

RECENTLY DISCOVERED RELIEF SCULPTURES FROM THE GREAT TEMPLE AT PETRA, JORDAN

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Introduction

In excavation and consolidation campaigns in 1997, 1998, and 1999, the Brown University archaeological expedition to the Great Temple at Petra — operating under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan — recovered a number of remarkable limestone relief slabs which clearly decorated parts of the temple complex. Consisting of framed panels depicting male and female figures, as well as a triumphal wreath, these pieces represent some of the most important decorative sculptures yet recovered from the temple ruins.

In this article, the author will examine each of the panels, discuss circumstances of recovery, and try to reconstruct how they might have decorated the temple. An attempt will be made to connect the pieces to work already being done on the iconography of the sculptural program of the Great Temple complex, and to the broader context of the history of Nabataean sculpture and its place in the world of Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and Roman art.

The Great Temple Site

The “Great Temple” is dealt with fully in a number of other publications;¹ however, a brief summary of the ruins is in order so that the relief panels can be located relative to the major architecture. The site itself is located in the so-called “Central Valley” of Petra, south of the Wādī Mūsā (وادي موسى) and almost directly opposite from the famous Temple of the Winged Lions. The entire complex is massive, covering 7,560 m², and is divided into three main “sections”: the Propylaeum or monumental entrance staircase at the site’s northern extreme (which climbs from the western end of the famous “Colonnaded Street” south to the Great Temple complex proper), a huge lower courtyard called the Lower Temenos comprising the northern half of the site, and, making up the southern half, the upper courtyard or Upper Temenos, in which is situated the main “Great Temple” building.

The Lower Temenos is where a majority of the relief panels were recovered. This courtyard consists of a variety of structures: paired *cryptoportici* on the west, north, and east, supporting massive triple colonnades which were decorated with remarkable elephant-headed capitals; a broad courtyard paved with hexagonally-shaped limestone flags, and semi-circular *exedrae* — one on the east and one on the west — aligned with the southern ends of the east and west triple colonnades. Between the *exedrae* was the great sandstone retaining wall of the Upper Temenos courtyard, and three staircases (the central one eventually went out of use and was blocked) leading up to the Great Temple building. It was around the East Exedra, the East Colonnade and the eastern end of the Retaining Wall that most of the relief panels were recovered.

The Sculptures

Seven relief sculptures have been recovered from the Great Temple site, and one from alongside the Colonnaded Street, just below the Lower Temenos terrace. All are of the same material (a medium-grained limestone), worked in the same middle relief technique, can be reconstructed as originally being roughly the same dimensions (about 90cm wide), and share important characteristics like a frame of *cyma reversa* with fillet. Almost all the figural reliefs have slots cut for the insertion of the head, which was most likely made in a separate piece (and perhaps executed in a different material, like marble), and depict male and female images in a heavy style that owes much to Hellenistic/Roman naturalism. The iconography and repertoire of figural themes seem classicizing, as are their costumes and attributes, when depicted. All exhibit significant weathering and damage, and almost all were recovered from the northeast quarter of the Great Temple site where they show evidence of reuse in later periods.

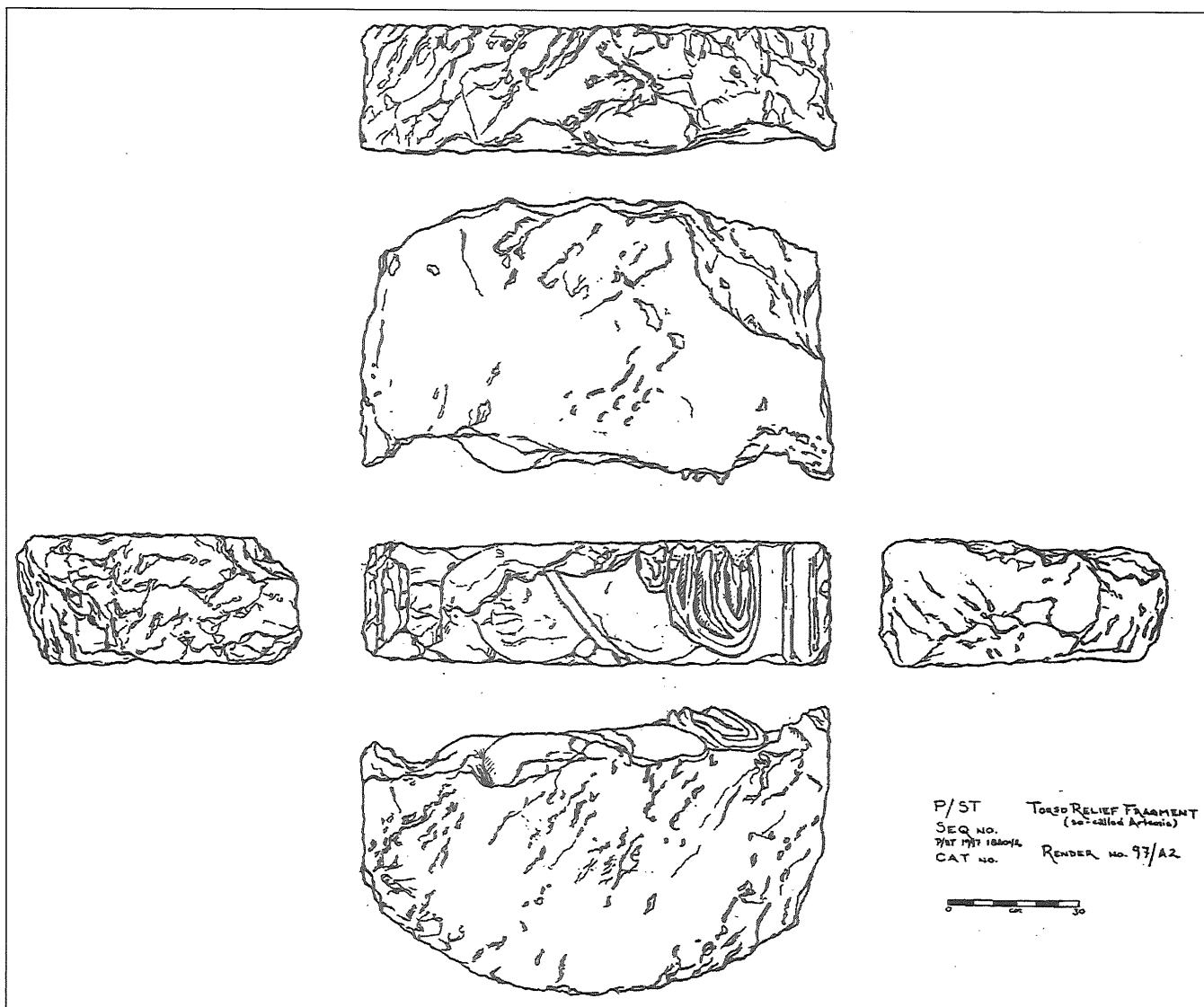
The first relief (Figs. 1-2) recovered was exca-

1. For the topography of the Great Temple site, see Joukowsky 1998a: 187-234. For the history of the excavations to 1997, see in the same volume: 47-148. For a complete bibliography of publications of the Great Temple excavations up until

1997 see in the same volume: xxxv-xxxix. For annual excavation reports since 1997, see by the same author 1998b: 293-318; 1999: 195-222; 2000: 313-334.



1. "Dioskouros/Ares/Apollo" type bust (A. Joukowsky).



2. "Dioskouros/Ares/Apollo" type bust (S. Sullivan).

vated in late fill of the Lower Temenos courtyard, just north of the East-West Retaining Wall that separates the Lower and Upper Temenoi, on June 19, 1997 (Schluntz in Joukowsky 1998a: 231-232; Joukowsky 1998b: 298, fig. 8; Schluntz 1999: 69-72). The panel was sawn or chiseled widthwise at some point into a narrow strip, probably in order to reuse it in some fashion, but preserves almost its full original width, and *cyma reversa* borders at both the right and left margins. It now measures 86cm in width, 24cm in height, and 52cm in thickness.²

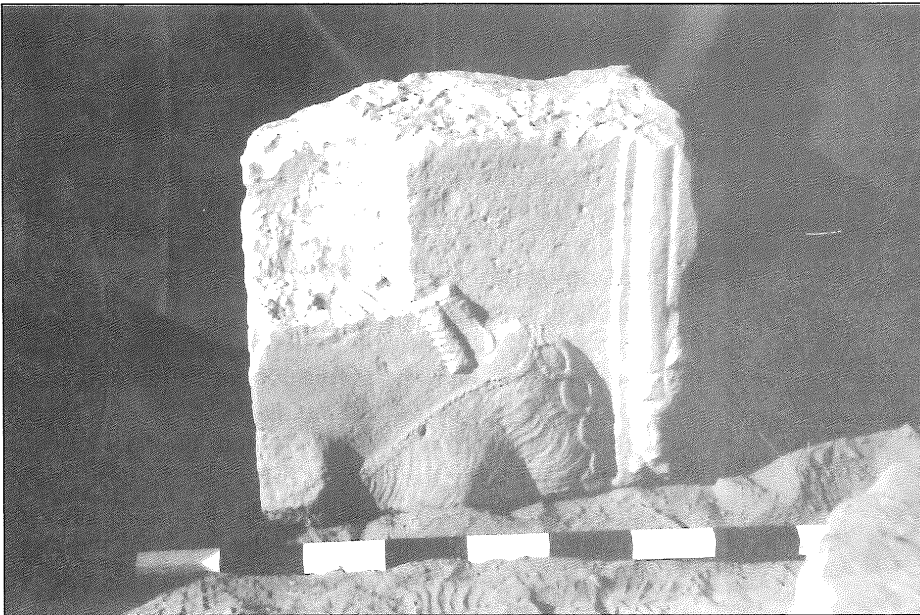
The preserved relief depicts a nude male torso, with heavy, almost pendulous pectorals and broad, rounded shoulders. A strap or baldric, sculpted as a raised band against the surface of the torso, runs diagonally between the pectoral muscles from over the right shoulder proper to under the left breast. Between the pectorals, at the lower margin of what is preserved of the image, is a damaged element that may represent the pommel and part of the handle of a sword or dagger. Over the left shoulder proper is hung a bunched garment with deeply cut folds, perhaps representing a riding cloak (*chlamys*). The iconography suggests one of the Dioskouroi, or perhaps Apollo or Ares, but too little of the sculpture is preserved to be sure.

The second relief (Figs. 3-4) was discovered by Assistant Director Erika Schluntz and dig foreman Dakhilallah Qublan in the fall of 1997, during site consolidation (Joukowsky 1999: 209, figs. 13-14; Schluntz 1999: 69, n. 8 and 72, n. 12). This frag-

ment was sawn or chiseled in a rough rectangle for reuse, 53cm in width by 41cm in height by 21cm in thickness, and built into a rough wall laid between the columns of the middle row of the East Colonnade of the Lower Temenos (Fig. 5). This wall probably dates from the Late Roman period, and includes a number of reused architectural fragments from the Great Temple ruins.

The panel shows the left side proper of a female figure, clad in an elaborately depicted *chiton*. The garment has a raised border, carved with a suggestion of a woven braid, and four open "loops" on the shoulder, fastened with buttons or clasps. Shallow-cut folds give an indication of anatomy underneath the garment in a "wet drapery" technique, including the shoulder and breast. The neckline of the *chiton* plunges from the left shoulder proper to under the (heavily damaged) right breast, leaving it exposed. Corkscrew "finger curls" rest on the shoulder, and this panel was the first discovered with an open slot where the head would be located — indicating that these elements were carved separately (perhaps of different materials) and then fitted into the panel. A female figure with exposed right breast might represent Aphrodite, an amazon, or a maenad, but too little of the panel is preserved to be certain of such an identification.

A flurry of discoveries, made primarily by the author and members of his trench crews, occurred in 1998, greatly increasing the corpus of relief panels from the Great Temple site.³ The first sculpture

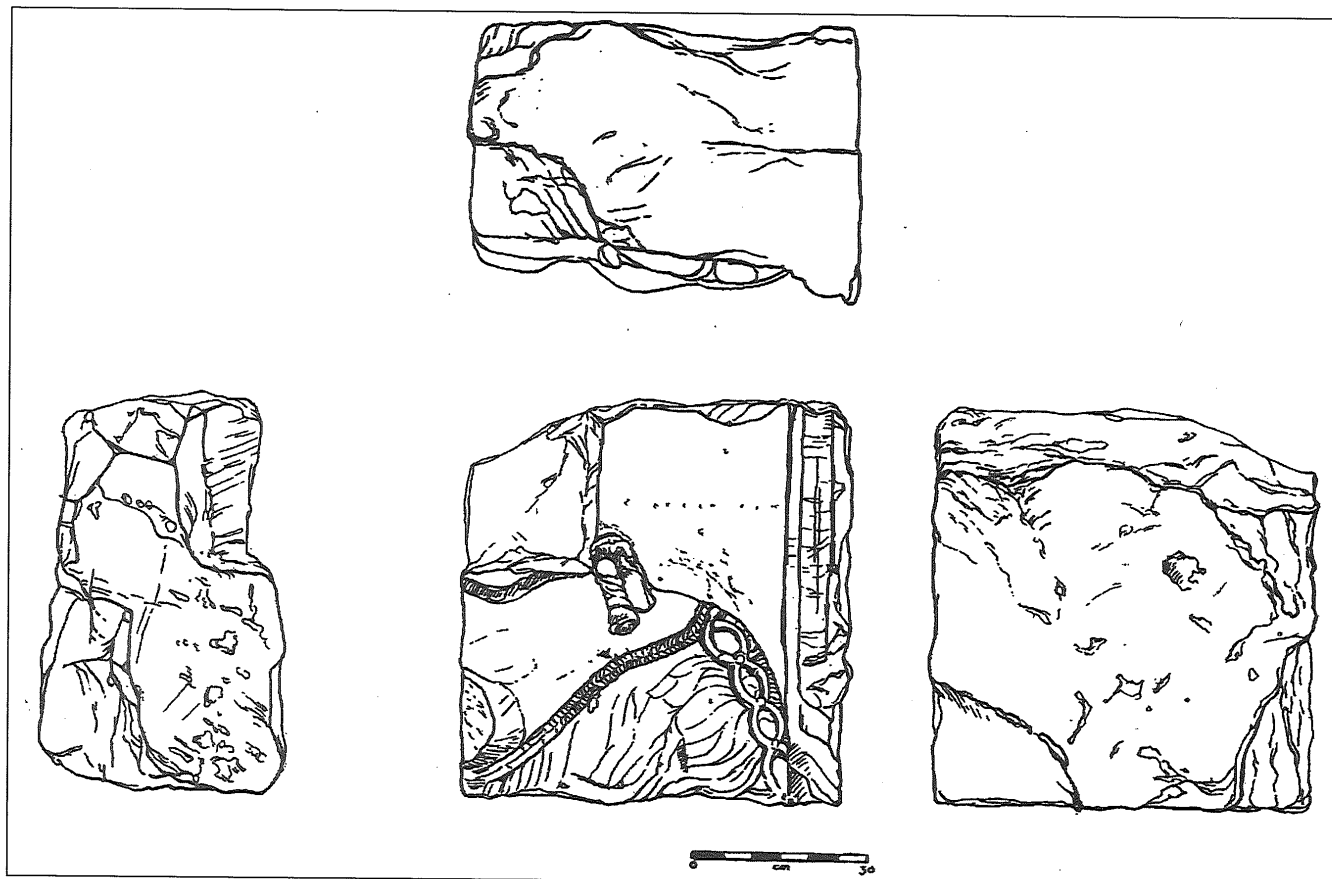


3. "Maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite" type bust (A. Joukowsky).

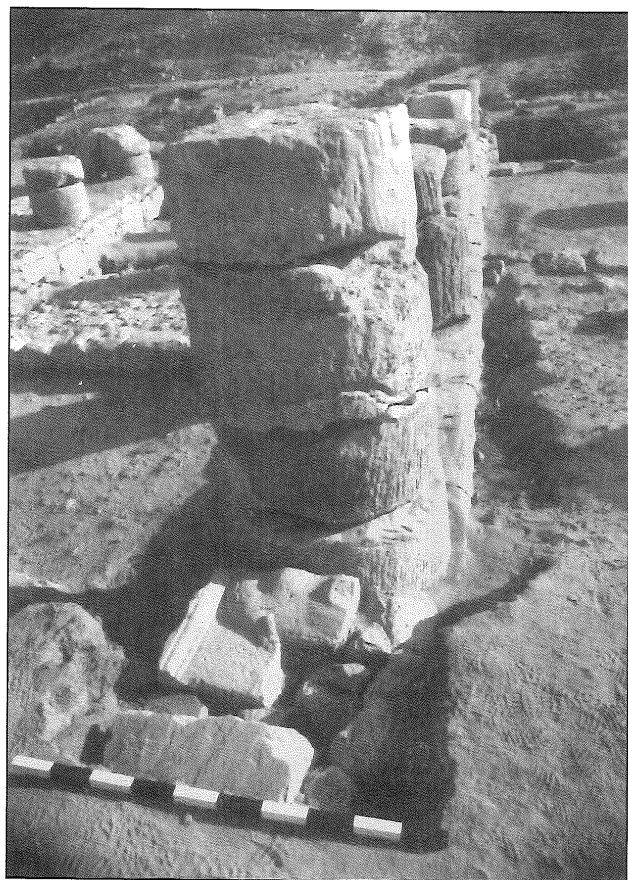
2. I cannot explain the discrepancies between measurements of relief panels given in this article and in Schluntz in Joukowsky 1998a: 231-232 as well as Schluntz 1999: 69-72. In all cases, measurements in this article come from the Great Temple excavation reports and annual publications in *ADAJ*

(supra n. 1).

3. Ms. Monica Sylvester (1997-1999), Ms. Elizabeth Najjar (1997), Mr. Benjamin Kleine (1997), Ms. Hillary Mattison (1997), and Ms. Sarah Karz (1998).



4. "Maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite" type bust (S. Sullivan).



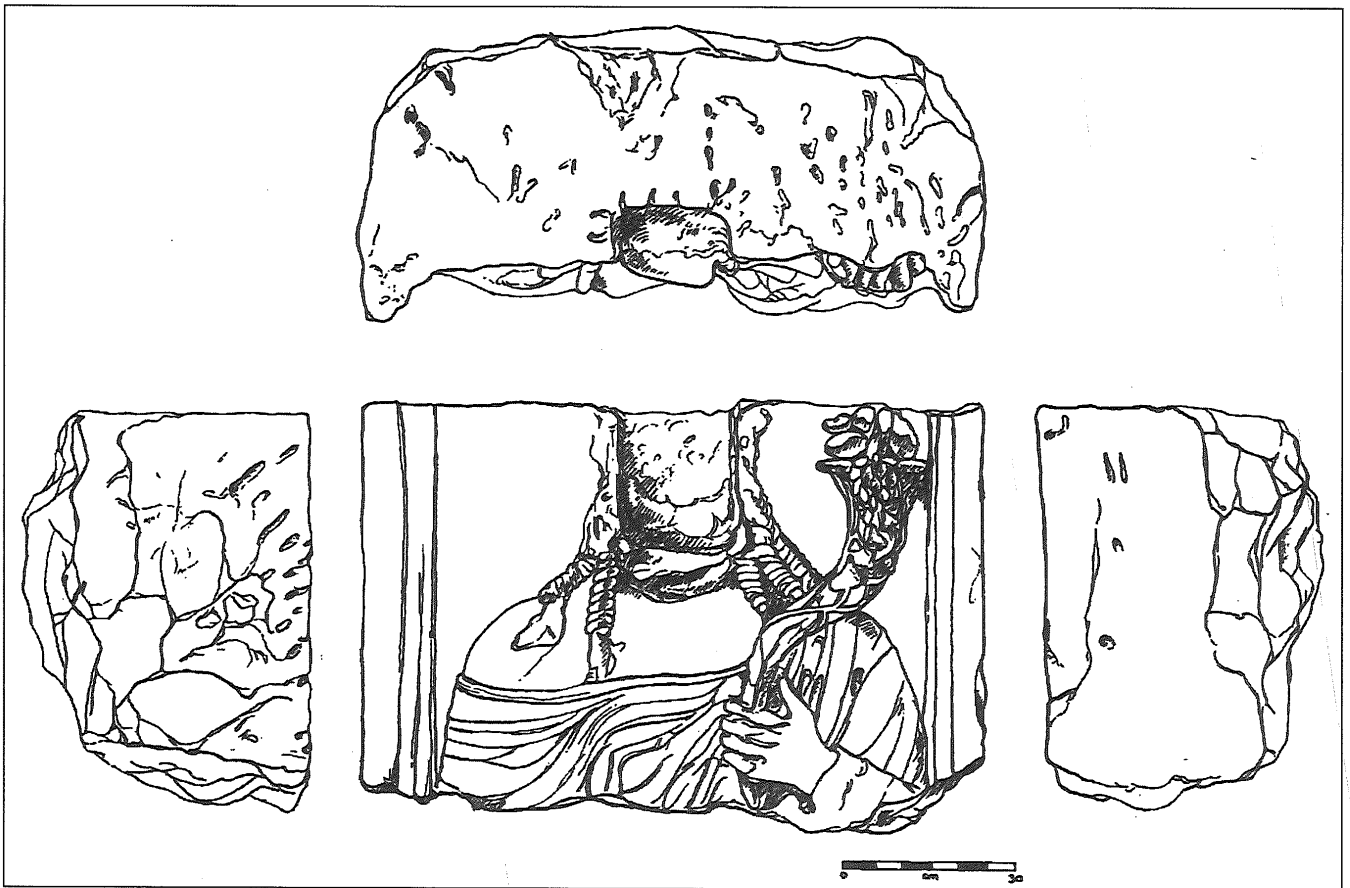
5. "Maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite" type bust, in situ (A. Joukowsky).

recovered that season (Figs. 6-7) is perhaps the best preserved and most spectacular of the figural panels. Excavated on July 4, 1998, from a layer of dense gray lime (associated with the postulated reuse of the Lower Temenos area as a lime kiln in the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period), it depicts a female figure with cornucopia (Joukowsky 1999: 208-209, fig. 12). The full width of the panel is preserved from left to right frame, and measures 84cm across. The top and bottom of the panel have been sawed or chiseled off, however, and the resulting height of the panel is 52cm. The piece is 38cm thick, and like all the others is roughly worked on the back.

As stated above, the relief is of a female figure in a *chiton*, holding a cornucopia in her left hand proper. The head is missing, as in all the other figural panels, with a rough slot where the neck should articulate with the rest of the relief figure. Some plaster has been preserved in the slot, further strengthening the theory that the heads of the panels were carved out of separate materials and then fitted into the empty socket. Iconographically, the goddess Tyche/Fortuna is suggested — a prominent theme in Nabataean art of the first centuries BC/AD, and in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East in general.



6. "Tyche/Fortuna" type bust (A. Joukowsky).



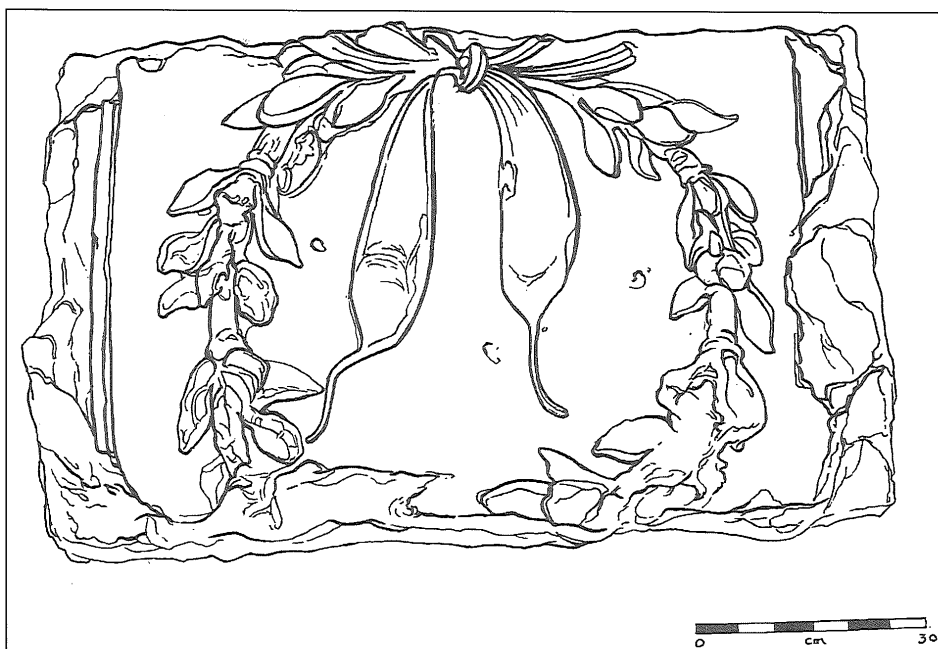
7. "Tyche/Fortuna" type bust (S. Sullivan).

The carving technique is similar to the female figure discovered in 1997, with heavy, rounded features. The folds of the *chiton* are shallow-cut, and emulate the "wet drapery" style. A braided border, similar to that on the garment of the female figure described above, forms the neckline of the

chiton, which plunges to expose the right shoulder proper. The breast, however, is not exposed. The left hand proper is visible, as the arm is bending at the elbow and the forearm is laid across the left breast. This is the hand that grasps the cornucopia; a thin, "s" curve-shaped horn with a stylized ivy



8. Wreath panel, upon discovery (A. Joukowsky).



9. Wreath panel (S. Sullivan).

tendril wrapped round, laid across the left forearm and running to the left shoulder. Fruits are visible coming from the flaring mouth of the cornucopia, and a bunch of grapes can be identified. As on the other female panel, corkscrew “finger curls” are arranged on each shoulder — three on the left proper and two on the right. On the whole, this panel is a tour-de-force of the Nabataean carver’s craft.

Shortly after the discovery of the Tyche figure, a panel was recovered (Figs. 8-9) which depicted a triumphal wreath with ribbon (or fillet) on July 12, 1998 (Joukowsky 1999: 209, fig. 15). This fairly well preserved panel was built, upside down, into the Late Roman/Byzantine wall (Fig. 10), which

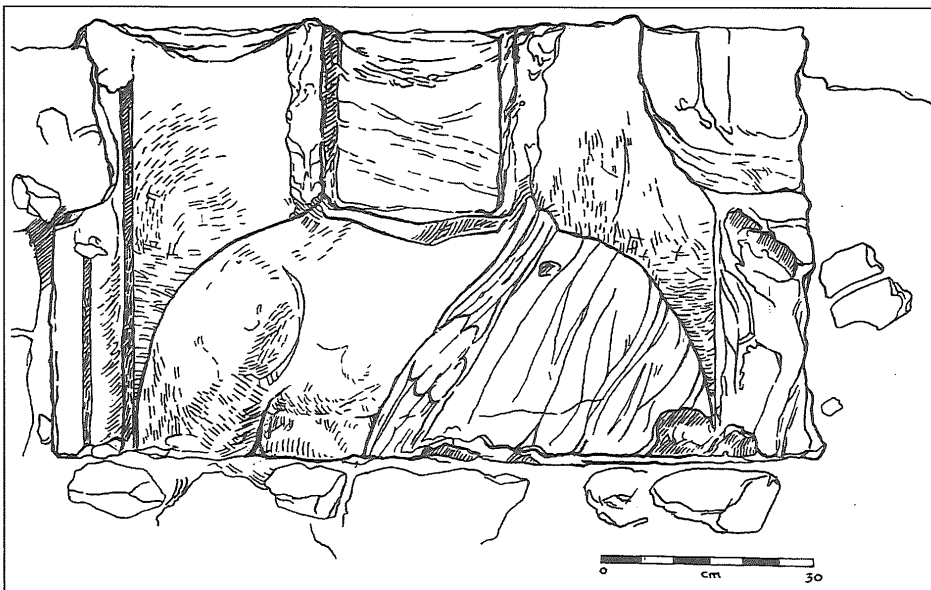
runs between the columns of the center row of the triple East Colonnade (the same rubble intercolumnar wall into which the first recovered female panel was built, but further south than that panel; see above). Nearly the full width of the panel is retained, as can be seen in the *cyma reversa* framing elements in evidence on both the left and right sides of the piece, and the whole sculpture measures 82cm wide by 52cm in height by approximately 24cm in thickness. The foliage of the wreath depicted (laurel? olive?) is shown more naturalistically than, say, the ivy tendril on the cornucopia of the Tyche figure, and no stylistic connection can be made between the ribbon/fillet and the drapery



10. Wreath panel, in situ (A. Joukowsky).



11. Male bust, in situ (A. Joukowsky).



12. Male bust (S. Sullivan).



13. Second “Tyche” bust (author).

of the figural panels.

Near to the wreath carving another panel was recovered (Figs. 11-12), at the end of the same excavation season (August 2, 1998). This relief depicts a male figure, and was built into a diagonal cross-wall of late provenience running southeast to northwest — from the northwest corner of the retaining wall of the monumental pool of the so-called “Lower Market” area to the southernmost column of the middle column row of the East Colonnade (Joukowsky 1999: 209).⁴ The panel is cut down on top and bottom and somewhat damaged, though the figure is clear and readable: a male figure in a chiton or chlamys thrown over the left shoulder proper, executed in the heavy style noted on the other panels; the anatomy of the left shoulder is somewhat visible underneath. Generalized musculature is depicted on the nude right shoulder as well as the right pectoral, while the collarbone is deeply carved. The head, as usual, is missing; the slot where it would have inserted was filled with a large stone when the panel was reused in the late cross-wall. Some of the *cyma reversa* border remains on the left edge of the panel, while the right edge is damaged and no border is visible. Preserved dimensions are 85cm in width by 50cm in height by 40cm in thickness.

While 1998 seems to have been the most momentous year for the excavation in terms of discovering relief panels, two more fragments were discovered in subsequent seasons. At the very beginning of the 1999 campaign, for instance, a damaged and cut-down female panel (Fig. 13) was

recovered immediately adjacent to the male panel described above: just west and south of it, built into the diagonal cross-wall of late provenience running from the northwest corner of the retaining wall of the monumental pool of the so-called “Lower Market” area to the southernmost column of the middle column row of the East Colonnade of the Great Temple site (Joukowsky 2000: 317). This sculpture is the less well-preserved “twin” of the Tyche panel discovered in July of 1998; a cut down panel some 53cm wide by 40cm high, depicting the left shoulder proper of a female figure, the left arm, the left side of the neck, and the left breast. Heavy folds of a *chiton* are draped over the left shoulder and arm, as in the Tyche panel from 1998; a squarish neckline exposes part of the neck, and the left half of the cut-out slot where the head would be inserted. The left arm is bent at the elbow and folded back below the left shoulder; the worn, chunky left hand holds a badly damaged representation of the cornucopia. While much of the detail evident on the 1998 Tyche is lost here, there is enough to determine that the two panels were identical in several important respects.

Also at the beginning of the 1999 excavation season (June 3), another relief carving was recovered (not illustrated): a well-preserved panel depicting a female bust (Joukowsky 2000: 333). It is in all respects similar to the panels described above and clearly part of the corpus of relief carvings, but was recovered not in the northeastern quadrant of the site (the east side of the Lower Temenos courtyard). Rather, it was excavated by Director Martha

4. For the so-called “Lower Market” see most recently Bedal 2000.

Joukowsky in the southwestern quadrant, on the west side of the raised upper courtyard (the Upper Temenos) in which is set the main "Great Temple" building, built into a late "Bedouin" wall. This bust, preserved to almost its full width of 87cm, a height of 49cm, and a thickness of 22cm depicts a draped female figure of the so-called "maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite" type described above; it is fairly well-preserved, with a *chiton* draped over the left breast. The anatomy underneath the thick drapery is generalized, with shoulder and breast appearing as mounds under the heavy cloth. The neckline of the *chiton* plunges from the left shoulder proper to under the right breast, leaving it exposed. A strap or baldric runs between the breasts, suggesting an Amazon. Part of the square socket, where a sculpted head would insert, is preserved. Though recovered in a different part of the site, this panel clearly belongs with the others discovered in the eastern part of the Lower Temenos area.

Finally, a panel from the so-called Colonnaded Street (also known as the "Roman Road"), which forms the northernmost boundary of the Great Temple site and above which the Lower Temenos Courtyard is elevated, has been recognized by the author as probably belonging to the corpus of Great Temple relief carvings (Fig. 14), based on its dimensions and workmanship. This sculpture, previously published (Roche 1985: 313-317, fig. 1; McKenzie 1988: 94, no. 65), is well-preserved, 90cm in width by 45cm in height, and depicts a female bust with strong parallels to the relief carvings discovered at the Great Temple site. The panel preserves the *cyma reversa* and fillet on the left side (as the viewer sees it); the framing is broken away at right. Between the frames is a draped female bust, with heavy cloak overlying a lighter *chi-*

ton underneath. The *chiton* is depicted as having a braided border at the neckline, with a multitude of vertical folds or pleats running from the neck to where the *chiton* disappears under the heavy cloak. Like the other female busts, the anatomy of the Colonnaded Street panel underneath the thick drapery is generalized, with shoulders appearing as mounds under the heavy cloth. The right arm proper, mostly obscured underneath the thick cloak, seems to be bent at the elbow and drawn across the torso, covering the breasts of the figure. Also, part of the square socket, where a sculpted head would insert, is preserved. However, on this example, the heavy cloak comes up the right side (proper) of the neck, as well as the cut-out socket; suggesting perhaps that the head which was originally part of the panel was veiled. Taken together, the corpus of recently discovered relief panels from the Great Temple site constitutes an important collection of Nabataean sculpture, and may reveal aspects of the history and function of the site, as well as the history and stylistic development of Nabataean carving at Petra.

Previous Scholarship

In her 1999 dissertation on the Great Temple, Erika Schluntz took up the question of the first two relief panels discovered: the male torso and the female figure panel reused in the late intercolumnar wall (Schluntz 1999: 69-72). Schluntz postulated, based on just these two fragments, that the reliefs might have been part of a program that decorated the north sides of the two anta faces of the exterior walls of the main Great Temple building; based on her estimate of the reconstructed dimensions of the panels (about 90cm), the width of the anta faces (1.5m), and the reconstructed height of the Temple façade, she surmised that there might have been as



14. Female bust from the Colonnaded Street (S. Sullivan).

many as five panels on each anta wall, arranged vertically and running from the top of the anta to the bottom (Schluntz 1999: 71). Schluntz also suggested that, stylistically, the panels most closely a group of sculptures recovered by G.R.H. Wright in the area of the Temenos Gate of the Qasr al-Bint (قصر البنت) complex, and labeled the “1967 Group of Sculptures” by Judith McKenzie in her recent work on Nabataean sculpture and architecture (Wright 1967-68: 20-29; McKenzie 1988: 85-88, figs. 10-11; McKenzie 1990: 134-135, pls. 60-66; Schluntz 1999: 71-72). She notes the same use of *cyma reversa* fillet, parallels in appearance between the male torso and the “Ares” figure from the “1967” group (Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: fig. 6.9), and similarities in treatment of drapery between the cut down female panel and the veiled female bust from the “1967” group (McKenzie 1988: fig. 11c; Schluntz 1999: 72). Schluntz concludes by stating that these parallels could suggest for the production of the Great Temple reliefs a date similar to that postulated by McKenzie for the “1967” sculptures: before the beginning of the first century AD (Schluntz 1999: 72). This would jibe well with current dating of the main Great Temple building; pottery and stratigraphic evidence suggest that the earliest architecture pertaining to the Great Temple building — and this would include the antae of the main screen walls where Schluntz suggests the panels could have been originally located — dates to the end of the first century BC and the first century AD (Joukowsky 1998a: 133-140; Bestock 1999: 246-248; Joukowsky and Basile 2001: 50).

Though based on only a few bits of information, Schluntz’s theories seem to be mostly borne out by the relief fragments discovered after the appearance of her 1999 work. While it is difficult to know for sure where the panels were originally located in the Great Temple complex (and how they were arranged), their size would seem to preclude their placement anywhere but the antae of the Temple building or perhaps its frieze course (as on the Qasr al-Bint; see below). The number of panels now recovered approaches Schluntz’s estimate of a total of ten,⁵ and while quality varies from panel to panel, most exhibit the same stylistic characteristics that prompted her to compare the pieces to Wright and McKenzie’s so-called “1967 Group of Sculptures”. Similarities in treatment of anatomy and

drapery, compositional techniques, and even material make the “1967 Group” still the best parallel for the Great Temple group; although the workmanship in some cases is not as fine (compare for instance the drapery of Great Temple’s “maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite” types, or the relief from the Colonnaded Street, with the veiled female bust from the “1967 Group”; see Wright 1967-68: no. 20; McKenzie 1988: fig. 11c), these still constitute the most convincing comparanda. Schluntz’s original ideas have clearly been bolstered by discoveries as the Great Temple since 1999.

Context and Function

While Schluntz’s theories concerning possible location, dating, and stylistic comparanda continue to be applicable to the increasing corpus of Great Temple reliefs, her suggestions as to the function of the reliefs in the overall sculptural program are more controversial.

In 1997, excavator Leigh-Ann Bedal discovered, in what was supposed to be the *cella* of the so-called “Great Temple” building, the western part of a classicizing *theatron*, added after the earliest phase architecture and complete with horseshoe *cavea* and low *pulpitum* built between the massive porch columns (Joukowsky 1998: 300-309). This discovery threw into disarray the assumption that the Great Temple, so-called since Bachmann’s time, was indeed a temple site. In her 1999 dissertation, Schluntz, addressing this new evidence, argues that the “Great Temple” was in fact a royal audience hall in its earliest (pre-Roman annexation) phase (similar to those at Herodian palaces, for instance, like that at Jericho), and then a public assembly space after the addition of the *theatron* arrangement (Schluntz 1999: 82-135). In support of this argument, she interprets the sculptural decoration of the complex as a program designed to speak to the role of the Nabataean royal families (Schluntz 1999: 78-81). Specifically, in regards to the relief panels, Schluntz states that:

“...the figural relief panels would be serving an appropriate propagandistic function as divine patrons of the Nabataean kings, adorning the main building’s façade. Their presence would have actually been less appropriate for a temple façade, which would more likely only display imagery connected to the temple’s resident di-

5. A pattern has emerged, however; one that Schluntz could not possibly have known about while preparing her 1999 work. Since *two* Tyche figures have been recovered, and *two* maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite types, it might be suggested that the antae were decorated with *pairs* of relief busts — one of each pair on the north face of the west anta and

one on the north face of the east anta, presumably located at the same height. Thus, there may have been two “Dioskouros/Ares/Apollo” types, two “maenad/Amazon/Aphrodite” types, two “Tyche/Fortuna” types, two “draped female bust” types, two “draped male bust” types, and two wreaths, for a total of 12 panels (six on each anta).

vinity" (Schluntz 1999: 79, n. 15).

However, a close look at relief panels similar to those discovered at the Great Temple site shows that this is probably not the case. Indeed, when Nabataean relief panels can be securely associated with architecture, they almost always pertain to *sacred* architecture.

There are a number of sculpted panels, identified as Nabataean in origin, from sites in and around Jordan. Many of these cannot be associated with a particular structure, but some have a secure provenience. Also, many are similar, in overall format, to the Great Temple panels: figures depicted as busts, with upper torso in low relief, heads depicted in high relief (on the Great Temple panels, of course, the heads seem to have been separate pieces sculpted in the round), and distinct borders framing the panel. This evidence suggests that the sculpted panel — typically depicting a god or a supernatural figure in a classicizing, naturalistic style — was an important element in the decorative sculptural programs of Nabataean buildings (Lytelton and Blagg 1990: 98).

From Petra itself, there are tens of panels and panel fragments — lining the Colonnaded Street, along the walkways leading to the Burckhardt Archaeological Center, the "Old Museum", and the Petra Archaeological Museum west of the Great Temple site, and on the north side of the Wādī Mūsā near the Temple of the Winged Lions and the recently excavated "Petra Church". Catalogued in the very useful 1988 article by Judith McKenzie (90-95), they include unprovenienced stray finds, fragments, whole panels, and important sculptural groups such as the Qaṣr al-Bint decoration and the so-called "1967 Group of Sculptures" discussed above.

However, it is interesting to note that securely provenienced panels from Petra decorate *sacred* architecture only. The most obvious example would be the famous sculpted panels decorating the Temenos Gate.⁶ This structure, almost universally interpreted as the gateway to the sacred *temenos* enclosure of the Qaṣr al-Bint temple, is faced with square, framed sculpted panels decorated with relief busts.⁷ The Qaṣr al-Bint itself has its antae decorat-

ed with raised framed panels — there is no figural decoration (they are merely blank, the frames themselves are the decoration) — but this arrangement has suggested to some (including the author) a possible parallel to the pattern of decorated antae of the Great Temple main building. Of course, massive sculptural panels — depicting various deities as bust reliefs (but only the well-known Helios relief is extant) — have been reconstructed as decorating the "Doric-style" frieze of the temple.⁸

Outside of Petra, sculpted panels with secure architectural provenience also demonstrate an affinity with sacred buildings. The famous sculptural panels of the Khirbat at-Tannūr (خربة التنور) temple, for instance, decorated the façade of the inner shrine of that building.⁹ A similar situation is seen nearby at the temple at Khirbat adh-Dharīḥ (خربة الذريح),¹⁰ where relief busts of gods (including the well-known "Castor and Pollux" relief) decorate the frieze course — indeed the panels are stylistically linked to the reliefs of Khirbat at-Tannūr, suggesting to some a local "school" of Nabataean sculptors operating in central Jordan (Lytelton and Blagg 1990: 100; Zayadine 1991: 57). In both of these cases, the relief panels represent a number of different deities (as is indeed the case with the Qaṣr al-Bint frieze discussed above), seemingly contradicting Schluntz's assertion that a Nabataean temple façade would only be decorated with images pertaining to the god or goddess worshipped inside the temple itself.

Thus, the presence of sculpted panels depicting busts of various deities (and/or other supernatural beings) in relief suggests a *sacred* function for the main Great Temple building, if it indeed was decorated with these panels as postulated above. Whether this "sacred function" is as a "conventional" Nabataean temple (is there such a thing at Petra?), or something else (a "sacred theater" or banqueting triclinium?), is open for debate, but evidence unearthed recently (including a small niche idol, a small "portable" baetyl, a relief "dagger god" idol carved into the cliff face near the southeast corner of the main Great Temple building, a small altar from the Lower Temenos area, a remarkable pair of limestone baetyls recovered

6. For the most up to date discussion and complete bibliography of the Temenos Gate, see McKenzie 1990: 132-134.

7. Some are *in situ*, some have been restored to the Gate, and some are reconstructions. Also, a number of important panel fragments have been associated with the Gate. See Parr 1957: 5-8; 1960: 130-132; Glueck 1965: 466-467; McKenzie 1988: 87-88; 1990: 133-134; Basile 1997: 255-266.

8. For the most up to date discussion and complete bibliography of the Qaṣr al-Bint architecture and decorative program, see McKenzie 1990: 135-138.

9. Glueck's famous 1965 book admirably summarizes not only his work at the Khirbat at-Tannūr temple but also amply illustrates the sculpture from the site, as well as comparanda for those sculptures. For the relief panel busts see Glueck 1965: 122-123, 144-146, 198-207, 222-228, 315-319, 396-399, 410-417, 465-473, 510, pls. 1-3, 12, 25-28, 45, 53, 55-56, 130-132, 136-137, 145-146, 153-154, 157.

10. For a complete bibliography of the Khirbat adh-Dharīḥ site, see Villeneuve 2000: 1543-1555.

from a niche in the West Cryptoportico of the Lower Temenos, and an inscription — dated to the eleventh year of the reign of Aretas IV, or AD 2-3 — referring to a “*theatron* to (the Nabataean god) Dushara” recovered from the Petra Church site but almost certainly moved there from somewhere else, and somewhere nearby) is “piling up” in favor of a religious function for the Great Temple complex (Joukowsky and Basile 2001: 47-49, 51, 54-57).¹¹

The Reliefs and Nabataean Sculpture

Though scholars have been exploring Petra’s ruins since the beginning of the 19th century, a sophisticated, comprehensive study of Nabataean art is, remarkably, still lacking almost 200 years later. Archaeological studies abound, for sure, and recently important reexaminations of Nabataean rock-cut tombs and freestanding architecture have appeared (most importantly McKenzie 1990). Studies of individual artistic monuments, and small groups of monuments, are published regularly — too many to mention here. And, of course, Nabataean pottery and coins have been studied, due to their unique chronological value.¹² However, an overall synthesis of Nabataean art is still lacking, and synthetic analyses of Nabataean sculptural monuments lag far behind studies of the tomb façades, architecture, pottery, and coinage.

The process has begun, however, and some recent studies may be brought to bear on the Great Temple reliefs in order to say something more definitive about their place in the history of Nabataean art. These studies — McKenzie 1988, Patrich 1990, Lyttelton and Blagg 1990, and Zayadine 1991 — represent the pioneering efforts in an attempt to synthesize what we currently think we know about Nabataean sculpture, and make it possible to go beyond the “local” observations on sculptural fragments commonly found in archaeological reports.¹³

First and foremost is the question of comparanda. As stated above, the so-called “1967 Group of Sculptures” from the area around the Temenos Gate can be cited as having stylistic parallels with the Great Temple reliefs. Since it can be convinc-

ingly demonstrated, archaeologically, that this group (or, at least, some of this group)¹⁴ predates the Temenos Gate sculptures, and the Temenos Gate dates from after AD 76 (or 9 BC), therefore the “1967 Group” predates AD 76 (or 9 BC; see Wright 1967-68: 20-29; McKenzie 1988: 85-88, figs. 10-11; McKenzie 1990: 134-135, pls. 60-66; Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: 98-99; Schluntz 1999: 71-72). Furthermore, McKenzie has argued that stylistically, the “1967 Group” most resembles the Helios bust of Qasr al-Bint and the relief sculptures of al-Khaznah (الخزنة); both of these are monuments dated by several scholars to before the beginning to the first century AD (McKenzie 1988: 86-87, 90-92; McKenzie 1990: 134-135; Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: 106). Additionally, stylistic and chronological links, seen by McKenzie, between sculptures at Petra and Khirbat at-Tannūr (especially relief busts from the Temenos Gate and from the “period II” altar pedestal at at-Tannūr, dated to the first century AD and the first quarter of the second century) expand the typically “local” nature of Nabataean sculptural studies and (potentially) demonstrate a remarkable phenomenon: classical features in Nabataean sculptures at both Petra and Khirbat at-Tannūr are strongest in the *earlier* periods, and become more simplified (showing what Zayadine would call “Graeco-Syrian” and “Parthian-Hellenistic” influences; 1991: 56-57) *later on* (McKenzie 1988: 81, 89). One assumes that a revival of the classical style begins after the Roman annexation, operating in tandem with the more schematic post-annexation styles that persist at at-Tannūr and adh-Dharīḥ (Zayadine 1991: 58).

While McKenzie’s theories depend upon a complex “re-reading” of Glueck’s interpretations of his own stratigraphy and architectural phasing (McKenzie 1988: 81-85; see also Starcky 1968: 222-223), and perhaps represent “overly neat” or “extreme” statements regarding the chronological role of classicizing models in Nabataean art and architecture,¹⁵ her willingness to compare monuments across sites (as well as across time) demonstrates the potential of such methods. Indeed, some

11. The controversy over the function of the “Great Temple” is dealt with most recently in Joukowsky and Basile 2001: 43-58.

12. See for instance Meshorer 1975; Khairy 1975; ‘Amr 1987; Augé 1991; Schmid 1995; etc.

13. Glueck 1965 also attempts a synthesis of Nabataean art, and is an admirable source of photos for comparanda (supra n. 9); however, many of its observations and conclusions are now out of date.

14. For *contra* McKenzie that the “1967 Group of Sculptures” forms one coherent group, see Lyttelton and Blagg

1990:98.

15. McKenzie makes similar arguments regarding the architecture of Petra — in her seminal 1987 article with Phippen, and in her equally groundbreaking 1990 work — and similarly uses comparisons with “provincial” monuments, this time at Madā’in Šālīḥ. Lyttelton and Blagg are critical of this approach, stating that: “It seems, however, a somewhat hazardous oversimplification to allow the head of Petra to be ruled by the foot of Madā’in Salih...” (1990: 105).

observations made above regarding the “quality” of the Great Temple reliefs can be brought to bear on McKenzie’s theories. For while the “1967 Group” remains closest to the Great Temple group stylistically, as Schluntz originally observed, the workmanship of some of the Great Temple panels — especially in the depiction of drapery, and the anatomy underneath — is inferior to the “1967” sculptures. A comparison of the veiled female bust from the “1967 Group” (McKenzie 1988: fig. 11c), the well-preserved Tyche panel from the Great Temple discovered 4 July 1998 (see above), and the “bust of a female with cornucopia” from the Temenos Gate (McKenzie 1988: fig. 12d), is especially instructive. While the Great Temple relief has more in common, perhaps, with the “1967” piece, in a way it stands in the middle of the sequence: the drapery is more classical than the Temenos Gate panel, but of a quality inferior to that of the “1967” panel (McKenzie’s progression from “rounded folds of various depths” to “series of flat surfaces”; 1988: 88). The preserved “ringlets” or “corkscrew curls” on the Great Temple panel, as well, are more well-executed and fully realized than the stylized curls of the Temenos Gate panel, but are more schematic than the undulating hair of the “1967” bust (move to “repetitive” elements in the depiction of hair; McKenzie 1988: 88). If McKenzie’s sequence is correct, then it could be suggested that, stylistically, that the Great Temple panels should come somewhere between the “1967 Group of Sculptures” (dated to before the beginning of the first century AD, stratigraphically as well as stylistically due to the similarities of this group with the Helios bust of Qaṣr al-Bint; McKenzie 1988: 92) and the Temenos Gate group (after AD 76, or 9 BC, depending upon how you read the stratigraphy; McKenzie 1988: 91). Since, as stated above, pottery and stratigraphic evidence date the main Great Temple architecture to before AD 100 (i.e. Joukowsky and Basile 2001: 50, etc.), and, as stated above, the Great Temple relief panels are reconstructed as belonging to the main architectural phases (Schluntz 1999: 69-72), this would jibe with McKenzie’s scheme of “...a simplification of the earlier more classical forms as a Nabataean style develops...” (McKenzie 1988: 88).

The next important question concerns influences and origins. From where does the Nabataean “bust relief panel” arise? This is not a commonly seen class of sculpture. *Commemorative* relief busts exist, of course, in the Roman Republic, and persist into Imperial times. Such commemorative reliefs also occur in the Imperial provinces and on its periphery — the Palmyrene funerary reliefs

would be one well-known example. The panels, in a way, resemble metope decoration, and indeed some panels did function as metopes, like the Helios bust of Qaṣr al-Bint and its postulated cousins. In the final analysis, however, the Nabataean relief busts simply are not the same thing as conventional Graeco-Roman metope decoration, which tends to provide for multiple figures and, indeed, narrative content. Thus it could be argued that relief busts depicting deities and supernatural figures, though those figures are often from Graeco-Roman mythology, constitute an important *native Nabataean* sculptural type.

Stylistically, general parallels are more apparent, and some have already been suggested for the “1967 Group of Sculptures” especially. As previously discussed, McKenzie in her 1988 article sees these sculptures as standing at the beginning of a process whereby classical traditions become more schematic and generalized; therefore, the “1967 Group”, along with the al-Khaznah reliefs and the bust of Helios from Qaṣr al-Bint, are the most classicizing and naturalistic. Lyttelton and Blagg are more explicit still, calling these busts “...wholly Hellenistic...without any obvious Nabataean reference...” (1990: 99). Exactly where Hellenistic influences on Petra and the Nabataeans originated from is also now being stated more explicitly: several of the important recent studies on Nabataean art and architecture, including those of McKenzie and Lyttelton and Blagg, look increasingly towards Alexandria (Lyttelton 1974; Schmidt-Colinet 1980; Lyttelton and Blagg 1990; McKenzie 1990). Alexandrian influence is seen generally in the “baroque” architecture (like al-Khaznah) that some of these authors would date to the second half of the first century BC or the first half of the second century AD (not to the second century AD, when the Roman High Imperial baroque style reaches its climax; see for instance Ward-Perkins 1981: 331-334; *contra* Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: 100-104, 106), and specifically in such objects as the distinctive “floral-type” capitals that appear on several key monuments at Petra (including al-Khaznah, and for that matter the Great Temple; Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: 94-95; Schluntz in Joukowsky 1998a: 226-231; Schluntz 1999: 57-68). Indeed, an important theme running through McKenzie’s entire 1990 study is that of Alexandrian baroque influence on Petra’s earliest architectural monuments. While connections with other important Hellenistic centers, like Pergamon, can also be expected (Lyttelton and Blagg, for instance, see Pergamene influence in the “floral scrolls” and “weapons friezes” that appear on several Petra monuments; 1990:

96-98), it would seem that Alexandrian contacts might account for the extreme classicism of not only the "1967 Group of Sculptures" but perhaps the Great Temple reliefs as well.

There is also the more complex question of Roman influence. Rome in the first century BC (and perhaps in the beginning of the first century AD) was, in many respects (especially in respect to art and architecture) a Hellenistic state, so to look for Hellenistic and Roman influences in Nabataean art is, in some ways, to seek the same thing. As Lyttelton and Blagg have said of the period from the reign of Aretas III to Aretas IV (ca. 87 BC-AD 40; the period when they see a number of key monuments being built at Petra): "...many of the elements in the art of Petra which have been regarded as 'Roman' have probably been interpreted as such because Roman ornament was being influenced [by Hellenistic models] at approximately the same time" (1990: 105). Thus, we see that we need not wait for annexation to look for Roman influence — and Roman influence in the first century BC and the first half of the first century AD would include Hellenistic elements.

The mechanisms through which Roman artistic models could be made available to Nabataean craftspeople would certainly include trade and political contacts — the same mechanisms that would have brought Alexandrian and Pergamene ideas to Nabataea as well. However, there is another important possibility, in the person of a "middle man": Herod the Great. Herod's role as a builder and patron of the arts is well known; recently, Roller has offered an exhaustive examination of this legacy (1998). Lyttelton and Blagg see a possible connection between Herod and the building programs of the later Nabataean kings (especially Aretas IV; 1990: 106), and Schluntz, advancing her argument that the "Great Temple" was, in fact, a royal audience hall in its first phases, sees parallels between the main Great Temple structure and Herod's palaces, like the famous "Winter Palace" at Jericho (1999: 106-113). The so-called "Lower Market", located immediately to the east of the Great Temple site, has been shown by Bedal to be a garden and pool complex with Herodian "overtones" (again, parallels with Jericho; see Bedal 2000). And, if in fact the "Great Temple" was a sacred site, as argued by this author and by Joukowsky (Joukowsky and Basile 2001), possible Herodian links are still to be seen: the architecture of the Lower Temenos, which the author contends is (ultimately) modeled on the Roman sanctuary/imperial forum type (like the Sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli, the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at

Praeneste, and the Forum of Julius Caesar and the Forum of Augustus in Rome, which all predate or are contemporary with the main architecture of the Great Temple site; Basile in Joukowsky 1998a: 204-206), may also be related to Herod's own versions and interpretations of this type. As Roller demonstrates, the Temple of Augustus at Sebaste (Samaria) was probably influenced by the Kaisareia of Antioch and Alexandria and the Forum of Julius Caesar, though at Sebaste he did not enclose the temple structure within the portico, making it instead into a "forecourt" (1998: 92). The Roman sanctuary/imperial forum type is also seen as influencing the design of Herod's rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem (Roller 1998: 93; Jacobson 2002: 23-27, 60). Thus, we see that Petra, in the first centuries BC and AD, stood at the nexus of a number of important artistic influences, all of which trace at least some of their origins ultimately to the traditions of the Hellenistic Near East. The classicism of the Great Temple relief panels is a reflection of these influences.

Conclusions

While there is much that cannot be known about the remarkable Great Temple relief panels, the following hypotheses can be forcefully advanced, based on the state of the evidence currently, and on previous scholarship:

- 1) The Great Temple panels represent some of the finest relief sculptures recovered from Petra's Central Valley;
- 2) The panels most likely decorated either the antae or frieze course of the Great Temple main building, as per Schluntz 1999;
- 3) The panels bear stylistic resemblances to the so-called "1967 Group of Sculptures", and therefore are roughly contemporary (late first century BC, beginning of the first century AD), as per Schluntz 1999 — this would jibe well with the archaeological evidence currently available for the Great Temple site, which dates the main architecture to before AD 100;
- 4) Functionally, the panels resemble the Temenos Gate panels of Petra, and the relief busts decorating the temples of Khirbat at-Tannūr and Khirbat adh-Dharīḥ; that is, decorating sacred architecture;
- 5) Comparisons between important sculptural groups — the "1967 Group", the al-Khaznah reliefs, the Helios bust of the Qaṣr al-Bint, the Temenos Gate sculptures, the reliefs of Khirbat at-Tannūr — suggest that the Great Temple panels stand in the middle of a progression represented by the "1967 Group" at one end and the Teme-

nos Gate sculptures at the other, as per McKenzie 1988, perhaps further refining the dating of the Great Temple reliefs to between 1 BC and AD 76;

- 6) Stylistically, the classicism of the Great Temple panels suggests Hellenistic and Roman influences, although the relief bust of Graeco-Roman deities and mythological figures, used to decorate antae faces, pilasters, and friezes, is not generally known outside of Nabataea.

Hopefully, as more excavation takes place at the Great Temple site and at other sites in the Petra Central Valley, these hypotheses can be further tested. However, even if no more evidence can ever be brought to bear on the Great Temple relief panels, they will remain some of the most impressive examples of Nabataean relief carving yet recovered from the Rose City.

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