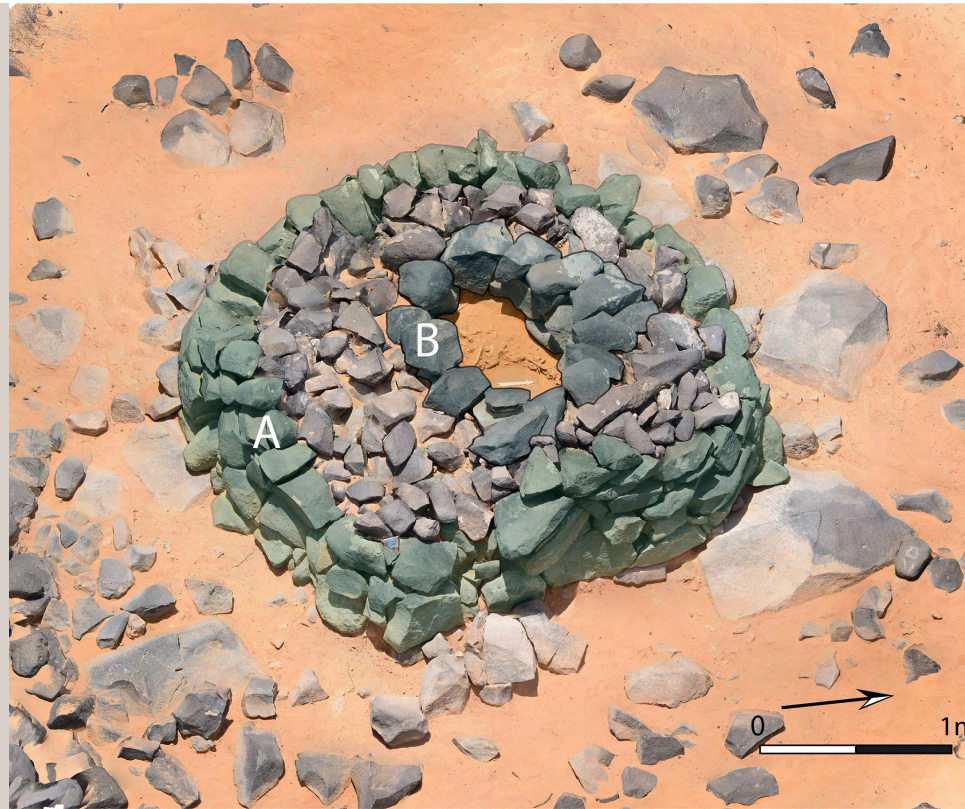


Fig. 1. 3-D image of an apsidal tower tomb at the site of QUR-1075, with its explicitly straight façade. A: outer wall; B: burial chamber. The tomb measures about 3.8 x 3.5 m, with a height of 1.2 m. (Photo by Peter Akkermans, Leiden University.)



The Jebel Qurma Archaeological Landscape Project seeks to examine settlement in Jordan's northeastern basalt desert from a *longue durée* perspective, through survey and excavation in the rugged and difficult-to-access Jebel Qurma region, located east of Azraq and close to the Jordanian-Saudi border.

Pre-Islamic burial cairns dot the basaltic uplands of northeastern Jordan, yet these graves have never been investigated systematically. This situation is now changing. The key aim of our recent research in the Jebel Qurma area is to explore these many hundreds of burials of different shape, size, and construction. In addition to the cairns investigated in previous fieldwork seasons, a total of twelve (pre-Islamic) tombs at seven different sites were chosen for excavation in 2018 and 2019.

Three types of cairns have been distinguished up to now: ring cairns, round tower tombs, and cist graves. On the basis of optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) and radiocarbon dates, these three categories of tomb appear to date mainly between the second half of the 1st millennium BC and the 1st century AD (Akkermans 2018; Akkermans et al. 2020).

Jebel Qurma Archaeological Landscape Project

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Recently, a fourth type of monument has been identified: the apsidal tower tomb. These cairns, about 4 m in diameter and about 1.2 m tall, are roughly hemispherical or squarish in plan with one straight façade that is usually oriented towards the east (Fig. 1). They have a central oval burial chamber, with a flat, stone-paved floor. As with the other types of cairns, the apsidal tombs were regularly reused for interment. In one example the tomb contained three individuals laid on top of each other in a strongly contracted position, oriented east-west, with the head to the west.

While most of the other types of tombs tend to stand alone at prominent, high locales throughout the Jebel Qurma range, the apsidal tombs occur in groups of two to seven cairns at only two, neighboring, sites until now. In one instance, an apsidal tomb had been substantially leveled in order to facilitate the construction of a round tower tomb on top of the lower remains (Fig. 2).

Although their precise date is still under study, the apsidal tower tombs most likely date to the early Iron Age, ca. 1100–700 BC. Grave goods, predominantly consisting of jewelry, included a carnelian axe-shaped pendant with good parallels from Iron Age sites



Fig. 2. A circular tower tomb at the site of QUR-1075, with the leveled remains of an apsidal tower tomb below. (Photo by Peter Akkermans, Leiden University.)

as far apart as Wadi Fidan in Jordan and Saruq al-Hadid in the Emirates. Another relevant find was a small steatite scarab in a Levantine Egyptianizing style of the first half of the 1st millennium BC.

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