the royal dynasty from the hieroglyphic texts with the regents mentioned in the Neo-Assyrian sources (cf. Tab. 2), it seems likely that at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC the Amuq plain was the seat of the kingdom of Unqi.<sup>53</sup> If, as seems probable, building phase II at Tell Tayinat should be dated to this period, the headquarters of the kingdom of Unqi were probably located in building 1. However, as Osborne suggested, following Liverani's proposal of territorial organisation, as well as considering the information provided by Assyrian sources, it may be assumed that a three-tiered settlement pattern existed in the area:<sup>54</sup> during Iron Age II, the range of influence among the sites in the Amuq was most probably organised around secondary towns.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it seems likely that Chatal Höyük managed several other sites in its vicinity and possibly the whole Afrin Valley up to the town of Afrin, too.

The archaeological evidence from Chatal Höyük seems to confirm this assumption. The beginning of phase O at Chatal Höyük shows a new arrangement of the urban space, as the architectural features point towards a very dense occupation in Area I and probably also in Area II (Fig. 3). The function of Area IVa differs from the latter in many respects. Firstly, during phase O\_Mid, it had been occupied by a large single building, the layout of which differed greatly from the surrounding agglutinated structures. Moreover, the distribution of imports and different classes of pottery during period O shows a remarkable trend: although the surface excavated in Area IVa is considerably smaller than that of Area I, the largest amount of imported pottery in the sub-phases O\_beg and O\_mid was found in Area IVa: thus, it points towards a social differentiation in the use of the urban space specifically during these two phases. Furthermore, it needs to be emphasised that the layout of the aforementioned large structure is reminiscent of bit Hilani architecture. This is suggested by the large entrance courtyard and the fact that the building probably appeared elevated above its surroundings, considering the size of the staircase leading up to the main entrance. It can further be observed that this monumental structure faced a courtyard surrounded by a wall and was oriented towards the position where the main entrance to the area on top of the mound may be assumed to have been. Due to its position, the building would have been visible while approaching the mound,

<sup>52</sup> Gilibert 2011; Pucci 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Bryce 2012, 130–132 with references; Harrison 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Osborne 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Osborne 2013 identified two other sites as second-level settlements probably managing other parts of the Amuq (AS 99 and AS 156; cf. fig. 1).

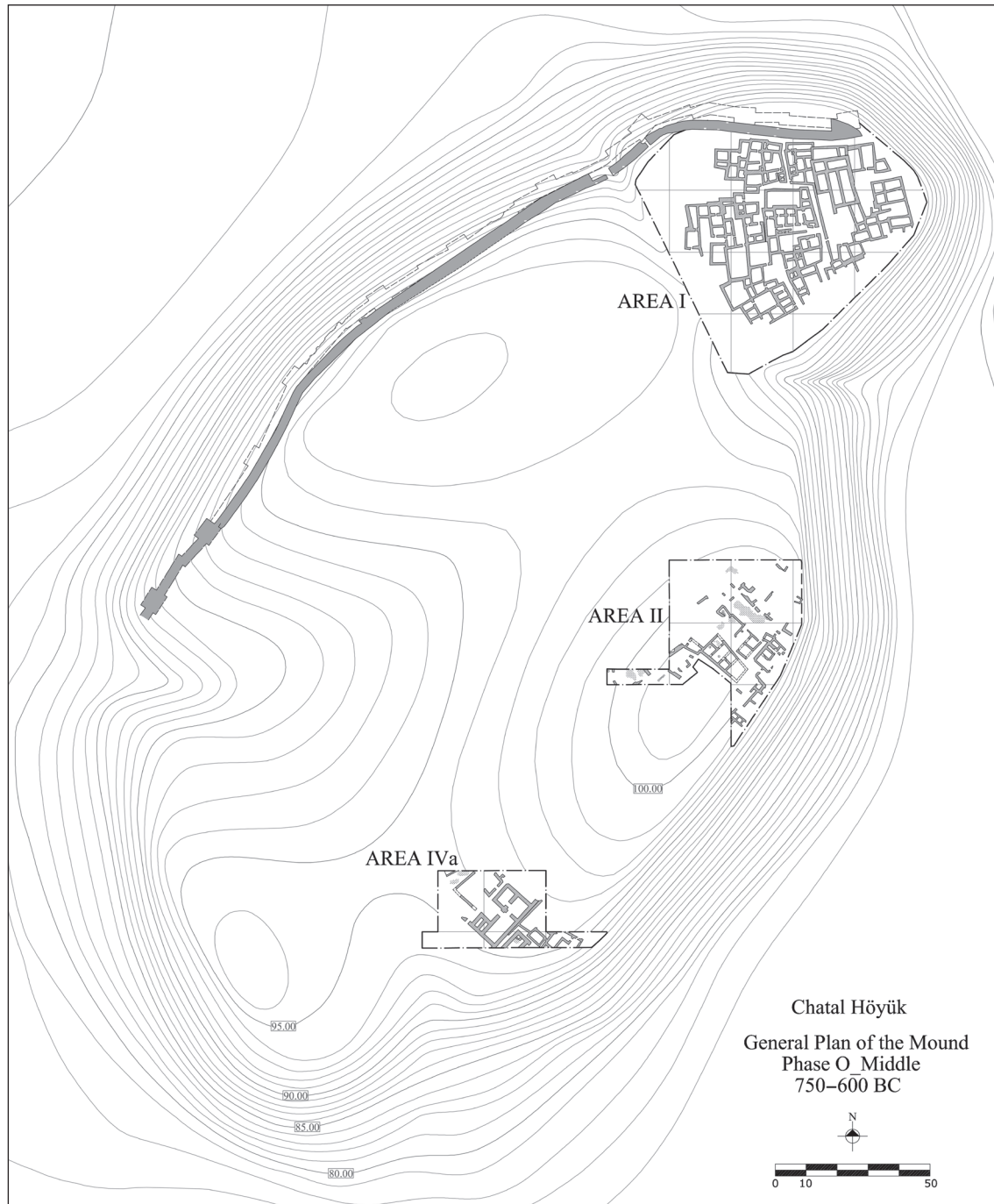


Fig. 3 Chatal Höyük during phase O (graphics: M. Pucci)

in a visual arrangement which was typical for the Syro-Hittite palaces.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it seems that the acropolis experienced an internal functional division with different types of buildings and of inventories during this period. Square S-9 provides us with further information in this regard: the cache S-9/3 includes three very fine bowls with rounded bottoms, the only libation vessel identified at the

<sup>56</sup> Pucci 2008, 170.



site, as well as a complete Kernos ring.<sup>57</sup> All these findings point towards religious/ritual activities and consequently towards the location of a cult structure in this square. Therefore, during this period, it seems as if the built space was functionally differentiated, thus implying that Chatal Höyük at this time represented a complex settlement rather than a small domestic village.

The material culture, especially the pottery identified at the sites of Tell Tayinat and Chatal Höyük is again very similar and shows the progressive diffusion of Red Slip Ware among open shapes, a phenomenon which again can be observed in the whole Levant (with regional variants).<sup>58</sup> The main change, however, seems to be related to the production process, which, at least at Chatal Höyük, became standardised, showing a shift in the economic organisation of the settlement; interestingly, the Assyrian conquest of the area is not visible in the material culture of the site, as Assyrian or Assyrian-influenced pottery is extremely scarce, at least at this site.<sup>59</sup> The settlement remained inhabited until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC without disruptions or changes in urban organisation. This situation seems to contrast with the major rearrangement that the acropolis at Tell Tayinat underwent at this time, at least in the excavated part: the material culture related to buildings II and XVI on the acropolis and the layout and internal arrangement of building IX reflect a strong Assyrian impact.<sup>60</sup> The different impact of the Assyrian conquest was probably related to the different political roles the two settlements fulfilled; however, this process will need further investigation.

### Conclusions

As future excavations at Tell Tayinat and survey activity in the Amuq will certainly enrich our knowledge on the Iron Age material culture of this region, some cautious conclusions can be drawn here.

1. On the basis of the material evidence at Chatal Höyük, Tell Atchana and Tell Tayinat, the process of reurbanisation (12<sup>th</sup> century BC) of the Amuq area started after a phase of decay and ruralisation.
2. The Iron Age I material culture shows a process of hybridisation including in the local pottery production Mycenaean components, which became part of the local repertoire and a marker for community identity.
3. According to the extent of the Iron Age I ceramic horizon, Hatay shared common features with the Aleppo area, the Qoueiq Valley, the Levantine coast up to Hama and Internal Western Syria, following the Afrin and the Orontes valleys; its connections through the Kara-Su Valley to the Islahiye and Gaziantep area are ephemeral.
4. According to the urban organisation at Chatal Höyük and Tell Tayinat, the Amuq region gained a three-tiered settlement structure only in Iron Age II, together with a general change in the local production system.

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<sup>57</sup> The other large fragment of a Kernos was found in this same square but on a higher level. Cf. Pucci 2019a, 159, 226–227.

<sup>58</sup> Soldi 2013; Mazzoni 2014b.

<sup>59</sup> For this reason it is almost impossible to distinguish between Iron Age II and III at Chatal; in this sense the use of the term phase O for the period mid-9<sup>th</sup> – mid-6<sup>th</sup> century better mirrors the archaeological material in the region.

<sup>60</sup> Haines 1971; Harrison – Osborne 2012; Harrison 2016.



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