

“THE RESETTLEMENT OF MADABA IN THE LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD”

**“New Insights on the Archaeology of the Ottoman and Mandate Periods
In the Southern Levant”**

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ABSTRACT

The migration of Christian settlers from Karak to Mādabā is one of the more celebrated of nineteenth century Transjordan. In 1880, following a dispute between the Christian al-Azeizat and the Muslim al-Sarayra over an incident involving the abduction of a female member of the al-Azeizat (although accounts diverge on the details), and accompanied by members of two other Christian tribes from Karak, the al-Azeizat began settling in Mādabā, which they laid claim to with the tacit approval and support of the Ottoman authorities. Prior to this event, the primary written sources for the region consist almost solely of travelogues written by western explorers. Most notable for the Mādabā Plain region is H. B. Tristram, who visited the ancient site in 1872, and produced a detailed description of its ruins and the surrounding environs (1873), which he noted were being cultivated by Beni Sakhr bedouin, or at least by their vassals and slaves. Tristram's account provides a particularly revealing glimpse of the changing socio-political landscape of this period, prompted in part by land reforms instituted by the Ottoman government, including the shift toward sedentarization, and the increasingly contested nature of land claims that ensued. This paper will present the results of the Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project's investigations at the site, which provide an alternative source of information for this period and the opportunity for fresh insight into this formative phase in the transition to the modern era.