

# THE LATE BRONZE/EARLY IRON AGE TRANSITION IN THE NORTH ORONTES VALLEY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Accounts of widespread famine, large-scale migrations – most famously including the ‘Sea Peoples’ – and the collapse of the centralized state bureaucracies responsible for the rich administrative and literary archives of the Late Bronze Age, are all commonly invoked as evidence the transition to the early Iron Age was marked by a systemic, catastrophic cultural collapse and historical disruption. However, archaeological excavations, and a growing corpus of epigraphic discoveries, increasingly portray a more complex historical experience. While it may be true that this era, the ‘Dark Age’ of Homeric lore, was characterized by cultural devolution, political fragmentation and ethnic strife, there is also growing evidence of cultural and political continuity.

The pace of discovery has been particularly pronounced in the Hittite realm, and has forced a thorough revision of longstanding views about the Hittite Empire’s political fortunes during its final stages, and in the aftermath of its collapse.<sup>1</sup> In brief, it has become increasingly clear that a complex set of interrelated factors contributed to the Hittite Empire’s collapse, and that its downfall was perhaps not as terminal as once thought. Indeed, the most striking development has been the growing evidence of political and cultural continuity during the post-Empire period. This has been best exemplified at the Hittite capital itself, where recent investigations have thrown into doubt the well-entrenched view that the final Late Bronze Age settlement was violently destroyed ca. 1200 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Evidence of political and cultural continuity has also been forthcoming in the southeastern regions of the empire, most notably at Karkamiš, seat of a Hittite viceroy during the Empire period, where Hawkins<sup>3</sup> has succeeded in reconstructing an unbroken dynastic line bridging the historical gap between the fall of Hattuša and the emergence of the Neo-Hittite states of northwest Syria in the early centuries of the first millennium BCE.

The recent discovery of two Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions on the Aleppo Citadel, inscribed on the reliefs of the great Temple of the Storm God,<sup>4</sup> has now raised the prospect of tracing the historical development of another Early Iron Age polity, this one associated with the Amuq Plain region of the North Orontes Valley. Although a full publication of the Aleppo inscriptions has yet to appear, a number of observations with potentially significant historical implications have been made recently by Hawkins.<sup>5</sup> In particular, he has dated the inscriptions to ca. 1100 BCE, based on the paleography of the script and the iconography of the associated reliefs, and he has drawn attention to a toponym that appears in both inscriptions, specifically “the Land of Palistin”, which we are told was ruled by an individual named Taita. Most intriguingly, Hawkins has also proposed that the term shares an etymology with the *Peleset* (Assyrian *Palast*), mentioned in the Medinet Habu reliefs of Sea Peoples fame, and thus presumably also shares a common ethnic, if not historical, association.

A variant spelling of the toponym (“Walistin” instead of “Palistin”) also occurs on three previously known Luwian monuments. Two appear on funerary stelae discovered in the villages of Meharde

<sup>1</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the epigraphic evidence, and the broader historical context, see Hawkins 2002; Harrison 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See further in Seeher 1998; 2001; Genz 2003; 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See Hawkins 1988; 2002.

<sup>4</sup> For preliminary reports of the excavations, see Kohlmeyer 2000; Gonnella-Khayyata-Kohlmeyer 2005: 73-113.

<sup>5</sup> Hawkins’ first observations about the Aleppo epigraphic evidence appeared as a post-publication insert in his 2002 article. Preliminary readings of the first inscription (Aleppo 6) were subsequently presented in papers delivered at the 4<sup>th</sup> ICAANE meetings in Berlin (2004), and at a symposium commemorating the opening of the Syro-Anatolian Gallery at the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago in 2005. Most recently, at the 6<sup>th</sup> ICAANE meetings in Rome, held May 5-10, 2008, Hawkins reported on the discovery of a fragmentary second inscription (Aleppo 7).

and Sheizar, located near Qal‘at al-Mudiq, northwest of Hama, and concern Taita’s wife, Queen Kupiyas.<sup>6</sup> The third reference was found on a fragmentary Hieroglyphic Luwian monument recovered during the Syro-Hittite Expedition’s excavations in the West Central Area of the upper mound at Tell Tayinat, and identified as Tell Tayinat Inscription 1.<sup>7</sup> Although there is some uncertainty regarding the provenance and dating of these inscriptions, as Hawkins has observed, these inscriptions collectively infer the existence of an Early Iron Age kingdom of considerable size and influence, encompassing an area that extended east to include Aleppo, and south as far as the Middle Orontes Valley northwest of Hama. In this context, it is worth noting the close correspondence between the apparent territorial extent of the Land of Palistin and the combined territories of the Late Bronze Age vassal kingdoms of Mukiš, Niya and Nuhašše, which were consolidated under the control of Aleppo during Šuppiluliuma I’s administrative reorganization of the region in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, Hawkins has proposed that the capital of this Early Iron Age polity be sought in the North Orontes Valley at the site of Tell Tayinat, a proposal supported by historical references to the later Iron Age Kingdom of Patina,<sup>8</sup> and its royal city Kunulua, almost certainly to be identified with Tell Tayinat.

Since I have outlined the broader historical context of these developments elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> in this paper I will focus on the results of the ongoing archaeological investigations at Tell Tayinat. As I will attempt to demonstrate, the evidence points to the foundation of a new settlement in the Early Iron Age, either co-terminus with, or immediately following, the destruction or abandonment of nearby Alalakh (Tell Atchana). In keeping with Hawkins’ reading of the epigraphic evidence, the cultural character of the earliest phases of this settlement exhibit strong Aegean material cultural associations. The archaeological evidence also indicates the emergence of a substantial settlement during the Early Iron Age at Tell Tayinat, endowed with formal architecture and monumental sculptural remains. Although the investigations are still ongoing, and the results presented here therefore preliminary, when combined with the mounting epigraphic evidence, the emerging picture of this formative ‘Dark Age’ is of a considerably more complex historical process than previously imagined, marked by both continuity and change.

## 2. THE SYRO-HITTITE EXPEDITION EXCAVATIONS

Large-scale excavations were conducted at Tell Tayinat by the University of Chicago’s Syro-Hittite Expedition over the course of four field seasons between 1935 and 1938. The site forms a large, low-lying mound, approximately 40 ha in size, situated at the northern bend of the Orontes River, at the point where the river enters the Amuq Plain before working its way westward toward the sea. The Syro-Hittite Expedition’s excavations focused primarily on the West Central Area of the site’s upper mound (visible as a dark shadow on the west side of the upper mound in fig. 1), although excavation areas were also opened on the eastern and southern edges of the upper mound and in the lower settlement.<sup>10</sup> In all, the Syro-Hittite Expedition achieved large horizontal exposures of five distinct architectural phases, or Building Periods, which they assigned to the Iron II and III periods (or Amuq Phase O, ca. 900-550 BCE).<sup>11</sup> A series of isolated soundings below the earliest Phase O floors encountered remains that were dated primarily to the third millennium BCE (specifically Phases H, I and J),<sup>12</sup> suggesting to the excavators that a lengthy period of abandonment occurred between the final Early Bronze Age settlement and the earliest Iron Age settlement.

<sup>6</sup> For translations and commentary, see Hawkins 1979; 2000: 415-419.

<sup>7</sup> See Gelb 1939: 39; Hawkins 2000: 365-367. Gelb attributed the inscription incorrectly to a colossal statue, parts of which were found in Gateway VII, situated along the eastern edge of the upper mound. The Syro-Hittite Expedition field records clearly indicate the inscription was found in the vicinity of Courtyard VIII, associated with the monumental palatial structures excavated in the West Central Area. See Haines 1971: 67; and fuller discussion in Harrison 2009.

<sup>8</sup> The shared etymology of Wadasatini (as originally read) and Patina (p>b>w, with a dropping of the intervocalic –ds/ts) was first noted by Yamada (2000: 96, n. 71), and further strengthens the historical link between the two entities.

<sup>9</sup> Harrison 2009.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed description of the topography and history of exploration at the site, see Batiuk-Harrison-Pavlish 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Haines 1971: 64-66.

<sup>12</sup> Braidwood-Braidwood 1960: 13-14.

According to the Chicago excavators, Building I, the most prominent of the *bit hilani* uncovered in the West Central Area, and the adjacent *megaron*-style temple (Building II) were constructed during the Second Building Period, the beginning of which they dated to the end of the ninth century BCE, based largely on the presence of the numerous Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments that were found on or below their floors.<sup>13</sup> Renovations to these buildings accounted for most of the activity assigned to the Third and Fourth Building Periods, which were dated to the latter part of the eighth and the seven centuries BCE, although stratigraphic links to the artifactual sequence remain tenuous.<sup>14</sup> The Second Building Period also included Buildings IV (a second *bit hilani*) and VI which, together with Buildings I and II, were arranged around a paved central courtyard (Courtyard VIII). This Second Building Period complex was the most extensive and best preserved architectural phase uncovered in the West Central Area by the Syro-Hittite Expedition. It also exhibited clear stratigraphic separation from earlier, more fragmentary architectural remains encountered by the Chicago team, which they loosely assigned to their First Building Period.

Two large complexes, identified as Buildings XIII and XIV, were uncovered in limited exposures beneath the floors and walls of several Second Building Period structures. The east part of Building XIII extended under Building IV, while Building XIV was sealed by Buildings I, VI and the southern portion of IV. Since they represented the earliest Iron Age architectural levels encountered in the West Central Area by the Syro-Hittite Expedition, both buildings were assigned to the First Building Period.<sup>15</sup> As with the Second Building Period, both structures appeared to form part of a larger complex oriented around a central courtyard. Fragmentary remains uncovered below Second Building Period levels elsewhere on the upper mound were tentatively also assigned to this First Building Period.

Building XIII was excavated during the 1937 season. Unfortunately, except for a few wall fragments along its east side, only the sub-floor structural foundations of the building were found intact. Nevertheless, the general outline of Building XIII was reasonably clear, betraying the unmistakable characteristics of a *bit hilani*.<sup>16</sup> The building was roughly rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 28 × 35 m, and was entered from the south through what appears to have been a porticoed entrance, with a series of side rooms arranged around a long, rectangular central room, presumably the main reception hall.<sup>17</sup> The building's foundations were formed by deeply cut, vertically-faced trenches filled with unbaked brick, a distinctive construction technique also used in many of the other monumental buildings of the West Central Area.<sup>18</sup>

Though poorly preserved, and only partially excavated, Building XIV appears to have been considerably larger than Building XIII. As with Building XIII, very little of its superstructure was found intact, and the excavators therefore were unable to reconstruct a coherent plan of the complex, nor identify its function.<sup>19</sup> However, they did assemble a composite outline of the architectural remains they encountered that gives some indication of its enormous size,<sup>20</sup> which they estimate to have been at least 49 × 95 m (fig. 2).

## 2.1 Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions

The Syro-Hittite Expedition also uncovered important artifactual remains which they assigned loosely to the First Building Period, including a substantial number of fragmentary Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions. While there has been some debate regarding the provenance of this material (a total of almost 90 fragments are reported), the Expedition's field records clearly indicate that these epigraphic remains were recovered from a wide range of secondary and tertiary contexts associated with the Second Building Period, including construction fill.<sup>21</sup> The production of these monuments,

<sup>13</sup> Haines 1971: 66.

<sup>14</sup> See Harrison 2005, for further discussion of this phase of Tayinat's settlement history.

<sup>15</sup> Haines 1971: 64.

<sup>16</sup> For the floor plan, see Haines 1971: pl. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Haines 1971: 38-39.

<sup>18</sup> Braidwood-Braidwood 1960: 13.

<sup>19</sup> Haines 1971: 39-40.

<sup>20</sup> See Haines 1971: pl. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison 2001: 127-128; 2008: 174.

in other words, must predate at least the terminal phase of the Second Building Period, and therefore should be assigned to the First and Second Building Periods or, possibly, even earlier.” This Luwian corpus includes the fragments of Tell Tayinat Inscription 1, and its reference to the ‘Land of Walistin’.

## 2.2 Column Bases

A number of isolated architectural finds also appear to belong to the First Building Period, and add further to the scale and grandeur of this early phase. In particular, at least two similarly carved basalt column bases, ranging in diameter between 1.3 to 1.4 m, were recovered from contexts that suggest they originally belonged to either Buildings XIII or XIV. One was found on the surface of the mound,<sup>22</sup> while the second was found (apparently in reuse) in the paving of Courtyard VIII, directly above the porch entrance to Building XIII.<sup>23</sup> Two additional column bases were uncovered in a sounding (T 9) excavated beneath the pavement of Courtyard VIII in the area of Squares H-J 17-18.<sup>24</sup> However, it is unclear whether the larger of the two is different from the one described earlier by Haines as a surface find. In any case, the latter piece was found resting, out of position, on top of a wall attributed to Building XIV.<sup>25</sup> Although of uncertain provenance, these column bases clearly predate the Second (and Third) Building Period structures they were recovered from, while their simple architectural style anticipates the smaller, more elaborately carved column bases found *in situ* in the entrance to Building I.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.3 Carved Basalt Orthostats

Two carved lion-headed orthostats were also recovered during the Chicago excavations.<sup>27</sup> The first (T-3269) was found in secondary reuse in the north wall of Building IV, in a context associated with the building’s second phase of occupation (specifically Floor 1, or the Third Building Period, according to the Haines phasing sequence).<sup>28</sup> The principal features of the lion’s head are clearly depicted, including its eyes, nose, slightly opened mouth with teeth and five whiskers. Its head is turned 90 degrees to the right, indicating that the figure probably once guarded the left side of an entranceway. The second lion-headed orthostat (T-3270) was also found out of context on Floor 3 in Room A, the stairwell for Building I, a context dated by the excavators to the Second Building Period. This second lion figure exhibits stylistic features strikingly similar to the first, but also differs slightly, maintaining a forward-looking pose and roughly carved paws for a base. Both figures display characteristics typical of early Neo-Hittite sculpture, and almost certainly should be assigned to the First Building Period.<sup>29</sup>

A final architectural piece should also be considered, though its association with Tell Tayinat is not certain. The piece in question, a carved basalt orthostat depicting two charioteers driving over a defeated enemy rendered larger than life size, was first reported in 1896, and is said to have come from Tell Tayinat.<sup>30</sup> Although usually dated to the eighth century by art historians,<sup>31</sup> the chariot scene resembles similar reliefs found at Karkamiš<sup>32</sup> and Zincirli<sup>33</sup> usually dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries

<sup>22</sup> Haines 1971: 37, pls. 68D and 116B.

<sup>23</sup> Haines 1971: 39; depicted in the northeast corner of Square F-17 in pl. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Haines 1971: 41, pls. 89A and 98B.

<sup>25</sup> Haines 1971: pl. 95.

<sup>26</sup> Compare with Haines 1971: pls. 78C-D, 103 and 116A.

<sup>27</sup> This discussion of the Tayinat orthostats has benefited from a study conducted by B. Janeway as part of a graduate seminar paper.

<sup>28</sup> Haines 1971: 42 and 65, pls. 71B and 97.

<sup>29</sup> Mazzoni has also dated this second lion figure (T-3270) to the Early Iron Age, and has used it as evidence to argue for an 11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century BCE date for the foundation of the Iron Age city. See Mazzoni 1994: 322, n. 20; 1995: 188, n. 45.

<sup>30</sup> Braidwood 1937: 33, fig. 7.

<sup>31</sup> See Vieyra 1955: 46-47; Madhloom 1970: 31; Orthmann 1971: 83, 158-159.

<sup>32</sup> Orthmann 1971: pl. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Orthmann 1971: pl. 57a.



BCE, and contains specific features commonly associated with the ninth century or earlier, including the coiffure of the riders (pothook curls, hair bunched at the nape of the neck, and clean-shaven face), the presence of crossing arrow quivers on the side of the chariot, and a richly ornamented bar connecting the chariot to the horse. The eight-spoked wheel of the Tayinat chariot, while generally considered typical of the eighth century BCE, does occur in ninth century contexts.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps more significantly, the Second through Fifth Building Periods at Tayinat, in other words the eighth century and later, thus far have failed to produce any carved basalt orthostats, in contrast to the numerous plain orthostats that have been recovered from these levels.

### 3. THE TAYINAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT INVESTIGATIONS

The Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) was conceived within the framework of the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP), which has been systematically documenting the archaeology of the Amuq Plain in southeastern Turkey since 1995. Within this broader regional research framework, TAP was initiated as a long-term field project, designed to fully and systematically document the archaeological record preserved at the site, clearly identified by the Syro-Hittite Expedition as one of the principal Bronze and Iron Age settlements in the plain. Following preliminary field seasons devoted to surveying and mapping the site,<sup>35</sup> targeted excavations were resumed at Tell Tayinat in 2004, and have continued on an annual basis since.

#### 3.1 Field I

With the commencement of excavations in 2004, an exploratory probe was initiated along the southern edge of the West Central Area to test, or ‘ground truth’, remote sensing data gathered during the surface survey. These initial excavations, limited to a 3 × 20 m trench spanning two 10 × 10 m squares (G4.55 and G4.56; see figs. 1 and 3), uncovered the northern wall and portions of the central room of Building II, the *megaron*-style temple first excavated by the Syro-Hittite Expedition. Building II, in turn, sealed a remarkably well-preserved sequence of Early Iron Age remains, including a wealth of pottery and other material culture exhibiting strong Aegean associations. During the following 2005 season, the 2004 probe was extended laterally to the south, and identified as Field I, expanding the excavated area to four 10 × 10 m squares (G4.55, G4.56, G4.65, and G4.66), or a total area of 400 sq m. In 2006, excavations continued in all four of these squares. To date, the excavations in Field I have succeeded in delineating eight superimposed architectural phases, or Field Phases (FP), with the primary sequence (FPs 3-6) dating to the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, or the Early Iron I (or Iron IA) period.

The earliest Iron Age settlement, represented by FP 6, cut directly into remains dating to the late third millennium BCE (specifically Amuq Phase J; see fig. 3). Though heavily disturbed by subsequent building activity, FPs 6 and 5 nevertheless preserved a series of large storage ‘silos’ (e.g., G4.56:153/154), with several smaller pits interspersed between them, some of which contained large concentrations of non-perforated, cylindrical clay loom weights and other artifacts associated with textile production (see further below). FP 4 was encountered primarily in the northern two squares, G4.55 and G4.56, and included a well-preserved rectilinear structure (G4.56:23), with walls constructed in a header and stretcher technique, and preserved to a height of seven courses. Although well-preserved, the remains of FP 4 appeared to have been heavily damaged by the leveling that occurred during construction of the foundations and sub-structures of Building II (FP 2), and by extensive pitting activity assigned to FP 3. The walls associated with FP 4 were dry-laid, and varyingly preserved to between five and seven courses in height. A number of installations, including a stone pavement or platform (G4.56:20) that flanked a clay-lined pit (G4.56:34/37), also appear to belong to this field phase, though their precise stratigraphic positions were not always certain due to the leveling activity associated with the construction of Building II. These included a clay and lime-

<sup>34</sup> See Ussishkin 1969: 128; Madhloom 1970: 14, pl. I.3.

<sup>35</sup> See further in Batiuk-Harrison-Pavlish 2005.

plastered pit (G4.55:23), possibly a storage silo, and a stone pavement or platform (G4.56:20), which flanked a second, larger clay-lined pit (G4.56:34/37).

FP 3 represented a somewhat enigmatic, intermediate phase between FPs 2 and 4. It was characterized by substantial pitting activity, best exemplified by two large ashy pits in the northwest part of the field (Square G4.55). No walls or other free-standing structures were assigned to this phase. Although mixed, the associated pottery appears to date primarily to the Late Iron I period. Large foundation trenches packed with mud brick, which formed the structural foundations for the north and south walls of Building II, cut deeply into the Early Iron Age sequence, sealing and partially obliterating these earlier phases. First uncovered during the Syro-Hittite Expedition's excavations, and dated by them to the late 9<sup>th</sup>/early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (or Iron IIB; Amuq Phase Oc), these foundation deposits were assigned to FP 2. FP 1 consisted of the post-occupational plow zone and topsoil.

The four-phase Early Iron Age sequence delineated in Field I appears to correlate well with the Iron I sequences uncovered at other sites in the region. In the Amuq Plain, for example, the Syro-Hittite Expedition's excavations at Chatal Höyük identified four architectural phases dating to the Iron I (collectively, their Phase IV, or Amuq Phase N), best preserved in Area I (Levels 10-7), but also encountered in Area II (Levels 11-9), and in very limited exposures in Areas III through VI.<sup>36</sup> The excavations at Tell Judaidah identified three discrete phases, Levels 11-9 (collectively Phase V).<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere in the region, the Tell Afis excavations have also produced four Early Iron I levels, their Phases Va [=Levels 9c-b], IVc [=Level 9a], IVb [=Level 8b], and IVa [=Level 8a].<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the Tayinat sequence, however, the Early Iron I levels at Afis form part of a longer sequence that spans the Late Bronze II/Early Iron Age transition. Stratified sequences spanning the LB II/Early Iron I have also been excavated at Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani,<sup>39</sup> and at Tell Kazel,<sup>40</sup> with the Early Iron I levels at the latter two sites producing significant quantities of Mycenaean IIIc:1 pottery.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in the southern Levant, a series of sites clustered primarily along the southern coastal plain have revealed Early Iron Age levels with substantial amounts of Mycenaean IIIc:1 pottery and other material culture exhibiting strong Aegean cultural associations, including Tel Miqne/Ekron (Strata VII-VI),<sup>42</sup> Areas G and H at Ashdod (Strata XIII-XI),<sup>43</sup> and Grid 38 at Ashkelon (Phase 20 [=Stratum XVII]).<sup>44</sup>

### 3.1.1 Pottery

The Early Iron I levels in Field I have produced large quantities of Mycenaean IIIc:1 pottery and, although analysis of this material is in its early stages, it is clear these wares formed the dominant potting tradition during the FP 6 through 3 sequence. Moreover, a wide spectrum of forms, motifs and fabrics are represented in the assemblage. I will only summarize the salient features of the assemblage here, since a more thorough description of the Tayinat Mycenaean IIIc:1 pottery analyzed to date has been presented elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Shallow rounded bowls and deeper bell-shaped bowls, or skyphoi, are the most common vessel types in the assemblage (fig. 4). The skyphoi are equipped typically with close-set horizontal handles, usually with a painted band applied along the handle, a ring base, and are decorated with horizontal, linear painted bands on the exterior or, alternatively, with a combination of linear and non-linear motifs, and a solidly coated interior. Two color combinations predominate: red painted decorations on a pinkish fabric (RoP), and black painted decorations on a

<sup>36</sup> Haines 1971: 5, 13-14, 17-24.

<sup>37</sup> Haines 1971: 27-28.

<sup>38</sup> See Venturi 2007: 124-125, 137-148, and chart on p. 301. See also Mazzoni 2000a: 31-35, and 56, Table 1; 2000b; Venturi 2000a and 2000b.

<sup>39</sup> du Piéd 2008: 162-163.

<sup>40</sup> Badre et al. 2005: 32-36; Badre 2006: 92-93; see also Capet 2008.

<sup>41</sup> For Ras Ibn Hani, see Venturi 2007: figs. 17.1-6; du Piéd 2008: 169-170, figs. 7-9. For Tell Kazel, see Badre et al. 2005: fig. 8; Badre 2006: fig. 18.6-9.

<sup>42</sup> Dothan-Zukerman 2004: 3-4; Gitin-Meehl-Dothan 2006: 29-49.

<sup>43</sup> Dothan-Zukerman 2004: 4-7; Ben-Shlomo 2005: 9.

<sup>44</sup> Stager et al. 2008: 257-261.

<sup>45</sup> See Janeway 2008: 129-138.

buff, white fabric (BoW). Bell-shaped bowls were also well-represented at Chatal Höyük and Tell Judaidah, with thirty-five examples recorded by the Syro-Hittite Expedition, and grouped according to three decorative schemes.<sup>46</sup> Other painted wares commonly found in the Field I assemblage include kraters (fig. 5), amphorae (fig. 6), their handles typically decorated with swirling tassels, and spouted jars,<sup>47</sup> referred to as feeding bottles in the southern Levantine tradition.<sup>48</sup>

The Field I assemblage also includes a distinctive cooking ware that closely resembles the so called 'Philistine Cooking Jug' found in contemporary levels in the southern Levant.<sup>49</sup> It is distinguishable morphologically and technologically from a Bronze Age tradition that continues into the Iron Age. The typical vessel has an ovoid body with sloping shoulders that lead to an everted rim, usually with a thickened or rounded lip, and it is equipped with either one or two handles and a disk base (fig. 7). The vessels are made of a dark, gray-brown fabric, and tempered with crushed shell.<sup>50</sup> This distinctive cooking ware tradition is commonly found in the Aegean and on Cyprus, and appears as early as the Late Helladic III (ca. 1400 BCE).<sup>51</sup>

The Mycenaean IIIC:1 tradition appears to have enjoyed widespread distribution in the North Orontes Valley. In addition to its predominance at Tell Tayinat, Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery has been reported at eighteen other sites in the valley by the AVR P Survey.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, according to Swift, painted wares accounted for an astounding 90 to 95% of the total Phase N assemblage recovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition.<sup>53</sup> Clearly the product of local manufacture, the unique formal and stylistic features of the Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery preserved in the Early Iron Age levels at Tell Tayinat, and in the North Orontes Valley more generally, reflect the local, idiosyncratic character of this distinctive potting tradition, and reinforce the regionalized and heterogeneous nature of its development throughout the eastern Mediterranean. As a result, though there have been numerous attempts to identify criteria that can chart its chronological development,<sup>54</sup> not surprisingly, no clear consensus has yet to emerge. Nevertheless, over the course of the Iron I, the developmental trajectory experienced in the North Orontes Valley clearly witnessed the gradual eclipse of Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery, and its eventual replacement in the Late Iron I/Early Iron II by the Red Slipped Burnished Ware tradition, a trend that also has been observed elsewhere in the region.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.1.2 Loom Weights

To date, the TAP excavations in Field I have produced more than one hundred non-perforated, cylindrical clay loom weights. Various described as spools or spool weights,<sup>56</sup> these distinctive by-products of textile production are commonly found in Late Helladic IIIC levels at sites throughout the Aegean, most notably at Mycenae and Tiryns.<sup>57</sup> More recently, they have been recognized in Early Iron Age levels at an increasing number of Levantine sites,<sup>58</sup> generally in association with Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery. The Tayinat loom weights occur in a variety of sizes and shapes, though two particular types predominate: a cylindrical form with convex, rounded ends, and an hourglass shape with a tapered mid-section and flattened, distal ends.<sup>59</sup> The Field I loom weights typically have been found in caches, sometimes of twenty or more, deposited in pits, although isolated examples have also occurred. The Syro-Hittite Expedition also uncovered a cache of these distinctive loom weights at Chatal Höyük, though apparently in an early Phase O context (Room T81, Level

<sup>46</sup> Swift 1958: 66, figs. 19-21.

<sup>47</sup> Eight spouted jars are reported to have been recovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition; see Swift 1958: 68, fig. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Dothan-Zukerman 2004: 24.

<sup>49</sup> See Killebrew 1999; 2005: 222-223.

<sup>50</sup> Janeway 2008: 134-136.

<sup>51</sup> Dothan-Zukerman 2004: 28-30; Killebrew 2005: 222-223.

<sup>52</sup> Verstraete-Wilkinson 2000: 188-189.

<sup>53</sup> Swift 1958: 64.

<sup>54</sup> Summarized conveniently in Dothan-Zukerman 2004: 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> See Venturi 2007: 297-300; Janeway 2008: 136-137.

<sup>56</sup> Stager 1998: 346; Rahmstorf 2003: 397-400.

<sup>57</sup> Rahmstorf 2003: 397, 400-402; 2008: 59-73.

<sup>58</sup> Stager 1998: 346; Cecchini 2000: 214-217; Rahmstorf 2003: 403-406.

<sup>59</sup> Janeway 2008: 138-139.

5b).<sup>60</sup> It is now generally accepted that the introduction of the warp-weighted loom to the eastern Mediterranean occurred during the Early Iron Age,<sup>61</sup> providing further support for a western origin of this textile productive technology. Cylindrical loom weights become less frequent towards the end of the Iron I, and are eventually replaced entirely by a perforated spherical type,<sup>62</sup> mirroring the similar decline in the presence of Mycenaean III C:1 pottery.

The Field I excavations have also produced other cultural remains of possible Aegean derivation, including clay figurines, potter's marks, and a faunal record that may reflect western dietary habits.<sup>63</sup> Although analysis of the Iron I levels in Field I is still ongoing, it nevertheless has become increasingly clear that the inhabitants of the Early Iron Age settlement at Tell Tayinat enjoyed a wide spectrum of shared cultural, technological, and possibly even linguistic, knowledge and experience with the Aegean world.

### 3.2 Field II

In 2005, excavations were initiated to the north of Field I in the vicinity of Building I (fig. 1), the principal *bit hilani* uncovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition. The primary objectives of the excavations in this area, identified as Field II, were to determine whether anything remained of Building I, and then to excavate the earlier levels associated with Building XIV, and thereby better establish the stratigraphic relationships between these two structures.

The 2005 excavations, limited to a 10 × 10 m square (G4.35), proceeded to uncover a series of large mudbrick walls immediately below the modern plow zone. In 2006, two 10 × 10 m squares were opened to the south and east (G4.45 and G4.46), linking Field II with Field I, and in 2007 three additional squares to the east and north (G4.36, G4.37 and G4.47). The 2006 and 2007 seasons also revealed a series of substantial walls which, together with the 2005 remains, appear to form part of a single monumental structure (fig. 8). The walls averaged more than 3 m in width, and form a tight grid pattern of small rooms, none of which were equipped with an entryway. Probes were excavated in the southwest corners of Squares G4.35 and G4.45 against the face of several of the walls, and reached a depth of more than 3 m before uncovering the bottoms of the walls. Unfortunately, no internal surfaces or floors corresponding to the use-phase of the complex were identified, although a number of earlier surfaces cut by the walls were encountered. Clearly the foundations of an enormous structure, our excavations suggest that the Field II walls very probably formed part of the south-eastern corner of Building XIV (fig. 2).

In 2007, excavations were initiated in Squares G4.37 and G4.47 in an effort to find surfaces that might have sealed against the eastern exterior of the building. These excavations revealed a stone pavement, which in turn sealed a densely packed sherd-strewn surface, comprised predominantly of Red Slipped Burnished Ware pottery (depicted in the lower right corner in fig. 8). Unfortunately, the Syro-Hittite Expedition had trenched along the exterior face of the wall, effectively obliterating any stratigraphic connections that might have existed between these surfaces and the wall. A Hieroglyphic Luwian fragment was found sitting on the stone pavement, which was almost certainly part of the same paved area uncovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition to the east of Building I.<sup>64</sup> Despite the stratigraphic break, and the lack of internal surfaces, the pottery associated with this monumental structure suggests a Late Iron I/Early Iron II date (ca. 10<sup>th</sup>-early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) for the complex.

The Field II excavations have succeeded in establishing the stratigraphic relationship between the walls of the Field II complex and the north wall of Building II in Field I to the south, with the associated deposits of the latter structure clearly sealing over those of the former. Since the Syro-Hittite Expedition's excavations established that Buildings I and II were linked stratigraphically, and thus were contemporary, the newly uncovered walls in Field II must predate the Second Building Period horizon, and therefore must almost certainly belong to the Building XIV complex.

<sup>60</sup> Haines 1971: pl. 16B.

<sup>61</sup> Cecchini 2000: 211-216.

<sup>62</sup> Cecchini 2000: 217-222.

<sup>63</sup> Lipovitch 2008.

<sup>64</sup> See Haines 1971: 45, pls. 74A and 103.



The TAP investigations have also begun to shed more light on the depositional history of the numerous Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments recovered during the course of the Syro-Hittite Expedition's excavations, in part due to the discovery of additional fragments with the resumption of excavations. These fragments, and very probably most, if not all, of the Chicago fragments appear to have eroded, or 'bled', from the unexcavated part of the mound immediately to the north of Building II; in other words, from the cultural stratum that has now begun to reveal the remains of what must be Building XIV. When these fragments are plotted spatially, they cluster tightly around Building XIV (fig. 9). The extraordinary size of its walls, the monumental column bases and carved orthostats possibly associated with it, and the rich epigraphic record concentrated in its vicinity, unquestionably mark this structure as an important building. Moreover, although further excavations and analysis are needed, its apparent date and relative stratigraphic position within the Early Iron Age sequence at Tayinat also raises the prospect that Building XIV was the palatial residence of the kings of Palistin.

#### 4. EARLY IRON AGE TAYINAT AND THE 'LAND OF PALISTIN'

While it is clear that the collapse of the Hittite Empire at the end of the Late Bronze Age created a political vacuum that fostered an era of prolonged regional instability, as we have seen, there is also growing evidence of cultural and political continuity. In key centers of Hittite power, such as at Karkamiš, Hittite imperial control appears to have survived in the form of diminished 'rump' states ruled by dynastic lines with direct ancestral links to the royal family in Hattuša. Interspersed between these reduced enclaves of Hittite influence, rival political centers, perhaps most importantly at Zincirli (ancient Sam'al) and Tell Rifa'at (ancient Arpad), also began to materialize, reflecting their own newly emergent cultural and linguistic traditions. The result was a highly fragmented, or 'balkanized', political landscape within which a diverse cultural and ethnic milieu was able to develop and flourish. This cultural and political ferment provided the stimulus that forged the small vibrant nation-states that would come to define Iron Age civilization in this region.

In the North Orontes Valley, the existing archaeological evidence supports this view of continuity and change. Survey data indicate significant levels of settlement continuity during the transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, there is also evidence of change, attested perhaps most revealingly in the shift of the primary settlement in the valley from Tell Atchana (ancient Alalakh) to nearby Tell Tayinat. Whether the terminal Late Bronze Age settlement at Alalakh was destroyed or abandoned remains unclear, but the renewed excavations at Tayinat have now demonstrated conclusively that the site was resettled in the Early Iron I (or early 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE), after an eight-century hiatus corresponding to the period of Alalakh's ascendancy. Somewhat unexpectedly, however, the Early Iron I levels at Tayinat have also revealed a material cultural signature that betrays an intrusive Aegean influence, if not direct evidence for the presence of foreign settlers. Superimposed over these distinctive remains, in turn, are the monumental structures of the First Building Period, with their Hittite stylistic features and rich Luwian epigraphic record, followed by the late 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century *bit hilani* complex of the Second Building Period.

Although the specific historical circumstances remain elusive, the accumulating archaeological and textual evidence point to the existence of a powerful regional kingdom, the 'Land of Palistin', which emerged in the aftermath of the Hittite Empire's collapse, ruled by a line of kings with Hittite names, and very possibly with direct ancestral links to the royal dynasty. Intriguingly, this Early Iron Age polity also exhibits strong Aegean cultural ties, both in its material culture, and now also epigraphically. Furthermore, it appears to have eclipsed Aleppo as the dominant regional power, shifting the locus of power west to the North Orontes Valley. Centered at Tell Tayinat, the wealth of this hypothesized Early Iron Age kingdom is reflected in the impressive buildings and standing monuments of the First Building Period.

<sup>65</sup> For more on these settlement trends, see Harrison 2009: 175-176; also Pruss 2002.

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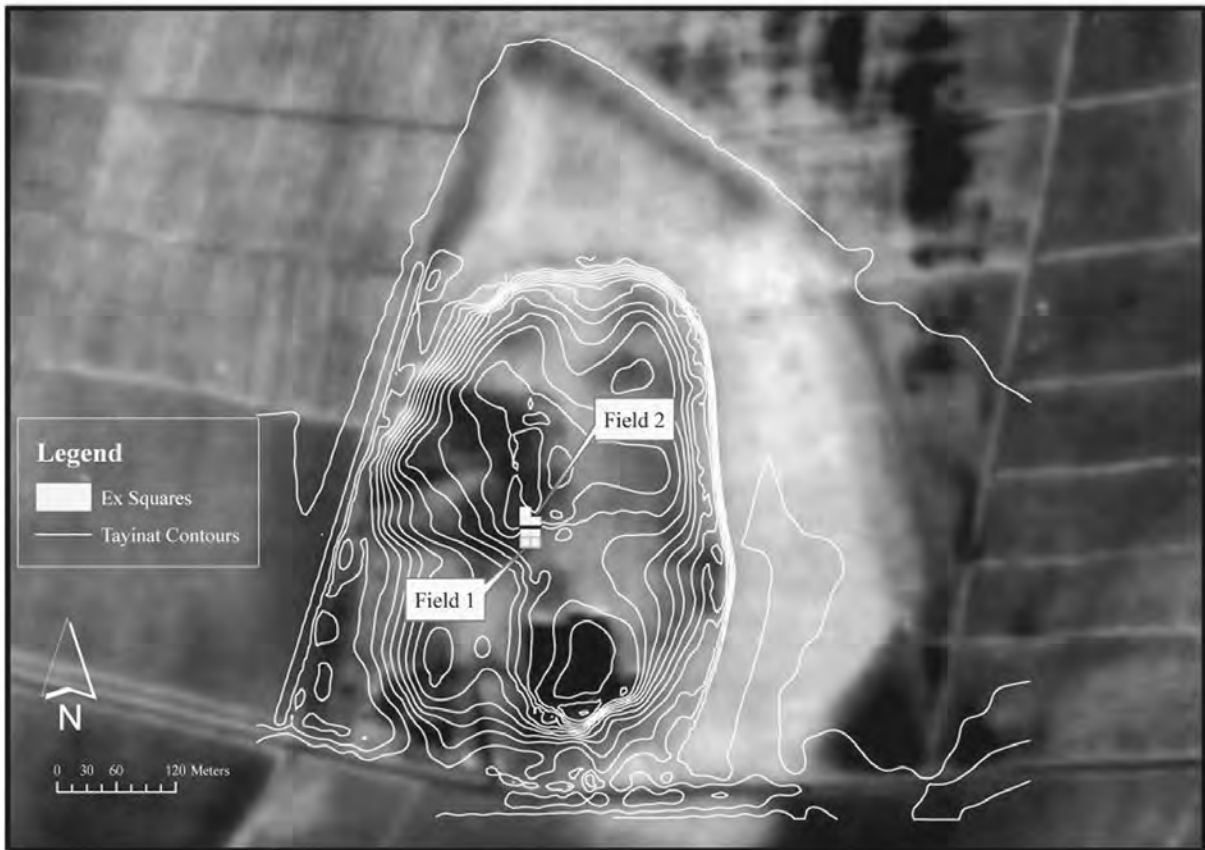


Fig. 1 – Contour map of Tell Tayinat overlaid on a Corona satellite image of the site (created by S. Batiuk).

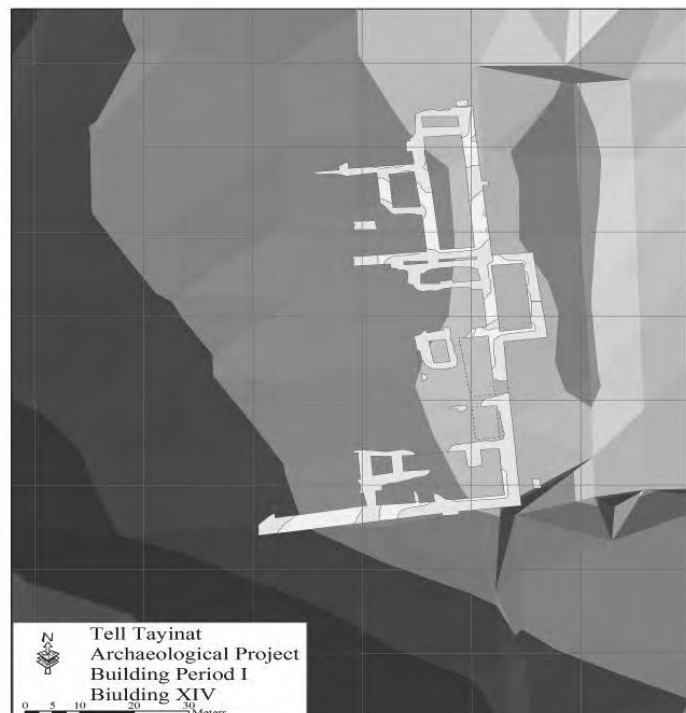


Fig. 2 – Plan of the Building XIV remains excavated by the Syro-Hittite Expedition (created by S. Batiuk).

# Tell Ta'yinat 2007: Area G4 Squares 55, 56, 65 & 66

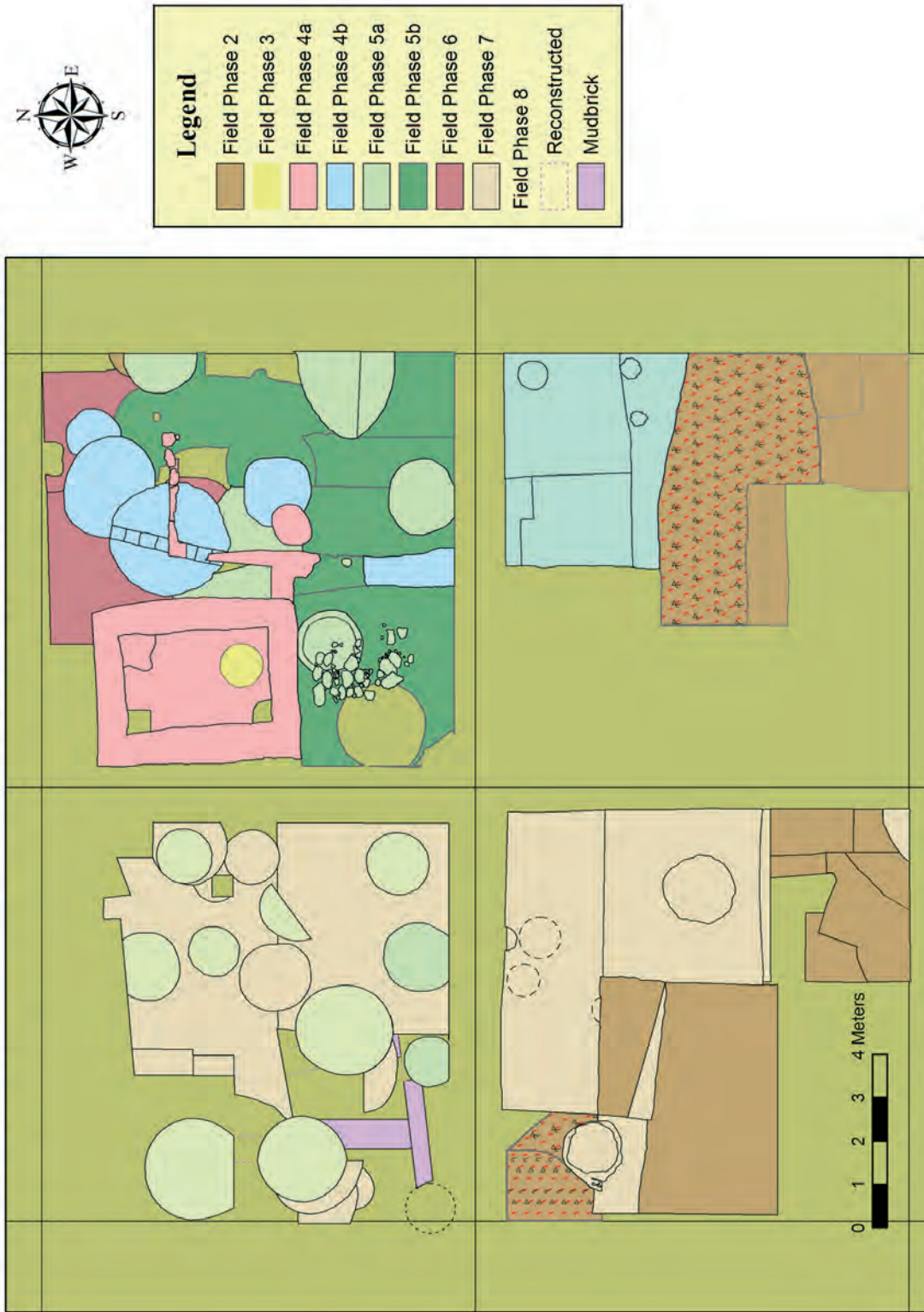


Fig. 3 – Plan of the Early Iron Age architecture in Field I (created by S. Batiuk).

**Tell Ta'yinat bowls (Phases 6-3)**

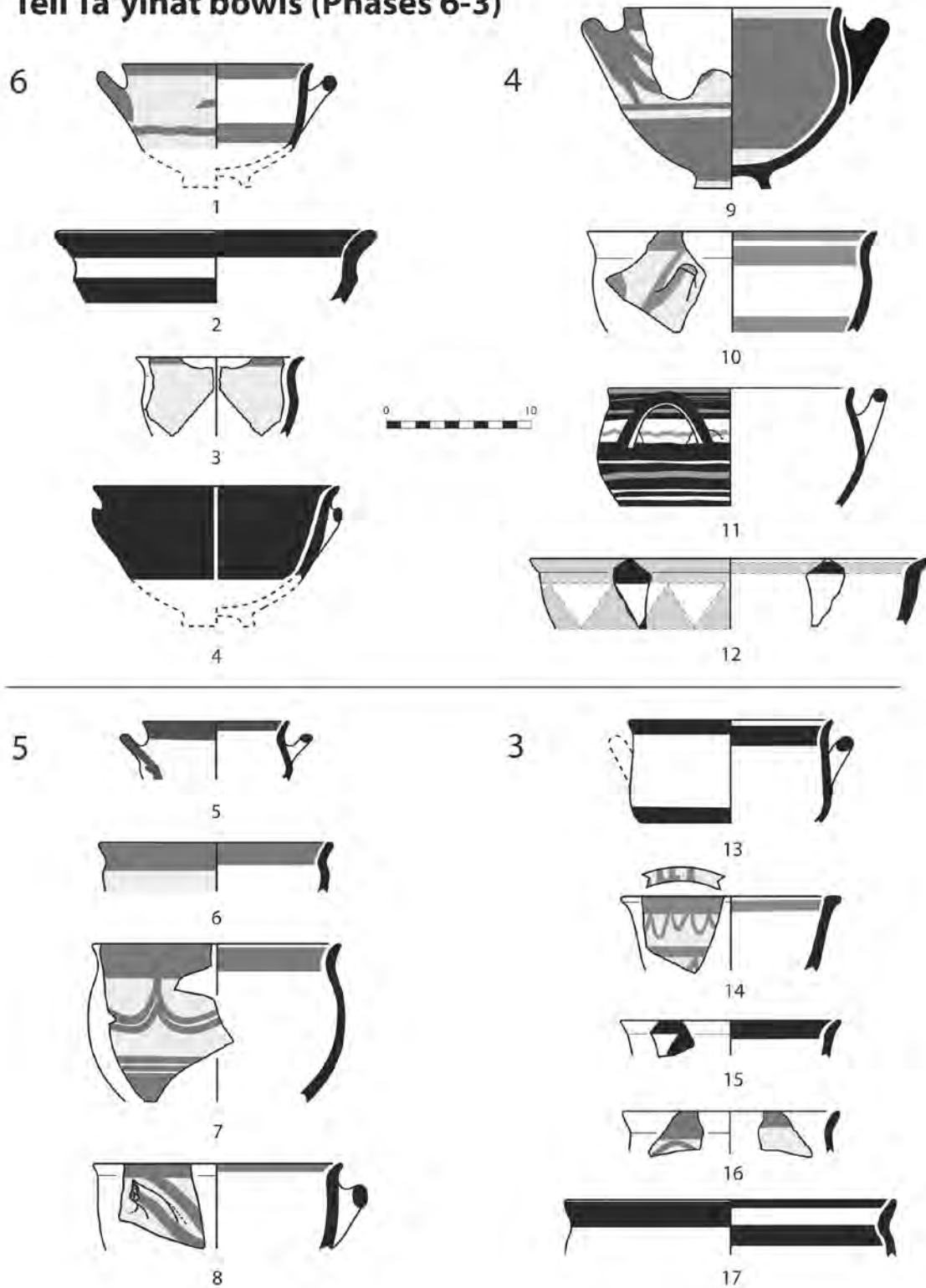


Fig. 4 – Mycenaean III C:1 Bell-shaped Bowls, or skyphoi, from Field I (drawn by B. Janeway).

## Tayinat kraters (field phases 6-3)

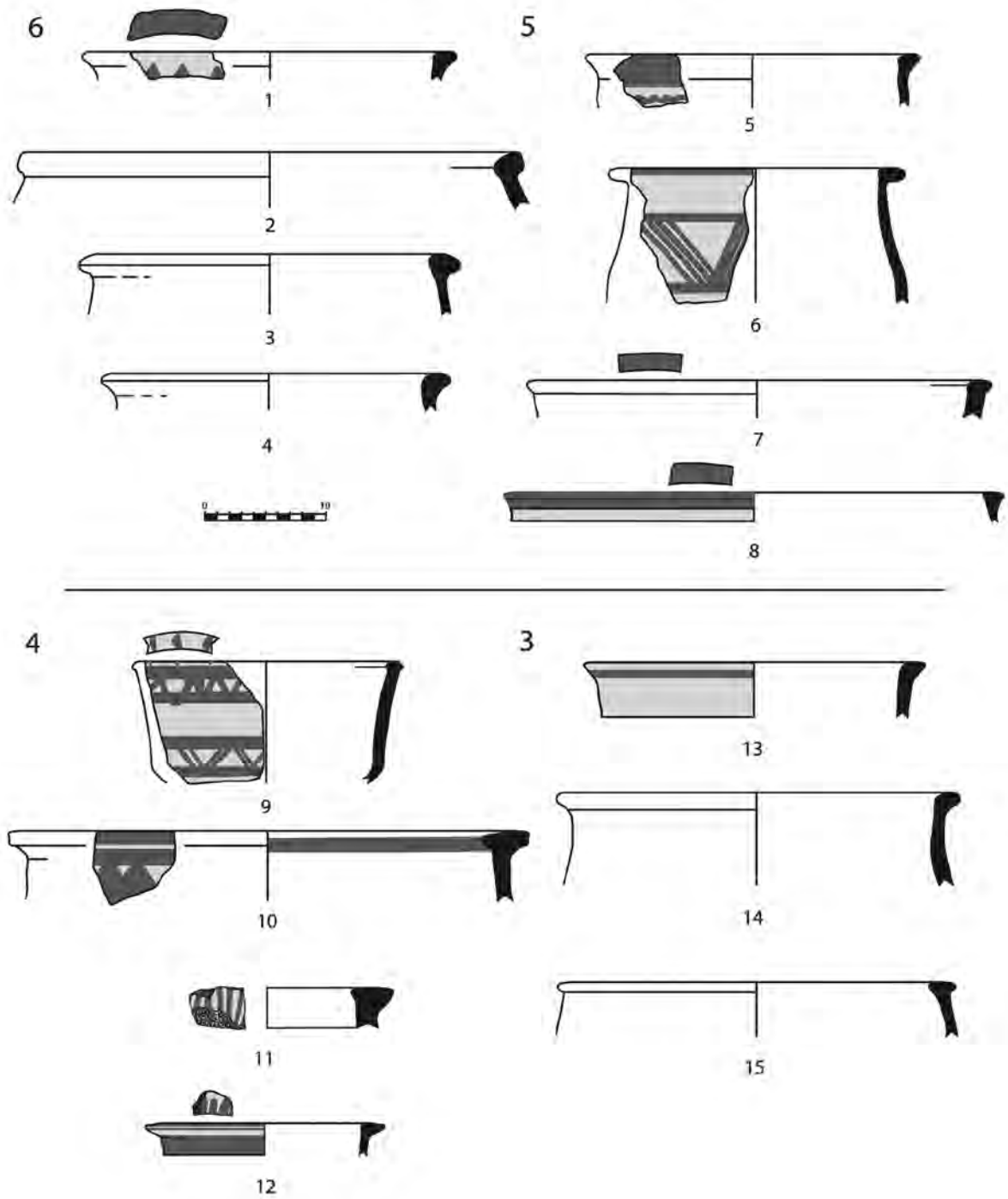


Fig. 5 – Iron I Painted Ware Kraters from Field I (drawn by B. Janeway).



Tayinat amphorae and jars (field phases 6-3)

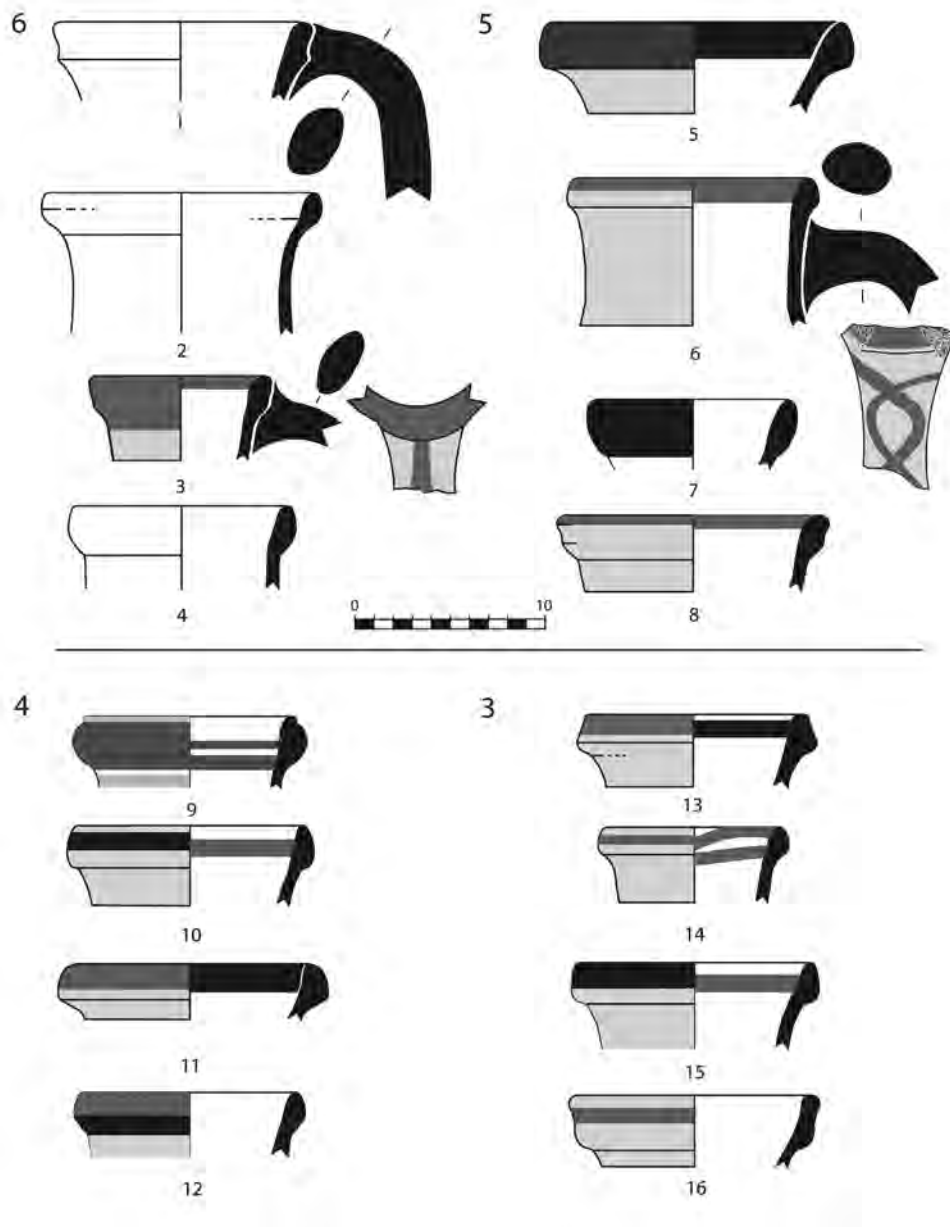


Fig. 6 – Iron I Amphorae from Field I (drawn by B. Janeway).

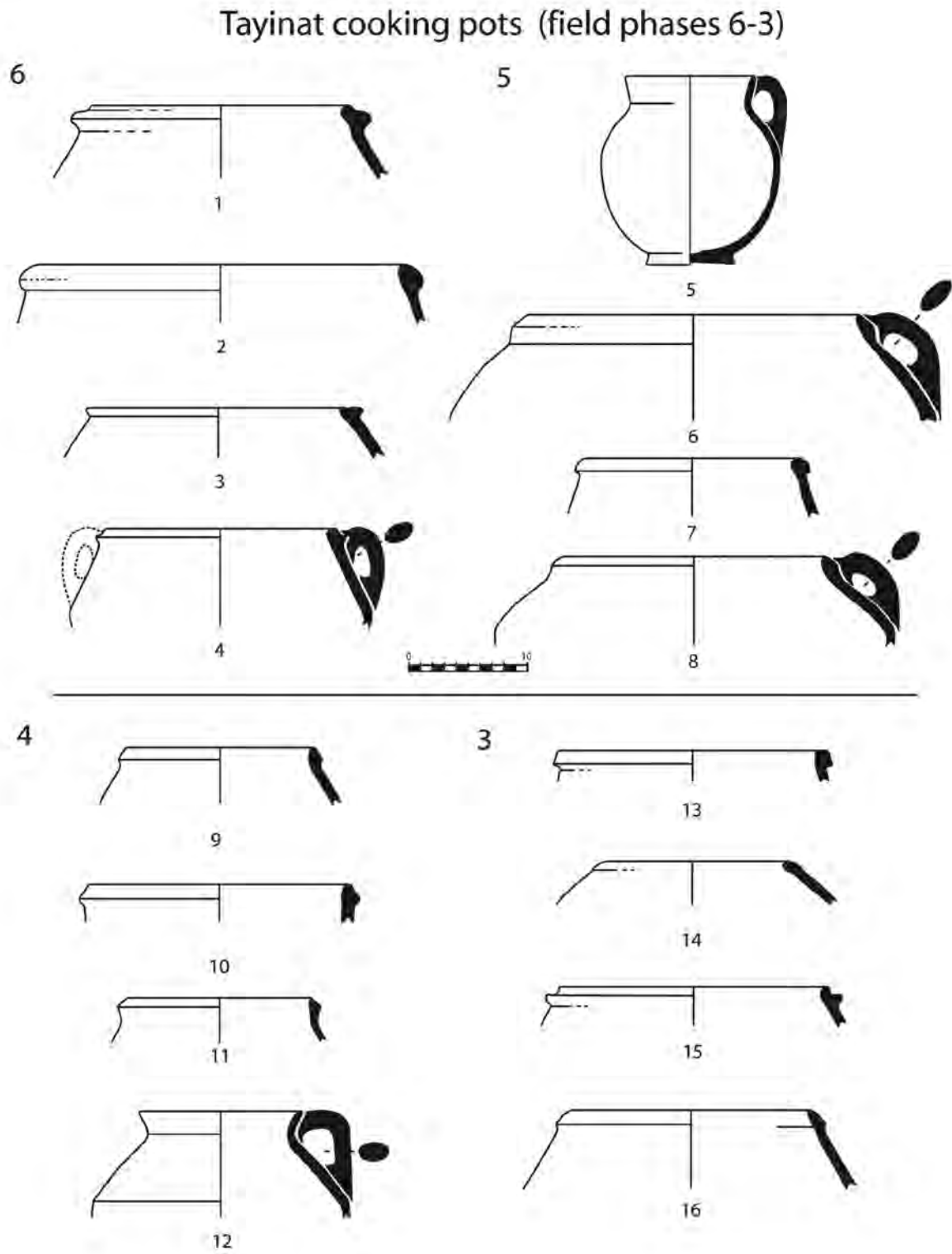


Fig. 7 – Iron I Cooking Pots from Field I (drawn by B. Janeway).

# Tell Tayinat 2007: Field II Late Iron I/ Early Iron II (Building XIV)



Fig. 8 – Plan of Field II architecture (created by S. Batiuk).

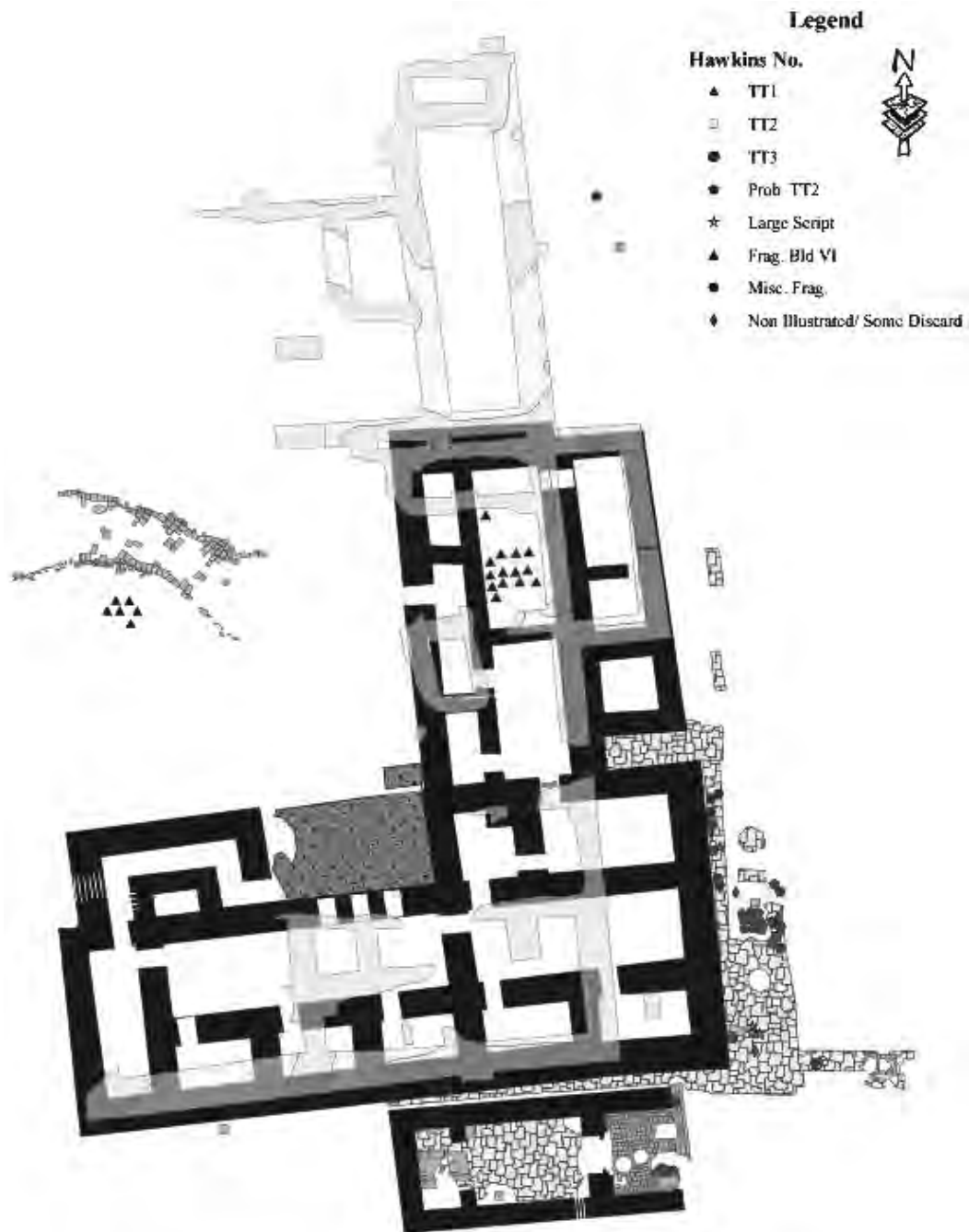


Fig. 9 – Spatial distribution of Hieroglyphic Luwian fragments in the West Central Area (created by S. Batiuk).