

# RECENT DISCOVERIES IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE

QASR] BINT FAR'UN AT PETRA

## I. ACCOUNT OF THE RECENT EXCAVATIONS

by P. J. Parr.

### Introduction.

Ever since the early days of its work at Petra, the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem has concerned itself with the Qasr el-Bint temple and its environs. In 1959 excavation at the foot of the Arched Gate at the western end of the colonnaded street not only proved this building to be the monumental entrance to the temple precinct, as previously suggested by von Domaszewski and others, but also revealed its true plan for the first time, thereby making possible significant advances in the discussion of its date<sup>1</sup>. In the same year, a sounding at the north-east corner of the Qasr itself established the previously unappreciated fact that the temple rested on a podium and was approached up a flight of monumental steps<sup>2</sup>. These were important additions to knowledge; but the main task, that of excavating the temple precinct, or **temenos**, itself, was too great for the resources of the School, and it fell to the lot of the Jordanian Government to clear the greater part of this area, at various times during 1963 and 1964. In the course of this work the salient features of the plan of the temenos were revealed, and many important discoveries made, the most prominent being a number of reliefs and inscriptions. The sculpture is discussed in a preliminary fashion by Mr. G. R. H. Wright in the second part of this report (below), while the inscriptions are the subject of a separate studies by the Abbé Jean Starcky, Mrs. C. M. Bennett and Mr. John Strugnell, in this Volume and elsewhere. One of them must be mentioned here, however, since its discovery was the direct cause of further investigations being carried out. (Fig 10, pl VI ). This text is in Nabataean, on a block of sandstone forming part of a row of benches along the southern side of the temenos ( described in greater detail below ), some 25m. east of the Qasr. It was uncovered, apparently, early in 1964, but seems not to have been noted until the summer of that year, when the writer made

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( 1 ) P. J. Parr, *P. E. Q.*, 1960, p. 131 f.; G.R.H. Wright, *P.E.Q.* 1961, p. 124 ff.

( 2 ) P. J. Parr, *op. cit.*, 1960 p. 133, and G.R.H. Wright, *op. cit.*, 1961, p. 8ff.; J. Starcky and J. Stugnell, *Revue Biblique*, 1966. 236 - 247.

photographs and squeezes of it. The fact that this inscription was *in situ* and was built into a free-standing structure so close to, and so obviously related to, the Qasr el-Bint, made it of very great value. In 1965, with the authorization of the late Dr. Awni Dajani, then Director of Antiquities, the block was studied by the Abbé Jean Stracky and Professor John Strugnell. Their findings have already appeared in a volume of the *Revue Biblique*; it is sufficient to record here that the stone proved to be the base for a statue ( which was not found) of Aretas IV (9 B.C. - 40 A.D.), and the inscription to be dated palaeographically to not later than the beginning of the first century A. D.

The discovery of this new material bearing on the date of the *temenos* and the Qasr, together with the fact that the Jordanian Department of Antiquities was contemplating the resumption of its work of clearance, made it imperative that further stratigraphic excavation should be carried out in the area, with the principal aims of establishing the exact relationship between the inscription and the temple, and of obtaining complementary dating evidence from the latter building itself. After protracted consultations the present writer was invited to undertake this work, before the larger scale clearance got under way. These initial investigations took place during four weeks in September and October 1965. The work was financed and equipped by the Department of Antiquities, largely with monies made available by the United States Agency for International Development ( USAID); incidental expenses were met by the British School of Archaeology (Petra Excavation Fund). The archaeological staff was composed mainly of volunteers from Miss K. M. Kenyon's excavation team in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>, and the architect, on this as on other occasions, was Mr. G. R. H. Wright, whose report on certain aspects of the work appears below. To these colleagues, and especially to Mr. Wright, the best thanks of the writer are due. Grateful acknowledgement is also made of the assistance, of many kinds, provided by Dr. Dajani, Mr. Ralph Iler, Miss K. M. Kenyon, Dr. Paul Lapp, and Mr. Tom Zavishlock. Without the interest and co-operation of these people the work described in this article would not have taken place, and our knowledge of Petra's history would be considerably Less.

The following account of the Qasr el-Bint sanctuary and of the results of the recent work is of a preliminary nature only, and will be followed by a fuller treatment in the final report of the British School's excavations. It must be emphasized that a complete study of the temple area could not be undertaken in 1965, with the time and resources available, and that as a consequence many problems remain unsolved and many aspects of the area uninvestigated. It is confidently felt, however, that a solid basis for future work has been established, and that the outlines of this should be made available to other scholars without delay .

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( 3 ) Miss J. Farrell, Miss M. Geschier, Mr. T. Holland, Miss A. Searight, Miss G. Smith, and Mr. T. Strickland.



### General Description of the Sanctuary Area.

In view of what has been said in the last paragraph it will be appreciated that the description of the Sanctuary which follows is incomplete, and may even be inaccurate in detail. The plan published will almost certainly have to be revised on a future occasion. In particular, the structural details of the long southern wall of the *temenos* and of adjacent benches and other features have been insufficiently examined; even a cursory inspection reveals evidence of repairs and rebuildings, all of which have a bearing on the chronological development of the area and should, properly, be investigated. Such detailed investigation is a task for the future.

The Qasr el-Bint sanctuary area stretches for some 200 m. along the southern bank of the wadi Musa, from close under el-Habis in the west to the Arched Gate in east (Fig. 1, pl. I) This gate undoubtedly formed the monumental entrance to the temple precinct, at least during the later stages of the temple's history, although there were other entrances as well, as we shall see. It has been described many times before, most recently by G. R. H. Wright<sup>4</sup>. Our description of the temple area, therefore, may conveniently start within the gateway, and with two structures attached to that monument.

The first of these is a small tower-like building contiguous with the northern pier of the gate (see the plan, Fig. 18, pl. XI). It is poorly preserved, but what little remains was fully excavated in 1960; it will be discussed in the final report. It seems clear that in origin it is earlier than the present gateway, being founded on a wall which was partly destroyed when that monument was built<sup>5</sup>. The other structure attached to the gate adjoins its southern pier. It is again of tower-like proportions, although it is considerably larger than the northern building, and is preserved to a much greater height (Fig 2, pl. I and fig. 3, pl. II) It has only been partly cleared, and very inadequately studied; hence, little can usefully be said about its plan or function. However, one point is clear and deserves mention, namely, that it is entered from the *temenos*, by means of an imposing doorway. This fact suggests forcibly that the southern "tower" is an integral part of the sanctuary area, and had a rôle to play in the religious ceremonies which took place therein. It is possible that it is a vestibule belonging to some building lying further south. A glance at Bachmann's plan<sup>6</sup> shows that the ruins most closely adjacent to the gate on this side are those of the baths, and although excavation would be required to establish the relationship of these various structures, it may, perhaps, be tentatively suggested that the newly exposed "tower" is the main entrance to these baths. It

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( 4 )            *Op. cit.*, 1961 p. 124 ff.; *Revue Biblique*, 1966, p. 404 ff.

( 5 )            P. J. Parr, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

( 6 )            W. Bachmann et. al., *Petra* (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen des Deutsch-Türkischen Denkmalschutz-Kommandos, Heft 3 ), 1921, plate I.

has hitherto been assumed that this complex of building was approached from the colonnaded street through a doorway some 10 m. east of the Arched Gate, but this doorway seems hardly imposing enough to be the main entrance, and the doorway in the **temenos** might appear more suitable. The association of the baths with the sanctuary that this suggestion implies is by no means impossible. There is much evidence ( some of it collected by Ginouvès<sup>7</sup> for ritual bathing in connection with both classical and ancient oriental religions, and a bath-house might well form one of the adjuncts of this sacred area in Petra.

The façade of this "tower" or vestibule forms an angle with the southern boundary wall of the **temenos** ( Figs. 2 and 3, pl. I, II ). As stressed above, this wall is not necessarily a homogeneous structure, and further investigation might well reveal that it had a complicated history. The same can be said even more emphatically about the various structures which about the wall, lining the southern side of the **temenos**. The first of these structures is a low paved dais filling the corner formed by the boundary wall and the "vestibule" façade; it is about 3 m. wide, 15 m. long, and one step high. At the rear of the dais, against the boundary wall, is a stone seat or bench with a simple moulded profile. Next to this dais, and separated from it by a gap of about 30 m., is another stone platform, about the same length as the dais but slightly wider. This has no bench associated with it, and it is approached from the **temenos** up three shallow steps. It seems likely that this is the remnant of a flight of steps leading south out of the **temenos**; and the fact that it lies on the axis of the small prostyle hexastyle temple shown on the German plan<sup>9</sup> suggests that it is, in fact, the stepped approach to that monument<sup>10</sup>. It is true that there is no obvious doorway in the boundary wall at this point, but if, as seems probable, the steps are denuded, the original flight might well have risen to a threshold at a higher level than the surviving top of the wall. Further west still, these steps are succeeded by a small water basin ( not shown on the plan; see Fig. 4, pl. II ), and then comes the beginnings of another broad flight of stairs, ( 16.50 m. X 2.00 m ), consisting of

( 7 ) R. Ginouvès, **Balaneutiké : Recherches sur le bain dans l'antiquité grecque**. Paris, 1962

( 8 ) It must be pointed out, however, that the baths, in the form in which they are visible today, are almost certainly considerably later than the original sanctuary, which, as we shall see, cannot date from after the early 1st. century A. D. The baths, on the other hand, by virtue of the fact that one of their chambers is roofed with a pendentive dome ( see W. Bachmann, *op. cit.*, fig. 39 ), can hardly be earlier than the 2nd. century; such a dome occurring before this date would be so unusual as to be revolutionary. None of this is evidence against our postulated association of baths and sanctuary, however, since the "vestibule" might well be a later addition to the **temenos**, or the baths may have been rebuilt. Without excavation we cannot solve these problems.

( 9 ) W. Bachmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9, and fig. 43.

( 10 ) Starcky has already noted that this small temple opens off the Qasr el-Bint **temenos**. See **Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible**, VII ( Fasc. 39 ), col. 975.



only two visible steps, and here coinciding with an opening in the *temenos* wall. Where this leads remains unknown.

The main feature of this southern side of the Qasr precinct now appears : it is the double row of benches which stretches for some 73 m. in the direction of the temple ( Figs. 3 and 5, pl. III ). The benches, of large sandstone blocks, actually comprise three tiers, but the uppermost tier is a plinth or pedestal and only the lower two are true seats. They are provided with a projecting moulding, but otherwise they are quite plain. A fuller description of the western end of the row of benches will be given in the section of this report dealing with the 1965 excavations.

The benches end about 20 m. east of the Qasr el-Bint, at a point where the southern wall of the precinct is interrupted by another doorway ( Fig. 6. pl. III ). This is 3.50 m. between jambs, and is of a monumental nature, being framed within pilasters and quarter columns resting on engaged pedestals. Although preserved ( as is the *temenos* wall here ) to a height of some 3 - 4 m. , there is unfortunately no evidence for the original appearance of its upper part. Its threshold is approached from the *temenos* by means of a flight of four or five steps, now much destroyed, and within the doorway there is another paved area, a small part of which has been excavated. Bachmann's reconstructed plan of the Qasr el-Bint<sup>11</sup> shows this entrance as leading into a courtyard surrounded on three sides by rooms, but there seems to be no evidence for this on the ground, and most of Bachmann's walls are hypothetical. There is, in fact, almost no evidence to show how the area immediately south of the *temenos* was arranged. The baths and the small temple already been mentioned as occupying some of this area at the eastern end of the site, but for the central and western part there is no more than a suggestion of another long wall running parallel to the *temenos* wall a few metres away from it<sup>12</sup>. One point of interest may be noted here in this general connection, namely that the level of the paving uncovered within the doorway is only about 1m. higher than the paving of the *temenos* itself. This shows that there is no considerable and abrupt rise in the ground level south of the *temenos*, as has sometimes been assumed. A study - admittedly perfunctory - of the level of the remains of the small temple and of the baths ( which are preserved to roof height ) relative to that of the colonnaded street and the *temenos*, as well as evidence from excavations further east along the street<sup>13</sup>, tends to confirm this conclusion. It seems clear that the flattish area of ground on the left bank of the wadi Musa, on which the street and sanctuary were sited, extends somewhat further south than the present contours suggest, and that the buildings south of the street and *temenos* were on much the

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(11) *Op. cit.*, p. 58, fig. 50.

(12) *Ibid.*, plate I.

(13) Not yet published.



same level as those monuments themselves. Not only does this augur well for the productivity of future excavations in this area, but it has a bearing on the problem of the orientation of the Qasr el-Bint, as we shall see below .

West of the doorway at the end of the benches, the wall of the **temenos** continues for another 8 m. , until it is within 5 m. of the eastern flank of the Qasr. For this entire stretch it is abutted by a massive masonry pedestal, 2 m. wide and preserved to a height of 2 m. , the purpose of which is unknown. The **temenos** wall then makes a right-angled turn to the south, and although it has been traced for only a few metres in this new direction there can be little doubt that it runs parallel to the side of the temple, presumably turning west again to follow the rear wall of that building, and eventually joining up with the partly visible wall which forms the western boundary of the precinct. The Qasr would thus be encompassed on three sides by a **peribolos**, but it is important to note that the **peribolos** did not enclose the area immediately in front of the temple, forming (as the German Plan shows ) an axial courtyard arranged symmetrically around the monumental altar. In actual fact, the paving of the **temenos** stretches, unbroken by wall or step, from the altar to the Arched Gate : the establishment of this fact is, perhaps, one of the most significant results of the Jordanian Government's work on this site.

We thus come to the Qasr el-Bint itself. As in the case of the Arched Gate, this building has been discussed by so many scholars that no further treatment of its main features is called for here. The reader is referred to Mr. Wright's discussion with full bibliography, in the **Palestine Exploration Quarterly**<sup>14</sup>, and to a critical appraisal of this by the Abbé Jean Starcky in the **Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible**. A few new details concerning the building will be noted in the following section of this report.

West of the Qasr a short stretch of the end wall of the **temenos** is visible, including the exhedra shown on Bachmann's plan. One or two fragments of masonry recorded on the latter, however, can no longer be seen, and are not therefore drawn on the new plan published here. At the same time it must be emphasized that the work of the German surveyors, wherever it has been checked, has proved to be remarkably accurate, and it is reasonably certain that these additional lengths of wall did exist in 1917. They should, therefore, be added to our plan.

Little can be said about the long northern boundary of the **temenos**. In one or two places lengths of walling are visible, and their alignments are noted on the plan. The arrangement of this side of the sanctuary area is unknown, and it is likely that it has been subjected to so much erosion that all remains other than foundations have disappeared. At only one point did new evidence emerge, near the north-west corner of the area.

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(14) P. E. Q., 1961, p. 8 ff.



Here, roughly on a line with the western wall of the Qasr, a short return in the northern boundary wall is now exposed. As Mr. Wright points out in his discussion below, this is suggestive of an entrance to the **temenos** on this side, axial to the Qasr and altar.

Before leaving our description of the Qasr el-Bint precinct mention must be made briefly of one other feature, namely the paving itself. This has not been completely cleared or studied, but even a casual inspection shows that it is by no means continuous and homogeneous. Some of the interruptions and irregularities are no doubt the result of repairs, but there are places which are entirely devoid of paving slabs and where the surrounding slabs are laid with a straight edge. An example is shown on the plan, opposite the approach steps to the small temple; another (not planned) was investigated a few metres north of the masonry pedestal at the western end of the southern boundary. Here it was clear from the stratigraphy that an area, of unascertained dimensions, had been deliberately left free of paving. No trace of foundations was observed, and it seems unlikely that any substantial building ever stood on this spot. These unpaved areas may perhaps have been the emplacements of temporary booths or pedestals connected in some way with the rituals performed here; or could they possibly be the sites of small sacred gardens, or of tethering areas for the sacred and sacrificial animals which might well have been found in the **temenos**?<sup>15</sup>

#### **The 1965 Excavations.**

The stratigraphic excavations of 1965 were concentrated at the western end of the **temenos**, and had for their main objects the establishment of the date of the Qasr and the elucidation of the plan of its approach steps and altar. So far as the plan is concerned, the chief results of the work are summarized in Mr. Wright's account below and on the accompanying drawings. A more detailed treatment must await further study of the evidence, and will appear in the final report. In this present article attention will be directed towards the chronological aspect. Evidence relevant to this came from three areas, each of which will be discussed separately.

##### **(i) The Southern Temenos Wall and Benches.**

As already stated, the base of the statue of Aretas IV was found built into the benches along the southern side of the **temenos**, about 5m. from their western end. Excavations were conducted to establish the relationship of these benches with the **temenos** wall, and of the wall with the Qasr.

An inspection of the remains uncovered by the Department of Antiquities at this point revealed that the final 7m. stretch of benches is structurally distinct from the seats to the

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Lucian mentions sacred oxen, horses, bears, lions, etc., allowed to browse in the great court of the temple at Hierapolis. (*De Dea Syria*, edited by H.A. Strong and J. Garsang, 1913, p. 78, paragraph 41).



east (see Figs. 7 - 8, Pl. IV - V). The differences are of both design and build. The eastern benches - i.e. the main row - are constructed entirely of dressed stones, and both tiers of seats are provided with a projecting lip - a sort of cornice - which is chamfered. The chamfered lip on the lower bench is not visible on the published photograph, having been broken off at its point. The short row of benches to the west, however, is much more poorly built, having only an ashlar facing with a rubble and earth core behind. (Fig 9, Pl. V). Only the upper tier of benches here is moulded, although the moulding is more elaborate than is the case with the western seats. In view of all this there can be little doubt that the two adjacent sections of benches are of different dates.

It is, however, by no means easy to establish their relative sequence. The evidence of the masonry is inconclusive. It might at first sight appear that the eastern benches overlap slightly the western, and so are later in construction; but at the same time it must be recognized that the overlap is so small that the western masonry, if later, could easily have been inserted into this position. More informative is the evidence of the paving in front of the benches, which in this part of the **temenos** is manifestly homogeneous and of one period. It will be observed (Fig. 8, Pl. V) that the slabs run beneath the eastern benches, which are thus later than, or more probably contemporary with, the paving. At the foot of the western benches, however, the slabs are broken, and there is a gap of between 10 and 40 cms. between the paving and the lower bench. (Fig. 9, Pl. V) This gap runs the entire length of the western seats and coincides with them, save for a slight extension to the east. It is, moreover, clear that the paving was deliberately cut after it had been laid, since the broken edge is rough and chipped, unlike the normal finished edges of the slabs. The purpose of this later cutting is not evident, but it can surely only be associated with the erection of the neighbouring benches, which would thus seem to be later than those to the east. In the opinion of the writer this conclusion is probable, though by no means certain; certainty on this point could only be achieved by a complete dismantling of the structures, which is obviously undesirable.

Fortunately for our present purposes, the relative chronology of the two adjacent rows of benches is not of vital importance. What is important, and quite certain, is that the western benches are structurally later than the main **temenos** wall at their rear; they are clearly built up against it, and a trench dug through the rubble core of the benches showed the foundation blocks of the **temenos** wall continuing down below the level of the paving into the underlying wadi deposits. There is no break in the masonry of the wall coinciding with the break in the benches, and the wall is presumably contemporary with the paving. If our arguments above have been correct, then the most likely sequence of building in this area is ( i ) the **temenos** wall, paving, and eastern benches, followed by ( i i ) the cutting of the paving and the erection of the present western benches. It is logical to suppose ( and in fact there is some archaeological evidence for this, though not yet fully worked out ) that the benches of phase (i) originally ran the whole length of the **temenos**, and were later replaced by the existing western seats; the cutting of the pavement might then be associated with the destruction or removal of the



original structures. The interval of time involved is, of course, quite unknown, but our conclusion is that the western row of benches is later, by some probably fairly considerable period of time, than the **temenos** wall.

Now it is in the plinth belonging to the western benches that the Aretas IV statue base is situated (Fig. 10, Pl. VI). It is cut on the face of an ashlar block, about 30 x 50 cms. in size, and is patently in its original position, there being no evidence at all of its being reused stone from elsewhere. It is, in fact, only one of several inscriptions which were formerly displayed in this plinth; some 1.50m. to the east there is another, almost identical, block with a few surviving Greek characters, while in the close vicinity are two stones recessed for the affixture of, presumably, bronze or marble plaques (visible in the photograph, Fig. 7, Pl. IV. Whether or not all of these were statue bases is a moot point; it is certainly tempting to imagine here a row of Nabataean royal portraits. Be that as it may the Aretas base provides us with a terminus ante quem of about the beginning of the first century A.D. for the western plinth and benches, and thus for the **temenos** wall, which must, however, be a good deal earlier than this.

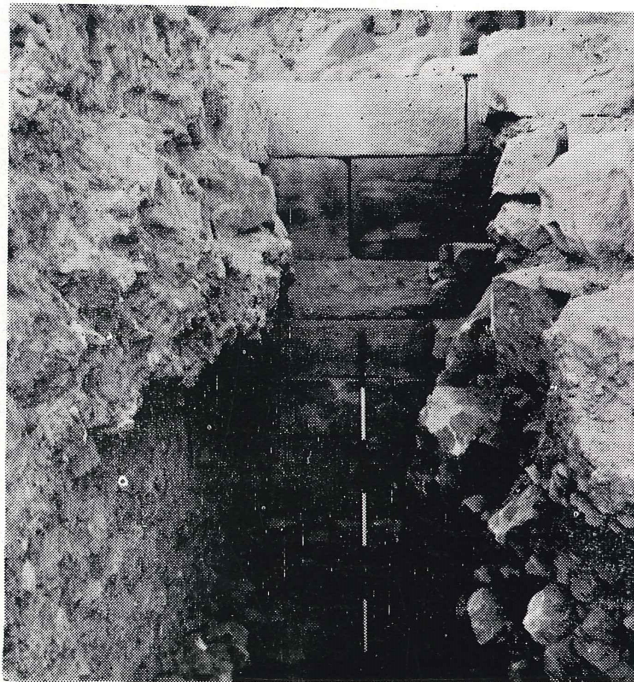
With this date established, the next stage is to investigate the relationship of the **temenos** wall with the Qasr itself. Again it must be stressed that the nature of the remains and the limited scale of our operations did not permit this investigation to be carried to an entirely satisfactory conclusion. In the present state of affairs our arguments have to be based largely on a consideration of the plans of the relevant structures, unsupported by stratigraphic evidence, and it is quite possible that minor building phases have not been recognized. In this connection we may note that, to the west of the doorway which marks the end of the benches, the **temenos** wall appears on the published plan to continue on not quite the same alignment as the corresponding wall behind the benches; the change of direction is very slight, but it could indicate that this portion of the wall is of a different period. However, since only the upper courses of the wall were uncovered it would be dangerous to base any argument on this change of direction, and in the absence of any certain indication to the contrary it may be assumed that the **temenos** wall on either side of the doorway is of one build and one period.

We have already seen that the **temenos** wall changes direction at a point some 5m. from the Qasr, and then runs southwards, more or less parallel to the flank of the temple. This change of direction would obviously make no sense if the Qasr - or an earlier building on the same plan - were not there, and since there is no evidence whatsoever for an earlier monumental structure beneath the Qasr (as we shall see later), the **temenos** wall is clearly later than or contemporary with the temple itself. The latter supposition is, of course, the more probable; the lay-out of **temenos** wall and temple is a unified one, manifestly part of a single design. Excavations in the intervening space between the podium of the Qasr and the corner of the **temenos** wall produced much evidence for the later history of this area, but the levels contemporary with and earlier than the buildings were very much disturbed by massive drains





**FIG. 10**  
The dedicatory inscription of Aretas IV.



**FIG. 11**  
the top of the scale ).  
Northern wall of Qasr podium, showing unfinished state of chamfer moulding ( just below



ferred. This chamfer moulding occurs on the main eastern face of the podium also. On the northern face, with which we are dealing, however, the chamfer is unfinished, being left in a rough state; neither is there any sign on it of weathering, such as occurs elsewhere. It can be assumed then that this face of the podium was never visible after the Qasr had been built; sometime during the course of construction a change of plan occurred - probably an increase in the width of the stepped approach - and the unfinished die wall was covered by the rubble fill forming the ramp for the steps.

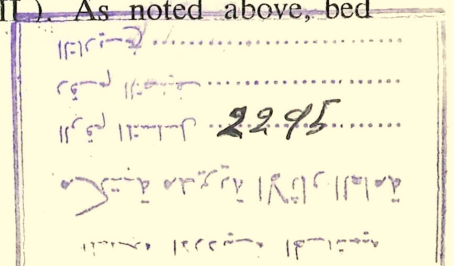
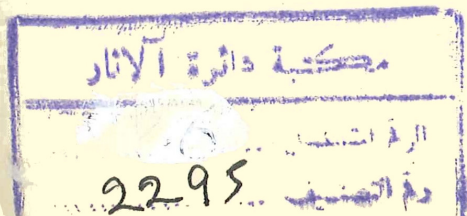
The lower part of the construction trench is filled with stones, and the upper part with a layer of purple stony earth. This upper layer extends across the entire section, and at the northern end it is overlain by other stony deposits, all presumably derived from the building activities on the temple.

**C. Construction of Stepped Approach.** The final stage is represented by the construction of the approach steps. Before this, however, there is evidence of some slight occupation on the surface of the débris left by the construction gangs and masons who had erected the main building. This consists, in the section under review, of the remains of a clay oven and some building blocks which could be part of a wall. The remains are quite slight, however, and in view of the unfinished podium wall, as well as of other stratigraphic indications elsewhere, a major occupation phase between the construction of the Qasr and the provision of its steps cannot be postulated.

The first task in the erection of the steps was evidently the construction of a stone gutter on the line of their foot (Figs 12 and 13, pl. VII) This gutter stretches across the entire width of the approach, except for a gap of 6 m. in the centre, corresponding in size with the central intercolumniation of the main façade of the temple. Below the gutter is an enclosed drain, and although its course was not traced we have little hesitation in suggesting that its ultimate destination was a cistern rather than the wadi, in view of the known preoccupation of the Nabataeans with water conservation.

Following the construction of drain and gutter the filling of heavy stones and earth would have been put in position, and on the ramp so formed the steps built. In this particular area none of the steps survive, although a little of the bedding layer of stones and concrete in which they were set can still be seen at the top of the section. Elsewhere, however, some marble slabs remain in position, giving some idea of the former appearance of the temple approach. In the second part of this report Mr. Wright makes additional comments on its arrangement.

A few metres to the west of this main section a small sounding was dug against the outer edge of the gutter at the foot of the flight of steps. This showed clearly its foundation trench cutting through a series of gravel and sand layers ( Fig. 13, pl. VII ). As noted above, bed





rock was very close to the surface here, and the gravelly and sandy deposits are to be interpreted as the work of the wadi in the pre-temple phase. Any later structures and deposits had presumably been removed, either by erosion or by man at the time of the construction of the temple, when the whole area might well have been deliberately levelled.

Many important aspects of the work done in 1965 in this area of the temple steps must await the final publication for discussion. Here only the chronological implications need be stressed. The first significant fact is the absence of any substantial building on the site prior to the erection of the Qasr. This by itself is persuasive evidence for an early date for this building, since it is unlikely that this focal part of Petra would have been left undeveloped for long after the initial architectural embellishment of the city; and there is evidence for this embellishment elsewhere at least as early as the 1st. century B. C.<sup>17</sup>. The second point to note is that the pottery found in the levels associated with the construction of the temple supports this argument. Although the material is not yet available for detailed study, preliminary inspection in the field left no doubt that the painted Nabataean fragments belonged to the early style of that ware, as isolated by the writer<sup>18</sup>, to be assigned generally speaking to the period from c. 60 B. C. to c. 25 A. D. Further study will make possible greater precision.

(iii) **The Altar.** ( Fig. 16, pl. IX ) Excavations in the vicinity of the monumental altar revealed much evidence for its original plan and appearance; some of this is noted by Mr. Wright below. From the chronological point of view most of the evidence related to the later history of the area, and this will be considered in the final report. It is only necessary to note here that beneath the south-west corner of the altar steps two earlier phases of remains were discovered, consisting of short stretches of foundations or walls. The excavations were too exiguous to throw light on the nature of these remains; they do not, however, suggest monumental architecture, and are probably to be equated with the slight structures found beneath the Qasr steps.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion.**

The evidence we have cited - epigraphic, architectural, and archaeological leads us to conclude that the Qasr el-Bint was constructed not later than the early years of the 1st. century A. D. with a date of a generation or so before being more likely. This conclusion is at striking variance with opinions expressed on many occasions by the writer and by Mr. Wright, and the mistaken nature of our earlier assumptions are freely acknowledged. Basing our arguments

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(17) Cf. P. J. Parr, "The Beginnings of Hellenisation in Petra", in *Le rayonnement des civilisations grecque et romaine su les cultures périphériques* (VIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès international d'archéologie classique) 1965, p. 529.

(18) *Ibid*, p. 530-1 and plate 132(1); *P.E.Q.*, 1960, p. 134-5; *Illustrated London News*, November 17th. 1962, p. 789 and figs. 10 and 17.



partly on the testimony of analogous buildings elsewhere, and partly on the presumed contemporaneity of the Qasr and the Arched Gate ( a matter to which we shall return in a moment ), we had been led to think that Qasr could not be earlier than the Antonine period<sup>19</sup>. This opinion can obviously no longer be sustained. Arguments based on analogy are notoriously weak; the difficulties to which they have given rise in the case of another Petra monument), we had been led to think that the Qasr co by Wright in a recent volume of this **Annual**<sup>20</sup>. Nor, in the case of the Qasr, do the analogies all point in the same direction; Starcky, following Kohl and Will in their discussions of the stucco decoration and of the plan of the **adyton** respectively has suggested a date in the reign of Aretas IV ( 9 B.C. - 40 A.D. ) for the temple.<sup>21</sup> This conclusion, based on comparative studies, is obviously nearer the truth than the former opinion of the present two authors; but even Starcky's date may be too low, in the light of the new archaeological evidence, and the reign of Obodas II ( c. 28 B.C. - 9 B.C. ) is equally likely<sup>22</sup>.

In view of all this we are compelled to look once more at the question of the date of the Arched Gate at the eastern end of the Qasr **temenos**. We had earlier assumed that temple and gate were contemporary, but this is evidently not so. It is generally agreed today that the gate can hardly be much earlier than the end of the first century A.D.; Starcky suggests the reign of the last Nabataean king, Rabbel II ( 70-106 A. D. ), while Wright and the present author would prefer to place it in the second half of the 2nd. century<sup>23</sup>. It is clear, then, that this cannot be the original gateway to the **temenos**, and there is in fact some slight archaeological evidence for an earlier gate, on the site of or close to the later. This comprises, in the first place, some building blocks and architectural members ( including part of a pilaster with applied stucco ) found re-used in what is probably<sup>24</sup> a massive foundation platform underlying the present gateway and, secondly, the newly discovered relief panels, described below by Mr. Wright, which stylistically seem more at home in the early part of the 1st. century A.D. than later, and which could well come from a monumental archway. These are tentative suggestions only; a more detailed analysis of the remains in the neighbourhood of the present gate must be made before there is hope of proving the existence of an earlier monumental entrance to the **temenos** from the east.

~~temenos~~

- (19) Cf. Wright, **P.E.Q.** 1961, p. 33 and p. 126; Parr, **Illustrated London News**, November 10th. 1962, p. 746; Parr, **Le Rayonnement des Civilisations** ....., p. 530.
- (20) **A.D.A.J.**, VI - VII (1962), p. 24 ff.
- (21) Starcky, **Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible** VII, col. 975 - 978 with references.
- (22) The temple of Ba'al Shamin at Si in the Hauran, which, as Mr. Wright discusses below, has a courtyard with benches similar to this at Petra, was begun in 33/2 B.C.
- (23) Parr, **P.E.Q.**, 1960, p. 131 ff; Wright, **P.E.Q.** 1961, p. 126; *Revue Biblique*, 1966, p. 417 - 419; J. Starcky, **op. cit.**; col. 947 - 8.
- (24) Parr, **P.E.Q.** 1960, p. 132 and plate XXII A.



### **Postscript : The Deity of the Qasr el-Bint.**

If this important question, that of the identity of the god - or goddess - worshipped in the Qasr, has been relegated to a postscript it is simply because the archaeological evidence has as yet thrown almost no light on it. It is generally assumed that it is the shrine of Dushara, and certainly it would not be inappropriate for the head of the Nabataean pantheon to be revered in what is obviously the most important sanctuary in Petra<sup>25</sup>. Until evidence to the contrary appears, therefore, we may accept this attribution. Two items of a primarily archaeological nature do have a bearing on this matter, however, and it may not be out of place to conclude this part of the report with a mention of them.

( i ) **The Cult Statue.** According to the Byzantine writer Suidas, Dushara was worshipped at Petra in the form of a square aniconic stone, and Starcky suggests that this would have been placed in the Holy of Holies of the temple, in other words in the central chapel of the tripartite **adyton**. Anthropomorphic representations of Dushara are also known, however especially on coins; they appear at Bosra certainly on those of Commodus ( late 2nd. century A. D. ), and possibly also on some of the final issues of the independent Nabataean kingdom<sup>26</sup>. It is probable that the Qasr el-Bint boasted such a divine image, at least in the latest stages of its history. During the 1959 excavations a fragment of a marble hand, about four times life size, ( Fig 14 pl. VIII ) discovered in the debris close to the north-east angle of the podium, representing the final destruction of the temple. The hand, which is clenched and might originally have been holding some object, is surely from an acrolithic statue of Greco-Roman style, and its size indicates its importance. A cult statue some 6-7 m. tall would fit comfortably in the space available in the Holy of Holies.

( ii ) **The Orientation of the Qasr.** The temple faces slightly east of north, and thus conforms approximately to the orientation of some other Nabataean temples, for example the so-called temple of Dushara at Si and the small temple at Umm el-Jemal. However, other Nabataean shrines are differently placed: the temples of Ba'al Shamin at Si and of Allat at Rumm face south-east, while the Tannur sanctuary points due east. The reasons for this variation, and the wider problems concerning the orientation of ancient temples, cannot be discussed here, but some attempt should be made to explain the strange siting of the Qasr el-Bint, at right angles

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(25) See, for example, Starcky in *Bible et Terre Sainte* No. 73 ( April 1965 ), p. 18. A recent attempt by Yadin to identify the Qasr el-Bint with the temple of Aphrodite at Petra mentioned in documents from the Judean desert does not convince the present writer; cf. Yadin, *Jarbericht Ex Orinete Lux* 17, 1963, p. 234 ff., and the author's reply in *ibid.* 19, 1966, p. 550 ff.

(26) C.R. Morey, "Dusares and the Coin Types of Bosra", in *Princeton Archaeological Expedition to Syria*, Div. II, Sect A, Pt. 4; Appendix. See also D. Sourdel, *Les cultes du Hauran*, 1952, p. 62.



to its temenos<sup>27</sup>. The orientation of the **temenos** is, of course, dictated by the configuration of the ground and the presence of the wadi; the **question** is, why was not the temple itself orientated the same way, facing east? It has been suggested that the reason was a purely practical one, namely that by siting the temple at right angles to the wadi advantage was taken of the natural rise of the ground to the south to provide **an impressive approach** to the Holy of Holies<sup>28</sup>. But, as we have seen, there is little to suggest that the ground level behind the Qasr is in fact much higher than the level of the **temenos in front**, so that this suggestion loses much of its force. The present writer once proposed that the temple was designed to face a postulated original main entrance to the city from the north along the wadi Abu Ollega, which joins the wadi Musa just opposite the monumental altar; but for various reasons this no longer seems a feasible answer. It may be that the Nabataean architects were simply following, in this single particular, the recommendation of Vitruvius, that temples built along rivers should face the river banks ( Book IV, Chapter 5 ). The answer to the problem may never be known; but perhaps, in the context of this interim report, a little further speculation might be allowed. Had the temple faced east, the view from the Holy of Holies - the scene spread before the eye of the cult statue - would have been a limited one, restricted to the **temenos** and the buildings lining the wadi, and closed by the wall of dark sombre sandstone which bounds the city on the east. Facing north, however, the view is very different ( Fig. 15, pl. IX ). Looking along the line of axis of temple and altar, the eye is drawn to the flat summit of a mountain, the Jebel el-Mu'eisrat, while a little to the right rises the limestone plateau of Jebel esh-Shara, the mountains of which Dushara was lord<sup>29</sup>. Might not the orientation of the Qasr el-Bint towards the north symbolize or commemorate in some way the connection of the deity with the mountain tops, and underline the predilection of the Nabataeans for the high places?

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- (27) We may note in passing that this arrangement is not unique. The temple of Ba'al Sheamin at Palmyra, for example dating in its present form from 130-1 A.D., but with elements of its **temenos** going back to at least 23 A.D., is flanked on both sides by great peristyle courts which are much more imposing than the small courtyard immediately in front of the **cella**. In this case the temple faces south-east. See P. Collart, *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie*, VII, 1957, p. 67 ff. and Plate I.
- (28) Wright, *P.E.Q.* 1961, p. 10.
- (29) But see Starcky, *op. cit.*, col. 986-7, for a critical discussion of this generally accepted association of Dushara with Jebel esh-Shara.