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# Dūr-Katlimmu 2008 and Beyond

Edited by Hartmut Kühne

2010

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## Editorial Foreword

This volume initiates a new series *Studia Chaburensia*. It will be devoted to the study of provincial regions with an emphasis on the development, change, and collapse of settlements, environment, economy, administration, and every day life in rural areas dependent on urban centres or not. Chronologically unlimited, the series will focus on the Assyrian and contemporary civilisations of the second and first millennia BCE. Geographically it will encompass Upper Mesopotamia as well as neighbouring regions.

January 2010-01-15

## A Neo-Assyrian Chamber Tomb in Dūr-Katlimmu\*

### Stratigraphical Context

In Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad / Dūr-Katlimmu at the Ḥābūr-river in North-eastern Syria an early Neo-Assyrian chamber tomb was detected during the 2003-campaign. It was excavated in the centre of “Lower Town II”, operation “Neo-Assyrian residences”<sup>1</sup>. The “Neo-Assyrian residences” were inhabited during the second full occupation period of Dūr-Katlimmu (EP 7)<sup>2</sup>. They were constructed onto the remains of buildings which represent the first full occupation period of Lower Town II (EP 8). The latter can be dated by the seal of Išme-ilu, eunuch of Nergal-ēreš (KÜHNE / RADNER 2008) which provides a *terminus ante quem*, that is prior to 775 BC (second eponymat of Nergal-Ereš). The chamber tomb<sup>3</sup> (Figs. 1-3)<sup>4</sup> was sealed by the floor of room ST of the first full occupation period. Due to the construction of room ST the ground had been levelled. The tomb must have been plundered during this procedure as can be seen in the fact that the bones of the individual were scattered all over the pit and only single items of the burial objects remained in fallen position. The grave architecture was destroyed and the vault tumbled down. Next to the grave an adjoining wall ZM 444 had been torn down. Thus, the grave and the associated wall ZM 444 are older than room ST and represent the earliest occupation below the central part of house 1 in operation Neo-Assyrian Residences. ZM 444 indicates that there was a house in which the chamber tomb may have been integrated. By reason of the stratigraphical context the chamber tomb had been build during an early stage of the first full occupation period (EP 8) or during the time when the Lower Town II was founded (EP 9). It represents a unique archaeological evidence for that early phase of the Neo-Assyrian period (late 10<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> century BC).

\* Florian Janoscha Kreppner, Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology, Freie Universität Berlin; Heide Hornig, Institute of Human Biology and Anthropology, Freie Universität Berlin.

1 Cf. Pucci 2008: 49-63.

2 Cf. Kühne 2008: 548, Abb. 3. The absolute dates used in this article are taken from the table shown in Kühne (2008: 550): EP 7: 2. Voll-Besiedlung (721-612 BC), EP 8: 1. Voll-Besiedlung (ca. 823-722 BC), EP 9: Gründung (ca. 936-824 BC).

3 Grave-no G 03/028. Various burial customs including inhumation and cremation are attested in operation Neo-Assyrian residences (Kreppner 2008).

4 The photos (Figs. 2-6, Pl. I-II) were taken by Jörg Lemke. The plan (Fig. 1) was drawn by Susanne Kunze. The drawings on Plates I-II were realised by Jörg Müller.

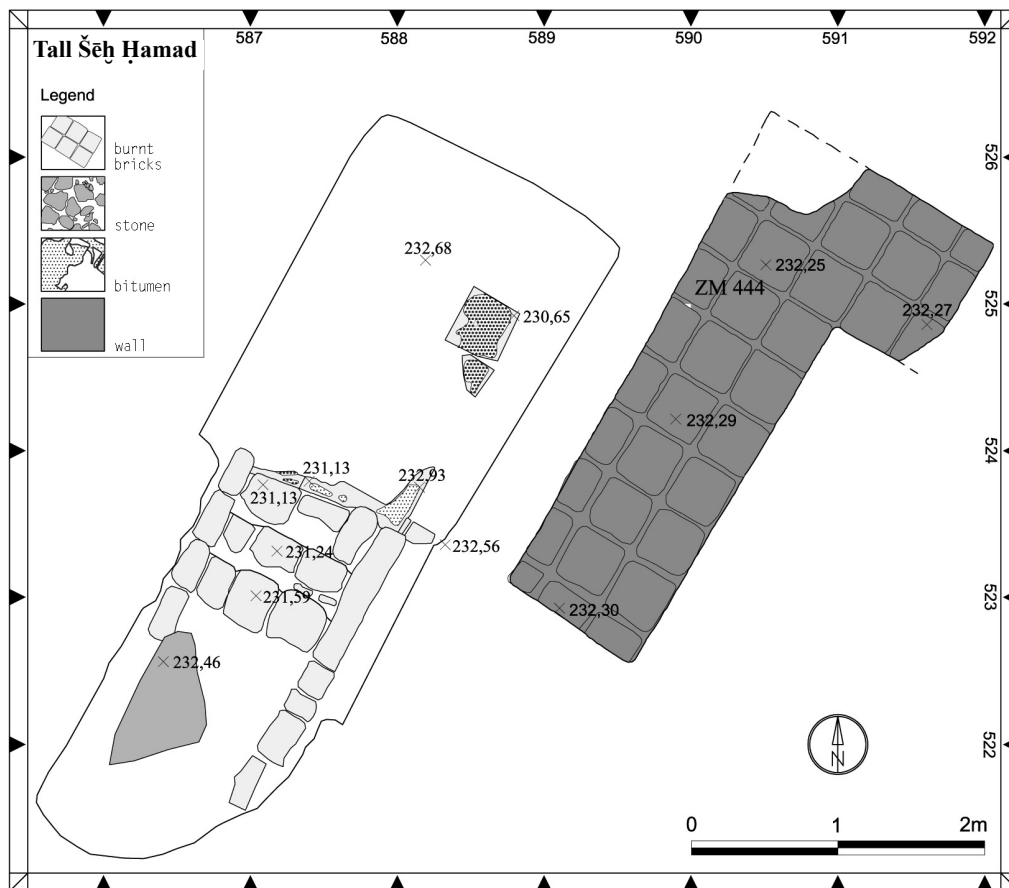


Fig. 1: Chamber tomb, Grave-no 03/028. Plan.

## The Chamber Tomb

The chamber tomb was sunk in a 5,60 m long, 2,30 m wide and 1,70 m deep pit which had been cut into the bedrock. It was oriented southwest-northeast. The chamber walls had been constructed of burnt bricks. Due to the destruction only the lower part of the staircase and single bricks of the floor were recovered *in situ* (Figs. 2, 3). The remaining bricks of the pavement were covered by a lime and bitumen plaster. A stepped dromos once led down to the burial chamber. The chamber measured 2,20 m x 1,20 m (reconstructed inner width). Numerous burnt bricks in fallen position (Fig. 4) indicate that the chamber was once vaulted as recorded from other Neo-Assyrian sites like Aššūr<sup>5</sup>, Nimrūd (DAMERJI 1999), Tall Aḫmar (BUNNENS 1997) and Ḥumaidāt (IBRAHIM / AMIN AGHA 1983).

5 Cf. Mofidi-Nasrabadi 1999, Haller 1954, Sürenhagen / Renger 1982, Lundstöm 2009. A new study on the graves of Assur has been completed by Stefan Hauser but is not published yet.

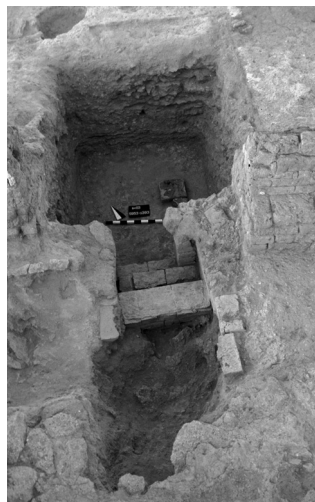


Fig. 2: Grave-no 03/028.



Fig. 3: Grave-no 03/028, staircase.



Fig. 4: Grave-no 03/028, burnt bricks in fallen position.

## Finds

Part of the buried individual's jewellery and costume have been found in the debris all over the plundered chamber: a silver-ring<sup>6</sup> (Pl. I.1), six beads<sup>7</sup> (Pl. I.2) and a fragment of a needle made of bronze<sup>8</sup> (Pl. I.3).

Three pottery vessels must be assigned to the burial objects and have to be interpreted as containers for food or drink offerings. A cylindrical beaker<sup>9</sup> (Pl. II.1) with a slightly rounded base has a very close parallel in a beaker from a grave context in Assur (HALLER 1954: Taf. 2, bk).

A fragment of a tripod bowl is glazed<sup>10</sup> (Pl. II.2). Tripod bowls made of grey-ware are attested in Tall Aḫmar (JAMIESON 1999: 304, Fig. 6, 14), Nimrūd (RAWSON 1954: Pl. 41, 2) and Ḥirbat Qaṣrīg (CURTIS 1989: Fig. 30, 112-115). Two items found in Nimrūd Fort Shalmaneser are red slipped (OATES 1959: Taf. 35,15; 35,16). Buff ware tripod bowls are published from Nimrūd Town Wall Houses (LINES 1954: Pl. 38,1) and Tall Ḥalaf (HROUDA 1962: Taf. 68,178). Since none of the tripod bowls known from other Neo-Assyrian sites are glazed, the Šēḫ Ḥamad tripod bowl is unique.

While beakers with flared rim and pointed or rounded bases are numerous attested in late Neo-Assyrian contexts, the beaker<sup>11</sup> (Pl. II.3) found in the chamber tomb in Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad has a flat base. This typological peculiarity could be interpreted in favour of an early Neo-Assyrian date.

6 Inv.-no SH 03/5953/0680: 0,3 x dm. 2,0 cm.

7 Inv.-nos SH 03/5953/0677 (Pl. I.2a): blue frit, 0,19 x dm. 0,26 cm, Beck (1928) type I.C.1.b; SH 03/5953/0643 (Pl. I.2b): blue frit, 0,8 x dm. 0,4 cm, Beck (1928) type I.D.1.b; SH 03/5953/0584 (Pl. I.2c): 0,9 x dm. 0,6 cm, Beck (1928) type I.D.1.f; SH 03/5953/0678 (Pl. I.2d): limestone, 1,8 x dm. 0,7 cm, Beck (1928) type I.D.1.f; SH 03/5953/0676 (Pl. I.2e): bone, 0,3 x dm. 1,4 cm, Beck (1928) type I.A.1.b; SH 03/5953/0654 (Pl. I.2f): green frit, 0,7 x dm. 0,5 cm, Beck (1928) type I.D.1.f.

8 Inv.-no SH 03/5953/0578: 5,3 x dm. 0,3 cm.

9 Inv.-no SH 03/5953/0609.

10 Inv.-no SH 03/5953/0675.

11 Inv.-no SH 03/5953/0621.



## Cultural Significance

The excavation of the Neo-Assyrian vaulted grave in Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad demonstrates that a burial custom implying the erection of a chamber tomb existed in the Lower Town II of Dūr-Katlimmu. The stratigraphy proves an early Neo-Assyrian date (late 10<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> century BC). Since a chamber tomb is a costly grave type, it is important to notice, that even during the early occupation period of the Lower Town II the family of the deceased individual could afford the construction of a chamber tomb.

Not many archaeological contexts can be dated to the early Neo-Assyrian period in northern Mesopotamia with certainty. Thus, the Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad chamber tomb is of significance because it generated well dated early Neo-Assyrian material.

## Anthropological Record

The anthropological record for the Neo-Assyrian period is sparse. Due to the early excavations in Aššūr none of the skeletons was analysed by an anthropologist. Anthropological evidence has only been published for the 17 individuals from the Neo-Assyrian Queen's tombs at Nimrūd (SCHULTZ / KUNTER 1998). Thus, the analysed human find from Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad / Dūr-Katlimmu will increase our knowledge for the Neo-Assyrian period, because every single anthropologically analysed skeleton provides new insights to the living conditions at that time.

A very gracile female person who died at the age of 20 to 22 years was buried in this tomb. The fragmented human bones were - due to tomb raiders - dispersed all over the chamber but part of only one individual (Figs. 5, 6). The body height of this woman could be reconstructed to have been about 153 cm.

## Pathologica

The individual showed knock-knees due to a neck-shaft angle of both femora which were larger than the norm (coxa valga). This defective position causes increased pressure and shearing force on the femoral neck which results in overstrained muscles. Accordingly the young woman possesses changes of the neck of the femur as well as the deep imprints of the muscles on the back of the femur. This coxa valga is associated with added overloaded hip joints so that this woman as well shows incipient osteoarthritis in the hip joints. The reason for the knock-knees can be hereditarily, pathologically founded or due to exposure deformities of adolescence.

Porous disaggregation was detected at the roof of the orbits of the individual (cribra orbitalia), a symptom that could be traced back to e. g. chronic anaemia, scurvy, rachitis or inflammation. The teeth of the woman showed only slight occurrence of periodontosis and calculus.

Comparatively, the skeletons from the Queen's tombs at Nimrūd were diagnosed e. g. with inflammatory processes which could possibly be linked with damp, cold rooms, degenerative joint diseases or parodontopathy, which were normally more pronounced in individuals of the lower class than individuals of the upper class (SCHULTZ / KUNTER 1998).

Concerning this, the woman from Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad / Dūr-Katlimmu shows, except for the coxa valga, no unusual pathological marks, but it is to be considered that this female was still young at the moment of death. It is to keep in mind that in ancient societies many women died young due to childbirth or postnatal complications.



Fig. 5: Fragmented human bones, part of only one individual.



Fig. 6: Fragmented skull.

## Isotopes Analyses

The chemical composition of a skeleton reflects the geochemical and biochemical conditions of the environment. Accordingly, chemical analyses of skeletons contribute to achieve information about dietary resources, the nutritional situation of small children, the migrational behaviour and the human-environment relationship as well as cultural or ecological determined nutritional behaviour.

Consumed food matters exhibit characteristic rates of stable heavy isotopes like carbon and nitrogen, which are accumulated in the bones. With food ingested proteins, carbohydrates and fats reflect the isotope ratios in animal tissues. Generally, the carbon values allow the distinction between  $C_3$ -plants (e. g. wheat, rice, barley, pulses) and  $C_4$ -plants (e. g. millet, maize and sugar cane). The nitrogen isotopes advert to the protein proportion in the food.

The isotope analysis of the young female from the tomb points to an omnivore – balanced – diet based on  $C_3$ -plants (barley) and highly animal oriented protein consumption.

The isotope ratios of oxygen in water vary in dependence to geographical position and climate. Hence, the oxygen isotope ratio in bones is linked to the drinking water and thus to the pristine region of individuals. There are no serious differences between the oxygen values of the tomb skeleton and the individuals from the Parthian-Roman period of the settlement. Therefore it can be assumed that the individual from the tomb chamber belongs to the geographical region (HORNIG 2007).

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Plate I

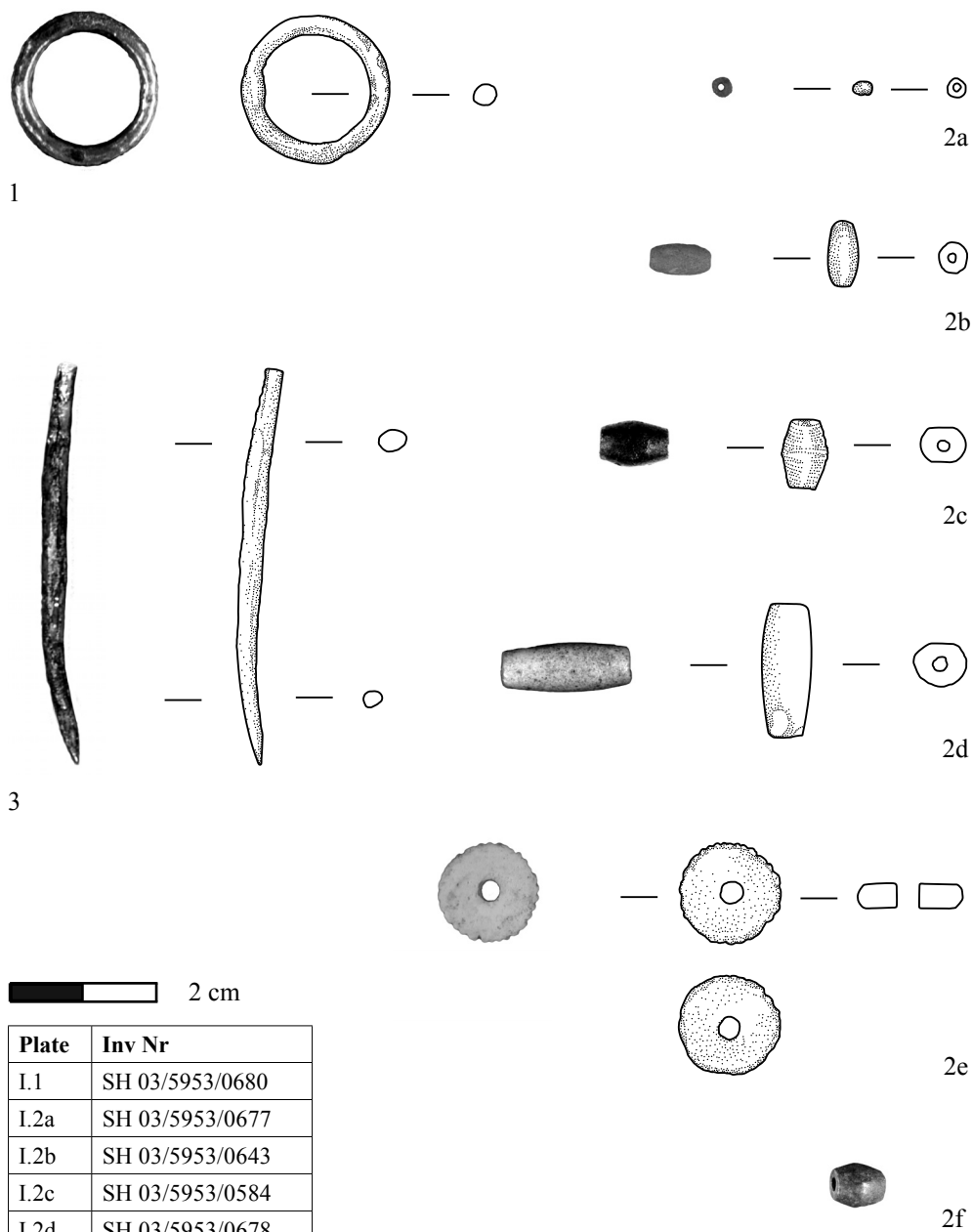
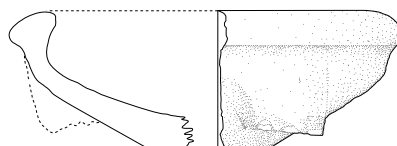
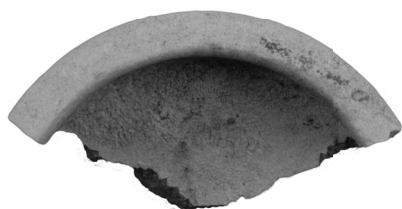
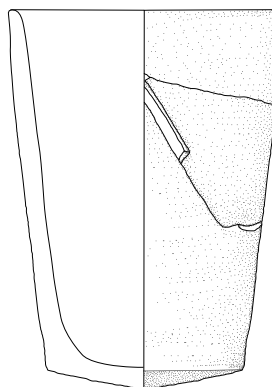


Plate	Inv Nr
I.1	SH 03/5953/0680
I.2a	SH 03/5953/0677
I.2b	SH 03/5953/0643
I.2c	SH 03/5953/0584
I.2d	SH 03/5953/0678
I.2e	SH 03/5953/0676
I.2f	SH 03/5953/0654
I.3	SH 03/5953/0578

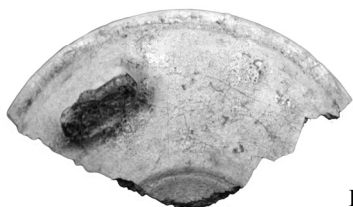
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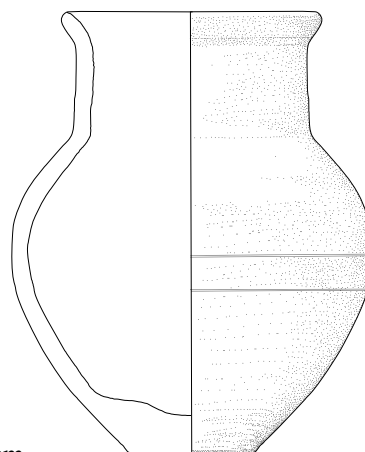

Pl. II.1: SH 03/5953/0609



Pl. II.2: SH 03/5953/0675



Pl. II.3: SH 03/5953/0621


 4 cm