TAYINAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

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The 2024 excavation season of the Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) was the first one following the devastating earthquakes of February 6, 2023, which caused widespread destruction and the death of thousands in southeastern Türkiye and northwestern Syria. The TAP expedition compound was also a casualty of these earthquakes. One of the primary objectives of the season, therefore, was the construction of a new facility (fig. 1), which was erected adjacent to the compound (*kazı evi*) of Koç University's Tell Kurdu Expedition thanks to the generous invitation of our colleague Prof. Dr. Rana Özbal, director of the ongoing excavations at Tell Kurdu, the site of ISAC excavations led by Robert Braidwood in the 1930s.

The 2024 season, conducted between June 27 and August 16, resumed the long-running investigations in Field 1 (primarily Early Bronze Age [EBA]) and Field 7 (Iron Age), with excavations in a total of nine discrete excavation units (or "squares"; fig. 2).

FIELD 1

Excavations were conducted in all four Field 1 squares (figs. 3–4) and focused on two primary season objectives:

1. Articulation of the architectural remains of Field Phase (FP) 8b (ca. 2300–2200 BCE, EB IVB) in Squares G4.56, G4.65, and G4.66
2. Investigation of the earlier FP10 (ca. 2500–2300 BCE, EB IVA), primarily in Square G4.55, stratigraphically sealed by FP8b architecture previously excavated in this area

Figure 1. Newly constructed Tayinat expedition compound.

Square G4.55

The main objective in Square G4.55 was to examine the rooms associated with structures from FP10 (EB IVA) and, ideally, to locate the floors of these rooms.

The limited spatial extent of the rooms confined within the square restricted access to the FP10 remains. Although significant FP10 walls were identified, often measuring more than 1 m in thickness, the rooms extended beyond the perimeters of the excavation area. Despite the limited exposure possible, a significant amount of destruction debris, including roof collapse, had been identified in this area during the 2022 season.

Following removal of the remaining FP8 architectural features, the western half of an FP10 room was excavated, with a small sounding inside the room extending to a depth of more than 2 m (the sounding is visible in the upper left of fig. 3). The floor of the room was not reached, but substantial amounts of burned debris, including large amounts of wood charcoal, were uncovered in the room.

Square G4.56

The FP8b architectural remains in Square G4.56 had been excavated in previous seasons and the floors of rooms from this phase identified in several areas (fig. 4).

In the western part of the square, beneath the floors of one of these rooms, the upper sections of walls associated with FP10 had been identified in 2022. These walls extended westward and linked with architectural remains identified in Square G4.55. The goal of the 2024 season, therefore, was to identify and expose the floors of the remaining FP8b rooms and then to remove

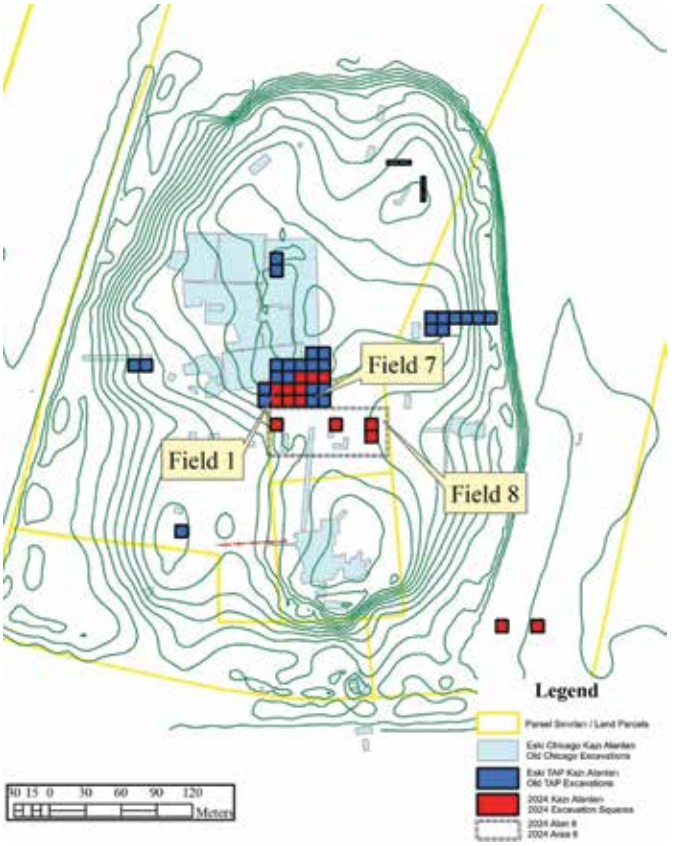

Figure 2. Site plan of Tayinat showing the principal excavation fields.

Figure 3. Aerial view of Field 1.

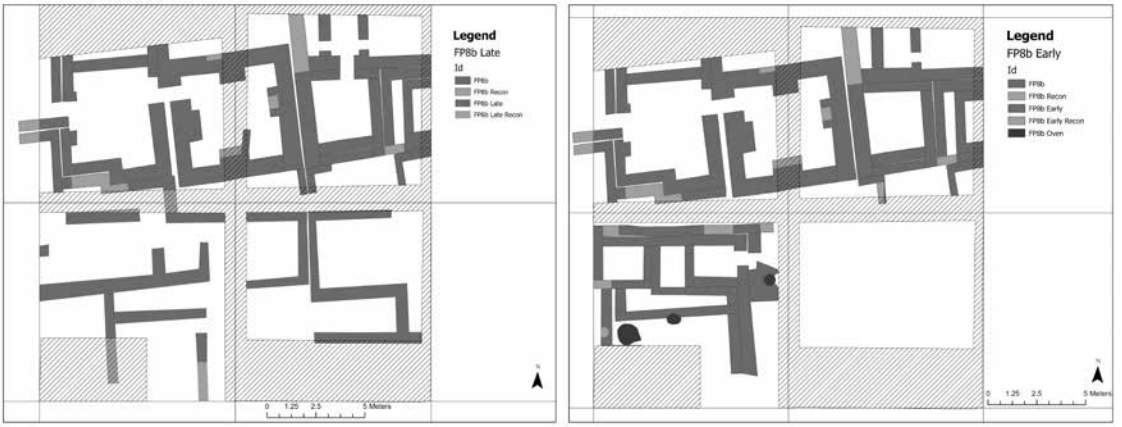

Figure 4. Plan of Field Phase 8b EB IVB architecture in Field 1.

the remains of this field phase to facilitate expanded excavations of the next phase in this area. This work was carried out using a technique that had been successfully implemented previously in Square G4.55. The EB IVB walls were first sectioned, permitting documentation of the construction techniques employed, and then systematically removed.

The walls and rooms discovered in Square G4.56 are believed to have been part of at least three large buildings that extended across the full extent of Field 1. Several additional rooms and floors were identified as the excavations progressed, and the sectioning of the walls associated with this field phase revealed a complicated sequence of construction and renovation throughout the complex.

Square G4.65

In contrast to Squares G4.55 and G4.56, where the FP8b architecture was preserved in one primary construction phase to a depth of roughly 1.5 m, the Square G4.65 investigations revealed a more complicated stratigraphy, with two architectural subphases associated with FP8b (fig. 4).

The latter, more ephemeral phase had already been removed in 2022. Consequently, the primary objectives of the 2024 field season were to (1) complete the excavation of the earlier subphase in the hope of resolving several remaining questions about the layout of the rooms from this subphase; (2) remove the fill from within the rooms; (3) identify their floors; and (4) delineate a plan of the subphase. Excavation of the structures associated with this earlier FP8b subphase indicated food preparation and cooking as the primary activities in this area, with several *tābûn*s (clay ovens) and other pyrotechnic installations uncovered.

Square G4.66

The Square G4.66 excavations were the first ones to be conducted in this area since the 2015 field season, which had uncovered early Iron Age I remains as well as a series of ephemeral walls tentatively dated to FP8b. As in Square G4.65, it was anticipated that this architecture formed part of the later subphase of FP8b (fig. 4), that this architectural phase would be relatively shallow in depth, and that it would be found to seal the earlier architectural subphase uncovered in the adjacent Square G4.65.

The primary objectives of the 2024 season, therefore, were to confirm the layout of the walls that had been tentatively identified in 2015 and to clarify the plan of the structures belonging to this subphase. A secondary goal was to determine whether evidence could be identified for an earlier subphase beneath these walls.

The season's excavations confirmed the existence of several rooms dating to the later FP8b subphase and, toward the end of the season, the existence of an earlier, and likely more substantial, FP8b subphase.

The walls of this phase were also positively connected with the contemporary structures in Square G4.65 to the west.

Micromorphology and Phytolith Sampling

Soil samples were taken during the 2024 field season as part of a pilot study to conduct micromorphological and phytolith analyses of the EBA structures in Field 1. As part of this study, micromorphological blocks were extracted from several EBA contexts, with particular focus on storage features, such as pits and bins. Samples were simultaneously taken from these same contexts for phytolith analysis. These samples and their subsequent analysis will provide a better understanding of EBA food storage practices.

FIELD 7

Excavations were conducted in five squares in Field 7 during the 2024 field season (fig. 2). The Field 7 objectives were as follows:

1. To understand the stratigraphic layering associated with the Neo-Hittite–period statues (Suppiluliuma, female, lion, etc.) and to collect basalt from locations thought to be associated with these statues
2. To delineate the stratigraphy beneath Temple XVI and the context of the ceramic floors revealed during the 2022 season
3. To determine the southwestern and southeastern extents of the stone pavement (courtyard and street), which forms a significant part of the Iron Age complex

Square G4.47

A series of ceramic installations associated with ritual activities was excavated in Square G4.47. These installations were set within a mudbrick structure that included a large storage jar dated to the Iron II/III period. The easternmost ceramic installation was lined with large, EBA pithos fragments, likely for insulation and/or stabilization.

The westernmost ceramic installation was much smaller and not lined with EBA ceramic fragments. To the north, a third installation, partially visible in the balk, was similar in size to the western installation. Both the western and northern installations featured working surfaces with significant quantities of ash.

Following the abandonment of these installations, a small, north–south wall was built over the fills and working surfaces in this area. This wall intersected with a large, east–west enclosure wall.

Square G4.48

The Square G4.48 excavations uncovered a series of surfaces heavily lined with ceramic sherds and a room associated with a wall to the east (fig. 5). The finds from this area included cooking vessels, a basalt grinder, a basalt pedestal bowl, and numerous animal bones—all indicative of food preparation activity. The 2024 excavations identified a succession of three well-preserved, ceramic-lined surfaces and part of a fourth. A large quantity of bone fragments belonging to a wide variety of species—including cattle (a partial skull), sheep/goat, horse, and fish—were also associated with these surfaces. In some cases, the bone fragments were found placed between the ceramic remains, suggesting that this area may have been intensively used for ritual activities.

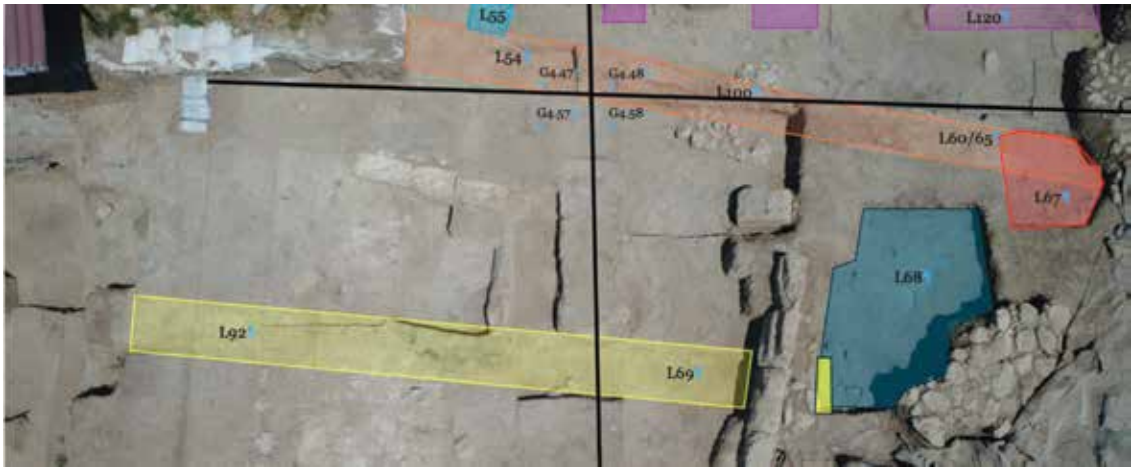

Figure 5. Features identified in Squares G4.47, G4.48, G4.57, and G4.58.

Square G4.57

A conglomerate surface with pebbles, first identified in 2022, was further delineated during the 2024 season. The Square G4.57 excavations also uncovered a series of large mudbrick walls, part of a large complex sealed by the later conglomerate layer (fig. 5); this mudbrick complex is believed to extend into Squares G4.58 and G4.47/G4.48. If these proposed connections are accurate, they may signal the presence of a very large building, possibly part of a temple complex, presumably dating to the late Iron I / early Iron II period.

Square G4.58

Excavations in Square G4.58 were initiated following the discovery of a large, east–west wall in the adjacent Square G4.57 that was part of the mudbrick complex described above. It was suspected that the eastern end of this wall extended into G4.58; subsequent excavation confirmed this extension.

Square G4.67

Square G4.67, originally opened in 2022 to trace and understand the extent of a large stone pavement, was fully exposed during the 2024 season. Although the stone pavement was found to have suffered damage during the early modern period, the 2024 excavations established that the conglomerate layer seen in Square G4.57 slopes downward as it extends south and continues beneath the stone pavement.

Basalt Reconstruction Project

The Basalt Reconstruction Project (BRP) is an ongoing effort to reconstruct the monumental basalt sculptures and sculptural material—including Hieroglyphic Luwian–inscribed stelae; the Suppililiuma, female, and lion statues; and six to eight as-yet-unidentified sculptures—at the Hatay Archaeology Museum laboratory. Due to post-earthquake work on the infrastructure of the Hatay Museum, the BRP was moved to a portable unit in the museum's garden under the guidance of the museum directorate. In 2024, the reconstruction effort focused primarily on the fragments with Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions because of space limitations in the portable unit. The 3D scanning of all basalt pieces started as part of an effort to make them accessible to team members located abroad, prioritizing fragments already joined or considered joinable (fig. 6). Eventually, this work will allow digital comparison for joins with fragments in the ISAC collections from excavations conducted at Tayinat in the 1930s.

Figure 6. 3D scanning of Iron Age sculptural fragments.

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