

An early 'long-tub' coffin from 5th century BC Achaemenid Nippur?

Bernhard SCHNEIDER

Abstract

With the addition of the evidence provided by the dated tablet CBS 10059 buried together with a 'long-tub' coffin, I put into perspective the position of an early type of 'long-tub' coffin. Following this evidence, this type of burial belongs into the Late Achaemenid period, although, the so far published evidence shows that this type continues well into the Seleucid and probably also the early Parthian period.

Keywords: Nippur, coffin, Southern Mesopotamia, Achaemenids, Seleucids, Egyptians.

Zusammenfassung

Aufgrund der neuen Evidenz die die datierte Tontafel CBS 10059 gibt, wird versucht, den frühen Typ eines an beiden Enden gerundeten 'Trogarges' mit Ziegelabdeckung als der späten Achämenidenzeit zugehörig darzustellen. Die Verwendung von Trogsärgen lief jedoch klar bis in die Seleukidenzeit und wahrscheinlich sogar bis in die früh-parthische Zeit.

Schlüsselwörter: Nippur, Sarg, Südmesopotamien, Achämeniden, Seleukiden, Ägypter.

ملخص

ومع إضافة الأدلة التي قدمها اللوح المؤرخ CBS 10059 المدفون مع تابوت "ذو الحوض الطويل"، أقدم لكم تفسيراً لوضع نوع مبكر من تابوت "ذو الحوض الطويل". وفقاً لهذه الأدلة، ينتمي هذا النوع من الدفن إلى فترة الأخمينيين المتأخرة، على الرغم من أن الأدلة المنشورة حتى الآن تظهر أن هذا النوع يستمر أيضاً في فترة السلوقيين وربما أيضاً في الفترة البارثية المبكرة. الكلمات المفتاحية: نيبور، تابوت، جنوب بلاد ما بين النهرين، الأخمينيين، السلوقيين، المصريين.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nippur, situated on an ancient branch of the Euphrates, lies about 150 km to the Southeast of Baghdad, a bit over 6 km to the North of the modern town of 'Afek (Schneider 2023, Abb. 1-3). The region belonging to the modern southern Iraqi province of Al-Qadisiyah was once the border region between Sumer to the South and Akkad to the North. This was of the reasons why Nippur was an important settlement from the Ubaid period onwards (Schneider 2022).

The comprehensive study by Heather Baker of the burials dating from the post-Kassite to the Achaemenid period did not include the 'long tub' coffin as it is generally believed to be a later type of coffin (Baker 1995). The study by Baker included all the types with individuals buried in a flexed position, leaving

out the burials which made an outstretched position possible. Baker based her study, among others, on an earlier work by Eva Strommenger (1964), who dated this type to the Hellenistic/Parthian period and with no other published evidence at hand there was no reason to include it at the time (Strommenger 1964, Fig. 1). Strommenger's reference work was based to a big part on the reports of Reuther's excavations at Babylon (Reuther 1926).

In this article I try to put an early type of 'long tub' coffin with the buried individual in an outstretched position into a proper chronological niche. This early version of 'long tub' belongs to the sequence of burials potentially in use already during the later Achaemenid period. For the other types in use see Baker (1995). Another task of this article will be to ask for the origin of this unique shape which served the purpose of an

out-stretched (or semi-outstretched) body position. Before, at Nippur and other places in Southern Mesopotamia the flexed burial position (German 'Hockerposition'/Hockergrab) was dominant, for example within a 'bathtub coffin' with a round head-end and a flat foot-end (Baker 1995).


The available archaeological evidence consists of the unpublished documentation material from the third expedition (1893-96) of the early excavations of the University of Pennsylvania at Nippur, led by John Henry Haynes. Here the excavator describes a dated tablet (CBS 10059) in its archaeological context in association with a 'long tub' coffin.

2. CIRCUMSTANCES OF FINDING

During the excavations of the third expedition (1893-96) Haynes concentrated all his effort on the Southwestern tip of the 'Westmound,' designated as Mound X by the first expedition (1889). Until 13 April 1895, already two such 'long tub' coffins ('plain gray caskets') were encountered besides

other types of burials as the following report shows. It could therefore be already from this time, that a single photograph was shot by Haynes which is preserved from the third expedition (Fig. 1) showing two partly excavated 'long tub' coffins, one with a partly preserved brick cover.

Excerpt from the report of Haynes of the week ending on 13 April 1895 (UPMAA Nippur 04.03):

'Among a variety of coffins exhumed during the week we have saved one ornamented gray sarcophagus, and two [Fig. 1?] plain gray caskets of the following form . These and many other coffins previously saved are now in process of final preparation for transportation to Constantinople. When the preparation of these shall be complete we shall then have twenty seven coffins ready to be removed from Niffer whenever the summons shall come to call us homeward. They may be classified as follows:


- 14. Sarcophagi
- 10. Bathtub Coffins
- 3. Caskets and several 'Burial Urns'...



Fig. 1 – Two, so far, unidentified 'caskets' which were partly excavated on Mound X in 1895 represent the type of 'long-tub' coffin with a cover of one row of burnt bricks (type C2a). Expedition III, No. 98. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The tablet CBS 10059 was drafted at the very end of the reign of Xerxes. The text has been drafted on 10 August 465 BC (20/V/21¹ Xerxes = 10 August 465 BC), a few days after Xerxes died (Stolper 1999), and therefore providing the latest tablet dated after this king. CBS 10059 was found during the latter half of the third campaign (1893-1896) at Nippur. Haynes described it in his report of the week ending on 11 May 1895 (see below). As the excavator was short in proper photographic paper, a photograph of the tablet was sent later with the report of February 1st 1896. The tablet was first identified with CBS 10059 by Aage Westenholz during his research in the Nippur archive at Philadelphia in the late 1980ies according to the entry of Hilprecht in the CBS catalogue. Without mentioning its archaeological context, the inscription was published by Stolper (1999; A short update of the inscription including a few additions will be published by the present author in a separate place.). A precise location was not given but during this time the excavations were exclusively concentrated on the southern part of the 'West Mound', Mound X, as for example stated in the reports of the weeks ending on 30 March, 20 April, 27 April and 25 May 1895 (UPMAA Nippur 04.03). In the report of the week ending on 20 April, Haynes states that the excavations during the last two weeks were 'confined to the southwestern borders of Mound X.' (UPMAA Nippur 04.03). Therefore, the presented archaeological evidence must be localized at Mound X as well, without any further specification of its exact findspot but probably near the southwestern borders of the mound. A nowadays lost **inventory list of excavated burials from 1893-96** would have provided us with further details. It is noteworthy to add here that at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology a 'long tub' coffin of similar size (roughly measured from the photograph as 161 x 36-38 x 20-22 cm height, outside measurements) is inventoried as number 85-48-996 and stated as deriving from the excavations of 1889-1900 (<https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/348902>, accessed on 16 February 2021).

Excerpt from the report of Haynes of the week ending on 11 May 1895 (UPMAA Nippur 04.03):

- '2. 1 Casket of unglazed potters clay of the following form  5 feet 2 in. long; 1 ft. 2 in. wide; 6 ½ in. deep. [157,48 x 36,56 x 16,51 cm]
3. 1 sound tablet of precisely the same character as the lot of tablets discovered June 3rd, 1893, and packed in cases No's 1 to 11, and forwarded to Constantinople in the spring and summer of 1894.

This tablet bears a line of Hebrew [actually engraved Aramaic] writing somewhat rudely incised or scratched on its uninscribed edge. The tablet and a common clay vase were found lying upon the brickwork which covered and protected the brittle high swelling lid of the casket. There can be no reasonable doubt but that both vase and tablet were deposited upon the grave at the time of the burial. In several other instances vases and bowls containing food and drink have been found in the same relation to this identical style of casket, coffin, or sarcophagus, whatever we may choose to call it. That the tablet bears a superscription in Hebrew is a point in evidence that this was a Jewish grave. Moreover the burial is about three feet below the level of the Jewish occupation, and this is another point in evidence of its Jewish origin. However unsanitary and abhorrent shallow burials may appear to us, the average depth of burials, even to this day, not only among Jews, but by all other nationalities throughout the greater part of the Turkish empire is rather less than three feet below the surface, often not exceeding two feet in depth; perhaps never exceeding three feet in the most careful burials made today in this part of the world. More than 15 of these coffins have been discovered, and their origin and age have hitherto been unsolved puzzles, but it now seems that a reasonable and safe clue has at length been found, and that this clue is further augmented by another clearly defined indication leading the mind logically to the same conclusion. If this conclusion can be established as a fact, which no one can deny, a good starting point will thus be gained from which to establish also the relative ages of the many other existing types of coffins found at Niffer. To anyone interested in the burial customs and architecture of Babylonia any such additions to our present knowledge will be of great interest and value. Negatives of both coffin and tablet have been made, but until the fresh supplies arrive from London they cannot be printed, and when they finally do arrive, I shall have the same time many irons in the fire.'

This rather shallow and slim 'long tub' coffin designated by Haynes as a 'casket' measured 157.48 x 36.56 cm with a height of only 16.51 cm. Its cover consisted of a poorly preserved 'brittle and high swelling' lid and a supra construction of a row of broken burnt bricks, covered by complete bricks (see two unidentified examples from Mound X on Fig. 1). Although the description provided by Haynes is lacking any details concerning the position of the body from its measurements, it becomes clear that it was

¹ Ancient dates are provided here in the format day/month/year (d/m/y).

supposed to be in a stretched position.

3. THE SEQUENCE OF OCCUPATION ON MOUND X:

Near surface:

'Jewish occupation', so designated because of the frequency in which were found 'Hebrew incantation bowls'. The latter roughly date from late Parthian times until Sasanian and probably also Early Islamic times as 'Kufic' coins associated with them were sometimes mentioned by the different excavators of 1889-1900. The incantation bowls from Nippur (and elsewhere) and are written mostly in Jewish-Aramaic, but also in Mandaic and Hebrew.

3 ft. below the level of 'Jewish occupation':

Two layers of mud-bricks of about 25 cm (estimated 10-12.5 cm height each including a layer of mud-mortar) height

Long-tub coffin of 16,51 cm with a high swelling lid, rising at least another 15 cm higher.

Intermediate strata

Occasional occurrence of Middle Babylonian burials (Gibson 1978 *et al.*).

Earliest level securely reached

Old Babylonian (private) housing

4. AN EARLY TERMINUS POST-QUEM FOR 'LONG-TUB' COFFINS?

As an early *terminus post-quem* for the use of this type of long-tub coffins at Nippur can serve now the tablet CBS 10059 (20/V/21 Xerxes = 10 August 465 BC) (Stolper 1999). It provides further evidence for a chronology of a sub-type of this coffin.

4.1. Content of CBS 10059 (20/V/21 Xerxes = 10 August 465 BC)

According to the Aramaic writing in ink, the text concerns 'dates of Kidin' (*tmryn zy kdn*) (Stolper 1999: 6-7). It is interesting that Haynes spoke about a 'rudely incised or scratched' which he identified then as 'Hebrew'. Besides this, the text contains a nail mark with a further description in Babylonian cuneiform as nail mark (*ṣu-pur*) of Kidin. It seems, therefore, quite likely that the tablet belonged to Kidin himself and not one of the other individuals considered within the text. Kidin is further specified in the text as *gugallu* (Akk.), 'canal inspector' (Stolper 1999). This conventional translation seems to show only a part of the tasks of a *gugallu*, as it was suggested by Jankovic to see in this profession rather a kind of 'estate manager' (Jankovic 2007). It is interesting, that similar interconnections

existed in the tasks of officials in Ottoman Mesopotamia (Fernea 1970). With such a rather high position connected to the local administration, Kidin belongs to that part of Babylonian establishment which stayed on power after the revolts under the early reign of Xerxes 484 BC, or was promoted to these ranks in the aftermath of the revolts. The latter has to be kept in mind also in connection with the arrival of possible newcomers also in the Nippur region. Kidin is most probably a shortened version of such a name as Kidin-Enlil (or Kidin-Sîn etc.) and as such it seems that he would be of Babylonian origin. But any definite statement concerning ethnicity has to take into account the existence of mixed family trees as for example at Hellenistic Uruk. Probably a shift in the elite could be suggested by the appearance of a scribe with the name Bel-ušallim, son of Sîn-aḫḫe-iddin, with roots at Babylon or probably Ur although such names are frequently attested at Nippur also in earlier texts since at least the Neo-Babylonian period (626-539 BC). It cannot be excluded with certainty that this tablet belonged to the individual (not preserved) who handed over that field to Kidin (filiation not preserved) (Stolper 1999: 6-7 (li. 4)).

4.2. The long-tub coffin as a burial type of foreign origin?

The common ancient Mesopotamian position of burial was the flexed. The stretched position of the buried individual can be therefore seen as later innovation, probably brought from outside. Not out of interest for a study concerning a burial type which is probably of foreign origin is the fact that the property of concern is described as laying 'at the opening of the *Ḥambari Canal*, adjoining (property of) *Paṭ-esi the Egyptian*, and extending as far as (?) the second opening (at) the *Village of Carians ...*' (Stolper 1999: 6-7 (li. 1-3)). Within the later Murasû corpus (ca. 445-405 BC) is attested a place called *Ḥambari* (Zadok 2015: 144), mentioned in connection with Arabs and 'shushanites of *ḥisannu*' (Zadok 1978: 320).

This makes it quite possible that the orchard of concern was considered to belong to one of the fiefs, most commonly bow-land (Akk. *bit qašti*), of settlements/sub-districts (sometimes designated as Akk. *ḥaṭru/hadru*) of foreign groups situated around this *Ḥambari Canal*. This would lead me to suspect that our Kidin could also belong to such a group. Although, a final proof concerning Kidin's origin must await further epigraphic material.

Providing for the possibility that the buried individual was a (much) later descendant of the family of Kidin, the original identity could have been

manifested in the burial customs. In case if the absolute date of the burial itself would fall into much later times, it would be also interesting to see a continuity within the population of Nippur from the end of the reign of Xerxes in 465 BC until at least Late Achaemenid times and therefore potentially until about 330 BC (ca. 135 years) or even later.

5. 'WESTMOUND' AS HOTSPOT FOR 'LONG TUB' COFFINS

Otherwise, only the report of Haynes from the week ending on 13 April 1895 explicitly describes 'two plain gray caskets' of the 'long-tub' shape which were found on Mound X. Although, according to Haynes at least 15 examples of similar burials were found by him at Nippur until 11 May 1895 (since Summer of 1894). The excavator also states that within the same relation as the tablet a single vase or more vessels were found with this type of coffin.

At Babylon 'Trogssärg' are common from the Achaemenid until the Seleucid period (Reuther 1926: 245), although there 'Trogssärg mit Doppeldeckeln' rather fit the description of our example. At Babylon this type with a pottery lid in two pieces seems to be exclusively attested during the Seleucid/Parthian period (Ibid. 252-253: Nos. 199-203). This can be seen also as indicative of the same period for this type of cover at Nippur (see Gibson's results below). In most of the cases there was no such brick construction in use as mentioned by Haynes and therefore it is possible that this arrangement was in use only at the very beginning of this type during the later Achaemenid period (Gibson *et al.* 1978: 23 Burial 12; Figs. 30:2; 32:3). It is not clear of what exact type of a 'long-tub' the 'drab pottery coffins' excavated at Seleucia/Tell Umar were, but there they were in use well into the Parthian period (Yeivin 1933: 35-36; Pl. 16: Fig. 2).

McGuire Gibson found several additional examples in his excavations on the 'West Mound' (WA) of a type of coffin which he called a 'long-tub' (Burials 5, 8, 12 and 14) during the 12th Season of Chicago at Nippur (Gibson *et al.* 1978). The body of the buried individual was lying in an outstretched position, sometimes on its back with the arms crossed at waist and the head turned to southeast (Burial 5 and 12), often including an eggshell-ware bowl (Burial 5, 8 and 12) (Ibid. 23). Burial 5 (WA Locus 6, 175 x 47 x 22,5 m high) cut into Level III from Level I with a fragmentary preserved ceramic lid seemingly consisting of only one piece. Another 'pottery coffin' (Burial 8, with four bricks leaning in pairs of two against the head part of the coffin lid. Ibid. Fig. 31),

otherwise identical with the other three 'long-tubs', was found preserved with a pottery lid and two holes in it, evidently for putting the lid in position during the burying process (see also Fig. 1; Burial 14 has been left unexcavated but consisted also of a two-parted lid with at least one mudbrick leaning against the headend. Gibson *et al.* 1978: 23.). This lid type seems to be, therefore, identical with the later type of 'long tub' coffin found at Babylon dated by the excavators into the Seleucid/Parthian period (Reuther 1926: 252-253).

The post World War II excavations brought to light several 'long-tubs' on 'Tablet Hill' within trench TA Level I (McCown & Haines 1967, Pl. 159: E), as well as within the upper layers of the North Temple/Sounding E which were badly disturbed by the mostly undocumented trenches cut by the early excavators of the University of Pennsylvania (1889-1900) (McCown, Haines & Biggs 1978: 53-54; Pl. 75: 3-4). Rests of an example of such a coffin is nowadays (December 2021) visible on the eroded slope to the North of trench TA on Tablet Hill which was probably already partly excavated by the University of Pennsylvania expeditions 1889-1900 (Fig. 3).

6. TYPES OF 'LONG-TUB' COFFINS

An early precursor of our 'long-tubs' exists with an 'independent' type (A) of a coffin which was found in larger numbers at Fara/Shuruppak situated 47 km to the Southeast of Nippur (Heinrich 1931: 20; 137; Martin 1988: 40-41). Of a similar type, at Nippur only one specimen of this somehow larger type (170-180 x 40-50 x 38 cm), with a design of horizontal ridges on the

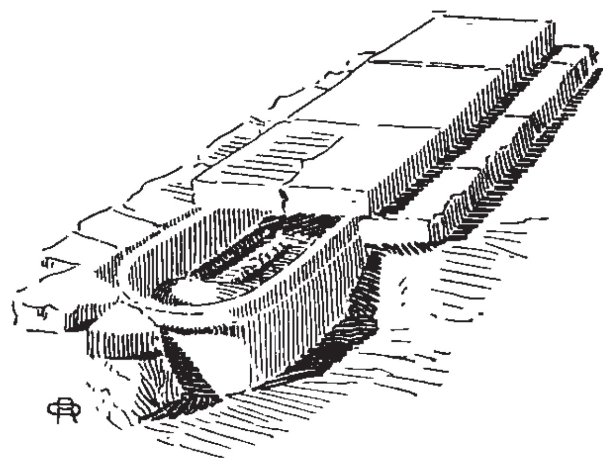


Fig. 2 - 'Trogssärg 196' (type C1) with originally five bricks (46 x 46 cm) serving as cover, lying on a single line of broken bricks. Reuther 1926, 248: Fig. 115.

outside of the tub (probably late 'Old Babylonian'), was found dug from TA VIII cutting into Level X Floor 2, Locus TA 153 (McCown & Haines 1967: 119; Pl. 158: E [Burial 3B 27]).

The type (B) of a 'long-tub' with one rounded and one straight end and often found to be used as a cover only ('Stülpgrab') was described by Reuther concerning the evidence at Babylon as directly developed from the 'bathtub' coffin during the Achaemenid period (Reuther 1926: 229-232). As it seems to be absent from the Nippur evidence, it is here not further discussed.

At Babylon this type was called 'Trogsgarg' by Reuther obviously after its resemblance with a food trough, for animals as for example of pigs, (Reuther 1926, 245-248: Nos. 190-197; see especially 248 Fig. 115, Plate 85: 'Trogsgarg 196', here Fig. 2), although there this term included both kinds of such coffins with one end rounded and one end flat (type B) as well as with both ends rounded (type C) (Ibid. Tafel 85-86).

A sub-type (C1) of this latter coffin at Babylon facilitated solely bricks as cover (Fig. 2). Samples of bricks with a size of 42-48 cm² were reported during

the early expeditions (1889-1900). Therefore, the brick frame and cover at Nippur belong to a sub-type which stands between the latter and the more common type met at the 'Westmound' by Gibson.

In summary, from the archaeological evidence mainly attested at Babylon and Nippur there can be distinguished two general types of 'long-tubs' with rounded ends. Whereas the type (C1) with brick lid was in use as early as the mid-5th century BC and called Achaemenid type by Reuther (Reuther 1926, 91), the later type (C2b) was assigned to the late Achaemenid (c. mid-4th century BC) until well in the Seleucid period with a possibility of use up until the Arsacid period (c. 150 BC onwards) within the excavation reports of Gibson (Gibson *et al.* 1978). As our type of 'long-tub' coffin with brick lid and two parted high swelling pottery lid stands between C1 and C2b it will be designated here as C2a, indicating its typological position between the former types. An additional type (C3) to be distinguished from type C2 was found in the 'Spring Cemetery' near Persepolis. It was cut into two sections of a standard sized coffin, the space between (10-35 cm) extended to fit the size of the body, although no real clue for dating this type could be found (Schmidt 1957,



Fig. 3 – Possible 'long-tub' coffin on the sloping surface to the North of trench TA on Tablet Hill. B. Schneider 2021 (during Nippur 21).

117-123). At the 'Spring Cemetery' the burials were noted to be oriented from 6° east of north to 32° west of north (Ibid. 118: Fig. 24).

6.1. Date range

According to the description of the excavator, the tablet CBS 10059 was found lying directly on the surface of the lid on a 'long tub' coffin with 'brick lid' and therefore, as the excavator Haynes pointed out rightly, has to be connected with the original burial. The tablet was laid on the brick sometime after the lid closed the burial itself. This is also indicated by the good state of preservation ('sound tablet') of the excavated tablet which later was obviously affected by the transport from Istanbul to Philadelphia (Stolper 1999, 6). Additionally, 'a common clay vase' was deposited with the tablet probably in connection with a ceremony after the actual burying process. As long as additional information concerning the vase is missing, only the tablet can be of help here in dating the burial. Although the tablet likely belonged to the buried individual, it is not sure if it was drafted for the same person or even during the lifetime of the same. It is possible, that it was of interest also for later descendants of Kidin.

The date of 10 August 465 BC (20/V/21 Xerxes) can serve, therefore, only as *terminus post quem* for the use of such type C2a coffins at Nippur. Through burying the tablet on top of the brick cover, it is clear that the right to work this orchard was going back to the owner (name not preserved) and the tablet was not needed anymore. Therefore, the drafting date of this tablet would lie quite some time ahead of the burial process itself. Hence, this type of coffin is found at Nippur on the 'West Mound' during a period when the city was part of the Achaemenid empire (c. 539-331 BC). The burial itself likely, dates later than the tablet, and falls probably already into the second half of the 5th century BC or even later.

6.2. A later type of 'long-tub' coffin

The excavations of McGuire Gibson (Gibson 1975; Gibson *et al.* 1978) on the Northern part of 'Westmound' (Mound I) in WA showed that the type C2b of 'long-tub' coffins with 'two parted lid' was in use at the time after the conquest of Babylonia by Alexander the Great (330 BC) until well into the Seleucid period (until ca. 150 BC). The four 'long-tub' coffins which were found (Gibson *et al.* 1978: 22-23) in 'Level I' are Burial 5, Burial 8, Burial 12 and Burial 14 (Gibson *et al.* 1978: 23). The earliest burial from WA Level I, Burial 1 tentatively still dated into the late Achaemenid period according

to the excavator because of a single bowl with a flaring rim (12N 79) (Gibson *et al.* 1978: 42). An approximate date was assigned by the excavators for Level I as belonging to the Seleucid period based on a worn bronze coin (12N 278) of Seleucus II (246-226/5 BC) from a later foundation pit of a wall which was identified by Gibson as belonging to the 'Court of Columns' (Gibson *et al.* 1978: 19).

A badly eroded bronze coin of either Antiochus IV (175-163 BC) or Demetrius I (162-150 BC), found a few centimeters under Floor 1 (compact beaten earth) of WA Locus 2, is serving as a *terminus post quem* for the construction of this floor (Gibson 1975: 14, An even later 'Floor O' was connected with a renovation of the building including a narrowing of the doorway from Locus 1 (later addition) into Locus 2). The latter date would also coincide with the evidence from the two most recent cuneiform records which mark the end of the Ekur-archive (Van der Spek 1992; Schneider 2018, 2023).

7. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE BURIAL TYPE

The reason why such a type of coffin was used at Nippur for burials earliest from the end of the reign of Xerxes (465 BC) onwards, remains to be further researched. Its appearance could be connected with the settling of foreign groups of people within the Nippur region. Some probably arrived as mercenaries, such as the Carians (Manning 2021), for example, who are attested to be settled in the hinterland of Nippur as early as the reign of Cambyses (529-522 BC) (Stolper 1999: 7; Potts 2018). Such foreign groups were often administrated within a *ḫaṭru* (Akk.) organization (Stolper 1988). Furthermore, a settlement of Egyptians existed nearby the Carians (Zadok 1978, 62; idem. 2005, 80-85). In the same way for e. g. also Sidonians and Tyrians, the latter could have been probably captured already by Nebuchadnezzar II, can be attested in the documents from the Murašû archive (Stolper 1985) (For a reference to early Egyptians antedating the conquest of Egypt see Stolper 1988, 140: n.28; see also Hackl & Jursa 2015. For Carians at Borsippa see Waerzeggers 2006; Manning 2021: 181). It is therefore not a surprise to find these two groups also mentioned within tablet CBS 10059. Also of notice is the information provided by Zadok that Arameans dwelt within late Achaemenid Nippur, known from a text dated to 13 September 445 BC (6/VI/20 Artaxerxes I) (Zadok 2015: 105).

In case of a later date of the burial one or two generations after the text was drafted (around 400

BC), the people formerly seen as newcomers could have risen in the social ranks to own private estates on the 'Westmound' of Nippur. This would fit also into the picture provided by the 'Achaemenid chapel' documented by Gibson (1975: 12-13) in trench WA, not far off the findspot (Stolper 1985: 157-168) of the Murashû archive (454-404 BC), to be found about 50 meters to the Southwest. Besides an alabaster bowl datable to the Achaemenid period (Gibson 1975: Fig. 34:4), the inventory included the fragment of a stone *cippus* with an Egyptian hieroglyph text (Ibid: Fig. 43: 3; 143-150). Another relevant factor for an Egyptian presence at Nippur would be, that the end of the 'Murashû archive' falls into a period when Enlil-suppe-muḥur, the 'bailiff' (Akk. *paqdu*) of Aršamu (i. e. Arsames, satrap of Egypt), seemingly takes over the former family business in managing considerable estates in the Nippur region. The earliest mention of an estate of Aršam (É^mAr-šá-mu = bit Aršamu) within the Murashû archive dates into the year 425 BC while the 'Arsames dossier' in particular runs from 413 until 404 BC (Stolper 1985: 65). So far overlooked material evidence comes from the environs of North-Temple (Mound VIII). In the East corner of the mound was found a vase with several seals, one of them (CBS 14362) was read by Legrain (1925: No. 1034) as 'Ḥen-neter-ḥa-ḥet'. Aage Westenholz identified the findspot within the framework of his project 'Nippur Digitized' (www.nippur-digitized.com).

Although there is evidence of individuals of West-Semitic or Aramaic as well as Egyptian origin in texts and for the latter also according to the material evidence, no direct connection to the 'long-tub' burial type can be drawn at this point.

8. CONCLUSION

Thanks to the archaeological evidence of a sub-type of a 'long-tub' coffin, buried with CBS 10059 opens the possibility that this burial type was in use already during the late Achaemenid period, with 465 BC as an early (most probably too early as it could have become obsolete also at a much later date) *terminus post-quem*.

There are several options for the identification of the origins of this type of burial specifically at Nippur and in Mesopotamian proper in general, none of them seems to be conclusive by now. It would be also a desideratum to conduct a dental analysis of strontium isotopes to solve the question concerning the possibility of a foreign origin of at least some of the buried individuals at Nippur and its rural hinterland. The rural region to the South and Southeast of Nippur

is now in the focus of research during the MSCA Cofund project RuBab and will hopefully provide more data concerning the chronology of burials.

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Author's address

Bernhard Schneider, PhD
Center for the Study of the Ancient World
University of Wrocław
ul. Szewska 49
50-139 Wrocław (Poland)