



Fig. 1. Square 15T, S.U.3 and 4.

The Brigham Young University Wadi Mataha Project completed its sixteenth and seventeenth seasons in 2018 and 2019. Excavations were carried out at one site: site 15, tomb BD 676, located at UTM 335865.97 N, 736107.20 E at an elevation of 947.32 masl. In 2018, part of a 5 x 5 m square (15 T) in front of the tomb façade was excavated to bedrock. The area is located in the northwest corner of the platform area bounded on two sides by the cliff face. A 2 x 1 m square space that had been left unexcavated in the southern part of the square was completed. Five stratigraphic units were identified in this area. S.U.1 was a mixed layer of sand and dung deposited over the last ten years as the result of traffic from the clearing of the interior of the tomb. S.U.2, a layer of hard-packed sand that formed the original surface of the area covered S.U.3, a layer of medium-sized stones piled up in the area during the middle Islamic period, as evidenced by the large number of potsherds from the surrounding dark-brown sandy clay layer S.U.4 (Fig. 1). The pottery from this level included numerous examples of middle Islamic coarse wares as well as linear-design painted wares, including a

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unique sherd with a floral-pattern design in red paint that is reminiscent of Nabataean fine painted wares. Below this level, a hard-packed orange sand (S.U.5) covered the bedrock of the platform. This level contained only Nabataean fine- and medium-fine orange wares, as well as unguentaria fragments.

In 2019, a 2 x 3 m test trench (ITT2) was excavated in the northwest corner of the tomb interior, in front of loculi L10, L11, and L12. The remaining 10 cm of stratigraphic material above bedrock was removed from the area and screened for artifacts. Three strata were identified. The top layer (S.U.1) consisted of the last of the goat dung and fine manure that filled the interior of the tomb. Below that was a brownish sandy layer made up of windblown orange sand and goat manure (S.U.2). Below this layer and above the bedrock was a hard-packed layer of yellow-orange sand. In the brownish sandy layer, a few sherds of coarse handmade middle Islamic cooking pots and storage vessels were found along with goat bones and some grains of wheat or barley. In the hard-pack yellow-orange sand SU 3 was found a silver circular button or stud with an elaborate floral design, RI 1, possibly lost during the attempted looting of loculus L12. The elaborate floral design is made up of three major symbols: crescent moons, four-petaled rosettes, and lotus blossoms surrounding a central circle.

Also in 2019, 15W NW, a 2 x 2 m square against the façade of the tomb near the doorway contained in S.U. 3, yielded a quantity of middle Islamic handmade coarse-ware sherds along with some linear-geometric middle Islamic painted wares (e.g., Fig. 2). A large heavy bronze ring (RI 3), with a mostly illegible bezel inscription in Arabic (possibly *la illaha*), was found in S.U.2. Material from the lower level S.U.4 includes Nabataean fine, thin, dark-painted wares, numerous lithics, a carnelian hexagonal bead (RI 4), a piece of worked turquoise (RI 5), and a circular bronze, possibly Nabataean, coin with a hole in it (RI 6).



Fig 2. Example of one of the middle Islamic pottery sherds found during excavations.