

**TAYINAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT  
2016 SEASONAL REPORT**

[Not for Publication]

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## INTRODUCTION

The Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) conducted its twelfth season of field research at Tell Tayinat between **June 10 and July 3, 2016**.

The 2015 TAP senior staff consisted of Dr. Timothy Harrison (Project Director), Dr. Elif Denel (Assistant Director and Field 7 Operations), Dr. Stephen Batiuk (Senior Field Archaeologist), Dr. Lynn Welton (Field 1 Operations), and Dr. James Osborne (Lower Town Survey). The project was assisted by Dr. Steven Karacic (Postdoctoral Fellow, Koç University), Öge Demirci (MA Student, Koç University), Filiz Dolgun and Ganime Türköz (MA Students, Mustafa Kemal University). Mehmet Nezir Arı served as government representative on behalf of the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums.

The primary objectives of the 2016 TAP field season were as follows: (1) continue the ‘soft capping’ conservation program of the monumental mudbrick architecture on the Neo-Hittite citadel, in particular Temples II (Field 1) and XVI (Field 2), in preparation for the planned archaeological park; (2) continue ongoing analyses of the artifact (ceramic) assemblages recovered from previous field seasons in Fields 1, 5, and 7; (3) complete the report of the systematic surface survey of the lower town settlement; and (4) continue the preparation of a master plan for the Tayinat Archaeological Park.

### MUDBRICK ARCHITECTURE CONSERVATION (S. BATIUK)

The primary goal of the 2016 mudbrick conservation program was the completion of the conservation of the north and west walls of Temple II, which had begun during the 2015 season. Of secondary importance was the cleaning and rerouting of the pathway installed in the 2014 season, which was located directly over the western end of the cella of Temple II. Additionally, Temple XVI needed some minor re-plastering after a year of exposure to the elements, and a coat of whitewash, which was not completed during the 2015 season.

## **Temple XVI**

The experimentation with preservation methods continued in Temple XVI, in particular, with post fieldwork conservation efforts. After the 2014 season, Temple XVI was intentionally left completely exposed over the winter, which resulted in significant plant growth and the collapse of some of the soft capping applied in 2015. For the winter of 2015-2016, we decided to alter our strategy, and Temple XVI was left exposed to the elements, and for visitors to see, only until the late fall, when the structure was covered with Geotextile for the winter. The result was much greater preservation, only requiring minor re-plastering, and no mudbrick collapse. This strategy will continue until a shelter can be constructed over the area. After cleaning and removal of the Geotextile, the Temple XVI soft capping was re-plastered with a simple straw clay plaster and then heavily coated in lime whitewash.

## **Temple II**

During the 2015 season, approximately 18 m of the north wall of Temple II was uncovered, conserved, soft-capped, and then covered with a temporary shelter for protection, with all of the previous seasons plastering work preserved in a pristine state. However, the western-most extent of the north wall was not soft capped. Consequently, the focus of the 2016 season was to complete the soft capping of the western end of the north wall, and then the western wall of the building. The state of preservation of the south wall also needed to be assessed. The University of Chicago's Syrian-Hittite Expedition field records suggested that only the foundations of this wall were preserved.

The 2016 season began with a clearing of the debris that had accumulated since the Chicago excavations. Remarkably, this effort revealed the intact remains of the podium located at the back, or western end, of the cella of Temple II, as first discovered by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition almost eighty years ago. By the third day of clearing, a large dressed basalt stone was

uncovered and identified to be the stone adjacent to the north face of the podium of the sanctuary of Temple II excavated by Chicago. As cleaning continued, the excellent state of preservation of the sanctuary as excavated by the Syrian-Hittite Expedition became clear. With the exception of two post excavation pits in the northern portion of the structure, as well as one small probe (the result of a TAP datum installation), the cella was preserved virtually as it had been excavated in 1935, including a second large basalt slab, part of the podium, and the base of an altar situated in front of the podium.

After clearing the debris accumulated since the 1930's excavations, the mudbrick conservation program was resumed, focusing initially on the western extent of the north wall. The identification of the south face of the north wall and the stone-paved floor of the cella provided valuable indication of the extent to which the south face of the wall had been lost further to the east, in Squares 55 and 56, due to bank degradation, since its excavation in 2004. The result is a much wider preserved western extension of the north wall.

The east face of the west wall of Temple II was easily identified, due to the conflagration that had destroyed the building in its final phase. However, the west face of the wall proved to be significantly more difficult to identify, and thus its conservation was based on the measurements identified in the 1930's excavations. As with the Chicago excavations, the superstructure of the south wall of Temple II was unidentifiable. However, its foundations were readily visible, and the soft capping of the south wall was accomplished based on these measurements.

The soft capping procedure introduced in 2014 was continued in 2016, with mudbricks of different widths laid out along the faces of the temple's walls, and then built up to a height that would allow for capping. Given the changes in elevation between the north and south walls, a series of steps were introduced in the west wall to allow for a lower construction of the south wall. Geotextile was then placed over the archaeological remains to aid in their preservation, and

in-filled with soil. A temporary shelter was not constructed this year due to time constraints, but the metal supports were established in preparation for its construction in 2017. Following the protocols established in 2015, 16 buckets filled with cement and metal support bars were placed above the Geotextile and then covered by soil and the soft capping, allowing for strong supports to be established without contacting or impacting the archaeological remains.

For the interior of the sanctuary, only minor adjustments were made in the conservation. Primarily, the southern basalt slab of the podium, which had already sunk and slumped southward by its excavation in the 1930's, was re-leveled with stones and earth to approximate its original look. The central mudbrick platform of the podium was conserved and extended to its full approximate size, what remained of the central altar was soft-capped, and a facsimile of the northern interior pier was reconstructed. A final step should involve the whitewashing of the exterior and interior of the walls as well as the altar and podium, which will provide an accurate approximation of the original appearance of Temple II during the Iron III, while preserving the existing archaeological remains without damage.

### **Pathways**

The pathways and viewing platforms had to be significantly re-routed as a result of the 2016 conservation work, since the original route lay directly over the west wall of Temple II. Consequently, the path was redirected westward, just south of Field 1, and north along the west side of the west wall of Temple II, before continuing around Field 2, eastward to the viewing platform overlooking Temple XVI. A second pathway branched east along the south side of Field 1, before turning north between Fields 1 and 7, and continuing to the viewing platform overlooking Temple XVI. Additionally, we removed the original gravel in the pathways, and then laid down Geotextile to inhibit plant growth, which was then overlaid with a smaller, pebble-sized gravel, resulting in a more stable walking surface.

**CERAMIC ANALYSIS (L. WELTON)**

A primary objective of the TAP 2016 season was to continue the ongoing processing and analysis of the extensive ceramic assemblages produced during previous excavation seasons. The 2016 season had two primary goals concerning the TAP ceramic collections: (1) continue the documentation of the pottery from the TAP 2015 season, including drawing and photographing sherds that were not drawn and photographed in 2015; and (2) the creation of a study and reference collection for the Iron I pottery assemblage. This process was started in 2015, and involved assembling representative pottery forms for inclusion in the planned reference collection, but without completing the necessary documentation. In 2016, we completed the documentation of this reference collection, including complete descriptions, drawings and photographs of each artifact in the reference collection.

**LOWER TOWN SURFACE SURVEY (J. OSBORNE)**

The primary objective of the 2016 season of the Tayinat lower town survey was to complete the analysis of the results of the past two field seasons (2014 and 2015) in the lower town at Tell Tayinat, and to prepare a full report of these results. This report was completed, and submitted to the journal *Anatolica* for publication.

During the 2016 season, we also met with the primary landowner of the fields in the Lower Settlement at Tayinat, and discussed the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding potential future archaeological research on his land. These discussions were very positive, and we are now working with him to prepare the MoU.

### **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

The Tayinat Archaeological Project's 2016 investigations continued the successful conservation program to preserve the monumental mudbrick architecture that formed the royal palaces and temples of Tayinat's Neo-Hittite citadel. In particular, the 2016 season saw the successful consolidation and preservation of the western portion of Temple II, first excavated in the 1930s by the University of Chicago's Syrian-Hittite Expedition. Further work on the network of pathways and viewing platforms in preparation for the Tayinat Archaeological Park, formally approved in 2011 by the Adana Kurul, was also an important accomplishment.

The monumental mudbrick architectural conservation program was complemented by the successful completion of ongoing analyses of the extensive ceramic assemblages produced by the TAP excavations, the completion of reports, and further progress on the preparation of a master plan for the Tayinat Archaeological Park; the latter included extensive consultations with local government officials in the Hatay Büyükşehir Belediye and the relevant departments of the Hatay Valilik.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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