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THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF AEGEAN CONTACT AT TELL TA'YINAT AND VICINITY IN THE EARLY IRON AGE: EVIDENCE OF THE SEA PEOPLES?

Introduction

Our knowledge of the transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age in the northern Levant is much less advanced than in the southern Levant, where decades of intensive excavations have greatly facilitated attempts at a synthesis. Nevertheless, where scholars were once content to explain the transition in terms of wide-sweeping conquest and migration theories (Drews 1993: 48), they are more reluctant to do so today, owing to the growing complexity of the material cultural evidence increasingly becoming available (Bryce 1998: 368). Ancient documentary sources do exist, but they are of a more fragmentary and cryptic nature and are only now receiving the increased scrutiny they deserve. Moreover, new epigraphic data are coming to light that add to our knowledge of the erstwhile 'Dark Age' in the northern Levant (Stager 1991: 41; Schachermeyr 1984: 181–90; Ipek and Tosun 2000: 970–72).

In 1995, the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP) was initiated in part to focus on cultural links with the Aegean. Both survey work and site excavations were planned in order to investigate the relations between the Aegean (including Cyprus) and the indigenous population during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Verstraete and Wilkinson 2001: 179). Integral to these investigations have been the renewed excavations at Tell Ta'yinat begun in 2004.

W.-D. Niemeier has neatly summarized the key indicators of intrusive Aegean culture that occur in the eastern Mediterranean during the Early Iron Age. These include terracotta figurines of ritual Mycenaean derivation, hearths typically found in Mycenaean palaces and shrines, Mycenaean-type kitchen ware, a change in diet attested by an increase in cattle and hog husbandry (see also Hesse 1986), and the use of loomweights (Stager's spoolweights; 1998: 346–47) peculiar to Aegean sites from Cyprus to the Greek mainland (Niemeier 2001: 11–12).

What follows is a preliminary attempt to assess the nature and extent of Aegean contact with the Amuq Valley and at Tell Ta'yinat, later known as Kunulua, capital of the Kingdom of Patina/Unqi (Batiuk et al. 2005: 173). Though the Ta'yinat Archaeological Project (TAP) has only just begun to expose occupational deposits from this period, the evidence for relations with the Aegean has been extensive. This paper will focus on the ceramic assemblage and the evidence

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of textile production uncovered thus far by the excavations. These preliminary results anticipate further related discoveries in future field seasons, and therefore permit us to hypothesize and speculate about the settlement history of the site and the surrounding region.

Defining Mycenaean Pottery

The question of how to define Mycenaean style pottery and how to distinguish local ware from imported pottery is integral. At Ashdod and Ekron, a ceramic repertoire comprised of vessels that are Aegean in form and decoration has been identified as being of Mycenaean derivation, and labeled Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery (Killebrew 2000: 234; 2005: 206, 219–30; Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 3). Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA) and petrographic analyses of the pottery fabric, however, have confirmed that this ceramic material was locally made. At Ekron, the excavators also had the good fortune to discover several kilns that contained this distinctive pottery (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 3, 31; Dothan et al. 1986: 15).

The most systematic and comprehensive classification of Mycenaean pottery thus far has been developed by P. Mountjoy (1986; 1993; 1999). According to her analysis, Early Iron Age vessels which retain Aegean elements of form and surface decoration, but were fashioned from local clays, should be classified as Mycenaean IIIC:1 (hereafter Myc IIIC:1) pottery. This productive tradition invariably incorporated local stylistic components over time, giving rise to distinctive regional patterns. The Mycenaean material of the Iron I period is marked by a lack of standardization, and less specialized craftsmanship than earlier phases of Mycenaean Ware, when centralized production centers manufactured and distributed high quality vessels with a lustrous painted finish. Because the period is characterized by localized regional development, attempts to develop interregional criteria for dating Myc IIIC:1 assemblages have usually floundered.

Since the differences between Myc IIIC:1a and b have not been satisfactorily demonstrated in Levantine contexts (see Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 2), the more general designation will be used in this paper. Dothan herself only recently adopted this revised terminology. In an article entitled "Reflections on the Initial Phase of Philistine Settlement" (2000), she used the term Mycenaean IIIC:1b throughout. By the time of her 2004 study, she had abandoned it in favor of Mycenaean IIIC:1. Future research could change that equation, but at present no adequate standard exists for subdividing the Mycenaean IIIC:1 period in any broadly applicable way.

Previous Research in the Amuq Plain Region

The Amuq Plain, situated at the junction where the eastern Mediterranean seaboard merges with the Anatolian Highlands, holds a prominent position in Near Eastern archaeological research (Fig. 1). It has been the scene of important excavations (e.g., Tell Atchana, Tell Ta'yinat, Tell Judaidah and Chatal Höyük), and has provided one of

the foundational cultural sequences for the Levant and western Syria. The Amuq Plain strategically straddles one of the principal transit corridors that ran from the Syro-Mesopotamian interior west to the Mediterranean and north to Anatolia (Fig. 2). As a result, it preserves some of the richest and most extensive archaeological remains in the entire Near East (the Braidwood survey [1937] recorded no less than 178 mounded settlement sites within the narrow confines of the plain). Blessed with a wealth of natural resources, the Amuq Basin provided a fertile environment for intensive agricultural production, while the mineral and timber-rich Amanus Mountains that border the plain presented a particularly valuable asset, very likely attracting settlement and accelerating the early development of complex social and economic institutions in the region.

Today, Tell Ta'yinat consists of a large, low-lying mound 1.5 km east of Demirköprü on the northern bend of the Orontes River, at the point where it turns west and winds around the southern edge of the Amuq Plain. The site consists of an upper and lower mound, with the lower mound now hidden by a thick alluvial accumulation deposited by the Orontes River. The site lies just north of the modern Antakya-Reyhanlı road, and measures approximately 500m (E-W) by 700m (N-S) for a total area of 35 ha, of which roughly 20 ha comprise the upper citadel mound.

Large-scale excavations were conducted by the University of Chicago at Tell Ta'yinat over four field seasons between 1935 and 1938 as part of the Syro-Hittite Expedition. The excavations focused primarily on the West Central Area of the upper mound, although excavation areas were also opened on the eastern and southern edges of the upper mound and in the lower settlement (for a more thorough description of the topography and archaeology of the site, see Batiuk et al. 2005). In all, the Chicago excavations achieved large horizontal exposures of five distinct architectural phases, or Building Periods, dating to the Iron II and III periods (Amuq Phase O, ca. 950–550 B.C.E) (Haines 1971: 64–66). A series of isolated soundings below the earliest Phase O floors encountered remains that dated primarily to the late third millennium BCE (Phases I and J; earlier Phase H levels were also uncovered) (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 13–14), indicating that a lengthy period of abandonment occurred between the Early Bronze and Iron Age settlements at the site.

Settlement Trends in the North Orontes Valley Region

Survey data for the North Orontes Valley region indicate a relative decline in settlement during the Late Bronze Age (LBA) that parallels a general decline throughout the ancient Near East during this period (see McClellan 1992; Yener et al. 2000: 187–89; Casana and Wilkinson 2005). This trend was reversed during the Iron Age, when the number of sites in the region almost doubled. Several patterns emerge from a closer analysis of this survey data (for a more thorough treatment, see Harrison 2001: 122–24). First, of the 30 LBA (Amuq Phase M) sites that have been identified by surface survey, 17 also preserved evidence of

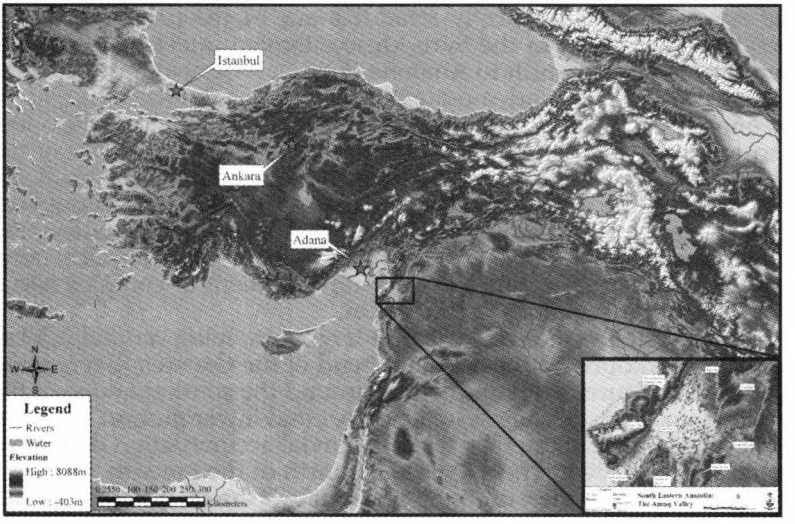

Fig. 1. Map of Anatolia and North Syria featuring the Amuq Plain (inset) (created by S. Batiuk).

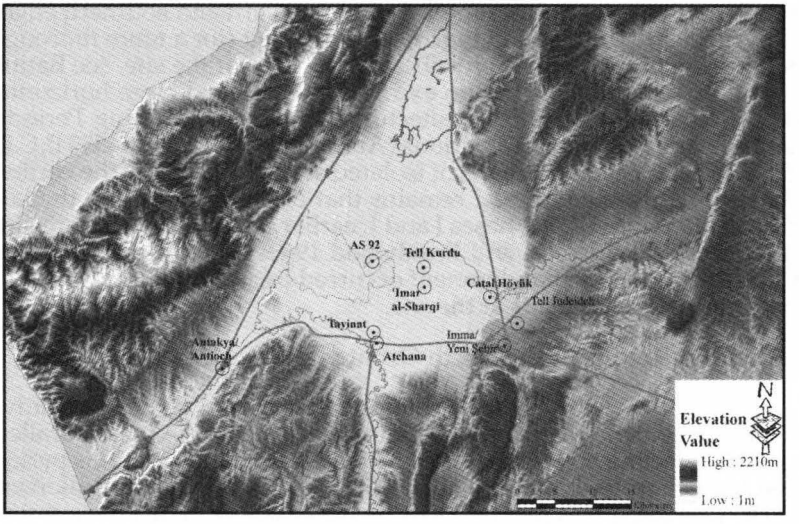

Fig. 2. Transit routes through the Amuq Plain (adapted from Yener et al. 2000: fig. 13).

Early Iron Age (Amuq Phase N) occupation, or almost two-thirds of the LBA sites, suggesting significant settlement continuity between the two periods. However, these 17 sites also account for only about one third of the total number of recorded Amuq N sites. Fully 74%, or 30 of the 47 known Amuq N sites, were new settlements. Moreover, of these 17 sites, 14 were occupied during all three periods, the LBA through the later Iron II period (Amuq Phase O), and represented multiple-period mounds with long occupational sequences. In contrast, the evidence for settlement continuity between the Iron I (Amuq N) and the later Iron II is very strong. 35 of the 47 known Amuq N sites, or a remarkable 75%, were also occupied in Phase O (Harrison, in press).

What these survey data fail to reveal, however, is the emergence of Tell Ta'yinat as the dominant settlement in the region. By the Iron II period (Phase O), at 35 ha, Tell Ta'yinat had grown to account for fully 30% of the known settled area, and was more than three times larger than Chatal Höyük (AS 167), the next largest settlement in the regional site-size hierarchy. The dominance of Tell Ta'yinat is also reflected in the spatial distribution of Phase O sites, which shows a heavy concentration of settlements in its vicinity along the southern edge of the plain. Thus, while the survey data indicate significant settlement continuity during the transition from the LBA to the Early Iron Age, equally revealing is the evidence that this Early Iron Age settlement network subsequently developed into an integrated, urbanized regional entity, with Tell Ta'yinat at its center.

The Ceramic Sequence in the Amuq Plain

Until recently, our knowledge of the ceramic sequence for the Amuq Plain and Tell Ta'yinat during the Early Iron Age derived almost exclusively from the dissertation research of Gustavus Swift (1958). His analysis defined Amuq Phases K to O, covering the second and first millennia BCE. The relevant period for this study is Phase N, which Swift dated to 1150–950 BCE. Phase N levels were uncovered at three sites: Chatal Höyük, Tell Judaidah, and Tell Ta'yinat. Chatal Höyük produced the richest assemblage of Phase N pottery, while Tell Judaidah provided the most complete sequence of Phase N levels, at four. At Tell Ta'yinat, however, only traces of Phase N were found, having been largely obscured by the monumental remains of the Phase O settlement (Swift 1958: 64).

Site distribution during Phase M tended to cluster in the southern part of the valley at nodal points, suggesting a preference for locations best suited to take advantage of trade routes (Fig. 2), particularly the east-west corridor connecting the Mediterranean coast to Aleppo and points beyond (Harrison 2000: 192). The distribution of Aegean imports mirrored settlement patterns. During the LB II (ca. 1400–1200 BCE), imports were found at five sites, including Tell Atchana, Chatal Höyük, and Tell Judaidah (Verstraete and Wilkinson 2000: 188).

Phase N witnessed the appearance of Myc IIIC:1 pottery. Significantly, it has been found at a much larger number of sites (18, according to the AVRP Survey; Verstraete and Wilkinson 2000: 188–89)

than the imported ware of Phase M, reflecting a much wider pattern of distribution and consumption.

The Phase N assemblage differed sharply from the preceding and succeeding phases in terms of its high percentage of painted ware, as much as 90–95% of the overall assemblage, according to Swift.[1] Swift also noted that both the fabric and painted decorations took on new qualities, combining new motifs with painted patterns and shapes from the Late Bronze Age (Swift 1958: 64). To his thinking, the assemblage's uniformity of technique and style "did not seem to admit the possibility that any part of it was imported from another region" (Swift 1958: 72). In Swift's view, this uniformity prevented any sub-phasing of the ceramic corpus into less than a 200-year time span, and he therefore failed to discern any developmental pattern.

The Renewed Excavations at Tell Ta'yinat

It is important to note that the following description represents a preliminary synthesis of the ongoing TAP excavations. Thus it should be viewed as neither systematic nor conclusive. The first season of excavations, though limited in area to a 3 x 20 m trench spanning two 10 x 10 m squares (G4.55 and G4.56), produced exciting confirmation of remote sensing data, revealing part of the Iron II *megaron*-style temple (Building II) originally discovered during the Chicago excavations (Fig. 3). Building II, in turn, sealed a remarkably well-preserved sequence of Early Bronze and Early Iron Age remains, including substantial amounts of material culture with strong Aegean connections. During the 2005 season, therefore, the 2004 probe was extended laterally to the south, expanding the area of excavation to four 10x10 m squares (G4.55, G4.56, G4.65 and G4.66), for a total area of 400 sq m. In all, the 2004–2006 excavations in Field I succeeded in delineating seven superimposed architectural Field Phases (FP), with the primary sequence (FPs 3–6) dating to the Early Iron Age.

The four field phases delineated at Tell Ta'yinat thus far accords well with the Iron I sequences at other sites in the region. Phase N at Chatal Höyük also preserved four architectural phases, levels 7–10. Tell Judaidah, where the largest number of reliable Phase N levels was found, also consisted of a sequence of four phases (Swift 1958: 64).

Elsewhere in the region, at Tell Afis in northwest Syria, Levels 9c, 9b, 9a, and 8 comprise the Early Iron Age horizon (Cecchini and Mazzoni 1998: 4). Several sites in coastal Syria have also produced Myc IIIC:1 pottery, including Ras al Bassit (Courbin 1986; 1993) and Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni et al. 1978; 1979), while Tell Kazel, located in coastal Lebanon, has revealed a well stratified sequence of Late Bronze and Iron I period deposits (Levels 6–3; Badre 2006: 69). Here the appearance of Myc IIIC:1 ceramics coincided with the introduction of two other new pottery traditions, Handmade Burnished Ware and Grey Ware, all of which were present in a destruction level the excavator has associated with the Sea Peoples (Badre et al. 2005: 33–36; Badre 2006: 92–93).

[1] This is an accurate calculation, however, only if the published whole vessels are counted.

In the southern Levant, the excavations at Tel Miqne/Ekron have delineated four phases, 9D–C, 9B–A (=Str. VII, VI, V; Dothan and Zukerman: 2004), while Ashdod has produced five levels, 6, 5, 4b, and 4a (=Str. XIIIb–XIa) (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005, 9). In Grid 38 at Ashkelon, excavations have revealed four phases, levels 20–17 (Master 2005: fig. 20.3).

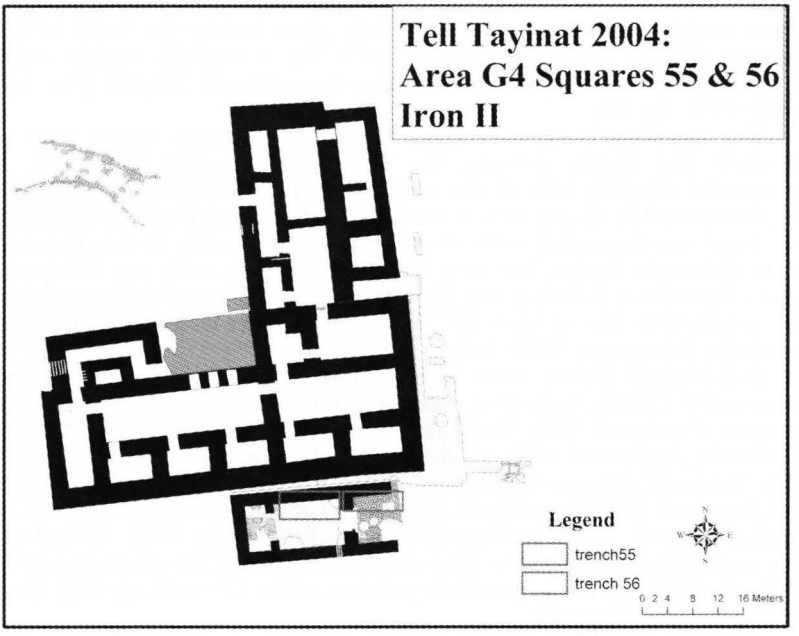

Fig. 3. Tell Ta'yinat Field 1, Squares 55 and 56, overlaid on Buildings I and II (Harrison et al. 2006: fig. 4).

Aegean Contacts With Tell Ta'yinat and the Amuq

Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery

The excavations at Tell Ta'yinat thus far have yielded several restorable Phase N vessels and a large number of painted sherds, several of which display salient Myc IIIC:1 motifs. Figure 4 illustrates the skyphos, or bell-shaped bowl, with one or two horizontal handles. Thirty-five examples, thirty-three of which were painted, were recovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition, each bearing one of three varieties of decoration as described by Swift (1958: 66). All of the bell-shaped bowls have a ring base, a slightly everted rim, close-set horizontal handles and are decorated with a painted band that runs along each handle and terminates at the attachment point. The Ta'yinat skyphos (Fig. 4.1; Ta'yinat FP 5; FS 284, Furumark 1972: fig.

14) most closely resembles Z192 from Judaidah (Fig. 4.4; Swift 1958: fig. 21), and corresponds to Furumark's type 285 (1941: 634).

Skyphos A2542 from Chatal Höyük (Fig. 4.2; Swift 1958: fig. 19) features a painted scheme that marks the advent of the LH IIIC Early period (1190–1130 BCE). Given the fluid nature of development inherent in the relative chronology of Myc IIIC:1 pottery, this motif constitutes a rare diagnostic fossil. This bowl type almost always has a solidly coated interior, and on the exterior, either bands on the lower body and base, or is completely plain below the level of the handles (Rutter 2003: 197; French 1975: 53). A slightly variant form is represented by Skyphos B2361, also from Chatal Höyük (Fig. 4.3; Swift 1958: fig. 20).

The skyphos is far and away the most common vessel type at Ashdod and Ekron. Among the Mycenaean vessels recovered, it comprised roughly 50% of the total (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 8–12), compared to nearly 30% of the total in the Amuq Plain (Swift 1958: 66). Most are decorated with simple horizontal bands or a somewhat more elaborate design, but very few are plain. Not only was this bowl type a favorite at Ashdod and Ekron, it remained popular throughout the productive life of Myc IIIC:1 pottery, which lasted nearly three centuries (Mountjoy 1986: 219).

Bell-shaped bowls have been found at coastal sites across the Levant and Cilicia, including Acco (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 12), Sarepta (Pritchard 1975: 90–91, figs. 26:4–5; Koehl 1985: 119–21, figs. 20:193–96; Anderson 1988: pl. 28:19), Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni et al. 1979: 249), Tarsus (Goldman 1956b: figs. 330f), and Kazanli Höyük (Sherratt and Crouwel 1987: figs. 4:6, 8). Moreover, parallels exist on Cyprus at Sinda Period II, dated to Myc IIIC:1b (Karageorghis 1990: 12 and pl. VI), and Maa-Palaeokastro, also dated to Myc IIIC:1b (Karageorghis 1990: pl. XVIII:4). These parallels point to a late 12th century BCE date for the Ta'yinat skyphos.

A more complete vessel at Tell Ta'yinat was restored in the form of a two-handled jar or amphora (Fig. 4:5; Ta'yinat FP 5; FS 69, Furumark 1972: fig. 7), which closely parallels a vessel from Chatal Höyük (Fig. 4:6; Swift 1958: fig. 24), although with a different paint scheme. A second parallel is found at Tell Afis (Venturi 1998: 129; fig. 4:5). The first two amphorae contain three horizontal bands on the body, one on the lower section, one at the shoulder, and one on the lower neck. All three are painted around the rim and have tassels that descend down each handle and flourish at mid-body. The zigzag vertical triglyph on the Ta'yinat amphora is analogous to Furumark's motif of paneled patterns (FM 75, Furumark 1972: 416–20), dated to ca. 1200 BCE. The Afis vessel is from Level 8, or the middle of the 11th century BCE. Venturi notes further parallels from Period I in the Hama cemetery, which has been dated to ca. 1200–1075 BCE (Venturi 1998: 129; Riis 1948: 56, fig. 48). Based on Swift's periodization and initial stratigraphic assessment at Tell Ta'yinat, this vessel likely dates to the mid 12th century BCE.

A number of other diagnostic Myc IIIC:1 sherds have been collected that further testify to an Aegeanizing influence at Tell

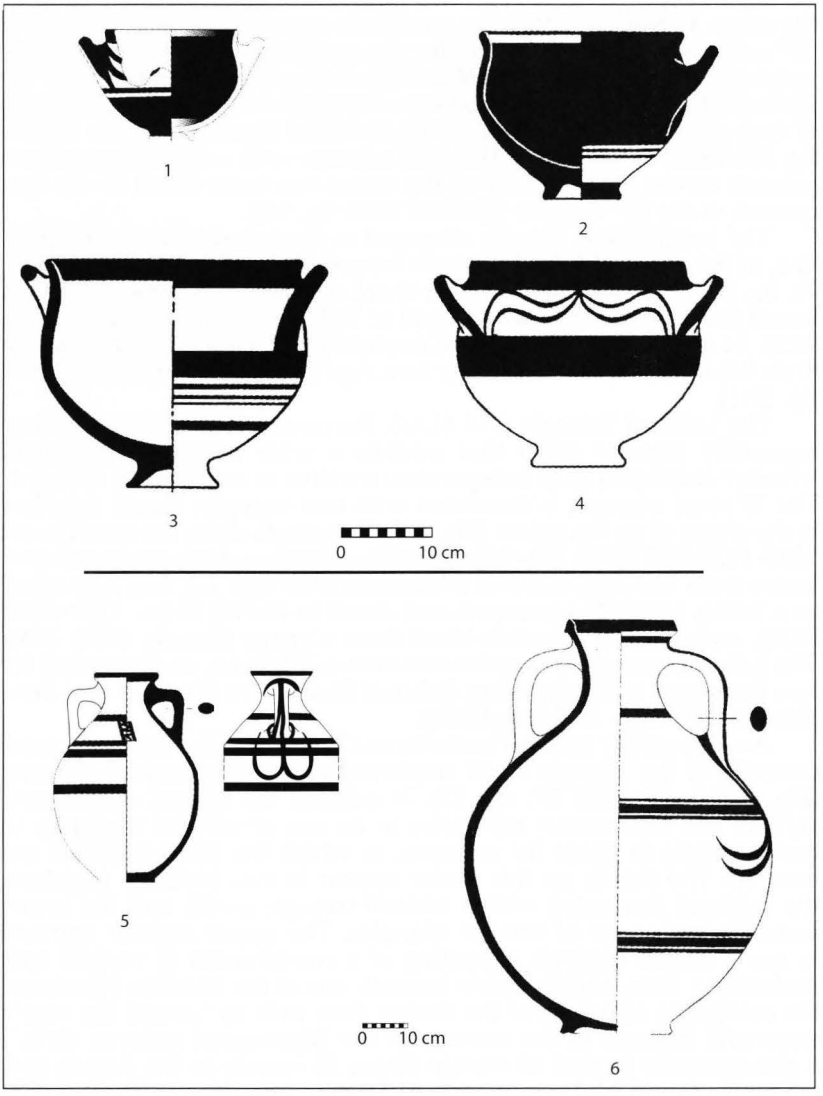

Fig. 4. Skyphoi from Ta'yinat, Chatal Höyük (A2542 and B2361) and Judaidah (Z192) (see Swift 1958: figs. 19-21), and Amphorae from Ta'yinat and Chatal Höyük (Swift 1958: fig. 24).

Ta'yinat. A large restored krater (Fig. 5.3) combines two motifs: Isolated Semicircles (FM 43: j; Furumark 1972: 345) and a Zigzag pattern (FM 61: 1; Furumark 1972: 391) on two horizontal registers, one on top of the other. Furumark dates the semicircle motif to the first half of the 12th century (1972: 348), and dates the consecutive zigzags to widely varying periods (Furumark 1972: 391). A mended krater from the LB IIb Transitional Phase at Tarsus bears a single row of zigzags consisting of four parallel lines instead of the standard three (Goldman 1956b: fig. 336:1352) In level 9a at Tell Afis, a krater with a set of zigzag lines painted across the shoulder of the vessel has been dated to the last quarter of the 12th century (Venturi 1998: fig. 4:2).

The semicircle is usually arranged in single rows on a horizontal line, as the only published example from the Amuq attests (Swift 1958: 76, fig. 27:D). An analogous krater sherd with a row of semicircles was found in an unspecified Iron I level at Tell Qarqar (Dornemann 1999: 89:5). At Ain Dara, a krater sherd depicting semicircles in the Granary Style has been dated to the Early Iron Age (Stone and Zimansky 1999: fig. 27:1).

The Latticed Triangle (FM 61A:5, Furumark 1972: 391) is another regionally popular motif that exhibits a wide range of variations, whether employed as an independent motif or as an auxiliary element. The Ta'yinat example is decorated with two triangles joined together in the shape of an hourglass (Fig. 5.1). Furumark dates the motif to ca. 1200–1125 BCE (1972: 391–92). A similar motif has also been found on a krater from Tell Afis, in Level 10 (Bonatz 1998: figs. 1:2; 5:2), identified as a lattice butterfly ornament and dated to the LB II (ca. 1250–1200 BCE), with further parallels cited from Cyprus (Bonatz 1998: 218). The latticed triangle was quite common in Philistia, as illustrated by two Bichrome examples from Ashdod Stratum XI (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005: figs. 3.47:9 and 3.54).

An elaborately painted krater from Chatal Höyük provides a good example of the triangle motif employed as an independent element (Fig. 5.2; Swift 1958: 67; fig. 23). It exhibits the typical ornamental style of the Mycenaean repertoire in its use of vertical triglyphs to create panels or space for metopes, in which the various motifs are arrayed. The motifs on this krater appear in two separate registers, the topmost decorated with a latticed triangle motif, and the lower consisting of a row of smaller triangles. The upper register appears to use a simple triglyph consisting of a combination of vertical and undulating lines, barely visible beneath one of the handles. However, the composite structure of the design does little to "accent the vase's structural features in the manner of the Mycenaean tectonic style," a characteristic typical of certain Phase N vessels in the Amuq and evidently found on large vessels in Hama, according to Swift (1958: 71).

Only two bird motifs (FM 7, Furumark 1972: 253) have thus far been found at sites in the Amuq Plain. The first was recovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition in the 1930s (unprovenanced; Swift 1958: 75, fig. 27:A), and the TAP excavations have produced the second (Fig. 5.4). Swift suggested a Late Minoan bird motif as a parallel to the former

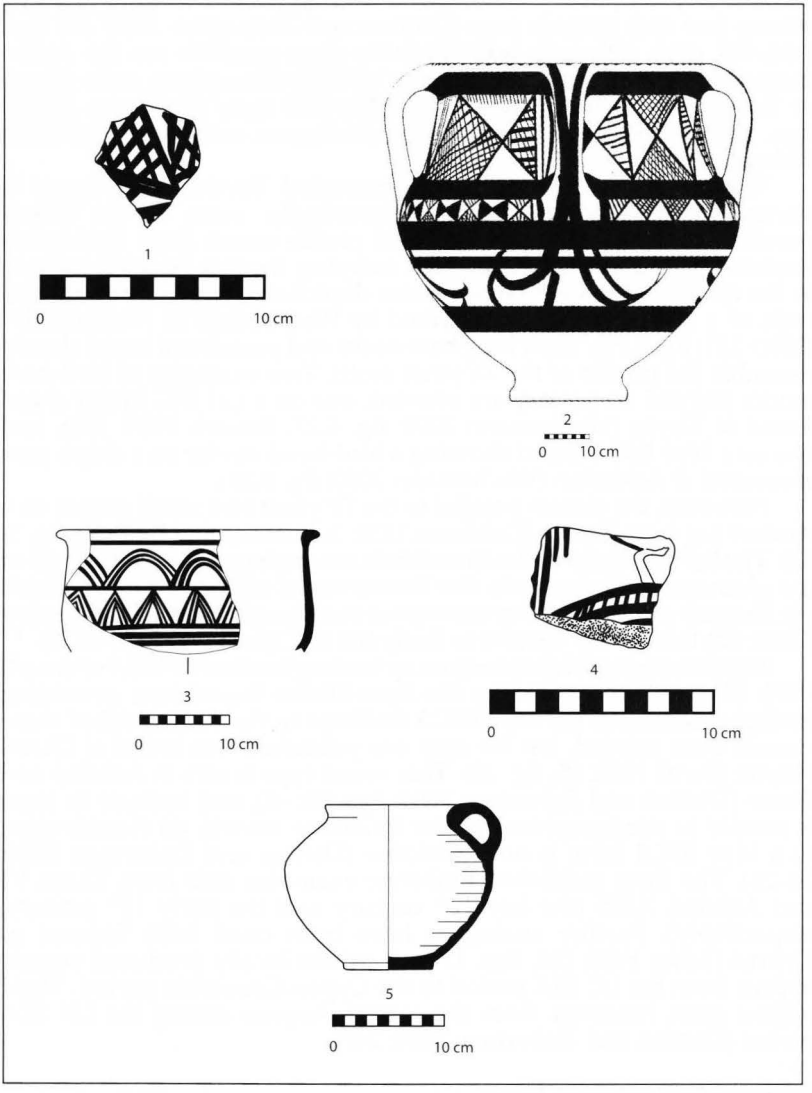

Fig. 5. Kraters from Ta'yinat and Chatal Höyük (Swift 1958: fig. 23), a bird motif from Ta'yinat, and an Aegean-style cooking jug from Ta'yinat.

that is less than convincing, though none of Furumark's catalogue of bird figures (1972: figs. 30–31) comes any closer. The bird motif occurs occasionally on pottery from Ekron and Ashdod, including kraters, stirrup jars and strainer jugs (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 39; figs. 8:14; 9:9, etc.), although none provide close parallels for the Amuq examples. Several unique examples of bird decorations were found at Tarsus, but in the Late Bronze Myc IIIB style (Goldman 1956b: figs. 1323–1325). Again, no obvious analogues occur in Furumark's listings.

The long beak of the newly excavated Tayinat bird figure is particularly difficult to match. Interestingly, some of the closest parallels to the bird's neck and head profile comes from bird-heads depicted on the bows of the ships carrying the Sea Peoples, as seen in the reliefs at Medinet Habu. These depictions, which form the two ends of a boat, have been described by Wachsmann as "waterbirds" (2000: 121; fig. 6.19). Their long bare necks and prominent beaks closely resemble the profile of the Ta'yinat motif. Two examples of bird-boat motifs painted on pottery are attested, one on a LH IIIC krater sherd found at Tiryns (Wachsmann 2000: fig. 6.27; Bouzek 1985: 178), and one on a Myc IIIC:1 sherd showing a bird-head device on a ship's post recovered at Ashkelon (Wachsmann 2000: fig. 6.29).

However, the closest parallel to the Ta'yinat bird motif occurs on a strainer jug from Tarsus (Goldman 1939: 2–5; Mountjoy 2005: 92, fig. 3: 42). The barred necks of the three birds are analogous, as is the style of the plumage. Unfortunately, the Tarsus vessel was found in a rubbish pit, thereby preventing any attempt at stratigraphic dating. Mountjoy (2005: 92) tentatively dates it to Early LH IIIC (ca. 1190–1130 BCE).

Eight examples of spouted jars, or feeding bottles (FS 160, Furumark 1972: 31), were recovered by the Syro-Hittite Expedition, providing further evidence of the Myc IIIC:1 tradition in the Amuq. All of these vessels were painted, but the only one published was found at Chatal Höyük (Swift 1958: 68; fig. 25). This vessel type is rare at Ashdod and Ekron (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: figs. 30: –8), and because its form is similar to stratigraphically later Philistine vessels, its classification as a Myc IIIC:1 form is not restrictive (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 24–28). The three published Philistine examples date from Ekron VI and Ashdod XIIIb (the late 12th century and the early 12th century, respectively). Further analogues have been cited from Enkomi in Cyprus (Kling 1989: 160, figs. 17:c–d), where locally produced vessels appear from the LC IIIA period to the Cypro-Geometric period. Their origins stem, however, from the eastern Aegean during the LH IIIA period (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 24f).

Aegean-Style Cooking Ware

A distinctive cooking pot type provides compelling evidence for the presence of an intrusive Aegean culture at Ashdod, Ekron and Ashkelon. It is morphologically and technologically distinguishable from both its Bronze Age predecessors and Iron Age contemporaries (Killebrew 1999: 94; 2005: 222–23). It has an ovoid body, a disc base,

sloping shoulders with an everted rim, which can be rounded, thickened, or less frequently triangular in section. Most pots from Ekron and Ashdod have a single loop handle, but sometimes they have two, each of which attaches at the rim (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 28). The form is commonly found on both the Greek mainland and islands, including Mycenae, Tiryns and Lefkandi (Popham and Sacket 1968: fig. 31; Popham and Milburn 1971: 337: 6), as well as on Cyprus (Yasur-Landau 2003a: 589; 2003b: 46–47; Killebrew 2005: 222–23, see n. 98 for further bibliography), and originated as early as LH IIIA (ca. 1400 BCE; Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 28).

The Syro-Hittite Expedition was able to recover only one example of a cooking pot they considered complete enough to register. It is described as having a flat base, a rounded lower body, and a straight shoulder that slopes inward. The rim is thickened and two vertical handles attach at the rim and shoulder (Swift 1959: 69). Though Swift provided no illustration, the description is precisely that of the Aegean-inspired cooking pot, or jug. In the Amuq, these cooking pots were manufactured from dark gray-brown clay heavily tempered with crushed shell, which made them easy to distinguish from Phase O cooking pots (Swift 1958: 65).

During the 2006 season, the TAP excavations produced the first intact examples of this cooking pot type found at Tell Ta'yinat. They have the characteristic features of the Aegean tradition: ovoid bodies, sloping shoulders, a short curving neck, everted and rounded rims, and disc or ring bases (Fig. 5.5). One of the Ta'yinat exemplars is virtually identical to a cooking pot from Ekron Stratum VIA (early 11th century BCE; Dothan and Zukerman 2004: fig 36.2). Other closely analogous vessels have been found at Tarsus (Goldman 1956b: figs. 389:1220–21) and on Cyprus (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983: figs. 50: 7–8).

In Dothan's view, the ultimate origin of the Philistine cooking pot is to be found in the Aegean zone. Cypriot cooking pots differ from Aegean cooking pots in that they were handmade and have a round base (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 30).[2] Killebrew, however, while acknowledging the Aegean inspiration of this cooking ware, argues that the closest links, both in terms of greater numbers of parallels and closer typological correspondence, exist on Cyprus and in Cilicia, particularly at Tarsus (Killebrew 2005: 223). Moreover, the typical Late Helladic cooking pot is normally placed on top of a tripod, a vessel type that does not occur in Philistia (Killebrew 2000: 242; 1998: 401). Alternatively, it has also been suggested that both forms usually occur side by side and can be found at almost any LH IIIC site, undermining the possibility of using this vessel type as a marker of ethnic identity (Yasur-Landau 2003a: 589).

Stratigraphically, the Aegean-style cooking pot first appears in Ekron Stratum VII and Ashdod Stratum XIIIb (Killebrew 2005: 244, n. 97), and over the course of the following century was gradually replaced by the traditional Canaanite-style alternative, a trend interpreted as

[2] Another site with cooking pots analogous to those on Cyprus is Megiddo Stratum VI, where the vessels have rounded bases instead of the standard Philistine flat base (Harrison 2004: 30, pls. 9:5–16).

evidence of cultural assimilation (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 28, 30). Two Aegean-style cooking pots that date to the LB II have been published from Tarsus (Goldman 1956b: figs. 389:1220–21). These also have a flat ring base, ovoid shape, everted rim, and handles (either one or two) that attach at the rim. However, the Tarsus pots have a less everted neck and rim profile and are somewhat smaller overall, measuring only 8–10 cm in diameter, versus the 15–25 cm reported for the published examples from Ashdod and Ekron. The Tarsus cooking pots also appear to be less well crafted and are probably handmade. There is little doubt, however, that they exhibit an Aegean style.

The cooking pot provides an intriguing measure of cultural contact and food production technology. Killebrew, for example, has shown that the Philistine potting tradition differed from that of the indigenous inhabitants of the southern coastal plain at every stage of the production process, from the choice of clay source, to formation techniques and firing temperatures (Killebrew 1998: 400–01; 1999: 108; 2005: 227). Since both petrographic analysis and INAA have demonstrated that the pottery was locally made, the sudden appearance of a unique cooking ware tradition becomes a persuasive argument for the introduction of an Aegean element (Kanta 2003: 178), particularly if we accept that culinary practices tend to remain conservative, as ethnographic studies have shown (Hesse 1986: 17).

Summary Observations

The preliminary findings at Tell Ta'yinat find no fault with the view, pending the results of chemical and petrographic analyses, that the Myc IIIC:1 pottery from the Amuq was the product of local industry, a pattern that has become increasingly evident throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin. The idiosyncratic character of these assemblages, which variously retain the distinctive stylistic features of their Aegean precursors, has resulted in the regional development emblematic of the Myc IIIC:1 tradition (Mountjoy 1993: 164).

Another aspect of the regionalism that prevailed in the Amuq during Phase N was the disruption of trade patterns that were the hallmark of the previous Late Bronze Age. The Syro-Hittite Expedition registered only four imported vessels or vessel fragments, all of which were Cypro-Geometric pieces (dated ca. 1050–950 BCE). These, Swift postulated, were instrumental in establishing the terminal date for the Amuq Phase N assemblage (1958: 121–22).

However, Swift's view that the character of the Phase N assemblage was not subject to sub-phasing is open to challenge. Our initial indications are that at least two ceramic horizons can be discerned within the Phase N sequence. The Syro-Hittite Expedition noted the dramatic increase in painted ware from Phase M. This observation can now be confirmed, though we are not yet able to provide statistical support for the assertion. Nevertheless, the latter portion of Phase N clearly witnessed a significant decrease in the percentage of painted wares as they gave way to the Red Slipped Burnished Ware (RSBW) of Phase O.

The decline of the painted ware tradition over the course of Phase N is paralleled at other Levantine sites. At Tarsus, in Cilicia, where the Transitional Ware included a rich collection of Myc IIIC:1 pottery, "evidence for the lingering influence of the Bronze Age of Tarsus, and more specifically of the Mycenaean style, which ceased to exist" at the end of the 12th century (Goldman 1956a: 63, 350).[3] Similarly, the excavations at Tell Afis produced a significant percentage of painted wares in Level 9a, dated ca. 1150–1100 BCE, but very little before or after that phase (Venturi 1998: 129).

Several attempts have been made to delineate criteria for the chronological development of painted wares, for example, Dothan's early Simple to later Elaborate Style at Ashdod and Ekron (Dothan 1989: 4–6; Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 36, 44). But Dothan's scheme, which assumes a transition from simple to more complex styles, has been questioned. At Ashkelon, both simple motifs, consisting of bands, and more complex spiral motifs were present together in the earliest level, as they also appear to be at Ashdod and Ekron (Master 2005: 342–43), although the more elaborate decorations, which (as defined by Dothan) include pictorial motifs such as birds and fish, do indeed occur only in later Myc IIIC: 1 contexts at Ekron (specifically Levels VIIA and VI; Dothan and Zukermann 2004: 6, 36). An analogous pattern is attested on Cyprus at Sinda (Levels II and III), Kition (floors IIIA and IV in Area I) and Enkomi (IIIA; Kling 1985). The widely cited development of Philistine Monochrome into Bichrome may be paralleled at Tell Ta'yinat, as it apparently is at Ugarit and Ras Ibn Hani (cf. Singer 1985: 112; Bounni et al. 1978: 280–82; 1979: 245–57), but this remains to be proven.

To summarize the Syro-Hittite Expedition's understanding of the Phase N pottery sequence in the Amuq, they conceived of the phase as beginning in the middle of the 12th century, following a stratigraphic gap, and lasting for approximately 200 years (ca. 1150–950 BCE). Swift postulated his start date for the phase based on parallels with the Transitional Ware of Tarsus, which he believed to be earlier than Amuq Phase N material. The decorative elements consisted of simple geometric designs such as hatched and cross-hatched triangles, groups of diagonal strokes leaning in alternate directions, and wavy lines set between straight bands, all of which were usually rendered within horizontal registers (1958: 71).

Swift identified the stylistic repertoire found in the Early Iron Age Amuq with the Granary Style, a somewhat restricted tradition named after pottery found in the remains of a granary excavated at Mycenae, and dated to the 12th century. The Close Style, considered a contemporary of the Granary Style, and consisting of decorative elements that extend over the entire surface of the vessel, often with motifs added to accessory portions of the body, such as handles and

[3] The lack of stratified deposits at Tarsus remains a problem (see Ünlü 2005: 145). According to the excavator, "there was no stratification within Tarsus Mycenaean pottery" (Goldman 1956a: 206). Instead, the excavator relied on the typological system developed by Furumark to subdivide the Early Iron Age stylistically on the basis of shapes and motifs.

spouts (cf. Furumark 1941: 570–73), however, was not represented in the Amuq sequence. Swift thus judged the Transitional Ware found at Tarsus, and the LC III Decorated Ware of Cyprus, particularly the Granary Ware from Enkomi, to provide the closest parallels for the Phase N assemblage (1958: 120).

Aegean-Type Loomweights

Niemeier's other key indicator of an intrusive Aegean presence that is relevant to this discussion is the peculiar clay cylinders identified as loomweights (2001: 11–12). These curious objects were first discovered by H. Schliemann on the upper citadel at Tiryns and at Mycenae. He correctly identified them as loomweights (Schliemann 1885: 136–37, fig. 70; Stager 1991: 37). Excavations have since established that these cylindrical loomweights became common at sites throughout the Aegean during the LH IIIC period (Rahmstorf 2003: 397, 404), or roughly the same time they appeared in the Levant.

Several pieces of evidence suggest their original purpose. First, clusters of the clay objects have often been found arranged in single, double or triple rows, evidently preserving the position in which they were being used when the loom was destroyed (Stager 1991: 36–37; Haines 1971: pl. 16B; Cecchini 2000: 211). Elsewhere, they have been found in small heaps, apparently gathered in anticipation of future use. The ashy remains of burned wood have also provided evidence of loom activity (Cecchini 2000: 211), as has the discovery of microscopic concentrations of fibers (Lass 1994: 31–32).

These spoolweights, as Stager has called them, are notably different from both preceding Bronze Age and succeeding Iron Age exemplars. In contrast to typical Levantine loomweights, which are pyramidal and perforated, these objects are cylindrical, unperforated and made of unfired clay. They have also been found at sites across the eastern Mediterranean basin from Enkomi and Kition in Cyprus to the Aegean at Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos and Lefkandi (Stager 1998: 346, pl. 6).

Thus far, the TAP excavations have produced more than 80 of these spoolweights. They can be divided into two distinct types, an unfired and non-perforated cylindrical form, and a fired, perforated, and more spherical type. They have been recovered almost exclusively from the Early Iron Age levels in Field I, and exhibit at least two distinct shapes: (1) a cylindrical form with convex, rounded ends (Fig. 6.1), and an hourglass shape with a tapered mid-section and frequently flattened distal ends (Fig. 6.2). Two examples of the hourglass spool weight type also have a dimple on one end.

The Syro-Hittite Expedition excavations at Chatal Höyük also uncovered a cache of these distinctive loomweights, but in a level corresponding to their early Phase O (Haines 1971: pl. 16B). The area was characterized by domestic architecture and was reached only in a test pit (T8, Level 5b). Unfortunately, the only documentation available is a photograph that shows what appears to be approximately 25 loomweights of the cylindrical, unfired variety, some of which are

whitened. It is difficult to establish a reliable date for the level, since it was assigned only broadly to Phase O (ca. 1000–500 BCE).

The appearance of the warp-weighted loom in Syria during the Early Iron Age is now well-established (Barber 1997: 192). Both unfired and fired reels have also been found in the Late Bronze Age levels at Alisar Höyük, Tarsus and Tille Höyük, though the use of the warp-weighted loom is less certain for this period. The possibility thus exists that the warp-weighted loom arrived in Syria by way of Anatolia or Cyprus (Cecchini 2000: 217).

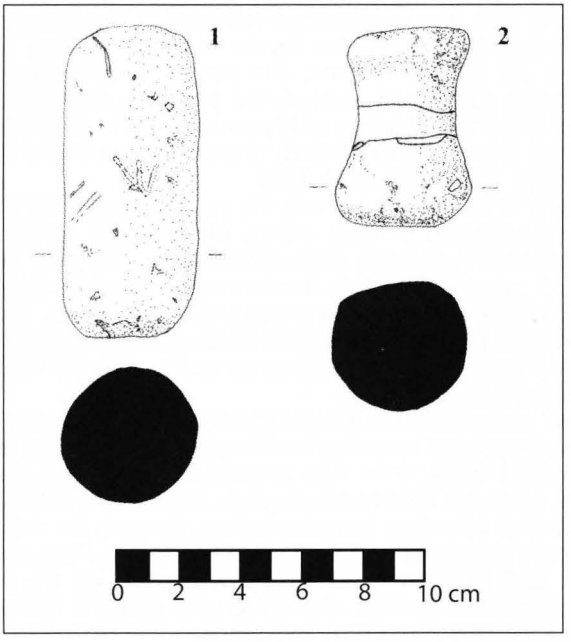

Fig. 6. Cylindrical loomweights found at Tell Ta'yinat (drawn by F. Haughey).

The pottery evidence at Tell Afis suggests that the local inhabitants came into contact with Aegean culture at the same time that the spoolweights appeared, as they were found in all levels of the Iron I, beginning with Level 9b (ca. 1150 BCE). By the end of the Iron I period, the reel-type weights were used less frequently, and the unfired variety slowly gave way to the fired type (Cecchini 2000: 217). This trend has also been noted at Ashkelon (Stager 1991: 37), where the use of these distinctive loomweights coincided with the manufacture of monochrome and bichrome pottery.

The Nature and Extent of Aegean Contact in the Amuq

To summarize, the AVRP survey documented several important developments at the outset of the Early Iron Age in the Amuq Valley. The region experienced a progressive decline in settlement over the course of the Late Bronze Age, mirroring a wider pattern of decline in sedentary settlement that prevailed across the Levant. During this period, settlements tended to concentrate toward the southern edge of the plain, taking advantage of access to trade routes. Imported Mycenaean pottery has been found at only three sites of the 21 surveyed from the LB II period (Verstraete and Wilkinson 2000: 188).

The Early Iron Age witnessed a rebound in the number of settled sites, returning almost to the levels reached during the Middle Bronze Age. At the same time, the presence of imported Aegean products ceases altogether. Instead, the period is characterized by the widespread local manufacture of Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery, which has been reported from at least 18 Early Iron Age sites in the Amuq Plain (Verstraete and Wilkinson 2000: 188).

The Early Iron Age, or Phase N, ceramic repertoire is marked by a steep increase in painted wares. Decorations consist primarily of simple geometric designs such as hatching, diagonal strokes, and wavy bands arranged within horizontal registers, along with an occasional anthropomorphic or zoomorphic depiction. According to Swift, the closest parallels elsewhere to the Amuq assemblage are the Transitional Wares found at Tarsus, as well as the LC IIIC Decorated Wares from Cyprus (1958: 120).

The TAP excavations at Tell Ta'yinat thus far have not uncovered extensive architectural remains, but they have succeeded in revealing a well-stratified Early Iron Age sequence, something the Chicago excavations were not able to accomplish. Unlike the southern Levant, and its evidence of urban transformation, there is no indication that large numbers of immigrants arrived in the Amuq Plain and imposed themselves and their material culture wholesale on the pre-existing cultural substratum. Indeed, the structural remains uncovered thus far suggest a more rudimentary existence.

The complete list of Aegean cultural traits noted by Niemeier (2001: 11–12) is admittedly not all in evidence yet at Tell Ta'yinat and its immediate vicinity. At the same time, however, the widespread existence of extensive Mycenaean IIIC:1 assemblages is undeniable, and surely culturally and historically significant. If dietary habits are a relatively conservative indicator of group identity, then the propensity for Aegean-style tablewares and cooking wares must be seen as inescapable evidence of a foreign presence.

Consequently, it does not seem unreasonable to infer the influx of small groups of Aegean or Aegeanized peoples into the region during this period. Whether they arrived from Cilicia, Cyprus, western Anatolia, or elsewhere is beyond the current scope of our knowledge. But they appear to have taken up residence across from a ruined Alalakh on the old hill of Ta'yinat, which had been abandoned for nearly a millennium. Not unlike the Philistines, we can postulate their

cultural assimilation as reflected by the eventual disappearance of the painted ware tradition, and coincided with the formation of the Neo-Hittite Kingdom of Patina.

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