

Fig. 1. A 3-D reconstruction of mosque 1 based on the excavations of the Islamic Baydha Project. (Image by Qais Tweissi.)

The Islamic Baydha (Beidha) Project, affiliated with the Council for British Research in the Levant, conducts research, conservation, training, and community engagement and is part of the broader Late Petra Project; both aim at understanding settlement in the Petra region during the Islamic period and are led by Micaela Sinibaldi. The Late Petra Project has provided solid evidence, through the creation of a local ceramic chronology, that Petra and its surrounding region were not abandoned after the Byzantine period. The Islamic Baydha Project holds the most substantial and accessible evidence for Islamic-period settlement in the Petra region, since modern development is fortunately absent here. Here we report on the 2018 and 2019 seasons (see Sinibaldi 2016 and 2018 for former seasons).

The village currently under investigation includes a large number of clustered habitations and two mosques, which are dated to not earlier than the 13th–14th century (Mamluk period). The two mosques are particularly valuable, as they are currently the only ones identified and excavated in the region. Seasons 2018 and 2019 focused on completing the excavation and mapping of the plan of mosque 1; detailed results have allowed the preparation of a 3-D reconstruction (Fig. 1). This mosque's building style and general architectural characteristics are very similar to those of mosque 2; the recovery of a wooden beam on the floor during the first phase of abandonment confirmed that

Petra: Islamic Baydha Project

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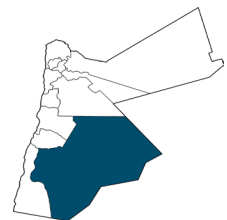




Fig. 2. An aerial view of the site of Islamic Baydha. (Photo by Robert Bewley, APAAME. APAAME_20181017_RHB-0047.)

this material originally supported the roof of this mosque also. Mosque 1, however, is less well preserved and slightly larger than mosque 2. Another major difference is that it was plastered in red on at least the lower part of all its walls, as well as the mihrab floor, while the columns supporting the roof were plastered in white. In the northeastern corner of the mosque, to the left of the entrance, a platform was discovered, the original purpose of which has still not been fully clarified.

In contrast to mosque 2, mosque 1, whose plan is closer to a square, has two arches that run north-south. This aspect may be due in part to the fact that the mosque used as its foundations several earlier buildings, which were discovered under each one of the mosque walls and which might have determined its plan. Structures related to at least two earlier phases, Nabataean and Byzantine, were revealed by excavations. The Nabataean phase is well known at the site and was already revealed by the numerous rock-cut structures and built walls recorded during former surveys and excavations. However, the recording of a Byzantine phase under mosque 1 is particularly interesting, because this is the first safely

dated built structure revealed at the site. The Byzantine phases can be associated with the rock-cut church recorded by the ACOR survey project, directed by Patricia Bikai in 2003–2008, and with the fragments of ceramics recorded by the surveys of Brown University in 2010–2012.

In both seasons, aerial photos of the site were taken by the team of Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA, Oxford University) (Fig. 2). Both seasons also included, as always, the training of Jordanian and international archaeologists: in 2018 and 2019, the project trained six female Jordanian archaeologists in archaeological fieldwork techniques. And, as always, a special day was dedicated to visits of schools from the Petra region. In January 2020, the new Islamic Baydha Project website was launched: islamicbaydhaproject.wixsite.com/islamicbaydhaproject.

Presentations took place in Jordan at ACOR, the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA), and Al Hussein Bin Talal University, in London at the British Museum and at the Islamic Archaeology Day at the UCL, and in Bern at the European Association of Archaeologists' conference.

References

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