

THE INTERNATIONAL WĀDĪ FARASA PROJECT (IWFP): PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2007 SEASON

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Introduction and Acknowledgments

The 2007 field season of the International Wādī Farasa Project (IWFP) lasted from 12th August to sixth September. IWFP 2007 was part of the French project, “From Petra to Wādī Rum”, directed by Dr Christian Augé (CNRS, IFPO ‘Ammān). IWFP 2007 was conducted by the Association for the Understanding of Ancient Cultures (AUAC;), based in Basel, Switzerland, and was generously sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Paul Valéry University, Montpellier III, France. We would like to thank the Director General of the Department of Antiquities, Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, for his support and for granting the work permit, in addition to Dr Christian Augé (‘Ammān), Dr Fawzi Zayadine (‘Ammān), Prof. David F. Graf (Miami) and Dr Bernhard Kolb (Basel) for their continuous interest in the project. We would also like to thank IFPO ‘Ammān, especially its director Dr Jean-François Salles, for accommodating the team during its stay at ‘Ammān and Suleiman Farajat, director of the Petra Park Authority, for logistical support.

The following persons participated in IWFP 2007: archaeologists Stephan G. Schmid (director), André Barmasse (Basel), Laurent Gorgé (Basel), Bénédicte Renoult (Montpellier), Corinne Gosset (Montpellier) and Aurélie Guet (Montpellier). The Department of Antiquities representative was Abduraheem Hazeem, whose help and advice were very much appreciated. Ten workmen and one teawoman from the B’dul and Saydine tribes were employed. During the teams sojourn at Nazzal’s Camp, Shaher Mohammed al-Bdool was a very efficient and helpful camp manager.

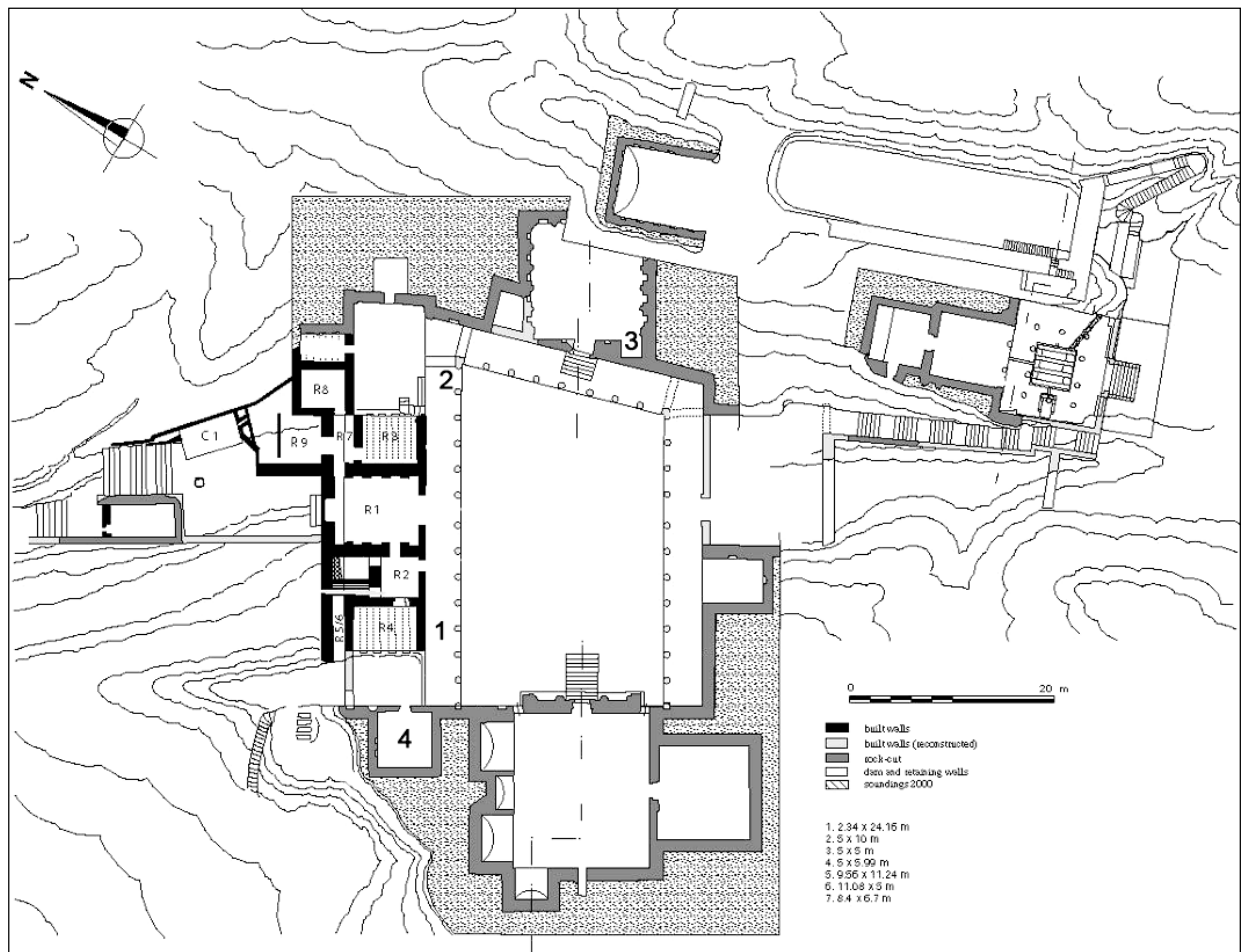
In view of the results of previous seasons

(Schmid 2007b), the following trenches and soundings were opened (**Fig. 1**).

At the emplacement of the northern portico a square was opened in order to connect the previously excavated part of the central portico with the first sounding excavated in 2000 at its south-west corner (**Fig. 1, no. 1**). Underneath the rocky plateau at the north-east side of the complex, the Mediaeval structures we began to expose in 2006 were again the objectives of several trenches (**Fig. 1, no. 2**). A small sounding was excavated within the southern-most entrance to the huge *triclinium* of the complex (**Fig. 1, no. 3**). Finally, the rock-cut room associated with the rocky outcrop at the south-west side of the complex was cleaned, as was the rocky surface in front of it (**Fig. 1, no. 4**).

Northern Portico

Towards the western corner of the northern portico, a trench was opened to continue exposure of the colonnade. Since the trench is situated immediately adjacent to Room 4 (**Fig. 1, no. 1**), it was hoped to obtain some additional information about the water management of the complex (see Schmid 2008). As discussed in previous reports, Room 4 and the neighbouring Room 2 were not constructed during the main building phase of the complex in the second half of the first century AD, but slightly later in the early second century AD. When Room 4 was constructed, an underground channel of Nabataean date was blocked, first by the construction of the substantial northern wall of Room 4, and again by the fill upon which the floor of Room 4 was subsequently built. This caused massive disturbance to the water management of the entire complex. The water channel underneath Room 4 was actually used to drain water from

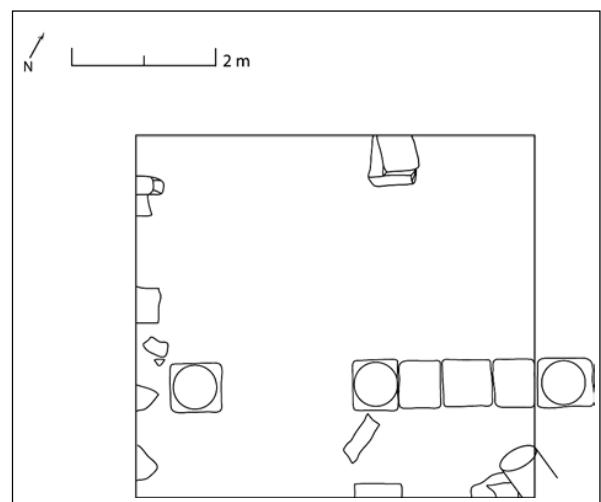


1. Wādī Farasa East, general plan of the Soldier Tomb's complex (A. Barmasse after Bachmann, Watzinger and Wiegand 1921).

the entire wadi, a necessary measure in order to have a stable area for construction. In the Nabataean period, following the construction of the courtyard and porticoes, this water channel ran underneath these installations but must have remained in use. It was only with the construction of Room 4 that it was cut. This led to a series of problems: since the water could no longer be evacuated from the complex, it must have begun to flood other rooms in the northern area. As a result, the water channel north of Room 2 was constructed (excavated in 2001, see Schmid 2002). The water must also have penetrated under Room 4, causing major stability problems.

Therefore, one of the goals of the 2007 season was to confirm the exact position and operation of the water channel under the northern portico, in addition to excavation of the colonnade itself. Since the area under exploration is limited on its northern side by the southern wall

of Room 4, the remains of at least two columns were found in collapse debris (**Figs. 2 and 3**). So far, 12 column drums have been recorded



2. Wādī Farasa East, sounding within northern portico (L. Gorgerat).

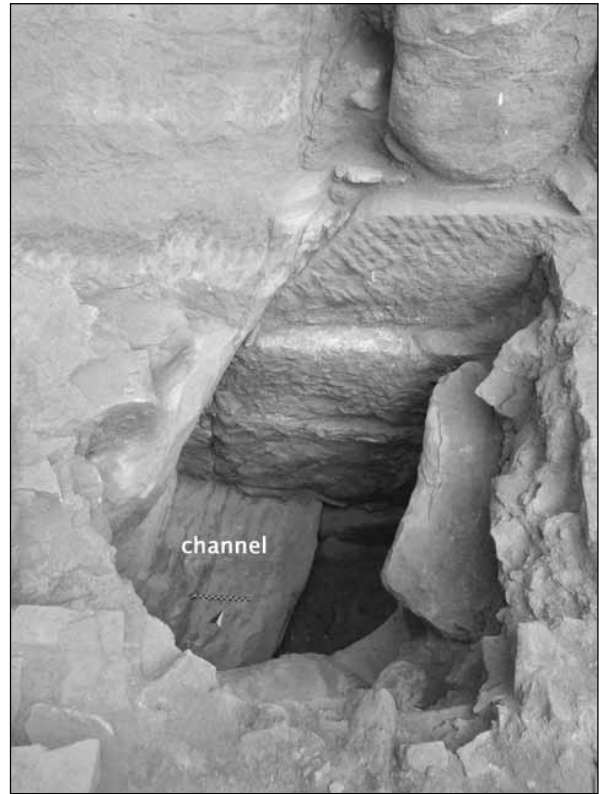


3. *Wādī Farasa East, sounding within northern portico with collapsed columns (S. Schmid).*

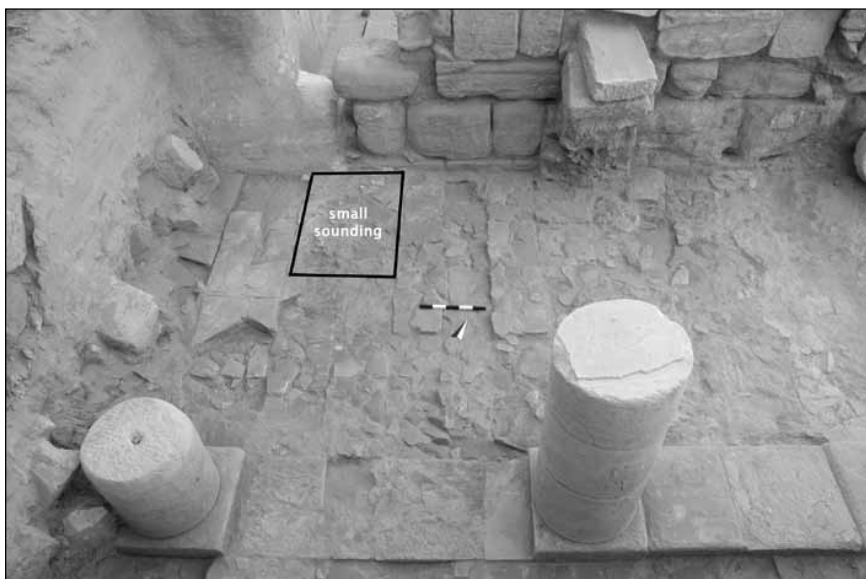
from this area, but no capital. Presumably the capitals fell further into the courtyard when the colonnade collapsed. On top of the debris created by the architectural components of the colonnade, a Mediaeval occupation comprising an ashy layer with significant quantities of 11th to 13th century AD pottery was identified. As in previous seasons, it was observed that most of the primary floor slabs were missing by the time the colonnade collapsed, but the foundations for these slabs, consisting of smaller, flat stones and clay with earth, not only remained *in situ* but also clearly indicated the outline of the slabs themselves (**Fig. 4**).

To our surprise, and in contrast to the scenario outlined above, a small sounding excavated below the portico floor slabs immediately south

of the southern wall of Room 4 yielded conflicting evidence for the chronology and operation of the water management system. The sounding was opened where we expected to find the continuation of the above-mentioned water channel and, indeed, it was at this very spot that the water channel was actually found (**Fig. 5**). However,



5. *Wādī Farasa East, small sounding in northern portico (S. Schmid).*



4. *Wādī Farasa East, sounding within northern portico after cleaning (S. Schmid).*

contrary to our expectations, it was clear that the channel had already been cut when the Soldier's Tomb complex was first constructed. In Figure 5 one can clearly see that it was the construction of the southern wall of Room 4 (Fig. 5, top) that cut the channel. In order to provide better support for that wall, a part of the channel was even chiselled away. Thus, what we originally believed to be a major system of drainage and canalisation was already defunct by the time the main complex was first constructed in the second half of the first century AD. Therefore, the question of precisely how water was diverted from the complex remains open for the time being, as a number of other potential solutions have already been ruled out (*supra* and Schmid 2007b: 144-145, Schmid 2008).

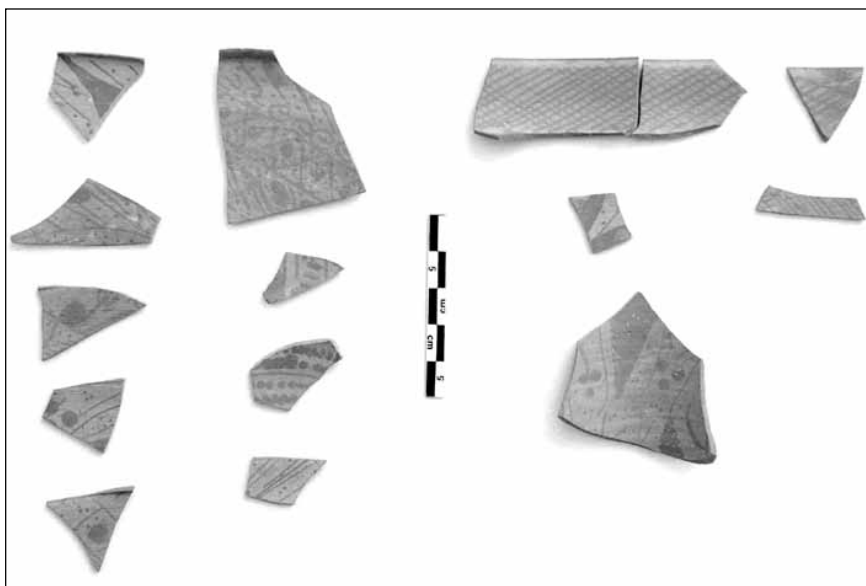
Regarding the chronology of the complex, the new sounding at the northern portico confirmed the results of similar soundings excavated in previous seasons. A significant number of small pottery fragments were recovered from under the foundations of the colonnade floor slabs. Except for a few coarse-ware sherds, most of the fragments are of Nabataean fine ware, especially painted cups (Fig. 6). Since all the painted sherds can be attributed to Nabataean painted fine ware Phase 3a (c.f. Schmid 2000), this gives us a reliable *terminus post quem* or, at best, a *terminus ad quem* of the third quarter of the first century AD for the construction of the complex.

North-East Corner of the Complex and Triclinium Entrance

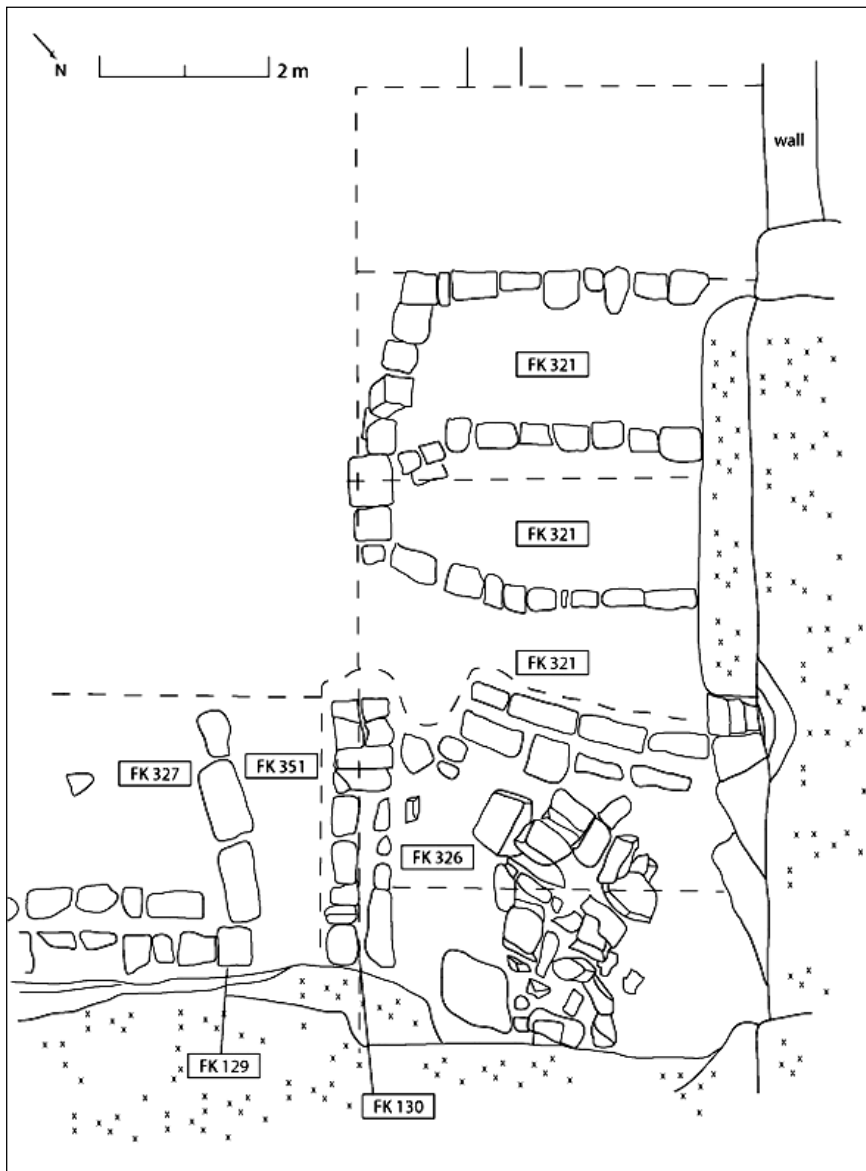
During the 2006 season, a series of apparently Mediaeval rooms began to appear in the north-east corner of the former portico and in front of the huge triclinium of the Soldier's Tomb complex (Fig. 1, no. 1), forming two rooms and a kind of corridor (Figs. 7 and 8). This year, an adjacent room was exposed, directly facing the rock on its north and east sides (Fig. 8, top left; Fig. 9, left). As clearly indicated by the collapse and two remaining arch supports, the room was originally spanned by an east-west arch.

The haphazard building technique in reused stone (Fig. 11) and significant quantity of so-called Ayyubid-Mamluk pottery of the 11th to 13th centuries AD indicate a Mediaeval date for these structures. This, together with the results of previous seasons (Schmid 2007b: 141-144, Schmid and Barmasse 2006: 217-219, Schmid 2005: 75f.), demonstrates that the Soldier's Tomb complex was reused during the period of Crusader presence at Petra, probably as a small fortification (see Schmid 2006a). This hypothesis of a military aspect to the Mediaeval occupation of the area is supported by the presence of a significant number of round stones in various sizes, that could be interpreted as *ballistae*, i.e. ammunition for slingshots and small catapults (Fig. 12).

East of the abovementioned structures, other walls of the same phase of construction continue



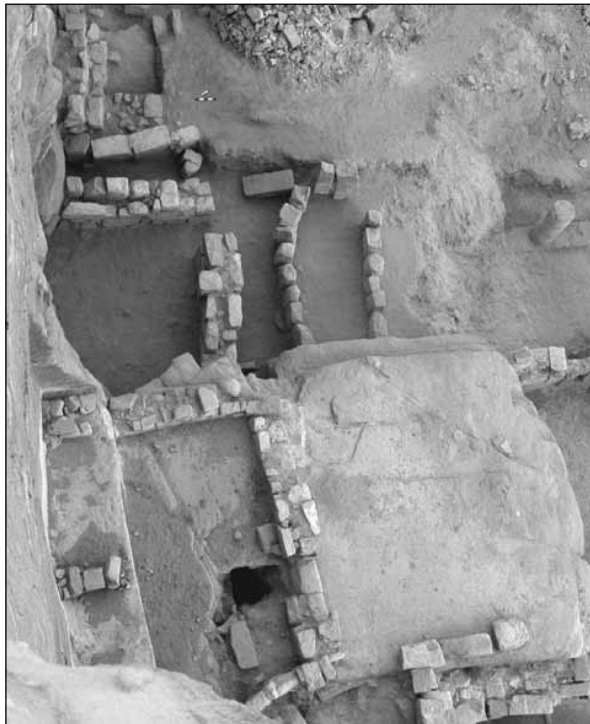
6. Pottery from small sounding in northern portico (S. Schmid).



7. Wādī Farasa East, Mediaeval rooms at north-east corner of complex (A. Barmasse and L. Gorgerat).

in direction of the huge *triclinium* of the Soldier's Tomb complex (**Fig. 7**, left). At least one additional room was exposed, and it seems that the same row of structures once continued all the way in front of the *triclinium*. As the main, central entrance of the *triclinium* was completely cleared in the 1930s by the then Department of Antiquities of Transjordan (Horsfield 1938: 40, notes 5 and 7, Horsfield 1939: 93), no additional information would be forthcoming from that spot. It was therefore decided to excavate a small sounding in the area of the southernmost lateral entrance of the *triclinium* (**Figs. 13 and 14**).

Although rather small and not completely finished, the sounding revealed a succession of phases within its narrow extent. A series of steps leading from the *triclinium* down towards the courtyard (**Fig. 13**, right; **Fig. 14**, right) ought to belong to the earliest phase of the Soldier's Tomb complex. This makes sense, as the courtyard floor (including floor slabs) is at an elevation of 930.61m. asl, the central part of the *triclinium* floor is at 931.58m. asl and the first step to be excavated this year at 931.89m. asl. Therefore, the difference in height of 1.28m. had to be descended by these steps. At this period, the southern side door must have been impressively



8. Wādi Farasa East, Mediaeval rooms at north-east corner of complex (S. Schmid).

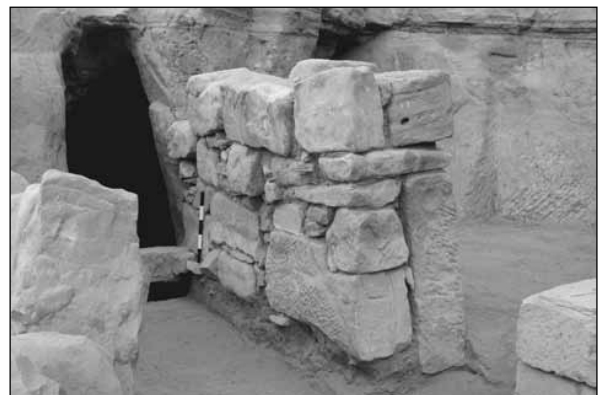


9. Wādi Farasa East, Mediaeval rooms at north-east corner of complex (S. Schmid).

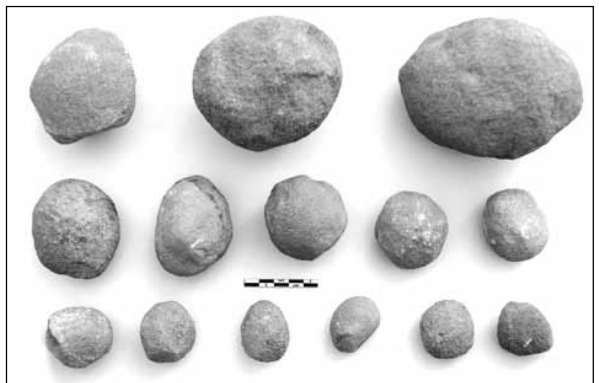
high; in a subsequent phase it was partially filled in and the threshold raised by almost one meter. When this was done has not, so far, been established; similarly, the reason for the alteration remains uncertain. Maybe these changes were aimed at diverting winter flood-water, which would suggest that the water management systems of Wādi Farasa East were not working properly as early as late Antiquity. Later, the area immediately in front of the southern side door was occupied by an important structure, perhaps a podium or something similar. This



10. Wādi Farasa East, Mediaeval rooms at north-east corner of complex (S. Schmid).



11. Wādi Farasa East, Mediaeval wall (S. Schmid).



12. Wādi Farasa East, rounded stones, possibly Mediaeval ballistae (S. Schmid).

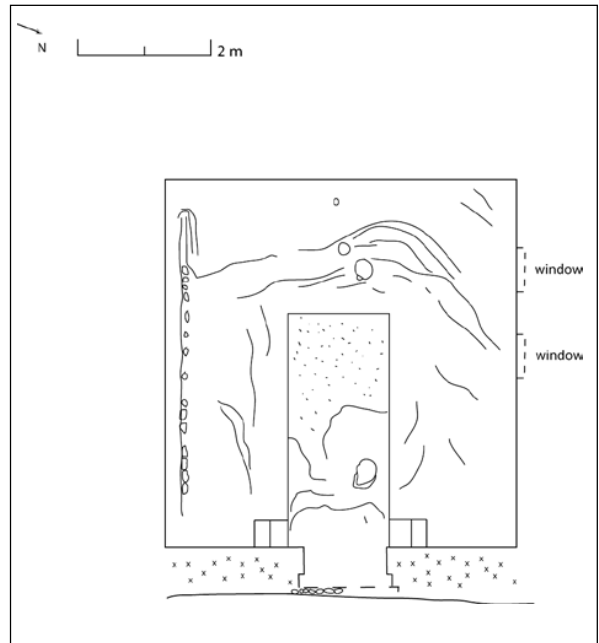
was constructed of large stones positioned on a level of clearly reused smaller stones, some of which retained traces of wall plaster (**Fig. 13**, centre; **Fig. 14** centre). This podium-like structure seems to have covered the whole space in front of the *triclinium* (c.f. above), which could be indicative of a Mediaeval date. In fact, all the rock-cut structures so far explored on the lower and upper terrace clearly show that the Mediae-



13. *Wādi Farasa East, small sounding in southern doorway of large triclinium (S. Schmid).*



14. *Wādi Farasa East, small sounding in southern doorway of large triclinium (S. Schmid).*



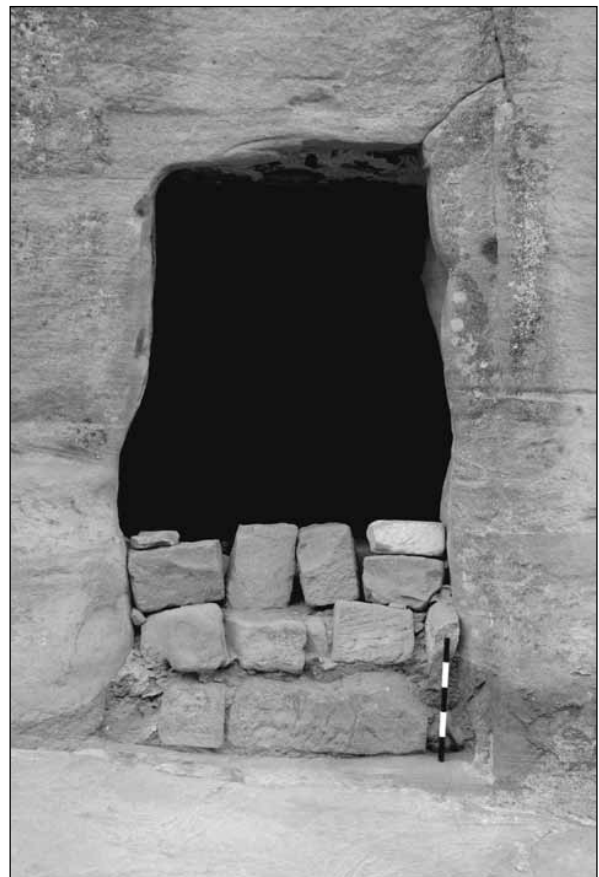
15. *Wādi Farasa East, rock-cut triclinium at south-west corner of complex (S. Schmid and L. Gorgerat).*

val — probably Crusader — occupation of Wādi Farasa East had a strong defensive character; for instance, the entrances of the Soldier's Tomb on the lower terrace and the Garden House on the upper terrace were all blocked.

Rock-Cut Room at the Western Corner of the Complex

Ever since the first Western travellers visited and described the remains of Wādi Farasa East, the exact function of this room (**Fig. 1, no. 4; Fig. 15**; Brünnow and Domaszweski 1904: no. 238) has remained unclear, mainly because it was completely filled by animal dung and other remnants of secondary use, and its doorway was blocked by a series of stones (**Fig. 16**).

Even when clearing the surface of the inner room, it was apparent that there were rock-cut platforms along three sides or the four sides. Removal of an upper layer of greyish ash, which contained the abovementioned evidence of secondary use, exposed a layer of reddish



16. *Wādi Farasa East, entrance to rock-cut triclinium at south-west corner of complex (S. Schmid).*

sand lying immediately over the floor in the centre of the room. Removal of this layer began to expose the shape of the room (**Figs. 15 and 17**) which was, without doubt, that of a small *triclinium* or banqueting hall. The room was accessed by a row of three small steps on either side of the entrance. Further proof of its function was provided by finds from inside and also outside the room. The abovementioned, lowermost layer of reddish sand inside the room was 5 to 10cm. thick and contained a significant amount of pottery, which appeared on preliminary inspection to be of the second century AD. The most striking observation was an apparent absence of fine wares, specifically painted drinking cups — an astonishing situation in the case of a banqueting hall. On the other hand, large numbers of fragmented cooking pots (**Fig. 18.1**) and amphorae for storing and transporting liquids clearly reinforce its interpretation as a *triclinium*. The same observations also applied to the upper layer, viz. significant presence of cooking wares and *amphorae*, and absence of fine drinking cups. The upper layer also contained some sherds of Mediaeval pottery, indicating that the room was also used during that period. As for the absence of fine ware in general and drinking cups in particular, we can put forward three hypotheses:

1. Drinking cups may have been personal possessions and were therefore taken away by *triclinium* users on departure;
2. The people using the Soldier's Tomb complex would almost certainly have belonged to the Nabataean upper classes, regardless of exactly who they were. As Strabo, writing in



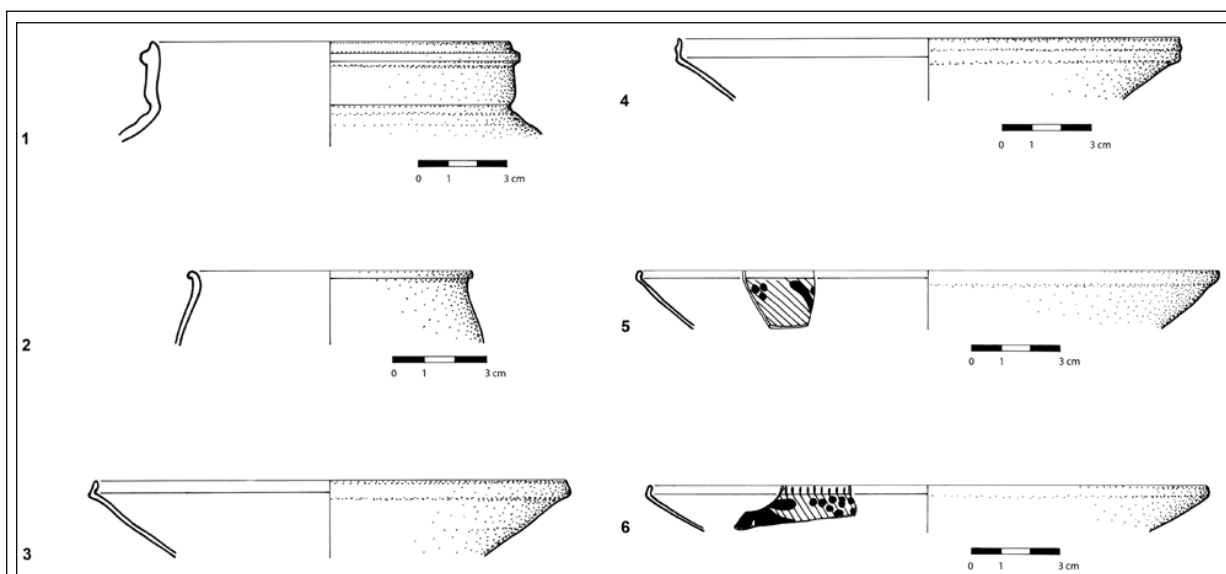
17. Wādi Farasa East, rock-cut *triclinium* at south-west corner of complex after cleaning (S. Schmid).

the late first century BC, informs us that the Nabataean aristocracy used golden drinking cups (Strabo, Geogr. 16, 4, 26: c.f. Schmid 2000), there may have been no need for pottery drinking cups in this specific instance;

3. Finally, and most probably, a large number of pottery fragments were recovered from the bedrock surface outside and in front of the *triclinium* itself (**Fig. 19**). The types of cooking pots and *amphorae* match those from inside the *triclinium*, with the addition of several sherds of fine ware, including painted drinking cups (**Fig. 18.2-6**) belonging mostly to the late first century AD.

In respect of the third hypothesis put forward above, that is to link the pottery found just outside the small rock-cut *triclinium* with the banqueting activities that took place within it, a number of other finds may be of interest. The main retaining wall of the lower terrace had been exposed as early as 2001 (Schmid 2002: 260-262). At its southern end, where it blocks the water channel discussed above in connection with the northern portico and Room 4 (c.f. Schmid 2002: 262, 266, fig. 16), a significant quantity of Nabataean fine ware pottery was found inside and beside the water channel. At that time it was difficult to account for the presence of this pottery, as there was no apparent association with any of the structures that had been excavated to date. However, this location is immediately below the rocky terrace that gives access to the small rock-cut *triclinium*. As we have good evidence that pottery was cleared out of the *triclinium* on at least several occasions, it is possible that some of it may have fallen into and around the water channel below.

As can be seen in Figure 20, the rocky interior surface of the *triclinium* was not always of the quality needed to provide a perfectly level surface; consequently small packing stones were placed in some areas. However, one can hardly imagine that such a rough surface was designed to be visible in Antiquity and, therefore, we propose that the floor was once paved with slabs. The same probably is true of the floor outside the *triclinium*. In some places, rock-cut bedding for floor slabs can even be seen (**Fig. 19**) and, indeed, a few broken floor slabs were found in the debris outside the small *triclinium* (**Fig. 21**).



Catalogue of Pottery Illustrated in Figure 18 (Colours Follow Munsell Soil Color Chart)

Nr. 1

Nabataean / Roman cooking pot from inside the triclinium

Clay: 5YR reddish yellow 6/6

Inner surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6/6

Outer surface: 7.5YR gray - brown 5/1.5

Parallels: Gerber 1997: 409, fig 4B (second half first century AD and later)

side the triclinium

Clay: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Inner surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6/6

Outer surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Parallels: Schmid 2000: 9, 25, figs. 54-56 (20 to 100AD)

Nr. 2

Nabataean plain fine cup / beaker from outside the triclinium

Clay: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Inner surface: 2.5YR red 6/7

Outer surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Parallels: Schmid 2000: 61, figs 224-225 (late first to second century AD)

Nr. 5

Nabataean painted fine ware bowl from outside the triclinium

Clay: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Inner surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Outer surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Painting: 2.5YR dark red 4/6

Parallels: Schmid 2000: 28-29, 38, figs 90-92, 378-379, colour plate 5: 7-10 (70 to 100AD)

Nr. 3

Nabataean plain fine ware plate from outside the triclinium

Clay: 5YR reddish yellow 6/6

Inner surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6/8

Outer surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6/8

Parallels: Schmid 2000: 9, 25, figs 52-53 (this specific form: late first to second AD)

Nr. 6

Nabataean painted fine ware bowl from outside the triclinium

Clay: 2.5YR red 6/8

Inner surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Outer surface: 5YR reddish yellow 6.5/8

Painting: 2.5YR dark red 4/6

Parallels: Schmid 2000: 28-29, 38, figs 90-92, 378, 379, colour plate 5: 7-10 (70 to 100AD)

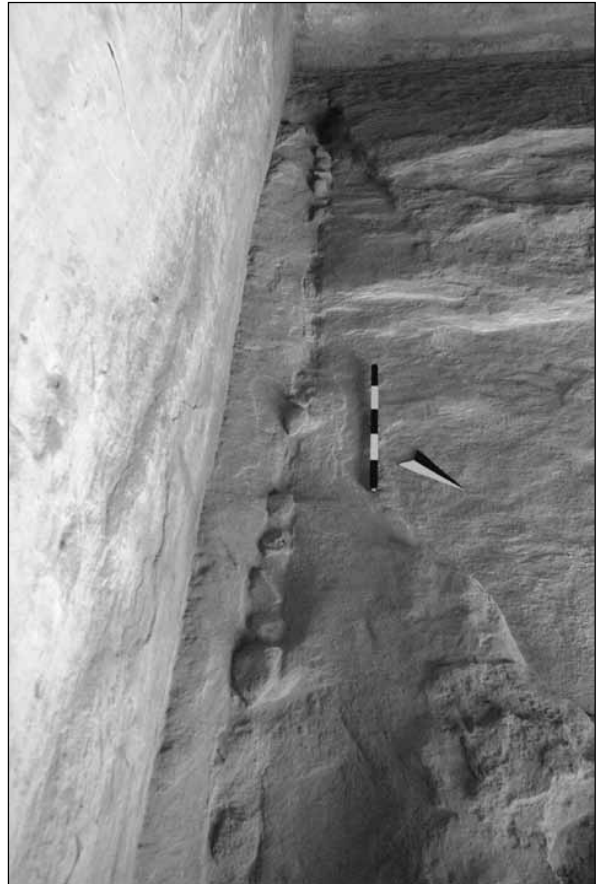
Nr. 4

Nabataean plain fine ware plate from out-

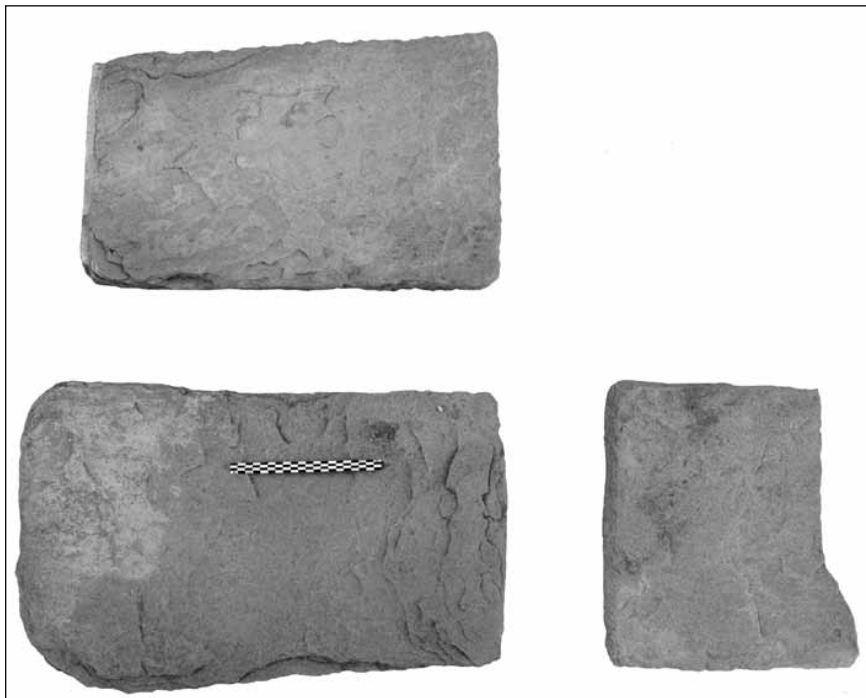


19. *Wādī Farasa East, area in front of the rock-cut triclinium at south-west corner of complex (S. Schmid).*

Although total exposure of the northern colonnade was not achieved during the 2007 season of the International Wādī Farasa Project, the results obtained are highly encouraging. On the one hand, our understanding of the Soldier's Tomb complex — which clearly reflects the high-status architecture of the Hellenistic and Roman upper classes in the wider Mediterranean area — has become increasingly clear. In future years its chronology will undoubtedly be refined, especially for its later, Roman phases of use (for the wider chronological context see Schmid 2006b; 2007a; 2009). On the other hand, this season's results have demonstrated



20. *Wādī Farasa East, rock-cut triclinium at south-west corner of complex after cleaning: detail (S. Schmid).*



21. *Wādī Farasa East, fragmented floor slabs from area in front of rock-cut triclinium at south-west corner of complex (S. Schmid).*

that the Mediaeval occupation of the site is even more important than we previously been led to believe (c.f. Schmid 2006a).

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