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MELINDA A. ZEDER

**SHEIKH ḤAMAD, TELL** (Dur Katlimmu), site located in northeast Syria, 70 km (43 mi.) north-northeast of Deir ez-Zor, on the east bank of the Khabur, the largest tributary of the Euphrates River (35°37' N, 40°45' E). The site was first investigated by Hormuzd Rassam in 1879, who discovered the fragmentary stela of Adad-Nirari III now in the British Museum. Surveyed by Hartmut Kühne and

Wolfgang Röllig in 1975 and 1977, systematic excavations began, under Kühne's direction in 1978 under the auspices of the Free University of Berlin.

The most ancient settlement dates to the late fourth millennium, but the site was apparently continuously occupied throughout the Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Ages (3000–1500 BCE). Originally a small village, the first expansion noted took place in the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500 BCE), during the Old Babylonian period, with the construction of a citadel and a lower town, covering about 15 ha (37 acres). During the Late Bronze Age (1500–1000 BCE), the town was first under the control of the Mitanni Empire and then under the Middle-Assyrian Empire. [See Mitanni; Assyrians.] In the thirteenth century BCE, probably under the rule of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser I, the site became the seat of a governor. An archive of about five hundred cuneiform tablets found on the western slope of the citadel, in a wing of the governor's palace, ascertains that the site is to be identified with the Assyrian city of Dur Katlimmu, known from other Assyrian cuneiform sources of the second and first millennia BCE, but not anticipated in the region of Tell Sheikh Ḥamad. [See Cuneiform; Palace.]

In the Iron Age (1000–330 BCE), Dur Katlimmu returned to Assyrian rule (ninth century BCE). It may have been controlled by the Arameans in the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE. [See Arameans.] At the end of the eighth century BCE, the settlement was considerably enlarged when almost 40 ha (99 acres) were added to the lower town. A new town wall 4 km long enclosed the settlement, whose intramural occupation then covered 55 ha (156 acres). With the suburban areas in the north and in the east, the settlement had doubled. The excavated buildings consist of a palace and several residences of high officials. Broad streets and large open spaces dominated the new part of the lower town. At least two gates gave access from the north and the east, and a small harbor may have existed along the riverbank in the west. The city then served as an administrative and economic center, as the central place of a four-tiered settlement pattern. The population grew to about seven thousand. Considering its present geoclimatic situation, south of the dry-farming belt, such a large population could only have been supported by special means; these consisted mainly of a regional irrigation system, traces of which were discovered 2.5 km (1.5 mi.) east of Dur Katlimmu and along the east and west banks of the Khabur River. [See Irrigation.]

After the downfall of the Assyrian Empire (612/10 BCE), the Babylonians, under their king Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, stepped in and founded the short-lived Neo-Babylonian Empire (610–539 BCE). Recent excavation results demonstrate that Dur Katlimmu was captured, looted, and partly burned. The provincial center of Dur Katlimmu—then perhaps under another name—carried on. A palacelike building was erected, possibly the seat of the Babylonian governor. Other former Assyrian buildings were

reused. Four unique cuneiform tablets, written in Assyrian with Aramaic postscripts, but dated according to the regnal years of the Babylonian king, ascertain that the population remained Assyrian and Aramaic, and that Assyrian law was still followed, twelve years after the breakdown of the Assyrian Empire. [See Aramaic Language and Literature.]

During the period of the Persian Empire (535–333 BCE), the extended lower town was only sporadically occupied. Gradually, the settlement was reduced to its former size of about 15 ha (37 acres). In the Hellenistic and Roman periods (333 BCE–300 CE), the lower town was used as a burial ground. The old citadel and the original lower town were densely settled, the lower town being turned eventually into a castrum. During the Parthian-Roman wars in the second century CE, the settlement seems to have achieved some military significance as a fortress. In the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (300–700 CE), the settlement continuously lost significance; by the dawn of the Islamic period it had dwindled to a small village again. It has been reoccupied only in the most recent past.

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HARTMUT KÜHNE

**SHELL.** See Bone, Ivory, and Shell.

**SHEMA<sup>c</sup>, KHIRBET**, also known as Galilean Tekoa, site located in the Upper Galilee on a high ridge of the Meiron massif, at 760 m above sea level (approx. 25° N, 34° E; map reference 1914 × 2647). It is approximately 10 km (6 mi.) west of Safed. Barely accessible from the south and west, and on its eastern and northern sides only after a long, steep climb, "the ruin of Shammai" has been a Jewish pilgrim site since the Middle Ages (it is not mentioned in the sources before the eleventh century). A large mausoleum with an underground tomb chamber marks the traditional spot of the grave of Shammai, the noted sage from the time of King Herod. The *ʿayin* in the name *Shema<sup>c</sup>*, however, may refer to another megalithic monument, on the western ascent, that local Arabs call candle (*Shema<sup>c</sup>*) and Jews call the seat of Elijah.

The site was excavated between 1970 and 1972 as a field project through the American Schools of Oriental Research,

funded by the Smithsonian Institution and a consortium of universities, and directed by Eric M. Meyers. A final report of the expedition was published in 1976. The joint expedition was among the first excavations in the 1970s to engage scientific collaborators in geology, paleozoology, and environmental studies and to undertake conservation work from the outset.

Excavations were conducted in parts of the cemetery, in an industrial/agricultural area, and in the synagogue complex. While there was considerable debris dating to medieval times or to the Early Arab period, the bulk of the stratified material recovered dated to the Roman and Early Byzantine periods. In addition, limited finds from the Late Hellenistic period, mainly coins, suggest that the site was first occupied in the first century BCE.

Soundings in the cemetery produced evidence for the practice of secondary burials (*ossilegium*) in *kokhim* and other repositories, as well as of primary inhumation. The tombs under the large mausoleum identified with Shammai were all disturbed. Indeed, most of the tombs had been robbed in antiquity. The closest parallels are to be found at Beth-She<sup>c</sup>arim in western Galilee, which date roughly to the same periods. Numerous olive presses and several ritual baths (*miqva<sup>c</sup>ot*) were excavated in other areas, all dating to Roman times. [See Burial Sites; Tombs; Burial Techniques; Beth-She<sup>c</sup>arim; Ritual Baths.]

Much of the scholarly attention devoted to the site has focused on the unusual broadhouse synagogue(s) excavation revealed and on their location not on the actual height



SHEMA<sup>c</sup>, KHIRBET. Mausoleum, looking west. (Courtesy E. M. Meyers)