

ACOR Newsletter

أخبار أکور



Vol. 6.1— Summer 1994

The Madaba Archaeological Park

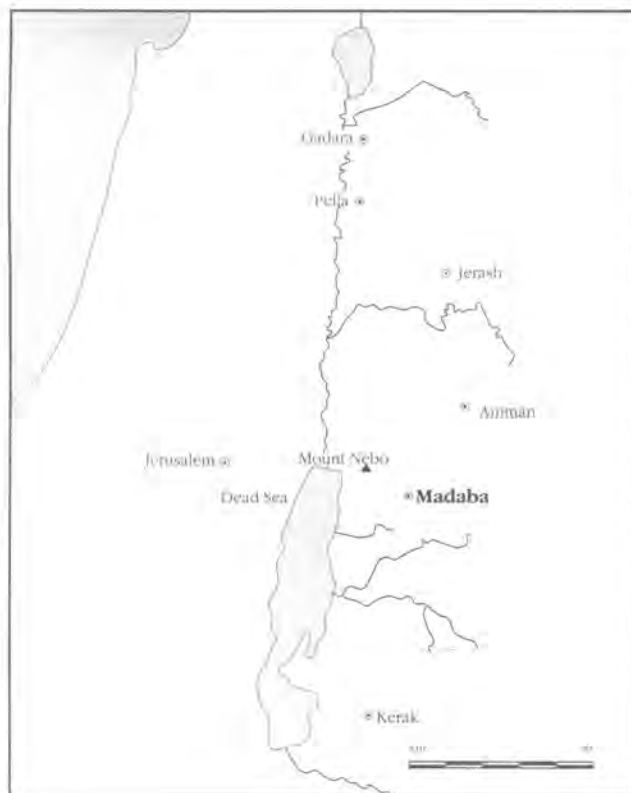
The History of Madaba

Modern Madaba, 30 km southwest of Amman, continues an urban tradition that can be traced back at least 4,500 years. The ancient settlement, now mostly buried beneath the modern town, lies on a natural rise created by branches of the Wadi Madaba. On and around the tell are the remains of the classical town, represented most notably by the churches and mosaic pavements that have brought Madaba so much fame.

The earliest reference to Madaba occurs in the Bible (Numbers 21:30) as part of a lament describing the conquest of a series of Moabite cities including Madaba by the Amorite King Sihon of Heshbon. Madaba continued to play a role in regional conflicts and, during the Hellenistic period, the "sons of Jambri," apparently members of a Nabataean tribe from Madaba, were accused of ambushing a passing caravan in ca. 160 B.C. and killing John, the brother of Judas Maccabeus (I Maccabees 9:35-42). In retaliation, his brothers Jonathan and Simon attacked a Jambri marriage celebration, killing many in revenge. The region was incorporated into the Roman Province of Arabia in A.D. 106, following Trajan's defeat of the Nabataeans at Petra. Christianity gained a foothold in the Madaba region during the late Roman period. There is evidence of a bishop in Madaba as early as the middle of the 5th century. The mosaic pavements of the region have proved to be a rich source for Madaba's ecclesiastical history.

Madaba flourished during the reign of the Emperor Justinian (A.D. 527-65). An inscription found on the plastered wall of a large cistern to the north of the Church of St. George credits him with the renovation of the structure. During the 6th to 8th centuries, the church with the famous mosaic map of the Holy Land, the churches along the Roman street, the Burnt Palace and the Hippolytus Hall were built.

Following the Islamic conquest and the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, the city of Madaba continued to flourish.



The excavations at the Burnt Palace demonstrate the richness of the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods. Far from being economically impoverished, those periods witnessed remarkable building activities. When one considers the fate of the antique cities of Syria which entered a phase of gradual decline from about the middle of the 6th century, Madaba appears as an exception to the general trend.



The western half of the Hippolytus Hall mosaic as the floor of the home of Sulayman Sunna'. Photo by D. Baly, ca. 1934.

The literary record falls silent about Madaba from the 8th until the early 19th century, when western Europeans began arriving in the Near East in search of adventure and traces of the past. In 1806, the German explorer Ulrich Seetzen was the first European to visit Madaba. The famous Swiss 'discoverer' of Petra, Johann Burckhardt, followed a few years later and recorded the considerable water collection and storage facilities near Madaba. Neither explorer noted any settled population in the region.

With the discovery of the Moabite Stone at Dhiban in 1868, international interest in what was then called Transjordan increased dramatically and a flurry of expeditions soon began. Of these, the most successful was led by H. B. Tristram in 1872. The impressive extent of Madaba's ancient ruins prompted Tristram to observe: "Excavations we were not able to attempt; but I have seen no place in the country where they seem more likely to yield good results." Tristram also stated that much of the surrounding country was being cultivated



Residents of Madaba at the turn of the century

by Beni Sakhr Bedouin. Claude Conder visited Madaba in 1881 and noted the presence of a group of Christians who had recently arrived from Kerak and were then living in caves. As those families moved onto the tell itself, often building directly on the foundations of ancient structures, they came upon mosaic after mosaic. Many were incorporated as floors in the new houses being built by the settlers.

The announcement in 1897 of the discovery of a map of the Holy Land dating to the Byzantine era created a sensation. By the end of the first year alone, well over a dozen studies had appeared analyzing its contents. By the end of the century, the majority of the known mosaics of Madaba had been at least partially uncovered. In most cases, they were preserved and can be seen today.

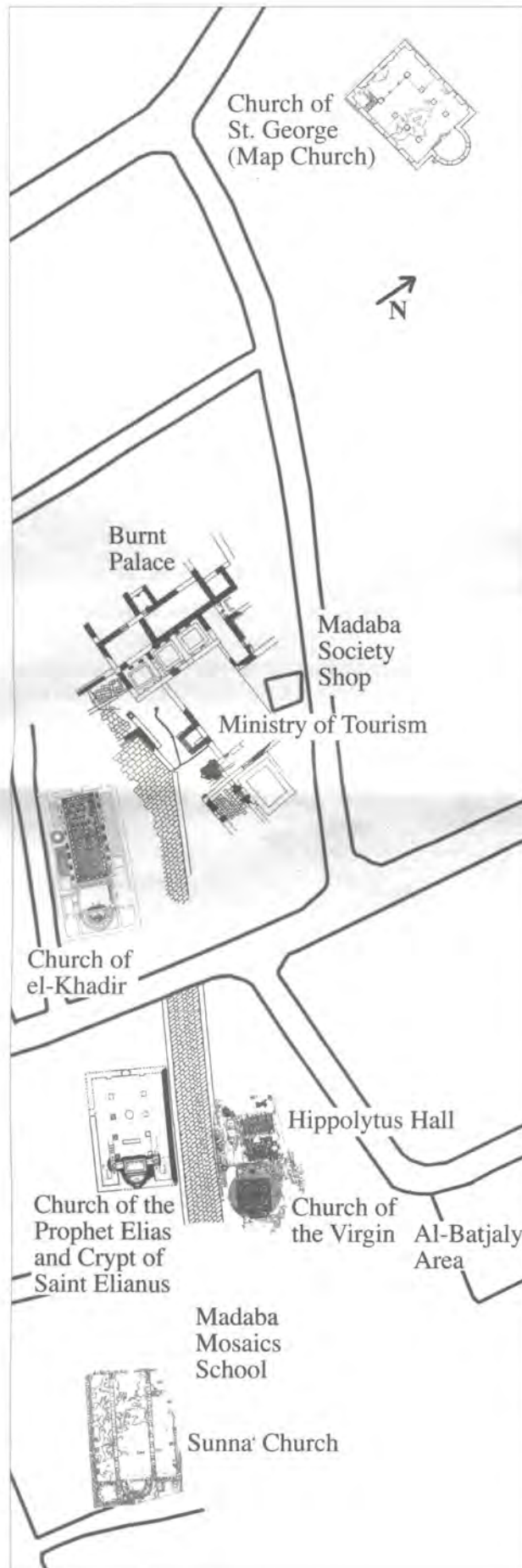
Political unrest began to destabilize the region in 1905, making exploration more difficult; in 1916 the Arab Revolt began. Madaba would produce only a few archaeological discoveries in the next decades. The construction boom that followed the end of World War II, however, uncovered many new traces of Madaba's past.



The Church of St. George, the 'Map Church,' in 1902

In 1962, the Department of Antiquities opened an archaeological museum in Madaba. Several adjoining houses where mosaic pavements had been discovered, southwest of the acropolis, formed the nucleus of the museum.

The mosaic discoveries of the past century, while rightfully earning Madaba the title "city of mosaics," have also brought concerns for their preservation. Individual mosaic pavements have received special attention from time to time, most notably the restoration of the map mosaic in 1965 by specialists from Germany. Until recently, however, there has been no systematic effort to preserve these priceless treasures of the town's rich architectural heritage. The need for preservation became even more acute during the building boom of the 1970s and 1980s. As a result of the need for conservation of Madaba's heritage, the Madaba Archaeological Park project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), evolved. In a related project, under a grant from the Canada Fund to ACOR, buildings within the park were renovated for use by the Madaba Mosaic School, a project of the Government of Italy to train mosaic conservators.



The Madaba Archaeological Park

In 1991, a project was initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to create an archaeological park in the heart of Madaba. The park includes a well-preserved stretch of late Roman street and buildings dating from the Roman period into the early part of this century. The goals of the park project are to explore the history of Madaba, to protect its archaeological heritage from destruction, and to revitalize downtown Madaba. The park, which is located close to the Church of St. George with the famous mosaic map, contains a number of Jordan's most important mosaics. However, the mosaics had been covered over to protect them. The first stage of the project was the construction of a



The shelter over the Church of the Virgin and the Hippolytus Hall

shelter over two of the most important sites, the Church of the Virgin and the Hippolytus Hall. Architect Ammar Khammash designed a stone building compatible with the character of the site. The building includes arcades where other mosaics from the region are displayed. Khammash also renovated three buildings to be used as the Ministry of Tourism Reception Center, as a shop run by the Madaba Society, and as a center for resident archaeologists and conservators (Jumean House). In addition, he built a new shelter over the Church of the Apostles which is about 500 meters south of the park. As part of the project, excavations were conducted in the area of the Church of the Virgin and the al-Batjaly sector by Michele Piccirillo, and at the Church of the Prophet Elias by Cherie Lenzen, Ghazi Bisheh and Michele Piccirillo. In the western half of the park, excavation of parts of the Roman street and parts of the Burnt Palace were conducted by Cherie Lenzen and Ghazi Bisheh; Pierre Bikai excavated a number of cisterns within the park. Finally, as part of the project, restoration work was conducted by the Madaba Mosaic School, by ACOR conservators and by the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

The following pages give a brief description of the monuments which are within or near the park.

The Church of the Map

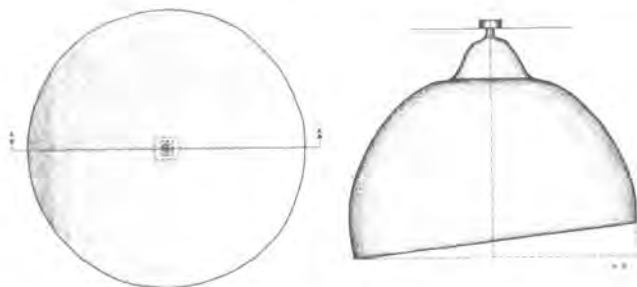
The Greek Orthodox Church of St. George, located to the northwest of the Madaba Archaeological Park, was built in 1896 over the remains of a Byzantine church. The famous mosaic map of the Holy Land, dated to the mid-6th century, is partially preserved as part of the church's floor. It shows an area extending from Egypt to the Phoenician coast, and from the desert to the Mediterranean Sea. The cities and buildings of the map are oriented toward the east, as are the captions.



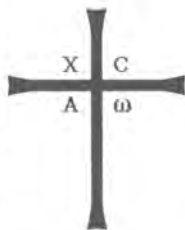
There are 157 such captions and most of the sites have been identified. Jerusalem is shown above.

Bier al-Rayes

Several scholars in the 1890s noted a large cistern just north of the church with the map. According to an inscription on its wall, the cistern was renovated in the time of the Emperor Justinian. That cistern cannot now be located but, in the attempt to find it, another large



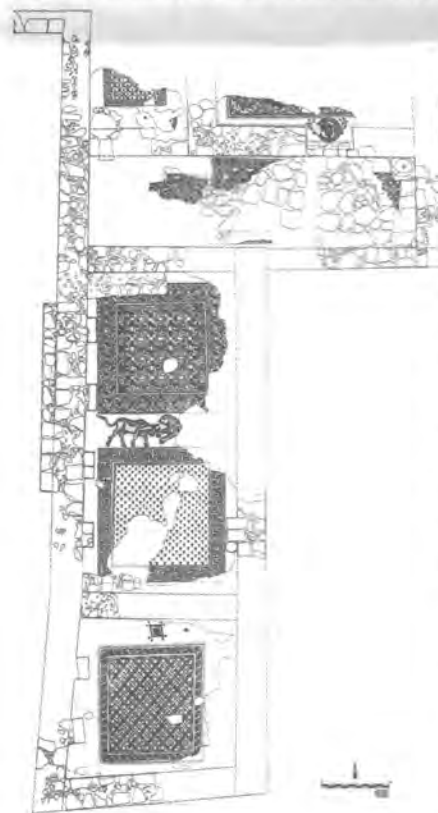
cistern, also to the north of the church, was completely excavated by ACOR Director Pierre Bikai in 1992-93. This latter cistern is 17 m wide; the bottom slopes from 12 m to 14 m from present ground level. Near the top of the cistern there is a cross which is about 60 cm high. Its inscription refers to "Jesus the Saviour, the Alpha and the Omega."



The Burnt Palace

In 1905, M. Metaxakis discovered a mosaic which he took to be the remains of a church. Excavations in 1985 by Michele Piccirillo showed that the mosaic actually decorated a room in a secular building which burned in the late Byzantine era and was then abandoned. The residence had a paved courtyard and to the east was a

large hall. The frame of the carpet of the hall's mosaic consists of a grid filled with trees, flowers, birds, fish and animals. Within that frame there are acanthus scrolls decorated with pastoral and hunting motifs. The entrance features a pair of sandals within a medallion. The 1993-94 excavations conducted by ACOR under the direction of Ghazi Bisheh made it clear that the hall was part of a larger, opulent complex. The courtyard is flanked on the north, east, and west by wings. To the south is the Roman street. Of the northern wing only a long narrow strip has been excavated. This includes a corridor which was originally paved with mosaics in geometric patterns. North of the corridor, two rooms with mosaics were partially excavated. The preserved sections of the mosaic in the room to the east include a personification of a Season as well as a bust of Tyche wearing a turreted crown. A second room was also paved with mosaics in a scale pattern surrounded by a plaited border. To the west of the central courtyard is a long room divided into five bays. The floor of this room has two main panels separated by a strip of plain white tesserae. The center of this strip shows a lion attacking a bull. The northern panel consists of geometric designs while the southern panel has a white background sprinkled with little tassels. To the south of this hall is a square room with a nearly intact mosaic floor decorated with a pattern of indented squares, framed by a border of two-strand guilloche.



The construction of the complex can be dated to the late 6th to early 7th century. The ceramic evidence indicates that it may have been destroyed by the well-documented earthquake of A.D. 747/48.

The Roman Street

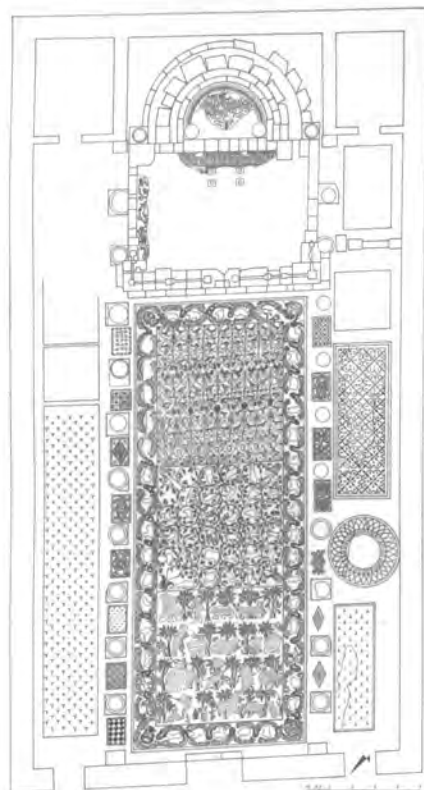
The street would originally have crossed Madaba from east to west, leading to gates in the city walls which have since vanished. It was paved with large flagstones



and flanked by columns. The street was covered by a layer of beaten earth during the Byzantine/Umayyad period. Many of the columns were reused in later structures, both in antiquity and in more recent times. Today most of the Roman street is covered by the modern town but two sections, bisected by a modern street, have been excavated.

The Church of al-Khadir

Identified in the early part of this century and called locally the Church of al-Khadir, it was excavated by the



German Evangelical Institute in 1966. Dated to the 6th century, the basilica incorporates a number of reused Roman capitals, columns and bases. In spite of iconoclastic mutilation, the decoration of the mosaic is still legible in its general outlines. The two aisles and the intercolumnar spaces are decorated with geometric and floral motifs. The pavement of the nave is en-

closed in an acanthus border with hunting and pastoral scenes. The corner scrolls are decorated with foliate masks. The central carpet has three sections. The first panel, to the west, consists of scenes of hunting, fowling and herding. These scenes are organized along four superimposed registers made up of trees laden with fruit. The second panel, at the center of the nave, is divided into 32 scrolls formed by eight vine branches which begin at the corners. Inside each scroll, in no particular order, there are scenes of hunting, herding and wine-making. The third panel has alternate series of birds, flowers, fruits and baskets.

The church has recently undergone further excavation and the remaining mosaics have been cleaned and treated to preserve them.

The Hippolytus Hall

Excavations between 1972 and 1991 showed that the Church of the Virgin was built above the hall of an early 6th century Madaba house. The western section of the hall had been found in 1905 by Sulayman Sunna', then the property owner. In 1982, the eastern section was unearthed by Michele Piccirillo.

A border of acanthus scrolls containing hunting and pastoral scenes frames the central field. The four scrolls in the corners are decorated with personifications of the Seasons. The central field of the mosaic is divided into three panels. In the western panel there are nilotic motifs: flowers and plants which alternate with birds. Two sea gulls with extended wings glide over the water. The central panel was partially destroyed when the hall was divided into two rooms in antiquity. The remaining portion shows some of the major characters of the tragedy of Phaedra and Hippolytus. Captions reveal the names of the characters in a scene which shows handmaidens assisting Phaedra. To the south, Hippolytus accompanied by his ministers and a servant holding his mount were shown but that part of the mosaic is largely destroyed. In the third panel, Aphrodite sits on a throne next to Adonis who holds a lance. The other figures are Graces and Cupids. In order to show that this scene takes place in the countryside, there is a



The Church of the Virgin

This mosaic was found in 1887 and the inscriptions in it identified the edifice as the Church of the Virgin Mary. Built above a Roman monument, the church has a round nave with a mosaic which had two phases. Flower blossoms and unopened buds which run along the edge of the nave formed part of the earlier mosaic which can be dated to the late 6th to the early 7th century. The well-preserved later mosaic dates to the Umayyad period. It consists of a square frame decorated on the outer edge by a series of serrated points. In the center are a round medallion and an inscription enclosed in a guilloche. In turn, two interwoven squares, which form a star, surround the central design which lies inside another circle. The star is enclosed in a circular border made up of interlaced smaller circles.

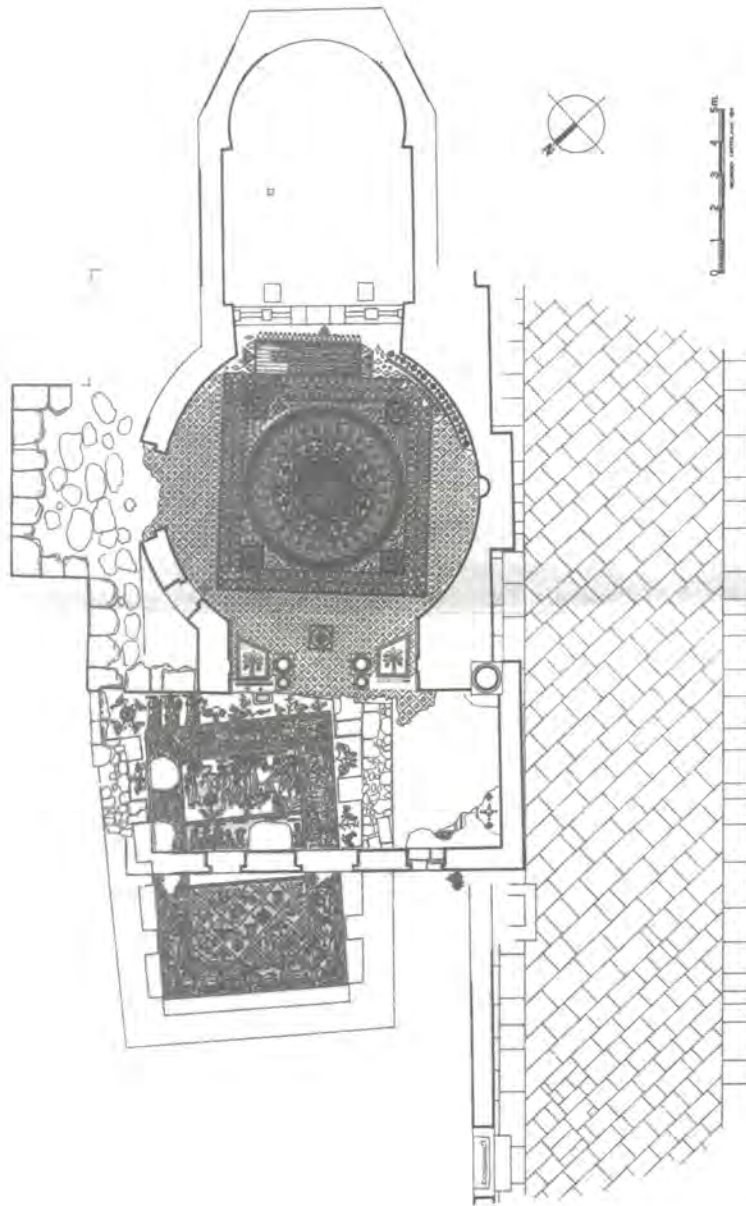
The inscription which is in the central medallion reads: "If you want to look at Mary, virginal Mother of God, and to Christ whom she generated, Universal King, only Son of the only God, purify [your] mind, flesh and works! May you purify with [your] prayer the people of God." A dedicatory inscription in front of the chancel screen says that the mosaic was made in the time of Bishop Theophane, "Thanks to the zeal and ardor of the people who love Christ in this city of Madaba ..."

The Church of the Prophet Elias and the Crypt of St. Elianus

This church was discovered in 1897. Although it was largely destroyed, early excavations uncovered sections of mosaic pavements, including two inscriptions. The dedicatory inscription near the step leading to the presbytery referred to the Prophet Elias and dated the mosaic to A.D. 607/8. Forming a circle in the nave, the second inscription read: "You who with your prayer set in motion, as is fitting, the clouds, bearers of rain, and who give mercy to the people, O prophet, remember also the benefactors and this humble city." After 1897, the church underwent further destruction. Excavations were reopened in 1992.

Some mosaics still remain in the western part of the nave. These include the medallion with the inscription and sections of the southern and western side of the frame with animals in circles (including the panther, following page).

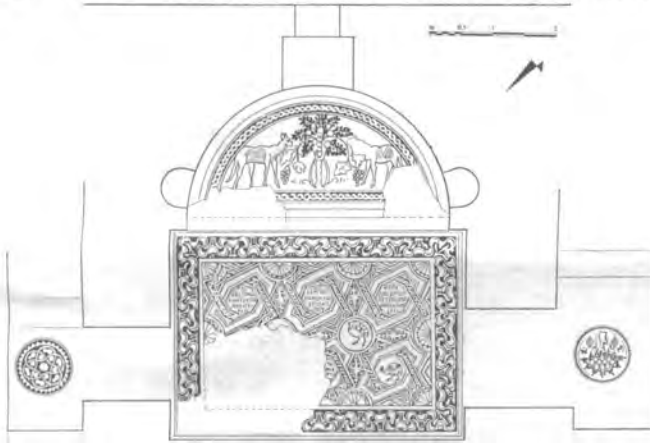
The Crypt of St. Elianus, also discovered in 1897, is located beneath the Church of the Prophet Elias. Two stairways descend into the crypt from the church. Each stairway terminates in a landing with mosaics: a small tree laden with fruit and a medallion with a three-eight interlaced figure. The floor of the apse was originally



peasant girl carrying a basket of fruit on her shoulder and a partridge in her hand. Again, the figures are identified by captions. Near the entrance is a medallion in which a pair of sandals is framed by four birds. Along the eastern wall, there are personifications of three cities together with two sea monsters who challenge each other, as well as flowers and birds. The cities are Rome, Gregoria and Madaba. Each is depicted as Tyche seated on a throne holding a small cross on a long staff in her right hand.



decorated with a lunette enclosed in a guilloche. In it were two sheep facing a small tree laden with fruit. Most of this panel has been destroyed. In the nave, a border of winged ribbons encloses a geometric pattern. It is decorated with birds and a dedicatory inscription: "The Christ God has erected this house at the time of the most



pious Bishop Sergius for the care of Sergius, the priest of Saint Elianus, the year 490 [A.D. 595/96] ... was paved with mosaics with the offering ... "

The Church of the Sunna' Family

Dated to the 6th century, this church has a nave, two aisles, a central apse and a synthronon. The mosaic floors of the southern aisle, portions of the nave and a



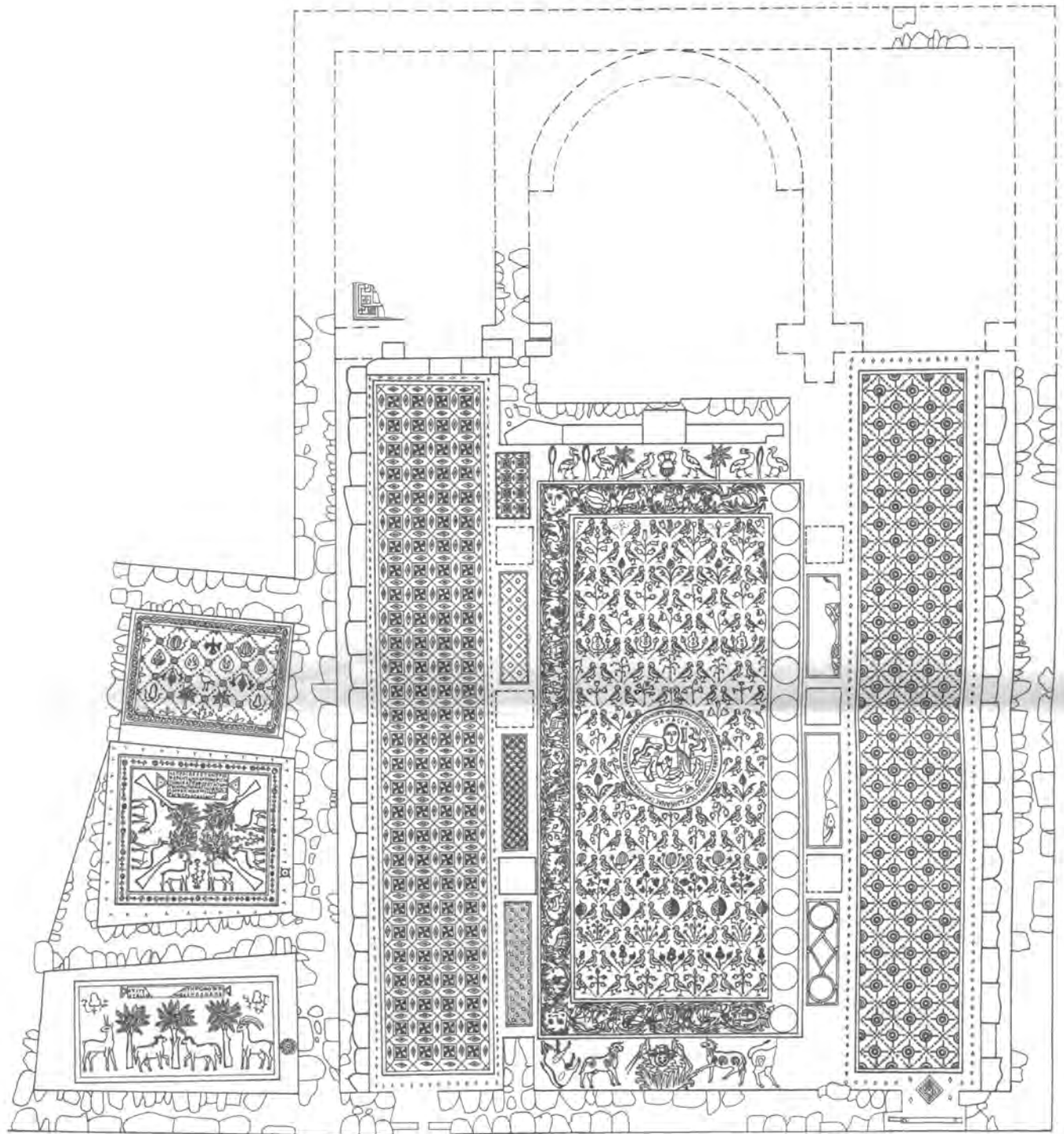
small part of the northern aisle have survived. In the nave, a continuous border of juxtaposed circles was decorated in the corners with the personifications of the Rivers of Paradise. The inner carpet was divided into three main panels. The western one was decorated with hunting scenes in a vineyard. The church was discovered in the early part of the century and has recently been re-excavated and the mosaics cleaned and treated by students from the Madaba Mosaic School.

The Church of the Apostles

This church is located to the southeast of the acropolis, a few meters from the King's Highway. In 1902, the name of the structure and the date of its construction, A.D. 578, were discovered in an inscription in one of the three rooms at the eastern end of the church. All three rooms have now been destroyed. Further excavations that same year led to the discovery of a medallion with a personification of the Sea in the center of the nave of the church. The accompanying inscription gives the name of the mosaicist, Salaman.



Systematic excavations were conducted at the church by the German Evangelical Institute in 1967. Except for the south side of the border, the body of the sanctuary is well preserved and, because it was not disfigured by the iconoclasts, it has one of the best dated and signed decorative programs of 6th century Madaba. Of particular note are the scenes of youths and animals on three sides of the acanthus scrolls and in the western and eastern surround of the nave. The structure itself is a basilica with a nave and two aisles. Two doors in the north wall of the church lead to two chapels which



also contain mosaics. The chapel at the northwest corner is decorated with a series of stags, sheep and gazelles facing small pomegranate and apple trees. The second chapel is divided into two areas. The western area is decorated with four fruit trees, one in each corner, oriented toward the center of the room. Between the trees, there are three pairs of animals. The east side is occupied by a dedicatory inscription which refers to "the temple of the Holy Apostles." The other area of the room is decorated with a grid of flowers on which are trees, flowers, leaves, fruits, buds and a bird. The whole composition is enclosed in a guilloche.

Written by Timothy Harrison (the history of Madaba); Patricia Bikai and Branwen Denton (the park project); Michele Piccirillo, Ghazi Bisheh and Pierre Bikai (the catalogue). Drawing of the logoon page 1 (personification of Madaba from the Hippolytus Hall) and the plan on p. 8 by C. Florimont; map on page 1 by Eugenio Alliata; graphic on page 3 by Patricia Bikai; drawings of the Burnt Palace and Bier al-Rayes by Samer Shraideh; photo of the Tyche of the Burnt Palace by Mary Scott; photo of the Church of the Prophet Elias mosaic by Thomas A. Dailey; plan on page 5 by U. Lux and C. Florimont; plan on page 6 by E. Alliata, G. Ortolani and L. Marino; and plan on page 7 by E. Alliata and M. Pizzorno. The rest of the photos and plans are courtesy of Michele Piccirillo.

Madaba Survey

As part of the overall Madaba project, an archaeological survey of the town was carried out by the author in 1993. A total area of 415,000 m² was surveyed and more than 130 partially or completely intact pre-modern buildings were identified in addition to numerous remains from antiquity. Analysis of the distribution of pottery sherds indicates that the town was confined to the area of the tell during the Bronze and Iron Ages, and then began to expand to the north during the Nabataean and early Roman periods, reaching its greatest extent during the late Roman and Byzantine periods. Probably during the 9th century, the town shrank dramatically in size—and may have been abandoned for a while. There was little apparent change over the ensuing centuries, although the presence of Ayyubid/Mamluk and Ottoman period remains in the vicinity of the Roman street testifies to at least some human activity. Branwen Denton continued the survey of Madaba's late 19th to early 20th century architecture. The information gathered in the survey will be published as *Madaba: An Archaeological and Architectural Survey*. The following is an excerpt from that volume.

Timothy Harrison

Beit Jumean

Beit Jumean is in the center of downtown Madaba. The oldest part of the house is toward the south and was built in 1905 for Ibrahim Jumean (right). The northern part of the building was added later.

In both the plan and decorative vocabulary, the southern section of Beit Jumean is the typical combined residential and commercial structure of turn-of-the-century Madaba. The building is of hewn ashlar stones from a local quarry set in regular courses. Three shops on the ground level reflect the three barrel-vaulted residence rooms of the second story. The facade of the southern part is divided into three parts by flat pilasters of projecting stone. Fac-



ing the main street are two balconies onto which open arched doors and windows.

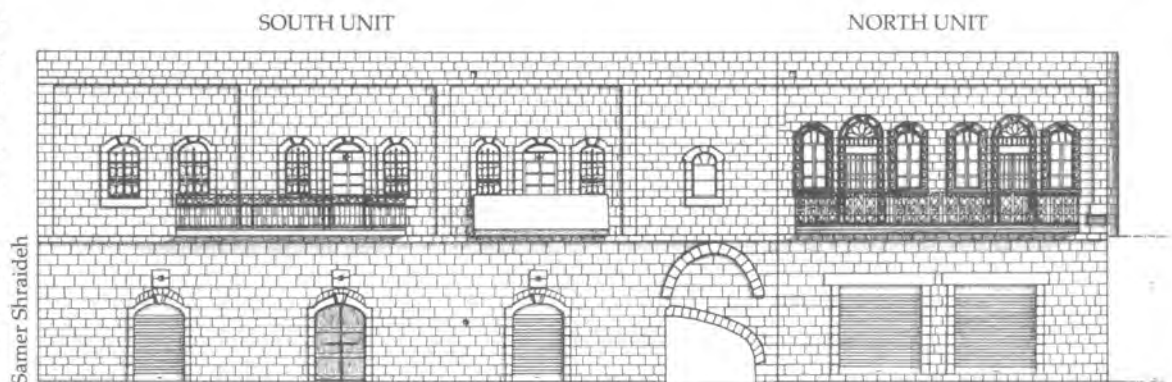
The unit to the north was added about 1920. It consists of two shops on the lower floor and an upper story which was added to and connected to the residence to the south. The facade of the second story, consisting of arches over the windows and open-arched doorway decoration with stained glass, is consistent with the early British Mandate period decorative repertoire. The interior of the house has two main rooms with flat ceilings and exposed stone walls. The floor of one room (right) is paved with decorative tiles.



Beit Jumean is an perfect example of how an older building with great architectural

value for the townscape of Madaba can be restored and made comfortable by modern standards without losing its traditional charm. The northern part of the building was purchased in 1993 by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and the upper story was renovated by Ammar Khammash to be used as a residence for archaeologists and conservators working at the Madaba Archaeological Park. The renovation, funded by a USAID grant to ACOR, was done in a manner which preserves the original character of the building, while incorporating structural improvements and modern facilities in a new wing at the back of the house. This was accomplished at a cost far below what would have been spent to erect a new building.

Branwen Denton



ACOR Director's Report

Current ACOR Projects

The following projects are funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID): Madaba: Burnt Palace, Ghazi Bisheh; Shelters for the Apostles' Church, Church of the Virgin and the Hippolytus Hall, Ammar Khammash; Archaeological Park, Ammar Khammash, Pierre Bikai, and Michele Piccirillo; Conservation of the Mosaics of the Burnt Palace, Mary Scott, Fatma Marii, Mahmoud Abu Juda; Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Program, Gaetano Palumbo. Petra: Petra Church North Rooms and Atrium Project, Pierre Bikai and Zbigniew Fiema; Petra Shelter Design, Robert Shutler, AIA. Madaba and Um er-Rasas Master Plans, Michele Piccirillo; Qatrania Master Plan, Leen Fakhoury.

Fellows in Residence

USIA Fellows: Irfan Shahid, *The Ghassanid Structures in the 6th Century and their Relevance to those of the Umayyads in Islamic Times*; Marie Alanen, *Architectural Reuse at Jerash: A Case Study in Transformations of the Urban Fabric, A.D. 100-750*; Julia Costello, *Consultancy on Significance Criteria for the Evaluation of Jordanian Cultural Resources*; Dale Lightfoot, *Foggara Irrigation in the Jordanian-Syrian Desert: Contemporary Impacts of Ancient Technology*; Laurie Brand, *Arab Women and Political Liberalization: Winners or Losers?*; Zbigniew Fiema, *Petra Church Project: Publication Phase*; Susan Slyomovics, *Public Memory of Place: Rebuilding the Pre-1948 Palestinian Village*. Winnett Fellow: Bruce Routledge, *Moab Marginal Agriculture Project*. ASAIP/Mellon Fellows: David Harris; Amy Bentley; Joseph Pimental; Jane McAuliffe served as coordinator. Information about ACOR's fellowships can be obtained from ACOR, 3301 North Charles St., Baltimore MD 21218.

Affiliated Field Projects

Aila: Roman Aqaba, S. Thomas Parker
Humeima (study season), John P. Oleson
Khirbet Iskander, Suzanne Richard
Madaba Plains Projects: Tell el 'Umeiri, Lawrence T. Geraty; Tell Jalul, Randall Younker; Regional Survey, Øystein LaBianca
Moab Marginal Agriculture Survey, Bruce Routledge
Petra, South Temple, Martha S. Joukowsky
The Byzantine Church, Jebel Webdeh, Pierre M. Bikai
Tell Jawa, Michèle Daviau
Tell Nimrin (study season), David McCreery and James Flanagan
Tor Faraj, Don Henry
Umm el-Jimal, Bert de Vries
Via Militaris Project, David F. Graf

News and Notes

- ◆Jan. 19. Pierre conducts a tour of the Amman Citadel for a Congressional delegation.
- ◆Feb. 7. Vicky takes a message from an unknown caller, asking whether "there is anybody at ACOR who specializes in money." Vicky informs him that Pierre is in Petra.
- ◆Feb. 10. At the Bikais' restaurant, Glen gets the perfect dinner complete with all four basic food groups: cheeseburgers, fries, Pepsi and a Snickers bar.
- ◆Feb. 12. Architect Rob Shutler presents his concept for a shelter over the Petra Church to assembled dignitaries, representatives of government ministries, and others interested in Petra. Unbelievably, a consensus is reached that this is the best type of shelter possible.
- ◆Feb. 17. Rami Khouri's full page review of *The Mosaics of Jordan* appears in the Jordan Times.
- ◆Feb. 21. Wendy Steward calls and offers to become the first to "adopt" a scroll.
- ◆Feb. 22. Dr. Jaakko Frösén of the Academy of Finland arrives to begin work on the scrolls. He estimates that it will take half a kilometer of glass to mount them.
- ◆March 8. Pierre leaves for Aqaba at 8:15 to attend to project business. He calls ACOR at 11:15 to say he's there, has visited the site, dealt with the problems and even had breakfast. Everyone reaches for calculators to determine by how much the Desert Highway speed limit (and perhaps also the world's land speed record) has been exceeded.
- ◆March 10. The power surges on after a five minute failure and fries an electrical component in ACOR's telephone exchange, rendering all phones in the house useless. Patricia Bikai: "Oh, isn't that nice!"
- ◆March 15. ACOR is awarded an architectural conservation grant for the Petra Church from the World Monuments Fund.
- ◆March 17. The new U.S. Ambassador and Mrs. Wesley Egan pay a visit to ACOR.
- ◆April 5. ACOR's CDS-ISIS library catalog is featured in the Jordan Library Association CDS-ISIS user's group newsletter.
- ◆April 6. The daughter of Mary Ellen Lane, the director of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), visits ACOR and enthuses, "WOW! this place is bigger than ... and the food is better than ... than the White House!"
- ◆April 7. ACOR hosts a reception for Michele Piccirillo on the occasion of the publication of *The Mosaics of Jordan*. Pierre shows the scrolls to the new Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, H.E. Mohammed al-Adwan.
- ◆April 9. The directors of the member schools of CAORC meet at ACOR.
- ◆April 14. Zbig Fiema comes in from Petra with two truckloads of equipment. Almost exactly two years after the preparations began at Petra, the excavation is over.
- ◆April 28. Pierre and Patricia host a working breakfast for the Deputy Administrator of USAID, Carol J. Lancaster, and the Director of USAID/Jordan, William

T. Oliver. Other guests include Alberta Arthur of the Rockefeller Foundation, Marta de la Torre of the Getty Conservation Institute, Leila Badre of the American University of Beirut Museum, and Annie Caubet of the Louvre. It's quite a gathering.

◆May 19. Gaetano Palumbo and Anna Paolini are married at Mount Nebo.

◆June 2. Pierre, Zbig and a TV crew return from Petra with tall tales of Pierre and Zbig wearing Roman centurion outfits at Qasr Beshir and Pierre dressed as Johann Burckhardt at Petra (watch for the Roman Empire segment in the Lost Civilizations series on NBC next spring).

◆June 7. David McCreery fires up the new mini-furnace in the lab to char some barleycorns and grains of wheat. The basement smells like 300 loaves of burned toast.

◆June 11. "The Restoration of the Great Temple," a documentary on the Hercules project, is aired on Jordan TV.

◆June 14. A group from Rice University visits ACOR and views the scrolls. One woman is so overcome that she bursts into tears, claiming that this was the most exciting moment of her life.

◆June 20. The Khirbet Salameh excavations, a field school for the University of Jordan, directed by Pierre, begin.

◆June 23. ACOR has two film crews busy in the conservation lab—the North Carolina State University team doing a video for ACOR and the New Dominion team doing a documentary on Petra for

television's Discovery Channel. This makes nine film crews this year with more to come later in the summer!

◆June 24. USIA Fellow Laurie Brand and Jonathan Rice are married in a ceremony held at Umm Qeis.

◆June 25. A dinner celebrating the completion of the excavations of St. George's at Darat al-Funun is held at the site. The new publication *The Byzantine Church at Darat al-Funun* (in English and Arabic) is introduced.

THE BYZANTINE CHURCH AT DARAT AL FUNUN



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The Petra Papyri

Conservation work on the carbonized papyrus scrolls which were found at the 6th century Byzantine church in Petra in late 1993 has begun. The conservation team arrived at the beginning of September 1994. Working under the leadership of Professor Jaakko Frösén, professor of papyrology at the Academy of Finland, the team includes four Finnish graduate and post-graduate students of papyrology, archaeology and conservation from the University of Helsinki: Marjo Lehtinen, Mari Mustonen, Matti Mustonen, and Erja Salmenkivi; a Jordanian student of archaeology and conservation from Yarmouk University, Fatma Marii; photographer R. Henry Cowherd; and excavator Zbigniew T. Fiema.

The 50 or so charred papyrus scrolls and scroll fragments were brought to the conservation laboratory at ACOR for the conservation and publication work. As of early October, twelve scrolls had been unrolled. The extremely slow and demanding process of conserving carbonized papyri is due to be completed in early 1995. The fragile material is being photographed using special methods in order to make the black ink on the charred



The word Petra in one of the scrolls. Photo by R. H. Cowherd.

black papyrus easier to decipher. Publication work will be undertaken by the University of Helsinki and the University of Michigan.

The texts found in the scrolls are the largest group of written material from antiquity ever found in Jordan. They are especially important because they belong to a period which is otherwise almost a blank page in the history of Petra and the scrolls are already yielding

ACOR and its Newsletter

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DURING WHICH THE SCROLLS WERE FOUND WAS FUNDED BY
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information on the people of Petra and their economic and social situation and on the question of what happened to the Nabataeans and Nabataean culture in Petra under early Byzantine rule.

The texts read so far were written in Greek by several different people in a variety of hands, sometimes cursive and difficult to decipher, in other cases quite legible. Despite the fact that Greek was the language of Roman and Byzantine Arabia and Palaestina, a variety of traditional Nabataean names have already been found; there are also many Christian and pagan Greek names.

The largest scroll opened to date was originally about 10 meters long and is an inventory of the property of a deceased; it deals with contracts and agreements concerning loans, sales and inheritances of plots of land and houses. It is preliminarily dated to A.D. 538, a date which coincides with the archaeological evidence from the site.

Another scroll deals with a division of inherited property which includes gardens, houses, agricultural land and so on. The measurements and locations of the properties with the names of all the neighbors are described in great detail. Finally, there is a scroll which is the will of a man suffering from a severe illness. Preliminary readings indicate that he names as his heirs a Theodorus Obodianus and a Peter who was the abbot of [the monastery of] Aaron (probably the one on Jebel Haroun at Petra) on the condition that they provide food and clothing for his mother.