

BURIAL CUSTOMS OF THE CHAMBER TOMBS IN SOUTHEAST ANATOLIA DURING THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

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Abstract:

This study concerns the burial customs of the chamber tombs discovered in the Southeast Anatolian Region. In the Early Bronze Age the Southeast Anatolian Region commenced the urbanization process like other places in the Near East, owing to the effects of the economic and social developments which were shaped by the impact of neighbouring cultures such as Syria and Mesopotamia. While *intramural* burial customs were practiced until the end of the period, there was a considerable increase in the number of *extramural* burials due to the urbanization in the region. This new social order brought the tradition of chamber tombs during the Early Bronze Age.

The chamber tombs of the Southeast Anatolian Region are amongst the earliest examples found in Anatolia. Chamber tombs which are usually used for collective burials are found both in *extramural* and *intramural* cemeteries as a separate group. Regardless of their location, there is no difference between their burial customs. Chamber tombs must have been the burial structures used by social groups which reached a certain economical level due to the urbanization. The grave goods, which were brought from long distances such as *depas*, *tankard* and Cycladic idols, and the abundant metal artifacts indicate that these people had power and position within the society.

Based on the information gathered from recent research in the region, it can be said that the chamber tomb tradition was widely used throughout the Early Bronze Age as in Northern Syria.

The Southeast Anatolia Region decreases elevation from north to south. It lies on the foothills of Southeast the Taurus Mountains which create a wide range to the north and consists of flat limestone plateaus between the Syrian and Iraqi borders to the south¹. Due to this geography, intense trade and cultural relations through the Tigris and

Euphrates river Valleys created a homogenous culture with certain common features from southeast Anatolia to northern Syria and the Mesopotamian Plain, as well as all the way to Eastern Anatolia². During the EBA, as for almost

¹ Yalçın 1986, 51.

² While local cultures continue to exist, cultural homogeneity started to take form. S. Mazzoni, who examined different aspect of this homogeneity especially in Northern Syria and Southeast Anatolia,

the entire Near East, Southeast Anatolia was included in the process of urbanization with the help of economic, technological and social developments shaped by the Syrian and Mesopotamian cultures. Among other new elements in the Early Bronze Age, a new tradition of burial customs, namely chamber tombs, start to be seen which were not widespread in Anatolia before that time³. The number of the chamber tombs in Southeast Anatolia has increased due to recent research and excavations (Fig. 1)⁴. The increase in the numbers brought various new questions. One of the questions is regarding the position of these individuals within the society. Another important as-

pect is the design of the tombs, based on their constructional and typical features⁵.

Emergence of the Chamber Tombs

Although their exact origin is not known, the stone built chamber tombs must be the successors of the cist graves⁶. They are notably similar to the cist graves in their constructional shapes. Most of the cist graves were used for individual burials. But, as with the chamber tombs, the existence of collective burials and the abundance of the goods of the cist graves⁷ indicate such development. The rock carved chamber tombs along the Middle Euphrates must be due to the calcareous geography of the region. These tombs occurred as a natural result of geography's influence on culture, and were used for collective burials throughout the EBA⁸.

Location of the Tombs

Almost all of the chamber tombs are found associated with a settlement. They were built either within the cemetery area adjacent to the settlement or inside the houses, most often within the citadel⁹.

concludes that it is due to intense trade and political relations within the cities. See Mazzoni 2000.

³ This article is a part of my unpublished M.A. thesis, which was presented to Ankara University Institute for Social Sciences, Archeology Main Branch, Protohistory and Near Eastern Archeology Department in 2003, entitled 'Burial Customs in Southeastern Anatolia Region During the Third Millennium B.C.'

⁴ In spite of this there is a very limited number of publications concerning the chamber tombs in the region altogether. The chamber tomb phenomena in Anatolia have been studied by T. Özgüç in detail concerning their size and construction features based on the present finds. See Özgüç 1948, 49. W. Orthmann appraised the burial customs of the Euphrates Valley in the third millennium B.C. by defining the chamber tombs' general features. See Orthmann 1980. N. Laneri studied *intramural* chamber tombs by defining the increasing number of *intramural* burial customs towards the end of the EBA. See Laneri 2004. Another important study is done by E. Carter and A. Parker (1995) who studied the graves from Northern Syria and Southeast Anatolia during the end of the EBA and classified the graves in the region. L. Cooper (2007), on the other hand, explains the variety of the grave types and the burial customs in Euphrates Valley by looking at the written sources, which gives information about different ethnic groups who lived in the region at the end of the EBA. As a result of research in recent years, the number of chamber tombs increased and this revealed the need to examine the constructional, functional, chronologic features and shapes and to define their general features.

⁵ One of the problems I have met during this study is that some of the chamber tombs made of stone are confused with cist grave technique concerning size and wall construction. The most important reason is that there is no standardization concerning basic features of chamber tombs such as size, height, and wall technique.

⁶ Yılmaz 2003, 90.

⁷ There are cist graves where up to nine individuals were buried in Birecik Cemetery. See Sertok – Ergeç 1999, 97 Tab. 1.

⁸ These types of graves are used especially around Gaziantep province for a long period until Roman times. See Archi et al. 1971.

⁹ Contrary to L. Woolley's argument that *intramural* burial customs decreased with urbanization. N. Laneri says that it continues during the EBA, based

The chamber tombs from Tilmen Höyük, Lidar Höyük, Oylum Höyük and Tıtrış Höyük are included in this group (Fig. 1)¹⁰.

Chamber tombs are also found in *extramural* cemeteries. In Tıtrış Höyük chamber tombs are found in the *extramural* cemetery as well as within the settlement. In the Gedikli Höyük *extramural* cemetery chamber tombs were separated from other types of burials by a wall. While there was a settlement in Hayaz Höyük at the beginning of the EBA, the settlement was abandoned towards the end of the period and a chamber tomb was built there¹¹. Since rock-cut chamber tombs are found outside of the settlements, in suitable topography where they could easily be built, they can be considered to be in this group.

Another group consists of monumental tombs, which are of completely different character, and are not known in this region before that time period. They were not connected to a settlement and were found in sacred areas where death-cult related ceremonies were held, such as in Gre Virike¹². Regardless of their location, chamber tombs don't differ in terms of burial customs and they all bear similar features.

Constructional Features

The tombs are divided into two main groups regarding their constructional features.

A-Stone-Built Chamber Tombs

The common feature of these widespread, single roomed stone built chamber tombs (Fig. 3) is that their walls were built with various sizes of rubble or ash-lars using the dry wall technique, and sometimes mud mortar. The walls were generally constructed straight, except for the oval shaped Gre Virike and Tilmen Höyük tombs' walls which were built concave towards the roof. Similar chamber tombs are known from Jerablus Tahtani, Tawi and Tell Beydar¹³. These tombs are rectangular, oval or round in plan. There are also tombs with trapezoid shape being nearly rectangular, as well as rectangular planned with rounded corners¹⁴. In Gre Virike the chamber tombs are oval and round in plan¹⁵. These tombs were built with locally found basalt and limestone. The size of the chamber varies. The long sides of the rooms vary between 2 and 5 m. and the narrow sides of the rooms vary between 1.25 and

on recent research. See Laneri 1999, 224; Yılmaz 2003, 55.

¹⁰ Laneri 1999, 229; Duru 2000b, 161; Hauptmann 1982, 96; Özgen – Helwing 2003, 66; Honça – Algaze 1998, 107.

¹¹ Honça – Algaze 1998, 107; Duru 2000a, 155; Roodenberg 1982, 29, 30.

¹² Ökse 2004b, 159; Ökse 2005.

¹³ Ökse 2004b, 160; Duru 2003, fig. 3; Peltenburg et al. 1995, fig. 8 Tomb 302; Kampschulte – Orthmann 1984, Tafel 35a Grab T5; Debruyne 1997, 145, fig. 2.

¹⁴ Yılmaz 2003.

¹⁵ A. T. Ökse claims that similar chamber tombs are found in Tilmen Höyük and Jerablus Tahtani. See A.T. Ökse 2004a, 187. A stone cist grave type which is either rectangular with rounded sides or oval shaped, with walls built of stones and regarded as monumental, was found in the EBA I period in Müslümantepe. See E. Ay 2004, 376, fig. 8. Round stone graves exist in Kültepe and Kalinkaya in Middle Anatolia in this period. See for Kültepe Özgüç 1963, 33, Pl. VI, 1-2; for Kalinkaya-Toptaštepe Zimmermann 2007, 375, fig. 2a-c. Examples of round stone cist graves which are similar to Kalinkaya in burial custom are found in the Iasos cemetery in Caria. See Pecorella 1984, 22, Tomba 28, Pl. 41-43. Most likely the number of examples of round graves in Anatolia will increase as the research increases.

3.50 m. The average height of the chamber tombs from ceiling to floor varies between 1.30 and 2.40 m¹⁶. The height of the chamber tomb and whether it was at ground level in its time is significant and indicates a function¹⁷. Comparing with other chamber tombs, the Hayaz Höyük chamber tomb is deeper than ground level and is 1 m. high¹⁸.

One of the most important constructional features of chamber tombs is that they have a door and a dromos on one of their narrow sides (Fig. 3e)¹⁹. Due to the absence of unity in direction of the tombs, there is no standard in the direction of the tomb entrances. The doors, which are only wide enough for one person, were closed with one or two slab stones placed vertically²⁰. The one or two leaved doors indicating entrance or exit from the tombs are connected to the entrance hall, which is also known as the 'dromos'. Steps leading to the chamber tomb, made of two or three lines of flat

stones, separate the chamber tomb from the entrance hall. Examples of those steps are found Gedikli, Hayaz Höyük, Gre Virike, Lidar Höyük and Oylum Höyük chamber tombs (Fig. 3a, e, c). Although it is rare, entering to the chamber tombs, which do not have a side entrance such as the Tilmen Höyük example, must have been from the top by lifting its covering stone²¹. Generally, roofs of the tombs are closed flatly with 3 or 4 big slabs²² (Fig. 3d, g). However, the roof of a tomb from Oylum Höyük²³ was closed with mud brick, and a false arched roof of a tomb from Gre Virike²⁴ indicates there are exceptions. The tomb floors are generally made of pressed soil, but there are also tombs from Gedikli Höyük whose floors are covered with various sizes of pebble stones²⁵.

The tombs from Tell Kara Hasan Höyük and Tell Amarna cemetery in the vicinity

¹⁶ For Titriş Höyük see Honça – Algaze 1998, 105; Algaze – Mısır 1993, 155; Algaze et al. 1995, 27; For Oylum Höyük see Özgen 1989-1990, 22; for Gedikli (Karahöyük) see Alkim – Alkim 1966, 21; for Tilmen Höyük see Duru 2000b, 161. These heights show that a person can easily walk about in the chamber during the burial procedure.

¹⁷ Whether the tombs are above ground or not when they were used is not stated in the publications. This makes it uncertain if they are below the ground or above it as a monumental tomb.

¹⁸ This tomb is deeper than the other graves under the ground. Its total depth exceeds 3 meters being 1,45 meters deep with a corridor 1,60 m further below the ground. None of the graves are deeper than 3 meters in the region. The chamber of the tomb is not different than the other chamber tombs except for this. See Roodenberg 1979-1980, 7.

¹⁹ One of the most important differences between chamber tombs and cist graves are that chamber tombs have entrances on the narrow side. As I recognize the same feature in the chamber tombs I examined, I think that this feature is particularly a feature of stone-built tombs, as İ.M. Akyurt stated. See Akyurt 1998, 5.

²⁰ Yılmaz 2003.

²¹ Duru 2003, 12, 13. E. Carter and A. Parker studied chamber tombs which have entrances on the upper side and are built of stone. In their study titled as 'Dolmen or Gallery Graves' and evaluated them separately from graves which have its entrance on the side, and are made of stone. See Carter – Parker 1995, 107, tab. 14, 2. But, there is no great difference between stone-built chamber tombs in burial customs except for their entrances. If we consider the fact that a man and woman are buried together in Tilmen Höyük, it is understood that there is no multiple burial here. The tomb does not have an entrance because most probably it is built for these two people. Therefore this tomb is not evaluated here under a separate title.

²² Yılmaz 2003.

²³ Özgen – Helwing 2003, 66.

²⁴ A. Tuba Ökse states that similar chamber tombs in North Syria in Jerablus Tahtani have false arched roofs. See Ökse 2004b, 160.

²⁵ Yılmaz 2003.

of Carchemish are known to have been built with stone²⁶.

A great number of stone walled chamber tombs have come to light through the museums' salvage excavations in Southeast Anatolia, especially in Gaziantep province. Among these, the chamber tombs, which were all found accidentally, are known from Mazmahor Village²⁷ in the vicinity of Şahinbey, Tünp Höyük²⁸ in the vicinity of Oğuzeli, Göbek Höyük²⁹ and Til Habeş³⁰ in the vicinity of Yavuzeli, Kazıklı Höyük³¹,

and Ayyıldız Village³², all from Gaziantep province, as well as Leylit Höyük³³ in Kilis province and the vicinity of Halfeti³⁴ in Şanlıurfa province. These tombs indicate that the number of the chamber tombs in the region would increase together with increasing field research.

B-Rock-Cut Chamber Tombs

The chamber tombs with oval and rectangular plan, and with single or multiple rooms are known in the region. There is a particularly large number of chamber tombs that have been excavated in the past, or accidentally found. A number of rock-cut chamber tombs that have been found during the museums' salvage excavations indicate its widespread tradition. The rock-cut chamber tombs are especially common in Gaziantep and its vicinity (Fig.1).

A rock-cut chamber tomb with an irregular plan was found during the Gaziantep Museum's salvage excavations in Gaziantep's town of Oğuzeli. The tomb is 4 m long, 2.5 m wide, 1.30 m high, and 1.9 m deep below ground level and its entrance is on the eastern side³⁵. A rock-cut chamber tomb with no specific plan was found in Gaziantep's town of Şehitkamil, in Sam Village on the northern foothills

²⁶ I predict that these must be chamber tombs; L. Woolley named them 'Large Tomb-Group' whereas he called other graves 'Cist Grave' in the Tell Amarna Cemetery in Tell Kara Hasan Höyük. Woolley 1914, 89-93. The dates and types of the graves around Carchemish are not well understood as they are destroyed or plundered. See Ensert 1995, 13 fn. 1.

²⁷ A chamber tomb in which walls are made of dressed stones, with the roof being covered with a flat stone, 1,55 x 3,15 m and 1,45 m in height, was found by the Gaziantep Museum, in Gaziantep province, Şahinbey district, Bağlarbaşı region, Mazmahor village. M. Önal and M. Sait Yılmaz prepared Gaziantep Museum Administration, Mazmahor Village Bronze Age Grave Excavation Report (2008).

²⁸ Chamber tombs made of cleaned stones are found in Gaziantep province in Oğuzeli district Tünp Höyük see Duru 2006, 62 fn. 47; Pl. 114, 1-4.

²⁹ A chamber tomb made of unworked limestones, being 3 x 2 m and 3m in height, was found as a result of a salvage excavation done in Gaziantep province, Yavuzeli district, Tokaçlı village, Göbek Höyük. S. Ezer regards this tomb as a cist grave. (See. Ezer 2002, 9, fig. 4). But according to its dimensions it must be a chamber tomb. R. Duru calls this grave a chamber tomb. See Duru 2006, 62 fn. 48; Mellink 1970, 164.

³⁰ A rectangular shaped chamber tomb being 1,77 x 2,90 m and 1,64m in height, was found in Gaziantep province, Yavuzeli district, Til Habeş Höyük. The tomb has an entrance on its narrow side 55cm in height from the ground and 84 x 77 cm in dimension. See Duru 2006, 62 fn. 50; Mellink 1970, 164.

³¹ The chamber tomb which is found in Kazıklı Höyük, 15 km west from Carchemish, most probably has a dromos in front of it, is 3,50 x 2,90 m, 1 m in height, and is rectangular shaped. See. Duru 2006, 63 fn. 51.

³² Ayyıldız tomb is 20 km west from Carchemish and has a dromos and a stone wall. See Sertok 2007, 245, 246; Squadrone 2007, 198.

³³ It is stated that three stone-built chamber tombs were found during the salvage excavations of Gaziantep Museum in 1983 and 1984. See Ensert 1995, 14.

³⁴ It is built of middle sized roughly worked stones. See Sertok 2007, 238.

³⁵ Gaziantep Museum Administration, Oğuzeli Fatih Region EBA Necropolis Excavation Result Report prepared by M. Önal and A. Beyazlar (2005).

of a limestone hill. Its dimensions are 2.60 m long, 1.35 m wide and 1.05 m high³⁶. A limestone rock-cut chamber tomb found in Gaziantep's Şahinbey district, Konak district is 3 m in diameter and 1 m high, with an entrance on the north. It has a semi-globular shaped tomb and was 1 m beneath ground level³⁷. A rock-cut chamber tomb is known from Şanlıurfa's Halfeti Province, Yukarı Göklü Village³⁸. An oval shaped rock-cut chamber tomb, which was reached through a shaft from the surface, is found in Dibecik Village, 30 km west of Carchemish, 10 km southeast of Tilbeşar, on the western side of the Sacır River³⁹. A rock-cut chamber tomb which was looted in the past was found on the foothills of Lohan Höyük, in Gaziantep's Burç town. Its chamber dimensions are 2 x 3 m⁴⁰. A rock-cut chamber tomb was found on the foothills of a limestone hill, 750 m west of Zincirli Höyük in Gaziantep's İslahiye province⁴¹. A rock cut

chamber tomb is also known from Tilbeş Höyük recently⁴².

In the Southeast Anatolian Region, rock-cut tombs were very commonly used grave types throughout the Early Bronze Age. In Northern Syria, during the same time period, single or multiple chambered rock-cut tombs are known from El Qitar, Tawi⁴³, Tell Banat⁴⁴, Samseddin, Tell al-Abd⁴⁵, Djerniye⁴⁶ and Tell as-Sweyhat⁴⁷.

Although rock-cut and stone built chamber tombs have different construction features, they generally bear the same burial customs. Regarding the distribution of these tombs throughout the EBA, it can be seen that they have a specific expansion in the Middle Euphrates River Basin (Fig. 1)⁴⁸.

Grave Finds

The grave goods of these graves, compared to other grave types, are particularly abundant. The most important reason for this is that the chamber tombs were used for a long period of time and the individuals were not buried all at the same time. Considering this situation, the goods put in the graves must have increased every time with a new burial. Some of these goods found in the graves were unique finds or luxurious trade goods⁴⁹ brought from long distances, giving us clues about the individuals' social

³⁶ Gaziantep Museum Administration, Sam Village Bronze Age Necropolis Excavation Result Report prepared by S.Tan and T. Atalay (2007).

³⁷ Gaziantep Museum Administration, Şahinbey district, Konak Region Rock Grave Excavation Report prepared by H. Alhan and T. Atalay (2002). Battal Höyük 250-300 m north of the tomb is thought to belong to the EBA.

³⁸ It can be said that collective burials are present in tombs used during the EBA and where a lot of materials are found.

³⁹ Sertok 2007, 238.

⁴⁰ Archi et al. 1971, 82.

⁴¹ Information about the chamber tomb excavated in 2007-2008 is from the Zincirli Höyük Excavation head D. Schloen. He stated that bones belonging to more than one person show multiple burials and that there is Bronze Age pottery in the tomb, although the tomb was destroyed by the villagers earlier. It is not accurate whether the pottery found in the tomb belongs to the EBA or not. The date of the tomb is also not defined as the studies on the tomb finds are still continuing. I thank D. Schloen for the information.

⁴² Cooper 2007, 60. There isn't any detailed information about the tomb.

⁴³ Kampschulte – Orthmann 1984, 13-26, Abb. 4.

⁴⁴ Porter 2002, fig.7.

⁴⁵ Orthmann 1980, 99.

⁴⁶ Meyer 1991, 149 ff.

⁴⁷ Zettler 1997, fig. 3.15.

⁴⁸ Carter – Parker 1995, 107.

⁴⁹ Matney et al. 1997, 66.

and economical situations. Various types of metal weapons, pottery and jewelry found in the graves in large numbers also indicate social status⁵⁰. Although there is no specific order in the graves, generally the skeleton lay on one side while the artifacts lay on another.

The Upper and Middle Euphrates River Basins share the same similarities in their pottery tradition as well as their grave types throughout the third millennium B.C. Particular types of vessels being frequently found in the graves indicate that they must have been part of an ideological or a ritual ceremony⁵¹.

Because they were looted in the past, Gedikli chamber tombs have a very small amount of grave goods. Locally made brittle orange and cream coloured wares of pots, cups, bowls, a trefoil jug, short fruit stands, a pot with a pedestal foot and small fruit stands with basket handles were found in the graves. Bronze finds are not abundant due to the looting⁵². The goods from the Tilmen Höyük tomb consist of great number of beads, two fruit stands made of brittle orange ware, two bowls, a plate with pedestal foot, an alabastron shaped Syrian bottle, a bronze wire twisted to make a spiral bracelet, and three bronze pins. Two of these pins have three perched birds on their heads⁵³. In the Lohan Höyük chamber tomb 44 pots were found including examples of long pedestal footed fruit stands made of brittle orange ware and spiral burnished me-

tallic wares⁵⁴. Only a bronze ring and a pot were found in one of the chamber tombs in Oylum Höyük⁵⁵. Almost 130 pots consisting of fruit stands, three footed pots, Syrian bottles, horizontally grooved conical goblets, bronze finds such as a bracelet, earring and *torque* pieces, a bronze axe with a broken shaft hole, and beads were found in the tomb called "The Tomb of Vases"⁵⁶. In chamber tomb number 3, fruit stands, ring based goblets, globular bottles, a small pot, seven pins made of copper, two silver hair spirals, a piece of a pen and a piece of a broken dagger were found⁵⁷. In Lidar Höyük's tomb number 6 almost 200 pots including cream coloured bowls, cups, bottles, spiral burnished metallic wares, 12 bronze pins, and a great number of beads reflect Early Dynastic III style. A great number of pots were also found in tomb number 5⁵⁸. In the Hayaz Höyük chamber tomb 8 bronze pins with globular heads, a needle, 5 bronze bracelets, and a lot of beads made of stone, sea shell and faience were found. Also over 40 pots of plain simple ware in various forms such as bottle, pot, pilgrim flask, bowl, fruit stand, and side spouted vase were found⁵⁹. Various types and pots and pot pieces were found in the dromos and main room of Gre Virike's chamber tomb K9. There were 76 pots in total. High footed pots, bull leg shaped footed pots, bell shaped footed pots, deep or

⁵⁰ V. A. Alekshin states that there is no difference in burial customs in a society; however finds and grave type are discriminating factors See Alekshin 1983, 140.

⁵¹ Jones-Bley 2000, 130 ff.

⁵² Carter — Parker 1995, 102; Alkım 1969a, 95-97; Alkım 1979, 138-140.

⁵³ Alkım 1969b, 288, 289.

⁵⁴ Archi et al. 1971, 82, pl. 154-158.

⁵⁵ Özgen et al. 2001, 224.

⁵⁶ Özgen 1990, 204, figs. 9,10; Özgen 1989-1990, 22, 23, figs. 1, 2; Özgen 1989, 96, 97, figs. 3-9.

⁵⁷ Özgen et al. 1997, 59, 60, figs. 12, 13.

⁵⁸ Hauptmann 1982, 96, 97, fig. 12.

⁵⁹ Roodenberg 1979-1980, 7, 8, fig. 9.

shallow bowls, pots of the metallic ware group, and conical goblets are among those pots. Apart from the pottery, a copper/bronze spearhead, three pins with globular heads, an agate bead, a hair band made of silver, and a triangle arrowhead with wings made of flint stone were found⁶⁰. Based on the similarities of the finds with the Middle Euphrates River Basin, it can be said that the grave was used throughout the Early Bronze Age III⁶¹.

Different forms of pottery such as fruit stands, alabastron or globular Syrian bottles, deep and shallow wheel made bowls, and a double composite bowl were found in the Titriş Höyük chamber tomb. Other finds include bronze pins with globular heads, a big dagger, sea shells, frit beads, a unique mortar made of basalt with pedestal base⁶², a sea shell with incised decoration⁶³, *depa*s examples, a bronze spearhead with a twisted head⁶⁴ and a pot with some flower remains⁶⁵. From the west side of tomb number 92.39, 12 pots, 4 pots inside the 12 pots, and 2 small violin shaped idols made of white stone have been found⁶⁶. In tomb number 69.54, 50 complete pots and a bronze *toggle-pin*⁶⁷ have found, and in the tomb number 35-18:229, 42 complete pots and some bronze pins-3 of them intact-have come to light.

There is no difference between stone built and rock-cut chamber tombs in terms of

their grave goods. But based on the fact that goods found in the rock-cut chamber tombs belong to different time periods, it is apparent that rock-cut chamber tombs were used for a longer time.

Dating⁶⁸

Grave goods are the most important indicators for dating the tombs. The graves' period of use can be determined by looking at the earliest and latest dated grave goods. It is not always possible to date the graves by their constructional technique and plan. However, all the oval planned and false arched tombs are contemporary with the Akkadian Period⁶⁹.

The chamber tombs are used for a longer time period than other grave types. Among the material found in the graves which help with the dating are various pottery groups and their typical forms appear in a particular area and a particular period in the EBA. Locally made brittle orange ware, which is frequently found in chamber tombs of the İslahiye region, is

⁶⁰ Ökse – Bucak 2002, 153, 154, figs. 7-9; Ökse 2005, figs. 11-17.

⁶¹ Ökse – Bucak 2002, 153.

⁶² Matney et al. 1997, 66, figs.10-12.

⁶³ Algaze et al. 1995, 27, fig. 30.

⁶⁴ Matney et al. 1997, 66, figs. 13, 15.

⁶⁵ Algaze 1997, 125, 126.

⁶⁶ Algaze – Mısıır 1993, 156.

⁶⁷ Algaze – Mısıır 1992, 160, fig. 11.

⁶⁸ The EBA is, in some centres, accepted as having four phases because of the South East Anatolia Region's cultural relations with Syria and Mesopotamia. See Dornemann 1990, 85, 86 and Mellink 1992, 213, 214. Some of the researchers accept the EBA as having three phases according to Anatolian chronology. There isn't any agreement on this subject but, when we consider materials such as pottery which are used for a long time and have continuity, it is seen that common cultural features in Southeast Anatolia and Syria. See Mazzoni 2000. As these regions have a cultural unity through the Euphrates Basin, it will be more convenient to accept the EBA as four phased according to Syria- Palestine chronology.

⁶⁹ In all the tombs built of stone in Gre Virike, Tilmen Höyük and Jerablus Tahtani, in Tell Beydar there is the technique of wall making with using a limestone false arch. This tomb technique, which was not known before, must be an Akkadian Period grave type.

one of the pottery groups of Amuq Valley's H, I and J phases⁷⁰. A great number of pots which are in general called conical goblets⁷¹ with a light cream colour, fast wheel made, grooved surface, round, flat or pointy-becoming narrower towards the bottom-bases, are found in the graves. These types of pots are seen in a widespread area during the EBA II and III periods⁷².

Based on the alabastron shaped Syrian bottle and other finds, the Tilmen Höyük chamber tomb⁷³ is dated to 2200-2100 B.C.⁷⁴. The Gedikli chamber tomb is dated to the EBA III with brittle orange ware pottery group, wheel made groove ornamented conical goblets found in the tomb, and *depas* examples found near the chamber tomb⁷⁵. The Hayaz Höyük chamber tomb⁷⁶ is dated to the EBA III-IV based on the plain simple pottery examples of globular formed Syrian bottles, spouted vessels and pilgrim flasks found in the tomb. Most of the pottery which is helpful to date the Lidar Höyük chamber tombs⁷⁷ are known as the later ex-

amples of the metallic ware group with spiral burnish, and dated to the end of the EBA. Globular shaped Syrian bottles, spouted vessels, and a bronze *torque* found in the Oylum Höyük chamber tomb⁷⁸ belong to the EBA III-IV. The rectangular chamber tombs of Gre Virike were used throughout the EBA III, while the round and oval planned chamber tombs, which are contemporary with the rectangular examples, are dated to the EBA III-IV based on the plain simple ware style footed pot and round and alabastron shaped Syrian bottles found in the tombs⁷⁹. The finds from the Titriş Höyük chamber tombs contain a great number of local and imported *depas* examples and violin shaped marble idols which are dated to EBA II (2600-2400 B.C.) and III (2300-2100 B.C.)⁸⁰.

The rock-cut chamber tombs which are widespread in the region were used during the same time period as the stone built tombs⁸¹. Regardless of their features most of the chamber tombs were used from the middle until the end of the EBA (Fig. 2). The increasing number of the chamber tombs towards the end of the period parallels with urbanization and its

⁷⁰ Braidwood – Braidwood 1960, this pottery group which is called Brittle Orange Ware are seen in H phase dated to EBA II: 368 and 518, I phase dated to EBA III: 406 and 520, Tell Brak Akkadian Period and its contemporary J phase: 432 and 522.

⁷¹ Braidwood – Braidwood 1960, for H phase 350, for I phase 406, for J phase 435.

⁷² Alkim 1979, 139, 140.

⁷³ These types of Syrian bottles which are useful in defining the date of Tilmen Höyük's chamber tomb, are pot forms produced in metal or ceramic in Syria and Anatolia at the end of EBA, bought and sold, and showing cultural relations between the regions. For one of the last studies dealing with Syrian bottles see Zimmermann 2005.

⁷⁴ Alkim 1964, 174.

⁷⁵ Alkim 1969a, 95 ff.: U.B. Alkim dated the graves to the EBA. *Depas* type pots start to be seen generally in the EBA II and are in widespread use during the EBA III. For detailed information see Spanos 1972.

⁷⁶ Roodenberg 1979-1980, 8.

⁷⁷ Hauptmann 1982, 97.

⁷⁸ Özgen – Helwing 2003, 73.

⁷⁹ Ökse 2004b, 160, 161.

⁸⁰ Honça – Algaze 1998, 104 ff.

⁸¹ I had the opportunity to examine the finds of chamber tombs excavated by the Gaziantep Museum during my visit to there. I thank A. Denizhanoğulları, A. Beyazlar and S. Tan. Looking at these finds, examples such as simple plain ware pots, Syrian bottles, spouted vessels, conic goblets, bronze axes with shaft-hole, toggle pins, globular, and sliced and double headed pins, attract attention. Some tombs are understood to be used from the middle of EBA to the end. I thank F. Kulakoğlu for his additional information about the dates of some graves.

economical, technological and social developments.

Anthropological Analyses and the Death Cult

Inhumation is seen in all of the chamber tombs. The tombs had a long period of use for collective, or in other words, secondary burials. When a burial was going to be interred, the previous burial's bones and goods were put aside, or sometimes a hole was dug into the floor in order to put the skeletal remains in it and sometimes covered with various materials such as mud brick⁸². Burials were interred not only in the chamber tombs, but sometimes in the dromos as well, as seen in Lidar Höyük⁸³. Male, female, child and infant burials in most of the chamber tombs indicate that they were family tombs⁸⁴. Accordingly, the number of the burials in the tombs can vary greatly between 2 to 26⁸⁵. Apart from the chamber tombs, there are also cremation burials in the Gedikli Höyük cemetery. Although these two distinct burial types belong to different time periods, they were still separated by a wall, which indicates that there were two different groups of people who followed distinct traditions⁸⁶. According to the anthropological analyses, people of Mediterranean, Alpine, and Dinaric morphology⁸⁷

have lived in this region together throughout the EBA.

Bones of smaller livestock as sacrificial animals were found in all of the tombs. Lamb or kid bones in Gre Virike⁸⁸, sheep or goat in Gedikli⁸⁹ and Hayaz Höyük⁹⁰, and a few animal bones in Oylum Höyük tombs⁹¹ show that after the burials were interred, animals were sacrificed. According to the Ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, goat sacrifice was made to protect the dead from sicknesses and evil, and to vow to the gods.

Another indication pointing to the existence of the cult of dead is the sacred constructions leading to underground water sources nearby the tombs. Stone built structures which are connected to the corridors, wide enough for one person, and leading underground, show that underground water related ceremonies were held here. It was believed in Ancient Mesopotamia, that the dead, on his/her journey to the underground world, was supposed to pass through the source of the underground waters, "Apzu"⁹². The ceremonies related to underground water sources must have been held to comfort the journey of the dead. The structures related to underground water sources were found so far in Gre Virike⁹³, Kırıskal Höyük⁹⁴, and Gedikli⁹⁵ (Fig.3a).

Religious ritual pits found around chamber tombs indicate that some kinds of

⁸² Yılmaz 2003, 65-67.

⁸³ Hauptmann 1982, 96 ff.

⁸⁴ Yılmaz 2003. Age and sex of the individuals are generally stated in anthropological analyses reports. But whether the individuals are relatives or not are not stated.

⁸⁵ Yılmaz 2003.

⁸⁶ Duru 2000a, 155.

⁸⁷ Çiner 1998, 51: R. Çiner underlines that the Mediterranean race is older than the others in Anatolia. Özgen 1990, 204; Wittwer-Backofer 1988, 194: in Lidar Höyük and Oylum Höyük Mediterranean, in Gedikli Höyük Mediterranean, Alpine and Dinaric races are defined.

⁸⁸ Uysal 2002, 252 ff. ; Ökse 2004b, 160.

⁸⁹ Çiner 1998, 90; Duru 1986, 170.

⁹⁰ Roodenberg 1979-1980, 7.

⁹¹ Özgen et al. 1997, 60.

⁹² Black – Green 1992, 27.

⁹³ Ökse 2004b, 159; Ökse 2007, 95.

⁹⁴ Alkım 1974, 825, 826, figs. 104-107.

⁹⁵ Duru 2000a, 155, fig. 4.

ceremonies were held. Various pots, figurines, animal bones, incense remains and grains were found in these pits⁹⁶. These finds prove the existence of the death cult practices.

Assessment and Conclusion

Chamber tombs, which are smaller in number compared to the other grave types, were used not by the entire society, but by a certain group. G. Algaze, based on the fact that some chamber tombs in Titriş Höyük were found in houses, regards them as family graves serving the members of the family⁹⁷. Generally chamber tombs, having collective burials of various ages and sexes proves that they must have used as family graves.

Chamber tombs were probably above the ground when they were built and must have appeared as monumental grave features; therefore it is thought that interred burials were remembered with occasionally held ceremonies. In the chamber tombs and chamber tomb complexes of Gre Virike⁹⁸ (Fig. 3f) and Oylum Höyük⁹⁹, there is evidence that death cult related ceremonies were held there. Some chamber tombs in Oylum Höyük were preserved within the MBA architecture showing that respect for the burials and sacred features of the tombs had continued¹⁰⁰. A common feature of the monumental graves, which were most probably above the ground, was the existence of rooms connected to the chamber

tombs. Oylum Höyük¹⁰¹ and Gre Virike¹⁰² chamber tombs have similarities in terms of their construction and functional aspects with the monumental grave complexes of Tell Ahmar¹⁰³, Tell Kara Quzaq¹⁰⁴, Jerablus Tahtani¹⁰⁵, Umm el-Marra¹⁰⁶, Tell Chuera¹⁰⁷, Tell Halawa A¹⁰⁸ and Tell Banat¹⁰⁹, which are all in Syria. Monumental tombs and their related structures along the Euphrates from Southeast Anatolia to Northern Syria reflect the same burial customs, with examples which would have been immediately understood to be royal graves. In Titriş Höyük, the existence of some of the chamber tombs with their doors and roofs above the ground in the courtyard, or in a room connected to the courtyard, or presence of a certain room in the houses for monumental tombs, prove that monumental tombs can also exist in houses¹¹⁰. These examples show that monumental tombs existed in Southeast Anatolia during the EBA. This type of grave must have belonged to the families which were important and respected by the society¹¹¹. However there is no certain

⁹⁶ Duru 1986, 170, Ökse 2004b, 159.

⁹⁷ Matney – Algaze 1995, 42; Honça – Algaze 1998, 108.

⁹⁸ Ökse 2004b, 161-163.

⁹⁹ Özgen – Helwing 2003, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Özgen – Helwing 2003, 67.

¹⁰¹ A ruined structure, probably related to tombs, is found see *ibid*, 67.

¹⁰² Ökse 2004b, 163; Ökse 2007, 95.

¹⁰³ Roobaert – Bunnens 1999, 165, fig 2.

¹⁰⁴ Pereiro 1999, 120, fig. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Peltenburg 1999, 429ff., fig. 1; Peltenburg et al. 1995, 7, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Schwartz et al., 2003, 338, figs. 18, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Klein – Orthmann 1995, fig. 32.

¹⁰⁸ Meyer 1989, fig.28.

¹⁰⁹ McClellan – Porter 1999, 110, figs. 8, 10.

¹¹⁰ Honça – Algaze 1998, 108.

¹¹¹ When we look at the chamber tombs used in later periods in Anatolia, even from very late periods, it is seen that the chamber tomb tradition, which has a monument showing the buried family's and individuals' names and used by respectable families, was used for a long time and has similarities in practice.

information about whether these families had religious, military or political power. It is also important to mention that there were also chamber tombs under the ground during the same time period. Tombs showing very similar burial customs are found in Tiritiş Höyük, Lidar Höyük, Hayaz Höyük, Gedikli and Tilmen Höyük. These chamber tombs, being distinct from other grave types, were used by an elite group of the society for a long time for collective burials. The abundance and wealth of the grave goods reflect the social status of the burials rather than a religious practice¹¹². There is little information concerning the social group or families thought to be buried in the chamber tombs, whether they had special roles or belong to a different ethnic background than the public¹¹³.

Field research has identified great numbers of rock-cut chamber tombs in Southeast Anatolia, in contrast to Eastern Anatolia where there are no known rock-cut chamber tombs during this time period. One or more roomed rock-cut chamber tombs in Northern Syria's Euphrates Basin are known from El Qitar, Tawi¹¹⁴, Tell Banat¹¹⁵, Tell es-Sweihat¹¹⁶, Selenkahiye¹¹⁷, Tell al-Abd¹¹⁸, Wreide¹¹⁹, Samseddin and

Djerniye¹²⁰. These kinds of rock-cut-tombs are widespread in the Middle Euphrates Valley during the EBA¹²¹.

Common features of the chamber tombs are that they are smaller in number in Southeast Anatolia comparing to the other grave types¹²², they were used for more than one burial and they were either stone-built or rock-cut. The chamber tomb is not an ordinary burial tradition held for the general public. When the stone built tombs, which have monumental quality and their connected room groups are considered together, it can be seen that these graves were not just used as burials, but they were also used for ceremonies such as remembrance and sacrificial rituals after the internment¹²³. The Royal Tombs of Ur in Southern Mesopotamia share the same tradition with some of the chamber tombs, belonging to a ruling class and being grave complexes with more than one room¹²⁴. The number of the chamber tombs increased with the emergence of city states and ruling class¹²⁵. As pointed out by A.T. Ökse¹²⁶, these tombs must have belonged to the ruling class. However, there is not sufficient information regarding the na-

For one of the recent studies about the subject see Özbek 2005, 63, 90.

¹¹² Although debated, it is thought that social status is an important function in the wealthy appearance of the graves. See Alekshin. 1983, 141.

¹¹³ According to anthropological analyses in Gedikli, individuals having distinct morphology explain why burial customs are so various, and also show that chamber tomb owners may belong to different ethnic groups. See R. Çiner 1998, 51.

¹¹⁴ Kampschulte – Orthmann 1984, 13-26.

¹¹⁵ Porter 2002, fig.7.

¹¹⁶ Zettler 1997, fig. 3.15.

¹¹⁷ Van Loon 2001, 218 ff, fig. 4B.

¹¹⁸ Orthmann 1980, 99.

¹¹⁹ Orthmann – Rova 1991, 10-42, Abb. 2-9.

¹²⁰ Meyer 1991, Samseddin Abb. 10-16 and Djerniye Abb. 41, 42.

¹²¹ Carter – Parker 1995, 107.

¹²² Besides the five tombs with rooms in Oylum Höyük others are lower in number. Roughly, if there are 50 cist graves in a cemetery, 2 or 3 will be chamber tombs. Having 2 or 3 chamber tombs is unique. See Özgen – Helwing 2003, 66.

¹²³ The most important example of death cult practice, and a cemetery where related ceremonies are organized, is in Gre Virike. See A.T. Ökse 2004b.

¹²⁴ Woolley 1934, Pl. 273; Strommenger 1957, 581.

¹²⁵ Centres such as Harran and Carchemish in the EBA are known to be city states of the Ebla Kingdom. See Archi 1993, 55; Archi 1988, 2.

¹²⁶ Ökse 2005, 42.

ture and power of this class. It is thought that the chamber tomb tradition in South-eastern Anatolia and Northern Syria, and especially the Middle Euphrates Basin during the Early Bronze Age share the same characteristics, and must have been a common burial custom.

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Figure 1. Map of the find spots and distribution of tomb types mentioned in the text. (Used Bibliography: Carter-Parker 1995; Yılmaz 2003).

Figure 2. Chronological table of the chamber tombs. (Used Bibliography: Carter – Parker 1995; Yılmaz 2003; Laneri 2004; Peltenburg 1999; Pereiro 1999; Porter 2002).

Figure 3. Plans of some stone-built chamber tombs:

- a. Gedikli (Duru 2000a, fig. 2).
- b. Tilmen Höyük (Duru 2003, fig. 3).
- c. Oylum Höyük (Özgen et al. 1997, fig. 10).
- d. Titriş Höyük (Laneri 2004, fig. 12).
- e. Lidar Höyük (Hauptmann 1982, figs. 9-10).
- f. Gre Virike (Ökse 2004a, figs. 5-6).
- g. Hayaz Höyük (Roodenberg 1982, fig. 2).

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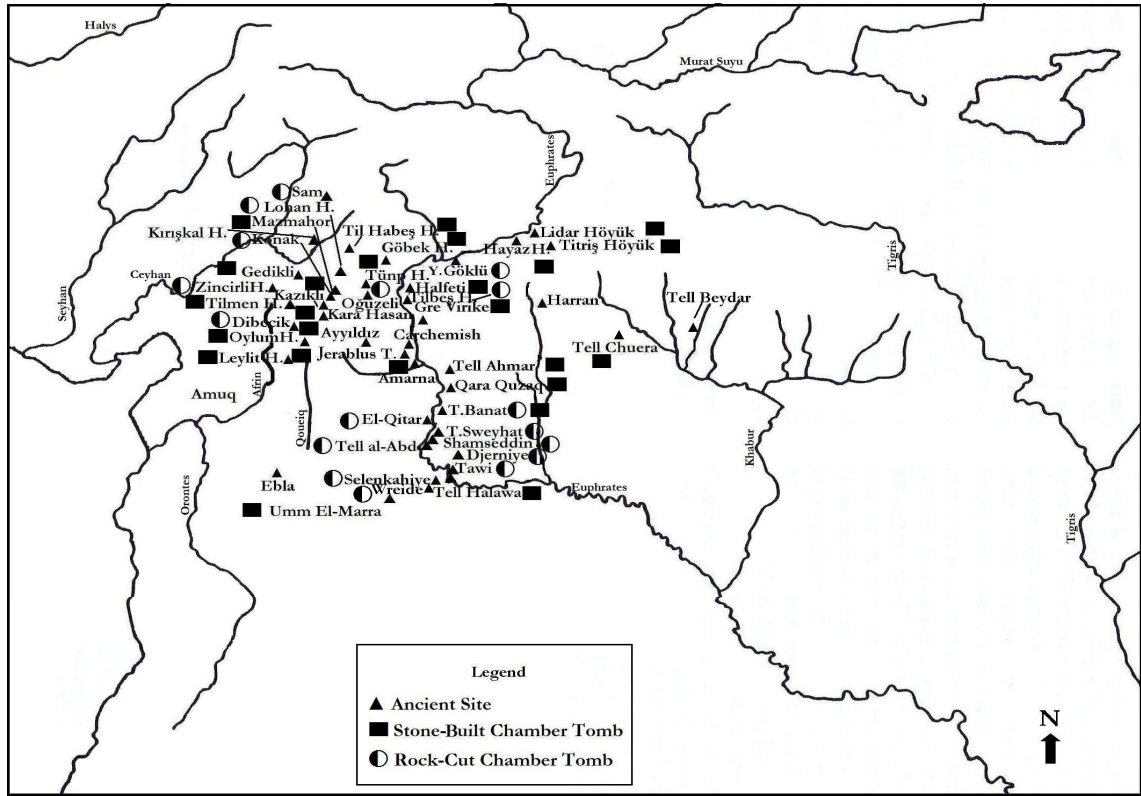
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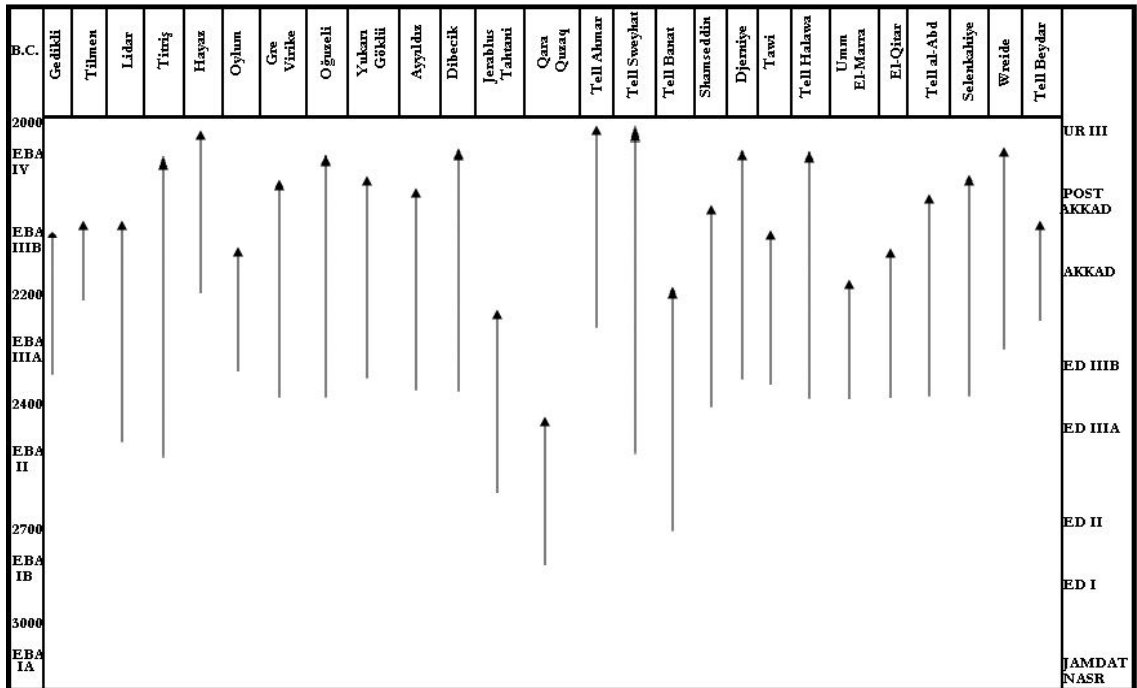
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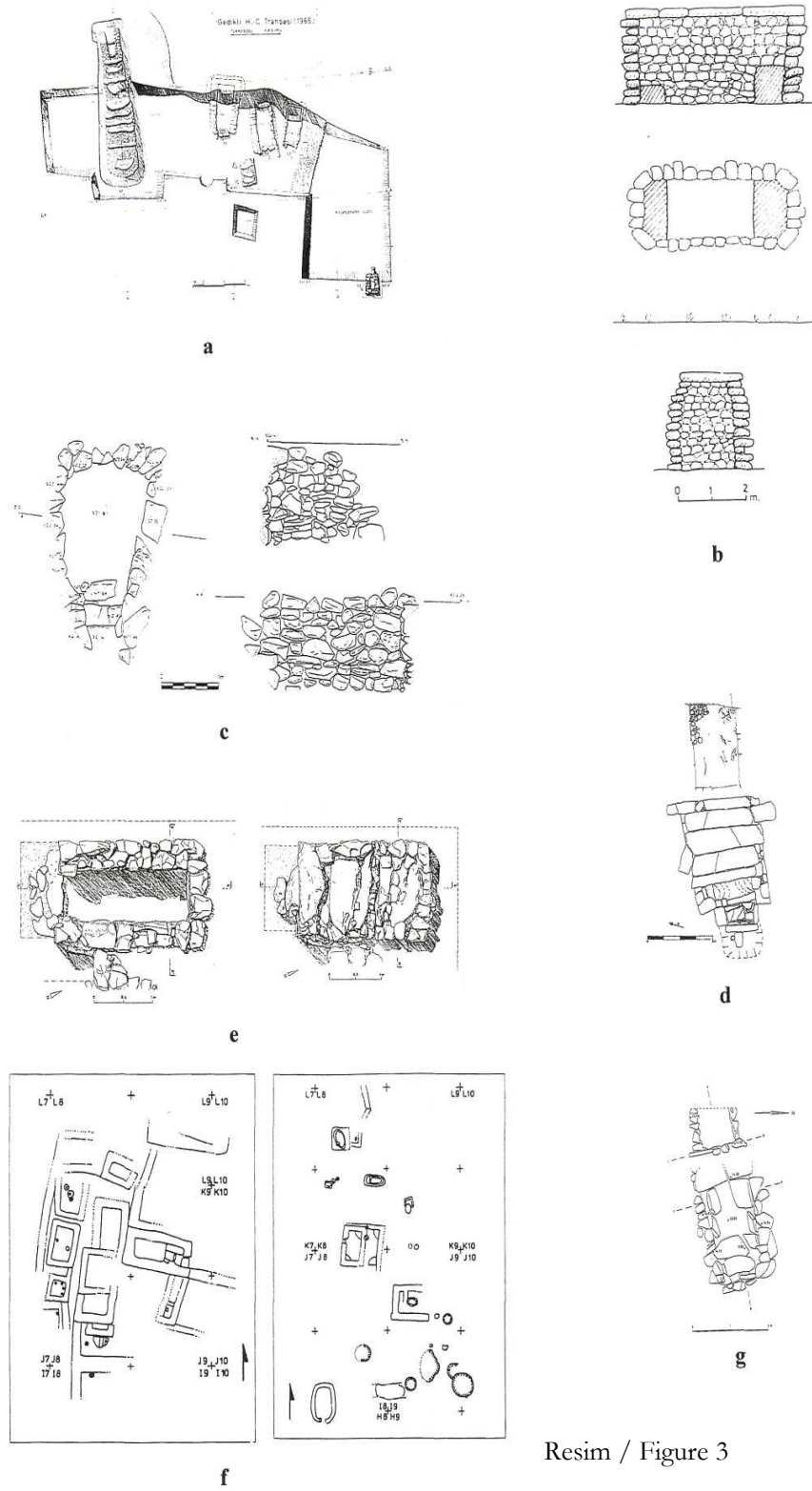


Resim / Figure 1



Resim / Figure 2

Burial Customs of the Chamber Tombs in Southeast Anatolia During the Early Bronze Age



Resim / Figure 3