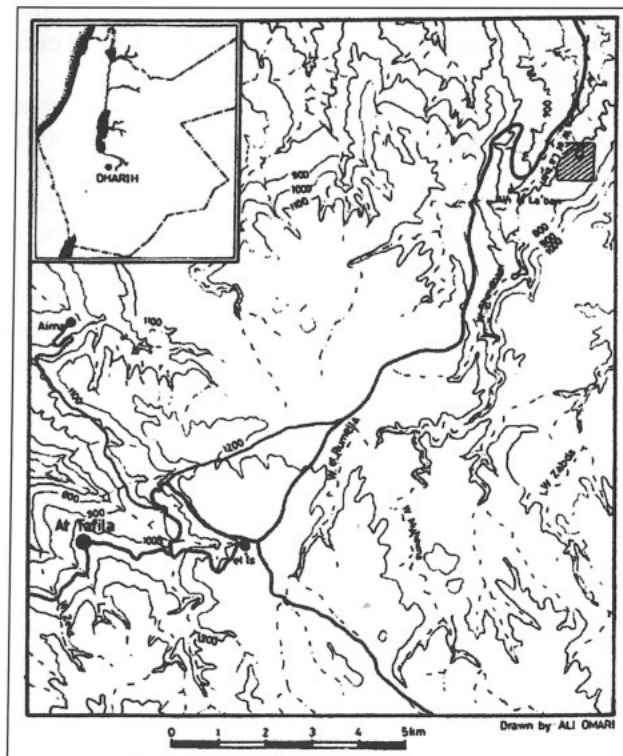


ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT KHIRBAT ADH-DHARIḤ

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Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ is situated on the King's Highway, in the Wādī al-La'bān, a southern tributary of Wādī al-Ḥasā, 12km to the north of aṭ-Ṭāfila and 7km to the south of the high-altitude sanctuary at Khirbat at-Tannūr, where adh-Dhariḥ is closely associated. Adh-Dhariḥ is a middle-size site in the countryside, 100km to the North of Petra (Fig. 1). It is located close to the King's Highway, the most important caravan road to link the North and the South of the Near East, and the area does not lack abundant water. With the help of the Department of Antiquities and the Governorate of aṭ-Ṭāfila, excavations at the site started in 1983 as a joint project of Yarmouk University IFAPO and Sorbonne University (AL-Muheisen and Villeneuve 1988: 458-79, 1994: 735-57, 1994: 41-45, 1999: 54-59; Lenoble *et al.* 2001: 89-151; Villeneuve and AL-Muheisen 2000: 1525-63, 2004: 83-100).



1. Map showing the site of Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ.

The archaeological project started there in 1984 and it has dealt with all aspects of the site

1. The chronology (Pottery Neolithic A; Early Bronze Age; Edomite in the Iron Age II; first century AD to middle fourth century AD; end of sixth to beginning of ninth century AD; and eventually around 15th-16th century AD)
2. The large and luxurious Nabataean sanctuary, a valley-sanctuary associated with the very close high-place sanctuary at at-Tannūr (excavated in the 1930s). At-Tannūr was probably dedicated to occasional processions (quinoxial, particularly).
3. The small village (second-fourth centuries AD), which is formed by peasant-houses, oil-presses, and by a luxurious seigniorial house as well.
4. The necropolis, which consists of two cemeteries, where a monumental tomb is noticeable, the tomb of the most influent family in the site, built around AD1100.
5. The many agricultural and hydraulic traces.
6. The hamlet (Christian then Muslim) of the Late Antiquity, limited to the northern courtyard of the Nabataean-Roman sanctuary.

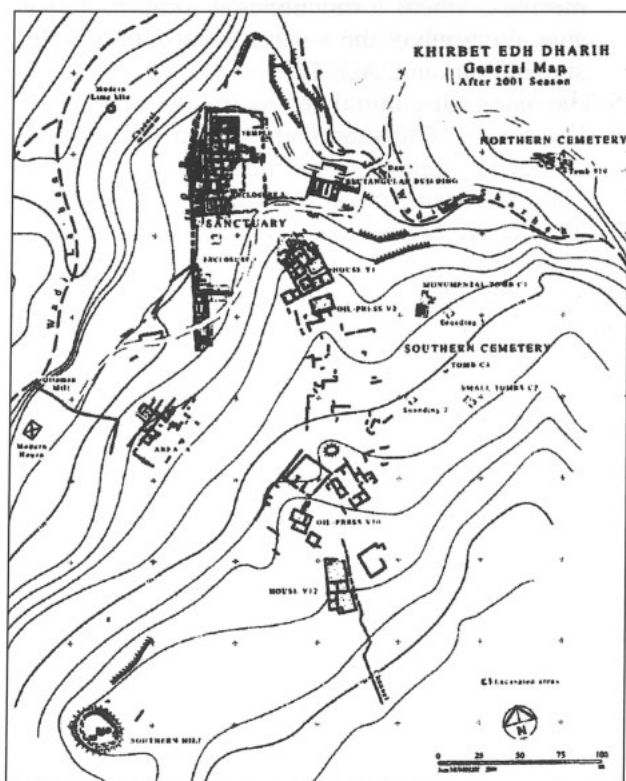
That really beautiful site, located within a large uninhabited valley, has now become an interesting spot for local visitors and foreign tourists, due to its position on the main touristic route in Jordan. On the other hand, adh-Dhariḥ is, with al-Ḥumayma (South of Petra, excavated by a North American team) the only site to be thoroughly studied in the Nabataean world east of the Jordan River, and its remains are more diversified and better preserved than in al-Ḥumayma.

Such sites may be excavated during many decades, but this is not our objective: we already step by step stopped the excavations within the cemeteries, the village, and remains around the site, areas which are by now well documented, and we plan now to finish the dig within the sanctuary area and its annexes as soon as possible and to achieve the final presentation of the site to the public.

The main goal of the current project is to ex-

cavate extensively a Nabataean medium-sized site (Fig. 2), which could offer dwellings, agricultural structure, water systems, cemeteries and a sanctuary. We hope that the collected data would enrich the archaeological data of Petra. The other goal of the project is to carry out consolidations of the various structures at the site so they would be better presented, which will have provided the visitors to southern Jordan an interesting idea engulfed by the Nabataean legacy and current local heritage.

Soundings on the Kings' Highway 1km to the north of adh-Dhariḥ revealed a small PNA site. This site is chronologically different from the site of adh-Dhariḥ itself; adh-Dhariḥ has a small EBII settlement on the southern hill, 350m to the south of the temple (a small enclosure that surrounds a few dwellings) and beneath the Nabataean oil press V10. The other features include a small rural Edomite settlement of the Iron Age II, but again only with dwellings and solely on the higher parts of the site (on the southern hill beneath the Nabataean house V12, with traces of metallurgical activity, where last is beneath the V10 oil press). The Edomite level is clearly separated from the Nabataean occupation by an abandonment phase. The buildings were made of mud-bricks and oriented differently. This tends to confirm the hypothesis of relative abandonment by the sedentary people in the southern Jordanian countryside between the pe-



2. General plan of the site of Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ.

riods of the Edomites and the Nabataeans.

As far as the Nabataean sedentary settlement is concerned, we do not have at adh-Dhariḥ any secure evidence to place it before the beginning of the first century AD. At this point, we hypothesized a progressive sedentarization during the course of the first century AD with dwellings and successive phases until the years 360AD at the sanctuary, followed by a long period of prosperity and growth of the site all within a Nabataean cultural tradition. Thus, adh-Dhariḥ neither supports the hypothesis of a violent Roman conquest of the Nabataean Kingdom nor a retreated countryside of southern Jordan during the second and third centuries AD.

One of the structures at the site (the oil press V10) is certainly destroyed by fire during the first half of the second century AD — like the house of az-Zanṭūr I in Petra and the house that is recently excavated in Wādī Mūsā — but the destruction at adh-Dhariḥ at this date is an isolated case because it is not exactly dated and seems to be incidental. On the contrary, the most important tomb in the cemeteries was built in the year 110 AD in a purely Nabataean tradition immediately after the Roman annexation.

Adh-Dhariḥ in the second and third centuries AD comprised about 20 ordinary small-sized houses, at least two oil-presses, one large luxurious residence, one enigmatic large building (residence or hostel) with a triclinium, two cemeteries consisting of numerous ordinary pit-graves, one monumental tomb, and a pilgrimage sanctuary of regional significance, which presents several successive phases.

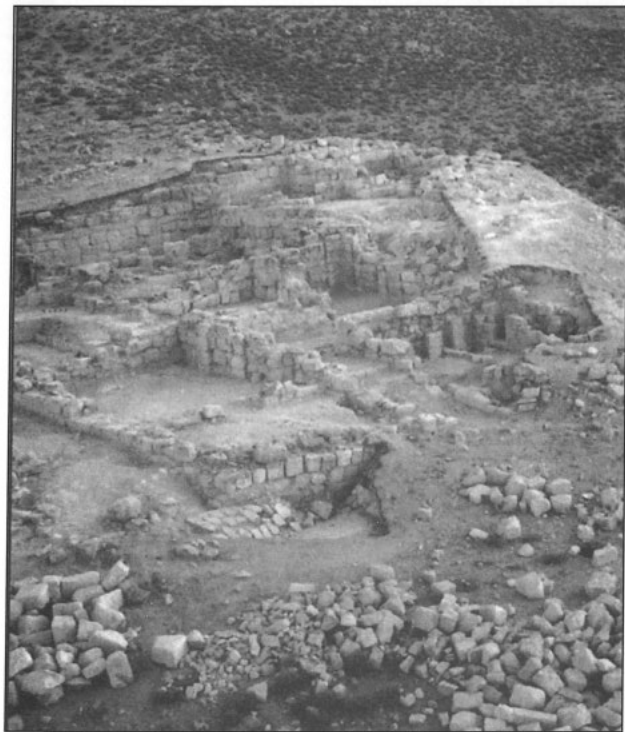
The completely excavated house (V12) gives a good example of an ordinary house, which was built progressively starting from the first century: it first consisted of one room, then two, then four eventually forming two housing units, each with a working-place courtyard, where one is in the north while the other is in the southeast. The house was destroyed and abandoned in the middle of the fifth century AD. The walls of the house were built in a rough coursed masonry, the floors were in earth, but the roofing are made of stone slabs borne by arches.

The oil-press (V2) is a grinding place in the middle of a paved room. It is probably representing two symmetrical counterweights-presses. It was destroyed in the middle of the fifth century AD.

The oil-press (V10) was built in the first century AD above the structures of the Early Bronze Age and the Iron Age II and is more complicated than the above. It was destroyed and abandoned during the first half of the second century AD. North to the oil press is a draining channel that proceeds towards a large reservoir, which is not excavated yet.

On the southern side, a passageway between V10 and a building was transformed into a rectangular enclosure. Before transformation, the oil press consisted of a unique paved room 12m by 5m with wood and clay roofing. There is a central grinder and two symmetrical counterweights presses. After transformation, a low wall divided the room into two unequal parts, and there was an attempt to install a screw press at the northern side as evidenced by the filling of the northern counterweights pit. The pottery of the destruction stratum is very abundant representing more than 300 objects (common pottery, lamps, greenish-white ware, and Nabataean painted pottery of Schmidt's phases 2B through 3C with a clear predominance of types 3B and 3C), which were later restored. All of the recovered coins were Nabataean and dated to the end of the first century AD.

The house V1, the closest to the temple, is a large and luxurious square residence, 35m by 35m (Fig. 3). Two independent rooms were built later to the south-west. The northern part of the house was collapsed and rebuilt with a slightly different orientation. The house was destroyed and abandoned in the middle of the fourth century AD. The house is organized around a carefully paved courtyard, with a portico on two sides. In the south, there are two reception rooms, in the north a series of private rooms, in the east a bath complex with a caldarium similar to those in the luxurious houses az-



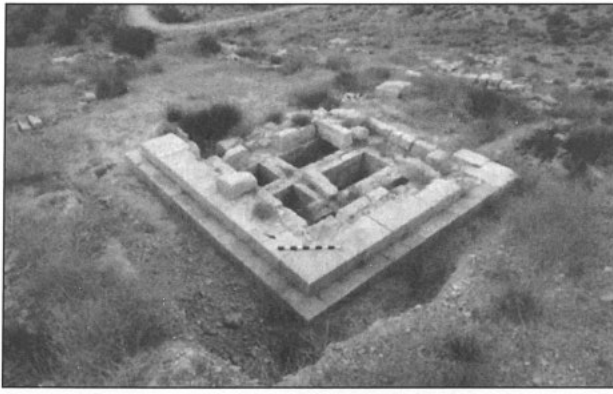
3. The house V1 at Khirbat adh-Dharih.

Zanṭūr III and Wādī Mūsā. North of the house extends a nicely paved esplanade with a system of draining and storing of water, it also has the first steps of a stairway descending towards the temple. On this esplanade, a small removable betyl was found, which suggests a cult either on the esplanade itself or on the roofs of the house.

Slightly to the east of the eastern gate of the sanctuary stands a 23m by 19m rectangular two-storey masonry building, the southern half has been excavated. On the ground level, one finds storage rooms from east to west, a central pillared hall, and a triclinium without pavement, the roofing of which was borne by arches. Among the debris of the upper floor, numerous fragments of stone and stucco decoration were found, and a small altar too. The function of the building, which has no parallels, is not elucidated yet, and we make several hypotheses: among them, a hostelry for the pilgrimages to the sanctuary, and/or an administrative building. It was not used after the middle of the fifth century AD.

The cemeteries extend over the slopes on the east of the inhabited site. They consist of a large number of individual graves, but sometimes used for multiple burials. They are pits in the soil delimited by flat stones on the edge, and covered by stone slabs. The graves were topped by steles of the nefesh type, sometimes reused and inscribed in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. The graves are generally orientated east-west. The skeletons are positioned with the head towards the west, lying on the back, and the burial offerings are very rare. It seems the first and the middle of the fifth century AD practices were the same, but the scantiness of the burial offerings makes the burials difficult to date. In one of the graves, a well-preserved wooden coffin was discovered. Many of the skeletons were found wrapped with luxurious goat leathers, apparently looking like *abayas*, with an abundant decoration: draughts board, and representations of camels. We find the same leather wrappings and the same funerary practices in one of the unique monumental tombs (Fig. 4) in the site a collective tomb, possibly a family one, with an upper part of a stepped base and an underground part consisting of six shafts of five superposed graves in each one. One of the deceased at the bottom was buried during the time the monument was being built; three undisturbed burials provided us with oboles of Charon, in the case in point drachmai of Trajanus, which give a date in the years 110AD. but the tomb remained in use till the years 360AD.

The sanctuary measures 110m x 45m. In its latest phase (Fig. 5), it consisted of at least two suc-



4. The monumental tombs at Khirbat adh-Dharih.

cessive temenos, the gates of the two temenos and of the temple being on the same straight line. This last phase was built in the year 150AD. The southern courtyard is not paved and does not reveal any buildings. The northern temenos can be accessed through two gateways: the eastern gate has a complex architecture and decoration (monumental lintel); it is only partially excavated. The southern gate, with a simple decoration, is completely reconstructed on paper. Through this southern gate, one would enter a roofed porch, and from there one would go down into a paved courtyard (remained to be excavated), surrounded by two steps, with a



5. Plan of the temple complex. Khirbat adh-Dharih.

column portico, at least on the southern side. On the south, west, and east sides of the courtyards is a series of rooms strongly reorganized in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods; amongst them at least a large triclinium (S2I-J) on the south. One large room on the west side, with a different orientation, testifies an earlier phase of this northern temenos. An important draining channels system existed beneath the pavement, with vertical man-holes. Immediately to the west of the temple and under a paved corridor, there was an underground structure with arches, probably a reservoir.

Several construction phases existed in the temple. The earliest known, probably smaller than the later ones, was completely destroyed and incorporated in the second temple, with its blocks reused. The clearest evidence of the earlier temple is found in the cellar of the later one, where a sounding 70cm under the pavement revealed the pavement of the earlier monument with two associated walls on the same orientation as the later walls. The extension of this sounding would result in an accurate date of the two phases of construction. At the moment, we think that the second and main phase, with a decoration very similar to that of the one at the gate of the Qaṣr al-Bint temenos, might be dated to the end of the first century AD or the beginning of the second century.

The façade is reconstructed on paper with good probability, but its drawing will have to be re-examined after excavation is completed next summer. The most interesting point is the presence of a mythological decoration within panels consisting of stone frames, with for example thunderbolts, but this decoration was hammered during a period of iconoclasm.

This second temple (22m x 16m) consists of a row of three linked spaces, with a clear continuous slope of the floor from the front to the rear. All of these spaces are disposed widthwise. First is a vestibule, which in the first stage was unroofed, only its western half is excavated. It opens to the north through a very large doorway towards a cellar. The southern, western and eastern walls of which were decorated with stucco. Last, the northern rear part has a cultic platform in its center, which bore a culminated kiosk. The roofing of which, even if it existed, still provides problems. This platform is surrounded on three sides by a narrow U-shaped corridor, which gives access to two crypts situated under the platform. Two corner-rooms are located on the northwest corner of the temple with undecorated wall cupboards. There were two successive organizations of the platform (the stairway in the front being an Umayyad addition). In the

first stage, one may access it through two narrow stairways in the front; in the large central flagstone of the pavement of the platform is a rectangular hole flanked by two small circular holes. Beneath the flagstone a stone vat was found. Thus, it would appear to be a system for sticking a betyl, making ritual aspersions on it and collect the blood in the underneath vat. Thus, the platform may be interpreted as a motab, or seat of the deity. In the second stage, the two stairways were carefully blocked, thus replaced by a movable ladder. Two new betyl-systems are installed, one at the north-eastern corner of the platform and the other at the southwestern corner — the place of the earlier blocked stairway. Thus, in this phase, there is a cult of a triad of beryls strangely diagonal and not frontally placed.

The temple consists of an open-air vestibule to the south and an almost square complex to the north (Fig. 6). From the vestibule one faces an interior façade, which was adorned with stuccoed niches; in the middle of that façade is a very wide gate situated towards the rear square part of the temple, almost identical in dimensions to the former temple. This complex is formed by a cella, richly adorned with architectural painted stuccos, and by a square cultic platform (built over two crypts) surrounded by a narrow corridor and flanked east and west by four small angled rooms, one of them enclosing a staircase leading to the terrace-roof. The room to the south of the staircase has an additional crypt under it. One of the unresolved issues concerns which parts of that complex were roofed. The corridor and the angle rooms certainly had a roof, but the technical difficulty of roofing the platform and cella presents a problem; the close parallel of the temple or "inner enclosure" at at-Tannūr, and the general and regular slope of the pavement through the whole of the temple (for



6. Aerial view of Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ sanctuary.

draining rainwater) makes it probable that these sacred spaces were unroofed, although pillars added along the walls of the cella lead one to think that the cella at least was ultimately roofed.

The external, main façade of the temple was 15 meters high. It must be understood, like the façade of the “inner enclosure” at at-Tannūr, as the “projection” on a unique wall of the façade of a distyle *in antis* monument with Corinthian capitals, but it presents a strong architectonic originality. This consists of: two protruding pedestals at the base, right and left of the door, each bearing possibly a feline; two large windows high in the façade; and a pediment with a semicircular tympanum. The whole is exuberantly decorated by sculptures in relief: right and left of the door and above it were decorative panels consisting of frames bearing religious motifs, among which the animated figures were defaced in late antiquity (during the eighth century) by religious iconoclasm. Among them, one may distinguish shields, winged or vegetal thunderbolts, lidded metallic crests borne by winged figures; and many mythological scenes, but also a triad with standards (either Roman military *signa* with the Capitoline triad or religious *semeia* of oriental deities) and even a Roman she-wolf, treated in an extremely provincial way. Above a foliated architrave populated with animals, with Medusa heads at the angles, stands a high-relief frieze with alternating figures of the Zodiac and winged Victories (**Fig. 7**), who crown these figures. The anthropomorphic busts discovered consist, from left to right, of Taurus (**Fig. 8**), the Gemini (**Fig. 9**), Cancer (**Fig. 10**), Libra, and a fragment of a cuirassed Sagittarius; the others are terribly worn or missing. The triangular pediment (**Fig. 11**) presents, to the left and right of an arch of voussoirs with floral motifs, symmetrical sea centaurs with long twisted tails, which are crowned by flying Victories, with standing eagles, and fishes at the extremities. The figures of the main, central tympanum, certainly the most important for the significance of the whole façade, have almost completely disappeared. The only fragments which could have come from there are the head of a bearded diety very much like a head from at-Tannūr usually interpreted as a Zeus (Glueck 1965: 294; McKenzie, Gibson and Reyes 2002: 61), and fine cornucopiae, which suggest a deity represented like a Tyche. Thus, we may imagine that the tympanum represented a couple, consisting of a male and female diety, presented as a Zeus and a Tyche, a probable translation of the chief Nabatean gods Dhusharā and al-‘Uzza. But this is highly speculative, and the decoration of the façade as a whole



7. Nike panel from Zodiac limestone frieze. Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ temple façade.



8. Taurus panel from Zodiac limestone frieze. Khirbat adh-Dhariḥ temple façade.



9. Gemini panel from Zodiac limestone frieze. Khirbat adh-Dharih temple façade.



10. Cancer panel from Zodiac limestone frieze. Khirbat adh-Dharih temple façade.



11. Pediment, left (west) part of temple façade.

appears like the juxtaposition of many themes. These discoveries will certainly generate passionate discussion about whether the zodiac here depicted is a sign of astral cults, as a *at-Tannūr*, or of the Roman cosmic order, and, more generally, if the whole is a celebration of indigenous deities with their Hellenized attributes or of the new Roman order. The question is complicated by the fact that we will probably never know if the adh-Dharih

temple was built before or after 106AD. We would suggest temporarily that the date is slightly later than the Roman annexation and that the iconography of adh-Dharih is a clever, diplomatic, maybe ambivalent, combination of the Greek-influenced Nabataean religion and a spectacular, professed allegiance to Roman power. The Roman she-wolf has hooves, which seems to be derisive, if it is not an indication of the artist's clumsiness.

Within the temple, the essential element is the square (7m x 7m) platform (height 1.40m) the access to it on its façade, in the late second century phase was through a wide, wooden stairway (earlier through small stone stairways positioned inside the platform façade itself). The platform was surmounted on three sides by a columned baldachin, itself surmounted by a richly decorated entablature, again including figures of Victories and deities. The platform is the *môtab* or *môtbâ*, the name given by inscriptions of Petra and Hegra (Healey 2001: 158-159) to the seat of the deities, thus the base of their sacred standing stones, or baetyls.

The whole structure was severely damaged in the year 360AD by an earthquake, which we are inclined to date, as in Petra, to the 19th of May, 363AD. Then it remained completely abandoned for about two centuries. This makes it difficult to identify with the locality of Ellebana, mentioned in the Berseba Edictum in the fifth century AD.

During the fourth century AD a new settlement was rebuilt, to the northern temenos of the former sanctuary, reusing the stones and frequently the bases of the Nabataean-Roman wall phases. It is a small fortified village or monastery, the peribole becomes a fortification, with the gates being narrowed and the thresholds heightened. The structures are very dense all over the temenos and also include houses and one counterweight oil-press. Within the former temple, the vestibule became a baptistery, the southwest crypt is a Christian tomb, the cellar was turned into a small church with a raised choir and an apse. A painted Greek inscription on the arch of the apse mentions Maria Theotokos, Mary the mother of god. The former Nabataean and Roman village is not reoccupied at all, but there were new graves of this period in the ancient cemetery, where several Christian steles have been found. This occupation continues that way until the eighth or ninth century AD. During the Umayyad period or at the beginning of the Abbasid period, the temple stopped being used as a church and the former motab was turned into a reception room with three benches. It was destroyed by a new earthquake, which before then was almost completely standing.

After that we find only a small rural settlement of the late Mamluk or early Ottoman period, still limited to the area of the northern temenos and the temple with the southern temenos used as a cemetery.

Thus adh-Dhariḥ presents a very clear evolution, which can now be considered as a model to be tested by other excavations in southern Jordan and a landmark for interpreting surveys. In the Nab-

ataean and Roman periods, adh-Dhariḥ was the main population center of the area between aṭ-Taḥila and Wādī al-Ḥasā, and between Wādī 'Araḥa and the desert in the middle of a cloud of hamlets and of isolated dwellings. Although adh-Dhariḥ was not large at all, its regional importance came from its sanctuary. For the late Nabataean period and its Roman continuation, the site allows underlining the role of the regional sanctuaries for the development of a rural population organized in small localities largely turned towards olive cultivation. The stratified social organization represented by prominent families and the luxurious households played the main role in the temple, owned the monumental tomb, and dominated the families of the modestly housed and modestly buried peasants. These main families probably belonged to the resh 'Ayn al-La'bān (the curator of the La'bān spring), mentioned in an inscription at Khirbat at-Tannūr in 8BC. At the moment we lack evidence at adh-Dhariḥ to assert that both epigraphic documents and stratigraphic evidence for the end of the first century BC.

The 12th season, in the summer of 2004, was conducted with that perspective: it concentrated on big-scale operations of cleaning, restoration, and soundings within the sanctuary and near it.

Apart from the dig itself, some specialized studies took place. French and Jordanian graduate students started the charcoal and seeds study; charcoals are still under examination, seeds are mainly wheat and barley, hummus, peaches, grapes, olives. American scholar, M. Perry, included adh-Dhariḥ within an important programme of measurement of strontium percentage in animal and human bones: first results for adh-Dhariḥ are simulating but perplexing, as they suggest that people buried in adh-Dhariḥ in different periods of Antiquity were not of local origin but could have come from the Petra-al-Quwayra area.

Consolidation and Restoration Activities: has been exceptionally important during that season. We removed hundred of tons of excavation debris accumulated during eleven seasons on a large area to the south-east of the temple, and we consolidated tens of meters of ancient walls. We dismantled limited parts of walls of the Late Antique hamlet within the Nabataean sanctuary and reconstructed the Nabataean-Roman aspect of the same spot. We made anastylosis work (including stone cutting and carving), especially on the northern (rear) wall of the temple, on the cultural platform of the temple and on the apse of the Byzantine church built inside the temple. Beside that, all the metallic ob-

jects and pottery were restored.

Excavation Activity: concerned mainly the Area A, on the sacred path towards the sanctuary, the southernmost area of the sanctuary S7; the external areas of the temple, to the north (S9) and East (S10); the Eastern Gateway to the sanctuary (S2B-S11B) and eastern parts of the main (northern) courtyard (S2) of the sanctuary.

Pre-Nabataean Phases

The season confirmed the presence, on many spots, of final Early Bronze Age and Edomite remains. In particular, a very thick Early Bronze IV destruction layer is present everywhere in Area A, immediately below first-third centuries AD buildings. The Edomite level, absent there, exists in Area B, some meters to the east.

First Century AD

Some additional discoveries made during that season contribute to document the first, small, sanctuary of adh-Dharih, which is largely obliterated by the later sanctuary. A segment of the earlier sanctuary was discovered near the north-west angle of the later temple. The sounding there produced Nabataean painted pottery of a type dated around 20AD, which gives an approximate indication (at least a *terminus post quem*) for the building of part of the earlier sanctuary.

Area A

The season confirmed the indications obtained during the 2001 season in that interesting area, which served as a stopping place for travelers before entering the sanctuary. It was built in the late first century AD/ early century AD, and occupation there ended in the third century, so one century earlier than elsewhere on the site (363AD). The early destruction is also demonstrated in area S7, on the southern limit of the sanctuary. As a palmyrenian coin of Wahballath, Zenobia's son, dated 273AD, was discovered in area A, we suspect that the spot could have been destroyed during the campaign of the palmyrenian army in the late third century.

Area A consists of an unpaved street leading towards the sanctuary, a caravansera and annexes to the east of the street, and baths to the west. The caravansera, a poor-quality building which was many times partially destroyed and modified, includes a large rectangular courtyard and series of rooms to the east, north and south of the courtyard. It opens towards the street through a gateway (A5), the room to the south of the gateway was

probably a guard-room (metallic weapon-heads were found there). In the south aisle, long and narrow rooms A4 and A10, without any fragment of objects inside them, could be stables. The bath (A2) is badly preserved, due to the reuse of its stones as pavement slabs by Byzantine rebuilders of the sanctuary area. Nevertheless, the heating system (hypocaust and ceramic pipes) of the hot room (caldarium) is quite well preserved, below floor-level.

The Sanctuary in the Second Century AD (Phase A)

The later sanctuary has a long history, where we may crudely distinguish phase A (early-middle second century), main period of building activity, and phase B (late second — mid fourth century) with a series of changes. Northern part of sounding S8, outside the north-west angle of the temple, provided a lot of potsherds at the foundation level. It can be roughly dated around 100AD, plus or less 20 years. Due to that uncertainty, we are not able yet to say if building activity started before or after the Roman annexation of the Nabataean kingdom (106AD).

North of the temple (rear part), area S9 was completely cleared to the circulation level around the temple. It was the level of a pavement, which actually has completely collapsed (earthquake of 363AD) in the underground room situated below, which is not excavated yet.

Large-scale excavation of area S10, to the east of the temple, revealed, on the contrary, a solid pavement everywhere, and no underground room below. The area was densely built later, during the Byzantine Umayyad reuse. The most interesting discovery there are the remains a small sacrificial altar, 3.64 meters square, built just 3,64 meters (7 Egyptian cubits) to the east of the temple eastern wall. A few elements of the altar decoration were discovered: a miniature Nabataean pilaster capital *in situ*, a relief depicting a *nefesh* on the front of a *pyramidion*.

The sacrificial function of that building is confirmed by its proximity to the Eastern Gate of the sanctuary, which was entirely cleared in areas S2B/S11B (after dismantling of its later blockings). That wide gate, with very low threshold, was probably dedicated to the introduction of animals for the sacrifices.

Changes in the Sanctuary in the Late Second — Mid Fourth Centuries (Phase B)

The main change was discovered due to soundings in area S7, at the southern entrance of the

sanctuary. Soundings of this season demonstrated that a series of 3 large rectangular rooms, adjacent to each other, was added around 200AD to the sanctuary, to the south of the southern courtyard. These rooms, which served for some time as cultural triclinia (banqueting rooms with benches on three sides), were dismantled in the late third century. At that time, their area was used temporarily as a huge working-place for workers employed in a building programme of sanctuary additions, additions which actually were never finished.

The Christian Settlement (Late Sixth Century — Mid Seventh Centuries?)

As during every season, a series of domestic ordinary units of that period, located within the northern courtyard of the Nabataean sanctuary, was cleared. The most interesting element for that period was, this year, a long lintel, adorned with an incised Greek cross inside a circle. Two rosettes flank the cross. The lintel was found near the southern gate of the main courtyard of the sanctuary, a gate which served in the Byzantine period as the main entrance to the hamlet: it was probably the lintel of that gate.

The Early Islamic (Umayyad and Early Abbasid) Settlement

Beside domestic units of the same kind as in the Byzantine period, the main discovery is that of a small very well preserved (2 to 3m high) *late antique bath* (Fig. 12). It is located near the south-eastern corner of the sanctuary main courtyard. It is built directly on the pavement of that courtyard, and has an over elevated pavement, in order to have the heating underground system (brick hypocaust) between the lower and higher pavements. Its plan is an elongated rectangle. It includes two small chambers with stone benches at the bottom of the walls and vertical ceramic heating pipes within the walls, and a couple of heated basins (actually square coated bathtubs) at the southern end. The furnace was located at the bottom of the outer southern wall. Some devices of that bath have comparisons in the (much larger) bath of the Umayyad palace in Khirbat al-Mafjar near Jericho.

A series of Arabic inscriptions and graffiti of the early Islamic period, none of them *in situ*, were also discovered on various spots of the northern courtyard of the sanctuary. One is quite interesting due to its position: a long text written on the north pilaster of the north-east angle of the temple; but it has not been deciphered yet. The most important document, found near the Eastern Gate of the sanctuary, is a short monumental inscription, a dedica-



12. Umayyad bath.

tion by a certain Hishām ibn Shābūr, dated 79Hg (thus 698-699AD). It is one of the earliest Islamic inscriptions discovered so long. The date clearly demonstrates that adh-Dharih was already an Islamic place (at least partially) in the late seventh century AD.

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