



Citation: Dominik Bonatz (2020) How to Cope with the Dead in Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology. New Sources, Approaches, and Comparative Perspectives in the Light of a Recent Publication. *Asia Anteriore Antica. Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures 2*: 79-94. doi: 10.13128/asiana-686

Copyright: © 2020 Dominik Bonatz. This is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Firenze University Press (<http://www.fupress.com/asiana>) and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Competing Interests: The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

How to Cope with the Dead in Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology. New Sources, Approaches, and Comparative Perspectives in the Light of a Recent Publication

DOMINIK BONATZ

Freie Universität Berlin
bonatz@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Abstract. Death remains a fascinating and challenging issue for archaeological research. Sometimes, however, it is astonishing how rationally and unemotionally archaeologists and anthropologists approach it. They take human remains and everything that surrounds them just like any other archaeological data set. Following the maxim “the dead do not bury themselves”, they mainly ask about for the social and political background of burials and funerary practices, and they try to reconstruct funerary rituals. Other questions that relate to the essential human experience of death rarely appear on the research agenda. In this respect, the recently published proceedings of an international workshop held in Florence in 2013 help me review the different approaches of ancient Near Eastern archaeologists and philologists who deal with phenomena of death and burial. Since the promising title of the book, published in 2016, is “How to Cope with Death” (in the ancient Near East), it will address the methodological question how to cope with death in Ancient Near Eastern archaeology. After a discussion centered on the papers collected in this volume (see appendix), the perspective will be enlarged by a refined look at the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments.

Keywords. Archaeology, dead, ancestor, funerary monument.

Under the title “How to Cope with Dead – Mourning and Funerary Practices in the Ancient Near East”, the proceedings of the international workshop held in Florence in 2013 and published in 2016 collect thirteen stimulating papers and an introduction by the editor, Candida Felli.¹ The authors gathered in this book are Adriano Favole, Alfonso Archi, Anne

¹ For the book’s contents, see the appendix. For the convenience of this article and the reader, references to the authors and their contributions will be made following this list of contents and not in the separate bibliography.

Löhnert, Andrea Kucharek, Candida Felli, Edgar Peltenburg, Anne Porter, Glenn Schwartz, Stefano Valentini, Peter Pfälzner, Joyce Nassar, Arkadiusz Soltysiak, and, in a joint article, Jennie Bradbury and Graham Philip. Their focus is on archaeological and textual data from the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC. The only exception is the article by Favole, which presents an anthropological perspective on contemporary funerary rituals in Italy and France. The geographic range covers mainly Syria, but also includes two comparative perspectives on textual sources on mourning and lament from Ancient Egypt (Kucharek) and Mesopotamian Nippur (Löhnert).

Despite this geographic and chronological limitation, the compilation of the case studies is rather eclectic. This is not due to the negligence of the editor but is a general problem in the “archaeology of death and burial”, which depends mostly on chance finds. Archaeological research projects usually start with perspectives and strategies that do not include the aim to excavate burials, tombs, or cemeteries. Yet, as soon as these appear, they attract multilateral attention. Their investigation demands a significant investment of time and a specialized work crew, and sometimes they shift the project’s research agenda in a completely new direction. For example, the unexpected discovery of the royal hypogeum in Qatna (Pfälzner) came as a real surprise, strongly affecting research interests in Qatna and beyond. The same goes for the elite tombs in Tell Jerablus Tahtani and Gre Virike (Peltenburg), Tell Banat (Porter), and Umm el-Marra (Schwartz) and for the vaulted hypogea in Tell Barri (Valentini). They significantly influenced the interests of their excavators and ended up making them specialists in a field they probably did not consider entering at the beginning of their projects. Hence, the “archaeology of death and burial” is a research field with sudden finds and alterations that can occur with every new and unexpected discovery. It is a field without a defined methodology or common research strategy, unlike “landscape archaeology” or “settlement history”, for example. What instead is typical of the “archaeology of death and burial” and is very well reflected in the book is the unavoidable multidisciplinary approach. The sources addressed in “How to Cope with Dead” are texts, tomb architectures and monuments, grave goods such as pottery, figurines, and organic materials, iconographic objects, human remains, and landscapes. It would normally require a group of specialized researchers to cover all these source categories with sufficient expertise, but it also is normal that not every burial context is equipped with or connected to all these specialties. Hence, it remains a serious challenge to interpolate where evidence is missing and links to certain categories, especially texts, are highly speculative.

The authors and especially the editor of the book have all these critical points in mind. The individual papers may be case studies, but their overall benefit is the focus on key topics and terms, which indeed reflect the state of the art and which can be seen as a successful approach to shape the “archaeology of death and burial” in continuation of Mike Parker Pearson’s seminal book that introduced this field to a broader audience (Parker Pearson 1999). In the following, I briefly comment on the most salient research topics of this approach:

- the visibility and accessibility of funerary/mortuary monuments;
- mourning practices;
- the “collective representation of death” (after Robert Hertz);
- the intermediate phases of burial and the dead, and the problem of secondary burial;
- concepts of embodied identity and fractal personhood;
- the dead playing a critical role in the negotiation of political power;
- the landscape of death and mourning practices.

1. THE VISIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF FUNERARY/MORTUARY MONUMENTS

Recent investigations in the Middle Euphrates region and the Jabbul plain of western Syria yielded new evidence of the differentiation of grave types and monuments during the earlier part and middle of the 3rd millennium BC. Variations in the monumentality, visibility, and accessibility of the tombs excavated in Gre Virike, Tell Jerablus Tahtani, Tell Banat, Tell Ahmar, Tell Umm al-Marra, and Ebla point to a distinct separation between private and public, individual and collective, and intramural vs. extramural burials. They reflect processes of social

segregation, stratification, and elite building in a “zone of uncertainty” (Peltenburg) that shifted between urbanism and tribalism. The accessible tombs, burials under palaces (Ebla), and rock-cut shaft graves anticipated the hypogea and subterranean vaulted tombs of the Middle Bronze Age II. These grave architectures and their location under palaces and houses clearly mark the importance of collective burials in contrast to individual graves, which all are found outside these areas.

2. MOURNING PRACTICES

A central topic in the book that definitely relates to its title “How to Cope with Dead” is mourning practices. We owe thanks to the editor who brought up this topic and to other authors (Archi, Kucharek, Löhnert, Pfälzner, Porter) who focused on it in their contributions, because it opens the discussion to a field that, as mentioned above, archaeologists and philologists of the ancient Near East have so far rarely touched upon. Textual sources from the Early Bronze to the Iron Age (collected by Archi and Felli) provide insights into mourning practices, including gestures of mourning such as wailing, weeping, and beating the breast, or they tell about professional mourners (e.g. the *razimtum*, *munabbitum* in Ebla). It is suggested that ritual journeys to extramural royal tombs may also have been accompanied by performances of mourning, but the evidence for this is not so clear. Most of all, however, the book argues against the common view that mourning, as the ultimate response of people in the face of a death, cannot be assessed through archaeological data, but must remain a matter of solely philological and anthropological research. Against this view, the contributions of Felli and Porter demonstrate the materiality of mourning, which for example is recognizable in figurines and figures applied to pots that express gestures of mourning and may represent people taking part in the funerary and mortuary practices. Porter and Pfälzner, furthermore, use archaeological data from collective graves (rock-cut shaft graves and hypogea) to suggest different stages of mourning. Important in this respect is Porter’s remark that mourning, in contrast to grieving, is socialized and public. This definition helps to relate the period of mourning to the transformation of the dead (after van Gennepe) and the collective representation of death (after Hertz) and thus brings the archaeological evidence (e.g. of the interaction with the dead body, for intermediate and secondary burials) stronger into mind. From an archaeological perspective, this research certainly has to face several practical and theoretical obstacles (e.g. the distinction between mourning and commemorating), but it is new and important for the attempt to address the nature of emotional responses and expressions in any mortuary practice.

3. THE “COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF DEATH”

Richard Hertz’s model of the “collective representation of death” is a classic in the study of mortuary practices that can be applied to many burial contexts including the ancient Near East. It explains the gradual transformation of the deceased to the state of an ancestor as a member of the collective group of ancestors and matches the picture of the Early Bronze Age monumental tombs mentioned above (1) and the Middle Bronze Age royal hypogeum in Qatna (Pfälzner). Based on textual records, namely the descriptions of the NEnaš processions at Ebla (Archi, Felli, Peltenburg), the model might be extended to other strong identifying and community references. These ritual processions, which lead the king and queen with the retinue of priests, scribes, and other officials to the mausoleums of the royal predecessors in the countryside of Ebla, evoke a marked blurring of identities between living performers (the king and the queen) and the deified ancestors. As a result, the transformation of the king as living embodiment of the ancestors was the ultimate achievement of this ritual.

In a fascinating article in the book, Favole explains why Hertz may have become more exotic to us than to the Dayak of Borneo, from whom he took his model of “collective representations”. The contemporary rites of cremation in Italy and France as described in this article result in the “nullification” of the body and erase nearly every aspect of shared collectivity. In fact, modern societies (at least some in this world) demonstrate a profound trans-

formation of traditional mortuary practices. The “collective representation of death”, which has the essential aim of assuring the future of the dead in the community of the living, is replaced by a personalized (cremation) ritual, which leave no traces and no orientations for future memories. Or, as the author says: “it produces an afterlife, or a non-afterlife, without a future”. As much as for ethnologists, is it an important task of the “archaeology of death and burial” to illuminate the elementary choices in mortuary practices and beliefs. A modern society locked in its crisis can learn much from that.

4. THE INTERMEDIATE PHASES OF BURIAL AND DEATH AND THE PROBLEM OF SECONDARY BURIALS

In Hertz’s model, the phase between the death of a person and the final ceremony that marks the definitive burial of the corpse is called the “intermediate” period. It has three levels: the provisional burial of the dead, the sojourn of the soul, and the mourning of the survivors. Recent excavations of complex burial contexts such as the royal hypogeum in Qatna have focused on this intermediate period, which in reality often does not comprise solely a single-phased ritual, but a multi-staged burial program. Modern research methods nowadays allow us to reconstruct some or most of the rituals and actions that accompanied the provisional burial of the corpse, and they even may make it possible to calculate the time span until the final burial ceremony, due to the analysis of body treatments and taphonomic processes. The mourning and the sojourn of the soul pose different problems of research, which already have been addressed (3) or will be addressed (6) in this article. However, a serious problem of definition or “semantic problem” (Pfälzner) is that of “secondary burials”. Usually it is assumed that a primary burial marks the stage of the intermediate period if evidence of a secondary burial follows, which is then regarded as the final ceremony. Yet, what happens if irregularities in an archaeological funerary context are misinterpreted as evidence of secondary burial; what if they in reality result from multi-staged burial programs, later disturbances of a burial site, or post-funeral relocations (Pfälzner)? The identification of a secondary burial still depends on the interpretations of scholars who often disagree among themselves about the nature of a secondary burial. For example, while Felli, Peltenburg, Porter, and Schwartz all see evidence of secondary burials in Early Bronze Age funerary contexts in northwestern Syria (e.g. Umm el-Marra, Tell Banat, Hadidi, Halawa B, Selenkahiye), Archi widely denies their existence.

Secondary burials are socially meaningful, so it is an important challenge for archaeologists to collect as much evidence as possible of their existence. From an archaeological point of view, they can provide the clearest evidence of transformations after death: the liberation of the living and becoming an ancestor in the collective group of ancestors. Not only sophisticated and interdisciplinary research in funerary contexts may help to reach clarification; ethnographic studies in contemporary societies that still practice secondary burials can also enrich our perspectives on archaeological phenomena. For example, the Toba Batak in Sumatra and the Tandroy and Mahafaly in Madagascar relocate parts of the deceased from a temporary repository to collective tombs, which are the most monumental and meaningful expression of ancestry, territoriality, and prestige. They do this even though they are Christians, because their own beliefs deeply root in the traditions of collective identities. Archaeology can learn much from the rituals that relocation of the bones requires, while Western minds can learn what the “collective representation of the death” means in modern times.

5. CONCEPTS OF EMBODIED IDENTITY AND FRACTAL PERSONHOOD

In his contribution, Peltenburg stresses the important point that multi-stage burial arrangements entailed more than removing living persons from society. They were equally concerned with reintegrating the dead into society as a different kind of active entities. In this respect, the dead as ancestors interfere with the living on different levels. They might be legitimizing or protective, but can also become angry at and vengeful toward their descendants who do not behave in the correct way. In northwestern Syria, public and secluded tombs and the use of ancestor images

attest to the long-lasting veneration and reanimation of certain deceased persons who had played and now continued to play a meaningful role in society. Their embodiments in society did not necessarily evoke the images of the deceased as they were perceived during their lifetimes, but rather represent an idealized simulacrum of the self. This is what usually happens also in many other cultural contexts when the predecessors become immortal and ideologized and are used for political purposes (see 6). Vice versa, the enactment of the king in the Eblaite NEnaš ceremony as the living embodiment of the ancestors shows that existing individuals can change their identities and share the special qualities of the ancestors.

The combined archaeological and textual evidence indicates that from the 3rd millennium B.C. on, social institutions emerged to reconstruct the embodied lives of all parties, to create new relationships between mourners, the recently deceased and ancestors, and in some cases, divinities (Peltenburg). The concept of fractal personhood was necessarily linked by such shifting relationships. It became omnipotent and characteristic of other societies in the ancient Near East; I will address this in the second part of this paper. Here it should be remembered that, also in this case, interpretations have to be critically reviewed. For instance, scholars still have differing interpretations of the notorious notion of the *kispum* ritual, for which textual but also archaeological data yields much, yet sometimes contradictory evidence. While some view it as a ritual that evokes the active role of the dead in society and as the act of feasting with the dead (Pfälzner 2015), others take it more strictly as the regular nourishment of the dead in order to prevent their baneful interference with the living (Bayliss 1973). To decide which placements of offerings or installations in an archaeological funerary context relate to a *kispum* ritual is indeed a difficult and rather hypothetical task. And more than that, it can be a fallacy to confuse the *kispum* with concepts of embodied identity and fractal personhood at all.

Generally, however, it can be concluded that the embodiment of the dead in society played an essential role in the negotiation of group identities, affiliation, and power relations; and it obviously had a profound eschatological meaning, since it promises a future for both the living and the dead. From a modern perspective, it represents the very opposite of the “nullification” of the body in contemporary cremation practices (as described by Favole), which appears as a drastic decision against personhood and embodiment.

6. THE DEAD PLAYING A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATION OF POLITICAL POWER

The aforementioned concepts of embodied identity and fractal personhood strongly connect to the politicization of the dead. The settings of many Early Bronze Age mortuary monuments, especially in the Middle Euphrates Valley (Gre Virike, Jerablus Tahtani, Tell Ahmar, Tell Banat/White Monument, Umm el-Marra, Tell Bi'a) and the descriptions in the Ebla texts are clear examples of the integration of major mortuary facilities into the political landscape. Furthermore, the continued use of mortuary monuments over many generations demonstrates that ancestors played a critical role in confirming the naturalness of the political order of the day (Peltenburg). The tombs are not just some place to put dead bodies: they are representations of power. In this respect, however, there is a significant difference in the setting of the tombs. While some communities, such as Mari in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC (Nassar) and Qatna in the 2nd millennium BC (Pfälzner), prefer burials in infra-urban spaces with very little or no visibility, others, such as the 3rd millennium Middle Euphrates-Ebla complex, use both infra and extra-urban spaces with high visibility for at least some tombs. An explanation of such variations might be the political and socio-economic organization of the decentralized populations in northwestern Syria, which in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC still had a strong pastoral element. In this context, the monumental permanence of certain tombs may have helped to shape the lived landscape forever, to form a fixed point in time and space for future generations for mainly political reasons. This does not mean that the dead in other infra-urban and hidden funerary contexts (e.g. Mari, Qatna) had a less important political function. The difference may just lie in the different type of audience. One is of a rather public nature and attracted by monumental tombs and inclusive mortuary and mourning ceremonies; the other consists of dynastic and family groups who practiced their funerary rites in rather exclusive spaces. In the second part of this paper, I will turn to an example in which both cases overlap.

7. THE LANDSCAPE OF DEATH AND MOURNING PRACTICES

In larger parts of northwestern Syria and especially during the Early Bronze Age, the physical space of the mortuary monuments and the spaces of mortuary rituals interacting with the spaces of the living (the mourners) and the fictional spaces of the dead create a special kind of landscape: the landscape of death. As Parker Pearson has termed it: “Placing the dead is one of the most visible activities through which human societies map out and express their relationships to ancestors, land and the living” (Parker Pearson 1999: 141). Accordingly, the landscape of death is the physical and ideological reference framework in which human relations overcome the boundaries of the past, the present, and the future. Due to the presence of funerary and ancestor monuments, it presents a ubiquitous and continuous phenomenon, but it needs its performances in mourning and mortuary ceremonies to be experienced and commemorated.

The archaeological evidence from burial contexts in northwestern Syria during the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC provides a series of examples of the visibility of the dead in the community of the living. However, not every region and period in the ancient Near East has the same recognizable intensity and apparentness of burial traditions. The low number of burials detected archaeologically in proportion to the estimated living population has been widely observed. The lack of “proper” burials becomes even more evident in the long-term perspective, which for certain regions and periods shows a striking absence of burial context. The “Invisible Dead” project of Durham University, whose results are summarized in the book by Bradbury and Philip, focused precisely on such long-term trends. A comprehensive database collecting information of burials from the 7th to the 1st millennium BC, mainly in the northern and southern Levant made it possible to demonstrate that the distribution of the dead over time and space is highly uneven. Such inequalities are not artifacts resulting from diverging research activities and interests; in certain cases, they can be proven to be the result of very disparate burial practices. While some may leave clearly visible traces in the archaeological record (hence called “proper” burials), others may not, due to different traditions of disposal and treatment of the dead. Examples of “improper” burials would be floating the dead body in a river or disposing of it in the steppes without a formal grave. There is no general distinction between societies and communities that prefer “proper” burials and those that prefer “improper” burials; the choices often depend on the status, sex, and age of the deceased individual. In this context, extramural disposals in “poor” graves or without graves are something that can very rarely be traced by archaeological research. In reality, a landscape of death emerges newly from the archaeological record only if a society significantly invested in the disposal, treatment, and remembrance of their dead or rather of certain groups of the dead. This is by no means a common case in the long history of the ancient Near East. Therefore, it needs special attention and serious reasoning about all the social, political, economic, religious, and ideological factors that bring a landscape of death into life. The book “How to Cope with Dead” puts a very valuable emphasis on this issue. In the next chapter of this paper, I will reconsider it with regard to the funerary monuments and practices in Luwian and Aramaean kingdoms of the Iron Age, which in general provide the ideal case study to review all of the seven research topics discussed so far.

The Syro-Hittite complex of funerary monuments

The locations of the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments, which include about 73 partly inscribed stelae and 28 statues, cover an area from southeast Anatolia to the northern and western parts of modern Syria.² In historical terms, they relate to urbanization processes in the Luwian and Aramaean kingdoms in this area from the 10th to the end of the 8th centuries BC. Due to the persistent traits of a Syrian *koine*, but also because of the strong surviving Hittite traditions in many of these small-scale political units, perhaps better called city-states, the term “Syro-Hittite” was introduced and is applied here to designate an area of common cultural affiliations.

² The corpus is compiled in Bonatz 2000. For further studies on the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments and their inscriptions, see Hawkins 1980; Hawkins 1989; Voos 1988; Bonatz 2001; Bonatz 2016; Bonatz 2019; and on the most recent find of the Kutamuwa stele in Zincirli, Struble, Herrmann 2009.

One of the common cultural expressions in the Luwian and Aramaean city-states is the funerary monument. Apart from some regional variations in the iconography of these monuments, the overall image of a mortuary repast virtually embodied in the conception of these monuments attests to a joint cultural practice adopted across a widespread area of diffusion. The term mortuary repast is used because most of these monuments show a table with offerings of food presented to the deceased (e.g., Figs 3-5). This has to be distinguished from the idea of funerary or mortuary banquet, as no evidence is given of a ritual meal shared by others. The image seems to have been created for the memory and benefit of the deceased and is thus clearly eschatological in its meaning. It also describes the memorial rite – the feeding of the dead – for which the funerary monument marked the proper place of performance.

As for the physical setting of this type of monument, there were apparently different choices. One was the erection of the monument as a proper marker over a grave, as confirmed by the archaeological context of the statues from Tell Halaf (Fig. 2 and Bonatz 2000: B 5). Each was set in a small tomb chamber over a shaft containing a cremation burial.³ In their inscriptions, two stelae from Neirab (Fig. 3 and Bonatz 2000: C 11) make provisions for the protection of the deceased's "sarcophagus" or "remains", which hence must have been located close to these monuments.⁴ A stela with the depiction of a mortuary repast found on the citadel in Zincirli-Sam'al (fig. 4) may be related to a nearby cist grave.⁵ In this case, the rather public display of the stela stands in contrast to the private sphere of the chambered monument. New evidence of such a private display space is given by the Kutamuwa stela (Fig. 5), which was found in a small chamber or "mortuary chapel" connected to a private house with temple in the lower town of Zincirli (Struble and Herrmann 2009). No remains of burial were discovered in this architectural context, so there is reason to believe that this monument merely served as a symbol of the deceased's afterlife. In fact, I assume that most of the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments primarily had this symbolic function and that they were not necessarily connected to the place of burial. Instead, it was the representation of the mortuary repast that created the cultic place for the deceased's memory, a place of interaction between the living and the dead.

Reviewing the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments in the context of the previously described approaches in a redefined "archaeology of death and burial", the following observations can be highlighted:

1. The visibility and accessibility of the funerary monuments include different choices. Monumental statues of the deceased and ancestors were placed in public places, i.e., in front of palaces (e.g. the statue A 6 on the citadel in Zincirli/Sam'al) or at city gates (e.g. the statue A 13 in the Lion Gate of Malatya), but they also could have been erected in grave chambers (e.g. the two female statues B 4 and B 5 in Tell Halaf/Guzana). In the same way, the funerary stelae were located in open spaces (e.g. the stela C 46 on the citadel of Zincirli/Sam'al) and in private chambers (e.g. the Kutamuwa stela in the lower town of Zincirli/Sam'al). The statue of a royal ancestor (A 6) from the citadel in Zincirli has cup marks on its base. Thus, it was intended to receive offerings, but they were also performed during ceremonies and public audiences that took place in the courtyard area between the palaces (Gilibert 2011: 99-106). In contrast, the stela of Kutamuwa was erected in a small chamber with an offering platform in front of it. In this context, every ritual activity was exclusive, limited to a small group of people and concealed from the eyes of the public.

Obviously, the difference between the public and the private display of a funerary monument resulted from the different social status of the deceased. Royal ancestors (male and female) were commemorated and venerated in the rather public sphere of the urban spaces, while other elite members of the society were remembered and ritually provided with food and drink in the context of their families. However, the mere fact that also non-royal individuals were able to commission a funerary monument demonstrates an attitude that is much different from other cul-

³ Bonatz 2000: 154-155, with further references.

⁴ KAI 225 and KAI 226, see also Bonatz 2000: 67-69. The common translation of the word 'rsth' used in both inscriptions is "sarcophagus". Alternatively, I.A. Yun proposes, with good arguments, the reading "remains" in the sense of human remains ('bone, skeleton', Yun 2006: 23-24).

⁵ Bonatz 2000: 136, with further references.

tural areas in the ancient Near East, in which a personal image made of stone was mainly a privilege of the highest-ranking individuals in society. In the long history of the ancient Near East, the Syro-Hittite funerary monument, either erected publicly or privately, is an extreme example of the visibility of death as an eternal collective. Within this collective, hierarchies and social affiliations remain the same as during lifetimes and are displayed with different iconography, accessibility, and monumentality of the stone images, but any stone image at all guaranteed the continued existence of the dead and thus also gave hope to the living.

2. Mourning practices can sometimes be deduced from the iconography of funerary monuments; for example, the famous Ahiram sarcophagus from Byblos shows mourning women on one small end of the tube of the sarcophagus (Rehm 2004: pls 7.8, 10). The imagery of the Syro-Hittite funerary monument, however, does not clearly refer to mourning practices. It often depicts the descendants of the deceased presenting offerings to or receiving protection from the deceased, but such actions are not an aspect of mourning. Nevertheless, one monument from Maraş depicts not only the usual fan-waving heirs (a female and a male) of the deceased woman, but also a procession of four veiled women (Fig. 6). Each holds one hand in front of her chest and the other outstretched. Even if this cannot be recognized with certainty as a typical gesture of mourning, the serious and regardful posture of the women may still imply an element of mourning.

It might be a fallacy to recognize mourning only in highly affective gestures such as beating the breasts and the head as pictured on the Ahiram sarcophagus. The gesture on the stela from Maraş could well be interpreted as a silent and modest form of mourning. As explained above, mourning should not be confused with grieving, because it is a socialized and public act. Mourning in the context of the Syro-Hittite funerary rites is indeed difficult to trace. Yet, it is still quite possible to assume socialized and public mourning rituals behind the imagery of the stelae and statues and mainly in the context of ceremonies taking place in different key spots of the urban space where the living and the dead interacted. This assumption will be reconsidered when the last topic, the “landscape of death”, is addressed at the end of this paper.

3. Robert Hertz’s model of the “collective representation of death” is basic for understanding the dynamics that lay behind the erection and use of the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments. As can be gathered from the inscription on the Kutamuwa stela and other funerary inscriptions, the monument was often already commissioned during a person’s lifetime. This means that certain individuals made provisions for their afterlife, which was perceived as an eternal life in the presence of the living. The funerary monument, whether commissioned by its owner or by her or his heirs, necessarily was first a monument erected for the deceased in the course of the funerary ritual; but then, after a few generations, it became an ancestor monument. It did not change its shape and it kept the image of its owner, but as time proceeded, it marked the transformation of the deceased to the state of an ancestor as a member of the collective group of ancestors. Again, there must have been a difference in the perception of the publically erected monuments of royal ancestors and the monuments of non-royal ancestors in rather private contexts. Yet, as social cohesion in the urban communities was strong and members of the elite not only supported the ruling dynasty but also participated in their lifestyle,⁶ the ancestors obviously also acted as a group of collectively intertwined individuals. Two examples illustrate this.

In the inscription on his stela, Kutamuwa calls himself “the servant of Panamuwa, King of Sam’al”. His close relation to the royal house of Sam’al is visually confirmed by his clothing, especially the hat, and the carving style of his relief, which is strikingly similar to another mortuary relief from Zincirli (Fig. 4) and to the carved reliefs portraying King Barrakib, the successor of Panamuwa II (Orthmann 1971: pl. 63.c). The image and the inscription on the stela thus first brings to mind Kutamuwa’s status as a member of the elite in Sam’al and only afterward asserts the importance of his family by addressing Kutamuwa’s sons, who are responsible for the offerings, in the inscription and the depiction of the mortuary repast on the stela.

The other evidence is the carved orthostats with depictions of ancestors seated at the offering table. These are placed in the walls of the city gates together with other orthostats that show representatives of the living commu-

⁶ Compare Gilibert 2011: 119-131.

nity, deities, and monsters. The pictorial programs at the entrances to the citadels in Zincirli (Gilibert 2001: fig. 31, Zincirli 12-51) and Karatepe (Çambel, Özyar 2003: pl. 124.a-b) provide the clearest examples of this integration of the ancestors in the group of other actors who represent the wealth, power, and protection of the city.

In the Luwian and Aramaean city-states, the “collective representation of death” in its distinctly visualized and monumentalized form is certainly one of the most important means of assuring collective identities and the future of the city, based on the community of the living and the dead.

4. The intermediate phases of burial and death and the problem of secondary burial are difficult to access in the case of the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments. One reason is the practice of cremation, which is attested to be the most common burial praxis in this period, although only few cremation burials and cemeteries have been excavated so far. The clearest example is the two statues from the citadel in Tell Halaf/Guzana, which were placed over shaft tombs containing urns with cremation remains and a few funerary gifts. Such burial contexts, however, do not allow us to reconstruct the multiple steps in the process of a burial, intermediate phases, or even secondary burial practices. Yet, there are a few alternatives we can speculate about in regard to these aspects.

One is the evidence of the funerary monument as it stands in its own right. The stelae can be as tall as 1.60 m, while the statues can have colossal dimensions with heights up to 3.25 m (including the base). The quarrying, transportation, and sculpting of such monuments need investments of time and labor. Even if there are indications that a funerary monument was sometimes commissioned during a person’s lifetime, the process of erecting the monument would have taken place only after his or her death. A meaningful immediate phase between these two events – death and then erection and inauguration of the monument – has to be expected, mainly because the funerary monument was considered the place where the soul of the deceased would rest for eternity (see below 5). This is a very important and striking point in the function and perception of the funerary monuments. It explains that the actual burial is of secondary importance, because the focus of ritual remembrance, offerings, and interaction with the dead is the funerary monument. I would therefore suggest that the cremation burial of a deceased person has to be considered one intermediate step in the funerary ritual and that the whole ceremony was terminated only after the erection of the statue or stela, that is, the moment when the soul of the deceased finally merged with the image. The feasts and funerary offerings that are prescribed to be carried out in the presence of the image are provisions for the future of the soul, yet they are merely the confirmation of the status quo that was reached with the erection of the funerary monument and its ritual consecration.

In the context of such mortuary practices and their underlying conceptions of the afterlife, secondary burials apparently were not needed. It would not have had any meaning to relocate the remains of the cremated body if the focus of attention and ritual practices was the stone monument. This interpretation, however, as plausible as it seems at first glance, has the problem that the total number of funerary monuments known to us today is far fewer than the estimated population in this large area. One of the very few cemeteries archaeologically investigated from this period is Yunus in the surroundings of Carchemish. It has the usual shaft graves with simple cremation urns. Over one of these graves, a very small funerary stela with a coarsely incised image of the deceased was found (Bonatz 2000: C 45). This find and some others indicate that also small, “cheap” stelae and statues existed. Nevertheless, it seems that only a rather small part of the population could have afforded a funerary monument. In the case of the Kutamuwa stela, for example, one may wonder why only he had a funerary stela placed in a separate chamber of his dwelling, while there would have been space for at least a couple of monuments dedicated to other members of the family. Hence, the “invisible dead” are a problem that also concerns the Syro-Hittite area. One should therefore be cautious about expecting that archeologically recorded funerary customs and complexes always represent the typical case. They rather demonstrate the multitude of customs and attitudes even within a given cultural system. However, if we conclude that striking funerary phenomena such as the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments are not the normal case, then they become an even more significant indication of what individuals may have thought was the best and most enduring option.

5. Concepts of embodied identity and fractal personhood can be recognized on several levels in which the dead are remembered and reintegrated in the world of the living.

The primary achievement of the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments lies in the centralization and monumentalization of a special memorial act, which is ritually embedded in the feeding of the deceased. Since in practice the ritual aims for the continual perpetuation of commemoration, the statue or stele of the deceased stands as a durable manifestation and call for its performance. The monument with its image marks the re-embodiment of the dead in society.

Paying attention to the deceased necessarily involves actors in the ritual performance. The interaction or literally face-to-face communication between the deceased (the ritual object) and the living actor (the performing subject) underlines the aspect of the liminal zone. The mortuary repast enables the encounter between living and dead in a metaphysical sense, but it also requires a physical space in which it can be carried out. It is obvious that the funerary monument marks the place of interaction through the ritual that it visually describes.

Making the absent visible and present in the here and now is one of the main purposes of ritual practice (Dücker 2007: 33). Through the mortuary repast, the transcendent image of the deceased can be evoked and it becomes tangible and accessible for reciprocal communication. Hence, the Syro-Hittite funerary monuments are lasting substitutes for living experiences with the dead, something that explains separation from them as being not a temporal, but merely a spatial fact. This gap can be bridged whenever the proper ritual is performed. The living subject participates in the ritual meal, not by sharing the meal with the deceased, but by offering food and drink to them. With this constellation in mind, we can imagine individuals acting in the presence of the funerary monument, which hence is not only a pictorial representation of the deceased, but also a testament to ritually maintained social relations.

Crucial in this respect is the concept of the “soul”, which is expected to dwell on in the stele or statue. The Aramaic inscription on the Kutamuwa stela makes a clear statement about this. Prescribing the offerings to several gods and to himself, Kutamuwa says, “A ram for Kubaba, and a ram for my ‘soul’ (*lnbšy*) that (will be) in this stele” (l. 5), and furthermore below in the inscription (l. 10-11), “He is also to perform the slaughter in (proximity to) my ‘soul’” (translated in Pardee 2009: 54).

David Hawkins has recently argued that the term “soul” (*nbsš*) should not be understood too literally. He instead suggests that *nbsš* is the translation of the Luwian word *atri-* and that, in the context of Kutamuwa’s inscription, its meaning is rather “likeness” (Hawkins 2015: 54-55). If we follow this interpretation, the translation would be, “A ram to my ‘soul’ (likeness), which (is) on this stele,” and “He is also to perform the slaughter on my ‘soul’ (likeness),” i.e., pour the blood over the image on the stele (Hawkins 2015: 55).

Concerning the concepts of embodied identity and fractal personhood, there is little difference between “soul” in its literal meaning and “likeness” as its metaphorical translation. The “likeness” in the context of the Kutamuwa stele is treated as if it were the living substitute for the dead person or as his simulacrum. This simulacrum contains aspects of the deceased individual, commemorated through the image and the inscription. For example, Kutamuwa is represented as the servant of the king and as the patriarch of his family. He appears to have had a multicultural identity, because his inscription is written in Aramaic, but the gods mentioned in the inscription, like Kubaba and Hadad of the Vineyards (= Luwian *Tarhunzas tuwarasis*), are Luwian. The provisions made for his afterlife kept him closely tied to his descendants (the sons mentioned as being responsible for the offerings), but the sacrifices to the gods (Hadad, Šamš, and Kubaba), which are mentioned in the same context, indicate another relationship important for his future life. In fact, the wish to share regular sacrifices with the gods is a common topos, also known from the Samalian royal inscriptions. For example, the inscription on the Hadad statue from Gercin clearly states that the “soul” of the deceased king (i.e., Panamuwa) is expected to eat and drink with Hadad (KAI 214: 17, 21-22,⁷ on this issue, see Niehr 1994 and Niehr 2006). There might be a slight difference in hierarchy, inasmuch as the king is privileged to eat with Hadad while Kutamuwa receives the same sacrifices as the gods (Pardee 2009: 63), but the sort of desire is essentially the same. This demonstrates another level of post-mortal embodiment in which the person reaches closer contact with the gods.⁸ The ultimate stage in this transformation is the deification

⁷ KAI = Donner H., Röllig W. 1966-1969, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, 3 vols, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz (2nd edition).

⁸ The phrase in a Luwian building inscription (KULULU 1, §§15-16) also emphasizes this demand. Here, the author, a servant of the ruler Tuwati, writes, “But when I myself shall ‘go away’ into the presence of the gods from the rule of Tuwati, these houses (will be) here” (translation from Hawkins 2015: 51).

of the royal ancestors, which is attested by the presence of royal statues with divine attributes (e.g. Bonatz 2000: A 6, A 7), the physical setting of some monuments in places where offerings were also presented to the gods, and inscriptions for both the Luwian and Aramaean kingdoms (Hawkins 2015: 50-51; Niehr 1994; Niehr 2006).

6. The dead playing a critical role in the negotiation of political power is an important issue, especially for the relations between the ruling royal class and the elite (aristocracy) in the Luwian and Aramaean city-states. Alessandra Gilibert (Gilibert 2011: 128-131, 134) has pointed out that, from the 9th century on, non-royal elites in the city-states ascended to more political power and that, in the context of a refined courtly environment, the king often became the catalyst for a hierarchy of non-royal court members. This process corresponds to the dramatic increase in funerary monuments in the 9th and 8th centuries BC.

As mentioned above, the iconography of the deceased on several funerary monuments resembles that of the king, although details, such as variations in the embellishment (embroidery?) of the garment and the furnishing for eating and drinking, indicate different hierarchic positions. The funerary monuments of non-royals may not have had the same visibility as those of the royal family because they were erected in rather private spaces, but they manifested the same aspect of durability. The stone monument per se was a symbol of social and political prestige.

Apart from such infra-social negotiations, the presence of ancestor monuments in the public spaces of the cities had a high value for the political order of the city-state, of course. These monuments may have helped to assure the origin and continuation of the dynastic line. However, since cases of inner-dynastic struggles and political overthrows are reported, the monuments of the royal ancestors could also have changed their meaning. Several of the monumental royal ancestor statues were found in contexts that suggest an intentional burial after violent destruction. The statue of a ruler from Melid (Bonatz 2000: A 13) that stood in the chamber of a gate (the Lion Gate in Arslantepe) was overturned from its base, its face was mutilated, and thereafter the monument was buried in the same gate chamber. The statue of a royal ancestor from Sam'al (fig. 1) also was toppled from its double lion base and ritually buried next to its original place in front of the Building J on the citadel of Sam'al. The severe mutilation of the royal statue from Carchemish (Bonatz 2000: A 7), which was found only in fragments close to the "Processional Entry", suggests a similar eradication of a politically important memorial. One may argue that such bad treatments of the royal ancestors were the result of the Assyrian conquest of these cities. However, the quite respectful burial of the statues in Melid and in Sam'al put this solution into question. It shows that the statues were believed to have their own spirit, because they were mutilated, ritually killed, and buried. The ritual annihilation of these images obviously must have involved people who believed in their power and who tried to banish it in accordance with their own cultural background.

7. In the realm of the Luwian and Aramaean kingdoms, the landscape of death is a persistent element structuring urban spatiality and sociopolitical cohesion. The monuments to the deceased and ancestors were encountered in different public and private spheres of the city landscapes and their surroundings. They were erected as individual monuments or as part of complex architectural and pictorial programs that served as diacritical markers for social and political identities. From the point of view of rather small-scale political units, their existence obviously had a strong legitimizing impact on hegemonic practices and territorial claims. In the case of the small kingdom of Sam'al-Ya'idi, there is striking evidence of the creation of a sacral landscape occupied by the ancestors and gods of the city-state.

About 7 km to the north of the capital, Zincirli, the two summits of a massive rock called Gerçin rise from the flat plain. The long inscription on the Hadad statue that was found at the foot of this prominent landmark provides a clear account of its function, first, as the state sanctuary and, second, as the necropolis of the kings of Ya'idi.⁹ Panamuwa I, who commissioned the statue around 830 B.C., used it also to make provisions for his own afterlife. As a dedication to the storm god Hadad, it also entailed the wish that the "soul" of Panamuwa might eat and drink with Hadad. Panamuwa furthermore mentions his grave chamber and a statue (probably his own) erected next to this grave. Felix von Luschan found fragments of four other monumental but severely damaged statues

⁹ KAI 214; for a more updated edition of the inscription, see Tropper 1993: 154-158.

at Gerçin in 1890 (Luschan 1893). These images probably also represented royal ancestors; their originals stood somewhere on the summits of Gerçin. The Gerçin complex thus stands as a landscape monument with a strong aura of sacrality. It was possible to view it from Sam'al every day and perhaps even the monumental statues were placed there on the top in a way that they could have been seen from a great distance. Inasmuch as Gerçin virtually occupies the plain, the royal ancestors and deities of Sam'al-Ya'idi venerated there manifested the ruling dynasty's possession of this land. The concept is not so far from NEnaš processions at Ebla in the middle of in the 3rd millennium BC (see above). It entails a journey through the landscape marked by the presence of the ancestors and deities that bestow legitimation and spiritual power on the ruling king.

One may expect that ceremonial processions were carried out between locations such as Zincirli and Gerçin; and the ceremonies inside the cities must also have required a meaningful movement between public and private spaces, upper and lower town, palaces, courtyards, and city gates.¹⁰ Such processions and ceremonies could have included mourning rituals if special focus was given to recently deceased individuals or important ancestors. However, since clear evidence of this is missing, we should stress the most distinct aspects: the communal and private space was mapped out with many focal points that lead to an unavoidable and continuous interaction between the living and the dead. The landscape of death in the context of the Luwian and Aramaean kingdoms was an omnipresent physical and spiritual experience. It must have had great meaning for the self-awareness of the contemporary communities, a bond to the past and a promise for the future. And this might have been the main reason why it completely disappeared after the Assyrian conquest.

APPENDIX

“HOW TO COPE WITH DEATH – MOURNING AND FUNERARY PRACTICES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST” CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Preface | 7 |
| CANDIDA FELLI | |
| “How to cope with death”: an introduction | 9 |
| ADRIANO FAVOLE | |
| Robert Hertz and contemporary cremation: representation of the body and new funerary rituals in Italy and France | 17 |
| ALFONSO ARCHI | |
| Some remarks on ethnoarchaeology and death in the Ancient Near East..... | 29 |
| ANNE LÖHNERT | |
| Coping with death according to the “Elegy on the Death of Nannā” | 49 |
| ANDREA KUCHARÉK | |
| Mourning and lament in Ancient Egypt..... | 67 |
| CANDIDA FELLI | |
| Mourning and funerary practices in the Ancient Near East: an essay to bridge the gap between the textual and the archaeological record..... | 83 |
| † EDGAR PELTENBURG | |
| Mortuary ritual and embodied identity in northwest Syria in the 3 rd millennium..... | 133 |

¹⁰ On this issue, see especially Pucci 2008 and Gilibert 2011.

ANNE PORTER

The materiality of mourning 157

GLENN SCHWARTZ

After interment/outside the tombs: some mortuary particulars at Umm el-Marra..... 189

STEFANO VALENTINI

Vaulted hypogea during the Middle Bronze Age: a perfect example
of the intra-muros multiple tomb in Mesopotamia..... 217

PETER PFÄLZNER

Royal corpses, royal ancestors and the living: the transformation of the dead in Ancient Syria..... 241

JOYCE NASSAR

The infra-urban funerary spaces: how the dead interact with daily life at Mari
(3rd millennium-2nd millennium BC)..... 271

ARKADIUSZ SOLTYSIAK

Taphonomy of human remains and mortuary archaeology:
three case studies from the Khabur triangle..... 295

JENNIE BRADBURY AND GRAHAM PHILIP

The Invisible Dead Project: a methodology for “coping” with the dead 309

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bayliss M. 1973, The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia, *Iraq* 35: 115-125.Bonatz D. 2000, *Das syro-bethitische Grabdenkmal. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung einer neuen Bildgattung im nordsyrisch-südostanatolischen Raum in der Eisenzeit*, Mainz, von Zabern.Bonatz D. 2001, Il banchetto funerario. Tradizione e innovazione di un soggetto sociale nella Siria-Anatolia dal Bronzo Antico all'Età del Ferro, *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 24: 159-174.Bonatz D. 2016, Syro-Hittite Funerary Monuments Revisited, in C.M. Draycott, M. Stamatopoulou (eds), *Dining & Death: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the “Funerary Banquet” in Ancient Art, Burial and Belief*, Colloquia Antiqua 16, Leuven, Peeters: 173-193.Bonatz D. 2019, Les monuments funéraires des néo-hittites, *Dossiers d'Archéologie hors Série* 36, *Royaume oubliés. De l'empire hittite au araméens*: 48-53.Çambel H., Özyar A. 2003, *Karatepe – Aslantaş. Azatiwataya, Die Bildwerke*, Mainz, von Zabern.Dücker B. 2007, *Rituale. Formen – Funktionen – Geschichte*, Stuttgart, Metzler.Gilibert A. 2011, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art and the Archaeology of Performance. The Stone Reliefs at Carchemish and Zincirli in the Earlier First Millennium BCE*, TOPOI Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 2, Berlin, de Gruyter.Hawkins D. 1980, Late Hittite Funerary Monuments, in B. Alster (ed.), *Death in Mesopotamia. Papers Read at the 26. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, Mesopotamia 8, Copenhagen, Akademisk Vorlag: 213-255.Hawkins D. 1989, More Late Hittite Funerary Monuments, in K. Emre, B. Hrouda, M. Mellink, N. Özgüç (eds), *Anatolia and the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honor of Tahsin Özgüç*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi: 189-197.Hawkins D. 2015, The Soul in the Stele?, in A. Archi (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome, 4-8 July 2011*, Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns: 49-56.von Luschan F. 1893, *Fünf Bildwerke aus Gerdschin*, in *Die Ausgrabungen in Sendschirlj I*, Berlin, Spemann.

- Niehr H. 1994, Zum Totenkult der Könige von Sam'al im 9. und 8. Jh. v. Chr., *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 11: 57-73.
- Niehr H. 2006, Bestattung und Ahnenkult in den Königshäusern von Sam'al (Zincirli) und Güzāna (Tell Halāf) in Nordsyrien, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 122/2: 111-139.
- Orthmann W. 1971, *Untersuchungen zur späthethitischen Kunst*, Bonn, Habelt.
- Pardee D. 2009, A New Aramaic Inscription from Zincirli, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 356: 51-71.
- Parker Pearson M. 1999, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing Limited.
- Pfälzner P. 2015, A House of Kings and Gods – Ritual Places in Syrian Palaces, in A.M. Maïla-Afeiche (ed.), *Cult and Ritual on the Levantine Coast and its Impact on the Eastern Mediterranean Realm. Proceedings of the International Symposium, Beirut 2012*, *Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'architecture Libanaises Hors-Série X*: 413-442.
- Pucci M. 2008, *Functional Analysis of Space in Syro-Hittite Architecture*, BAR International Series 1738, Oxford, BAR Publishing.
- Rehm E. 2004, *Dynastensarkophage mit szenischen Reliefs aus Byblos und Zypern. Teil 1.1 Der Ahiram Sarkophag*, Mainz, von Zabern.
- Struble E.J., Herrmann V.R. 2009, An Eternal Feast at Sam'al: The New Iron Age Mortuary Stele from Zincirli in Context, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 356: 15-49.
- Voos J. 1988, Studien zur Rolle von Statuen und Reliefs im syro-hethitischen Totenkult während der frühen Eisenzeit (etwa 10.-7. Jh. v.u.Z.), *Ethnologische-Archäologische Zeitschrift* 29: 347-362.
- Yun I.A. 2006, A Case of Linguistic Transition: The Nerab Inscription, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51/1: 19-43.



Fig. 1: Statue on double lion base, Zincirli citadel, c. 925-875, H. 2.50 m (statue), 0.72 m (base), Istanbul, Archaeological Museum no. 7768 (Bonatz 2000: A 6).



Fig. 2: Statue, Tell Halaf, mudbrick terrace under the “palace”, H. 1.42 m, c. 950-875, Aleppo Museum no. 7536 (Bonatz 2000: B 4).

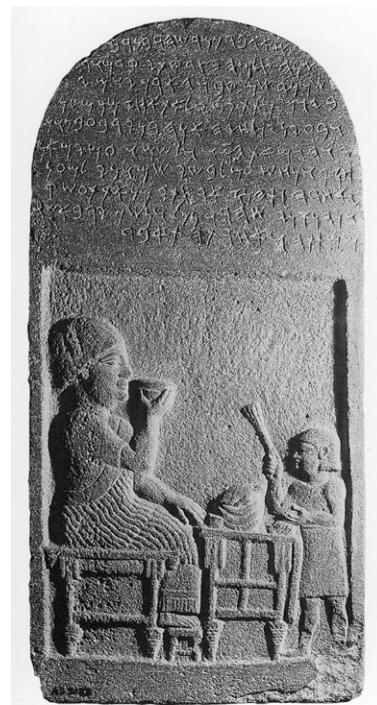


Fig. 3: Stele, Neirab, c. 710-690, H. 0.95 m, Louvre AO 3027 (Bonatz 2000: C 35).



Fig. 4: Stele, Zincirli, citadel, c. 730-710, H. 1.52 m, Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin VA 2658 (Bonatz 2000: C 46).

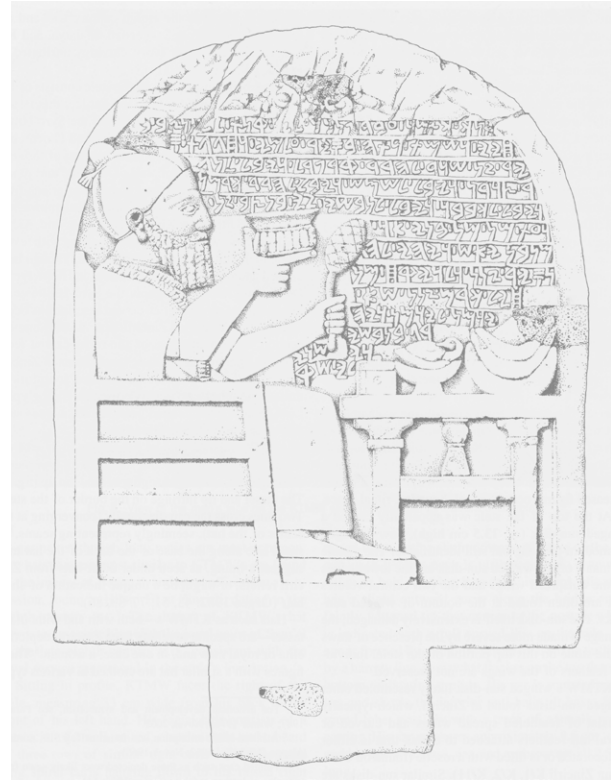


Fig. 5: Stele, Zincirli, lower town, c. 740-730, H. 0.99 m, Gaziantep Museum (Strubel and Herrmann 2009: fig. 4, drawing by K. Reczuch).



Fig. 6: Stele, Maraş, c. 800-725, H. 0.77 m, Antakya Museum, no. 17917 (Bonatz 2000: C 59).