

# CHATAL HÖYÜK PUBLICATION PROJECT

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## General Introduction

In 1930, a letter of the well-known historian and philologist Dr. Emile Forrer drove the attention of the Oriental Institute toward the large mound of Chatal Höyük on the eastern part of the Amuq plain in the Hatay province of Turkey; the letter suggested that this mound could be identified with the Iron Age capital Khunaluha (fig. 1). One year later, the Oriental Institute began archaeological activities on this mound and continued them over a period of four years (1932–1936), bringing to light domestic units on a large extent over the whole area of the mound. The archeological team of the Oriental Institute, directed for the most part by I. McEwan, pursued excavations on the mound at the same time as other investigations on neighboring mounds (Tell Tayinat, Tell Dahab, Tell Judeideh, Tell Kurdu) and in the last years at the same time as a survey of the whole Amuq plain. During the excavations, however, it became evident that the mound of Tell Tayinat, where numerous representative structures, inscriptions, and carved orthostats were found, was to be identified with the Iron Age town center of Khunaluha.

However, the site of Chatal Höyük revealed a large village continuously occupied during the Late Bronze and Iron Age periods and provided an extremely large amount of pottery from all occupational periods.

The materials (small finds and pottery sherds) collected during the excavations at Chatal Höyük were divided between the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago and the Antakya Museum in Turkey. Approximately 1,800 of the 8,000 inventoried small finds, 100 complete vessels, and 17,000 pottery sherds were brought to Chicago. Some of the objects are currently visible on



*Figure 1. General view of the mound of Chatal Höyük (1932)*

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exhibit in the Oriental Institute Museum, while the majority is kept in the Museum storerooms. The documentation records — field notebooks, architectural drawings, object register, notes — were also brought to the Oriental Institute and are kept in the Museum Archives. The staff and the volunteers of the Oriental Institute Museum have provided the objects and pottery sherds with inventory numbers and have entered the data into the Museum database. This process was completed for the Chatal Höyük materials in March 2008.

### Historical and Archaeological Overview

Recent excavations and better knowledge of the history of the second and first millennia in the Hatay area have revealed a variegated and changing political situation. In the second half of the second millennium B.C., the area of the Amuq was part of the Hittite empire and was ruled from the province capital of Carchemish. After the collapse of the Hittite empire in the thirteenth century B.C., this region lacked a central power. While several settlements, including Ugarit and Alalakh, were destroyed, probably as a consequence of external raids from the Mediterranean Sea (by the so-called Sea People), others, such as Carchemish and Kinet Höyük, were continuously inhabited. In the tenth century B.C., the region became one of the independent Syro-Hittite kingdoms that occupied northwestern Syria and southeastern Turkey. This kingdom, known as Unqi/Pattina, kept its independence until the Assyrian invasion and the conquest of its capital, Tell Tayinat/Khunalua, in 738 B.C. The region was then transformed into an Assyrian province, called Kullani, which had a local governor. After the collapse of the Assyrian empire, the area continued to be inhabited. Since the tenth century the area was characterized by the arrival and diffusion of Aramean and Phoenician languages witnessing the presence, mainly for the Arameans, of other group of peoples living in the region.

The materials from the older phases (Neolithic period to the end of the third millennium) collected during the the survey and small soundings were published in *Mounds in the Plain of Antioch: An Archaeological Survey*, by Robert J. Braidwood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937; OIP 48); and *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch*, by Robert J. Braidwood, Linda S. Braidwood, and Richard C. Haines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; OIP 61). However, materials dating to the later phases (second and first millennia B.C.) obtained by the extensive excavations were never published. Consequently, 95 percent of all materials from Chatal Höyük and the stratigraphic sequence of the mound have never been published or completely analyzed.

### Relevance of the Project in the Archaeology of the Near East

Archaeological materials coming from the Amuq are important for the information they contribute to the chronology of the Amuq, a region characterized by a relatively small number of textual sources. Moreover, due to the regional character of the Iron Age kingdoms, the material culture changes only very slightly from one region to the next, rendering a pottery sequence for the Syro-Hittite centers difficult to establish. Few archaeological materials from recent excavations in the Amuq (as Kinet Höyük) have been published in the last twenty years; moreover, these never equal the number of pottery sherds and small finds collected during the Chatal Höyük excavations. This site remains the largest excavated area in the region and consequently represents the largest pottery assemblage. Its publication would provide researchers with a valuable reference for future excavations.

Because Chatal Höyük is one of the few extensively excavated “village” sites, a functional analysis of the materials within their spatial context can shed light on the urban organization of a village in a specific time period and on the connections to the “capital” of the region.

## The Publication Project

Many different reasons — not least of which is the sheer quantity of materials — have postponed the analysis and publication of the excavations at Chatal Höyük. Thanks to the activities of the Amuq Regional Survey, which were resumed in 1995, attention was driven again toward the necessity of publishing the results of the old excavations. The Oriental Institute and the Amuq committee support the resumption of research on these excavations and have given me permission to work on the materials and stratigraphy of Chatal Höyük. This research is financed by a grant of the Shelby White-Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications.

The work began in Chicago in November 2006 and is still in progress. We focused first on a general inventory of the documents kept in the Oriental Institute Archives, which are of particular relevance in order to better understand the archeological context of the small finds and pottery. In order to provide a complete stratigraphical (and consequently chronological) sequence, the analysis of these materials cannot be based on stylistic criteria without considering their findspot.

All documents have been inventoried, and it was possible to distinguish three kinds of written documents: (1) documents related to the organization of the excavations (letters, telegrams, short reports, official communications between the Institute and the archaeologists), (2) original documents produced in the field (field notebooks, architectural drawings, field photos or negatives of small finds), and (3) secondary documents produced after the end of the archaeological investigations by scholars or students who were dealing with single groups of artifacts, mainly from a stylistic point of view. In parallel to the vital information on the stratigraphy of the site, this analysis has brought to light relevant information on the internal organization of work in the field, the turn over of the directors, as well as the expectations and wishes of the Oriental Institute and of the archaeologists. For example, it became evident by studying these documents that, although the mound was revealing a large settlement rich in small finds and pottery, the absence of monumental structures disappointed the archaeologists, who were looking for structures, statues, and carved orthostats as had been found in other Syro-Hittite capitals (i.e., Tell Halaf, Zincirli, and Carchemish). In fact, the unspectacular character of the settlement and its relative unimportance in the political scene saved the site from sudden and large-scale destructions and guaranteed continuity during a very troubled historical period (fig. 2).

The most relevant documents (such as the original notebooks) have been scanned and retyped in

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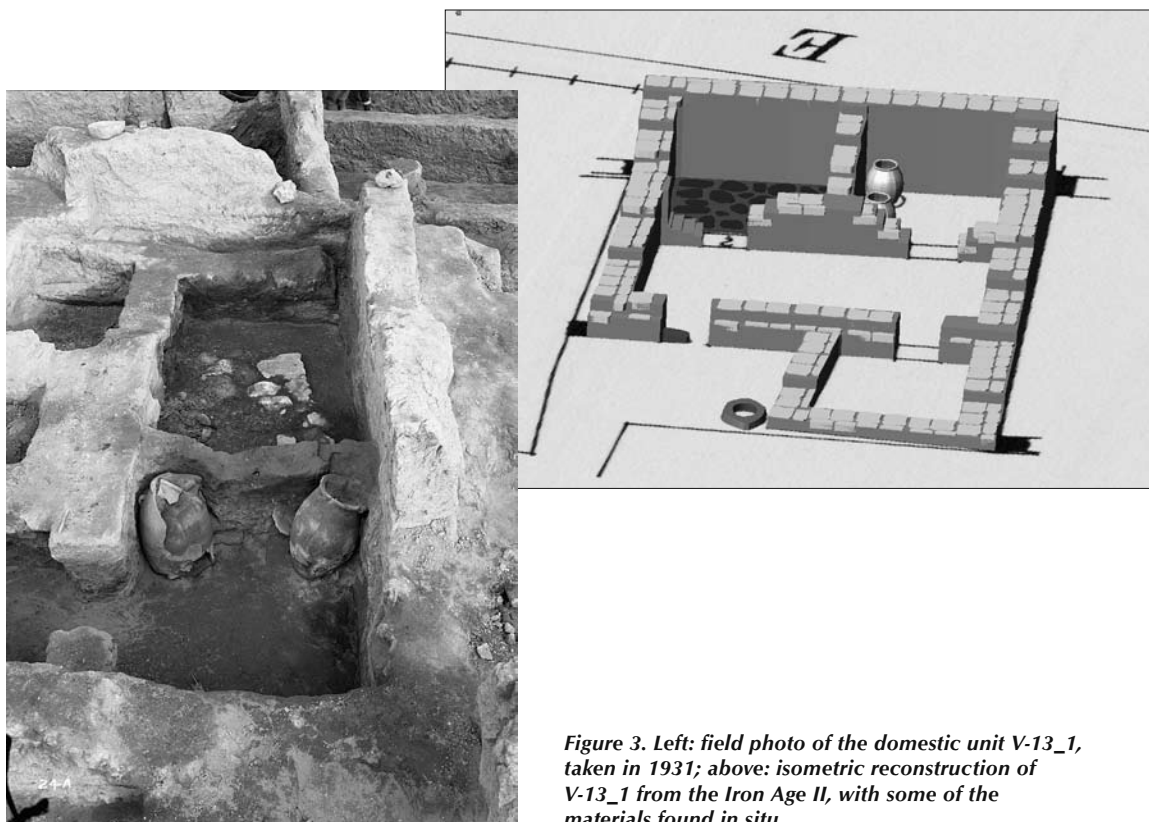
Figure 2. 1933 telegram from the director of excavation I. McEwan to the Oriental Institute

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order to better preserve this source of information. Original architectural drawings were also digitized with AutoCAD and have been in part reconstructed in three dimensions (fig. 3).

Due to the fact that a database including all information on written documents, their features, and their location in the Archives is at the disposal of the Museum Archivist, future research dealing with the Amuq excavations of the 1930s will be simplified. Additionally, every object from Chatal Höyük kept in the Museum has been described and photographed, and this information has been entered in a general database created especially for the Chatal Höyük publication; this database will be the basis of the catalog. The database also includes all small finds that were left in Turkey; the accuracy in the description done by the archaeologists and the photographs of the objects taken in the field allow a preliminary description that will be proofed by future analysis at the Antakya Museum (fig. 4).

Several interesting aspects became evident through the analysis of the objects. A large quantity of small finds shows evident relationships to Egypt and demonstrates also that many objects, mainly belonging to the category of amulets, were either directly imported from Egypt or locally made by Egyptians, indicating the existence either of very tight commercial connections with Egypt or the presence of Egyptian artisans. Considering the stamp seals, it is possible to point out three main groups: (1) the handled seals belonging to a local tradition, which were in continuous use during the whole period and reveal an unchanging local tradition; (2) the stamp seals in the form of scarabs or scaraboids (both imported and imitated) which are more numerous mainly in the Iron Age II–III levels and attest to a high point of interaction with Egypt during this period; and (3) the double convex seals that were found mainly in Late Bronze Age and Iron Age levels, indicating tight relationships with Anatolia for those periods.



*Figure 3. Left: field photo of the domestic unit V-13\_1, taken in 1931; above: isometric reconstruction of V-13\_1 from the Iron Age II, with some of the materials found in situ*

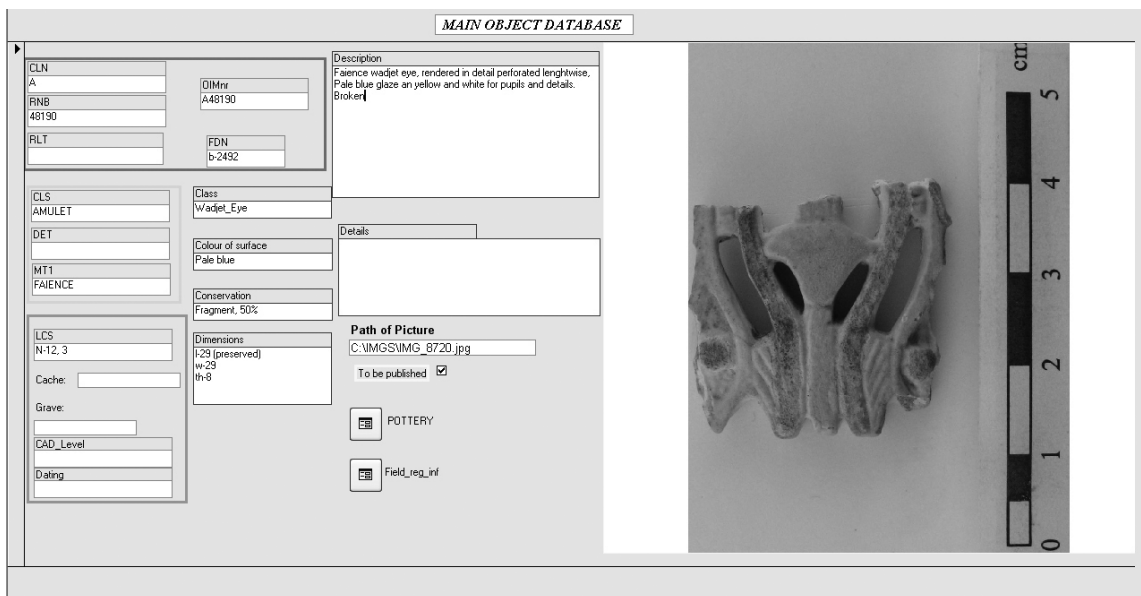


Figure 4. Screenshot of the Chatal Höyük database: example of Egyptian wadjet eye

In a third phase, pottery became the focus of the analysis, considering that it constitutes the basic element of reference for comparisons with other sites in the region (fig. 5). The number of pottery sherds collected and brought to Chicago is enormous and it was a great undertaking for the Museum Archivist and the volunteers to provide them with inventory numbers. The analysis of this material proceeded using the following method: the sherds were first sorted according to their archaeological context and the pottery horizon of each locus was described. Then, every sherd with a clear archaeological context was described according to the usual criteria employed in the analysis of pottery, that is, by fabric, shape, surface treatment, and decoration. Graduate student Tamara Leviton began this long and exhausting work in November 2006 and kept working on it until June 2007, when we finished recording all sherds. She will start again in October illustrating the sherds that have been selected for publication.

The pottery reflects the historical changes that occurred in the region; tendencies also emerged from the analysis of the small finds, which were witness to the strong connections during the late Bronze Age with the northern Hittite tradition, including standardized pottery belonging to the Hittite pottery production, which perfectly fits with the political dependence of this region to the Hittite kingdom. During this period, the external imports seem to be very limited and to have originated from the southwestern area of the region (Alalakh) and from Cyprus. These imports represent less than 5 percent of all sherds collected in this pottery horizon.

During the Iron Age I period, the pottery assemblage underwent fundamental changes. Painted imports from the Mediterranean area became popular and their local imitations constitute the majority of the collected sherds. A few other shapes (for example, cooking bowls) were kept in use and changed gradually over time. The painted pottery of this period shows a variety of shapes, a low level of standardization, and a general tendency toward experiments in imitating foreign shapes. In sum, the evidence indicates that the Iron Age I was a period of frequent contacts and exchanges with the Mediterranean area and apparently without strong centralized control.

The transition to the Iron Age II and III occurred more gradually. Local imitations continued, but on a smaller scale, while a new surface treatment — red slip — appeared and gradually

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became the most commonly used pottery type, with shapes undergoing an evident standardization and a decrease in variety. It therefore seems evident that a slight change occurred at the site and that there was a tendency toward higher centralized control in the pottery production, which lasted until the end of the Iron Age. It remains particularly interesting that the appearance and development of the red-slip ware seems to be related to the arrival of Aramean peoples in the region. The almost complete absence of Assyrian pottery (limited to a handful of sherds) seems to exclude the presence at the site of Assyrian peoples during a period of military occupation of the region.



*Figure 5. Woman with child washing pottery sherds at Chatal Höyük (1931)*

This might indicate that the unimportance of the site made an Assyrian presence unnecessary.

### **Future Plans and Publication**

The basic work in the analysis of stratigraphy, small finds, and pottery is finished and the catalog of materials is complete. Future work will deal mainly with the preparation of the manuscript for publication, which will include numerous illustrations, field photos, and architectural reconstructions in order to provide a comprehensive reference work. The drawing phase started in July 2008 and will last probably at least a year, considering the large number of objects that need to be drawn. Illustrator Angela Altenhofen will be responsible for the pencil drawings of small finds and complete vessels. She will also train Tamara Leviton, who has already worked on the pottery analysis, to draw the pottery sherds. This organization has two positive aspects: Tamara,

who is already familiar with the pottery corpus from Chatal Höyük, will also illustrate it. This activity also provides a chance for a student to be trained in a specific and important aspect of archaeology.

At the same time, I am preparing the text on the basic analysis of the stratigraphy and pottery, and brief chapters on specific classes of finds. External contributors will analyze other groups of finds that require specific examination, such as texts, seals, and Egyptian imports. Due to the fact that it will not be possible to publish drawings and photos of every single object or sherd, we plan to publish the database, which includes all information concerning objects and pottery, photos of each object, all stratigraphical data and field photos, in a digital form (either a CD included in the publication or an online publication in the Oriental Institute home page). This will allow other scholars with the necessary tools to pursue specific research on all classes of materials.

This project owes a great debt of gratitude to Museum Registrar Helen McDonald and to Museum Archivist John Larson: both of them have provided me with the necessary documentation and information. Special thanks are due also to Gretel Braidwood, who with other volunteers helped with the registration of the Chatal Höyük sherds; and to Oriental Institute Director Gil Stein, to David Schloen, and to Aslihan Yener for their support and encouragement.

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