

Archaeological investigation of Early Bronze Age burial site QA 1 in Wadi al-Fajj in northern Oman: results of the 2016 season

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Abstract: The first excavation season of a joint project of the PCMA and Department of Archaeology and Excavations, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Oman, was carried out in the microregion of Qumayrah in the fall of 2016. A single tomb was investigated at an Umm an-Nar period burial site in the area of the village of Al-Ayn. A complete ground-plan was traced, identifying the tomb as an example of a well-known type with interior divided into four burial chambers by crosswalls. The excavated quadrant yielded commingled skeletal remains and mortuary gifts: numerous beads, a number of pottery sherds and a single complete vessel, a few metal objects and a score of stone vessel fragments.

Keywords: Oman, Early Bronze Age, Umm an-Nar culture, burial site, circular tombs, Qumayrah–Ayn, QA 1

SITE QUMAYRAH–AYN 1 (QA 1)

QA 1¹ is a small burial ground of ancient circular tombs near the village of Al-Ayn in the microregion of Qumayrah (Al Dhahirah Governorate, Wilayat Dhank). The site is known to the Oman Department of Antiquities from 1998 at least, when it was first surveyed and reported by Paolo M. Costa (2006). In 2015, team

from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw carried out a brief reconnaissance in the area, mapping individual stone structures on the site and identifying them provisionally based on overall appearance as sepulchral monuments of the Early Bronze Age Umm an-Nar culture (2700/2600–2000 BC).

¹ The acronym “QA” for designating the sites is considered more distinctive, taking into account that the full name of the village is Al-‘Ayn Bani Sa‘dah, distinguishing it among all the toponyms containing the Arabic word "عين" which is used in the meaning of a “spring (water)”.

The burial site sits on a flat narrow terrace that extends along the southern foot of the mountain ridge Jabal Sanqah, not far off the Yanqul–Al Buraymi Road, at the crossroads, where a road to Qumayrah begins skirting the south side of site QA 1 [Figs 1, 2]. On the east the terrace overlooks Wadi al-Fajj which runs by the village of Al-Ayn and on the south there is a wide depression between the mountain ranges. A cultivated area stretches from the base of the terrace to the wadi edge. An Islamic graveyard enclosed within a concrete wall occupies the entire western part of the terrace. A cluster of ancient tombs (coded QA 1-1 through QA 1-10) is situated immediately to the east of the modern graveyard. Structure QA 1-9 is the only exception, standing solitary, about 65 m to the northwest from the rest of the monuments, on the other side of the road where a prehistoric site QA 2 was identified (see Białowarczuk 2017, in

this volume). Another isolated tomb of this type (site QA 9) is located approximately 450 m to the northeast of the cemetery, near the wadi.

Site QA 1 covers an area of approximately 0.40 ha overall (about 1 ha when measured together with QA 1-9 and the eastern part of the terrace). The site contains 10 circular structures, ranging in diameter from about 6 m to 11 m. The exterior base walls are constructed of well dressed stone blocks, well assembled, typical of the so-called Umm an-Nar tombs. Presently most of these structures are in a similar state of preservation. Save for the fragmentarily preserved QA 1-3, QA 1-7 and QA 1-10 [Fig. 3:b,f], the structures resemble round flattened mounds, thickly capped with heaps of stone blocks, rising not higher than 1 m above ground level [Figs 2 top; 3:a,c-e], more often preserving only a course or two of stones and sometimes only the outline

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of the stone plinth (the lowermost and the outermost part of the structure). Straight line segments seen sporadically among the jumbled stones inside the features indicate the presence of internal divisions. These were particularly clear at the start in the case of QA 1-10, which is the only structure to be located on the premises of the Islamic graveyard and which has suffered extensive dismantling in the past, most probably to provide building material for the construction of modern graves in the neighborhood. Cross-walls divided up the interior of the tomb, the ground plan resembling an encircled cross. The same cross-walls turned out to be present in QA 1-1 and QA 1-2.

The main cluster of tombs extends SW–NE for nearly 100 m. Five structures, QA 1-10, QA 1-1, QA 1-5, QA 1-7 and QA 1-8, are aligned in a row; the remaining four tombs in the middle of the cluster break out from this configuration; they are set two on either side of the line of symmetry [Fig. 2 bottom]. The tombs are spaced from 2–3 m to 12–14 m apart. Other features on the site include three vague stone alignments in the vicinity of QA 1-1 and QA 1-3, and a 14-m-long low stump of a freestanding stone wall, aligned N–S, in the eastern part of the terrace. Several irregular stone clusters are scattered next to it.

Keeping in mind the collective nature of the Umm an-Nar tombs, it is interesting

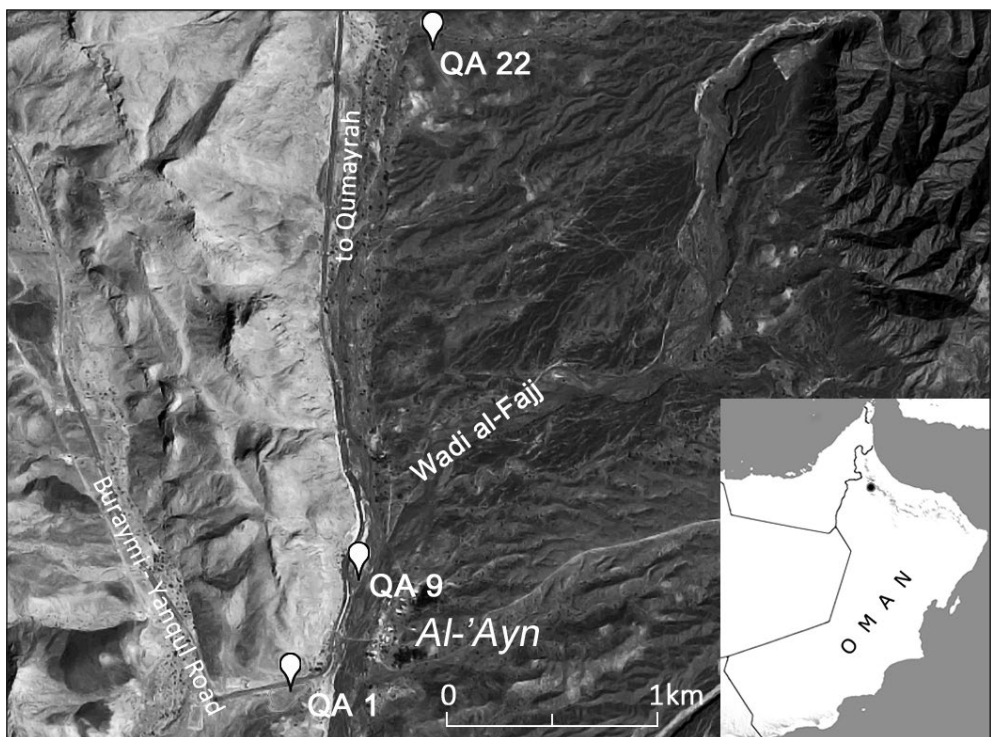
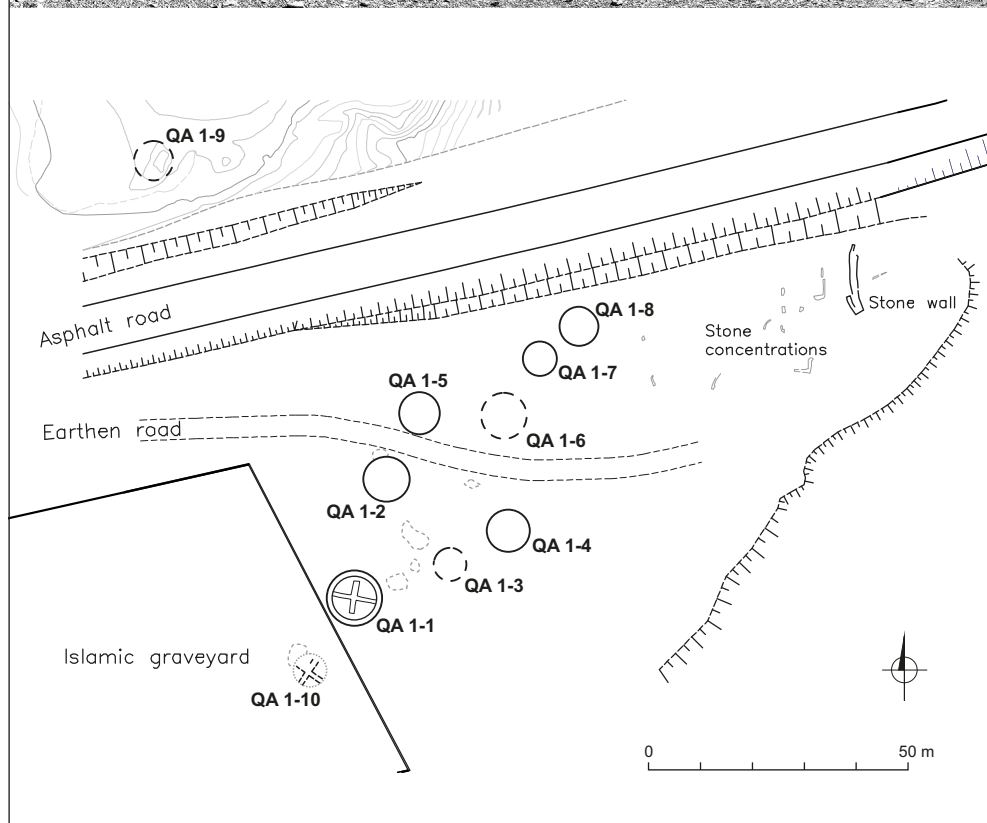
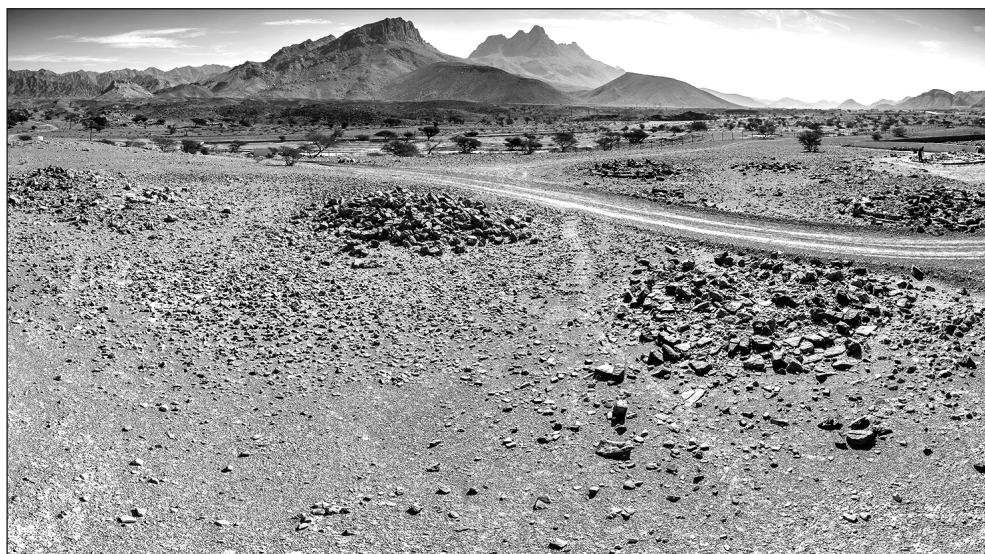


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of burial sites in the vicinity of Wadi al-Fajj (based on Google Earth) (PCMA Qumayrah Project/E. Rutkowski)



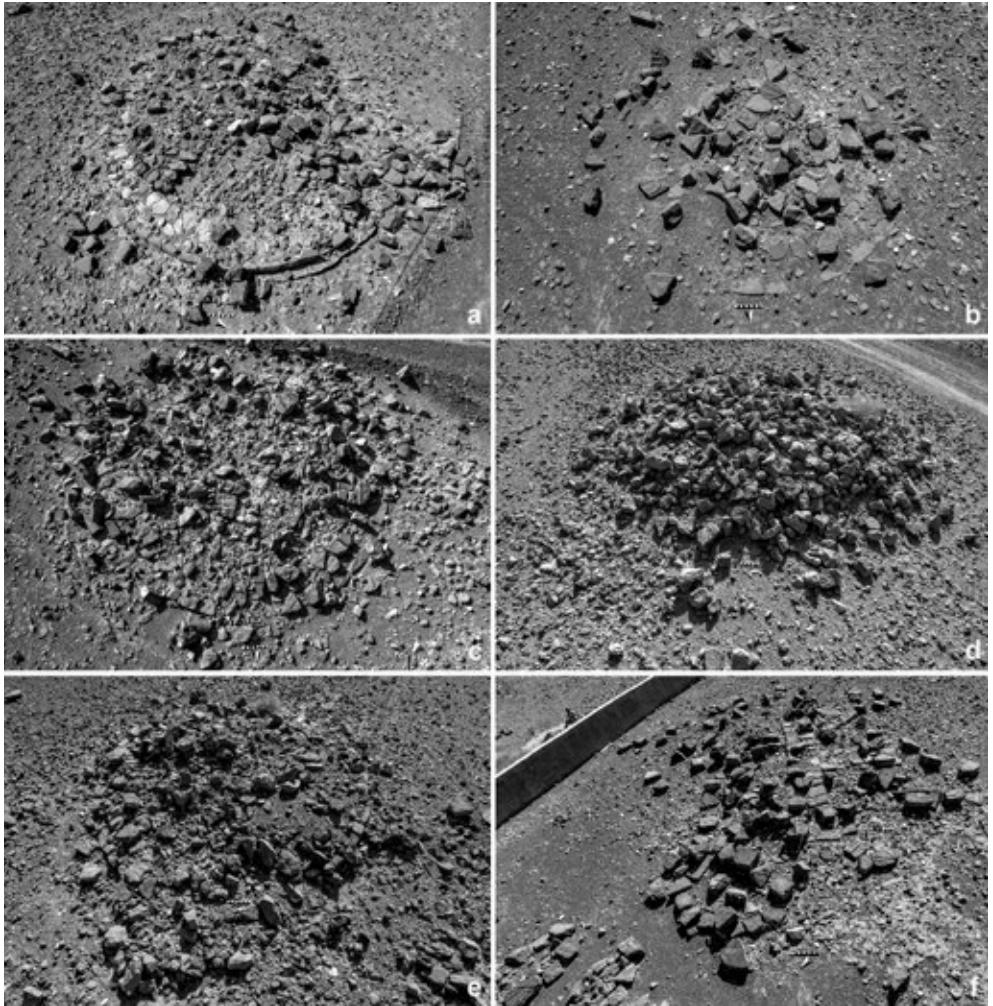


Fig. 3. Tombs of QA 1 site (selection) as seen from the above: a) QA 1-2, b) QA 1-3, c) QA 1-5, d) QA 1-6, e) QA 1-8, f) QA 1-10; in the foreground on the left Islamic graves (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photos A. Oleksiak)

◀ *Fig. 2. Site QA 1: top, panoramic view from the north; QA 1-1 at the utmost right; bottom, plan (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photo A. Oleksiak; mapping and processing R. Łopaciuk, M. Antos, E. Rutkowski)*

to note a whole cluster of burial structures gathered in a relatively small area. It implies the presence of a 3rd millennium settlement in the vicinity of the graveyard. Remnants of three large stone towers (each about 20 m in diameter) may be associated with this settlement. They are situated close to the wadi bed and below the terrace with the cemetery. The nearest one (QA 4) is only 100 m to the east of the cemetery.

Consequently, one can argue that the settlement linked to this cemetery could have had more importance than an ordinary village of the kind presently found on site.

It is also worth noting that cemetery QA 1 is exactly in the middle between two major centers of Umm an-Nar culture — Bat to the southeast and Hili to the northwest, which could mean that it was a midpoint station along the communication route along the Al-Hadjar mountain region or even an intermediate level center (midway between Hili and Bat). Save for the abovementioned towers, there is a potential settlement site (QA 3) on the other side of the wadi. Isolated pottery finds on the surface indicate an earlier occupation under the superimposed remains of later habitation.

TOMB QA 1-1

QA 1-1 is located in the western part of the site, next to the wall of the Islamic cemetery. The structure is built on a circular plan delimited by a massive outer wall, now ruined but still distinct. The main wall (W3) stands on a plinth (W4), which projects beyond W3 wherever the two are preserved together. Thus, W4 forms the outermost edge of the tomb on ground level, being about 10.80 m in diameter on average (10.78 m measured on the E–W axis and 10.83 m on the N–S axis), making it one of the largest structures on site. Its preserved height is about 0.90 m above the modern ground level (as measured in the center of the structure). After cleaning, the structure turned out to be divided into four chambers (Loci 1–4) by two inner partition walls (W1, W2) which are crossed in the middle of the tomb [Fig. 4]. The partition walls are not

identical in their course. W2 abuts W4, while W1, which is shorter in length than W2, does not adjoin the outer wall (W3/W4) leaving an empty area at either end. This is easily interpreted as an internal communication passage between chambers, that is, the northern passage between loci 1 and 2 (Locus 5) and the southern passage between loci 3 and 4 (Locus 6). In consequence, W2 evidently divided the tomb into two non-communicating halves, which implies that it was provided with separate entrances for each half. The location of these are suspected, but not confirmed: just in front of the ends of W1, where abnormally oblong stone blocks were inset, within the stonework of W3 (on the north) and W4 (on the south).

As far as the ground plan is concerned, QA 1-1 represents a type which is known from the Umm an-Nar island, but it is

Fig. 4. Tomb QA 1-1: top, bird's eye view from the north before cleaning (left) and from the east after cleaning (right); bottom, schematic plan based on photogrammetric image (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photo A. Oleksiak; orthophoto A. Oleksiak, M. Antos; processing Ł. Rutkowski) ►

nearly twice as big, resembling in size Tomb 87 at Bat. This tomb is similarly compartmented, the difference being that the cross-walls adjoin the exterior wall in one place (see Frifelt 1975: 76, Figs 24–25; Cleuziou and Tosi 2007: 109, Fig. 96).

EXCAVATION PROCEDURE

The surface of the structure was cleared first of the 50 or so stone blocks lying in disarray on the surface and then of the layer of soil and debris, exposing in effect the undisturbed tops of walls [*Fig. 4 top*]. This allowed the ground plan of the structure to be traced and revealed the bonding of stones along the length of the walls; photogrammetry was used to document this state as an orthophoto image [see *Fig. 4 bottom*].

Locus 1 (henceforth L1) in the north-western quadrant of the tomb was selected for excavation. A significant deposit of stone rubble was recorded inside L1. Part of it was removed, uncovering a stone pavement on the presumed chamber bottom, extending over a limited area in the north-eastern part of the chamber and in the western half of passage L5. Exploration in the rest of L1 stopped in the lower part of the chamber fill. Probes were dug in L1 (in the corner of W1/W2) to assess the presence of paving in the central part of the structure and in W4 outside the tomb to test the depth of the masonry. All the spoil tips were sieved.

DETAILS OF CONSTRUCTION

W1 is one of the two interior walls inside the tomb. It is aligned NNW–SSE (inclined 11 degrees from the north clockwise) and crossed in the center of the tomb with W2. It measures 6.50 m in length, with the width ranging from about

1.10 m (northern wing) to about 1.00 m (southern wing). W1 does not abut the exterior wall of the tomb. At both ends it terminates in a straight face, leaving an empty space in front, interpreted as passageways between adjacent chambers, that is, L5 (about 0.90 m in width) and L6 (1.15 m in width). The wall was built of rough-hewn stone slabs, stacked at least four courses high, reaching a maximum preserved height of about 0.70 m (foundation level not confirmed yet). It consists of two rows of large blocks with small stones placed in the core; in places, a third row can be distinguished in the northern wing. Stone blocks are for the most part of an irregular quadrilateral shape and random size, sometimes almost rectangular or square, exemplary dimensions being 56 x 36 cm, 50 x 48 cm, 46 x 37 cm, 40 x 39 cm; their thickness (height) varies between 12 cm and 20 cm (the thickest block is 27 cm).

The second interior wall, W2, is aligned EEN–WWS. It is 8.40 m long and clearly thinner than W1 (0.75–0.80 m wide). Unlike W1, by which it is crossed in the middle of its length, W2 abuts at its base the plinth (W4) on both ends; it may have been bonded with the outer wall of the tomb (at least a single stone of W2 overlaps the circuit of W3 as can be seen at the western junction between them), which may imply that the division of the tomb into four chambers and its partitioning into two separately accessible halves was intended from the start. W2 is preserved at least three courses high (foundation level not confirmed yet). It consists of two rows of large undressed blocks, irregular quadrilateral or trapezoid in shape (dimensions: 57 x 37 cm, 46 x 33 cm, 43 x 36 cm and 12–16 cm in

thickness). For most of its length on the western, better preserved wing, as can be observed in the topmost course, the triangular inner (back) faces of stone blocks are interlocked in zipper-like manner and the joints between them are filled with small stones. As can be seen from the side, the lower courses show a few exceptionally large blocks: 70 cm and 60 cm in length and 20 cm and 28 cm in thickness.

The exterior wall of the tomb, W3, nowadays very fragmentary, was built in the shape of a circle, measuring 10.50 m in reconstructed diameter at the base. It is 0.93–1.00 m wide. W3 was erected directly upon the plinth (W4). A single course of blocks was preserved on the northwestern side of the tomb and only individual blocks from the second course of the internal face of the wall (five blocks in the northwestern quadrant and four blocks in the southwestern quadrant). For the most part, W3 consists of three rows of stone blocks (sporadically two or four rows). W3 is characterized by the presence of well-cut and closely-fitted stone blocks (“ashlars”) in its external face. Only 21 of them have remained in place. All of them are either of trapezoid or triangular shape, having the outward-facing side smoothed, slightly convex and finely finished (dimensions: triangular blocks 32 x 26 cm, 26 x 20 cm, trapezoid blocks 57 x 40 cm, 39 x 26 cm, and both kinds about 20 cm in thickness, which equals the height of the whole course). They are fitted so as to match the roundness of the tomb. One is clearly longer than the others (66 cm in length) and is therefore presumed to be a “threshold slab”, indicating the possible location of the northern entrance to the tomb. Blocks belonging to the internal rows

of W3 are undressed and of an irregular quadrilateral shape. As observed from inside L1, the preserved blocks of the second course appear to be slightly stepped in compared to the bottommost course; this suggests an inward incline of the wall toward the center, that is, the facade tapered towards the top. Little can be said of the exterior wall because it has not been preserved and few facing stones were actually found in the rubble of L1 (perhaps because it was inside the chamber). It is reasonable to assume, however, that these well-worked stone blocks constituted ready building material and were the first to be looted once the tomb went out of use. Interestingly, the face stones used for the higher parts of the wall were visibly smaller than those of the bottommost course of W3. They vary in shape from an oblong rectangle to more of a square (dimensions: 30 x 15 cm, 23 x 14 cm, 29 x 19 cm) [Fig. 5 top and bottom right].

The issue of color is even more intriguing. These small facing blocks, recovered from the debris, are white or off-white, resembling “sugar lumps”, which is a figurative term often used in descriptions of these tombs. In turn, the facing blocks in the bottommost course of W3 are all grey. However, this might not be their natural color. Judging from a single ashlar that was found fallen outside the structure, partly buried in the soil and partly exposed to the air, the exposed part of which was visibly darker (light-grey) in shade compared to the unexposed part (which was off-white), one may wonder whether these blocks had not been once a lighter color (that is, white) and had turned grey over time due to the atmospheric conditions or exposure to sunlight [Fig. 5 bottom left]. A petrographic analysis determined that

the stone used for the facade is mudstone [= micritic limestone].² Microscopic examination of samples of the lighter and darker kinds of rock revealed no differences. The problem is more complex and challenging, especially when it is taken into account that the exposed facade of an Umm an-Nar tomb located close to the village of Bilt (10 km north of the QA 1 site), surveyed by the team in 2015, is built largely of white blocks, apparently unchanged over time.

Similarly, several facing blocks, mostly white or off-white, were seen scattered on the surface of a hillock at site QA 20 situated 300 m southeast of QA 1; these were likely facing stones of an Umm an-Nar period tomb, possibly taken from the cemetery at QA 1. It cannot be ruled out that the tomb builders appreciated the differences between different natural stone deposits and quarries and exploited them in their work. Besides, different parts of the exterior



Fig. 5. Tomb QA 1-1, details of construction: top left, relation between W3 and W4 as seen in the probe; top right, white facing stones recovered from the debris and placed on the bottommost course of W3 for the sake of comparison; bottom left, fallen ashlar showing the difference in color between sun-exposed and unexposed surfaces; bottom right, sizes and shapes of white facing stones (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photos M. Makowski, Ł. Rutkowski)

² Petrographic examination by Dr. Marek Jasionowski, Polish Geological Institute – National Research Institute (PGI-NRI), 2017.

wall may have differed in color from the start. These issues and others regarding the appearance of the tomb facades and their construction will be addressed in future research.

Wall W4 is a ring wall base (or plinth) on which W3 rested. Save for its westernmost margin, which was evidently destroyed by the construction of the fencing wall of the modern cemetery, the plinth is preserved around the whole perimeter of the tomb. It measures approximately 10.80 m in outer diameter and 1.15–1.18 m in width. W4 projects outside W3 by about 15–16 cm. A sounding dug outside the tomb revealed it to consist of two courses of stones: the upper course 10–12 cm thick, the lower one 16 cm, giving an overall height of 28 cm [Fig. 5 top left]. The lower course is preserved all around the monument, while the upper course is missing in places on the southern side. W4 consists of three rows of irregular quadrilateral blocks (dimensions: 60 x 60 cm, 60 x 48 cm, 45 x 35 cm). Similarly, as in the case of W3, but this time on the opposite site of the tomb, a single block is longer than the others (77 cm in length and 29 cm in width); it is the presumed “threshold” of the southern entrance. In turn, unlike W3, the blocks within the outer face of W4 are only roughly dressed. At present, the top of the plinth is flush with the surrounding ground surface. Excavation of the sounding outside the tomb structure revealed the presence of fallen stones accumulated outside the wall, which implies that the original walking level associated with the tomb must have been lower than nowadays. However, it is not yet certain whether the full height of the

base was meant to be seen or whether it was partly dug into the ground from the start.

EXPLORATION OF THE CHAMBER

The interior of chamber L1 was densely filled with rubble and fallen blocks. Voids



Fig. 6. Top view of the pavement uncovered in the northeastern expanse of L1 and in the passage L5 (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photo M. Makowski)



Fig. 7. Chamber L1 at the end of the season: one of the bone scatters seen just above the scale bar; paving slabs visible in the probe (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photo M. Makowski)

between stones were filled with loose soil and intermingled with numerous bone fragments. A layer of sand up to 10 cm thick was mixed with gravel at the bottom of the chamber. This deposit, recognized only in a restricted area of the excavation so far, was rich in finds that can be dated to the Umm an-Nar period, including fine black-on-red ware sherds, beads, and fragments of stone vessels. This deposit must have accumulated when the tomb stood open for some time.

The chamber had a stone pavement consisting of roughly flat, middle-sized stones (30–40 cm x 25–30 cm), laid in a loose and haphazard pattern, that is, with wide joints between them, sporadically disturbed by upright stones stuck in the ground. The flooring was recognized in two spots inside the chamber, covering the northeastern expanse of L1 along with the western half of passage L5 (within an area approximately 1.60 m by 1.80 m) and in the probe at the corner of W1/W2, essentially on two different levels [Figs 6, 7]. Excavation of the debris between the two places will show whether the pavement, the bottom of which is level with the top of W4 in the outermost part, descends gradually towards the center of the tomb. An alternative explanation is that these two pavements are not the same feature and belong to different architectural phases. Most of the bigger finds, including a complete miniature jar and fragments of stone vessels, have turned up on the pavement or just above it, especially in passage L5 or close to it. A few metal finds, including a bronze arrowhead, were found in the upper part of the fill. In turn, beads were found dispersed throughout the fill (including the tomb surface) and they were practically all recovered from sieving.

BONES

Skeletal remains were in abundance despite excavating only a small part of the chamber. The bones were found dispersed throughout the stone fill of the chamber. Small loose fragments were collected from the surface, then bones or bone fragments, often grouped in scatters, came from between the stones at different levels of the fill. They were more abundant in the lower part of it, but not necessarily at the very bottom of the chamber as could be expected. Most of the retrieved remains consisted of disarticulated and fragmented human bones. There were also some animal bones mixed in.

Pending specialist examination, it is quite apparent that more than one individual was buried in the chamber under discussion. No individual skeletons or even parts of them could formally be distinguished (no human skulls were recorded) and the poor preservation of the skeletal material precluded lifting them intact, even if longer fragments or assumed anatomical relations between bones were observed. The bones were generally fragile and additionally crushed by overlying stones. Whenever they adhered to the stone surface, they were destroyed once the stones were moved.

In general, the current impression is of a largely random and chaotic disposition of skeletal remains inside the explored chamber. It is reasonable to suppose that the breaking and intermingling occurred already in antiquity. One is entitled to wonder why some bone scatters were found well above the chamber bottom and what caused the fragmentation of the skeletons. Several scenarios can be taken into account to explain this situation, such as crushing of the skeletons beneath the fallen walls,

rearrangements of the original deposition pattern during later interments, reuse of an older sepulchral structure in later times (i.e., interring bodies in the fill of an already

ruined tomb), possible disturbance due to post-depositional penetration. Future exploration should elucidate at least some of these issues.

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE FINDS

POTTERY

The pottery assemblage from the current excavation includes 75 diagnostic sherds and one complete miniature vessel.

Two dozen common and coarse ware sherds collected from the surface of the tomb and the upper part of the fill of L1 may be later inclusions (among others, plain bowl rims, bowl decorated with crisscross

incisions on the rim top, two body sherds with a grooved wavy line, a ribbed red-slipped body sherd, a slightly concave tray with a combed undulating band around the edge, an amphora-like base, a storage jar rim, a vertically perforated knob handle).

The rest of the assemblage consists of fine ware sherds most of which can be attributed to the Umm an-Nar period.

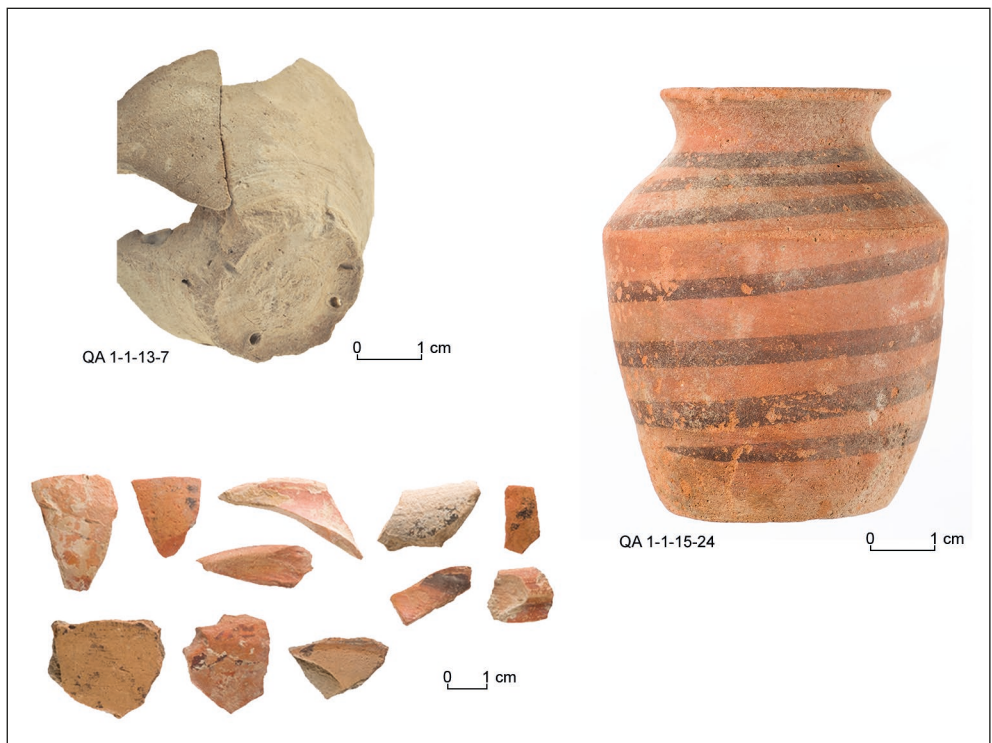


Fig. 8. Tomb QA 1-1, selection of pottery: above left, painted sherds; bottom right, miniature jar; top right, "suspension vessel" base (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photos A. Oleksiak, M. Makowski)

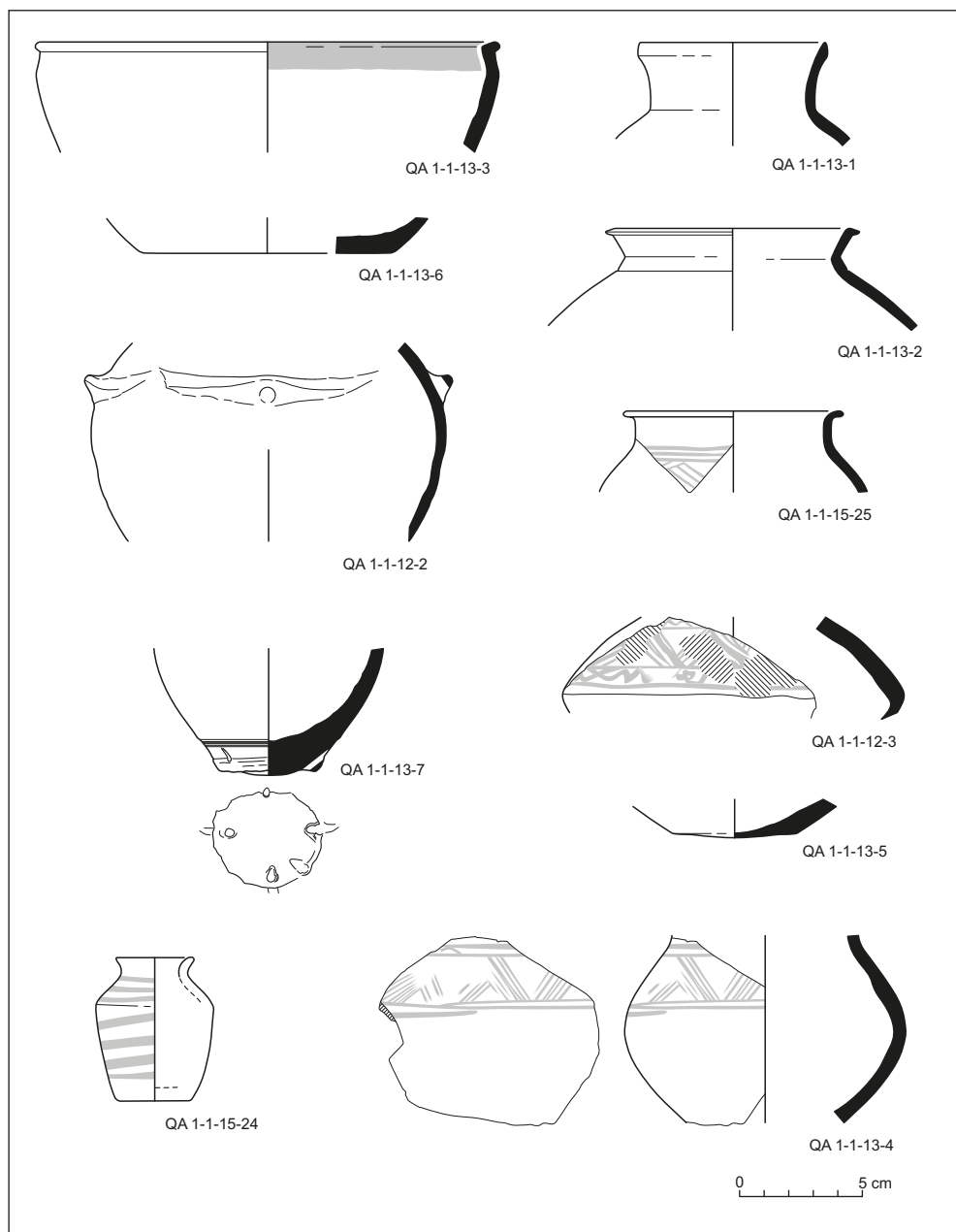


Fig. 9. Tomb QA 1-1, selection of pottery from the lower part of the fill of chamber L1, including miniature jar and “suspension vessel” base (PCMA Qumayrah Project/drawing and digitizing M. Momot)

There are over 20 fragments of painted pottery (black or dark brown on red/buff ware). In general, design motifs are not clear due to the fragmentation of most of the sherds and their abrasion [Fig. 8 left]. A few better preserved painted jar fragments show a typical Umm an-Nar design, that is,

a frieze of chevrons framed by horizontal stripes. One specimen, a strongly carinated body sherd, shows an additional wavy line between the horizontal stripes [QA 1-1-12-3, Fig. 9 middle right]. As far as vessel forms are concerned, small to medium jars (necked pots) appear to be prevalent in the



Fig. 10. Tomb QA 1-1, Incised Grey Ware vessel
(PCMA Qumayrah Project/drawing and digitizing M. Momot, photo Ł. Rutkowski)

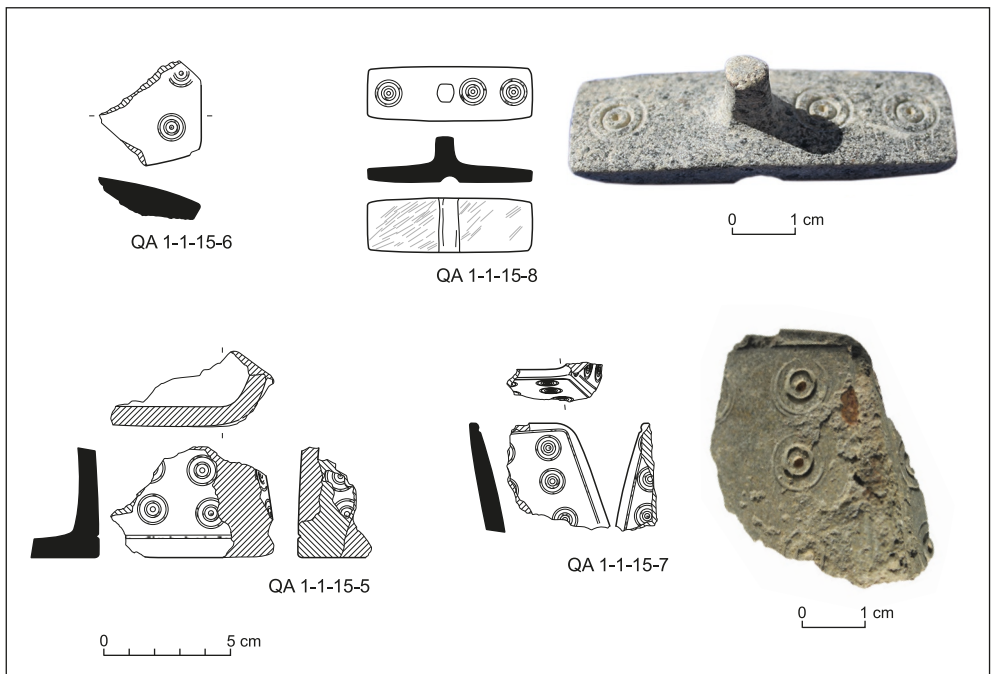


Fig. 11. Tomb QA 1-1, selection of soft stone vessel fragments, including lid and rectangular box rim
(PCMA Qumayrah Project/drawing and digitizing M. Momot; photos Ł. Rutkowski)

fine ware ceramics. Flat bases predominate with the exception of a ring base having four narrow holes at the base, which represents a so-called “suspension vessel”, well known from the Umm an-Nar pottery repertoire (e.g., Méry 1997: 176–177; Thornton and Ghazal 2016: 199). Vessels typically have a horizontal ridge along the shoulder, shaped in the form of four vertically perforated lugs. Such a shoulder fragment was also found in QA 1-1, but evidently from another vessel of this type. These two specimens from QA 1-1 are plain [QA 1-1-13-7, *Figs 8* top left; 9], while suspension vessels are usually decorated from the shoulder ridge to the base.

The miniature jar [QA 1-1-15-24, *Figs 8* right; 9] was found lying on its side on the pavement in the middle of passage L5. As far as its form is concerned, it is simply a miniature version of a “vase-like” jar with high shoulders and slender proportions, while its decoration pattern of horizontal stripes all over the body (an unfamiliar design in the known repertoire) finds parallels in a miniature vessel from Tomb A in Hili North (dated to about 2400–2200/2100 BC) (see Méry 1997: 176, *Fig. 4.6*; on the dating, see McSweeney, Méry, and Macchiarelli 2008: 10). The jar is 5.90 cm high; the rim diameter is 3.20 cm, the maximum diameter at the shoulder carination being 4.80 cm and the calculated volume 40 ml. It is of fine, orange fabric, and the well-fired, light red/orange surface is smoothed under the black paint of the ornament, which is slightly faded (technological features of the pottery assemblage have yet to be examined).

An incised body sherd of a bowl deserves special mention [*Fig. 10*]. It is an example of Incised Grey Ware imported from

Iran. A plain “metallic” ware jar rim sherd is probably another example of Iranian grey ware imports in the pottery set of QA-1.

STONE VESSELS

A total of 21 fragments of soft stone (chlorite/steatite) vessels were found in the tomb. The collection comprises rims, bases, body fragments, and lids: seven rim bowl fragments, four fragments of rectangular boxes, including one rim, one base and two lids (one fragmentary and one complete), seven small body fragments, and three base fragments (two of bowls and one thick base of an oval vessel). Eight specimens of this category are decorated with a dot in double ring motif (“double dotted circle”). This ornament occurs on all fragments belonging to rectangular boxes, covering evenly the whole exterior surface [QA 1-1-15-5, *Fig. 11*]. In turn, the decoration of a bowl is limited to below the rim, which appears to be a typical design for soapstone vessels of the Umm an-Nar period (David 1996: 37). In addition, another rim bowl fragment, plain on the sides, has a double-incised line around the top of the rim. A lid that was found is flat and rectangular in shape. It must have been fitted to a small rectangular double compartmented box, as indicated by a horizontal indentation in its bottom surface [QA 1-1-15-8, *Fig. 11*].

BEADS

Until now QA 1-1 has produced 84 beads. The set is dominated by microbeads, 70 in all (mostly made of stone of various kinds and colors). The remaining beads are represented by singular examples of ornaments. They are made of shell, stone (including semi-precious stones), and vitreous material, the material still to be identified. Five

beads in the collection represent an eye-catching range of materials [Fig. 12]: one multifaceted bead (tetradecahedron) of white translucent stone, one spheroid of orange semi-translucent stone (orange agate/quartz?), one banded agate tubular

bead, two beads of carnelian (one cylindrical disc and one circular oblate).

A broken spherical bead deserves special mention. It was made of vitreous material (glass/frit?) with traces of enamel pattern and punctuated with a blue (ultramarine) dot [Fig. 12 bottom right]. This kind of material indicates a later date than the Umm an-Nar period, thus it can be considered as evidence of a later reuse of the tomb.³ Although fragmentarily preserved, the ornament resembles that of the so-called “eye beads,” known from the Iron Age onwards, especially popular in the Islamic period and even today. This specimen was collected from the upper part of the fill of L1, where later inclusions are very likely to have occurred.

Apart from two tusk shell beads, there were four marine bivalve shells, including one with traces of some greenish substance on the inside, possibly a cosmetic pigment. A chemical analysis of a sample revealed high lead content, implying the presence of a lead-based paint.

METALS

Only three metal items were found in the tomb so far. This small set consists of two similar small fragments of a tool/weapon handle with copper/bronze rivets still in position and one complete copper/bronze arrowhead [Fig. 13]. Riveted scraps of metal are most likely of iron, which again indicates a later addition to the original 3rd millennium BC tomb. It is worth mentioning that the practice of reusing Bronze Age tombs by later inhabitants, especially those of the Iron Age, is a widespread phenomenon

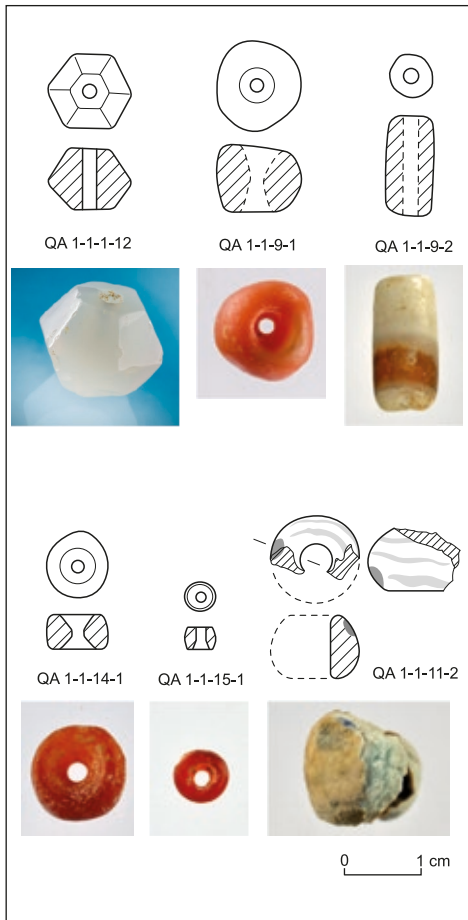


Fig. 12. Tomb QA 1-1: selection of beads (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photos A. Oleksiak, M. Makowski; drawing and digitizing M. Momot)

³ Two glass beads “with blue/green enamel details” are reported from Bat, from a mixed Umm an-Nar/Wadi Suq context related to a probable Wadi Suq mortuary structure (Williams and Gregoricka 2016: 305).

in the northern Arabian Peninsula (see Jasim 2006; Döpfer 2014). As for the arrowhead, its chronological attribution is doubtful. It is a small lanceolate tanged arrowhead (3.70 cm in length and 3 g in weight), with a flat tang and lenticular cross-section of a blade (with a slight central line gradually appearing near the point). No exact parallels are known; however generic comparisons can be made with specimens from Iron Age contexts in the Arabian Peninsula (e.g., see Jasim 2006). The arrowhead was also found in the upper part of the fill, just about 10 cm below the actual surface level (in the same batch as the abovementioned enamel bead). For this reason, the arrowhead was suspected of being part of grave goods associated with a probable later burial interred inside the debris of QA 1-1.

To sum up, a provisional assessment of the finds secures a dating in the Umm an-Nar period for most of the grave goods collected from the tomb. A number of the finds, however, like the enamel-decorated bead, iron artifacts, later pottery as well as bone scatters in the upper part of the fill, suggest later reuse of the burial place.

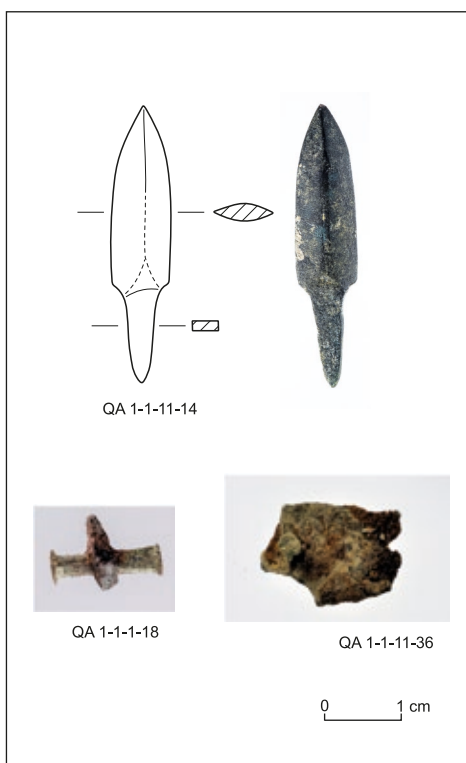


Fig. 13. Tomb QA 1-1: selection of metal finds (PCMA Qumayrah Project/photos A. Oleksiak, M. Makowski; drawing and digitizing M. Momot)

HAFIT BURIAL FIELD (SITE QA 22)

Remains of Hafit type tombs (about 3100–2700 BC) were also noted during a brief reconnaissance in the study area. The site (QA 22) is located in a hilly area approximately 2 km to the north of the village of Al-Ayn, stretching from the road leading to Qumayrah [see *Figs 1, 14*]. The tombs are scattered on low, narrow ridges separated by gullies, three near the road and two more on the next ridge. The

individual structures will be inventoried and described in an upcoming season. As far as the rules of location of Hafit cemeteries are known to the author, this place promises more finds of the kind. It is an important discovery for the microregion of Qumayrah, because it corroborates observations from other regions of Oman that Hafit and Umm an-Nar remains occur in the same territories.



Fig. 14. *A Hafit tomb at the site QA 22*
(PCMA Qumayrah Project/photo E. Rutkowski)

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