

# DIE KINDERGRÄBER DER NEOLITHISCHEN SIEDLUNG SHIR IN SYRIEN

DAI Standort Außenstelle Damaskus, Referat für Naturwissenschaften, Anthropologie

Laufzeit seit 2009

Disziplinen Anthropologie, Paläopathologie

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## METADATEN



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Laufzeit seit 2009

Fokus Auswertung

Disziplin Anthropologie, Paläopathologie

Methoden Analoge Dokumentation, Analoge zeichnerische Dokumentation, Dokumentation Fund/Befund, Taphonomie, Altersbestimmungen, Dünnschliffuntersuchungen, Menschenknochenanalyse, Mikroskopie, Röntgenuntersuchungen

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Schlagworte Neolithikum, Hominiden, Soziale kollektive Einheiten

Projekt-ID 2426

Permalink <https://www.dainst.org/projekt/-/project-display/2001663>

## OVERVIEW

Anthropological investigations of the skeletons found within the settlement of Shir started in 2009. Unfortunately, only a part of the excavated collection could be investigated, further work was stopped because of the start of the war.

The Neolithic settlement of Shir is located 12 km northwest of Hama, in western Syria. It dates to 7000 6200/6100 BC (calibrated data), representing the early Late Neolithic period, and is situated on top of a terrace, near the river Orontes. Fertile soils, permanent access to water and mild temperatures made this area a good place for settlement.

## SPACE & TIME

## RESEARCH

### RESEARCH INTEREST

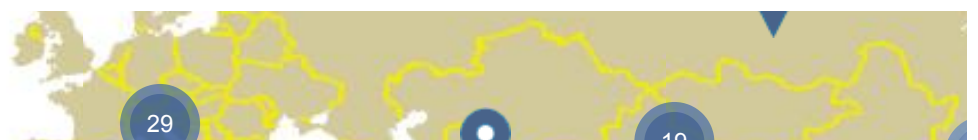
What are the reasons for the death of so many infants at a very young age?

### METHODS

In general, the skeletons were well preserved. Macroscopic investigations were carried out with the use of a magnifying glass. Standard anthropological methods were used for age and sex determination. Additional examinations, plain radiography (Faxitron 43805N by Hewlett-Packard) and histology were undertaken at the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin. Unfortunately, aDNA testing was unsuccessful due to the poor preservation of bone collagen.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

## TEAM





## RESULTS

### Results

Interestingly, most of the individuals investigated so far died at a very young age. The majority did not survive past the age of three years and there were very few juveniles and adults present in the material.

In general, it is very difficult to prove the cause of death from the skeleton of an individual, because many diseases that lead to death do not leave any traces on the bones. Children are especially frequently affected by viral infections which occur much too fast to affect the bones. Additionally, in many cases it is not just a single cause but a combination of several factors that lead to the death of one individual.

However, it was possible to find traces of deficiency diseases in these young infants, e.g., signs of scurvy and anemia. The orbital roof and the skull vault in particular exhibited typical changes of these diseases. Scurvy is due to vitamin C deficiency and leads to severe bleeding, also visible as small porotic plate-like structures attached to the bone. Anemia is characterized by a thickening of the external lamina of the skull vault with a porotic surface. Numerous different causes of anemia are known. The question of what kind of anemia the children suffered from and why they developed scurvy in this fertile environment is still under examination.

# PARTNER & FÖRDERER

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