

DIE KINDERGRÄBER DER NEOLITHISCHEN SIEDLUNG SHIR IN SYRIEN

DAI Standort Außenstelle Damaskus, Referat für Naturwissenschaften, Anthropologie

Laufzeit seit 2009

Disziplinen Anthropologie, Paläopathologie

METADATEN



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Fokus Auswertung

Disziplin Anthropologie, Paläopathologie

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Partner Außenstelle Damaskus der Orient-Abteilung

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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.

RAUM & ZEIT

FORSCHUNG

RESEARCH INTEREST

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

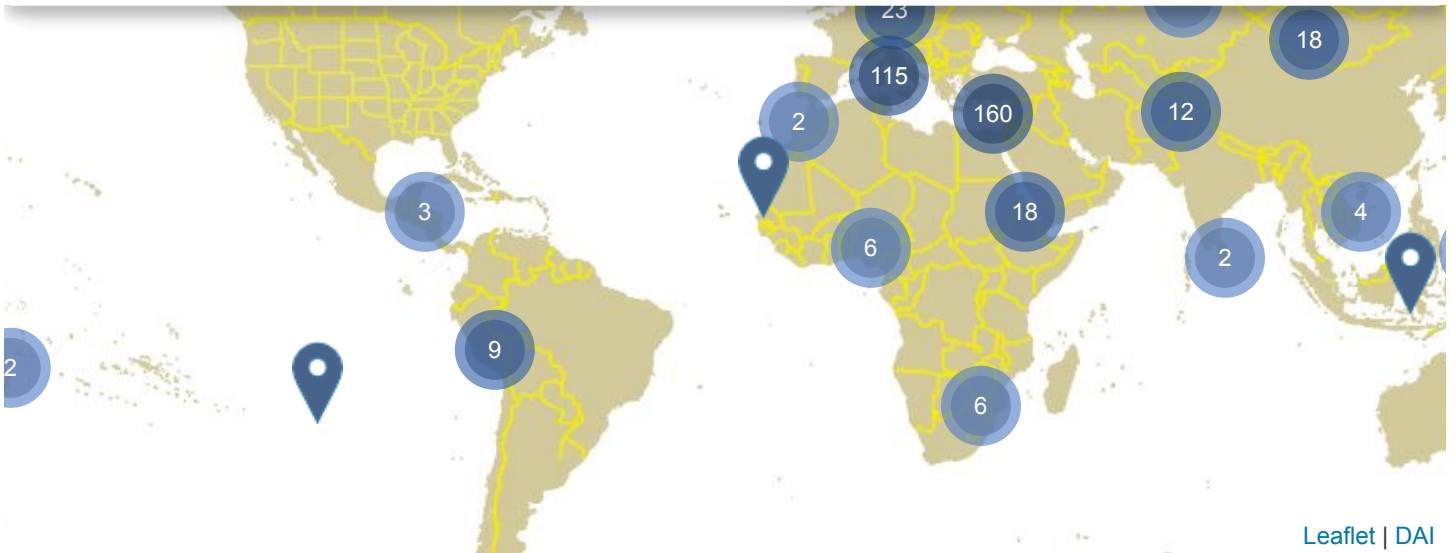
METHODS

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.

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ERGEBNISSE

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

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