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NEWSLETTER

Published by the Society of Friends

Sep 2017 VOL XXXI No. 2

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Front & Back Cover

Wat Chai Wathanaram - Thailand

Layout

Daisy Gharfne

Printing

Raidy - www.raidy.com

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About the Society of Friends

Founded in 1979 to encourage public support and use of the museum, members in the Society participate in many activities including lectures, children's activities, cultural trips and excursions as well as many social events. All Society members receive a subscription to the Museum Newsletter.

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The Genius of Neo-Assyrian Imperialism: Recent Discoveries at Tell Tayinat in the North Orontes Valley

By Dr. Timothy P. Harrison

Date: May 11th, 2017

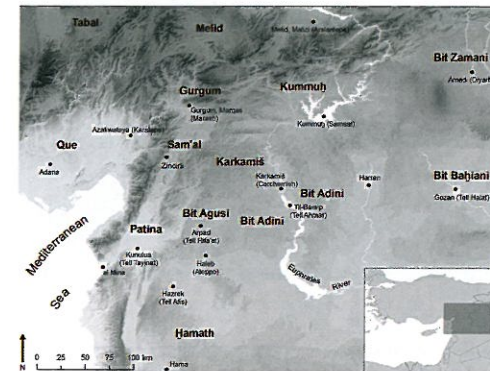


Dr. Timothy Harrison is Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto, a position he filled in 1997; and has currently assumed the Chair of this Dpt. since 2011. He also holds the Alfred H. Howell Chair, in History and Archaeology at AUB. Professor Harrison earned his PhD in Near Eastern Archaeology from the University of Chicago in 1995, completing a dissertation on the Early Bronze Age of Central Jordan. He has directed excavations at Tell Madaba, in Jordan, and currently is directing the Tayinat Archaeological Project on the Plain of Antioch in southeastern Turkey. These projects form part of a broader, regional research effort that seeks to shed light on the rise of early complex societies in the eastern Mediterranean region. Professor Harrison has published extensively on the Bronze and Iron Age cultures of the Levant, including four monographs, and more than 100 articles, book chapters, and reports. In 2012, he launched the CRANE Project (Computational Research on the Ancient Near East), an international consortium of projects conducting research in the Orontes Watershed. He served as President of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), the leading international professional association dedicated to the study of the cultures and history of the Middle East, between 2008 and 2013.

Recent studies of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (ca. 911-612 BCE), arguably the world's first true empire, have begun to emphasize the material dimensions of Neo-Assyrian imperialism, particularly the physical and visual expressions of Neo-Assyrian imperial power, and to explore its articulation in the archaeological record.

The genius of Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology is particularly evident in the way it was expressed through material form. This extended beyond the usual types of monumental remains, like large public buildings and fortification systems, to include large-scale representational art forms such as wall reliefs and sculpture, and craft industries such as ceramic fine ware production. Art historians have begun to emphasize the programmatic nature of Neo-Assyrian imperial art, and the remarkably sophisticated use of the written word to construct composite visual narratives that conveyed carefully crafted ideological messages to their intended audiences. These messages often were nuanced or tailored to very specific audiences, sometimes representing very different constituencies. The result was a complex visual and symbolic landscape that both projected and reinforced Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology, in which the Assyrian king was portrayed as ruler of the known world and imbued with divine authority as the earthly representative of Ashur, patron deity of Assyria.

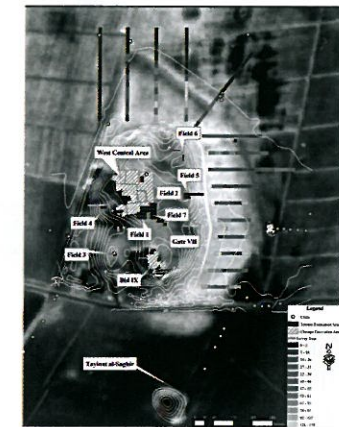
Ongoing excavations at the archaeological site of Tell Tayinat, located in the North Orontes Valley in southeastern Turkey, have uncovered the remains of a Neo-Assyrian settlement, including an Assyrian Governor's Residence and—most recently and intriguingly—a temple dating to this period (specifically the Iron III, or late 8th-7th centuries BCE). Ancient historical sources attest to the fact that Tayinat was destroyed in 738 BCE by the Neo-Assyrian empire-builder, Tiglath-pileser III, who then renamed it Kinalia and transformed the site into a provincial capital with a governor and local administration. Tayinat thus offers a rare opportunity to examine the physical manifestations of Neo-Assyrian imperialism.



Regional map showing the location of Tell Tayinat in the North Orontes Valley (created by J. Osborne).

THE SYRIAN-HITTITE EXPEDITION EXCAVATIONS

Large-scale excavations were first carried out at Tayinat by a team from the University of Chicago over four field seasons between 1935 and 1938 as part of the Syrian-Hittite Expedition. Their excavations focused primarily on the citadel, or upper mound, of the site, in an area they called the West Central Area, and uncovered several large palaces and a small temple dating to the Iron II (ca. 9th-8th centuries BCE), when Tayinat was known as Kunulua, royal city of the Neo-Hittite Kingdom of Patina. This complex of buildings was then renovated in the Iron III period, coinciding with the Neo-Assyrian conquest of the site, and thus preserves remains of their efforts to transform Tayinat into the provincial capital of Kinalia. One of the more interesting buildings uncovered by the Chicago excavators was found on a separate knoll to the south of the West Central Area. The structure, called **Building IX** by the Chicago team, proved to be an Assyrian Governor's Residence. The



Plan of Tayinat showing the Syrian-Hittite Expedition and Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) excavation areas (created by S. Batiuk).

rooms of Building IX were arranged around two large courtyards paved with baked bricks. The principal room of the building, which would have served as the reception room for the governor's public functions, measured approximately 8 x 26 m in size, and was paved with a floor made of small pebbles laid on edge in a lime plaster bed. The walls of this room were made of unbaked brick supported by a wood frame, and they appear to have been brightly decorated with blue-painted plaster. A stone threshold and two pivot stones indicate the room was entered through a double-swinging doorway. The room contained a number of intriguing installations, most notably, a rectangular limestone slab, measuring 1.2 x 2.8 m, and equipped with a hole in its center. A second installation consisted of two parallel rows of grooved stones, each approximately 5.3 m in length, embedded in the pebble paving toward the west end of the room. The Building IX complex was also equipped with an extensive network of drainage pipes, part of a remarkably sophisticated system of indoor plumbing.

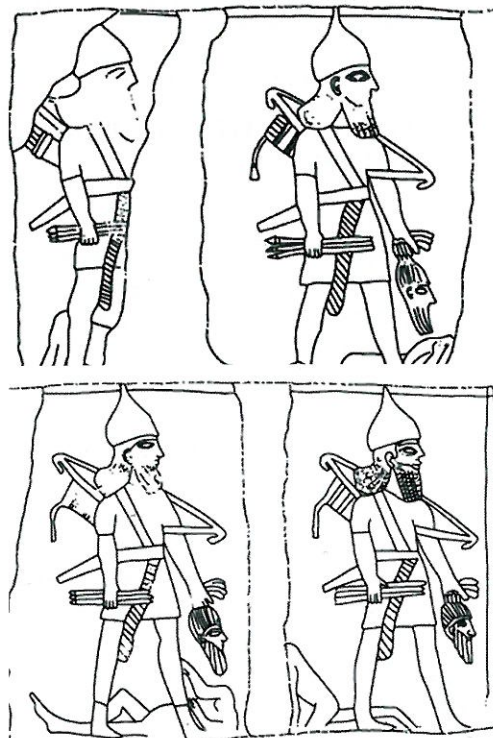


Assyrian Governor's Residence - Building IX

The features of Building IX clearly mark it as the residence of the Neo-Assyrian governor. To further emphasize its importance, Building IX was constructed on a massive elevated platform, or temenos, and it was approached through a heavily fortified gate (Gateway VII; see Fig. 2) lined with carved sandstone blocks (called orthostats) depicting Assyrian commandos trampling the decapitated bodies of their vanquished foes. Similarly designed and decorated Neo-Assyrian Governor's Residences have been found at other contemporary settlements in the region, including Tell Ahmar (ancient Til Barsip) and Arslan Tash (ancient Hadātu) in Syria. These buildings were all modelled after the great Assyrian royal palaces of Nimrud, Khorsabad and Nineveh (modern Mosul) in northern Iraq.



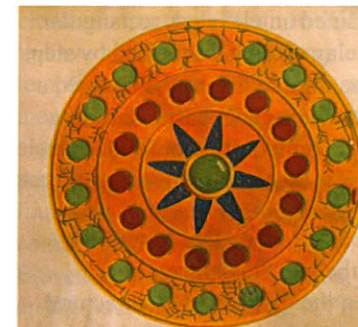
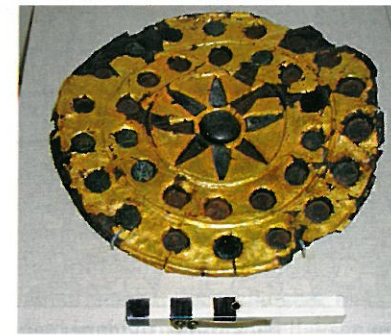
Orthostats depicting Neo-Assyrian commandos with the decapitated heads of captives (drawing by F. Haughey).



Orthostats depicting Neo-Assyrian commandos with the decapitated heads of captives (drawing by F. Haughey).

Several small finds from the Chicago excavations, unfortunately quite fragmentary, and found in poor contexts, also hint at the ideological program operationalized by the

Neo-Assyrians at Tell Tayinat. These include several Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, apparently the remains of sculptures or commemorative stelae, a number of clay cuneiform tablets, and a stone cylinder seal. The most informative Neo-Assyrian inscription, however, is a dedication "for the life of Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria," carved into the gold foil of an ornately decorated copper disk, possibly a votive or a dedicatory foundation deposit, which was found near one of the palatial buildings in the West Central Area.



Neo-Assyrian inscription carved into the gold foil of an ornately decorated copper disk.

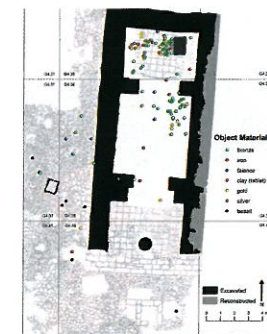
THE TAYINAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT INVESTIGATIONS

The Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) has been conducting excavations at Tell Tayinat since 2004, and in 2008, excavations were initiated to the east of the University of Chicago's trenches in the West Central Area. Quite unexpectedly, these investigations revealed the well-preserved remains of a second Iron Age temple at Tayinat, which we have designated Building XVI. The structure

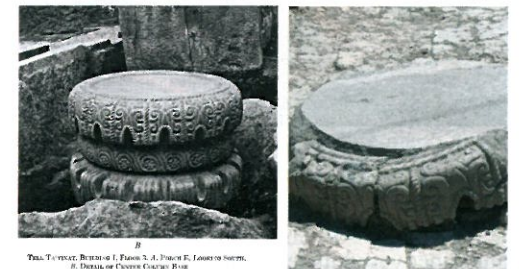
was modest in size, measuring 9 x 21 m, and was approached from the south by means of a series of stone steps. These stairs led to a porch that supported ornately carved basalt column base set into its floor. The column base is virtually identical in size, shape and design to the column bases found in the entrance to one of the palaces (Building I) in the West Central Area to the east. The porch was separated from the central room of the building by two brick piers. A thick deposit of burnt brick, apparently collapse, filled this central room, which was largely devoid of artifacts. The few small finds included tiny pieces of metal, possibly the remains of furniture or wall fixings, fragments of gold and silver foil, and the carved eye inlay from a human figure.



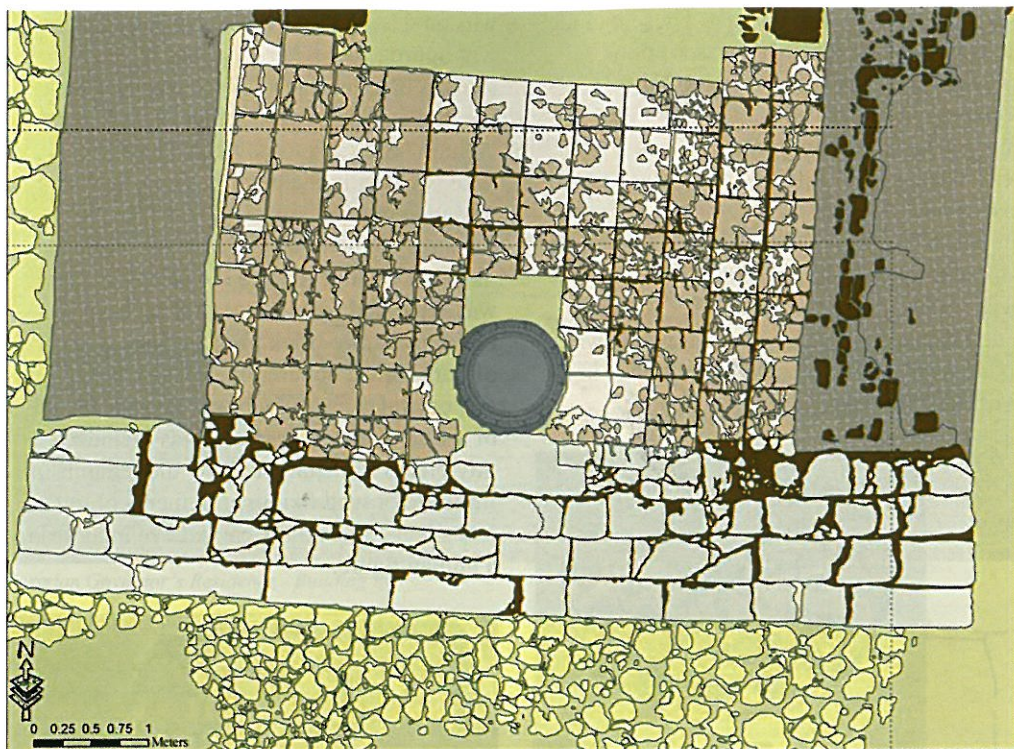
Aerial view of the new temple (Building XVI; photo by S. Batiuk).



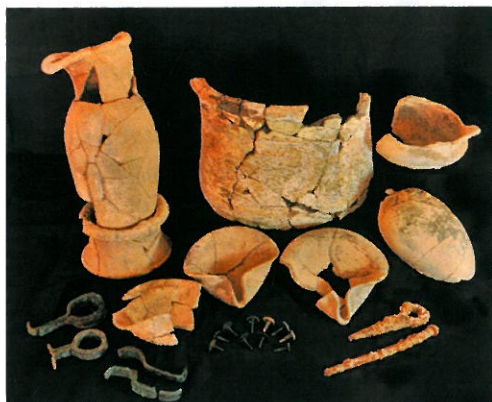
Plan of Building XVI showing the distribution of artifacts (created by S. Batiuk and J. Osborne).



Tell Tayinat, Building XVI, Plan 3. A. Palace I, Lower Room, B. Detail of Carved Eye Inlay.



A second set of piers separated the central room from a small back room, the inner sanctuary, or 'holy of holies', of the temple. This northern-most room contained an elevated, rectangular platform, or podium. The surface of the podium was paved with clay tiles, and accessed by steps in its two southern corners. The room had also been burned in the intense fire, and contained a wealth of cultic paraphernalia found strewn across the podium and around its base, including gold, bronze and iron implements, libation vessels and ornately decorated ritual objects. The surface debris also contained a series of cuneiform tablets written in Neo-Assyrian script.

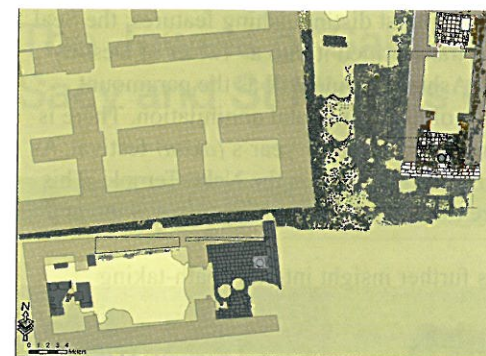


Cultic paraphernalia found on the podium in the inner sanctuary of Temple XVI (photo by J. Jackson).

Our excavation of Building XVI thus far has only uncovered its terminal phase, which

certainly must date to the Neo-Assyrian occupation in the late 8th-7th centuries BCE. However, the distinctive architectural style and design of the building's original structures suggest that it was constructed together with the adjacent palaces of the West Central Area sometime in the early- to mid-9th century BCE, prior to the arrival of the Neo-Assyrians. Then, sometime in the late 8th or early 7th century BCE, the Assyrians renovated the building and transformed it into a Neo-Assyrian temple with a distinctively Assyrian religious architectural style.

Moreover, when considered together with the nearby temple (Building II) discovered by the Chicago team, the two form a Double Temple complex, or sacred precinct, that closely



The Tayinat Double Temple Complex and Sacred Precinct (created by S. Batiuk).

resembles similar religious complexes at the royal cities of Nimrud and Khorsabad in the Assyrian heartland.

The Assyrian renovations to Building XVI included a ceramic tile pavement that partially obscures the column base embedded in the porch, the inner piers that separate the central room from the cella, and the ceramic tile-surfaced podium and altar that were installed in this inner chamber. A large elevated structure (Platform XV) appears to have been part of this complex, and it is tempting to suggest that this structure, which measured 46 x 87 m, might have served as an elevated platform for a religious monument, perhaps a small ziggurat, as was similarly found associated with the double temple complex at Khorsabad.

Eleven discrete tablets, or texts, were found on the podium in Building XVI. Eight are standard Mesopotamian omen texts, called Iqqur īpuš, which typically dealt with the timing of important activities or events in the life of a community (e.g., weddings, building a home, the start of the planting or harvest seasons). The Tayinat Iqqur īpuš tablets are displayed in tabular format, with the vertical axis listing the activities, and the horizontal axis the optimal month(s) of the year when they should be carried out.

The largest (28 x 43 cm in size) tablet records an oath by the provincial governor of Kinalia binding him in loyalty to Ashurbanipal, the son and chosen successor of the

Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon. The 674-line text closely parallels similar oath tablets that were found in a throne room adjacent to the Double Temple Complex of Nabu at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) in 1955, and most likely commemorates a major historical event that took place there in 672 BCE (specifically the 18th day of the second month of that year), in which all the subjugated rulers and vassals of the Assyrian Empire swore their collective loyalty to the Neo-Assyrian king. Most intriguing, however, is the possibility that these oath tablets were deliberately kept



The Tayinat Iqqur īpuš tablet



The Tayinat Oath Tablet (photo by J. Unruh).

in a place their oath-takers were expected to visit on a regular basis. The other tablets found with the Tayinat Oath Tablet help to clarify the broader social context of this remarkable collection of cuneiform documents. As first noted by the Assyriologist Jacob Lauinger, who deciphered the Tayinat tablets, two of the omen texts preserve markings that suggest they belonged to a class of amulet-shaped tablets intended primarily as votives, and were in fact meant for display, specifically as part of annual covenant renewal ceremonies. To better appreciate the sacramental role of

the Tayinat Oath Tablet, it is important to note one of its most distinguishing features: the Seal of Ashur. When applied to a tablet, the Seal of Ashur transformed it into a 'Tablet of Destiny', ratifying the document as a direct communication of Ashur's divine will as the paramount god of the Assyrians, and thus not to be altered at risk of death and total annihilation. There is reason to believe these ceremonies took place during the annual new year's (*akītu*) festival. As we have seen, the Nimrud oath tablets were found in a throne room in the Nabu Temple. This complex of rooms was known as the *bīt akītu*, where the annual *akītu* ceremony of Nabu and his partner Tašmetu was performed.

A document known as the Covenant of Ashur offers further insight into this oath-taking



The Tayinat amulet-shaped tablets

ceremony. The oath tablet was brought before the king and read aloud while a number of rituals were performed, including the burning of incense and oils, essentially activating the oath in the process. The presence of oil lamps, libation vessels, an incense box and a sacrificial altar on the podium in the inner sanctum of Building XVI (see Fig. 6) furnishes remarkable corroborating detail of the rituals described in this document, while providing a vivid image of the religious ceremonies that once took place there.

CONCLUSION

The ceremonies and rituals performed within the Tayinat sacred precinct help to illuminate the broader imperial project the Neo-Assyrians deployed at Tayinat, while also revealing their sophisticated use of the material form to communicate this political message. The Tayinat Double Temple complex, in effect, served as a stage for enacting the rituals and theatre of divine sanction within the local community. Together with the impressive public buildings

and redesigned Neo-Hittite royal citadel, the Tayinat sacred precinct offers an insightful glimpse into the imperial ambitions of Tiglath-pileser III and his successors. The transformed citadel stood as a powerful visual symbol that both manifested and reinforced the ideology of the Assyrian imperial program, elevating the king as supreme world ruler, imbued with divinely sanctioned authority, and responsible for maintaining order throughout the imperial realm.



Isometric reconstruction of the inner sanctum of Temple XVI (created by S. Batiuk).

The Jewels of Saida: New Discoveries at Khan Sacy and St Nicolas Church

By Dr. André G. Sacy

Date: May 24th, 2017

Written by: Dominique Sadi

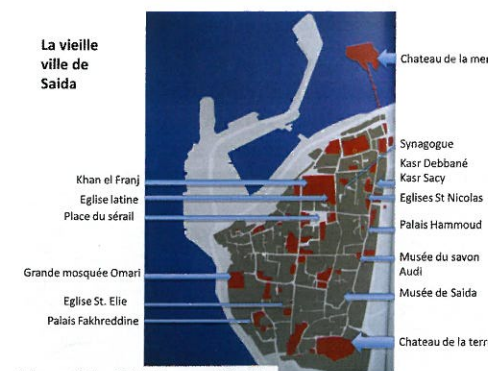


After a first lecture on "Presence of the Occident in the old town of Saïda (2010)", Dr André G. Sacy comes back to share his New Discoveries at Khan Sacy and St. Nicolas Church. Though he studied Dentistry at St Joseph University, specialised in Dental Prostheses in Paris and is an Honorary Professor, he has always had an interest in genealogy and the history of his hometown, Saïda. He is the author of "Saïda of Yesterday and Today" and "History of Saïda". Together with his brother Antoine he has worked on restoring Khan Sacy in Saïda for the last seven years.

Dr. Sacy opened his talk by stating that Saïda is a passion he wants to share.

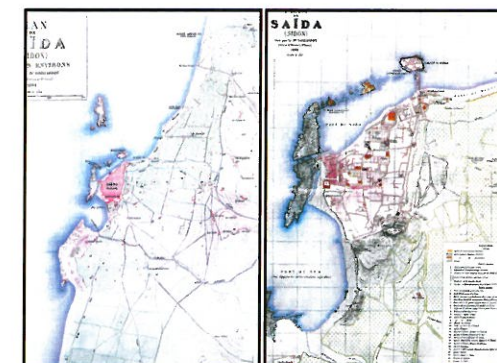
He is particularly interested in the Old City, which has remained as it was for a very long time. A 1934 photograph shows the Old City lying within the surrounding walls leading from the Land Castle to the Sea Castle. Most houses are by the sea. By 1936 the castles were linked by a bridge. Changes over the centuries can be traced in the form of old ruins and walls along the sea.

the walls, Khan Al Franj and the big Mosque. The town as shown on the map dates mostly from the Crusades but the old city is a very small part of today Saida, which has spread into a large city.



Map of the Old Town of Saida

The best map by Gaillardot/Renan (1864) is still in existence and shows the most details. The Muslim cemetery is on there and outside



Plan of Saida 1864

Plan of Saida 1864 (Dr. Gaillardot)

Dr. Sacy traced the map anticlockwise starting with the Sea Castle. Originally everything was concentrated around the castle and everything else was ignored. It was built at different periods (1254), then St Louis (IX) rebuilt it and lived in it until he left when his mother died. After the Crusades, the little mosque as well as a series of squats were added and later cleaned up to what appears today.