



## German Archaeologists have taken up excavations in Iraq

German Institute of Archaeology is locating ancient mound of Arbil

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*A team of German archaeologists around Dr Margarete van Ess (Orient Department, German Archaeological Institute / DAI) has taken up archaeological excavations in Arbil, federal region of Kurdistan, Iraq. Actual fieldwork (from November, 18th to 30th, 2009) focussed on a grave chamber recorded already in January, 2009, in the framework of a co-operation between the DAI and the Department of Antiquities, Arbil. The activities are part of an educational training initiative for young Iraqi-Kurdish archaeologists. Funding was provided by the „Official Development Assistance“ of the German Federal Government and by the Governor of the Arbil Region, Iraq.*

The German team consisted of Dr Arnulf Hausleiter of the institute's Orient Department coordinating the archaeological fieldwork, as well as of seven specialists in archaeology, excavation techniques, physical anthropology, conservation, photography and geophysics implementing specific training measures in excavation and recording methods in the field as well as in the conservation of archaeological objects. On the Iraqi-Kurdish side nine members of the Department of Antiquities, Arbil, and students of the Salahaddin University participated to the excavation and recording activities with great success.

Several aims had to be fulfilled this season: The systematic recording of a Neo-Assyrian grave chamber of the 7th century BC located near the famous citadel of Arbil commenced in January 2009, was completed. The vaulted tomb was built by baked bricks and contained at least three sarcophagi with up to five individuals. In accordance with the ancient burial rites, there was a number of grave goods, such as glazed and un-glazed pottery vessels, lamps and a bronze bowl. Architectural layout and the furnishing of the grave chamber are well known from other Assyrian capitals with Neo-Assyrian occupation, such as Ashur and Nimrud. Next to this tomb, an archaeological sounding was made, aimed at investigating the context of the tomb. A number of graves have been found, belonging to a cemetery, most probably occupied after the end of the Assyrian empire for several centuries. Below this cemetery, there are remains of mud-brick architecture with the same orientation as of the grave chamber. These walls belong to a building either connected directly to the grave chamber or to a subsequent building with the same orientation.

In an area of 1 ha around the grave chamber a geophysical prospection using ground penetrating radar (GPR) has been carried out in order to detect archaeological sub-surface structures by a non-destructive method. As a result, remains of substantial ancient architecture have been identified. Its orientation and depth are similar to the grave chamber and, therefore, indicate a possible Neo- or Post-Assyrian date. Thus, the hypothesis on the area to be

interpreted as an ancient mound with remains of occupation could be confirmed. Although this mound was subject to modern building activities, it is still visible today. Therefore, the area investigated shows a substantial potential for further archaeological research.

The work carried out in November 2009 was conceived as an intensive training programme in archaeological recording and conservation and will be continued as such shortly.

For further details please contact Dr. Magarete van Ess under [mve@orient.dainst.de](mailto:mve@orient.dainst.de)

Photo credit

Fig. 1: Recording excavated graves (Photo: J. Kramer)

Fig. 2: Archaeological recording in the excavation field (Photo: J. Kramer)

Fig. 3: View into the grave chamber of the Assyrian tomb (Photo: J. Kramer)

Fig. 4: Human bones in the Assyrian tomb (Photo: E. Petiti)