

INTERIM REPORT ON FOUR SEASONS OF EXCAVATIONS (2008, 2010 - 2013) AT WADI MATAHA SITE 15, BD TOMB 676

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Introduction

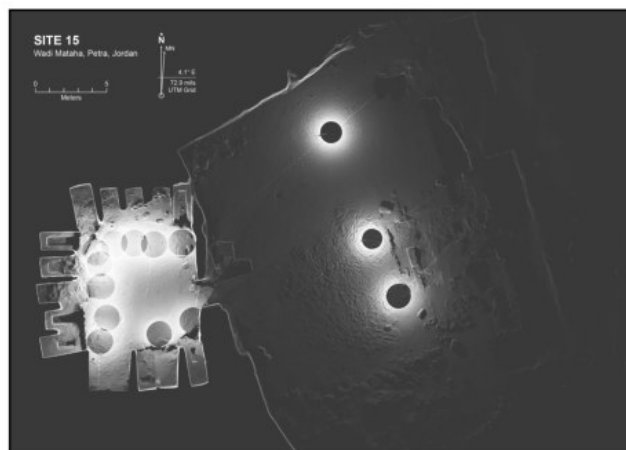
The Brigham Young University Wādī Mataha Project, sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, began in 1998 and has excavated a number of Nabataean tombs, water features, cultic niches and high places in the area west and north of the juncture between Wadi Mudhlim and the main Wadi Mataha. (Johnson *et al.* 1999; Johnson and al-Khourī 2005; Johnson *et al.* 2007; Johnson 2013). The main aim of this research is to test the theory that lithics, pottery sherds, fossils and other small objects were used by the Nabataeans as votive offerings in ritual situations, often decorated with the images of Nabataean, Egyptian and Greco-Roman deities such as Dushares, Allat, Isis, Harpocrates, Thoth, Bes, Hermes, Apollo and Selene.

Between 2008 and 2013, Tomb BD 676, WM Site 15 (located UTM 335865.97 N, 736107.20 E, elevation 947.32 m asl) was partially excavated. Originally described by Brunnow and Domaszewski in 1904 (Brunnow and Domaszewski 1904), it was later tentatively suggested by Schmidt, on the basis of surface features, that the complex in front of this tomb could contain two porticoes with columns surrounding an inner courtyard, similar to the complex in the front of the Tomb of the Roman Soldier in Wadi Farasa (Schmidt 2008: 214-217). The tomb has an elaborate façade and a square rock-cut chamber with 15 smaller rock-cut chambers, five each on the north, south and west sides, as well as four smaller chambers cut above the loculi on the west wall. The tomb is filled with a thick layer of animal dung (**Figs. 1 and 2**).

Facade

The façade (**Figs. 3 and 4**) is cut into the face of the cliff at the east end of Mughar al-Mataha and is carved in a variation of what has been described as the Hegra type by Brunnow and Domaszewski (Patrich 1990: 114-115). The form is very similar to the more elaborate Treppengraber type as illustrated by Schmidt-Colinet (1980: 73). This type at Petra, especially BD #813 (Zayadine 1973: 81, 1974: 142-14), was associated with members of the nobility as evidenced by an inscription dedicating that tomb to Oneishu, minister of Queen Shaqilat.

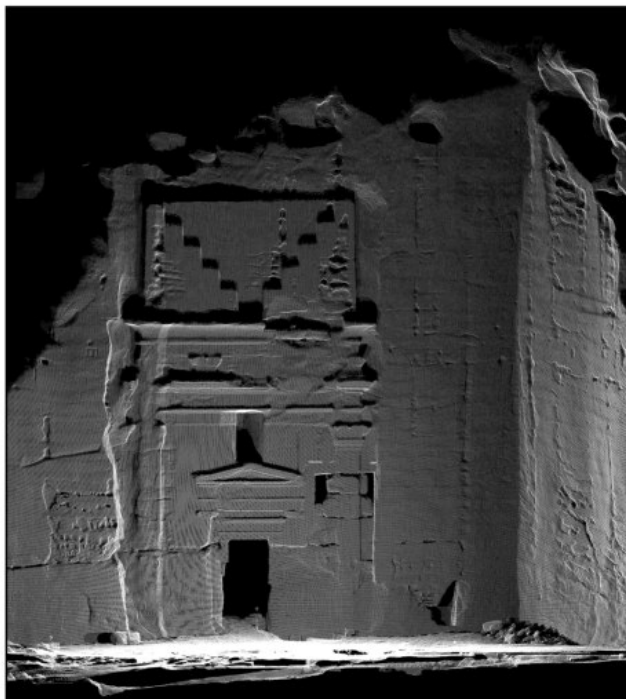
It has a number of features that vary from the standard pattern for this type of façade. First, in the center directly above the lower entablature over the door, there is a deep rectangular cut that does not penetrate to the interior of the tomb. Secondly, to the north of the entrance there is a window that has been filled in with masonry blocks, including two that form part of the outer pillar which is capped by a plain-faced Nabataean capital. The southern outer



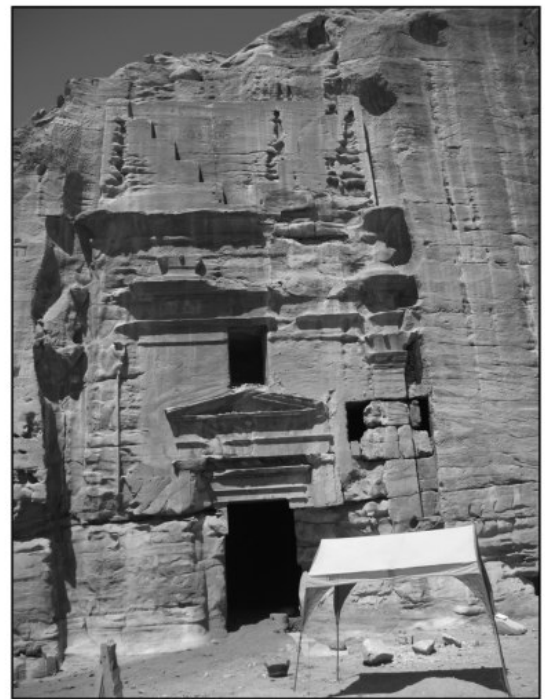
1. Overall Plan of Site 15, BD 676 (Ure).



2. 3D Top View, Site 15 (Ure).



3. 3D Tomb Facade Site 15 (Ure).



4. Tomb Façade (Johnson).

pillar is almost completely eroded and there are additional Nabataean plain-faced style capitals offset from the pillars above the first upper entablature similar to BD No 649. There are five-step crenellations in the upper register on the south, but the parallel northern group is almost completely eroded.

Finer details of the façade include evidence of a frieze in the register directly above the doorway (decorated to the north with the end of a ribbon), a rosette in the register above that one, the use of red-painted plaster framing the doorway and on the rounded pillars adjacent to it, and a possible grotesque human head above the window in-filled with masonry (**Fig. 5**).

Cultic Features

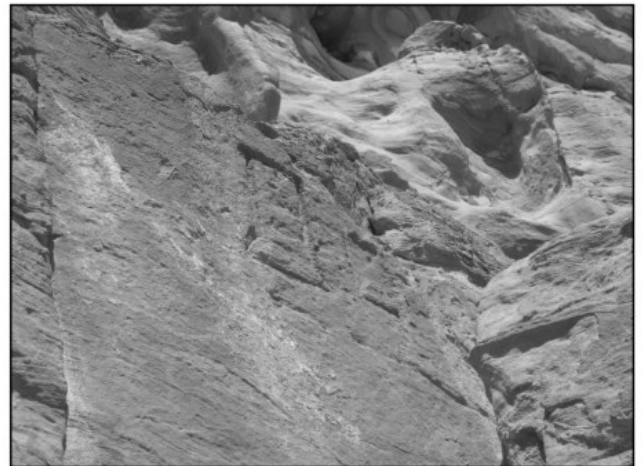
There are five significant cultic features associated with the exterior of the tomb. Just north of the forecourt area and the rock spur defining it is evidence for an upper and possibly a lower water storage area. At the spillway between the two areas, about four meters above the ground, there are two rock-cut niches next to each other facing east, with carved cultic blocks of equal size. One is a plain rectangular slab with a simple base raised in relief and the other has evidence of a carved geometric face with eyes possibly representing Dhushares and his consort Allat or al-Uzza (**Fig. 6**) (Wenning 2001: 86-87).

In the quarried area north of the tomb, the south face has a carved rectangular niche with either a raised in-relief angular horned altar similar to the top of the one shown on a lintel from Avdat (Patrich 1990: 94) or a recessed triangular shape (**Fig. 7**).

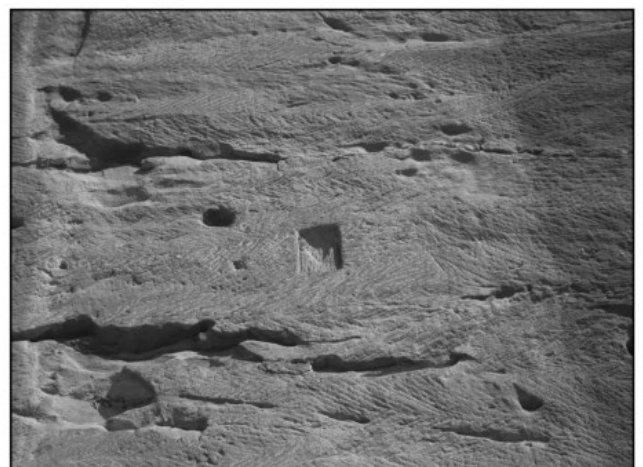
To the north of the façade is a shallow-cut square divided into four triangles by two diagonal lines (**Fig. 8**). There are two cultic features to the south of the tomb façade, one low down just adjacent to the south column and one very high above the top of the tomb façade. The lower one is a niche with two equal-size stelae separated by a space with a circular cut above the recess (**Fig. 9**). The higher one is a large niche near the



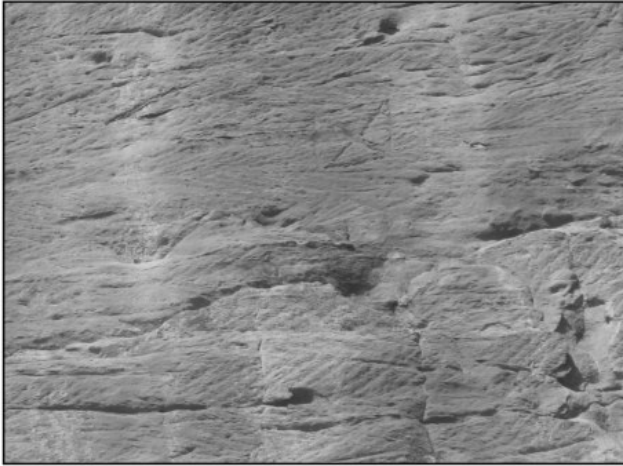
5. Possible human head above doorway (Johnson).



6. Two cultic niches to right of tomb (Johnson).



7. Carved rectangular niche with triangular shape in recess (Johnson).



8. Cut square with four triangles (Johnson).



9. Two stela with circular cut above (Johnson).

top of the cliff face with a carved rectangular stela with a more elaborate base than that to the north of the tomb (**Fig. 10**).

Forecourt - Portico

The area in front of the tomb entrance was divided into 5 x 5 m squares aligned with the visible wall lines, with the center of square 15A at the visible south-east corner of the structure. Squares were then assigned letters from south to north with A to E on the western edge, F to J in the next row to the west, K to O further west, followed by squares P to T, then U to Y nearest to the tomb entrance. Squares A, B, C, G and H were excavated in 2008, revealing a large ashlar-built platform sitting on bedrock. In 2010 the western half of square 15D was excavated; in 2011 the eastern half of square 15E was excavated; in 2013 a 3 x 3 m test trench was excavated in 15W. This trench lies immediately north of the entrance to the tomb.

Square 15W is a 3 x 3 m test trench north of the doorway into the interior of the tomb. A 40 cm layer of red windblown sand was sitting on bedrock throughout the area. The bedrock was carved into a ledge at the interface with the tomb façade, with the sides of three steps leading to a platform in front of the doorway with a water channel running east of the steps (**Fig. 11**). A large number of lithics were found lying on bedrock in the area north of the steps as well as a piece of carved bone with a figure of



10. Large rectangular block above tomb (Johnson).



11. Square 15 W near entrance (Johnson).



12. Lithics from 15 W (Johnson).

Harpocrates, a stone spindle whorl and a bronze ring with a beveled design. Lithics included two large chert cores as well as over 60 smaller worked pieces (**Fig. 12**).

Squares A, B, C, G and H form the south-west corner of a large platform on bedrock with a built facing wall to the east and south (**Fig. 13**). Both squares A and C reached bedrock in part of their area. Area A, at the corner of the wall, was excavated to bedrock in the south-west quadrant of the square with a depth of 2.8 m at the platform sloping to 3.1 m at the southern baulk (**Fig. 14**). In C, bedrock was only about 65 cm below datum at the platform edge and 84 cm below datum to the east. Two levels of build were noted in the platform area. The upper level is more roughly built with flat irregular blocks and less leveling of the floor. In 15B, east of the platform a roughly built ramp leads up to the platform area from an unexcavated stairway leading to the tomb from the *wadi* bed. In both 15B and especially in the western half of 15G and H, a lower level of construction has a perfectly level floor made of finer-cut flat ashlar sandstone slabs. There appears to be a finer-built inner courtyard to the west entered through a low doorway in 15H (**Fig. 15**). Ceramics associated with the strata in 15A and B indicate a period of use from the late 1st century BC to the late 1st century AD based on both Nabataean light red and dark red fine painted ware plate and bowl fragments in the levels. Significant



13. Built platform looking east (Johnson).



14. Square A, South Wall of Platform (Johnson).



15. Courtyard in 15 H (Johnson).

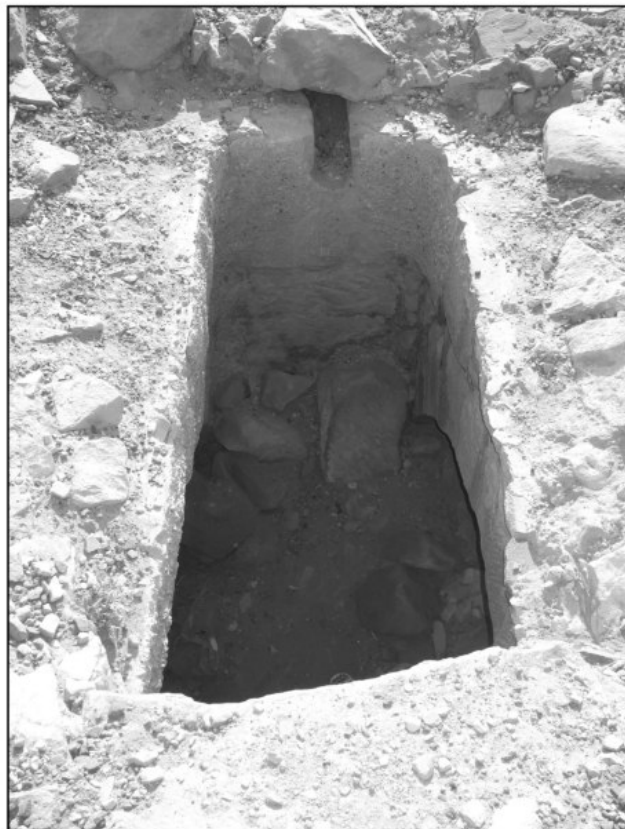
finds include a carved bone Dhushara figurine and a coin of Malichus II and Shaqilat, as well as a number of lithics from the built surface in square H. To the north of this area, the western half of square 15D was excavated to bedrock in 2010. Three stratigraphic units were identified in the area. SU1 was a loose reddish-tan silt with small rocks and a heavy concentration of sherds, including Nabataean dark red painted fine thin ware, a Hellenistic black-glazed sherd, an orange jar with red-drip paint and coarse black ware with straw temper. Forms included jars, plates, juglets, cooking pots, storage jars, bowls, amphorae and unguentaria. A heavy concentration of lithics and a number of large cores also came from the area.

Below SU1, bedrock was reached in the eastern half of the area with some evidence of an ash layer at scattered locations. The bedrock in this area forms a shallow basin with a cobble and clay floor that extends west into the unexcavated square in 15I. This was probably a pool area since a water channel is cut into the bedrock on the eastern side where it abuts the large ashlar-built Wall #1 that defines the platform. This pool may have drained into the large rock cut cistern in area 15J.

In square 15E, the eastern half of the square was excavated to bedrock in 2011. The western half of the area is bedrock with a covered water channel cut into it that leads to an underground cistern with three arches (**Fig. 16**). The channel is 50 cm deep, 17 cm wide at the top and 12 cm wide at the bottom, and 3.57 m long with 2.61 m of it covered by flat stones (**Fig. 17**). The channel slopes away from the cistern and would have contained water that overflowed from it. It ends at a deep-cut edge in the bedrock where there is a 1.23 m drop. The bedrock then slopes steeply to the east with various features cut into it or built on top of it. Three stratigraphic units were identified in the area. SU1 was a loose reddish-tan silt with small rocks and a heavy concentration of ceramic sherds, including Nabataean dark red painted fine thin ware and coarse black ware with straw temper. Forms

included jars, plates, juglets, cooking pots, storage jars, bowls, amphorae and unguentaria. A heavy concentration of lithics, including a truncated bladelet and a number of large cores, also came from the area.

Below SU1, bedrock was reached in the eastern half of the area with some evidence of an ash layer at scattered locations. The bedrock in this area slopes sharply to the east around the



16. Arched cistern (Johnson).



17. Water channel (Johnson).

square-built structure with a cut edge, with a triangular spur to the south and a water runnel to the north. The square-built structure sits on a layer of rubble over bedrock and was filled with a sterile layer of small stones and hard-packed white sand (**Fig. 18**). The currently excavated squares indicate a large solid platform forming a plaza in front of Tomb 676, rather than a colonnaded portico as suggested by Schmid.

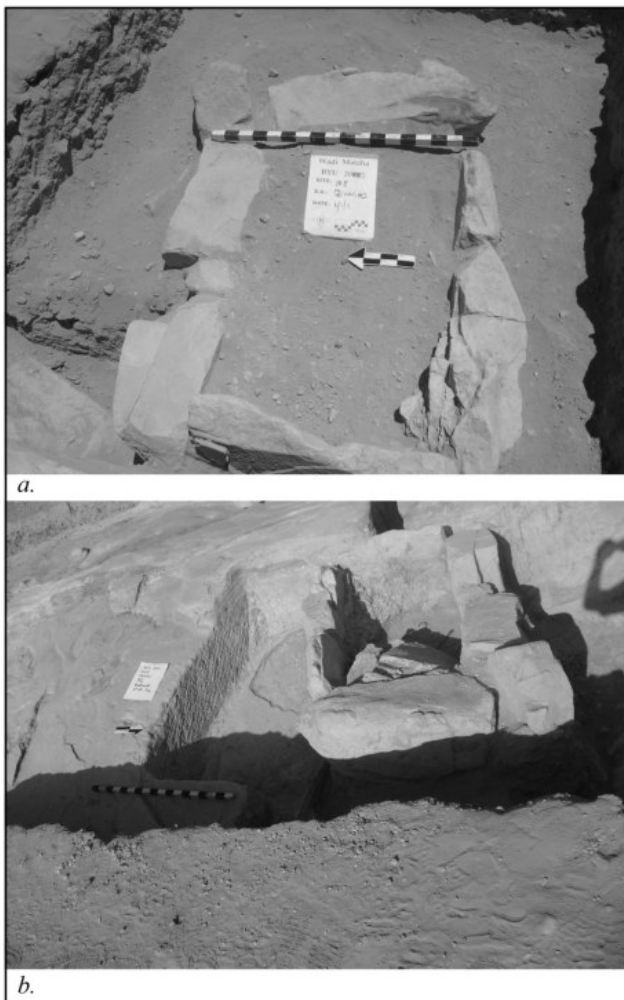
Chamber - Ioculi

The interior of the tomb has a large square rock-cut main chamber with 15 smaller rectangular rock-cut chambers, five each on the north, south and west side walls, as well as four smaller cuts above the larger chambers on the west side. The tomb is filled with a thick layer of animal dung. Nine of the larger lower chambers and two of the upper chambers have been excavated. The

larger chambers were designated L1 - 5 on the south wall from east to west, L6 - 10 on the west wall from south to north and L11 - 15 on the north wall from west to east. The smaller upper chambers on the west wall were designated A1 - 4 from south to north.

Chamber 15L1 is the first rock-cut chamber on the southern side of the tomb from the entrance on the east. It was filled with at least 1.5 m depth of goat, camel and donkey dung. After removal of the dung layer, SU2, a dark brown soil streaked with black decomposing cement, was found containing a pile of cut rocks sitting on bedrock that included three sculptural pieces (**Fig. 19**). Each of the sculptural pieces has a base with diagonal dressing, and cuts and groves. One appears to represent a Harpocrates face as well as a moon goddess figure when illuminated by direct sunlight from above. Below this level was a soft tan sand that went down to bedrock. A small rectangular cut, 71 x 113 cm and 58 cm deep, in the bottom of the bedrock was filled with soft sand and had a ledge about 29 cm below the top of the cut (**Fig. 20**). Three small beads, made of shell and glass, were found in this cut along with a number of animal bones (ungulate and bird), some of which had been burned; no human bones were found in this locus. A second rectangular cut runs north - south against the eastern wall under the layer of dung towards the doorway. There is also a shallow circular cut forming a half circle in the rear south-west corner of the locus about 4 cm deep with a sinuous groove against the western wall. A number of pieces of black coarse ware pottery were found in this locus along with a number of lithics and quartz pebbles.

Chamber 15L2 is located on the southern wall of the tomb. Excavation of SU1, the dung layer and SU 2, i.e. the layer of blackened sand with straw, exposed a plain rectangular chamber 2.83 x 1.12 x 2.62 m in size, with no cuts in the floor. The western side is separated from 15L3 by a narrow ridge 30 cm wide with a circular hole near its southern terminus, 7 cm in diameter; this matches the diameter of the base of pyriform



18. a.,b Square built structure in 15 E (Johnson).



19. Sculptural piece from 15L1 (Johnson).



20. Chamber 15L1 (Johnson).

unguentaria from the 1st century BC.

Chamber 15L3 is the third rock-cut chamber on the southern side of the tomb from the entrance on the east. It was filled with at least 1.5 m depth of goat, camel and donkey dung. After the removal of the dung layer, SU2, a dark brown soil streaked with black decomposing cement was found. Below this level was a soft red sand that went down to bedrock. A small cut, 100 x 40 cm and 24 cm deep, in the bottom of the bedrock was filled with soft sand. At the same level as the top of this cut, a large centrally pierced hexagonal carnelian bead (**Fig. 21**) was found. This cut contained no human bones, but a quantity of pottery sherds, including fragments of Nabataean dark red painted fine ware, were present. A lithic core, a number of bronze triangles and lumps of lead were also found in

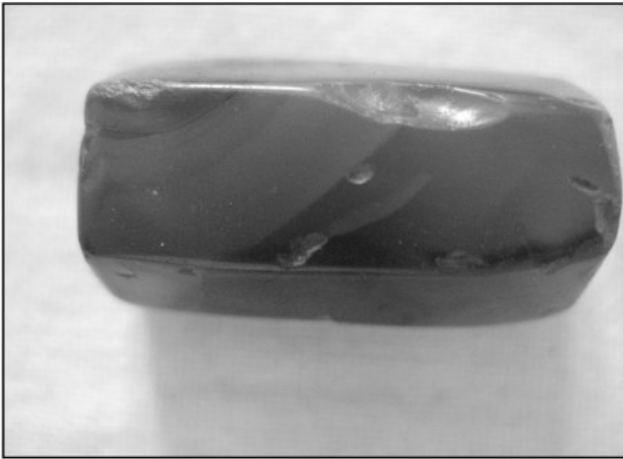
this cut.

Chamber 15L6 has a 1.45 m. x 3.17 m. chamber, with a small locus 60 cm wide and 123 cm long cut into the floor (**Fig. 22**). The locus has a 12 cm wide ledge at a depth of 20cm below its top ledge and is 70 cm deep. The lower area curves in at both ends, forming an oval with flat ends. One cover stone was found in place over the lip on the west end.

Human remains recovered from 15L6 represented a single child 4 to 6 years of age based on bone size, fusion of distal epiphyses and the presence of deciduous teeth. Recovered skeletal material included the distal end of a femur, distal end of a right radius, a lateral and central incisor, two first molars and one second molar, part of a mandible, a number of phalanges, eight metacarpals, a talus, parts of the ischium and ilium, a humerus head, rib fragments and a trapezoid. The bones of the radius and one of the metacarpals showed evidence of osteomyelitis in the form of oval abscesses in the bone. This is caused by the transport of bacteria from an infected area such as the lungs, throat, sinus or chest (**Fig. 23**). The oval holes will only appear in the bone of individuals who have survived the infection, so are not likely the cause of death.

Recovered artifacts from 15L6 included Nabataean dark red painted fine wares, a large brown and red chert core, 23 small chert flakes, numerous pottery sherds and a broken but nearly complete two-handled large coarse ware cooking pot with a thick flat disk base, an inverted rim and evidence of fire marks (**Fig. 24**). This burial is especially significant in that this is the first example of a large chamber and locus being used for the burial of an individual young child, indicating high rank and ascribed status in the upper levels of Nabataean society.

Chamber and locus 15L7 was smaller than 15L6. The chamber was 1.27 m wide and 2.77 m long, with a rectangular cut in the floor 1.88 m long and 0.71 m wide with a 6 cm wide ledge 30 cm below the floor of the chamber. The lower part of the locus was oval in shape; the bottom is 53 cm below the lip. This locus was partially



21. Carnelian bead, 15L3 (Johnson).



22. Chamber 15L6 (Johnson).



23. Radius, metacarpal-Osteomyelitis (De Castro).

robbed in the last two years.

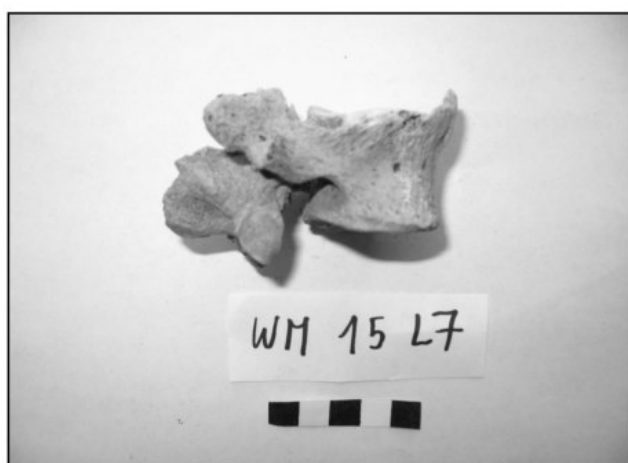
Human remains recovered from 15L7 were from a single adult female probably over 40 years of age. Sex was determined based on the very flat curvature of the fused sacrum and a gracile narrow rounded mandible. Age was based on tooth attrition based on White's charts of tooth wear. A complete radius indicates a stature of between 5'4" to 5'11". There was extensive evidence of osteoarthritis, especially in the vertebrae. One lumbar vertebra has a very large bone spur on the anterior edge of the superior side of the centrum (**Fig. 25**). Bones recovered included a fused sacrum, an axis vertebra, cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, 18 rib fragments, two humerus fragments, a mandible fragment, an ulna fragment, a left patella, femur fragments, carpals, metacarpals and phalanges, as well as two metatarsals. The rest of the skeleton may have been removed during the attempted looting.

Significant artifacts recovered included Nabataean thin dark red painted fine wares, a wooden stick, a large grey chert core, a red ware sherd with white-painted faces, a rosette lamp fragment, numerous chert flakes of various colors, a Nabataean dark red ware sherd with two black-painted faces (**Fig. 26**), a broken bronze and iron tube, four fragments of an orange- and green-colored glass bracelet and an oval brown pottery disk.

Chamber 15L8 is located on the western wall at the back of the tomb. It is the third locus from the south wall of the tomb. After removal of the dung layer, SU2, a dark fine sand with straw, was uncovered over the entire area. A rectangular cut into the bedrock below SU2 was filled with a layer of chalky white and soft yellow rocks. This cut had a lower lip on the south and north upon which flat square cover stones were resting (**Fig. 27**). Below the cover stones were layers of brown sandy silt, SU5, SU6 and SU7, with a darker soil SU8 above bedrock. The burial cut was 60 cm in depth, 161cm long and 41 cm wide; it contained the secondary burial of a single male adult about



24. Cooking Pot, 15L6 (Johnson).



25. Lumbar vertebrae, 15L7 (Johnson).

23 - 33 years of age. Many of the bones were fragmentary. Material with the burial included pottery sherds and a large number of lithics, rounded quartz pebbles and fossils. The burial dated to the later half of the 1st century BC based on the presence of Nabataean dark red or brown fine painted ware sherds in the lower levels. Two circular cuts to the north and west of the burial shaft have diameters that again fit the base size of unguentaria. A rectangular white stone with a triangular brown face painted on it (**Fig. 28**) was found in the cut.

Chamber 15L9 is located on the western wall at the back of the tomb. It is the fourth locus from the southern face going north. After removal of the animal dung, a layer of dark brown silt, SU2, was uncovered over the entire area. Below this, a layer of reddish-brown soil,

SU3, covered the cut bedrock around the edges of the locus. Below this level, a large cover stone 10 cm thick, 74 cm wide and over 1.24 m long, was found covering a rectangular cut into the bedrock (**Fig. 29**). This cut had a lower lip on the south and north on which the cover stone was resting. The cover stone was broken into two pieces by a large block that was wedged vertically in the cut (**Fig. 30**). Below the cover stone was a reddish-brown sandy silt, SU4, that reached to the bottom of the burial locus. Just below the cover stone near the area of the break, a bronze half circle with a floral and fruit design (**Fig. 31**) was found along with a gold seal with a lead attachment containing an Arabic inscription. The medallion and gold seal may have been placed in the grave to counter any evil that was perhaps thought to come out of it. Also in this layer were an iron ring, an iron needle, a yellow glass tessera, a green glass tubular bead and an oval green glass bead. The burial locus was 95 cm deep, 180 cm long and 70 cm wide, and contained the possibly secondary burial of a single female adult about 40 - 50 years of age. The bones were highly fragmented and weathered. Most of the body was present except for the maxilla, sternum, patella, carpals and foot phalanges. All other major bones were at least partially present. A few metacarpals, phalanges, tarsals and the axis vertebra were complete. All other bones were fragmented.

The individual had a small supraorbital ridge, a narrow mental eminence, a wide sciatic notch and a small femoral head (40 mm). A preauricular sulcus was also present, indicating that the individual had possibly given birth during her lifetime.

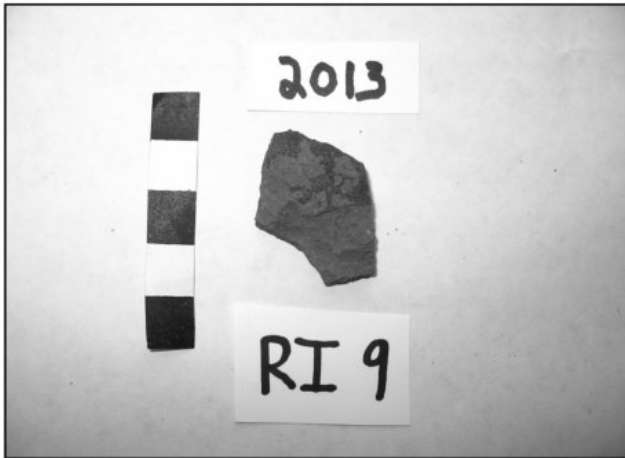
For determining age, the auricular surface of the innominate and the sterna rib ends were analyzed. The auricular surface exhibited microporosity, no apical activity and a coarse retroauricular surface, indicating the individual was between 40 - 44 years old at time of death. The sterna rib ends were porous, U-shaped and had an irregular sharp edge, indicating an age of 40 - 49. Taken together, this suggests the

individual was in her early to mid-40s at time of death.

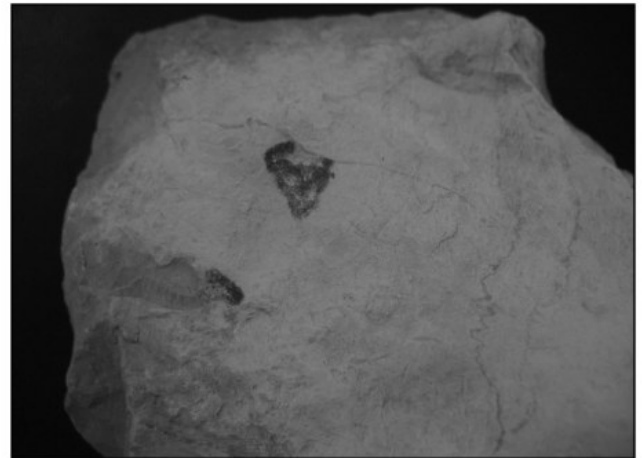
There were no teeth still in the sockets of the mandible (the maxilla was not present). Seven loose teeth were found with the remains: two incisors, one canine, one premolar and three molars. There were no caries in any of the teeth and the mandible did not show any evidence of ante-mortem tooth loss or abscesses. A premolar and molar both had extensive pulp exposure

owing to attrition; the other molars showed no pulp exposure. All the teeth had mild to moderate calculus deposits.

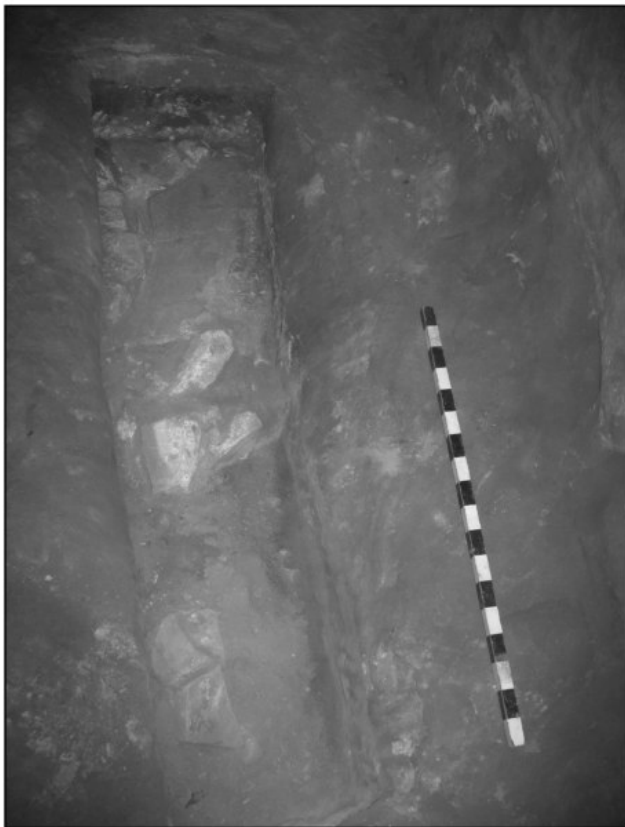
This individual suffered from osteoarthritis, especially in the spine and knee areas. There is mild evidence of osteoarthritis in the scapula, clavicle, innominate, phalanges, talus, tarsals, humerus, radius, ulna, tibia and fibula. Moderate to severe osteoarthritis was found in the femurs, ribs and vertebrae. None of the



26. Red Ware sherd with black faces (Johnson).



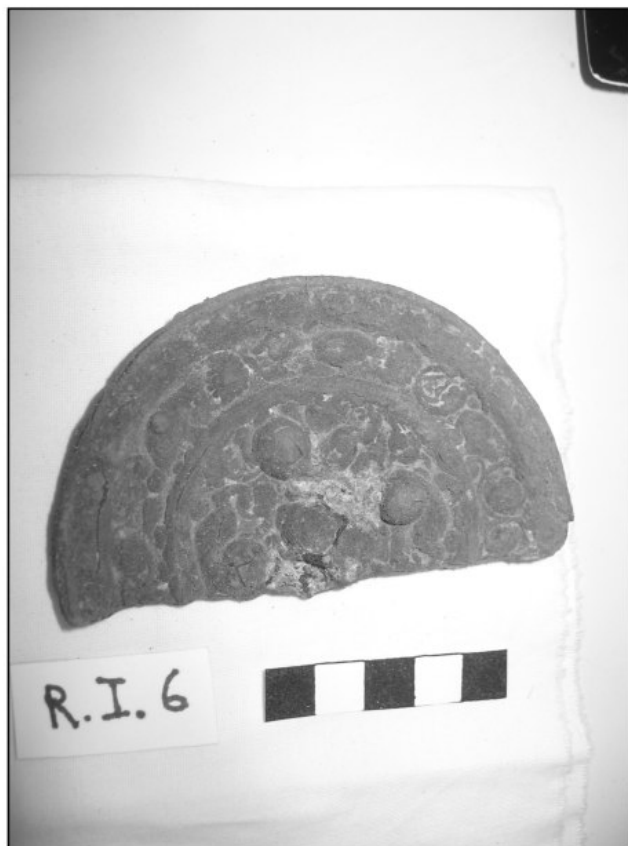
28. Stone with triangular face (Johnson).



27. Chamber 158 (Johnson).



29. Chamber 15L9 (Johnson).



30. Cover stone 15L9 (Johnson).

vertebrae had fused together, but several of the thoracic vertebrae had severe osteophyte growth and increased porosity. The left knee also had an area of eburnation where the cartilage between the femur and patella had worn away. Overall, most joints were affected by osteoarthritis indicating that this individual led a very active lifestyle. The burial dated to the latter half of the 1st century BC based on the presence of Nabataean dark red or brown fine painted ware sherds in the lower levels.

Chamber and locus 15L10 was 2.7 m long and 1.27 m wide, with a central square-cut locus 1.8 m long and 0.67 m wide. The locus had a 7 cm wide lip on which rested three large cover stones 17 cm below the floor of the chamber. The lower area was again oval in shape down to bedrock at a depth of 75 cm (**Fig. 31**).

A nearly complete burial of a healthy adolescent female, 15 - 18 years old and about 4' 11" in height, was recovered from this locus. Recovered osteological material included two femur fragments, 23 vertebrae, a sternum, unfused femur condyles,



31. Bronze half circle (Johnson).

parts of both the left and right ulnae, both radii, parts of both humeri, a right patella, eight teeth, fragments of the cranium, an ilium and ischium, scapula fragments, ribs and numerous bones from the hands and feet. Significant grave goods included a blue glass tessera, a white marine shell bead, a ceramic jar top with red- and black-painted faces, dark red and brown painted Nabataean fine ware bowl and plate fragments, fish vertebrae and other animal bones, a large grey chert nodule, two fossil gastropods, quartz pebbles and 20 small chert flakes of various colors.

Chamber 15L15 is located in the north-east corner near the entrance and was open to the elements because of erosion to the tomb wall on the eastern side. After removal of the dung layer and the black sand with straw, a unique rectangular cut with a double burial was found in the floor of the chamber. The rectangular cut was 2.3 m long, 0.63 m wide and 1.01 m deep, and contained two distinct layers. The upper burial was well preserved but disturbed, with cover stones lying flat over the top with one



32. Chamber 15L10 (Johnson).

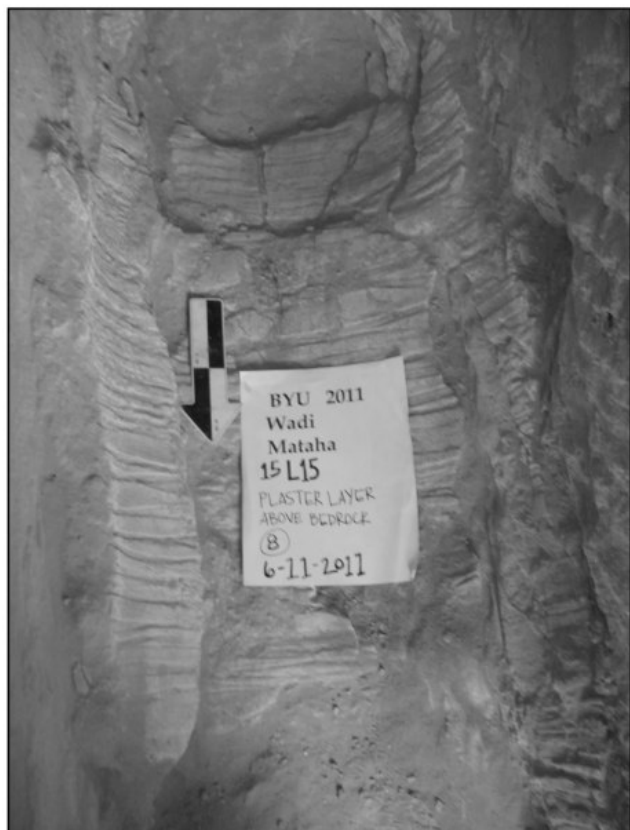
area of broken stones (**Fig. 32**). It contained the complete skeleton of an adult female with a wide sciatic notch and preauricular sulcus, 25 - 35 years of age based on the wear patterns of her molars. Stature was between 5' 0" and 5' 3" based on measurements of the humerus, radius, ulna, femur and tibia. The teeth were in excellent condition with no evidence of caries. Evidence of pathologies included a fifth lumbar vertebra fused to the sacrum, extreme lipping and a roughened surface on the thoracic vertebrae indicating osteoarthritis, and three phalanges with extreme wear on the articular margins. A large quantity of broken ceramic material, including Nabataean dark red and brown fine ware plates, unguentaria fragments, a rosette lamp fragment, fine ware cooking pots, cups, jars, bowls and ring bases, indicates a late 1st century date. Below this burial, on top of the cover stones of the second burial, a silver denarius of Trajan (**Fig. 33**) with a figure of Pax on the obverse probably dates the disturbance to around 106 AD.



33. Silver Denarius of Trajan (Johnson).

A second undisturbed burial below this was covered with large flat stones wedged into the burial cut and covered by a layer of small rounded and polished stones including a number of quartz pieces. The skeleton was articulated, being laid out on its side with the head facing east and oriented to the south. Molar wear indicates an age of 33 - 45 years of age while the wide sciatic notch, gracile brow ridges and preauricular sulcus point to a female who had given birth. No lipping of the vertebrae or unusual bone wear indicates relatively good health. A layer of curved plaster below the skeleton encased it in a plaster coffin (**Fig. 34**). Two elegant gold earrings (**Fig. 35**) were found near the skull with a simple design of a lope with a central ridge. A number of chert lithics, a fossil sea urchin and fine Nabataean dark red painted wares indicate a late 1st to early 2nd century BC date.

Areas 15a1 and 15a2 are located 3.5 meters above the floor of the tomb and are cut into the east-facing west wall of the chamber. 15a1 is located 1.26 m north of the south wall and is 75 cm wide, 75 cm high and 2.10 m deep. It was filled with fist-sized stones, windblown soil and a number of bird nests. Excavation was carried out using a ladder. Significant cultural material included a large number of lithic cores, rounded cobbles of sandstone, quartz and quartzite, a pyramidal shaped stone, a polished piece of marble, a flat stone mosaic floor tile, coarse ware pottery sherds and wooden objects



34. Upper burial 15L15 (Johnson).



35. Gold earrings (Johnson).

including a carved wooden fruit. Some animal bone and one burnt human femur fragment were also found. 15 a2 is located to the north of 15a1 and is 98 cm wide, 102 cm high and 2.71 m deep. It was originally blocked with four large ashlar blocks painted black, red, black and yellow, and contained a number of stones including lithic cores and large quantity of bird dung. A number of wooden objects were found, including a wooden spindle whorl with a circular



36. Lower burial in 15L15 (Johnson).

hole design (**Fig. 36**). These upper cuts may not have been burial chambers but rather storage areas for significant ritual materials.

Conclusion

Site 15, BD 676 is a high status Nabataean tomb with an elaborate façade, a large built platform in front and a water storage facility to the side. It has 15 chambers, nine of which had been excavated by 2014, with seven individual primary burials, a pattern different from other smaller tomb sites in the area that contain multiple secondary burials in each tomb locus (Johnson 2013). It probably dates from the last half of the 1st century BC to the beginning of the 2nd century BC based on Nabataean and Roman coins as well as Nabataean dark red or brown fine painted wares.

Ritual votive material in the chambers includes large numbers of lithics and stone objects (many with the faces of deities), fine ware pottery sherds, gold jewelry, fossils, carnelian and agate beads, wooden objects (including a spindle whorl) and marine shells. The remaining six chambers and the center of the tomb will be excavated in future seasons at Wadi Mataha.

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