

TALL MĀDABĀ ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, 2008
PRESS RELEASE

SITE NAME / DISTRICT	Tall Mādabā / Mādabā
PROJECT NAME	Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project
SEASON	2008
DURATION	June 15 to July 24, 2008 (40 days)
AUTHOR	Debra Foran
DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT	Debra Foran
SENIOR DIRECTOR	Timothy P. Harrison
NUMBER OF WORKERS	9
COST OF THE PROJECT	5,000 JD
SPONSOR	University of Toronto Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
DOA REPRESENTATIVE	Ali al-Khayyat

The 2008 field season of the Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project concentrated solely on excavations in Field B. The primary objective of this season was to further investigate the extent of remains dating to the Early Roman/Nabataean, Hellenistic, and Iron Age periods located on Mādabā's West Acropolis. With this goal in mind, one unit, at the southern end of the previously excavated area, was reopened and two new units, one at the northern of this same area and another inside the Ottoman house on the southern edge of the site, were opened. The past eight seasons of excavation at Tall Mādabā have revealed a complex occupational sequence inside the city's fortification wall spanning the Late Ottoman period through to the Iron Age (Figure 1).

The history of the reoccupation of Mādabā during the Late Ottoman period is well known. The Field B excavations have exposed numerous walls associated with the visible architecture on the site, in addition to several installations that were surely associated with these 19th century structures (FP 1). A large circular silo at the northern end of the excavated area can now be added to this corpus.

The importance of Mādabā during the Byzantine period is indisputable; however, very little evidence from this phase of occupation (FP 2) had been found in Field B before the 2007 season. A fragmentary mosaic pavement associated with a stone threshold was uncovered to the east of the previously excavated area. A second feature can now be added to this field phase. The remains of a silo, first uncovered at the end of the 2007 season, produced a definitive Late Byzantine/Early Islamic ceramic corpus. This installation was clearly built at the same time as the Late Hellenistic walls that surround it, but it continued in use until the 7th or 8th century CE. The upper portions of the silo were robbed out by the construction of a circular pit in the Late Ottoman period. Although the presence of substantial ceramic material from both the Late Byzantine/Early Islamic (FP 2) and Early Roman/Nabataean (FP 3 & 4) periods in Field B testifies to significant occupation at this time, the absence of any major structures can be explained by the prolific building activity of Mādabā's new inhabitants in the Late Ottoman period.

Previous field seasons at Tell Mādabā had exposed the remains of a massive structure dating to the Late Hellenistic period (FP 5 & 6). This season's excavations successfully uncovered more of this building and other contemporary structures (Figure 2). These vestiges confirm that, during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, a sizeable construction project was

undertaken just inside the pre-classical fortification wall on the western side of the acropolis. In a second phase, dating to the same cultural period, this building was remodeled and further reinforced.

During the 2007 season, the earliest occupation phase on the west acropolis was exposed along the inner face of the site's fortification wall. This provided a clear occupation sequence that began in the Late Bronze/Early Iron I (FP 10) and continued until the late Iron IIB (FP 7). The Iron Age remains previously excavated at Tell Madaba were sealed by a thick layer of sheet-wash. The 2008 excavations have revealed that this post-abandonment deposit is not present everywhere on site, indicating that perhaps the city's massive fortification wall was responsible for this accumulation.

The latest Iron Age phase at Tell Mādabā (FP 7) dates to the late Iron IIB period and consists of what has been termed a 'squatter' occupation. Excavations in 2008 exposed more of these badly constructed buildings (Figure 3); however, our efforts this season have also confirmed that this field phase is not present everywhere on the site. The earlier Iron Age phase (FP 8), dating to the Iron IIB, is represented by pillared buildings in the previously excavated area. Exploration in 2008 confirmed the extensive nature of the settlement at this time. Remnants of a massive structure built of very large stones was exposed at the southern end of the site (Figure 4).

The location of this site within the urban core of the city of Mādabā, within walking distance of the Mādabā Museum and Archaeological Park, increases the need to consider its tourism potential. The site maintenance and presentation 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.

The 2008 field season was 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 Mr. Ali al-Khayyat, Director of the Department of Antiquities Office in Mādabā.

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July 24, 2008



Figure 1 Tell Madaba - Field B



Figure 2 Plastered Late Hellenistic wall with foundation and threshold



Figure 3 Late Iron IIB 'squatter' occupation (FP 7) wall



Figure 4 Iron IIB (FP 8) massive structure at southern edge of site