

**“Channels and Cisterns:
The Hydro-engineering Achievements of the People of Late Byzantine Madaba”**

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ABSTRACT

The Byzantine period has always been a focal point of archaeological work in Jordan. The colourful mosaics and intricately designed architecture characteristic of this cultural period reveal a thriving community of both Christians and Muslims. Nowhere is this more evident than in the region surrounding the city of Madaba. Over the past century, considerable attention has been given to the ecclesiastical architecture of the region. In contrast, comparatively little has been paid to the vibrant urban tradition that supported the church.

One aspect of urban life in Madaba that requires more attention is water collection and conservation. There are no natural sources of water in close proximity to the city, therefore its inhabitants had to be creative and resourceful when designing and constructing any hydrological installation. The area in and around Madaba is replete with cisterns, wells, and reservoirs; yet, how people incorporated these features into domestic architecture remains unclear.

The Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project (TMAP) has been engaged in the excavation of a large residential building on the western slope of the city’s acropolis. The complex was built in the late 6th century and was subsequently renovated and abandoned in the 7th and 8th centuries. The building is characterized by a complex system of drain pipes, basins, and channels that conducted water into a large cistern at its northwestern edge. This paper will reconstruct the hydrological system of the West Acropolis residence in an attempt to shed light on the water collection strategies of the people of Madaba in the Late Byzantine period.