



Fig. 77. North Eastern Petra Project: Plan of the area (M. Holappa/J. Falkenberg)

After six seasons of surveying (2011 to 2015), the North-Eastern Petra Project (NEPP) carried out fieldwork activities for the first time in fall 2016. The project conducted intensive surveying, mapping, and limited excavations at Rujm Umm al-Sunaydiq in the northeastern area of Petra, specifically between Wadi Mataha and Wadi Musa on the high hill overlooking the eastern end of the Colonnaded Street and west of the Palace Tomb. The site covers approximately 350 m east–west by 250 m north–south. Modern maps of Petra’s center feature almost no extant structures or ruins in this area, despite the fact that these are visible and significant in appearance, as documented by the NEPP survey during the past five years of fieldwork (Fig. 77).

2016 fieldwork concentrated on Structure 2, the largest and the most sumptuous building in the NEPP area. Specifically, excavations took place in Room 1 located in the northeast corner of that structure. Fieldwork activities included the removal of the stone tumble from the room’s interior in order to reach the floor level and a detailed documentation of all strata, artifacts, and architectural blocks located in the room as well as the description of the surrounding walls. The documentation included traditional methods as well as the use of EDM, photogrammetric documentation and modelling of extant remains (Fig. 78). Furthermore, a limited clearance of the stone

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and soil material currently located on the northern slope of the room was made in order to ascertain the construction methods of the room and the entire structure.

Currently, the excavated Room 1 measures ca. 8.80 m (E–W) x 3.60 m (N–S) but it must originally have been larger, as the entire northern side has eroded away. The fieldwork results indicate that Room 1 (and apparently the entire Structure 2) was most probably constructed in the early 1st century A.D. and remained in use during the Nabataean and Roman periods. The room (and its upper story) turned out to be a luxuriously decorated space, including a flagstone pavement on the ground level and mosaic floors in the upper story, as well as painted wall plaster, opus sectile decoration, and architectural blocks of the highest decorated quality. Considerable amounts of tumbled stone inside the room indicate that it suffered two destructions, the first one probably being the A.D. 363 earthquake. Following that episode, the room was repaired and reoccupied, although seemingly on a more modest scale. A second destruction, at some point in the Byzantine period, terminated the occupation of Room 1. Generally, the results of the 2016 fieldwork season confirm the previously proposed interpretation of the NEPP architectural complex as a highly prestigious, residential complex, constructed in the early 1st century A.D., and probably related to the Nabataean royalty.

In 2017, no fieldwork was carried out in this area. However, the documentation of the architectural elements continued as part of the Ph.D project “Architecture and architectural decoration in Petra” by M. Dehner, who conducted extensive studies of the architectural findings in the NEPP area in March 2017. The investigations confirm the initial results regarding the importance of the NEPP area in general and Structure 2 in particular, which shows unique and spectacular decoration, reflecting its dominance. Further studies in this area combined with comparative studies in the city center of Petra promise comprehensive new insights and a better understanding of Nabataean freestanding architecture.



Fig. 78. Room 1 after excavation: 3D Model based on Structure From Motion Photogrammetry (image by M. Dehner)