

TELL MADABA EXCAVATIONS, 2004
MUNJAZAT PRESS RELEASE

Site Name: Tell Madaba

District: Madaba

Project Name: Tell Madaba Archaeological Project (TMAP)

Duration: June 9 to June 30, 2004 (22 days)

Number of workers: 7

Cost of Project: 800 JD

Sponsor: University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations

Director: Timothy P. Harrison

Assistant Director: Debra Foran

Representative of the Department of Antiquities: Abdullah al-Bawarid

The 2004 field season of the Tell Madaba Archaeological Project (TMAP) was conducted between the 9th and the 30th of June. The primary objective of the season involved the consolidation and restoration of a large Late Byzantine and Early Islamic complex preserved along the lower western slope of the acropolis (Fig. 1). The past five seasons of excavation at Tell Madaba have revealed the remains of a large complex built against the western face of the city's pre-classical fortification wall. The structure was constructed on a series of bedrock ledges that slope to the west. There are several features of this building that indicate it underwent two distinct construction phases, followed by a lengthy period of abandonment. The initial construction phase dates to the Late Byzantine period (6th century CE), while the subsequent renovations and abandonment date to the Early Islamic period (mid-7th to 8th/early 9th centuries CE).

The exceptional level of preservation of the architecture of this structure has necessitated a considerable amount of consolidation work. The 2004 field season was devoted to conserving the walls in the north-eastern corner of the building (Fig. 2). Now that this work has been completed, efforts can be concentrated on more permanent installations to protect the site. In conjunction with the 2004 consolidation effort, the Italian restorer Franco Sciorilli will be repairing the damaged sections of the large mosaic pavement uncovered at the end of the 2002 field season (Fig. 3).

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the function of this Late Byzantine/Early Islamic complex, Dr. Nola Johnson has begun a program to study and restore the painted plaster fragments recovered from the site. Dr. Johnson has been working on the material from the 1998 excavations, and to date has identified several Greek letters in a Late Greek script as well as fragments of a Greek cross. Her goals for the 2004 season were to ascertain the extent of the decoration as well as the nature of the design. Several different motifs have been identified in addition to a number of pieces that show the presence of a finished edge (Fig. 4).

The location of this site within the urban core of the city of Madaba, within walking distance of the Madaba Museum and Archaeological Park, increases the need to consider its tourism potential. The restoration and conservation effort that has accompanied the excavation project has begun preparing the site for future use as public space, for both the local population and the many tourists who visit the city each year. Once excavations within

the Late Byzantine/Early Islamic building have been completed, a more formal restoration program may be initiated in order to pursue this goal.

Funding for the 2004 field season was provided by grants from the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The excavations were conducted in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, which provided guidance and access to field equipment. The season's results would not have been possible without the dedicated help of Dr. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities, and Ali al-Khayyat, Director of the Department of Antiquities Office in Madaba.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4