



Fig. 1. Set of vessels from the second half of the 1st century BC.

The excavation of the Qasr al-Bint area is part of the French archaeological mission directed by L. Tholbecq. The 2019 season focused on the northern limit of the sacred area of the temple, partly excavated in the past by P. J. Parr and later by the Petra Hellenistic Project.

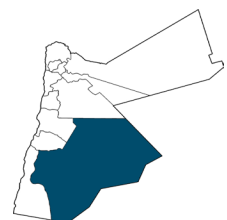
The northern limit of the temenos enclosure, masked by the modern facilities of the Wadi Musa riverbanks, was observed in four trenches excavated in its eastern part, near the temenos gate, in order to understand its function, its chronology, and the hypothetical existence of a stylobate. Immediately west of the temenos gate (trench E14), alongside previous Schmid's trench 2 (Graf et al. 2005, 426–432), architectural remains were discovered in the space between the north wall of the temenos and a second wall constituting the base of the modern wall that channels the wadi. Three major architectural phases have been identified. The first, consisting of a north-south wall, located in the eastern part of the trench, corresponds to the installation of a large hydraulic structure of the cistern type, the elevation of which consists of large limestone blocks covered by the remains of high-quality hydraulic mortar. Its limits are unknown due to subsequent architectural

Petra: Qasr al-Bint

François Renel

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

francois.renel@inrap.fr



transformations in later phases. From a chronological point of view, the material found in its trench fill dates its construction to between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC. In a later time, three walls were adjoined to this first structure, thus defining a rectangular structure. Connected with these is a second hydraulic structure consisting of a water channel that runs in a south-north direction at the base of the new structure. Its inner surface is covered by a fine hydraulic mortar. The fill of the channel contained a homogeneous group of Nabataean pottery and lamps of the later 2nd to the first half of the 1st century BC. This early Nabataean channel corresponds to the continuity of that identified by S. G. Schmid, which appears to have been cut by the construction of the temenos wall.

Above, we observed a series of fill layers. These deposits contain a huge quantity of Nabataean pottery dated to the first half of the 1st century BC, especially painted ware of phase 1, according to Schmid's typology. Finally, the latest occupation is defined by a reconstruction of the elevation and a clay floor with two banquettes alongside the northern and southern walls of the room. The discovery of a complete set of vessels in the destruction layer suggests a rapid abandonment of the dwelling sometime around the middle of the 1st century BC. It includes Nabataean common ware and fine and painted ware belonging to phase 2a of Schmid's typology (Fig. 1). This occupation, sealed by a destruction layer, constitutes the last of the pre-monumental levels before the construction of the northern wall of the temenos and the stylobate dated between the reigns of Obodas III or Aretas IV.

Fifteen meters west of the previous sounding, trench E15 offers the opportunity to observe the remnants of the northern wall of the temenos enclosure and, on both sides, occupation layers that predate the monumental structure. It consists of a succession of floors and fills in which many faunal remains and sherds were found in association, suggesting an important occupation phase in this area along the riverbed during the early Hellenistic period (ca. 4th–3rd century BC), prior to the development of the city center.

References

- Graf, D., L. A. Bedal, and S. G. Schmid. 2005. "The Hellenistic Petra Project: Excavations in the Civic Center, Preliminary Report of the First Season, 2004." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 49: 417–41.