

## EXCAVATIONS AT PETRA

( 1976 - 78 )

by

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Previous investigations<sup>1</sup> in the rock-cut monuments of Petra unearthed dating material which stimulated systematic research in the ill-known necropolis. Thanks to the financial assistance of the Naturhistorische Gesellschaft, directed by Dr. Dr. M. Lindner and to the Petra-Jerash Tourist Project, headed by Mr. Y. Alami, short seasons of excavations were conducted in several areas of the city. The main objectives were to resume the clearance of Tombs BI,1, 815 and to uncover new promising rock-cut monuments in the hope to solve the crucial problem of their chronology.

**Shaft Tomb BI,1** (Fig.1 and Pls.LXXXIII-LXXXIX).

On the slope west of the Urn Tomb (Br. 772) a square structure was discovered in 1973, overlaying a shaft of 2.05m by 0.70m, dug in the rock floor. It leads by means of toe-holes (Pl.LXXX,1) to a funeral chamber measuring 5.20m by 2.70m (Fig.1) and excavated with 8 sunken-graves. Only Graves 1 and 2 were cleared out in the first campaign. In April 1976, the work was resumed by Muhammed Murshed, Kathrin Göbel and W. Müller<sup>2</sup>, while the writer was in the hospital. This report depends mainly on the notes of the supervisors.

Grave N°3 was covered with fragments of

green, yellow, blue, black and red stucco. Its origin remains problematic, although it was assumed in the 1973-74 report that it was introduced through the shaft, after the destruction of the upper structure. But it is well known that Nabataean tombs bear traces of stucco (see Tomb 813, above). The cist was filled up with red sand and contained very poorly preserved skeletal remains together with bronze bells and glass fragments.

In the adjacent Grave 4, which was disturbed, a skeleton was covered with sand and stones. Roman, Byzantine and Nabataean sherds were collected. An ostrakon fragment inscribed with illegible Nabataean letters (N°1, Pl. LXXXI) was among them.

Three covering slabs out of six were *in situ* over Grave 5. Two skeletons were exposed in the cist which measures 2m by 0.6m and was 1.10m in depth. The earliest one which was laid on a layer of sand was separated from the upper one by a bed of mortar. A rich funeral deposit was recovered with the lower burial, consisting of pottery objects and bronze bells (see inventory).

Grave 6 was still covered by four slabs, two being removed from the south. Three lamps (N°s 8,9 and 10) were deposited with the fragmentary skeletal remains. Iron nails and two cockles were also found.

1. ADAJ, XIX (1974) p. 135-50.

2. Cf. a preliminary report by W. Müller and Katherin Göbel, in *Natur und Mesch* (1976) p. 97-101.

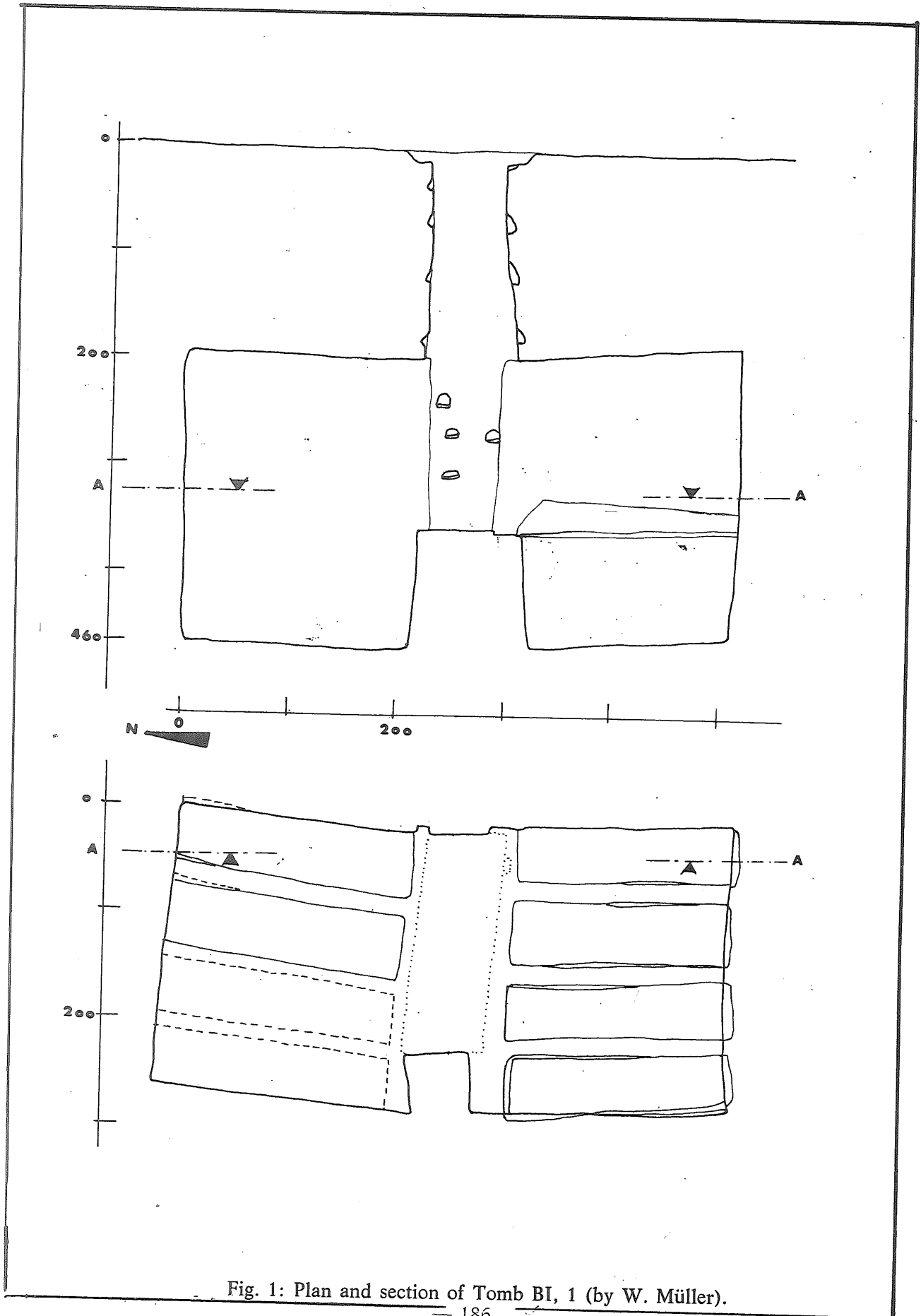


Fig. 1: Plan and section of Tomb BI, 1 (by W. Müller).

The next Grave 7 was of a different arrangement : when the top soil was removed, a complete skeleton appeared (Fig.2), head to north and arms alongside the body. A fragmentary skull which was left to the west, may belong to a different internment. Below this skeleton, several layers of mortar, sand and stones (Fig. 2a) were removed. Fragmentary bones were encountered at the bottom of the cist, on the usual bed of sand with a small cosmetic pot (Pl. LXXXV,2) and iron nails.

The last Grave 8 to the south was covered with a layer of painted plaster. Two skeletal remains, separated by mortar were recognised. The skull found with Grave 7 may have been transferred from the upper skeleton. A silver coin of Aretas IV and Shaqilat (Pl.LXXXIII) bronze bells and nails were found at the bottom of the cist together with two skulls and bones.

**The Objects:**

A significant pottery group was collected from the Graves (Pls.LXXXIV - LXXXIX). The most characteristic objects are four oil lamps, two of the delphiniform type. Lamp N°6 found in Grave 5 is of a dark gray ware, common in the Hellenistic period<sup>3</sup> and is decorated with a moulded horse-shoe impressions. The elongated burned nozzle bears an incision which starts from the top of the handle. The second example (N°9) from Grave 6 is remarkable because of a moulded lion head, the mouth working as the oil hole. Four other little holes for ventilation are distributed around the main hole. This object, as far as I am aware, has no parallel in the Nabataean

3. Paul Lapp, *Palestine Ceramic Chronology*, New Haven, 1961, p. 196, Type 84.  
 4. *RB*, LXI (1954) Fig. 2:16; LXIII (1956) Fig. 1:14.  
 5. *QDAP*, IX (1939) Pl. XXVII, 155.

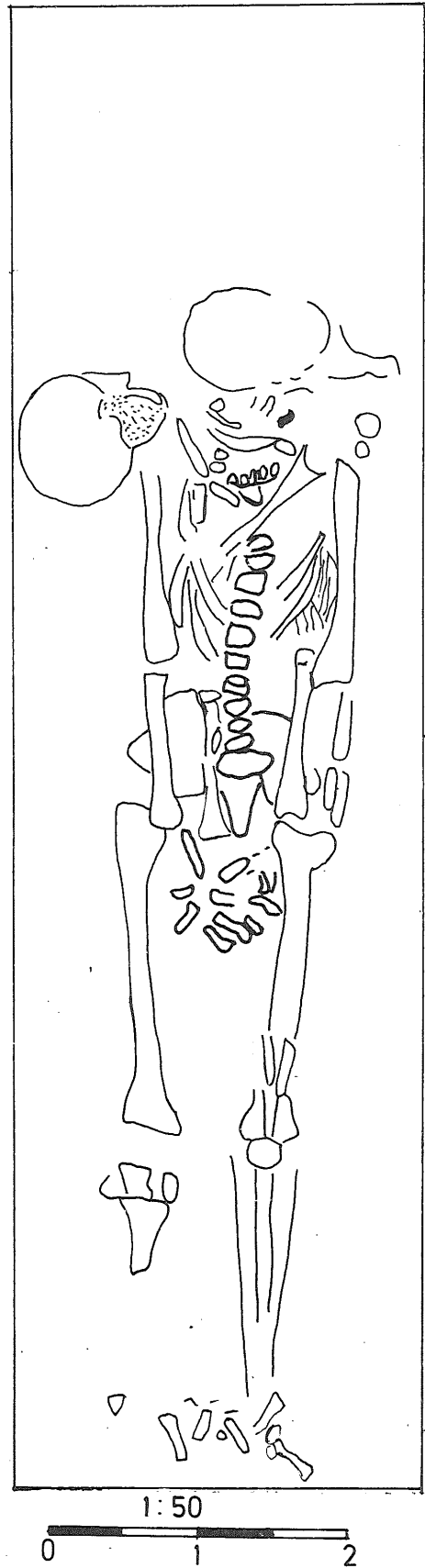


Fig. 2: Upper skeleton in Grave 7

corpus.

A hoard of delphiniform lamps close to the Petra model which were discovered by Father de Vaux at Qumrân and are dated 50-31 B.C. and are provided with loop handles and a little channel between the body and nozzle. this channel is replaced at Petra by a shallow incision. An exact parallel to lamp N°6 was yielded in Tomb E 3 in the Mu'eisrah Ridge<sup>5</sup>, excavated by Horsfield and dated by him to the 2nd century B.C. or Early Christian period. This chronological appreciation must be re-considered in the light of these new discoveries.

Lamps N°8 and 10 of the bow spouted type (so-called Herodian) are decorated with moulded rays and rosettes. They are typical of the Nabataean factories and are abundantly represented at Petra. An excellent example of

6. A. Negev, *The Nabataean Potter's Workshop at Oboda*, Bonn, 1874 p. 28 and Pl. 17:88.

7. *QDAP*, IX (1939) Pl. XXI, 155.

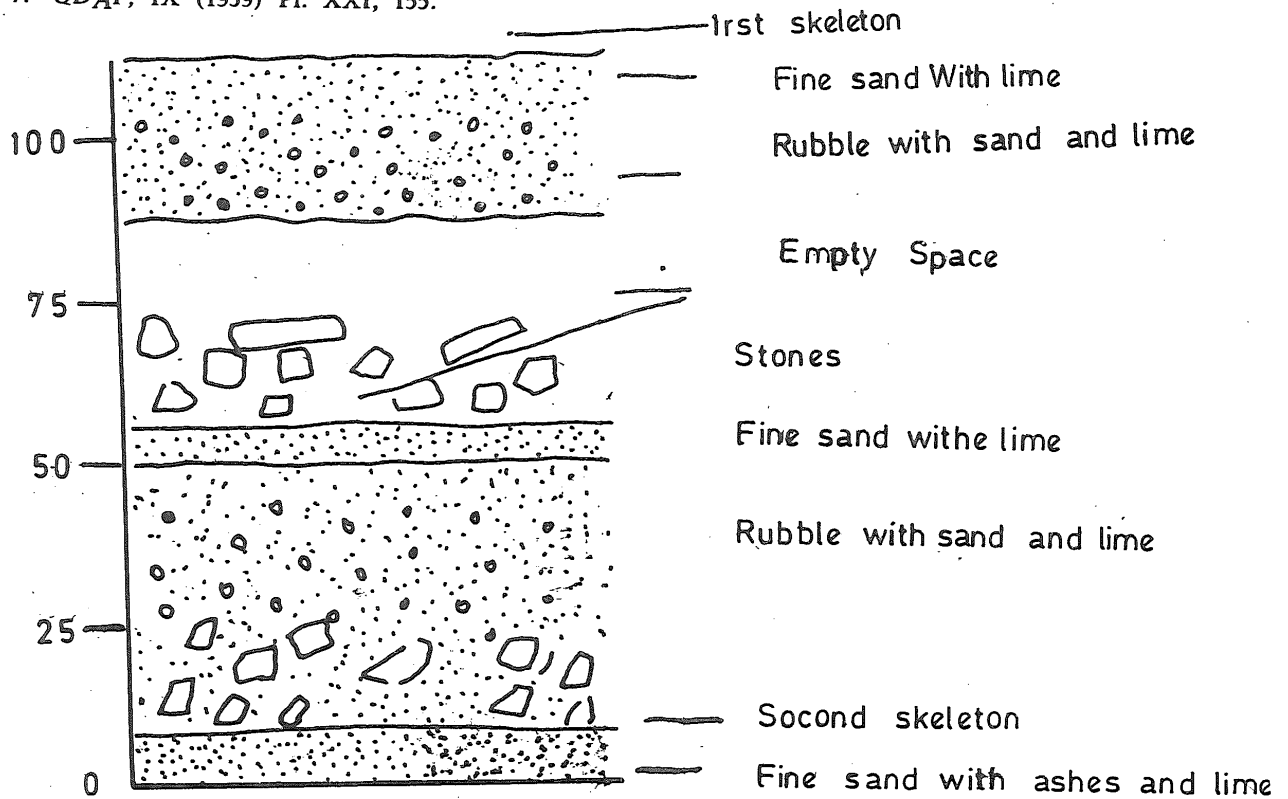
the voluted type came from the pottery workshop of Oboda<sup>6</sup> in the Negev and is dated to the early first century A.D.

This dating can be corroborated by the two unguentaria N°s 4 and 5; N°4, of a pear-shaped body and a pointed base was found in grave 5 and is covered with a gray-slip. The other unguentarium (N°5) discovered in the fill between graves 5 & 6 has a globular ribbed body and an outflaring rim. A good parallel to it was found by Horsfield<sup>7</sup> who dates it to the 1st century A.D.-B.C and the same date is given by M. Murray<sup>8</sup>.

Bowl N° 13 with an inverted rim and a ring base is related to Hellenistic prototypes. Similar forms were published by Murray<sup>9</sup>, Horsfield, and can be dated to the early first

8. *A steet at Petra*, London (1940) Pl. XXVII, 155

9. *Ibid.* Pl. XXVII, 62 (Form 22, p.22).



Tomb B 1  
Section Of G 7

Fig. 2a

century A.D.

Cup N° 14 of thick coarse ribbed ware may seem intrusive in this group. But good parallels to the form may be cited from Petra<sup>10</sup>, in the 1st century A.D

A fragment of a moulded vase (N°11, Pls LXXXIV-LXXXIX), is decorated with the profile of a female figure, wearing a chiton and a calathos decorated with an uraeus. She is holding an unidentified object in the left hand and extending the other. A cupid dressed with a rounded wig<sup>11</sup>, is advancing to the left, dragging an object with the right hand. The female figure is probably an Egyptian goddess. The vase of pinkish creamy ware and brown paint is possibly an imitation of the Arretine pottery<sup>12</sup>, which flourished in Italy in the first half of the 1st century A.D. An Egyptian-

Alexandrian influence could be postulated.

*The silver coin N°17* was found in grave 8' which, unfortunately, produced no other objects, except for iron nails and bronze bells. the obverse is struck with the busts of Aretas IV and Shaqilat, while the reverse bears the head of the king only. This type of coins can be dated to the twenty-seventh year of Aretas' reign (18 A.D.)<sup>13</sup>.

#### **Small objects:**

Nails and bells were collected from all the excavated graves. The nails could be an evidence of wooden boxes and the bells which are very common in Nabataean tombs<sup>14</sup>, can be considered as apotropaic. As for the cockles, they may be used with the same intention but also for pottery burnishing<sup>15</sup>.

10. *ADAJ*, XIX (1974) p. 147 and Pl. LXIX, 40.

11. Compare the wig of Cupid to a figurine of Alexandria, *Annuaire du musée gréco-romain* (1935-39) Pl. 167 and Pl. LXVII,2.

12. C. Johns, *Arretine and Samnian Pottery*, British Museum Publication, Oxford, 1977, p.9.

13. Y.Meshorer, *Nabataean Coins*, *Qedem*, 3 (1975), group D, P. 55 and Pl. 7, 103.

14. F. Zayadine, *Syria*, XLVII (1970) p. 125-26, and Fig. 12.

15. *Samaria-Sebaste*, III, Pl. XXVII.

### Tomb BI,1 Inventory

N°	Reg/ N°	Prov.	Description	Pl.
1	12	BI,T1, Grave 4	Ostracon inscribed with Nab. letters in black ink. Red ware, white slip.	LXXXIV
2	18	BI,T1, Grave 7	Small cosmetic pot, pedestal base, ribbed globular body. Orange ware, yellowish slip, white deposit.	LXXXV LXXXVII
4	3	BI,T1, Grave 5	Unguentarium, piriforme ribbed body, pink ware, gray slip, rim missing.	LXXXV, LXXXVII
5	2	BI,T1, Between G. 5&6	Unguentarium, outflaring rim, globular ribbed body, pink ware, buff surface, white inclusions.	LXXXV LXXXVII
	6	BI,T1,2 Grave 6	Moulded lamp, dark gray ware, pinkish slip, burned nozzle.	LXXXV
7	7	BI,T1,3 Grave 6	Two Cockles.	LXXXIV
8	8	BI,T1,3	Bow-spouted lamp, creamy ware, ochre slip, traces of brown paint on depressed oil hole and rounded body.	LXXXV LXXXVIII
9	9	BI,T1,2 Grave 6	Delphiniform lamp, moulded, decorated with lion mask, pink to gray ware, burned nozzle L.11,7 cm; H.3,5 cm.	LXXXV
10	10	BI,T1,2	Bow-pouted lamp, creamy ware, ochre slip, moulded. L.8,6 cm; H. 3,2 cm.	LXXXIV
11	12	BI,T1,2 Grave 5	Vase fragment, decorated with a female figure with cupid; creamy pinkish ware, brown slip	LXXXIV LXXXIX

13	13	BI,T1,2 Grave 5	Bowl fragment, pink ware, yellow paint over outer rim.	LXXXV LXXXIX
14	14	BI,T1,2	Cup, pink ware, buff surface, white inclusions,	LXXXV, LXXXIX
15	15	BI,T1	Bronze-bells.	LXXXVI
16	16	BI,T1	Iron nails.	LXXXVI
17	17	BI,T1,11 Grave 8	Silver coin. Ob. Bust of Aretas IV,r. Inscr [HRTT MLK NBTW] RHM'MH Rev. Jugate busts r. of Aretas IV and Shaqilat. Diam. 14 mm; Wt. 3,5g.	LXXXIII

### Tomb 813

The 'Uneishu Tomb, of the Hegra type, is carved in the western Khubtha cliff, at the exit of the Siq and opposite the theatre (Pl. XC). It has been already excavated in 1973-74<sup>16</sup>, and yielded rewarding objects and inscriptions. Loculus 4 of the eleven sunken graves (Fig. 3) was not excavated for it was obscured with one meter of rubbish accumulated by the bedouins and their herds. When this modern occupation debris was removed, it appeared that the first covering slab of the grave was missing and the space filled with sand and rubble. A sandstone fragment of 29X25X8cm engraved with few Nabataean letters (see below) came to light (Pl. XCII, 1). The sunken grave which is 1.35 m in depth was covered by slabs about 12cm thick overlaid with a layer of stone chips and mortar about 25cm in height. It was evident that the grave was visited in ancient times. Nevertheless, a fragment of a skull was at the southern end of the burial resting on a bed of ashes and lime. The contents was swiftly and a gold ring together with a silver coin were found. (see below).

#### The clearance of the Courtyard:

Part of the esplanade in front of the tomb was cleared out from the accumulated sand. This operation exposed the podium of the tomb and a flight of 3 steps 25cm in height, leading to the chamber. This is, to my knowledge, the only example of Hegra tomb at Petra, provided with a stepped access. A fragment of an Egyptian cavetto (Pl. XCII,2) fallen from the tomb façade was discovered in the debris.

#### The Objects:

1. The fragment of gold ring (Pl.

XCI,2). is 4,5 cm in diameter and is hollowed. It is too small for a bracelet but could be used as earring or pendant.

2. The silver coin (Pl. XCI,3) which is 16mm in diam. and 3,13g in weight, is badly corroded. The profile of the king with long-curved hair can be distinguished in the obverse. It is most probably the bust of Malichus II (40-60 A.D.) as one can assume from comparable silver coins in the Amman Museum.

3. The Nabataean inscription is unfortunately very fragmentary and reads:

1. MLKT
2. W

In the second line, the top of the curve belongs to a *waw* and it is likely that the word to be restored is NBTW. In this case, the inscription can be translated: Queen of the Nabataeans. The title of Queen was carried by princess of the royal family<sup>17</sup>, as proved by a dedication to Pasaël, daughter of Aretas IV who is called "Queen of the Nabataeans". It is not easy to determine whether the inscription commemorates the Queen or a princess of the royal family. The coin of Malichus II with the other objects and inscriptions suggest that the burial belonged to 'Uneishu and other members, of the ruling dynasty, in the time of Malichus II. The closed *mem* is certainly in favour of a date in the second half of the first A.D.

#### Monument Br. 9

As the visitor descends from the modern Rest House, towards the Siq, he will encounter in the er-Ramleh area, three disengaged sandstone blocks, locally known as *Sahrij* or water tanks (Pl. XCIII,1). The third monument to the right is distinguishable by the attached half

16. ADAJ, XIX (1974) p. 142ff.

17. T.J. Milik, J. Starcky, ADAJ, XX (1975) p. 113-14.



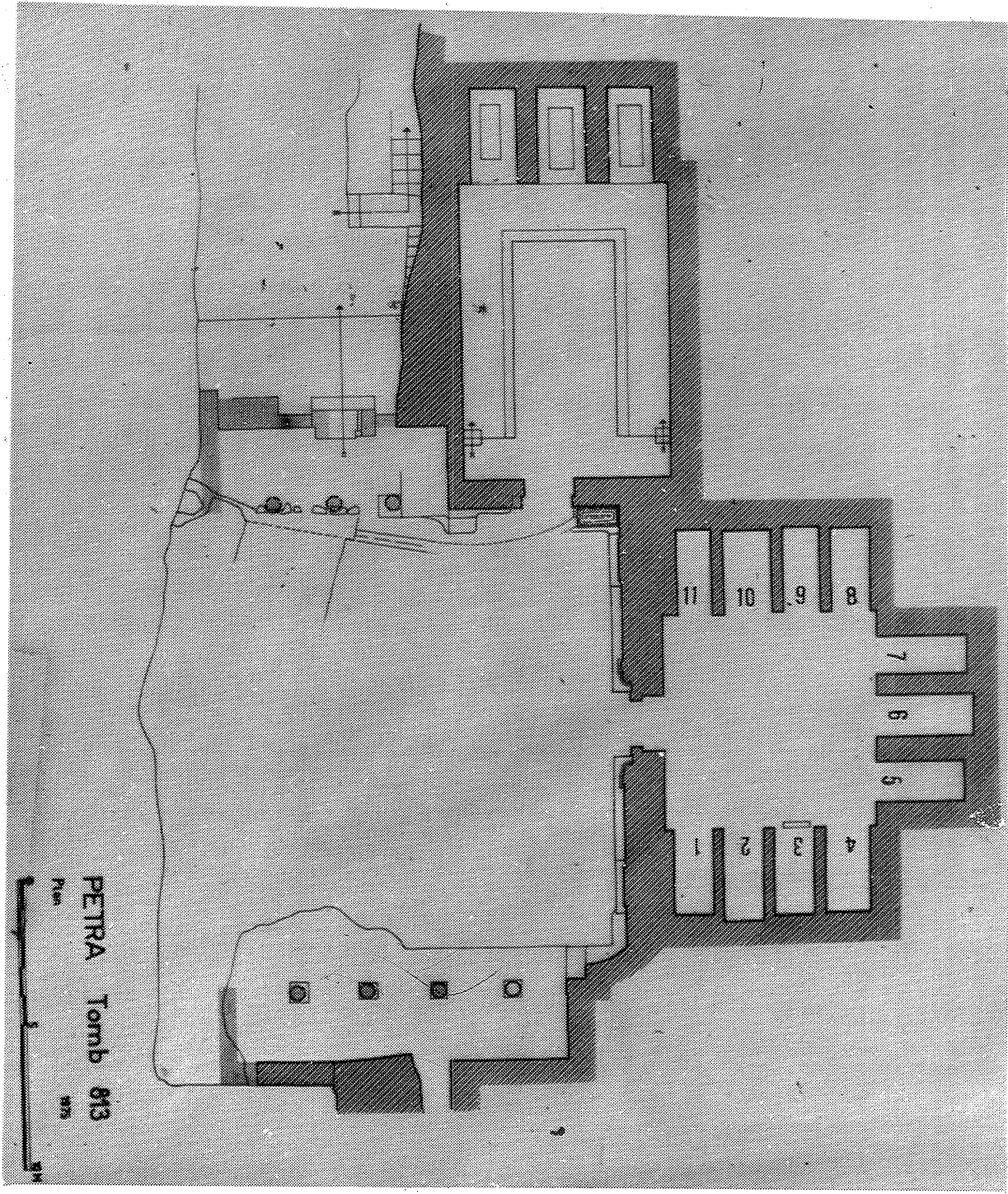


Fig. 5: Ground plan of Tomb 813 and adjacent trichlinium.

columns and pilasters (Pl. XC, 3) on the four façades which were once crowned by imported capitals. The entablature consists of an architrave, topped by a cornice which was wedged in a groove and a plain attica. It is likely that the monument was terminated by a built over structure including a *kimation* or apron string, a cavetto and half merlons of the Hegra type (see Tomb 813). This hypothesis is suggested by the discovery of a depressed margin of 64 to 68 cm in width, around the tip of the monument (Fig. 4) probably prepared to support the over imposed structure.

#### Exploration of the Monument:

In the northern rock wall, out of which the block was separated, a sloping ramp was prepared. It terminates in a little square platform which allows the explorer to examine the flat top of the monument. A shaft, cut in the terrace of the block was an irresistible appeal for investigation which the writer accomplished in the winter 78-79, while he was in charge of the Qasr el Bint excavations. The access to the shaft was made possible by a wooden bridge about 7 meters long (Pl. XC,2) which was laid between the ramp and the tip of the platform. Fearless bedouins crossed the bridge followed by architect Fr. Larché and other members of the excavation team. The rim of the shaft was strewn with pot sherds and stone chips. A rectangular cut 13 cm deep was carved in the northern margin while a little drain is incised in the eastern margin.

The cist which average 2.62m by 1.15m is 2.05m deep. There is a ledge on the southern flank only. After the clearance of the shaft, no objects were collected except for broken water pipes, 15cm in diameter and few Nabataean and Byzantine body sherds. The inter-

pretation of the monument is problematic. The absence of bones and covering slabs work against the hypothesis of a tomb. G.H. Wright<sup>18</sup> has suggested that some of the Petra High-Places were used for ritual exposure. It is more likely that such isolated cists similar to those of the Fars in Iran are better candidates for such practices, if they were ever adopted by Nabataeans. The discovery of water pipes is rather unexpected. They were probably a waist of the aqueduct which runs along the foot of the rock wall, north of the monument.

#### A Cultural Niche in the Siq

A niche hewn out of an isolated sand-stone block, about halfway in the Siq, where a section of the paved street is preserved, has been uncovered by the inspector of Petra, Mr. Mujahed el-Muhaisen in 1977. Although the upper part of the niche, i.e., the frieze of triglyphs and metopes seems to have been always visible, the monument was not recorded neither by Brünnow and von Domasewski nor by G. Dalman<sup>19</sup>, who published a meticulous survey of the sacred sites of Petra.

The niche (Fig. 5 and Pl. XCIV,1) which is 2.47 m high, is flanked by two antae, crowned by Nabataean capitals, a doric architrave and a frieze of triglyphs and metopes. Holes which hold traces of stucco are drilled in the architrave and the niche. A remarkable feature of the niche are the two baetyls which are cut in low relief on a pedestal. The left one which averages 0.93m by 0.49m bears in relief two squares, separated by a rectangular band, a schematic representation of a human face. This type of anthropomorphic idol is already known at Petra<sup>20</sup>, Wadi Ramm<sup>21</sup>, and Southern Arabia<sup>22</sup>. The best parallel to these twin idols are preserved on the granitic rocks of

18. PEQ (1969) p. 113-16.

19. *Petra*, Leipzig (1908).

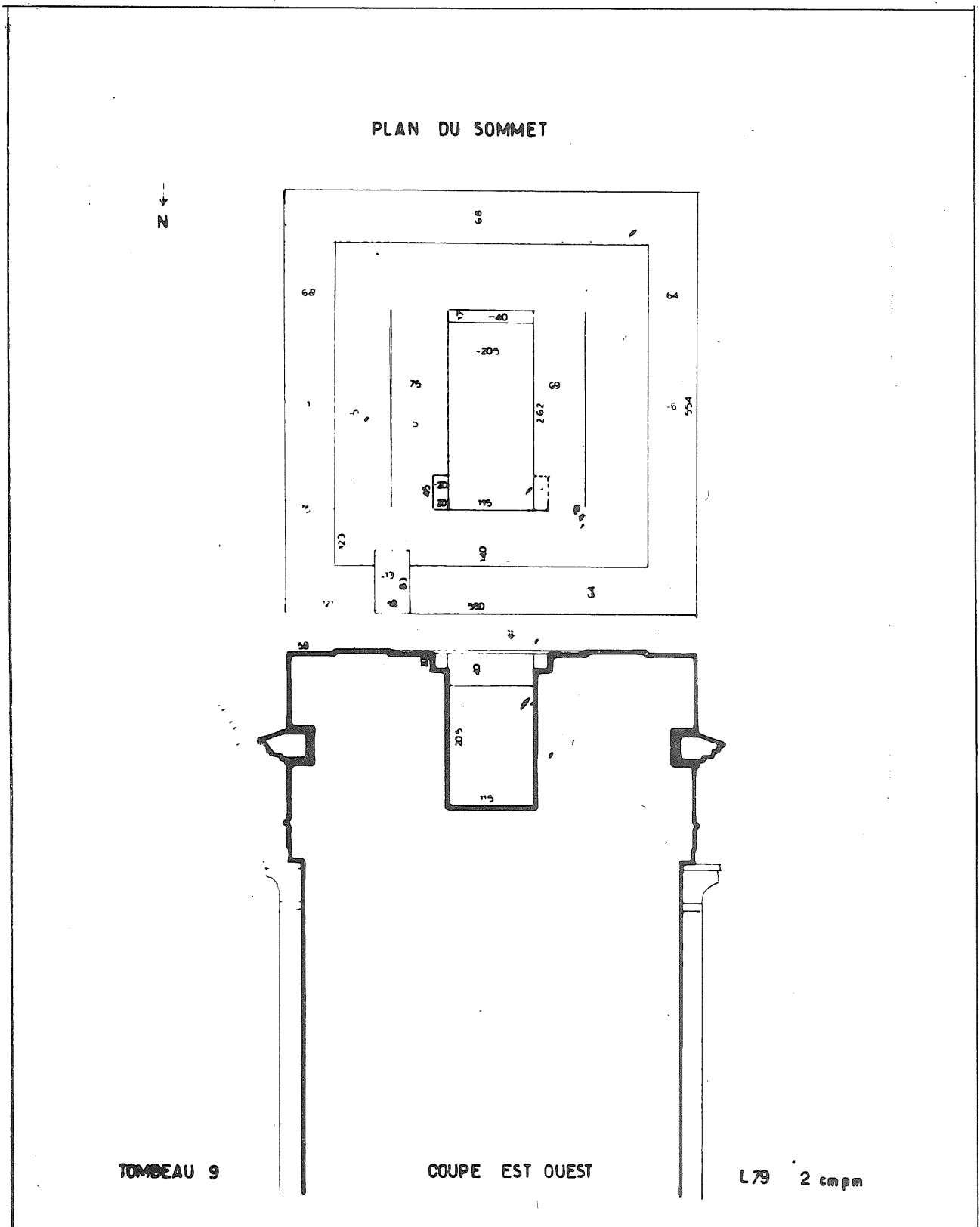


Fig. 4: Tomb 9, top plan and E-W. section (by Fr. Larché)

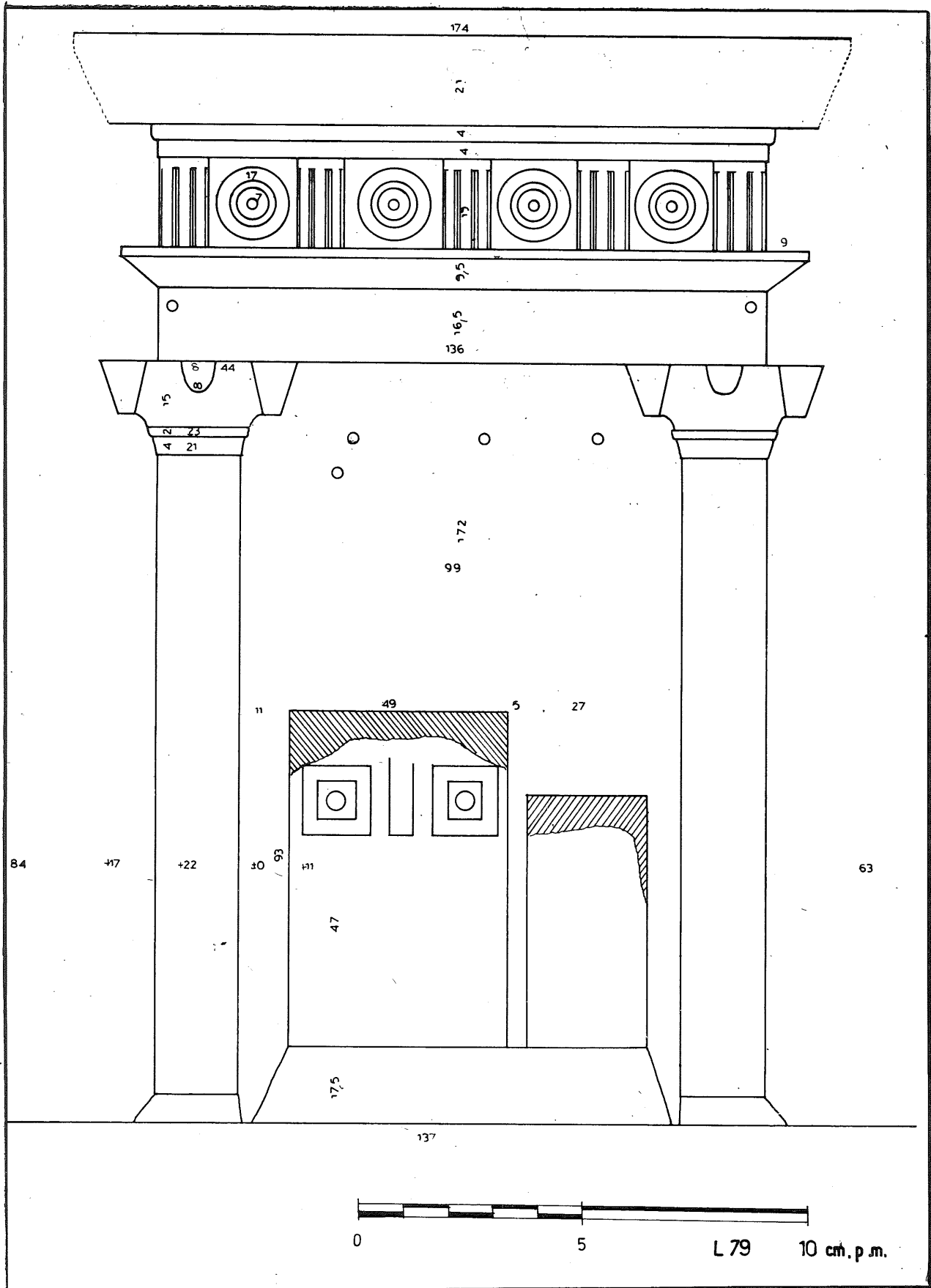


Fig. 5: Cultual niche in the Siq

Ain esh-Shallaleh, near Wadi Ramm temple (Pl. XCIV,2). Two pairs of idols are identified by inscriptions as al-'Uzza and al-Kutba of Ga'ia (modern Wadi Musa village) and as al-'Uzza and the "lord of the house". In both cases, the baetyl of al-'Uzza is adorned with a schematic human face. The Arabian origin of this idol is well attested by the stele of Hegra and South Arabia. A more anthropomorphic version of these idols was discovered at Hajar bin Humeid in Yemen<sup>23</sup>, at Taima<sup>24</sup> and recently in the Winged Lion temple of Petra<sup>25</sup>, excavated by Ph. Hammond (Pl. XLII). The Nabataean inscription which is to be dated to the 2nd half of the 1st century A.D. reads: "The goddess of Hayyan son of NYBT". There is no convincing evidence to identify this goddess with Atargatis.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, it is not easy to identify the two steles of the Sîq. New epigraphic discoveries at Petra brought to light many dedications to al-'Uzza, mentioned with a priest, in some cases: she is recorded in Wadi es-Siyyagh,<sup>27</sup> near the spring, at Sidd el Ma'âgen, in a gorge at the northern end of Khubtha, and on the way to al Khubtha High-Place,<sup>28</sup> with the "lord of the house". It is probable, if we compare these dedications to the other mentioned goddesses, that the consort of Dushares at Petra was al-'Uzza.

The dating of the Sîq niche is conjectural, due to the absence of inscriptions. It is clear that it is part of the layout of the Sîq as the main access to Petra. The constructed podium

on the paved street is probably the footway built with the paved road. If the assertion of P. Parr<sup>29</sup> that the street was built after 76 A.D. is accepted, the niche must be of earlier date. The frieze of triglyphs and metopes appears at Hegra as early as 1 B.C. It is possible to date the niche of the Sîq in the 1st half of the first century A.D.

#### General conclusion:

Shaft tomb BI,1, on the western Khubtha slope can be dated on the evidence of coins and pottery objects to the reign of Obodas III (30-9 B.C.) and Aretas IV (9 B.C. - 40 A.D.). The deposit was certainly disturbed by tomb robbers of the Byzantine period. Pottery lamps of the delphiniform type are related to the end of the first century B.C. But the majority of vases are to be dated to the reign of Aretas IVth.

It is now established that Tomb 813 was the burial place of Minister 'Uneishu and probably of members of the royal family. The double frame of the doorway which appears at Hegra after 31 A.D. can be considered as a good criterion for similar façades at Petra. The influence of Alexandria on this type of door frame is evident.

It is hoped that the resumption of the excavations in Tomb 813 and other rock-cut monuments will bring dating material which will certainly elucidate the mystery of the Petra undecipherable façades.

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20. *CIS*, II, 1, Pl. XIIX, N°423.

21. *RB*, XLIII (1934) p. 14ff and Figs. 11-12

22. C. Rathjens, *Sabaica* (1955) p. 219-24.

23. G.W. Van Beek, *Hajar bin Humeid*, Baltimore 1969), Pl. 47f. and Fig. 116g.

24. *Saudi Arabia Antiquities*, Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1975.

25. *ADAJ*, XII (1977-78) p. 81ff.

26. The nude goddess (*Ibid.* p. 86) riding a dolphin is probably a Nereid. Atargatis, the Syrian Goddess, was never depicted as a nude deity.

27. *ADAJ*, XX (1975) p. 124ss.

28. *RES* 1088.

29. *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century* (1970) p. 370.