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Petra: Qasr al-Bint

Thibaud Fournet, François Renel

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN JORDAN

علم الآثار
فني الأردن
NEWSLETTER



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ORIENTAL RESEARCH
للأبحاث الشرقية

2016 AND 2017 SEASONS



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acor@acorjordan.org

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Cover image: Detail of wall painting from the Bayt Ras Tomb
(Orthographic photo: Soizik Bechetoille-Kaczorowski/Ifpo Amman)

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MAP OF SITES AND PROJECTS



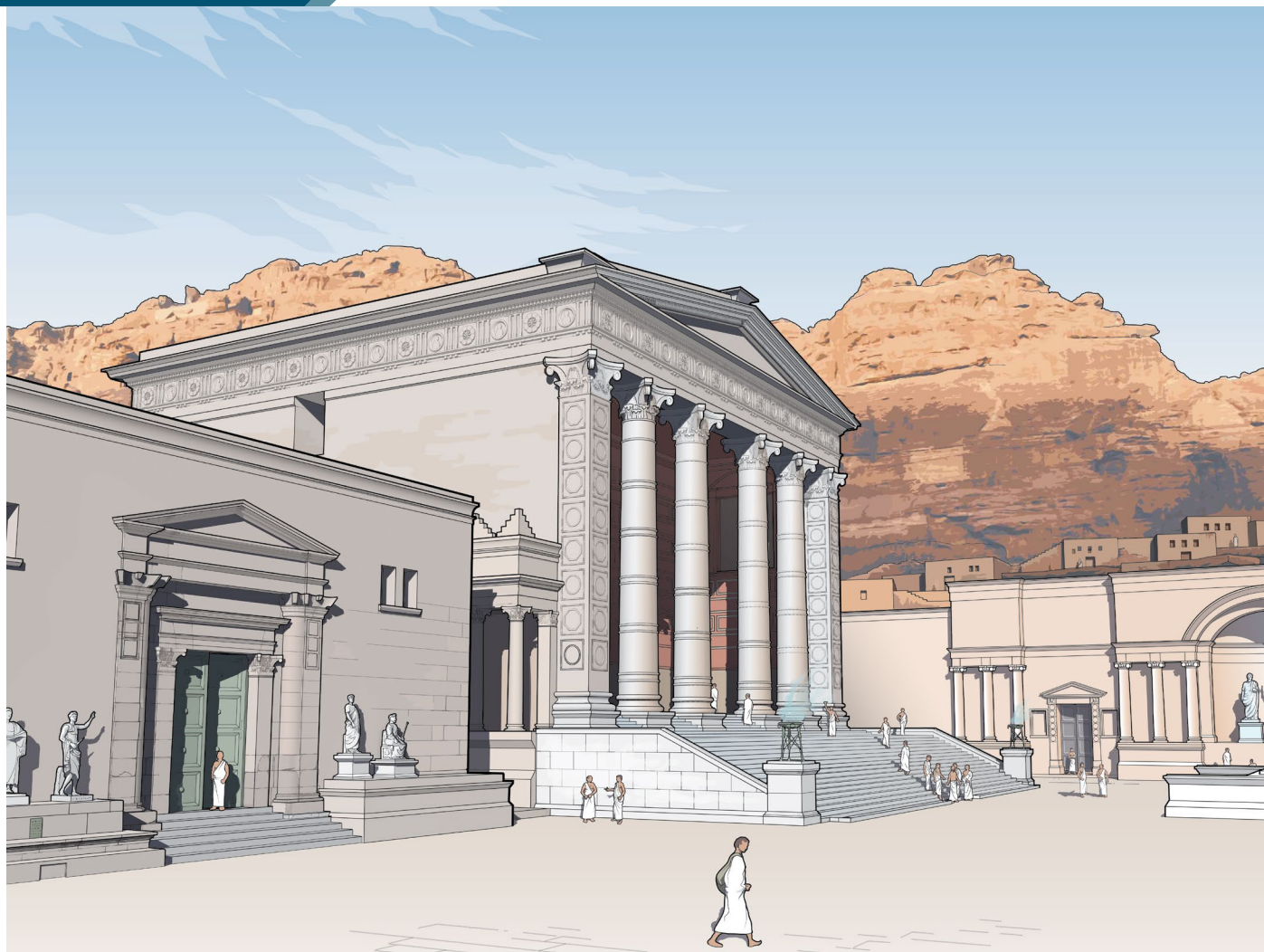


Fig. 85. Tentative reconstruction drawing of the Qasr al-Bint temple and adjacent buildings during the Roman period (Rendering by T. Fournet)

The excavation of the Qasr al-Bint area, conducted by François Renel since 1999, is part of the French Archaeological Mission of Petra, directed since 2013 by Laurent Tholbecq (Université Libre de Bruxelles), and before him by the late Christian Augé. The 2016 and 2017 seasons focused on the monumental staircase of the temple, partly documented by previous excavations, including Peter Parr during the 1960s and Fawzi Zayadine in the 1980s (Zayadine *et. al.* 2003), but it still produces valuable results concerning the chronology of the area.

For the recent periods, the most significant remains are related to an early Islamic reoccupation of the temple. They consist of a terrace wall, located on the monumental staircase of the temple, and of an impressive enclosure wall built inside the pronaos with massive reused dressed-stone and column drums (all of them part of the temple's upper parts). An important collection of locally handmade pottery from the associated layers could be dated, as a preliminary observation, to the 9th to 10th century A.D. This occupation could be related to a small graveyard previously excavated in front of the temple, and to other unexplained structures preserved inside the cella before 1970s preservation work.

PETRA: QASR AL BINT

François Renel

Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives/Centre national de la recherche scientifique

Thibaud Fournet

Centre national de la recherche scientifique/ l'Institut français du Proche-Orient

Concerning the monumental staircase itself, the excavation distinguished two architectural stages. The first stairs, built at the same time as or immediately after the temple's podium, appear to have been magnificently restored in white marble (Fig. 85). This refurbishment could be tentatively associated with the construction of the monumental Apse Building, northwest of the temple, during the second half of the 2nd century A.D.

The excavation also delivered elements concerning the early phases of the temple. In a deep sounding, made in a gap between the paving in the southwest corner of the pronaos, the foundations of the temple were exposed and, more significantly, pre-existing massive masonry was discovered underneath, directly resting on the bedrock. The size and strength of this masonry indicate that this substructure was probably designed to support a monumental building. The sherds found in the sand backfilling in those early foundations can be dated between 150 and 50 B.C. (Schmid's Phase 1).

Excavations on the temple were complemented by a renewed architectural analysis conducted by Thibaud Fournet on the "B Building," a luxury Nabataean construction previously excavated by the French team east of the temple. This study has resulted in a reconstruction with two stories centred around a courtyard surrounded by a Doric portico, supporting a Corinthian gallery at the upper level, with screen walls adorned with colonettes (Fig. 81). Beside this sophisticated courtyard, the analysis of the monumental gate of the building, with imbricated Nabataean and Corinthian orders, revealed two main successive construction stages, and provided new insights into its successive functions within the Qasr al-Bint temenos.

On another note, preservation efforts were continued and intensified in 2017, in terms of a large presentation/valorisation project for the Qasr al-Bint area, which encompassed security, conservation, and interpretation.

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CONTRIBUTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Fawzi Abudanah	fawziabudanh@yahoo.co.uk
Nizar Abu Jaber	nizar.abujaber@gju.edu.jo
Nizar Al Adarbeh	nizar.aladarbeh@gmail.com
Alexander Ahrens	alexander.ahrens@dainst.de
Peter Akkermans	p.m.m.g.akkermans@arch.leidenuniv.nl
Casey Allen	caseallen@gmail.com
Karin Bartl	Karin.Bartl@dainst.de
Robert Bates	bates@andrews.edu
Abeer Al Bawab	abeerbawab@yahoo.com
Ueli Bellwald	intrmeem@go.com.jo
Sara Berumen	sberumen@nd.edu
George Bevan	bevan@queensu.ca
Louise Blanke	anne-louise.blanke@wolfson.ox.ac.uk
Kent V. Bramlett	kbramlett@lasierra.edu
Stephen Bourke	stephen.bourke@sydney.edu.au
Claudia Bührig	claudia.buehrig@dainst.de
Caroline R. Cartwright	ccartwright@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk
Marie-Laure Chambrade	marie.chambrade@gmail.com
Meredith S. Chesson	mchesson@nd.edu
Douglas R. Clark	dclark@lasierra.edu
Glenn J. Corbett	corbett.glenn@caorc.org
Marta D'Andrea	marta.dandrea@uniroma1.it
Erin Darby	edarby1@utk.edu
Robert Darby	rdarby2@utk.edu
Marco Dehner	marco.dehner@web.de
Bert de Vries	dvr@calvin.edu
Mark Driessen	m.j.driessen@arch.leidenuniv.nl
Phillip C. Edwards	p.edwards@latrobe.edu.au
Ehab Eid	e.eid@jreds.org
Sawsan Al Fakhri	susfaisal@yahoo.com
Zbigniew T. Fiema	zbigniew.fiema@helsinki.fi
Cynthia Finlayson	calderfin@aol.com
Debra Foran	dforan@wlu.ca
Thibaud Fournet	t.fournet@ifporient.org
James Fraser	james.fraser@sydney.edu
Sumuo Fujii	fujii@kenroku.kanazawa-u.ac.jp
Constance Gane	cgane@andrews.edu
David F. Graf	dgraf@miami.edu
John D.M. Green	jgreen@acorjordan.org
Paul Gregor	pgregor@andrews.edu
Kaelin Groom	kaeling.groom@asu.edu
Jehad Haron	jehad.schep@acorjordan.org
Ulrich Huebner	ulrichhuebner@t-online.de
David Johnson	david_johnson@byu.edu
Zeidan Kafafi	zeidan.kafafi@gmail.com
Susanne Kerner	kerner@hum.ku.dk
Morag M. Kersel	mkersel@depaul.edu
Mohammed El Khalili	mohd_elkhalili@yahoo.com
Moritz Kinzel	zdr147@hum.ku.dk

Bernhard Kolb	bernhard.kolb@unibas.ch
Paula Kouki	paula.kouki@iki.fi
Theresa Kyoo Young Kim	KyooYoung.Kim.335@nd.edu
Øystein S. LaBianca	labianca@andrews.edu
Thomas Lepaon	thomas.lepaon@outlook.com
Achim Lichtenberger	lichtenb@uni-muenster.de
Jesse Long Jr.	jesse.long@lcu.edu
Bernhard Lucke	bernhard.lucke@fau.de
Danielle Macdonald	danielle-macdonald@utulsa.edu
Basem Mahamid	basemmahamid@yahoo.com
Lisa A. Maher	maher@berkeley.edu
Johannes Moser	johannes.moser@dainst.de
Lorenzo Nigro	lorenzo.nigro@uniroma1.it
Friedbert Ninow	fninow@lasierra.edu
Tom Paradise	trparadise@gmail.com
S. Thomas Parker	parker@ncsu.edu
Megan Perry	perrym@ecu.edu
Lucas Petit	l.petit@rmo.nl
Dayonni Phillips	dphill13@nd.edu
Andrea Polcaro	andrea.polcaro@unipg.it
Konstantinos D. Politis	kdpolitis@hsnes.org
Barbara A. Porter	acor@acorjordan.org
Rubina Raja	rubina.raja@cas.au.dk
Paul Ray	rayp@andrews.edu
Francois Renel	francois.renel@inrap.fr
Suzanne Richard	richard002@gannon.edu
Gary Rollefson	rollefgo@whitman.edu
Yorke Rowan	ymrowan@uchicago.edu
China P. Shelton	china.p.shelton@gmail.com
Islam Sleim	islam.seleim@yahoo.com
Ladislav Smejda	smejda@kar.zcu.cz
Günther Schörner	guenther.schoerner@univie.ac.at
Micaela Sinibaldi	micaela.sinibaldi@gmail.com
Stefan L. Smith	stefan.smith@dunelm.org.uk
Claude Vibert-Guige	claudio.vibert-guigue@ens.fr
David Vila	dvila@jbu.edu
Monique Vincent	mvincent@lasierra.edu
Gyozo Voros	taposiris@hotmail.com
Bethany J. Walker	bwalker@uni-bonn.de
Alexander Wasse	alexander.wasse@yeditepe.edu.tr
Thomas Weber-Karyotakis	thomas.weber-karyotakis@gju.edu.jo
Randall Younker	younker@andrews.edu