

# The Reuse of Tombs in Eastern Arabia

# Arabia Orientalis

Studien zur Archäologie Ostarabiens

Herausgegeben von Conrad Schmidt

Band 7

2023

Archaeopress Publishing · Oxford

# The Reuse of Tombs in Eastern Arabia

von Stephanie Döpfer

2023

Archaeopress Publishing · Oxford



© Archaeopress Publishing Ltd 2023  
Summertown Pavilion  
18-24 Middle Way

Cover illustration: Reconstruction of the reuse of an Umm an-Nar tomb (drawing: Maily Beyrens).



**FORSCHUNGSZENTRUM  
HISTORISCHE GEISTESWISSENSCHAFTEN**  
FRANKFURT HUMANITIES  
RESEARCH CENTRE

Printed with the kind support of the PPD programme of the FZHG.

Oxford OX2 7LG  
England  
ISSN 2625-9184  
ISBN 978-1-80327-497-32  
ISBN 978-1-80327-498-09 (e-Pdf)  
[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

This book is available in print and as a free download from [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

## Contents

List of figures .....	v
List of tables .....	ix
Acknowledgements .....	xi
1 Introduction .....	1
2 Reusing tombs – the theoretical background.....	3
2.1 Collective memory and cultural memory.....	3
2.1.1 Definition of cultural memory.....	5
2.1.2 Why should archaeologists study cultural memory?.....	7
2.1.3 Identifying cultural memory in the archaeological record .....	8
2.1.3.1 The material background.....	8
2.1.3.1.1 Places and objects.....	9
2.1.3.1.2 Commemorative rituals.....	10
2.1.3.2 Stakeholders and contents of cultural memory.....	14
2.2 Destructive reuse.....	14
2.2.1 Grave robbery .....	15
2.2.2 Revenants.....	17
2.2.3 Change of status and the destruction of the grave and grave goods.....	17
2.2.4 Secondary burial.....	18
2.3 Additive reuse.....	19
2.3.1 Deposition of single objects.....	19
2.3.2 Reuse as a new burial place.....	20
3 The mortuary monuments of Eastern Arabia .....	23
3.1 Hafit period (3100–2700 BC) .....	23
3.2 Umm an-Nar period (2700–2000 BC) .....	25
3.3 Wadi Suq period (2000–1600 BC) and Late Bronze Age (1600–1200 BC).....	27
3.4 Iron Age (1200–300 BC) .....	30
3.5 Late pre-Islamic (PIR) and Samad periods (300 BC–AD 300).....	33
3.6 Sasanian period (AD 300–630) .....	35
4 Reuse of tombs in Eastern Arabia from the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Islamic period.....	37
4.1 Evidence from excavated tombs.....	37
4.1.1 Ghalilah.....	37
4.1.2 Dhayah .....	38
4.1.3 Shimal.....	39
4.1.4 Qarn al-Harf.....	42
4.1.5 Dadna.....	43

4.1.6	Sharm.....	43
4.1.7	Bidya.....	44
4.1.8	Asimah.....	45
4.1.9	Qidfa.....	47
4.1.10	Ajman.....	48
4.1.11	Al-Qusais.....	48
4.1.12	Bitnah.....	49
4.1.13	Mleiha.....	50
4.1.14	Jebel Buhais.....	51
4.1.15	Jebel al-Emalah.....	57
4.1.16	Wā'ab.....	58
4.1.17	Wadi Suq.....	59
4.1.18	Saruj.....	59
4.1.19	Qarn bint Saud.....	59
4.1.20	Hili.....	62
4.1.21	Qattarah.....	64
4.1.22	Jebel Hafit.....	64
4.1.23	Mazyad.....	70
4.1.24	Qumayrah.....	70
4.1.25	Dhank.....	71
4.1.25.1	Al-Khutma.....	71
4.1.25.2	Al-Khubayb.....	72
4.1.26	Selme.....	73
4.1.27	Bat.....	74
4.1.28	Al-Ayn.....	79
4.1.29	Amlah.....	80
4.1.30	Bisya.....	80
4.1.31	Jebel Salut.....	81
4.1.32	Adam.....	82
4.1.32.1	Adam North.....	82
4.1.32.2	Adam South.....	85
4.1.33	Maysar.....	86
4.1.33.1	Maysar-8.....	86
4.1.33.2	Maysar-22.....	87
4.1.33.3	Maysar- 27.....	87
4.1.33.4	Maysar-51.....	88
4.1.34	Samad.....	89
4.1.34.1	Samad-10.....	89
4.1.34.2	Samad-20.....	91
4.1.34.3	Samad-21 North.....	91
4.1.34.4	Samad-21 South.....	93
4.1.34.5	Samad-22.....	99
4.1.34.6	Samad-23.....	99
4.1.35	Khudra.....	100
4.1.36	Al-Rawdah.....	101
4.1.37	Tawi Silaim.....	102
4.1.38	Shir/Jaylah.....	102
4.2	Evidence from intensively surveyed tombs.....	103

4.2.1	Khatt .....	104
4.2.2	Wadi al-Fa'y B.....	104
4.2.3	Al-Banah .....	105
4.2.4	Wadi Andam .....	105
4.2.5	Al-Mudhaybi Regional Survey .....	106
4.2.6	Bilad Bani Bu Hassan .....	106
4.2.7	Ja'alan .....	111
4.2.8	Wadi Tiwi .....	111
4.2.9	Dhank.....	112
4.2.9.1	Shokour.....	112
5	Modalities of reused tombs in Eastern Arabia.....	115
5.1	Modalities of reuse.....	115
5.1.1	Types of tombs reused.....	116
5.1.1.1	Case studies: Bat, Adam North and Samad-21 South .....	120
5.1.2	Temporal perspectives of reuse.....	124
5.1.3	Spatial perspectives of reuse .....	125
5.1.4	Who reused the tombs?.....	125
5.1.4.1	Reuse of tombs as burial places.....	125
5.1.4.2	Reuse with single objects.....	135
6	Why are tombs reused in Eastern Arabia? .....	142
6.1	Destructive reuse in Eastern Arabia.....	142
6.1.1	Grave robbery in Eastern Arabia.....	142
6.1.2	Fear of revenants in Eastern Arabia.....	144
6.1.3	Change of status and the destruction of grave goods in Eastern Arabia.....	144
6.1.4	Secondary burials in Eastern Arabia .....	145
6.1.5	Summary: destructive reuse of tombs in Eastern Arabia .....	145
6.2	Additive reuse in Eastern Arabia .....	145
6.2.1	Deposition of single objects in Eastern Arabia.....	145
6.2.2	Reuse of tombs as burial places in Eastern Arabia.....	151
6.3	Side note: spolia in Eastern Arabia .....	153
6.4	Discussion: reuse of tombs in Eastern Arabia in a diachronic perspective.....	154
6.4.1	Umm an-Nar period .....	154
6.4.2	Wadi Suq period.....	155
6.4.3	Late Bronze Age .....	156
6.4.4	Iron Age.....	156
6.4.5	Late pre-Islamic (PIR) and Samad periods .....	157
6.4.6	Sasanian .....	158
7	Summary: the how, the who and the why .....	160
	References.....	162





## List of figures

Fig. 1: Hafit period graves (1. adapted from Potts 1990: 75 fig. 8e, 2. Döpfer 2021b: Abb. 244).....	24
Fig. 2: Umm an-Nar period tombs (1. Döpfer 2021b: Abb. 91, 2. adapted from Potts 1990: 96 fig. 12).....	26
Fig. 3: Different types of Wadi Suq period tombs. ....	29
Fig. 4: Different types of Iron Age tombs (1. adapted from Taha 2009: 229 pl. 12B, 2. adapted from Jasim 2012: 53 fig. 63, 3. adapted from Jasim 2012: 38 fig. 38, 4. adapted from Yule 1994: Abb. 8 and 5. adapted from Yule 2014: fig. 13.1).....	32
Fig. 5: PIR tomb: a. simple grave (adapted from Boucharlat – Mouton 1998: 18 fig. 3), b: monumental tomb tower (adapted from Boucharlat – Mouton 1998: 23 fig. 7; Overlaet – Haerinck 2014: 209 fig. 4). ....	34
Fig. 6: Samad period tomb (adapted from Yule 2001: 30 Abb. 4.2).....	35
Fig. 7: Map of Eastern Arabia with archaeological sites mentioned in the text.....	38
Fig. 8: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Ghalilah (adapted from Donaldson 1984: fig. 16, fig. 17, fig. 22.118, fig. 28.35).....	39
Fig. 9: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Dhayah (adapted from De Waele – Haerinck 2006: 5.3a–b; Kästner 1991: 234 fig. 1; Kästner – Sahm – Velde 1988: fig. 3, fig. 15.4).....	40
Fig. 10: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Shimal (adapted from Kästner – Sahm – Velde 1988: pl. 1.1–2; Vogt – Franke-Vogt 1987: fig. 7, fig. 18.7–8, fig. 29, fig. 30.1, 5–10).....	41
Fig. 11: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Qarn al-Harf (adapted from Hilal 2005: 42 fig. 6, 46 fig. 10.1–3, 7, 46 fig. 11.16, 21–22).....	43
Fig. 12: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Sharm (adapted from Petrie 2000: fig. 1, fig. 4–5; Ziolkowski 2001: fig. 19, fig. 22, fig. 33, fig. 52, fig. 80). Findspots of PIR material marked in red, findspots of Umm an-Nar material in green. ....	44
Fig. 13: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Bidya (adapted from Al-Tikriti 1989a: pl. 61, 75–77) ....	44
Fig. 14: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Asimah (adapted from Vogt 1994: fig. 13, 16, 20.1, 21–22, 23.3–4, 29, 30.4–5, 39, 40.8, 12, 41.1, 6–7, 11, 42.1–2, 7–10, 12, 44.1–2).....	46–47
Fig. 15: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Ajman (adapted from Al-Tikriti 1989b: pl. 37–38, pl. 43.C–D, pl. 44). ....	48
Fig. 16: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Al-Qusais (adapted from Taha 2009: pl. 2, pl. 40A–C, pl. 50G). ....	49
Fig. 17: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Bitnah (adapted from Corboud <i>et al.</i> 1996: fig. 16, 36, 65, pl. 13, 24.18–21, 25.1–11, 65, 26, pl. 13, 24.28–21, 25.1–11, 26, 29.13, 19).....	50
Fig. 18: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Mleiha (adapted from Kutterer <i>et al.</i> 2014: fig. 3–5).....	50
Fig. 19: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Jebel Buhais (adapted from Jasim 2006: fig. 4–6, 11, 19, 27, 31a–b, 32, 41, 44, 46, 48.4, 51, 53, 55, 61, 64b, 65, 69, 87, 93; Uerpmann – Uerpmann 1999: fig. 1). ....	53–56

Fig. 20: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Jebel al-Emalah (adapted from Benton – Potts 1994: fig. 9, 19, 25, 28, 36, 41–42, 91, 94).....	57
Fig. 21: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Wa'ab (adapted from Fritz 2010: fig. 2).....	58
Fig. 22: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Wadi Suq (adapted from Frifelt 1975a: fig. 24f). ....	59
Fig. 23: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Qarn bint Saud (adapted from Al-Tikriti 1981: pl. 21, 23, 58b; Vogt 1985: Taf. 77, 78, 80).....	60–61
Fig. 24: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Hili (adapted from Frifelt 1979: fig. 12; Al-Tikriti 1981: pl. 31, 35, 92D, 94D, G, 102H–K, 140A, O–Q, 141G; Vogt 1985: Taf. 114.4; Cleuziou – Méry – Vogt 2011: fig. 84, fig. 226.DLA/m89). ....	63
Fig. 25: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Jebel Hafit (adapted from Cleuziou 1977: pl. 16.1; Al-Tikriti 1981: pl. 53B–D; Cleuziou – Méry – Vogt 2011: fig. 14, Frifelt 1971: fig. 9, 14, 19E, 21D, Madsen 2017: fig. 129, 131–132, 146, 173, 203, 205, 208, 254, 261, 267, 270–271, 273, 277–287).....	66–69
Fig. 26: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Mazyad (adapted from Cleuziou 1981: fig. 8).....	70
Fig. 27: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Qumayrah (Rutkowski 2017: fig. 12, 13; Rutkowski 2020: 309 fig. 3).....	71
Fig. 28: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Al-Khutma (adapted from Williams – Gregoricka 2013: fig. 8b, 9, 10a)....	71
Fig. 29: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Khubayb (adapted from Döpfer 2017: fig. 4, 9–10, 13–14; Williams – Gregoricka 2020: fig. 2–5).....	72
Fig. 30: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Selme (adapted from Yule – Weisgerber 2001: pl. 1.1, 3, 7–8, 12, pl. 2.19–20, pl. 3.37, 41, pl. 7.66, pl. 14.147, pl. 23.237, pl. 31.297, pl. 45.513, 515, pl. 46.522–523, pl. 50. 585–586). ....	73
Fig. 31: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Bat (adapted from Frifelt 1975a: fig. 6, 8, 28c, f, 29d; Nette 2008a: fig. 14, 25; Weisgerber – Böhme – Heckes 2008: 25, 33–34; Böhme 2011: fig. 2–3).....	76
Fig. 32: Distribution of finds according to period in Tomb 155. ....	77
Fig. 33: Distribution of finds according to period in Tomb 156. ....	79
Fig. 34: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Al-Ayn.....	80
Fig. 35: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Amlah (adapted from de Cardi – Collier – Doe 1976b: fig. 5, 18.83–87). 80	80
Fig. 36: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Bisya. ....	81
Fig. 37: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Jebel Salut (adapted from Condoluci – Degli Esposti 2015: pl. 2, 3, pl. 17.79, 18, 19). Blue = burial 1, green = burial 2, pink = burial 3. ....	81
Fig. 38: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Adam North (adapted from Gernez – Giraud 2015: fig. 11–12; Righetti 2015a: fig. 504, 511, 514a, 518, 534, 536, 540, 550).....	83–84
Fig. 39: Chronological timeframe of reused tombs at Adam South (adapted from Gernez 2016: fig. 16, 18–20). ....	85
Fig. 40: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Maysar-8 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 11–15). ....	86
Fig. 41: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Maysar-22 (adapted from Weisgerber 1980: Abb. 55).....	87
Fig. 42: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Maysar-27 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 17 M2710.3, 18 M2715.2, 19, 20 M2716N.1–3, 21 M2716N.9, 17, 23 M2717.1, 4–5, 24, 25 M2720.2, 26, 27 M2720.3–7, 28 M2721.1) ....	88
Fig. 43: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Maysar-51 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 256 M51).....	88
Fig. 44: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Samad-10 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 38, 40, 41 M1074, 44.1, 59, 60.1–4, 69. 70.2, 86, 87.2, 179.7, 191.1–2, 195, 601). ....	89

Fig. 45: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Samad-20 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 235).....	90
Fig. 46: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Samad-21 North (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 249, 250.1–10, 12, 252, 260 S2114, 263, 264).....	92
Fig. 47: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Samad-21 South (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 268, 269, 271, 271.2, 280, 305, 307, 314–315, 322, 323.2, 5, 336, 336.2, 341.2, 5, 342.13, 17, 345, 345.1–2, 355–357, 359, 359.1, 365, 365.2, 371, 371.2–3, 372, 372.2–3 604).....	95–99
Fig. 48: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Samad-22 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 381, 382.3–5, 384, 385.1–8, 10–11, 13, 15-16, 18, 386 S2203, 386.1).....	100
Fig. 49: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Samad-23 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 396).....	101
Fig. 50: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Samad-30 (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 449, 450.2).....	101
Fig. 51: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Al-Rawdah (adapted from Yule 2001: Taf. 531–532).....	102
Fig. 52: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Tawi Silaim (adapted from de Cardi – Bell – Starling 1979: fig. 3–5, 7.11, 31a).....	103
Fig. 53: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Shir (adapted from Yule – Weisgerber 1998: fig. 34, 37).....	104
Fig. 54: Chronological timeframes of reused tomb at Khatt (adapted from de Cardi – Kennet – Stocks 1994: fig. 6.4–5, 11, 13, 32, pl. VIIa).....	105
Fig. 55: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Al-Banah (adapted from de Cardi – Collier – Doe 1976a: fig. 25.277–279).....	105
Fig. 56: Chronological timeframe of reused tombs in the Wadi Andam Survey (adapted from Al-Jahwari 2008: fig 57.W.D.112–115, 58.W.D.119, W.D.130, 130A–D, 131D, 133B, 134A, D, G, 135B, 136E–F, 138A, F, 139C, E, pl. 91–97, 106.W.D.12, 17, 108–111).....	107–109
Fig. 57: Chronological timeframes of selected reused tombs from the Al-Mudhaybi Regional Survey.....	110
Fig. 58: Chronological timeframe of reused tombs in the Bilad Bani Bu Hasan (adapted from Edens 1988: fig. 40, 41.4–7, 42–43).....	111
Fig. 59: Chronological timeframe of reused tombs in the Ja'alan (adapted from Al-Jahwari 2013: fig. 6–8, 14–15).....	112
Fig. 60: Chronological timeframes of reused tombs at Wadi Tiwi (adapted from Korn <i>et al.</i> 2004: pl. 9, Schreiber – Häser 2004: fig. 3–7).....	114
Fig. 61: Chronological timeframe of reused tomb at Shokour (adapted from Williams – Gregoricka 2013: fig. 7).....	113–114
Fig. 62: Proportion of tombs reused among all excavated tombs studied.....	115
Fig. 63: Types of tombs reused (not reused/reused).....	116
Fig. 64: Types of tombs reused (above/below ground).....	116
Fig. 65: Types of tombs reused (individual/a few/collective).....	116
Fig. 66: Investigated tombs at the necropolis of Bat. Locations of Tombs 1139/40, 305 and 930 are only approximate. Background map by Frifelt 1989: fig. 10.7.....	121
Fig. 67: Investigated tombs at Adam North. Background map by Gernez – Giraud 2015: 114 fig. 9a.....	123
Fig. 68: Investigated tombs at Samad 21 South. Background map by Yule 2001: Taf. 603.....	124
Fig. 69: Temporal distribution of reuse.....	125
Fig. 70: Temporal distribution of reuse in relation to the total number of excavated tombs of each period.....	125
Fig. 71: Spatial distribution of reused tombs in Eastern Arabia.....	126

Fig. 72: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Umm an-Nar period.....	128
Fig. 73: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Wadi Suq period. ....	128
Fig. 74: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Late Bronze Age.....	129
Fig. 75: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Iron Age.....	129
Fig. 76: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Samad/PIR. ....	130
Fig. 77: Spatial distribution of reused tombs during the Sasanian period. ....	130

## List of tables

Tab. 1: Chronology of Eastern Arabia. ....	23
Tab. 2: Types of tombs reused. ....	120
Tab. 3: Percentage of reused tombs for each site. Sites with only one or two excavated tombs are not listed.....	127
Tab. 4: Details of burials in reused tombs. The data for this table derives from chapter 4.1. ....	132–134
Tab. 5: Later objects in older tombs that could not be associated with a burial (stray finds). The data for this table derives from chapter 4.1. ....	136–141
Tab. 6: Stray finds from tombs against criteria for ritual/non-ritual deposits. Black indicates when a criterium is fulfilled, grey if it is partially fulfilled. ....	147–150



## Acknowledgements

Since my first time in Oman in 2010, I have been warmly welcomed into a community of fellow archaeologists and scholars working in the region, many of whom have become friends over the years. It was also my first excavation in Bat that same year that brought me to the topic of the reuse of tombs, which has now finally become the focus of the habilitation dissertation which is presented in this book.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman for their valuable support, and for having granted me permission to conduct fieldwork in Oman. I especially thank H.E. Salim Mohammed Said Al Mahruqi, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism; Mr. Sultan bin Saif Al Bakri, the Director General for Archaeology and former Director of the Department of Excavations and Archaeological Studies; Khamis Al Asmi, the former Director of the Department of Excavations and Archaeological Studies; and Ali Al Mahruqi, the current director of the Department of Excavations and Archaeological Studies.

Financial support for my habilitation dissertation was provided through the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Printing costs were covered by the ProPost-Doc program of the Forschungszentrum Historische Geisteswissenschaften of Goethe University Frankfurt.

A Feodor Lynen fellowship allowed me to spend valuable time at the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University. My Leiden hosts Peter Akkermans, Jürgen Zangenberg, and especially Bleda Düring have my deepest and sincerest gratitude. Bleda guided me through my first years as postdoctoral researcher and in this way shaped my academic path in so many ways.

A special thanks to Dirk Wicke, my habilitation advisor and provider of my academic home at Goethe University Frankfurt for the past five years. His endless support for all my plans and ideas have been invaluable to their success. He made the department a place where a growing community of Oman-focused archaeologists could prosper, and where I have felt that I belong. Thanks too, of course, to all from my Oman bubble at Frankfurt: Iriñi Biezeveld, Jonas Kluge, Maria Pia Maiorano, Paige Paulsen, and Lucas Proctor.

A heartfelt thank you also goes to Kimberly Williams from Temple University, who acted as second reviewer for my habilitation dissertation and was, beyond that, a constant source of support and advice.

Finally, innumerable thanks to my family and my deeply beloved partner Conrad Schmidt.

Stephanie Döpper, Frankfurt am Main, November 2022





## 1 Introduction

Reuse of ancient monuments and other sites is a well-known phenomenon in all periods all over the world. People in the past were always confronted with surviving remains from previous periods, and reacted to and engaged with them in most varying ways. This is particularly true for liminal places like tombs. Reused structures are by definition used.<sup>1</sup> This can be unmarked and thus neutral in meaning, but if intentional and conscious, significantly value-laden.<sup>2</sup> It is the latter that this study concentrates on. Reuse differs from continuous use by a period of non-use and can take destructive and additive forms. The former is characterised by (partially) destroying and/or taking away human remains, grave goods or the architectural structure of the tombs itself. Additive reuse refers to the adjoining of objects or even complete burials to an older tomb after a significant gap in the occupation, in some cases when the original monument was already in a state of ruin.

Reuse and other later activities at tombs can range from a few changes of the inventory to the complete emptying of it.<sup>3</sup> For the archaeologist, identifying such later activities is challenging, not least because one and the same action can result in very different archaeological records.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, it is possible that very differently motivated actions can lead to the same visible changes in the archaeological material. For example, a completely empty grave could be the result of a secondary burial at another location, or grave robbery. Furthermore, natural, non-anthropogenic influences, such as the decomposition of the body, animal burrows or the collapse of the tomb structure, can generate disturbances within the tomb and are often difficult to differentiate from anthropogenic ones.<sup>5</sup> In addition, not all anthropogenic influences have to be intentional, for example, ploughing.

The majority of research on reuse of tombs has focused so far on Europe, with special emphasis on mega-

lithic architecture in its north and the medieval period.<sup>6</sup> Despite how tombs have been the main focus of archaeological research in Eastern Arabia, i.e., the north of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, in the past decades, reuse of tombs has received only little attention. Oftentimes, it is discounted as an exceptional case not worthy of further exploration or it is often over-simplified as grave robbery, although there is plenty of evidence contradicting this interpretation, as will be argued in this study. When mentioned in publications, it is mostly in the form of a negative comment about the disturbance to the actual focus of research, i.e., the first use of the tomb. This relates to the still dominant perception of archaeological sites as static entities belonging to a specific time period and not as ever-changing entities within a multi-layered world. In consequence, reuse has never received the same appreciation as the first use of a tomb. This results in later objects found within older tombs being rarely described or illustrated in detail in the publications of the excavations, rendering it impossible to reconstruct their depositional contexts and time period. Further, it makes it distinctly possible that some evidence is not recorded at all.<sup>7</sup>

This attitude to archaeological sites might be the reason why so far no comprehensive research has been undertaken on reuse in Eastern Arabia, neither into the temporal and nor into the spatial range of this phenomenon. Ignoring the complex use-history of such tombs, however, prevents not only understanding the burial customs of a specific time period, but more importantly the social conditions of the past communities that favoured or prevented such activities. The present work will investigate the phenomenon of reused tombs in Eastern Arabia from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age around 3100 BC until the end of the Sasanian period around AD 630, when the onset of Islam in Eastern Arabia profoundly changed the burial customs, in order to understand the underlying purposes and social context of this

1 Kinney 2011: 3.

2 Kinney 2011: 2.

3 Aspöck 2003: 230.

4 Baitinger 1992: 337 fig. 4; Aspöck 2015a: 24.

5 Baitinger 1992: 336.

6 Bradley 2002: 112–148

7 For similar handling of this phenomenon by archaeologists in other regions of the world, see Vejby 2012: 8.

praxis. For this, all published evidence for reuse of tombs in this region was collected and statistically analysed. Different ideas concerning the underlying research question of why tombs in Eastern Arabia were reused will be

discussed. These include grave robbery, change of status of the deceased, offerings and other depositions of single objects as well as reusing tombs as burial sites. Most of these can be placed in the context of cultural memory.