

THE INTERNATIONAL WĀDĪ FARASA PROJECT (IWFP) PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2004 SEASON

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I. Introduction and Acknowledgments

The field season 2004 of the International Wādi Farasa Project (IWFP) lasted from August 22nd to September 16th. The IWFP 2004 was carried out by the Association for the Understanding of Ancient Cultures (AUAC: www.iwfp.ch.vu), based in Basel (Switzerland) and the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF, London: www.pef.org.uk), generously sponsored by Ghadeer Mineral Waters, a Nestlé Waters Company, and the University of 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 working permit as well as Dr. Fawzi Zayadine (Amman), Prof. David Graf (Miami) and Dr. Bernhard Kolb (Basel) for their continuous interest in the project.

Beside the writer the following persons participated in the 2004 season of the IWFP: the archaeologists André Barmasse, MA (Basel), Caroline Huguenot, MA (Lausanne), Aurélien Amour, BA (Montpellier) and Adeeb Salamin, MA (representative of the Department of Antiquities) whose help and advice were much appreciated, and the anthropologist Sylvie Duchesne, MA (Toulouse). Seventeen workmen and one teawoman from the B'dool and Saydin tribes were employed. We would also like to thank IFPO Amman and especially its director Jean-François Salles for lodging the team during its stay at Amman.

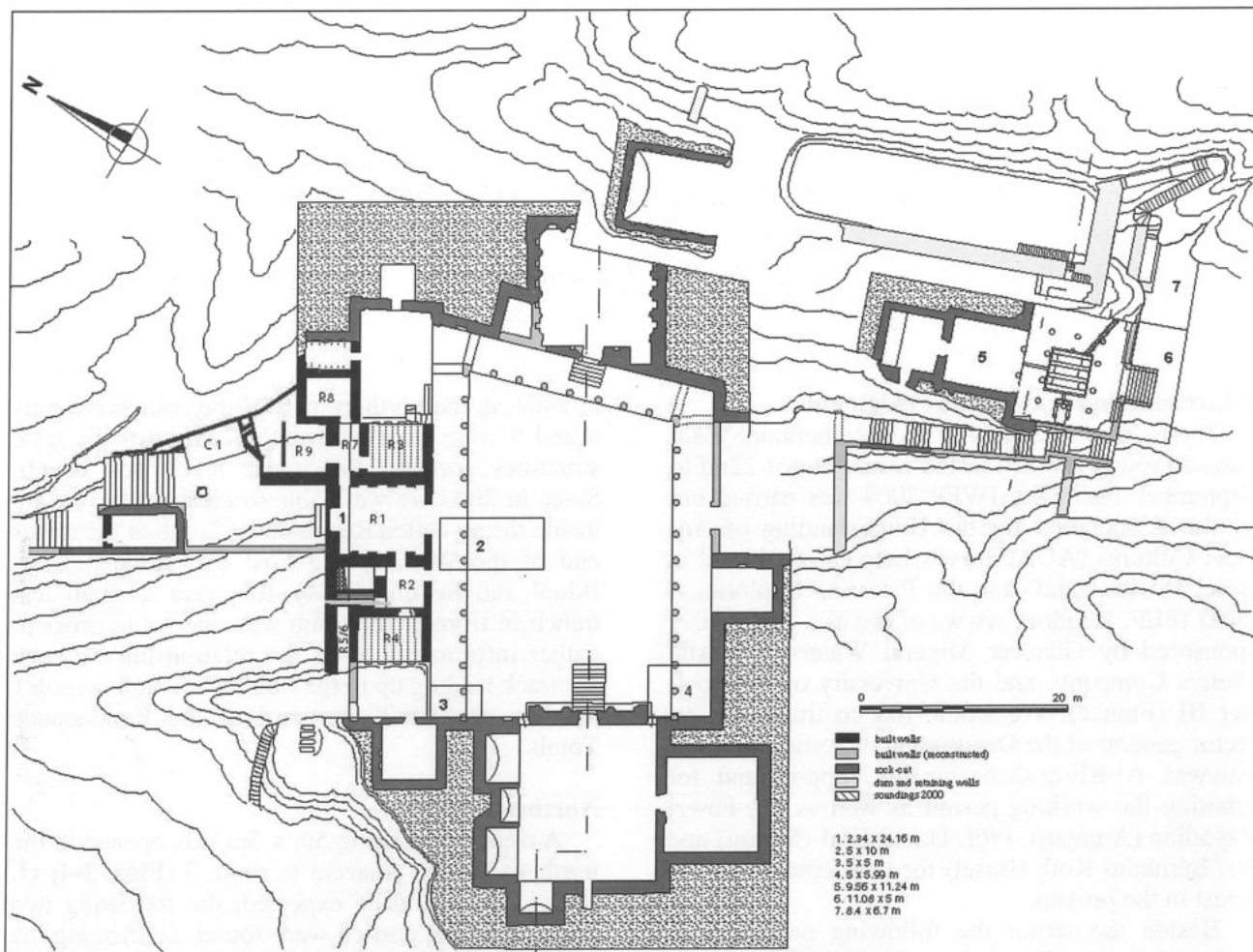
Following the results of the previous campaigns of the project (cf. Schmid and Barmasse 2004 for the results of the previous season as well as for further bibliographical references), the following trenches and soundings were opened (cf. **Fig. 1**): Cistern 1 in front of the Soldier's Tomb complex that was partially excavated last year, was completed in 2004; within the northern portico of the complex a trench measuring 5m x 5m was opened in order to expose the next couple of columns and to follow the rock cut water channel partially excavated in 2003 in the adjacent room 3, room 3 had been partially exposed last year and was completed

in 2004, in the northern part of the complex rooms 8 and 9 were excavated and cleaning of the rock structures forming the upper level was begun. Since in 2003 we were able to clean and excavate inside the so-called Renaissance Tomb at the lower end of the Wādi Farasa East (cf. Huguenot, al-Bdool and Schmid 2004), this year a small test trench in front of the tomb was opened in order to gather information as to the relationship between the track leading up to the Soldier's Tomb complex and the presumed courtyard of the Renaissance Tomb.

Northern Portico

A trench measuring 5m x 5m was opened in the northern portico adjacent to room 3 (**Figs. 2-4; cf. Fig. 1**). As could be expected, the following two columns of the portico were found, confirming the basic dimensions of this architectural feature, as known from previous years, that is a standard intercolumnium of 187cm, a bay of 247cm and a width of the portico of 3.65m. As already observed on other occasions, most of the original floor slabs had been taken away, most probably already in antiquity. Since most of the fallen down column drums and other architectural members were standing and lying on several centimeters of earth accumulated directly on the foundations of the slabs, this means that the slabs already had been robbed out when the columns collapsed. As can be seen on center top of figure 2 and is also obvious from the results within room 3 (see below), a rather huge door once connected room 3 to the adjacent portico, but was narrowed and eventually closed in subsequent later phases.

From the architectural members found in the debris, much interesting information can be gained. From one of the columns, according to the position most probably belonging to the central entrance way, the uppermost column drum, the capital and the first block belonging to the roofing construction were found in a row (**Fig. 2** center right; **Fig. 3** bottom center). Surprisingly, the stone just above



1. Wādi Farasa East, general plan (after Bachmann, Watzinger, Wiegand, modified by A. Barmasse).



2. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; northern portico with fallen column drums, capital and double arch (S. G. Schmid).

the capital clearly shows the beginning of two arches. When looking closer, one realizes that there are small differences in the degree of inclination of the two arches, and, therefore, either one of them was wider showing the same height or one was higher with both showing equal width. Two basic

possible solutions can be proposed at this stage of our investigations. Either the colonnade showed a front of columns crowned by arches, or we have to reckon a second colonnade, at least for the northern part of the complex. Unfortunately, at the present stage no decision can be made. Since the intercolumnium of the two columns forming the entrance indeed is wider than the above mentioned standard of 187cm (224cm), the different inclination of the arches could cause this. On the other hand, one could easily imagine a second colonnade of a slightly smaller height. One rather tempting argument could speak in favor of a second colonnade: With just one colonnade at the northern side of the complex, the façade of the Soldier's Tomb is clearly decentralized, with just 2.45m space between the southern portico and the façade of the tomb, while there is a 6.00m space between the northern portico and the façade. With a second portico at the northern side, measuring 3.65m as the first one, the space would be reduced to exactly 2.45m and, therefore, offering a perfect symmetry! However, for the time being no phys-

ical evidence for a second colonnade at the northern side was found and there would be a mathematical problem for the joining of the second colonnade from the northern side with the one on the eastern side in front of the triclinium.

Contrary to the capitals discovered so far, the one from the northern portico exposed this year was very well preserved on one side (**Fig. 3**) and allows a better understanding of its ancient form. Contrary to our previous assumption of simple, not decorated Doric capitals, we are in reality dealing with a form of richly modeled capitals (on different types of capitals used by the Nabataeans, cf. Netzer 2003: 159-164).

Rooms 3, 8 and 9

Room 3 measures 5.60m x 4.50m and is partially rock cut (NE side) and partially built up (SW side), covered with arches (**Figs. 1, 5**). As already observed during the partial excavation of that room in 2003, the initial, i.e. Nabataean floor level does not exist anymore, since the entire surface had

been reused in later times including the Medieval period as is indicated by corresponding pottery found on the bedrock. During later times the room was subject to different modifications. The rock cut channel that initially was constructed to deliver water into the big cistern outside the complex (see below) was completely filled up with small and



3. Wādī Farasa East, lower terrace; northern portico, fallen column drums, capital and beginning of double arch (S. G. Schmid).



4. Wādī Farasa East, lower terrace; detail of capital from northern portico (S. G. Schmid).

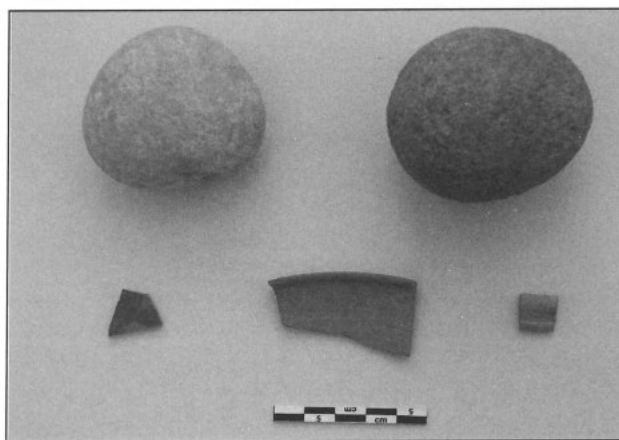


5. Wādī Farasa East, lower terrace; room 3, water channel and closed doorway (S. G. Schmid).

big stones. The fill contained a substantial amount of broken pottery, all of it belonging to the last quarter of the first century AD (Fig. 6). Together with the pottery, two small rounded stones were found, maybe used as bullets (Fig. 6). Therefore, the composition of the finds – pottery of the late first century AD and possible stone bullets – is exactly the same as observed on the lowest level of the big cistern according to the results of our excavation in 2003 and 2004 (see IWF 2003 and below). Although the opening cut into the rock is at some stretches of considerable width and depth, the initial water channel must have been rather narrow as is indicated by a fragment of a stone cut water channel that was found in the fill and must have belonged to the initial construction. This underlines once more the technical skills of the Nabataeans, especially in terms of water management: for the construction and maintenance of a water channel, it was easier to construct it from hewn stones bedded into a rock cut foundation.

Initially, a large door gave access from room 3 to the northern portico, but in later times it was first narrowed to about half of its size and eventually completely closed by rather careless alignments of stones (Fig. 5 top center and right). Within room 3 some elements of the bronze decoration of wooden furniture (or door) were found (Fig. 7), similar to decoration elements from late Roman contexts discovered by the Swiss excavations on az-Zanṭūr (personal communication by Dr. Bernhard Kolb, Basel).

Room 8 is a stunning combination of rock cut and built up architecture. Its maximum outside dimensions are of 4.30m x 5.60m (Figs. 8, 9). Whilst its southern and western parts are freely constructed of well set high quality blocks, the northern and eastern walls, although constructed from the same type of blocks, are leaning at the natural



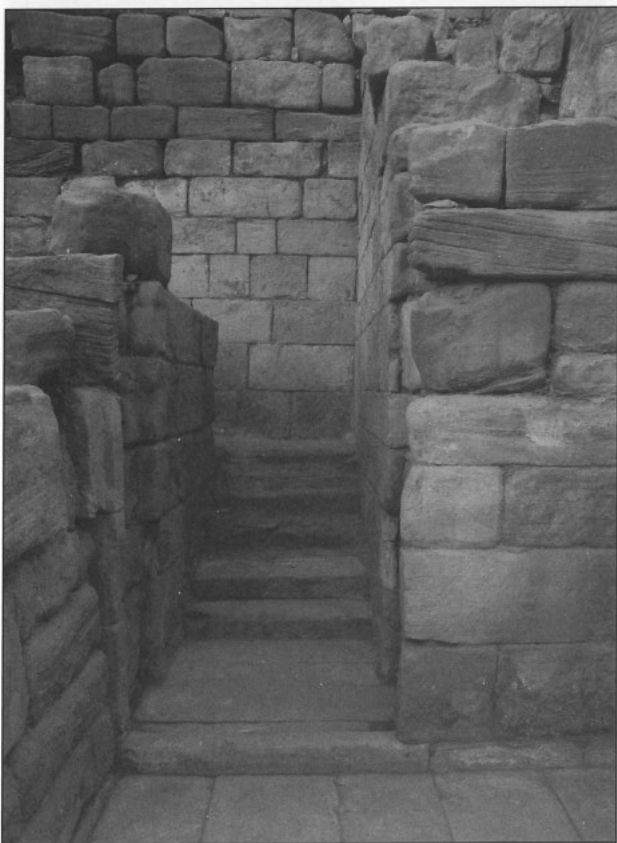
6. Nabataean pottery and possible stone bullets from room 3 (S. G. Schmid).



7. Room 3, bronze elements from the decoration of a wooden furniture (S. G. Schmid).



8. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; room 8 (S. G. Schmid).



9. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; rooms 7 and 8 (S. G. Schmid).

rock that was cut away for that purpose.

Already in 2003 we exposed the doorway leading to room 8 and it became clear that this room was rather narrow but conserved up to considerable height (Figs. 9). As soon became clear during the excavation, room 8 is a staircase leading up to the first floor of the entrance building of the Soldier's Tomb complex. The staircase is built around a central rock pillar and the first two courses of stairs are built upon the rock as well (Fig. 8). Nevertheless, in the Nabataean period the rock was not visible, since it was covered by slabs measuring 1.10m in length and by a massive wall. Two slabs forming the first two steps were found *in situ* and, therefore, we know that the height of one slab corresponds to 16cm. On the central rock pillar, a small rectangular zone is visible, that was carefully cut away (Fig. 8, on the spot of the meter). This is a first indication for additional courses of steps, as the staircase most probably was continuing: The bottom of the staircase is at 930.73m asl; the top of the rock pillar in the middle is at 932.90m asl, plus the 16cm of the slabs (now lost) brings us to 933.06m asl; therefore, the difference is of 2.33m. Interestingly, the rock on the top of our structure, i.e. the bottom of the first floor is at 935.26m asl, plus the 16cm of the slab (now lost) gives 935.42m asl and, therefore, a supposed difference between the middle of the staircase and the top of it of 2.36m, almost exactly the same as the first half.

In Medieval times the staircase was reused but apparently only up to half of its initial height. At this moment, an additional door was constructed, opening towards the north and, therefore, allowing a connection with the outside. In Nabataean times the staircase was directly accessible from the outside (see below) and through a small door in the huge entrance hall (room 1, cf. Fig. 1), first leading into room 7 and then into the staircase (room 8). One can suppose that the staircase was used in order to give a discrete access to the first floor, probably used for private purposes, while the official visitors to the complex were directly led through the central propylon into the courtyard and then into the tomb or the opposite banqueting hall.

Room 9 measures 3.50m x 3.50m and is built in front of room 7 (Figs. 10, 11; cf. Fig. 1). As soon became clear, room 9 is the result of a Medieval construction activity in that area and had no Nabataean predecessor. In the southern wall of room 9, a Nabataean door, initially giving access to room 7 (cf. Fig. 1) was closed by stone blocks and subsequently an arch was built against it (Fig. 10 top left). For the construction of the Medieval room 9, the outer walls of the Nabataean rooms 7 and 8



10. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; room 9 (S. G. Schmid).



11. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; room 9 with Nabataean (right) and Medieval (left) walls (S. G. Schmid).

(staircase) were used, while two new walls had to be set up in order to build the northern and western sides of room 9. These new walls are built in a careless technique and stand on 30cm of sand, while the Nabataean walls were carefully put on a specially cut surface directly on the bedrock (Fig. 11). Further, in modern times the western wall of room 9 was reused in order to construct a path and therefore showed massive use of cement.

In order to completely expose the northern part of the Soldier's Tomb complex, cleaning of the rocky outcrop at the NE corner of the complex was begun (Fig. 12). The cleaning revealed another Medieval room measuring 6.0m x 4.6m, built in a careless technique with reused stones and containing an important amount of the so-called Ayubid-Mamluk pottery (Fig. 13, for similar pottery see Walmsley and Grey 2001: 153-159; Tonghini and Vanni Desideri 2001; Pringle 1984, 1985; Johns 1998, on local aspects of Late Islamic pottery in central and southern Jordan see Brown 1987, 1988, 1991: 232-241, in general terms on that period in Jordan see Walmsley 2001).



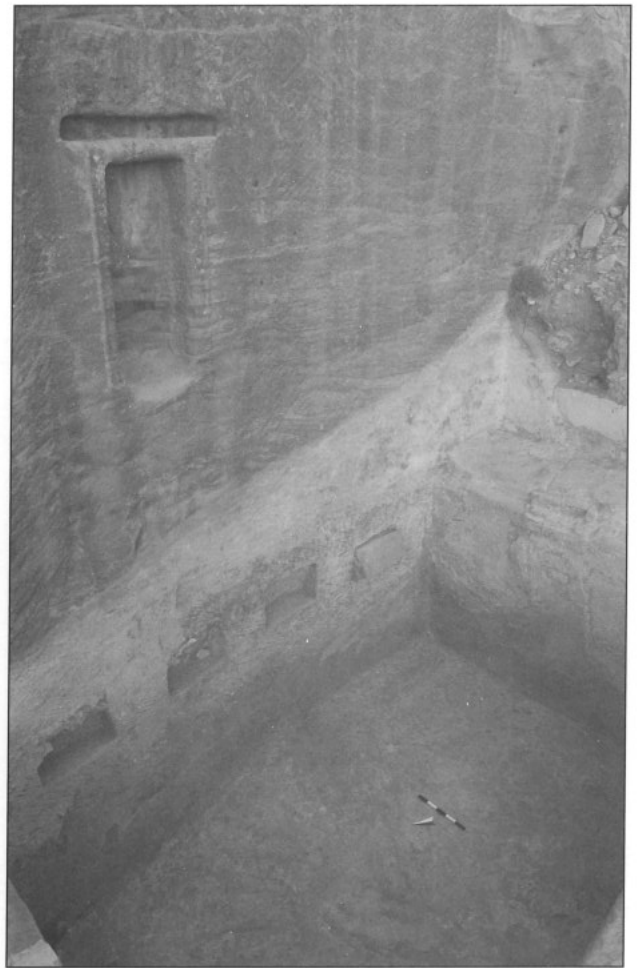
12. Wādi Farasa East, lower terrace; rock plateau with Medieval room (S. G. Schmid).



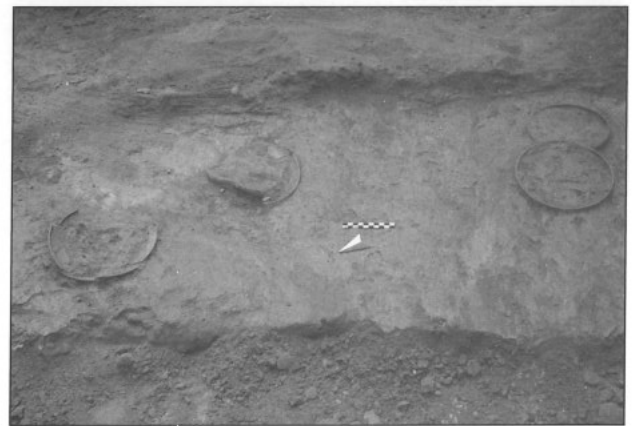
13. Medieval pottery from Medieval room on rock plateau (S. G. Schmid).

Cistern 1

In 2003 a cistern was discovered just outside, i.e. to the north of the Soldier's Tomb complex, measuring 5.2m x 3.4m and 2.20m in depth (Fig. 14). Since last year only half of it was excavated, this season the other half was completed. As last year, the upper levels did contain Nabataean pottery mixed up with substantial amounts of Medieval pottery, while the lower level, i.e. the last 30cm on top of the floor, where densely packed with Nabataean pottery (Fig. 15). The pottery of that last level shows an astonishing homogeneity, with almost 100% belonging to the last quarter of the first century AD (Figs. 16-18), or in terms of the phasing used for the painted pottery illustrated



14. cistern 1 in front of Soldier's Tomb complex (S. G. Schmid).

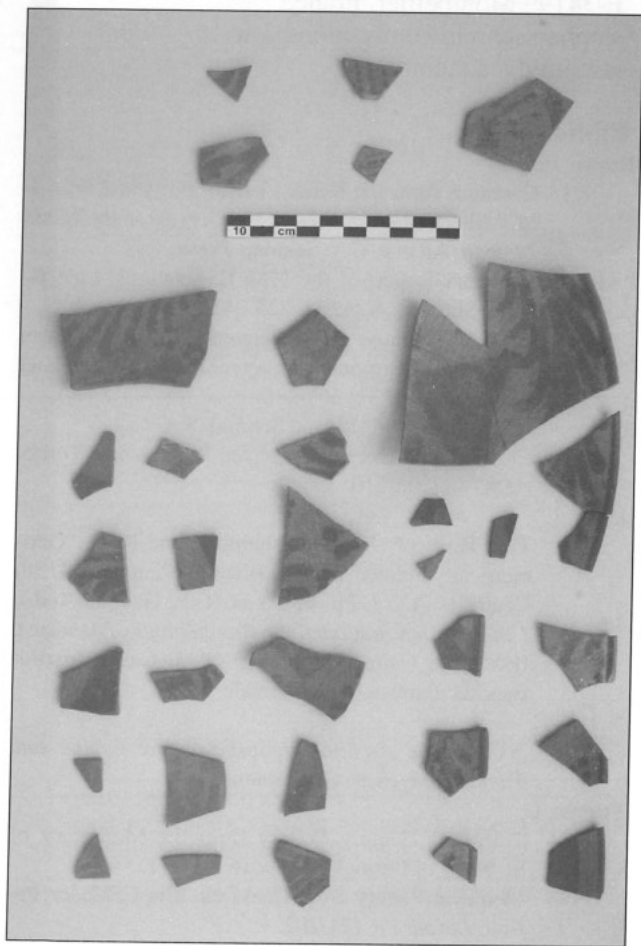


15. Bottom of cistern with Nabataean pottery *in situ* (S. G. Schmid).

on figure 17, phase 3b (on Nabataean pottery see Schmid 2000). Interestingly, although there were several more or less complete dishes and other forms of plain fine and coarse ware (cf. Fig. 16), there was much less painted pottery and most of it highly fragmented (Fig. 17), the exception being two complete painted bowls (top centre on Fig.



16. Nabataean pottery from bottom of cistern (S. G. Schmid).



17. Painted pottery from bottom of cistern (S. G. Schmid).

16). As can be illustrated with the small selection of coarse ware pottery on **Fig. 18**, we are readily dealing with an almost complete household, containing all types of vessels needed for storing, preparing and serving food and drinks. Still, it remains difficult to explain why a huge assemblage of complete and, therefore, still functioning pottery was thrown away into a cistern (cf. Schmid and Barmasse 2004). On the other hand, this almost complete “household” of pottery from the late first century AD clearly illustrates the multipurpose aspects of the Soldier’s Tomb complex.

Renaissance Tomb

Following the results of last year’s cleaning and excavation inside the so-called Renaissance Tomb (Huguenot, al-Bdool and Schmid 2004), we decided to carry out a small test trench measuring 4m x 4m in front of the tomb where one would expect the path leading towards the Wādī Farasa East to meet an eventual structure built in front of the tomb. However, besides two huge boulders maybe belonging to a wall, no built structures were found (**Fig. 19**), just substantial amounts of Nabataean pottery dating to the early first century AD.



18. Coarse ware pottery from bottom of cistern (S. G. Schmid).



19. Trench in front of the Renaissance Tomb (S. G. Schmid).

Sylvie Duchesne, anthropologist of the CNRS Toulouse (France) studied all the human remains collected in 2003 inside the Renaissance Tomb. Despite the fact that all the tombs were disturbed, interesting results regarding age, sex and diseases of the people buried inside the tomb were obtained. Due to the absence of detailed written sources we do not know a lot about the funerary customs of the Nabataeans, a series of samples was taken in order to carry out DNA analysis. This should hopefully provide some information about parental relationships between the different subjects.

Restoration and General Perspectives

In terms of restoration an additional course of stones was added to the main retaining wall of the complex (cf. **Fig. 20** and wall 1 on **Fig. 1**). As in previous years, the newly added stones were fixed with an elastic mortar containing crushed pottery fragments in order to improve its hydraulic qualities and, therefore, a kind of modern version of Nabataean mortar. The same technique was applied for the fixing of a few floor slabs in the northern portico and in order to prepare the restoration of the staircase (room 8), where we plan to add several more steps in a next season.

With the completion of our 2004 season, all the built structures forming the northern part of the Soldier's tomb complex are exposed (**Fig. 20**) and the third dimension of those once sumptuous installations becomes clearly visible, including clear evidence of an upper floor, although details of its architectural aspects are missing for the time being (cf. **Fig. 21**). As was demonstrated this year with the recovery of the double arches once put on top of the columns, there are still some unknown elements regarding the architecture of the complex. Therefore, and because of the remaining maintenance problems (flashfloods, sand, erosion etc.),



20. Wādi Farasa East, complex of the Soldier's Tomb, general view (S. G. Schmid).



21. Wādi Farasa East, complex of the Soldier's Tomb, tentative reconstruction (S. G. Schmid and F. Demange).

further exposure of the other porticoes and of the courtyard is needed.

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