

Jawf/Tabuk Archaeological Project (JTAP)

A Brief Report of the Second Field Season, 2013

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Research Objective and History

Our research project, *JTAP* (Jawf/Tabuk Archaeological Project), aims to trace the process of pastoral nomadization in the northern half of the Arabian Peninsula on the basis of archaeological evidence. For this objective, we are planning a comprehensive investigation of desert sites varying in date from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age. The first field season, taken place in December of 2012, was devoted to a reconnaissance survey in the northern half of the Tabuk Province and located several promising areas and sites ([Fujii 2012](#)). The second field season, our main concern, was conducted for about three weeks from September 23 until October 9, focusing on the Ghurayya Basin ca. 50 km NW of Tabuk (**Fig. 1**). We carried out a mapping survey and a brief sounding of the Wadi Ghubai sites in preparation for subsequent full-fledged investigations.

Staff of the Joint Survey

The staff member of the joint survey consisted of the following two parties: Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (hereafter SCTA) and Kanazawa University in Japan. The Saudi team was organized by Mr. Abdulrahman Mansour (Riyad), Mr. Ibrahim Abudullah al-Na'ami (Riyad), Mr. Reda al-Jahani (Tabuk), and Mr. Salem Musa al-'Oqbi (Tabuk), whereas the Japanese team was composed of Dr. Sumio Fujii and Dr. Takuro Adachi, Mr. Hidetaki Takenaka, Miss. Kae Suzuki, and Miss. Shiori Murakami. Both parties made efforts to develop the friendly relationship to the mutual benefit. It is needless to say that the generous permission and careful support of the SCTA main office in Riyadh lay behind the success of this field season.

Investigation Results

Our field operation focused on the eastern bank of Wadi Ghubai that drains the center of the Ghurayya Basin (**Figs. 2-6**). The intensive survey located a total of 88 archaeological features (**Table 1**), which included round or square tower tombs up to ca. 1.75 m in preserved height (**Fig. 7**), rectangular platforms up to ca. 17 m in length (**Fig. 8**), open sanctuaries up to ca. 58 m in diameter (**Fig. 9**), and miscellaneous stone alignments and concentrations (**Fig. 10**). They congregated on stony terraces to form several complexes, although a few isolated examples occasionally intervened between any two adjacent complexes.

In preparation for a full-fledged investigation scheduled in the next field season, we sounded one of the tower tombs and examined its internal structure (**Figs. 11-13**). The test sounding has proved that the masonry structure, measuring ca. 3.2-3.3 m in outer diameter, ca. 1.5-1.6 m in internal diameter, and ca. 1.1 m in maximum preserved height, is equipped with a corbelled roof and a central post for supporting it. Unfortunately, illicit diggings disturbed the circular wall, and no clear evidence for an entrance was confirmed. Since no *in situ* finds were recovered, nothing can be said about the date of the unique feature. Although similar tower tombs in the Sinai and the Gulf area equally suggest a date of the Early Bronze Age, further scrutiny is required to specify the date of the Saudi examples.

Another operation in the Gurayya Basin was to produce a contour map of al-Aynah (TB-1201), the only Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlement known to date in Saudi Arabia. The mapping survey has shown that the mound where the settlement overlies measures ca. 1 ha and ca. 5 m in relative height (**Figs. 14-16**). Of interest is the fact that as previously suggested (Zarins *et al.* 1981; Al-Asmari 2012), while the upper half of the mound is characterized by rectangular masonry structures, the lower half is marked by round enclosures. It appears that the two groups differ in date and nature. Small finds including PPNB flint artifacts concentrated on the former complex, suggesting that the PPNB settlement was limited to the central part of the mound. The latter complex, on the other hand, is yet to be clearly dated and requires further investigation.

In addition, we produced a contour map of Wadi Sharma 1, a small mound site along the Red Sea Coast (**Figs. 17-19**). The mapping survey has confirmed anew that the unique structural complex covering the mound surface bears some resemblance to Late

Neolithic open sanctuaries in southern Jordan (Fujii 2013). In this sense, the site has the potential to not only provide valuable insights into the communal ritual at the initial stage of pastoral nomadization but also shed new light on the cultural contact between the two adjacent areas. We are planning a small-scale excavation in the next field season scheduled in December, 2013.

Subsequent Laboratory Works

The last two days of this field season were devoted to organizing the survey data. Since surface finds were scarce and questionable in terms of their archaeological context, the indoor work focused on making a fair copy of drawings and the production of the list-type database of the Wadi Ghubai archaeological features (**Table 1**).

Concluding Remarks

As mentioned at the beginning, our research project aims to trace the process of pastoral nomadization in the northern half of the Arabian Peninsula. However, it involves a critical problem that the footprint of prehistoric pastoral nomads is usually difficult to specify because of their inferior archaeological visibility. Thus, unlike normal research projects focusing on a large-scale settlement site, our project requires a comprehensive investigation of various desert sites dotted in an extensive area. This is even more so when we try to address the *process* of pastoral nomadization. It is precisely for this reason that we applied for the permission in the two adjacent provinces (i.e. the Jawf and Tabuk), and that we repeated two preliminary surveys in advance of a full-fledged investigation scheduled from the next field season onward.

The mapping surveys conducted in this season have enabled us to set a specific research policy of subsequent field seasons. As for the initial stage of pastoral nomadization, the PPNB settlement of al-Aynah would be the most promising information source. We have produced a contour map in preparation of future investigations. Likewise, the supposedly Late Neolithic open sanctuary of Wadi Sharma 1 might provide a glimpse into a ritual aspect at the initial stage of pastoral nomadism. Here again, we have made arrangements for a future investigation. The third stage, namely, the establishment process of full-fledged nomadic society, is represented by the

appearance of large-scale communal cemeteries. The Wadi Ghubai drainage basin would be an ideal research field for studying the issue.

It is our research strategy to approach the issue of pastoral nomadization in the northern half of the Arabian Peninsula by means of treating these three phases collectively. The third field season, scheduled in December in 2013, is to embark on a limited excavation of a few important sites along Wadi Shrama and Wadi Ghubai.

Additional Remarks

We would like to appreciate the careful support from the staff members of the main and local offices of SCTA (**Figs. 20-21**). The only difficulty we faced in this field season was the absence of a storage for keeping collected objects and our equipment. It is hard to understand that the Tabuk local office has no official storage and forces us to rent a private storage. Aside from the equipment, the objects, communal cultural heritage of Saudi Arabia, should be kept officially. We would like to call for immediate improvements in this matter.

References

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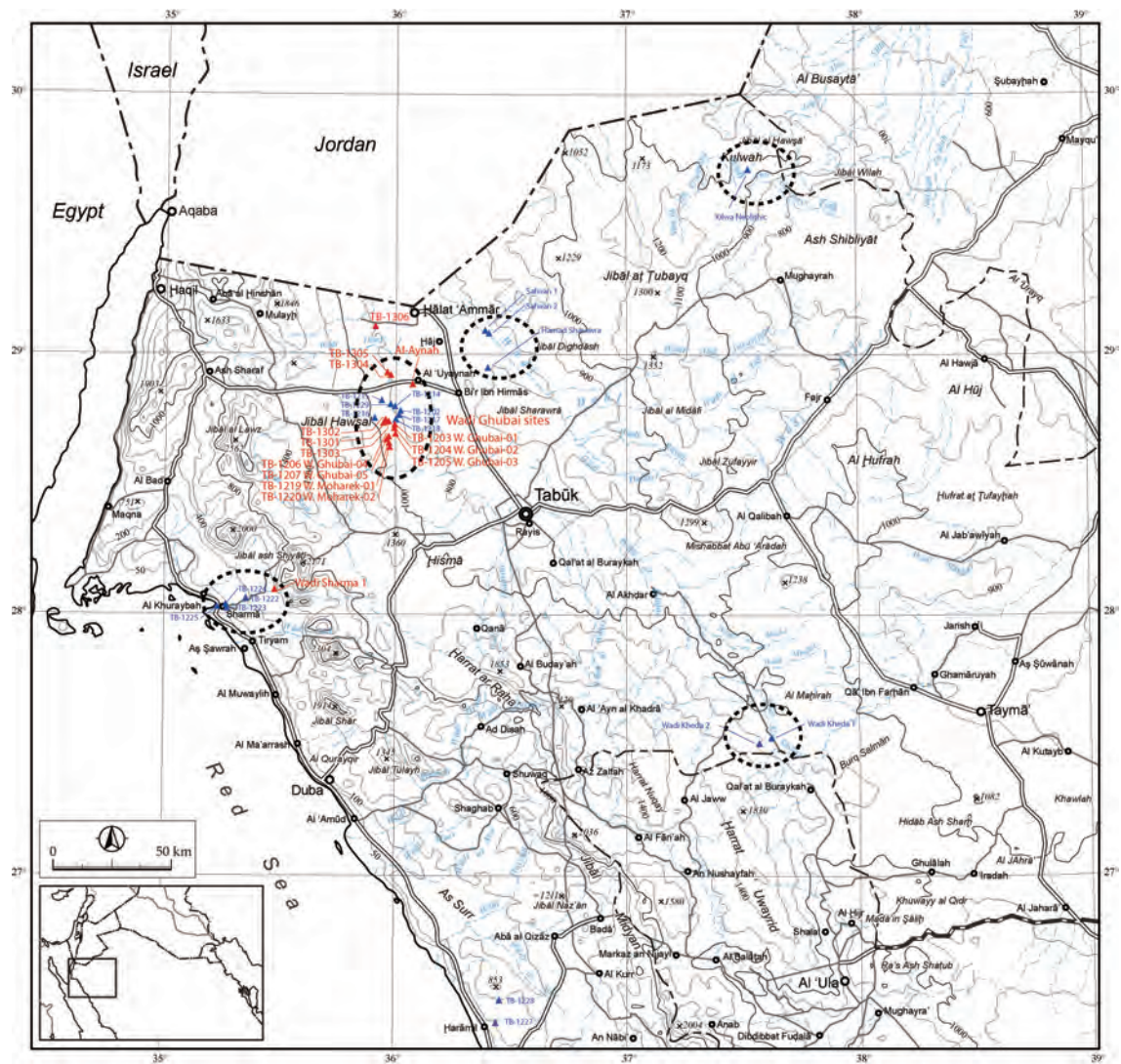


Fig. 1 Investigated sites (names in red) in the 2013 summer field season.

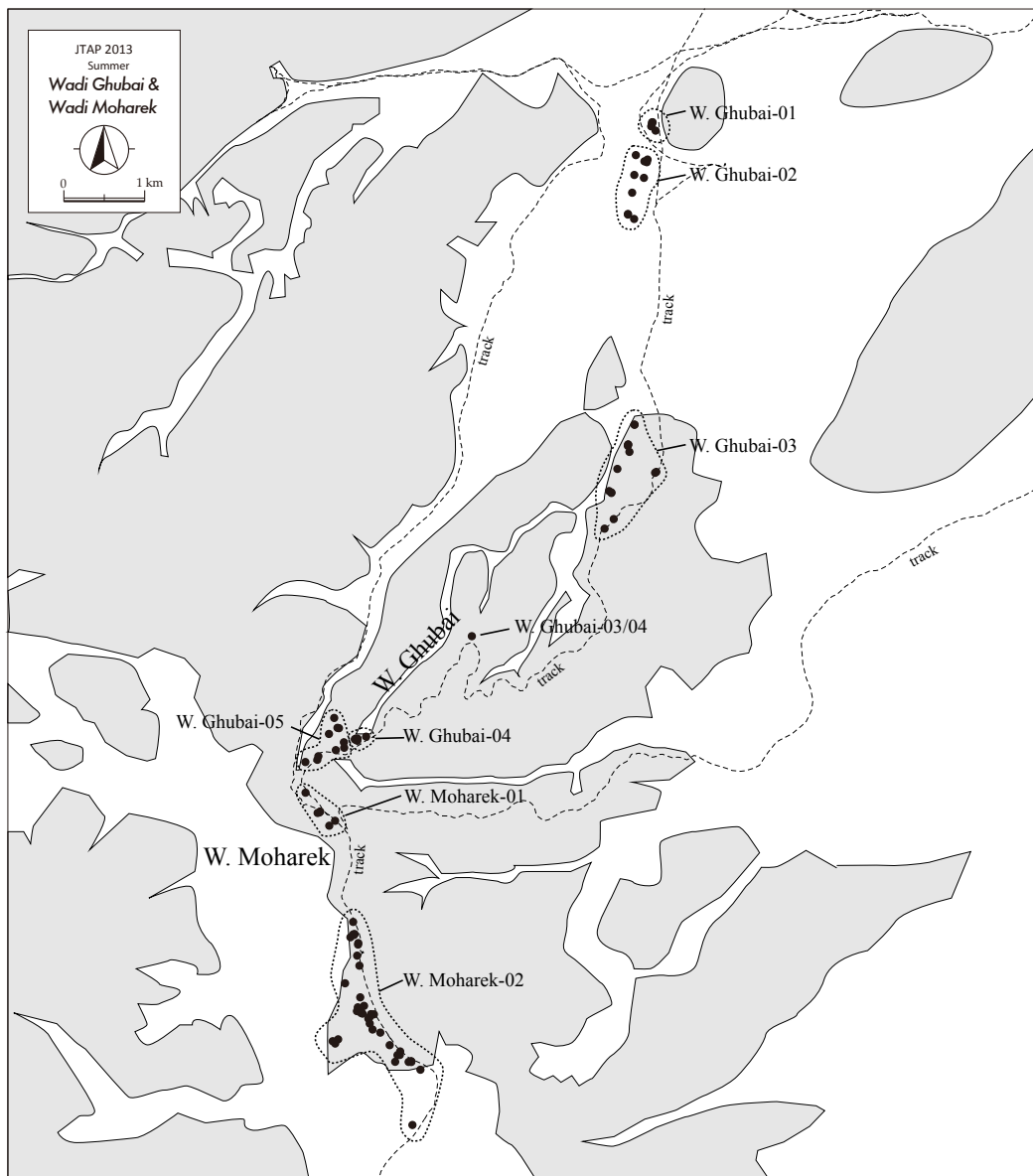


Fig. 2 Archaeological features located along the eastern bank of Wadi Ghubai.



Fig. 3 General view of the Wadi Ghubai drainage basin.



Fig. 4 General view of the Wadi Ghubai drainage basin.

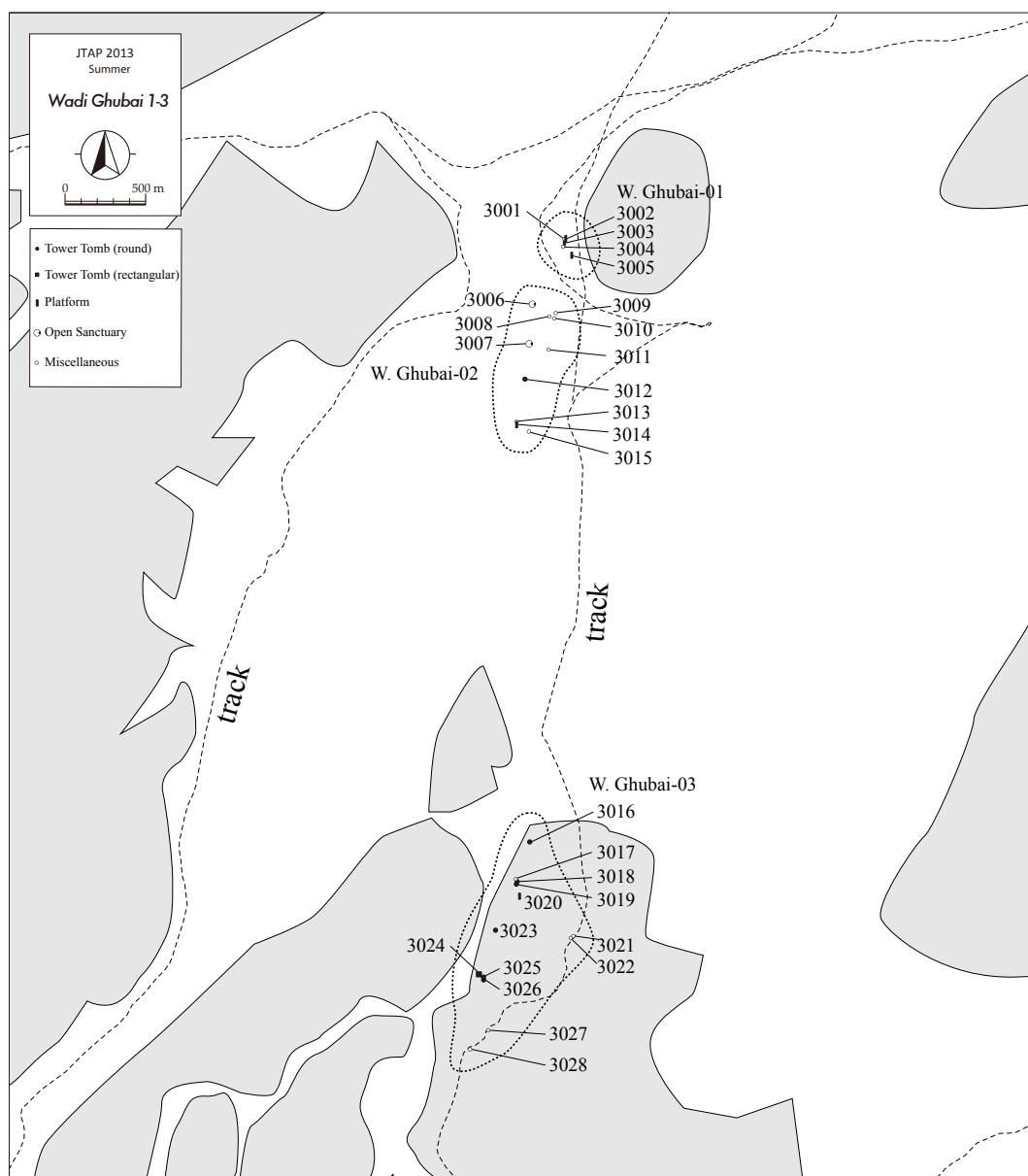


Fig. 5 Located features along the lower reach of Wadi Ghubai.

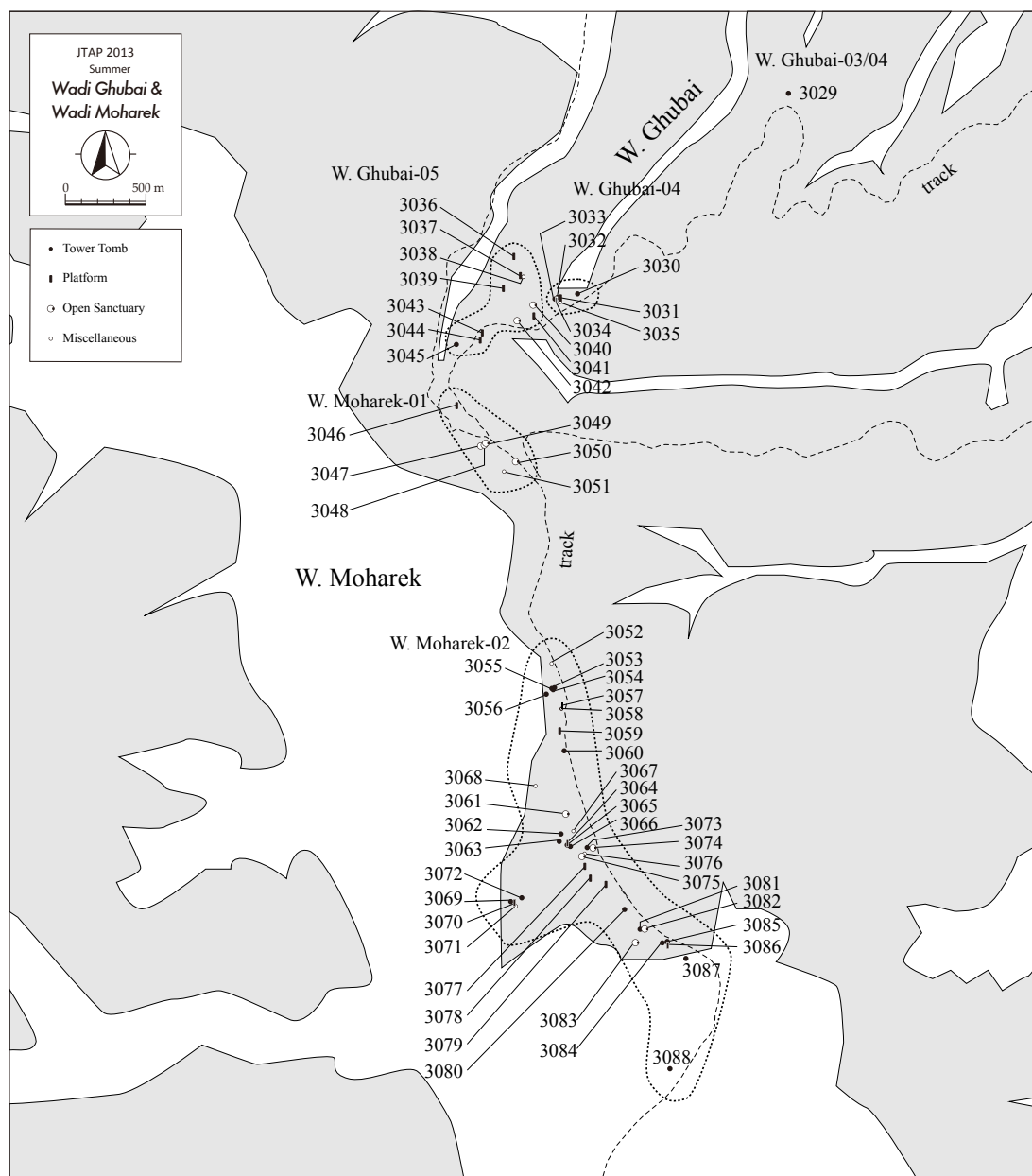


Fig. 6 Located features along the upper reach of Wadi Ghubai and Wadi Moharak

Table 1 Inventory of archaeological features along the eastern bank of Wadi Ghubai.

| Site | Feat. No | N | E | Elv. (m) | Length (m) | Width (m) | Height (m) | Type | Small Finds | Remarks |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| W. Ghubai-01 | 3001 | 28/44/438 | 035/59/631 | 825 | 6.60 | 4.30 | 0.10 | Cairn | - | |
| | 3002 | 28/44/439 | 035/59/635 | 823 | 8.50 | 4.00 | 0.30 | Platform | - | |
| | 3003 | 28/44/426 | 035/59/630 | 823 | 12.30 | 3.40 | 0.10 | Platform | - | |
| | 3004 | 28/44/415 | 035/59/626 | 825 | 7.40 | 6.40 | 0.70 | Cairn | - | |
| | 3005 | 28/44/390 | 035/59/655 | 825 | 7.80 | 3.80 | 0.50 | Platform | - | |
| W. Ghubai-02 | 3006 | 28/44/246 | 035/59/523 | 816 | 37.40 | 27.00 | 0.50 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3007 | 28/44/130 | 035/59/512 | 825 | 58.50 | 45.40 | 0.50 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3008 | 28/44/210 | 035/59/580 | 821 | 7.10 | 5.30 | 0.30 | Cairn | - | |
| | 3009 | 28/44/220 | 035/59/601 | 821 | 3.30 | 1.90 | 0.30 | Stone Concentration | pottery sherds | |
| | 3010 | 28/44/205 | 035/59/596 | 823 | 2.20 | 1.50 | 0.50 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3011 | 28/44/113 | 035/59/577 | 823 | 3.40 | 3.30 | 0.60 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3012 | 28/44/025 | 035/59/498 | 826 | 3.00 | 2.90 | 1.00 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3013 | 28/43/901 | 035/59/470 | 828 | 2.80 | 1.90 | 0.60 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3014 | 28/43/897 | 035/59/470 | 829 | 6.30 | 1.40 | 0.40 | Platform | - | |
| | 3015 | 28/43/871 | 035/59/511 | 826 | 5.00 | 4.90 | 0.30 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3016 | 28/42/664 | 035/59/513 | 844 | 5.50 | 5.00 | 1.20 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3017 | 28/42/547 | 035/59/472 | 850 | 3.00 | 1.50 | 0.55 | Others | - | |
| W. Ghubai-03 | 3018 | 28/42/548 | 035/59/471 | 850 | 5.20 | 4.70 | 0.75 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3019 | 28/42/540 | 035/59/469 | 850 | 4.80 | 4.50 | 1.40 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3020 | 28/42/504 | 035/59/480 | 860 | 5.80 | 1.00 | 0.40 | Platform | - | |
| | 3021 | 28/42/387 | 035/59/660 | 840 | 2.40 | 0.90 | 0.40 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3022 | 28/42/381 | 035/59/651 | 841 | 4.70 | 2.80 | 0.75 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3023 | 28/42/404 | 035/59/399 | 855 | 1.70 | 1.60 | 0.80 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3024 | 28/42/274 | 035/59/343 | 860 | 3.40 | 2.35 | 1.50 | Tower Tomb (Rectangular) | grinding slabs | |
| | 3025 | 28/42/266 | 035/59/358 | 860 | 3.40 | 3.30 | 1.75 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3026 | 28/42/263 | 035/59/359 | 860 | 2.60 | 2.60 | 1.45 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3027 | 28/42/110 | 035/59/374 | 859 | 4.20 | 4.20 | 0.40 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3028 | 28/42/053 | 035/59/313 | 862 | 3.00 | 2.70 | 0.40 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3029 | 28/41/422 | 35/57/403 | 903 | 2.10 | 1.90 | 0.80 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| W. Ghubai-03/04 | 3030 | 28/40/832 | 035/57/716 | 947 | 4.70 | 4.30 | 1.30 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| W. Ghubai-04 | 3031 | 28/40/820 | 035/57/659 | 951 | 17.60 | 1.50 | 0.45 | Platform | - | |
| | 3032 | 28/40/821 | 035/57/648 | 952 | 3.30 | 2.50 | 0.50 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3033 | 28/40/817 | 035/57/640 | 953 | 2.60 | 2.60 | 1.10 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3034 | 28/40/814 | 035/57/645 | 954 | 8.80 | 1.70 | 1.30 | Platform | - | |
| | 3035 | 28/40/808 | 035/57/657 | 954 | 3.80 | 1.50 | 0.60 | Others | - | |
| W. Ghubai-05 | 3036 | 28/40/942 | 035/57/502 | 960 | 7.20 | 1.40 | 0.90 | Platform | - | |
| | 3037 | 28/40/884 | 035/57/524 | 963 | 12.50 | 1.50 | 1.25 | Platform | - | |
| | 3038 | 28/40/882 | 035/57/534 | 963 | 3.90 | 1.20 | 0.50 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3039 | 28/40/848 | 035/57/467 | 968 | 8.40 | 1.40 | 0.80 | Platform | - | |
| | 3040 | 28/40/799 | 035/57/567 | 965 | 27.00 | 19.00 | 1.00 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3041 | 28/40/767 | 035/57/569 | 965 | 4.60 | 1.40 | 0.60 | Platform | - | |
| | 3042 | 28/40/753 | 035/57/513 | 967 | 31.40 | 29.00 | 1.20 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3043 | 28/40/717 | 035/57/396 | 978 | 7.50 | 1.80 | 0.80 | Platform | - | |
| | 3044 | 28/40/696 | 035/57/389 | 978 | 7.10 | 0.80 | 0.20 | Platform | - | |
| | 3045 | 28/40/683 | 035/57/309 | 985 | 3.20 | 3.10 | 0.90 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | Excavated |
| | 3046 | 28/40/503 | 035/57/310 | 990 | 12.40 | 1.30 | 0.90 | Platform | - | |
| | 3047 | 28/40/384 | 035/57/391 | 984 | 12.00 | 16.40 | 0.20 | Open Sanctuary ? | - | |
| W. Moharek-01 | 3048 | 28/40/387 | 035/57/403 | 985 | 13.40 | 9.00 | 0.20 | Open Sanctuary ? | - | |
| | 3049 | 28/40/392 | 035/57/408 | 984 | 12.00 | 10.00 | 0.20 | Open Sanctuary ? | - | |
| | 3050 | 28/40/309 | 035/57/469 | 982 | 10.40 | 9.00 | 0.20 | Open Sanctuary ? | - | |
| | 3051 | 28/40/338 | 035/57/508 | 981 | 5.40 | 4.70 | 0.50 | Cairn | - | |
| | 3052 | 28/39/744 | 035/57/629 | 971 | 31.00 | 8.60 | 0.50 | Others | - | |
| W. Moharek-02 | 3053 | 28/39/673 | 035/57/638 | 972 | 2.20 | 2.00 | 0.40 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3054 | 28/39/667 | 035/57/634 | 973 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 0.50 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3055 | 28/39/671 | 035/57/629 | 975 | 3.50 | 3.10 | 1.10 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3056 | 28/39/654 | 035/57/611 | 974 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 0.90 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3057 | 28/39/620 | 035/57/663 | 977 | 14.00 | 1.50 | 0.90 | Platform | - | |
| | 3058 | 28/39/611 | 035/57/662 | 977 | 3.30 | 1.50 | 0.40 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3059 | 28/39/546 | 035/57/656 | 980 | 5.90 | 1.50 | 0.75 | Platform | - | |
| | 3060 | 28/39/487 | 035/57/671 | 985 | 2.90 | 2.50 | 0.40 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3061 | 28/39/301 | 035/57/676 | 987 | 16.50 | 16.50 | 1.00 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3062 | 28/39/242 | 035/57/660 | 987 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.80 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3063 | 28/39/220 | 035/57/654 | 985 | 3.90 | 3.80 | 1.10 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3064 | 28/39/215 | 035/57/682 | 986 | 4.50 | 3.20 | 0.90 | Platform | - | |
| | 3065 | 28/39/210 | 035/57/681 | 987 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 1.00 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3066 | 28/39/206 | 035/57/692 | 987 | 2.20 | 2.20 | 0.60 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3067 | 28/39/251 | 035/57/702 | 987 | 48.00 | 0.50 | 0.50 | Others | - | |
| | 3068 | 28/39/384 | 035/57/575 | 980 | 87.0 | 2.20 | 0.40 | Others | - | |
| | 3069 | 28/39/043 | 035/57/492 | 982 | 4.80 | 4.60 | 1.20 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3070 | 28/39/040 | 035/57/504 | 982 | 4.40 | 1.10 | 0.60 | Platform | - | |
| | 3071 | 28/39/030 | 035/57/509 | 982 | 2.00 | 1.70 | 0.80 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3072 | 28/39/055 | 035/57/528 | 982 | 4.80 | 4.20 | 1.10 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3073 | 28/39/202 | 035/57/748 | 983 | 3.20 | 3.10 | 1.20 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3074 | 28/39/201 | 035/57/768 | 984 | 11.00 | 10.00 | 0.90 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3075 | 28/39/176 | 035/57/731 | 983 | 17.00 | 11.00 | 1.60 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3076 | 28/39/184 | 035/57/739 | 983 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 0.60 | Stone Concentration | - | |
| | 3077 | 28/39/147 | 035/57/740 | 985 | 3.80 | 1.50 | 0.90 | Platform | - | |
| | 3078 | 28/39/112 | 035/57/759 | 987 | 4.30 | 2.00 | 1.40 | Platform | - | |
| | 3079 | 28/39/094 | 035/57/811 | 985 | 13.90 | 2.20 | 1.20 | Platform | - | |
| | 3080 | 28/39/020 | 035/57/874 | 986 | 4.60 | 4.30 | 0.50 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3081 | 28/38/962 | 035/57/926 | 983 | 3.30 | 2.70 | 1.30 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3082 | 28/38/963 | 035/57/942 | 982 | 41.50 | 30.00 | 1.10 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3083 | 28/38/923 | 035/57/911 | 986 | 11.00 | 11.00 | 1.10 | Open Sanctuary | - | |
| | 3084 | 28/38/992 | 035/58/001 | 982 | 3.30 | 3.20 | 1.40 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3085 | 28/38/926 | 035/58/017 | 979 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 0.70 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3086 | 28/38/921 | 035/58/018 | 979 | 6.60 | 1.60 | 0.60 | Platform | - | |
| | 3087 | 28/38/876 | 035/58/080 | 977 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 0.90 | Tower Tomb (Round) | - | |
| | 3088 | 28/38/551 | 035/58/026 | 961 | 3.30 | 3.00 | 1.60 | Tower Tomb (Round) | bone fragments | |



Fig. 7 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3045 (Tower tomb): general view (looking N).



Fig. 8 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3079 (Platform): general view (looking NW).



Fig. 9 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3041 (Open sanctuary): general view (looking SE).



Fig. 10 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3052 (Stone alignment): partial view (looking S).

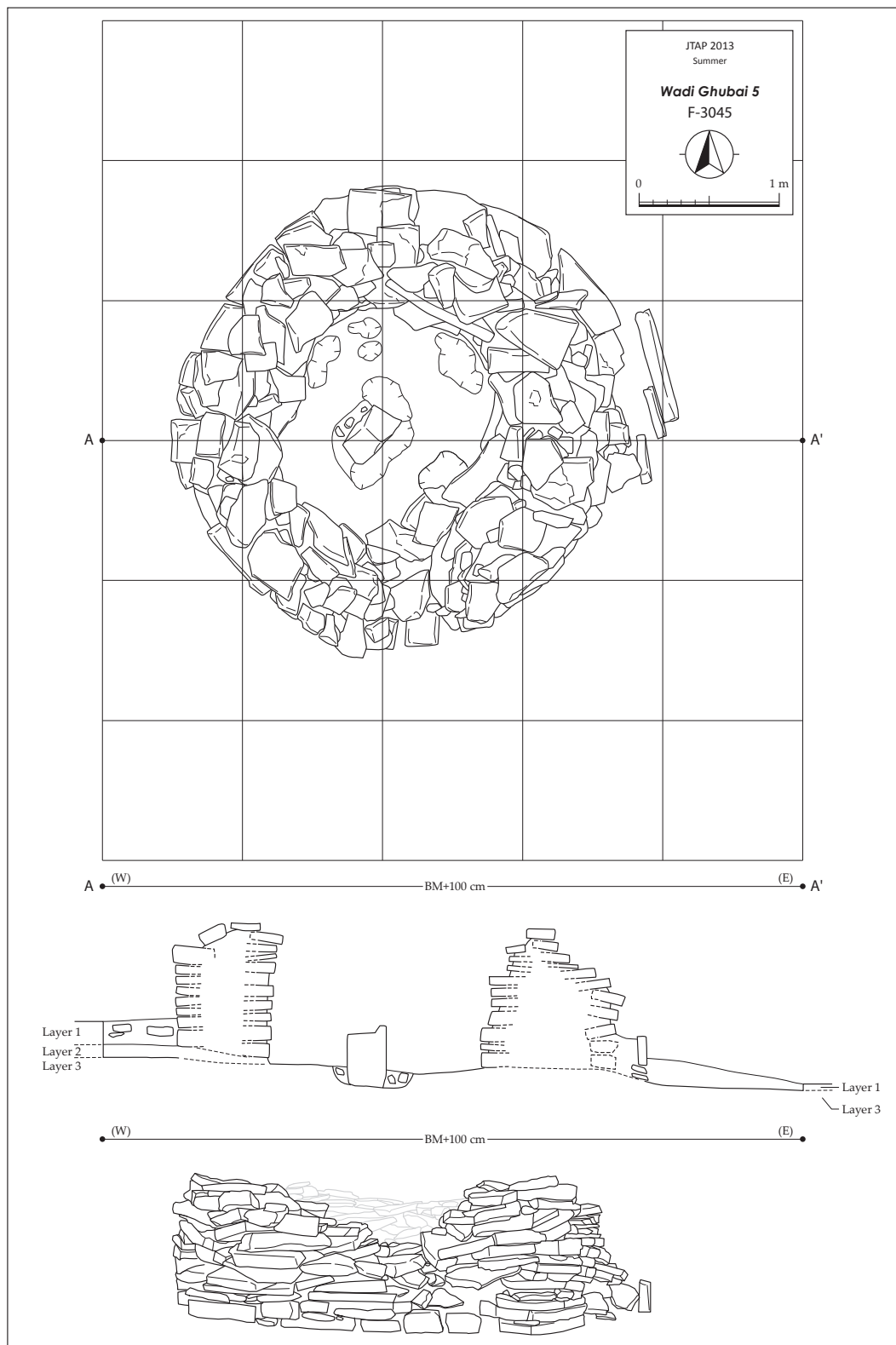


Fig. 11 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3045: plan, section/elevation, and lateral view.



Fig. 12 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3045: general view (looking N).



Fig. 13 Wadi Ghubai Feature 3045: general view (looking NW).



Fig. 14 Al-Aynah: contour map with wall alignments.



Fig. 15 Al-Aynah: general view (looking W).



Fig. 16 Al-Aynah: close-up view of the mound surface (looking N).

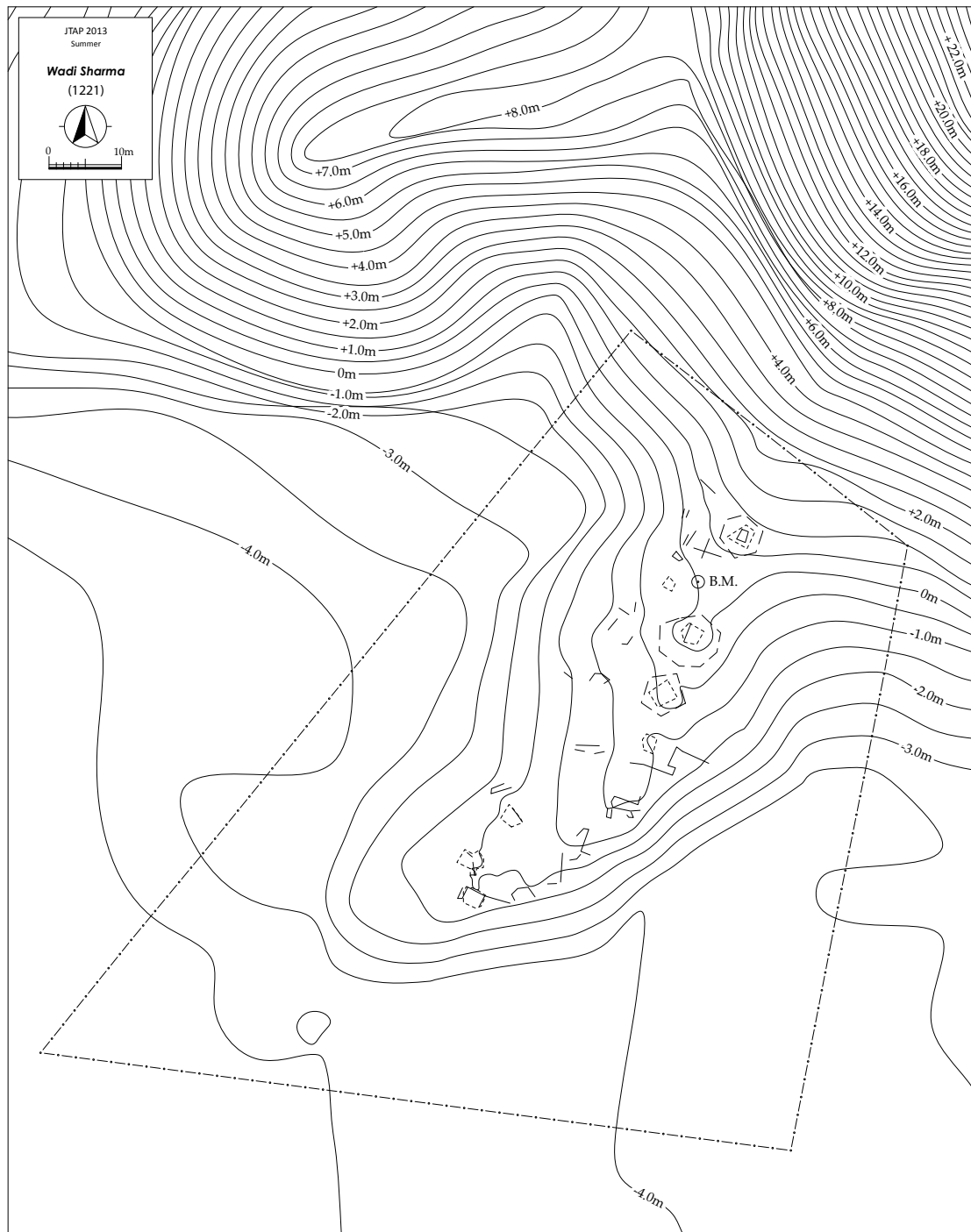


Fig. 17 Wadi Sharma 1: contour map with wall alignments.



Fig. 18 Wadi Sharma 1: general view (looking S).



Fig. 19 Wadi Sharma 1: close-up view of the mound surface (looking NW).



Fig. 20 Participants in this field season (at Wadi Sharma 1).



Fig. 21 Participants in this field season (at Wadi Ghubai 5).