



Fig. 85. Tentative reconstruction drawing of the Qasr al-Bint temple and adjacent buildings during the Roman period (Rendering by T. Fournet)

The excavation of the Qasr al-Bint area, conducted by François Renel since 1999, is part of the French Archaeological Mission of Petra, directed since 2013 by Laurent Tholbecq (Université Libre de Bruxelles), and before him by the late Christian Augé. The 2016 and 2017 seasons focused on the monumental staircase of the temple, partly documented by previous excavations, including Peter Parr during the 1960s and Fawzi Zayadine in the 1980s (Zayadine *et. al.* 2003), but it still produces valuable results concerning the chronology of the area.

For the recent periods, the most significant remains are related to an early Islamic reoccupation of the temple. They consist of a terrace wall, located on the monumental staircase of the temple, and of an impressive enclosure wall built inside the pronaos with massive reused dressed-stone and column drums (all of them part of the temple's upper parts). An important collection of locally handmade pottery from the associated layers could be dated, as a preliminary observation, to the 9th to 10th century A.D. This occupation could be related to a small graveyard previously excavated in front of the temple, and to other unexplained structures preserved inside the cella before 1970s preservation work.

PETRA: QASR AL BINT

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Concerning the monumental staircase itself, the excavation distinguished two architectural stages. The first stairs, built at the same time as or immediately after the temple's podium, appear to have been magnificently restored in white marble (Fig. 85). This refurbishment could be tentatively associated with the construction of the monumental Apse Building, northwest of the temple, during the second half of the 2nd century A.D.

The excavation also delivered elements concerning the early phases of the temple. In a deep sounding, made in a gap between the paving in the southwest corner of the pronaos, the foundations of the temple were exposed and, more significantly, pre-existing massive masonry was discovered underneath, directly resting on the bedrock. The size and strength of this masonry indicate that this substructure was probably designed to support a monumental building. The sherds found in the sand backfilling in those early foundations can be dated between 150 and 50 B.C. (Schmid's Phase 1).

Excavations on the temple were complemented by a renewed architectural analysis conducted by Thibaud Fournet on the "B Building," a luxury Nabataean construction previously excavated by the French team east of the temple. This study has resulted in a reconstruction with two stories centred around a courtyard surrounded by a Doric portico, supporting a Corinthian gallery at the upper level, with screen walls adorned with colonettes (Fig. 81). Beside this sophisticated courtyard, the analysis of the monumental gate of the building, with imbricated Nabataean and Corinthian orders, revealed two main successive construction stages, and provided new insights into its successive functions within the Qasr al-Bint temenos.

On another note, preservation efforts were continued and intensified in 2017, in terms of a large presentation/valorisation project for the Qasr al-Bint area, which encompassed security, conservation, and interpretation.

REFERENCES:

F. Zayadine, Fr. Larché, J. Dentzer-Feydy, 2003. *Le Qasr al-Bint de Pétra. L'architecture, le décor, la chronologie et les dieux*. Paris: ERC.