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Collective Memory and Collective Burials

Iron Age Chamber Tombs in Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah as Mnemonic Devices*

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ABSTRACT The present article is based on the relationship between collective memory and identity construction within communities. Memory is identified as a fundamental element determining how individuals and groups perceive themselves in relation to the world and others. Inquiring on collective memory of a community as a starting point or main concept of research is thus of significance for understanding both modern societies and ancient cultures.

The aim of the present study is to explore the connection between collective memory and chamber tombs in the Southern Levant during the developed Iron Age (ca. 840–586 B.C.E.). The so-called bench tombs were the preferred type of burial in the kingdom of Judah which emerged around the city of Jerusalem. The present article aims to explore how the Judahite bench tombs and their content, the tomb installations, artefacts and human remains, possibly enforced the commemoration and the forgetting of the deceased. The analysis draws on the distinction between communicative and cultural memory as two differing parts of the collective memory. It is argued that the tombs and their content functioned as mnemonic devices on several levels by commemorating the dead and reinforcing the cohesion and identity of the burying community.

Keywords Collective Memory, Collective Burials, Jerusalem, Iron Age, Southern Levant

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1. Introduction

> "Memory is identity.... You are what you have done; what you have done is in your memory; what you remember defines who you are; when you forget your life you cease to be, even before your death." Julian Barnes, *Nothing to Be Frightened of*

Memory is an element of our identity. Without memory, whether reflecting factual or imaginary occurrences, a proper identity construction — locating one's self in the world and in relation to other individuals or groups — is hardly possible. It has been understood for a long time that not only individuals but groups and entire societies have a memory as well. This is reflected in the culture of remembrance, in the narratives and events that are considered to be crucial for the self-conception of a community which can be observed from small units such as families, middle-sized groups like tribal communities and large entities as represented by modern nation states. By looking at the collective memory we are able to learn about the way those groups define themselves, in short how these communities construct their identity.

The collective memory of a community is not only of interest for our understanding of modern societies. Academic disciplines that deal with ancient cultures and civilizations may gain access to the lifeworlds of the past by using the memory-concept as a starting point or as a general theme for their investigations. Obviously, the limitations to grasp elements of collective memory are bigger for past communities, particularly if there are no other sources than the archaeological record. Nevertheless, even though the actual content of what has been part of the collective memory

of a community is not accessible anymore, the practices for storing and recalling this memory and the traces those practices left may offer important insights.

The present study focuses on a particular type of collective burials in the Southern Levant during the Iron Age, the so-called Judahite bench tombs. Judah was one of the early state formations that emerged in the first half of the first millennium B.C.E. in the region. The kingdom developed around its capital city, Jerusalem, and its history is prominently represented in the so-called Deuteronomistic history of the biblical tradition. This tradition has shaped the popular and in parts also the academic discourse about the Iron Age society in the region. Since ancient historiographies usually had a different purpose than giving an unaltered and bias-free account of events, the biblical tradition and the information from other sources, either in written form or from archaeological fieldwork, are oftentimes not compatible. In order to come to a better understanding of the Iron Age with all its aspects in the region, a stronger focus on the archaeological sources is essential.

Burials for the most part offer direct access to certain aspects of the collective memory of a community. The Judahite bench tombs were conceptualized as collective burials which is often a rather difficult archaeological source for investigations. This is because the prolonged or constant accessibility to the tombs and their use over several generations creates a palimpsest of archaeological traces. For the tombs that are of interest in the present article, the explanatory power is even more limited, since the majority of them have been found empty at the time of their archaeological investigation. Nevertheless, based on the configuration of the tombs, reconstructions of their interior and the materiality of the

included objects, the question of what was the role of the chamber graves for the collective memory of the burying community is discussed. The given considerations are preliminary, based on the current state of research and the limitations of the available sources. Since there are still many uncertainties, all conclusions can be nothing more than suggestions and an invitation to focus more on a rather underexplored area of the past—the construction of memory and the efficacy of the material culture on the people—in the Southern Levant.

In the first step the theoretical concepts of the present study namely collective memory and the materiality of the tombs and their content are introduced. After a brief overview of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant and the kingdom of Judah, the chamber tombs are described, analyzed and discussed regarding their connection to the collective memory of the Judahite society in the late Iron Age.

2. Theoretical Considerations: Collective Memory and Materiality

Identity is one of those terms that can be approached from several angles resulting in a multitude of definitions. Important for the present article are before all the insights that identities are constructed, that they are fluid and that they consist of a number of components (Vignoles et al. 2011). Although each person has their own unique identity, formed through individual experiences and the combination of different roles, the membership in various social groups connects us also with a collective identity. Both the collective and the individual identity are interdependent,

influencing each other to a bigger or lesser degree (Vignoles et al. 2011: 8–9).

Memory itself is not a necessity for people to identify with a certain group, but the communication within and the self-image of this group is ultimately based on the awareness of a shared past (Assmann 1988: 10). In this sense, memory plays a crucial role for the construction of individual and collective identities. But how is collective memory formed? An important contribution to answer this question comes from the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs who built upon the works of Émile Durkheim. Halbwachs emphasized that memories are shaped by social practices and that individual memory is highly determined by the collective memory of the social groups in which an individual is situated. In his seminal work *On Collective Memory*, first published in 1925, he explored the construction of collective memory in the family, in religious groups and in social classes (Halbwachs 1992). As the egyptologist Jan Assmann has outlined, the collective memory can be divided into different parts, such as the communicative, the cultural, the mimetic and the memory of things (Assmann 2011: 5–7). Whilst Halbwachs' research was mainly dealing with the communicative memory, Assmann has focussed on the cultural memory. Both the communicative and cultural memory are particularly important, when it comes to the active transmission of information through time. The communicative memory refers to all the information that is part of daily life conversations (Assmann 1988: 10–11; Asmmann 2011: 6, 36–37). The content of this memory is unspecific which also applies to the method of its transmission (Table 1). This means there is no rule for transferring or recalling this memory, except for the social conventions in the given society. Nothing ensures that parts of the original information are not altered or forgotten. This unregulated or unshaped

way of transmitting and recalling the events and narratives of the communicative memory has the consequence that its content is forgotten after eighty to hundred years (Assmann 2011: 34–35). Obviously, there are events that are remembered in a society that go much further back in time which brings us to the cultural memory (Table 1). According to Assmann, cultural memory stores the knowledge of a group's origin, their mythologies, and key events that are crucial to keep the cohesion of the group (Assmann 2011: 37–38). Therefore, it is of importance that this knowledge is transmitted unaltered. This is put into practice by recalling the content of the cultural memory in a ritualized way. The roles of the people participating in those rituals are clearly set. Recitations, movements, gestures, and clothing etc.—all are potentially codified, following specific rules and order (Assmann 2011: 39). Events that recall cultural memory can be small gatherings, for instance, with a bard singing from a heroic past up to big celebrations that happen only once within a certain cycle. Cultural memory is transmitted mostly by experts who make sure that the rituals and performances for recalling this part of the collective memory are not changed (Assmann 2011: 39). The ritual nature and canonical content are the reasons cultural memory can potentially be transmitted across many generations spanning hundreds or thousands of years.

Recalling cultural memory through rituals is particularly important in societies without a writing system. As soon as this is established, epigraphs and books may take the role of carrying the cultural memory which allows its transmission without the constraints of ritual performances (Assmann 1988: 14).

The collective memory has been the subject of other works, a prominent example is Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (Connerton 1989),

[Table 1] Communicative and Cultural Memory According to Assmann (2011: 41)

	Communicative Memory	Cultural Memory
Content	historical experiences in the framework of individual biographies	mythical history of origins, events in an absolute past
Forms	informal, without much form, natural growth, arising from interaction, everyday	organized, extremely formal, ceremonial communication, festival
Media	living, organic memories, experiences, hearsay	fixed objectifications, traditional symbolic classification and staging through words, pictures, dance, and so forth
Time structure	80－100 years, with a progressive present spanning three－four generations	absolute past of a mythical, primeval age
Carriers	nonspecific, contemporary witnesses within a memory community	specialized tradition bearers

which builds on Halbwachs' foundation. Independently from Assmann, who also started to publish about his studies in the 1980's (e.g. Assmann 1988), Connerton emphasized two aspects through which the collective memory of a society is preserved and recalled: commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices involving culturally specific gestures and postures. The former part is largely congruent with the cultural memory and the latter is the mimetic memory mentioned by Assmann (Assmann 2011: 5-6).

From the perspective of archaeology the point of contact between the communicative or cultural memory and material culture is not only limited to the occurrence of inscribed physical media. However, it is obvious that oral communications, rituals and related ceremonies are without any written records not or only indirectly accessible. The performance

of rituals, probably the practice that brings us closest in contact with the cultural memory of a community, may be represented by elements of the material culture such as clothes, tools, containers, foodstuffs, incense etc., including designated places. These objects and places are potentially traceable in the archaeological record, offering hints about culture-specific practices for recalling cultural memory. The actual content of that memory is, however, inaccessible to us as long as there are no written sources, inscriptions or pictorial representations. This applies also to the communicative memory as long as there are no written sources that mention daily life situations and casual events. Inscriptions of names together with titles or positions, as well as references to kinship, can offer valuable clues. Additionally, grave goods and peculiarities of the deceased's body may provide further insight. Also important for at least catching a glimpse of the content of the communicative memory is the historical background of a region, encompassing events and developments of the longue durée — the social, cultural, economic, and technical progress of a specific period. Particular elements of the material culture may have been used as mnemonic devices, which are pointers to a specific piece of memory (West 2023). The most obvious are monuments or certain landmarks that were included in the mythical narratives of a community (Assmann 2011: 44).

Graves are a category of archaeological finds that can be relatively securely ascribed as a matter of communicative and cultural memory. Concepts of the hereafter and funerary rituals are all elements that may be connected to the cultural memory of a community. Communicative memory is potentially represented by particular grave goods that may express the perceived identity of the deceased. The funeral itself and the related ceremonies such as processions, feasts, sacrifices etc. are

events that are partly carried out in such a way that they may become part of the communicative memory. The bigger and more ostentatious those ceremonies were, the stronger the impact on the memory of the participants and the entire community.

Aside from objects and places that were actively created or charged with meaning for recalling memory, other objects may have had a similar effect although they were not dedicated to this purpose. This leads us to another aspect that seems to offer useful explanations for analysing the memorial properties of the chamber tombs, namely the agency of things. Originally, the concept of agency refers to the capacity of individuals or groups to act independently, to make choices, and exert control over their actions within a social context. The idea that this may not only be true for human beings but also for material things has been discussed for quite some time in different branches of the humanities (Miller 2005; Malafouris 2008). The most radical approach is to understand objects as actors that are equal to human beings, as prominently expressed in Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour 2005: 63-86). A less extreme, but also not undisputed approach is to see objects as secondary agents as Alfred Gell has suggested based on his analysis of artwork (Gell 1998: 17-23). From this viewpoint, the efficacy that objects possibly can have is ultimately ascribed to them by people. Another approach is to take the perspective of materiality which emphasizes that things are active—not only as symbols but also through all of their other properties. As Fahlander and Oestigaard have pointed out, in this approach things have the potential to initiate or determine social actions (Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008: 4), which does not require to accept that an object has any kind of motivation or urge in order to ascribe agency to it. This means in an abbreviated form, as Christopher Tilley has put it,

that "we translate the term 'agency' as meaning providing affordances and constraints for thought and action" (Tilley 2007: 19). Thus, for the following considerations we have to keep in mind that the tombs, artefacts and bodies are not only passive devices for the construction of collective memory, they may shape the process of remembering on their own and in unintended ways.

3. The Early Iron Age and the Kingdom of Judah

The tombs that are discussed in the present study lead us to the Southern Levant, more precisely the Central Hill Country located between the coastal plains next to the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan Rift Valley in the modern country of Israel. The transition between the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age[1] came along with major disruptions in the regions around the eastern Mediterranean basin. Numerous city and territorial states collapsed leading to the disappearance of the dense economic and political communication network of the Late Bronze Age in the region (Cline 2014). In the aftermath new ethnic groups and states began to emerge, some of them newly formed, others restructured versions of older, long-established entities (Killebrew 2005; Müller 2022).

Our focus is specifically on the territory around the city of Jerusalem. As mentioned above, the grand historical narrative of the Israelites and the

1 There are different chronological systems with partly diverging absolute dates. The dates given in the present article follow the system suggested by A. Mazar, who dates the first stage of the Iron Age, the so-called Iron Age IA, to 1200-1140/1130 (Mazar 2005: Table 2.1).

ancient history of the region is decisively determined by the descriptions of the Bible, particularly the Deuteronomistic history outlined in the books Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the First and Second Book of the Kings. Naturally, there are different opinions on the veracity of the given accounts and since the scriptures passed down to us were compiled much later than the events they report about, it is certainly not very surprising that evidence supporting the earliest narratives are scarce or simply non-existent. One of those largely imaginary narratives is the story of the Israelites' migration from Egypt to Canaan, which was the name of the Southern Levant during the Bronze Age. Three main strands of scholarly opinions can be distinguished (Bloch-Smith and Nakhai 1999: 66-67; Rendsburg 2008: 3-5). One of them is the acceptance of the biblical account, thus believing that the Israelites were foreign to the land and that they conquered the area. Another theory assumes that the Israelites were pastoral nomads, who were familiar with the land. The assumption is that these nomads started to change their subsistence to a sedentary lifestyle in the course of the beginning Iron Age. The third theory suggests that the Israelites were originally inhabitants of the Canaanite city-states. Over time, they retreated to the sparsely settled hill country, where they gradually formed their own distinct ethnic group. Most scholars, it seems, tend to locate the origin of the Israelites in the Southern Levant and if a migration took place it was mainly intra-cultural.

Jerusalem, located in the Judean hills, has been settled from the Bronze Age (Killebrew 2003: 332-338). Due to the importance of the city for the three Abrahamic religions, its role in the region as a central place or as a hub is in the popular perception often exaggerated. The archaeological record supports the biblical tradition that the city was settled in the Iron Age I

(1200–980 B.C.E.). A major difference is, however, that the indicators that would suggest the existence of an early state formation, as purported in the Bible, for the time around the 10th century B.C.E. are—depending on the viewpoint—either very sparse or not ascertainable (Killebrew 2003: 338–343; Keimer 2019: 17). According to the biblical tradition the city was initially settled by the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe, and conquered by King David. David's predecessor, Saul, as well as David's son, Solomon, are described as the kings of a state that included the unified territory of the kingdom of Israel and of Judah. The oldest city part of Jerusalem is the so-called City of David, located along the southern mountain ridge adjacent to Mount Moriah. From there the city was extended to the north, including the Ophel and subsequently the summit of Mount Moriah which became the plateau for the construction of the first temple. According to tradition, Solomon ordered the construction of the temple, which became the focal point of worship for Yahwe, the god of the bible. Before the temple was destroyed by the troops of the Babylonian Empire in the year 587/586 B.C.E., the city expanded by including the so-called Western Hill.

It seems that from the 9th century B.C.E. onwards the population density in the highlands increased and the settlement structure became denser. Jerusalem was the biggest city in the region and developed to a regional center within a hierarchical settlement structure (Faust 2019: 340–341). For the beginning of the Iron Age the existence of a fortification around the city is disputed, but for the 8th century B.C.E. the evidence is clear (Geva 2006: 140). The famous temple of Solomon has not been detected through archaeological excavations due to the religious relevance of the Temple Mount. A precise description of the building in the Bible (1 Kings 6) and references in other sources leave no doubt that the temple

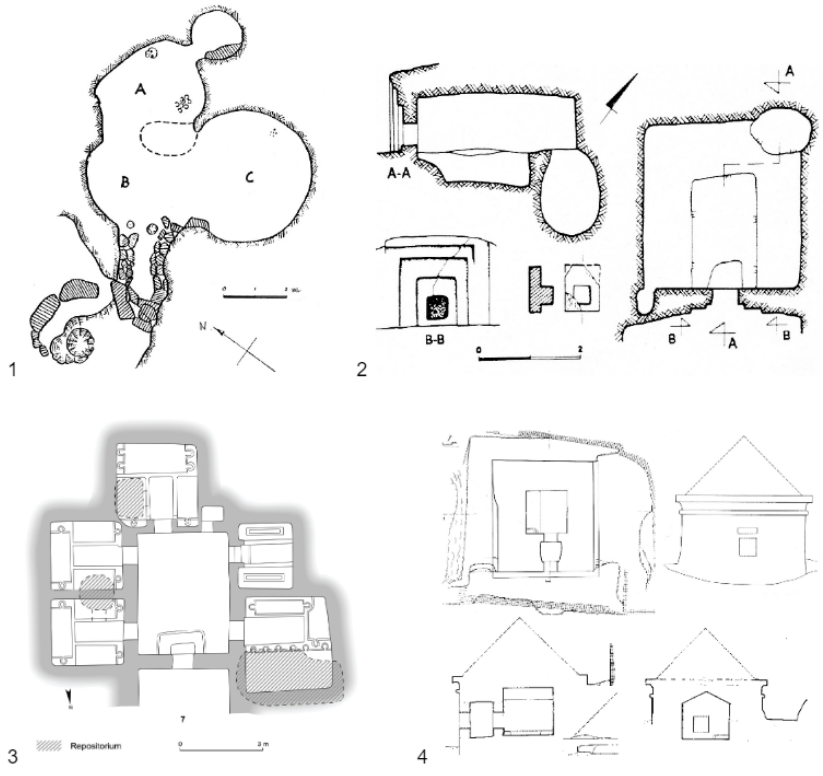
was on top of Mount Moriah and the central religious structure for the people in the region (Ussishkin 2009, 480). The development of the city to a regional center is accompanied by the occurrence of several burial plots that were originally located outside the city borders. The graves composing these plots are the so-called Judahite bench tombs that were constructed for several individuals (Figure 1.2-3). These collective burials stand in stark contrast to the extraordinary sepultures of the Silwan necropolis (Figure 1.4), on the eastern slope of the Kidron valley, not far from the City of David (Ussishkin 1970). Here, rock-cut tombs, some of them carved out as monoliths in the shape of houses, were conceptualized for one or two individuals. The occurrence of graves in the developed Iron Age (Iron Age II - 980-586 B.C.E.) is particularly remarkable, due to a lack of burials in the hill country during the earlier phase (Iron Age I) (Ilan 2017: 52-53). Several reasons for this situation have been discussed, for instance the interment in shallow pit graves without furnishings or the persistence of Bronze Age funerary customs (Faust 2004; Ilan 2017: 52-53). In any case, the appearance of the bench tombs and other grave types in the highlands marks a change in the local funerary culture. In combination with the above outlined developments, they may be taken as an indicator for the emergence of an early state (Fantalkin 2008: 23-28), which was the kingdom of Judah as mentioned in the biblical tradition.

4. The Judahite Bench Tombs

The chamber tombs are only one of several Iron Age burial types in the Southern Levant. A basic distinction can be made between interments

in pits or in caves/chambers (Bloch-Smith 1992a: 25-55; Kamlah 2009: 7-8). Pit burials show a wide range of variations from graves without any installations to those with stone settings, cists, jars or coffins. Cave tombs use natural, sometimes modified hollows or cavities (Figure 1.1) whilst chamber tombs were for the most part purposefully constructed by cutting them into the rock. For the kingdom of Judah the dominant grave type was the so-called bench tomb. In its basic version the tomb consists of a single chamber that is accessible from a small entrance (Figure 1.2). It has cut out benches on each of its sides, except for the entrance wall (Bloch-Smith 1992b: 217). Those benches were the last resting places of the deceased. When all places were occupied, the bodily remains and artefact assemblages were removed for a new interment. Often the tombs contain a pit or have an area that was used as a repository for the remains of the older burials. From the few graves with preserved content we know that at times several individuals were placed on one and the same bench. A variation of the bench tomb are niche tombs which contain, as the name implies, the bodies in carved out niches (Ilan 2017: 53-55). Complexer tomb constructions had a central space with several chambers that could store different numbers of interments (Figure 1.3). The interior of most tombs is rather basic and mostly undecorated, but there are also examples with lamp niches, gabled roof ceilings, carved pillows, columns etc. (Bloch-Smith 1992a: 42-43). A distinctive feature in some of the tombs are carvings of headrests on the benches which indicate for how many interments the place was initially conceptualized (Figure 1.3).

The constant accessibility to the tombs resulted in the removal of their content over time. There are exceptions, however, which allow us to get a basic idea about the furnishing of the tombs. The deceased were placed on



[Figure 1] Judahite burial types (1 – Lachisch 218, after Wenninger 2021: Taf. 39,72; 2 – Betlehem, grave 5, after Wenninger 2021: Taf. 23,1; 3 – Jerusalem, Ketef Hinnom grave 24, after Kamlah 2009: Abb. 7; 4 – Jerusalem–East, tomb 3; after Wenninger 2021: Taf. 48,112)

the benches with their personal ornaments, at times tools, figurines and other artefacts have been ascertained (Bloch-Smith 1992b: 218). The largest group of objects were nevertheless pottery vessels, most of them used as containers for holding different kinds of beverages and foods. Lamps, perfume vessels and flasks were part of the standard equipment as well. It seems that the combination of grave goods was, amongst others, determined by chronological factors and local customs (Bloch-Smith 1992a: table

8). Based on the scarce data, it seems that men and women, adults and infants were buried in the tombs (Bloch-Smith 1992a: Table 7). The general perception is that the tombs were used by families over several generations. The number of interred individuals shows—not much surprising—a high variety but usually between fifteen and thirty individuals were counted in one tomb (Bloch-Smith 1992b: 217).

The Judahite bench tombs are considered to be an ethnic marker of the Israelites, although their origins can be traced back to the late Bronze Age lowlands (Bloch-Smith 1992: 215). The seeming lack of preferences for a specific group of people interred in the tombs has led to the idea that they represent an ethos of equality among the members of Judahite society, which is, for instance, expressed by the absence of any identifiable graves in the Iron Age I (Faust 2004). At the time of the construction of the bench tombs (Iron Age II), in a period of growing social differences, this was, however, only an ideal and not a representation of the lived reality of the people anymore (Faust and Bunimovitz 2008: 154). Whether the chamber tombs represent indeed an ethos of equality may be better understood with ongoing research, at the moment the number of discovered bench tombs—currently around 1500 (Wenning 2021)—is by far not sufficient to include the majority of the highland population during the Iron Age II. Thus, it is clear that only a fraction of the people was buried in this way. The tombs have been consequently interpreted as the last resting places of families with an elevated social status (Faust and Bunimovitz 2008: 159). Faust and Bunimovitz (2018) argue that the occurrence of the graves is an indicator of social changes. The growing complexity of the highland polity and stronger social distinction weakened—in their opinion—the importance of the family, which was the main reference in the social life of previous

times. They suggest that the construction of the chamber tombs was an attempt to counter this development and to reinforce the cohesion of the family (Faust and Bunimovitz 2018: 157–158; Ilan 2017: 55–56).

Another suggestion in connection to the Judahite bench tombs is that they replicate the floor plan of the so-called four-room house which is considered to be another ethnic marker of the Israelites (Faust and Bunimovitz 2018: 153; Osborne 2011: 47–52). This interpretation is however not undisputed (Kamlah 2009: 19–21). As mentioned above, the bench tombs are also understood to be an indicator of the state formation of the kingdom of Judah. They seem to reflect the emerging social stratification but also the establishment of a commonly used burial type within a consistent cultural and political area (Fantalkin 2008). From the perspective of ritual practice the tombs and their furnishings suggest the existence of a cult of the dead. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith has highlighted that the rituals that took place in the grave chamber in combination with the remarks in the biblical scriptures point to a belief that the dead were still involved in the matters of the living community and that they were elevated to divine status. Asking the dead for their protection and communicating with them through the help of necromancers was apparently a known practice (Bloch-Smith 1992b: 222–223).

5. The Bench Tombs as Mnemonic Devices

As has been outlined above, the Judahite bench tombs provide, as any other burial, an access to the collective memory of the burying community. The religious, cultural and social practices, such as the funeral, the

accompanying rituals, ceremonies and events, are the points of contact with the communicative and cultural memory. Thus, the tomb and its furnishing as well as the places of interaction can be interpreted as mnemonic devices, basically serving as pointers to a specific piece of memory for the community. We may be able to make some suggestions on what those pointers were referring to, but most of the content is lost. The absence of the deceased's remains and artefacts in the majority of the known tombs is obviously a strong limitation to gain a better understanding of the situation. The following thoughts refer to the general principle of a Judahite bench tomb and not to specific examples. Some of the mentioned points may be more or less obvious, but it is important to state also what may appear banal at first as these things can be easily taken for granted and may be finally not properly appreciated in all their consequences.

When looking at the chamber first, a few elements are remarkable from the perspective of collective memory. Funerary rites are composed of different stages. Some of them may be public—and thus shaping the communicative memory of the community—others are private and may become the memory of a few participants. The comparatively small size of most of the chamber tombs suggests that the funeral as a public event for the entire community was performed outside the tomb (Figure 1.2). It seems that the space around the chamber was often not big enough to accommodate a larger audience too (Kamlah 2009: 16–17). This renders it very likely that the actual funerary ritual—potentially dedicated to a wider audience—was performed in or nearby the domestic sphere. The procession to the tomb, in its most basic form the transport of the body to the burial site, may have been another public event, but the actual interment of the body in the grave and the accompanying rituals were

seemingly performed for a smaller circle of people—shaping only their communicative memory. The rituals and ceremonies drew in all likelihood on narratives of cultural memory, serving as important reinforcements and affirmations of the group's identity. Except for the Silwan necropolis, whose tombs directly communicated due to their location and visibility with the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Figure 1.4), the location of the bench tombs was seemingly not marked by a larger monument. Hence the visibility of the tombs was not the first priority, although the biblical tradition mentions markers for the burials and that in some cases the graves themselves were used as markers for plots of land (Bloch-Smith 1992a: 111, 113–114). Nevertheless, there are also no indicators that the tombs' location was hidden or kept a secret. They often occur in groups which implies that certain areas were designated as burial grounds. The function of the majority of bench tombs was apparently not to signal to the community, which corresponds with the intimate character of the entire tomb construction. The durability of the stone chambers and the use of the tombs over several generations grants them properties of longevity and rootedness in the landscape. Both may be of importance to justify one's family claim for the land they have been living on or—more generally—their rights as inhabitants of the area.

As explained above, the chamber tombs were conceptualized as last resting places for more than one or two individuals. The bodies of the deceased were placed on the benches, in clearly designated spaces. The headrests that have been carved out of the rock in some of the tombs tell us about the number of people that could be laid to rest in the chamber and they indicate that the bodies were placed in supine position (Figure 1.3). The existence of those clearly marked places in the tomb may have had a

mnemonic function. This is because for collective burials without specific markers and no clearly designated places, the identification of the deceased may become increasingly difficult. This might have been the case for the cave tombs which have their origin in the Bronze Age and which were still in use during the Iron Age (Figure 1.1). One option to make the interments identifiable are inscriptions, which are, however, rather rare in Judahite tombs. The placement of the deceased at a specific, clearly recognizable position, allowed for a longer identification of the interred individual, even if this information was only part of the communicative memory.

Another aspect that appears to be important when it comes to the mnemonic function and commemorative aspects of the tombs are the properties or materialities of the deceased's body. This is because in the bench tombs the bodies were not concealed or abstracted from the community of the living as is the case for the interment in a coffin or a pit. Although the tombs were apparently not entered very often and by a larger group of people—as the measurements of most chambers suggest—the decaying process of the body must have been perceivable with all senses by the visitors. This certainly affected the way how people interacted in and around the tomb and thus how their memory—individually and collectively—was shaped. The dead body, as Yannis Hamilakis has put it, "act(s) upon others, in a haptic, olfactory, multi-sensory, and inevitably affective manner" (Hamilakis 2013: 131–132). In this sense the impact of the corpse on the memory of the people may be closely connected to the way it was interred. It can be assumed that the process of retaining a certain memory about a deceased and also forgetting the person starts earlier when the body is not directly perceivable anymore for the community of the living. The continued presence of the body and

the possibility of identifying the individual based on their bodily remains, implies a stronger presence and an ongoing impact of the deceased on the world of the living. The constant access to the deceased bodies and the possibility to get in direct contact with them inside the grave suggests that these interactions were important and probably even necessary. The sacrifices for the dead in the shape of food and beverages as well as the secondary treatment of the body remains are indicators for that.

It has been argued by Robert Wenning that the deceased individuals in the grave chamber were in an intermediate existence until their remains were moved aside to make space for a new interment (Wenning 1993: 179). During this time, they were ritually provided with food which explains the accumulated grave furnishings. Following the theory that Judahite society performed a cult of the dead, we may assume that the tombs were not considered to be a mere repository for the deceased but sacred places. It can be argued that the way how the graves were conceptualized supported this experience. The entrance to the tombs was in most cases rather small, and entering the space inside can be perceived as the passage into a different realm. The atmosphere inside the tomb was apparently very different from the outside and due to the performed rituals, the presence of the corpses in different states of decay, and the accumulation of objects from previous ceremonies, a dense sensual, in many ways otherworldly experience may have been the result for the visitors. Perhaps, it was the intermediate state of existence that made the dead ancestors approachable and also enabled them to interfere with the world of the living before they would completely transit into the hereafter. The chthonic character of the tombs has led to the interpretation that they represented the womb of the earth (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 25–26) or alternatively the womb of

the goddess Hathor (Hays 2012: 618–621). The latter idea emerges, amongst others, from the fact that the carved headrests on the benches resemble with their omega-shape the headdress of the Egyptian goddess.[2] If one of these—at the moment not undisputed—perceptions turns out to have an element of truth, they would render the tomb a pointer to a core belief, which must have been part of the community's cultural memory.

The transformation of the body from that of a recognizable person to the rather impersonal skeletal remains of a human being are almost metaphorical for the process of forgetting. The dead, their stories and all information about them, will remain in the communicative memory for three generations with a gradual loss of detail. The collective state of the last burial stage, when the bones were indistinguishably mingled with each other, may be seen as a state of complete oblivion. However, we could also interpret it as a way to extend the memory of the deceased. In this case, the memory is not bound to a particular individual anymore but to the group of ancestors. The change from an individual, who was known by the living community, to a member of the divine ancestors is also a transition from the realm of the communicative to the cultural memory. The deceased was now included in and thus commemorated through the narratives that were part of the cultural memory of the family group.

As mentioned above, the tombs have been interpreted as a representation of the ethos of equality that was a core value of the early Israelite communities. In a time of significant social changes such as in the Iron Age II, characterized by growing social inequalities and the weakening of the family as a central unit of identification, the tombs are considered

2 An overview on this discussion can be found in Kletter (2020: 37–39).

as a response to preserve traditional but already obsolete social values. Independently from the question, if this notion is correct, the tomb, due to its collective character, is a metaphor for the family and the household. In this sense, the entire tomb becomes a mnemonic device—a full-fledged monument—for core beliefs whose origin reaches far more back in time than the eighty or hundred years of the communicative memory. Thus, the tomb as a whole can be understood as a pointer to the cultural memory of the community.

The value of interpreting the bench tombs from the perspective of collective memory may be not readily obvious. Due to the limitations in comprehending the actual content of communicative and cultural memory within past societies, especially considering the absence of grave goods and bodily remains in most bench tombs, the potential for insights is indeed significantly narrowed. The idea that the chamber tombs served as mnemonic devices may appear simple at first. On the individual level, literally every element that can be found within or around the tombs may trigger a specific memory. However, references to the collective memory are not random or arbitrary. They can be partly deduced from the individual settings of a tomb and the patterns that occur in the archaeological record.

The usefulness of the made observations can be probably better ascertained by contrasting them with other contemporary burial types in Judah. Table 2 compares some of the discussed elements in reference to cave tombs (Figure 1.1), the monolithic tombs of the Silwan necropolis (Figure 1.4), and simple pit graves. Despite a number of common properties there are also some differences, for instance in the visibility, the interaction with the deceased, the duration of use, the possible impact on the communicative

[Table 2] Comparative Table of Grave Types Used during the Iron Age II in Judah Regarding Their Impact on the Collective Memory (categories are taken from the discussion in this section of the article)

	Cave tomb	Bench tomb	Monolithic tomb	Pit grave
Grave location	bound to natural conditions	can be purposefully constructed	can be purposefully constructed	can be purposefully constructed
Grave visibility	rather low	rather low	high	low, but depends on surface marker
Assembly in or in front of the tombs	no (depends on the size of the cave)	no	not inside, but outside	around the grave
Contact with the corpse	direct	direct	direct	indirect
Secondary interment	yes	yes	no	no
Duration of use	several generations	several generations	once	once
Grave goods	personal ornaments, sacrifices	personal ornaments, sacrifices	personal ornaments, sacrifices	personal ornaments, sacrifices
Possible impact on communicative memory	high	high	high	medium
Reference to cultural memory	yes	yes	yes, but possibly with inter-communal references	yes
Mnemonic quality	medium	high	high	low

memory etc.

Some of the categories play a role for other research concepts as well, but included is also a tentative assessment of the mnemonic quality as well as the relevance for the cultural and communicative memory. It can

be argued that pit graves and also the cave tombs, both already in use during the Late Bronze Age, have a lower mnemonic quality than the bench tombs and the monolithic tombs. As mentioned above, the cave tomb impedes the recognition of a particular corpse over time, while the pit grave completely removes the corpse from the sensory perception of the community. We may assume that the mnemonic quality was one reason for the adoption of the bench tomb and the construction of the monolithic tombs in the course of the Iron Age II. As emphasized above, all burials reference core narratives of cultural memory and thus, shifting preferences for a specific grave form may be interpreted as indicators for changing core beliefs.

The advantage of the bench tombs, compared to other collective burials, was the possibility to commemorate and remember particular individuals within the collective burial—at least for some time. We may argue that this kind of remembrance became an increasingly important part of the identity construction in Judahite society of the Iron Age II. The bench tomb and the monolithic tomb represent in this sense very different ways of commemoration with different effects on the collective memory. One purpose to construct a monolithic tomb was apparently to extend the memory of certain individuals within the society of Judah. The obvious intent for distinction may have had the consequence that over-regional narratives as part of cultural memory were referenced. Overall it is difficult to assess whether the strategy of the tomb owner or the group who constructed the monolithic tombs played out for a longer period. Even with an impressive tomb and inscriptions, the memory of the buried individuals must have faded, unless they were not integrated into narratives that were part of the community's cultural memory.

The bench tombs included references to the communicative and cultural memory as well, and it seems that the danger of forgetting was counterbalanced by the concept of the collective burial. It is very likely that the deceased went through different stages of their existence in the afterlife and that they finally became part of the ancestors of the family, who were all remembered in their chamber tomb.

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초록

집단 기억과 집단 매장지

철기시대 예루살렘과 유다 왕국의 기억장치로서의 방무덤

세바스티안 뮐러*

본 논문은 공동체의 집단 기억과 정체성 구축의 관계를 기반으로 한다. 기억은 개인과 집단이 세상과 타인과의 관계에서 자신을 인식하는 방식을 결정하는 기본 요소다. 따라서 공동체의 집단 기억을 연구의 출발점이나 주요 개념으로서 탐구하는 것은 현대사회와 고대문화를 이해하는 데 있어 의의가 있다.

본 연구의 목적은 발전된 철기 시대(기원전 840~586년) 남부 레반트 지역의 집단 기억과 방무덤 사이의 연관성을 탐구하는 것이다. 소위 벤치형 무덤은 예루살렘 도시를 중심으로 발달한 유다 왕국에서 선호하는 매장의 유형이었다. 본 논문의 목적은 유다 사람들의 벤치형 무덤과 내용물, 무덤 설치물, 유물 및 유골이 어떻게 고인을 추모하고 망각하도록 했는지 탐구하는 것이다. 이 분석은 집단 기억의 서로 다른 두 부분인 전달적 기억과 소통적 기억의 차이를 구분하여 활용한다. 무덤과 유물은 망자를 추모하고 매장 공동체의 결속력과 정체성을 강화함으로써 여러 차원에서 기억을 저장하는 장치로 기능했음을 주장하는 바이다.

주제어 집단기억, 자료 기관, 집단 매장지, 예루살렘, 철기시대

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