



A Landmark in the Urban Development of the Ottoman Period: St. George's Church and Socio-Cultural Dynamics in Madaba

Osmanlı Dönemi Kentsel Gelişiminde Bir Dönüm Noktası: Aziz George Kilisesi ve Madaba'daki Sosyo-Kültürel Dinamikler

ABSTRACT

With a rich confluence of socio-cultural diversity and history, Madaba from Ottoman times has always been a major meeting point of Byzantine and Ottoman cultures. The famous Church of St. George serves as the fulcrum for all sorts of religious, social, and cultural activities. The landmark has given identity to the urban growth of the city as well as strengthened social cohesion in its multicultural society. Church-surrounding urban growth patterns reinforced the Ottoman manner of urban planning which was characterized by the tendency to organize cities around major religious and social centers. This revolved around grouping neighborhoods into ancestral communities, deviating from existing preurban patterns. The policies of the Ottoman Empire acted as a potent force responsible for the preservation of religious institutions and the structuring of urban neighborhoods thereby forming a peculiar social and ethical hierarchy. The intent of the work is to study the impact the Church of St. George has had on the urban configuration of the city of Madaba from a socio-cultural perspective and investigate how the city developed during different historical periods. This work addresses the comparative interaction between sociocultural dynamics and physical structures and thus provides a more holistic view of the historical growth of Madaba. Thus, this analysis contributes to the academic discourse on the city, shedding light on its cultural intricacies and enhancing comprehension of Madaba's role in the broader socio-historical context of the region during the Ottoman era.

Keywords: Ottoman Urban Development, Madaba, St. George Church, Socio-Cultural Dynamics.

ÖZET

Sosyo-kültürel çeşitlilik ve tarihin zengin bir birleşimine sahip olan Madaba, Osmanlı döneminden beri Bizans ve Osmanlı kültürlerinin her zaman önemli bir buluşma noktası olmuştur. Ünlü St. George Kilisesi, her türlü dini, sosyal ve kültürel faaliyet için bir dayanak noktası olarak hizmet vermektedir. Bu simgesel yapı, kentin zaman içinde büyümesine kimlik kazandırmış ve kentin farklı kültürlerden kullanıcıları arasında sosyal uyumu güçlendirmiştir. Kiliseyi çevreleyen kentsel büyüme biçimleri, şehirleri başlıca dini ve sosyal merkezler etrafında organize etme eğilimiyle karakterize edilen Osmanlı şehir planlama tarzını pekiştirmiştir. Bu, mahallelerin geçmişten kalma kabileler halinde gruplandırılması etrafında gelişiyor ve mevcut kent öncesi kalıplardan ayrılıyordu. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun politikaları, dini kurumların korunmasından ve mahalle ölçeğinde kentlerin yapılandırılmasından sorumlu güç olarak hareket etmiş ve böylece kendine özgü bir sosyal ve etik hiyerarşi oluşturmuştur. Çalışmanın amacı, St. George Kilisesi'nin Madaba şehrinin kentsel yapılanması üzerindeki etkisini sosyo-kültürel bir perspektiften incelemek ve şehrin farklı tarihsel dönemlerde nasıl geliştiğini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma, sosyokültürel dinamikler ile fiziksel yapılar arasındaki karşılaştırmalı etkileşimi ele almakta ve böylece Madaba'nın tarihsel gelişimine dair daha bütüncül bir bakış açısı sağlamaktadır. Böylece bu analiz, kentin kültürel inceliklerine ışık tutarak ve Madaba'nın Osmanlı döneminde bölgenin daha geniş sosyo-tarihsel bağlamındaki rolünün anlaşılmasını sağlayarak kent hakkındaki akademik söyleme katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Kentsel Gelişimi, Madaba, Aziz George Kilisesi, Sosyo-Kültürel Dinamikler.

INTRODUCTION

Jordan is an intriguing place to study the dynamics of sociocultural connections and the formation of its urban fabric because Muslims constitute the majority of its population, with a significant presence of Christians who have lived in the region since the who have lived in the region since the early Christian period, as supported by historical and archaeological evidence. The Church of Saint George (The church of the Map) is located in Madaba, with a rich Christian history and a majority of Christian citizens. Jordan's Ministry of Culture designated the city of

İlknur Akıner¹
Serkan Kılıç²
Raneem Al Kharouf³

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¹ Prof. Dr., Akdeniz University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Antalya, Türkiye. ORCID: 0000-0002-9550-146X

² Assoc. Prof. Dr., Akdeniz University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Antalya, Türkiye. ORCID: 0000-0001-9314-5337

³ Jordanian Graduate Student, Akdeniz University, Institute of Natural and Applied Sciences, Department of Architecture, Antalya, Türkiye. ORCID: 0000-0003-4596-8309

Madaba as the country's cultural capital in 2012 (Al Rabady, 2013). Many newer vestiges of Madaba's past were discovered during the construction boom that followed the end of World War II. The Department of Antiquities established an archaeological museum in Madaba in 1962. Several nearby homes and individual mosaic pavements have received particular care from time to time, most notably the repair of the map mosaic by German archaeologists Heinz Cüppers and Herbert Donner in 1965 (Nassar et al., 2021). The Church of the Map, home to the world's oldest intact mosaic map of the Holy Land, and other historical structures located in the northwest quadrant of the historical center, serves as a pilgrimage site and a symbolic urban entrance for all tourists arriving from Amman.

Madaba as a village gained shape around the end of the eighteenth century, after over 1000 years of abandonment, with the arrival of Christian tribes from Al Karak (Al Assaf, 2013). The town's recurrent population movements spread throughout the historic core until the early 1970s. The historical core of Madaba represents the dominant tribal social order of the twentieth century and migratory attitudes, habits, and desires. As a result, the town of Madaba grew in concentric circles, beginning with the tribal domains and particularly surrounding them. The city of Madaba's tribal and religious forms had a significant impact on its urban expansion, as seen by the division of land shares (Griffith, 2016). In this study, the term "village" refers to the initial tribal and kinship-based settlement form of Madaba in the 19th century, while "town" is used for its administrative and spatial evolution during the late Ottoman and early Mandate periods. The designation "city" is avoided unless referring to broader contemporary urban functions in the present day.

Historic buildings and their surroundings significantly influence the urban fabric of the city; they contribute to the character of public spaces through their architectural presence and diverse functions. For example, some historic complexes incorporate public areas that also host educational institutions, thereby supporting both cultural continuity and active civic use. In the case of the Church of the Map, the orthodox school built on the periphery of the Church of the Map serves as a public space for an important social group in Madaba, while the Church is a major tourist attraction.

The paper examines the socio-cultural and historical influences of the Church of St. George in Madaba, Jordan, especially during the Ottoman Empire. Its main goal is to explore how this church affected Madaba's urban development, particularly through the lens of socio-cultural dynamics over time. The methodology involves a historical and chronological analysis of Madaba's urban evolution, focusing on mapping the city's layout around significant landmarks like the church, and examining how this aligns with tribal and religious community affiliations.

Research results provide a comprehensive survey of the historical and cultural landscape of Madaba, with a special focus on the impact of St. George's Church on the urban fabric. It also analyzes the development of the city in different periods, providing valuable insights into the interconnected nature of religious, cultural, and urban elements. While Madaba's historic center emerges as a testament to the importance of preserving historical heritage and promoting spatial regeneration, this research enriches our understanding of Madaba and contributes to a broader discourse on the complex relationships between religious landmarks and urban development. Key findings reveal that the Church of St. George significantly shaped Madaba's social and spatial organization. While the city's earlier layout was initially shaped during the Byzantine and early Islamic periods, particularly through the placement of key religious structures, the city's later urban development, driven by Ottoman policies and local tribal structures, continued to reinforce concentric patterns around these religious sites. This spatial arrangement underscores the enduring role of the church in fostering social cohesion and acting as a focal point in the urban fabric. This research enriches the understanding of the relationship between religious landmarks and urban development in historically diverse regions, such as Madaba in Jordan, where multiple religious and cultural influences have coexisted across centuries.

MADABA'S LOCATION, NAMING ORIGINS, AND SIGNIFICANCE

Jordan is an Arab country in southwest Asia, the Middle East, the southern portion of the Levant region, and the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Jordan is named after the Jordan River, which flows along its western borders. Madaba is around thirty kilometers south of Amman, Jordan's capital (Al Rabady, 2013). This settlement sits around 774 meters above sea level and overlooks the world's lowest point, the Dead Sea. Madaba also has a view of the Holy Lands "Jerusalem-Palestine," as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Madaba is a Syriac name that means "place of mud" or "subtle water" because water generally settled around the city. Others claim the name has Aramaic origins and means "fruit water." Another theory is that it is derived from "Medaba," a Moabite term for tranquil water. The name Madaba and its surroundings appear in ancient historical resources and holy books such as the Torah and the Bible (Ababsa, 2016), and the names Madaba "Medab" and

Heshbon "Hisban", Dhibun "Theban", Mont Nebo "Sigma or Saigha", Baal Maon "Ma'in" and "Mukawir", Makairos Castle, "Wadi Al-Wala" and other important sites. It is an important heritage tourist city with various monuments and tourist areas such as the Roman and Latin Church, Mount Nebo, and the Dead Sea. Madaba Governorate is classified as an agricultural area because of the fertility of its soils and the diversity of its topography. It features tourist attractions such as the Church of the Map, Mount Nebo, the Madaba Visitors Center, the Archaeological Park, the Church of the Apostles and the Museum, and Mukawir.

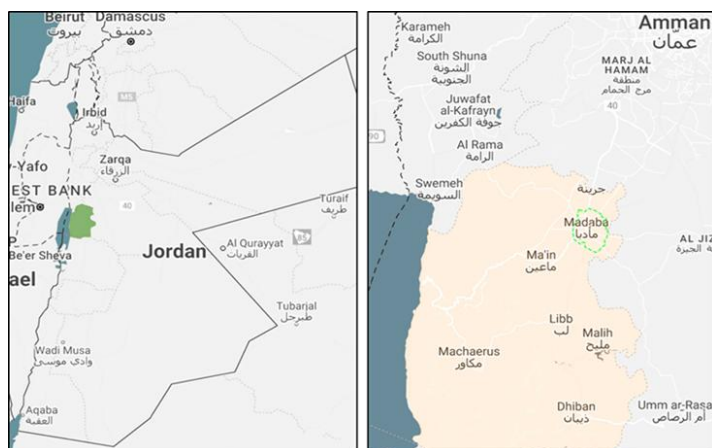


Figure 1: The map of Jordan generated from Google Maps, highlighted in green by the city of Madaba on the left.

Source: Retrieved from Google Earth.

Figure 2: Madaba's main districts are Ma'in, Libb, Malih, Dhiban, and Machaerus on the right.

Source: Retrieved from Google Earth.

A Short History of Madaba

The town of Madaba was once a Moabite border city. The king of Moab, King "Mesha," regained the lands in 850 BC, after the Amorites had taken over earlier. When the rule of the Moabites declined in the year 800 BC, Madaba became an Amorite state. Madaba was subjected to the Assyrian invasion and submitted to their rule 656 BC-732 BC. However, the Assyrians allowed the Moabites to have their own rule. But when the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians in Iraq, the region was ruled by the Babylonians in 612 BC; the city was under the rule of "Nebuchadnezzar." During the siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC and later military campaigns, the city of "Moab" fell back and declined. After that, Persian rule followed, and then the city was subjected to the rule of "Alexander the Great" in 332 BC, and he introduced some aspects of Greek life to it (Harrison et al., 2016).

Moab fell under the rule of the Nabataeans in 200 BC. It considerably flourished under Byzantine rule. Bishop Kaunas II, active around 451 CE, is associated with the construction of several churches that still stand today in Madaba, such as the Church of St. George, also known as the Church of the Map. The mosaic map seen in Figure 3, which lies in St. George Church, also goes back to the 5th century BC and is a one-of-a-kind piece of art and the oldest map known for the holy lands, showing Jordan, Palestine, and other neighboring geographies, like the Nile and Syria. Such a map is strong evidence of Madaba's importance at the time and the density of the population (Nassar et al., 2021).

Between 332 and 635 CE, Madaba grew significantly under Byzantine authority. Under Roman administration, Christianity began to flourish in Madaba and became a stronghold in the region during the late Roman period. As early as the middle of the fifth century, a bishop was present in Madaba. Several churches were constructed during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527–565 CE). St. George Church, the Roman Boulevard, the Burnt Palace, and the Hippolytus Hall were all erected during the 6th and 8th centuries (Harrison et al., 2016). The Islamic conquests of the Levant during the reign of Caliph "Omar Ibn Al-Khattab" included the city of Madaba, as it continued to flourish. Churches continued to be built under Islamic rule because of the freedom of belief granted to all. In 746 AD, Madaba was largely destroyed by an earthquake and subsequently abandoned (Harrison et al., 2016).



Figure 3: A detailed section of the Madaba Mosaic Map depicting the city of Jerusalem. This 6th-century Byzantine floor mosaic, located in the Church of St. George in Madaba, Jordan, is considered the oldest known cartographic representation of the Holy City.

Source: Donner, 1992.

Madaba, Jordan, is renowned for its historical mosaics and archaeological significance. The city's most famous feature is the Madaba Mosaic Map, located in the Greek Orthodox Basilica of St. George. This 6th-century mosaic is a detailed representation of the Holy Land, depicting Jerusalem, Jericho, and the Dead Sea, and is a valuable artifact for understanding the region's geography during the Byzantine era (Donner and Cüppers, 1977; Donner, 1992). In addition to the Mosaic Map, other notable landmarks include the Church of the Virgin Mary and the Archaeological Park, which contains a variety of ancient mosaics and structures (Piccirillo, 1988). Madaba's significance transcends its mosaics. Sites like Roman Hippolytus Hall and the Burnt Palace illustrate the city's deeply imbued Byzantine and Roman past. Besides, Madaba is not far from other important sites such as Mount Nebo (an important biblical place), Mukawir (where John the Baptist once inhabited), and Umm ar-Rasas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site cherished for its early Christian churches and mosaics. These landmarks make Madaba (see Figure 4) a crucial destination for those interested in Jordan's cultural and historical heritage (Piccirillo, 2004). The region's archaeological richness extends beyond Madaba, with nearby sites such as Khirbat al-Mudayna and Khirbat Ataruz contributing to our understanding of Iron Age Moabite civilization (Ji and Schade, 2020).

The following are the primary characteristics of Madaba (Baumgärtner, et al., 2019):

1. St. George's Church: Famous for the Madaba Mosaic Map, a 6th-century mosaic representing the Holy Land, including Jerusalem, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea.
2. Madaba Archaeological Park: It hosts various ancient mosaics and ruins, including the remains of a Byzantine church.
3. Church of the Apostles: It is known for its detailed mosaics depicting marine life and personified cities.
4. Mount Nebo (Near Madaba): A significant biblical site offering panoramic views of the Holy Land, often associated with the final resting place of Moses.
5. Madaba Museum: Displays local artifacts from different eras, including pottery, mosaics, and textiles.

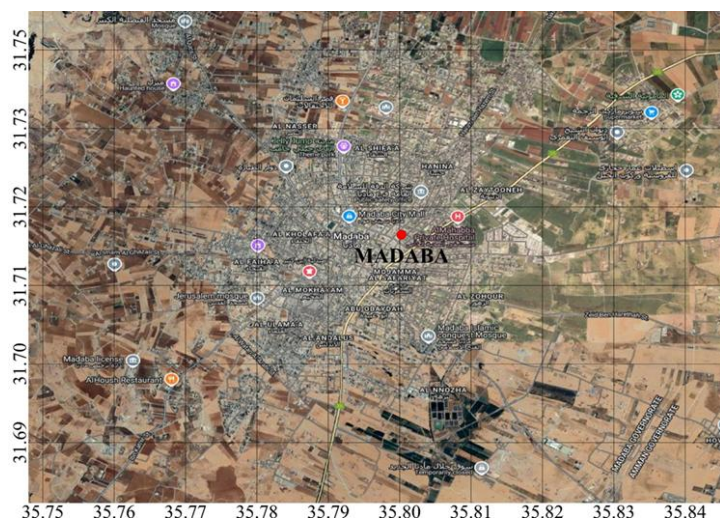


Figure 4: Geographic coordinates (WGS84) of the Madaba City in Jordan, Madaba is located approximately at latitude 31.75° N and longitude 35.82° E.

Source: Produced by the author.

The original Madaba Map is a 6th-century Byzantine mosaic located on the floor of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George in Madaba, Jordan (see Figure 5). It is considered the oldest surviving cartographic depiction of the Holy Land and is dated more precisely to circa 557 CE, based on new archaeological and art historical assessments (Madden, 2012). Originally measuring approximately 21 by 7 meters, the remaining portion is about 16 by 5 meters. The mosaic is composed of over two million tesserae and offers a bird's-eye representation of the region from Lebanon in the north to the Nile Delta in the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Eastern Desert.

The Jerusalem section, the most detailed part of the map, highlights major streets and architectural landmarks, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, depicted with considerable detail and prominence. Scholars argue that the map likely served as a religious and geographical guide for Christian pilgrims visiting the region (Avi-Yonah, 1954; Donner, 1992). In addition to biblical symbolism, the map illustrates urban planning, toponyms, and route systems of the period, although it does not follow strict geographic accuracy. Its colorful stones and Greek inscriptions reveal a theological landscape of the Byzantine worldview. One of the most comprehensive studies of the Madaba Map was carried out by Avi-Yonah. It includes a detailed analysis of the Cardo Maximus, the Church of Nea, and other important structures (Avi-Yonah, 1954). Donner (1992) explained the historical context of the map, its Greek inscriptions, and theological symbolism. Piccirillo and Alliata (1999), examined architectural details and Christian pilgrimage routes for the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the map. Here are some key features and landmarks that the mosaic map highlights:

1. The Cardo Maximus

This is the main north-south street of Roman Jerusalem. On the Madaba Map, it's represented as a prominent street lined with columns stretching through the heart of the city (Avigad, 1983). The Cardo was a central hub of commerce and daily life in Byzantine Jerusalem.

2. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

One of the most important Christian sites, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is depicted prominently in the center of Jerusalem on the map. Built over the sites traditionally believed to be Golgotha (where Jesus was crucified) and Jesus's tomb, the church was a major pilgrimage destination. The map shows the church with a large rotunda and courtyard (Corbo, 1981).

3. The Damascus Gate

The Damascus Gate is the main entrance to Jerusalem's Old City from the northwest. On the Madaba Map, it's shown as a significant entranceway, as it was a key point along the roads leading out of Jerusalem toward the northern regions and Damascus (Wightman, 1993).

4. The Nea Church (Church of the Theotokos)

Commissioned by Emperor Justinian I, the Nea Church is shown as a large building on the map, emphasizing its importance. The church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and was one of Jerusalem's largest and most significant churches during its time (Holum, 1992).

5. Siloam Pool

Located in the southern part of the city, the Pool of Siloam is also featured on the Madaba Map. This pool was used for ritual bathing, especially for pilgrims visiting the nearby Temple Mount (Reich and Shukron, 2011). It holds religious significance due to its mention in the New Testament, where Jesus healed a blind man.

6. Mount Zion and 7. Eastern Gate (Golden Gate)

The Madaba Map also gives a general representation of Mount Zion, which held religious and historical significance for Jews and Christians. It was believed to be the location of the Last Supper, and during the Byzantine period, several vital churches were located here. This gate, also known as the Golden Gate, is depicted on the eastern side of Jerusalem. It is one of the most critical gates because it leads directly to the Temple Mount and holds messianic significance in Christian and Jewish traditions (Pixner, 2010).

8. The Temple Mount (Though not explicitly depicted as a temple)

The Temple Mount area is represented on the map with open spaces and surrounding walls, although the Romans destroyed the Second Temple centuries earlier in 70 CE. By the 6th century, the Temple Mount would have mainly been unoccupied, but it still retained its significance as a sacred space (Elad, 1995).

9. Church of the Ascension and 10. City Walls and Gates

Situated on the Mount of Olives, this church is depicted on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The Church of the Ascension commemorates the site where Christians believe Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection. The Madaba Map includes detailed depictions of Jerusalem's fortifications, such as city walls and gates, illustrating the walled city pilgrims would encounter. Several of the city's gates are named and illustrated, showing Jerusalem as a fortified, thriving city (Murphy-O'Connor, 2008).

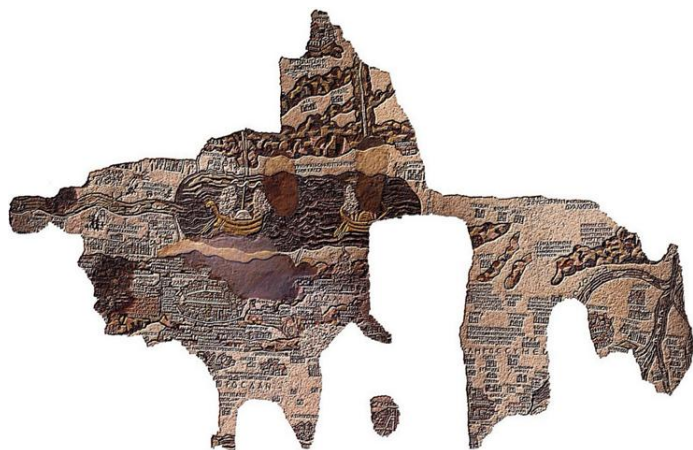


Figure 5: 6th-century Madaba Map, a Byzantine mosaic located on the floor of the Church of St. George in Madaba, Jordan.

Source: Donner, 1992.

MADABA'S SOCIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE 19TH CENTURY UP UNTIL WORLD WAR I

In 1839, during the Ottoman Empire's reform period, Madaba experienced a demographic shift after a long period of abandonment. The Ottoman authorities aimed to reassert control over their Arab provinces, including Jordan, primarily to enhance security along the pilgrimage routes to Mecca and Medina. However, the implementation of land reforms faced substantial resistance from local Bedouin tribes, who were reluctant to acknowledge Ottoman authority over their territories. This resistance was emblematic of the broader challenges the Ottomans faced in governing their diverse empire, particularly in regions where tribal loyalties were strong and often superseded allegiance to the central government (Akin and Gündoğan 2023).

The narrative surrounding the migrations to Madaba in the nineteenth century is deeply intertwined with local tribal dynamics. A pivotal incident in Al Karak involved the abduction of a woman from the al "Azayzat" tribe by a member of the Muslim "As-Sarayrah" tribe. This act of dishonor ignited a conflict that highlighted the fragile inter-tribal relations and the complexities of honor and retribution in Bedouin society. The ensuing demand for justice from the Christian members of the al "Azayzat" tribe, coupled with the refusal of the As-Sarayrah to surrender one of their own, escalated tensions. A Latin priest's intervention, facilitating the woman's escape to Nablus, underscores the role of religious figures in mediating tribal conflicts and the precarious position of Christian communities within this socio-political landscape (Akin 2023).

The migration of Christian Bedouin families from Al-Karak to Madaba was orchestrated by Ash-Sheikh Saleh Sawalha of the "Azayzat" tribe. By 1880, these families had erected Madaba as a settlement for Christians, using the remnants of the ancient city as a building material and cultivating the fertile plains. This migration was part of a larger Ottoman program of settling and agricultural encouragement in the area. The trip to Madaba was perilous across tribal lands largely hostile to outsiders; the establishment of a Christian community in Madaba severely altered the demographic and cultural landscape of the area, in alignment with an Ottoman agenda to foster stability and economic development through increased settlement (Jamhawi et al., 2023). The Ottoman Empire's politics during this time were complicated in balancing between the central authority and local tribal interests. The empire wished to integrate varied populations and stimulate agriculture but faced the difficulty of exerting control over tribal areas of land. Migrations to Madaba demonstrate the ability of the local communities to negotiate the challenges while contributing to the cultural and historical fabric of the region. The legacy of these migrations continues to shape Madaba's identity as a center of Christian heritage and a significant site for cultural tourism, particularly known for its ancient mosaics (Abukarki et al., 2023).



Figure 6: The view of The Front facade of St. George Church.

Source: Photo by Raneem AL KHAROUF.

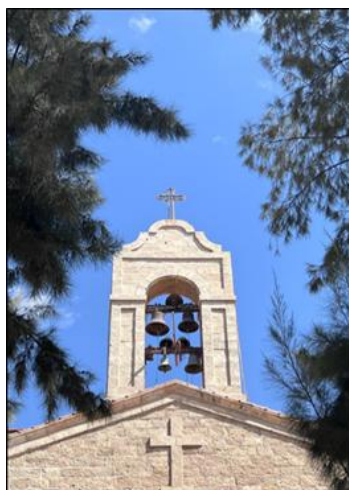


Figure 7: The view of the bell tower of St. George Church.

Source: Photo by Raneem AL KHAROUF.

The development of Madaba throughout the 19th century is connected with Ottoman dynamics. In 1880, Christian tribes who had fled from Karak repopulated Madaba after centuries of abandonment. The Tanzimat-period reforms, which intended to modernize the empire and reshape its administration, were employed by the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Such policy helped facilitate the resettlement of Christian groups in Madaba, such as the Ghassaniya, who would go on to construct the city's most famous landmark, the Church of St. George, in 1896 (see Figures 6 and 7). The Tanzimat reforms were instrumental in reshaping the socio-political landscape of the region, allowing for greater religious tolerance and the establishment of communal identities among the diverse populations in Madaba (Maggiolini, 2011).



Figure 8: Madaba from the east, around 1898.

Source: Library of Congress, American Colony in Jerusalem / <https://publication.doa.gov.jo> (Lesnes, 2019).

During the Ottoman period, the resettled Christian groups in Madaba were allowed to maintain relative autonomy in their religious and cultural practices. This is particularly significant when considering the role of St. George's Church as a socio-religious anchor during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The church not only functioned as a place of worship but also served as a community hub that supported education, local leadership, and the preservation of Greek Orthodox identity. Through the millet system, the Greek Orthodox community was able to administer its internal affairs, including marriage, education, and inheritance, which helped consolidate communal structures around institutions like St. George's Church. This autonomy contributed to the church's symbolic and functional centrality in Madaba's social landscape during the Ottoman era (Maggiolini 2011).

Forming The Modern City of Madaba Within the Tribal Fabric

The members of the "Azayzat" tribe refused to worship under the orders of an Orthodox priest from the "Halasa" tribe in Karak after their conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism a few years before they departed from Karak. The "Azayzat" tribe was able to persuade the other two Orthodox tribes, the "Karadsheh" and the "Ma'aya," with whom they had formed tribal alliances, to follow their plans and dwell with them in Madaba despite their conversion to Catholicism (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005c). The "Azayzat" had the greatest influence on the start of the first settlement project, as evidenced by the battles within the Karak tribal confederation and its desire for independence from the "Halasa", the other Christian tribe in Karak. With the cooperation and supervision of Catholic missionaries, the land originally provided to the "Azayzat" by the Latin Patriarchate, who played a key part in the founding of Madaba, was split among the three tribes- "Azayzat," "Karadsheh," and "Ma'aya." This land distribution sparked a conflict between the Catholic and Orthodox tribes. The land area allotted to each tribe was calculated based on the number of family heads: the "Azayzat" received 48 "Khanh," or lots, the "Karadsheh" 45, and the "Ma'aya" 38. Since its inception, these constituted the village's three different social and residential sections (Al Laimoun, 2004).

The two north-south highways connecting Madaba and Amman were built in the 1880s, illustrated in Figure 9. The Catholic and Greek missionaries' growth strategy was religious institutions and schools. They quickly constructed a tiny chapel and a classroom where the missionary could supervise schooling. Two churches, one at the top of the hill for the Latin Al "Azayzat" and one at the bottom for the Orthodox "Ma'aya" and "Karadsheh," produced two points of interest. A commercial strip grew gradually between the two sites, and the first mosque opened on Market Street in 1935. Other residential neighborhoods sprang up quickly across the hill in Madaba's historic core. The modest little village gave way to Madaba's evolution with the establishment of places like the "Hamarnah" and "Farah" shops, massive homes like Bayt "Hamarnah" and Bayt "Al-Halasa," a few public buildings like the Saraya, and religious buildings like St. George, St. John the Baptist, the parsonage house, and the house of the Rosary Sisters, all of which date back to the turn of the century (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005b).

By 1914, carpet stores had emerged near St George's Church, forming a retail district between the Orthodox and Latin churches - the Suq on al-Hashimi Street and King Talal Street. Religious spaces grew around the worship sites once the Hashemite Emirate of Transjordan was established: the Catholic Church with its schools; the Greek Orthodox Church with its presbytery and schools between the Karadsheh and Ma'aya burrows; and lastly, the mosque and Quranic school in the Suq area (Lesnes 2019). The following completed the original spatial organization (Ghanimeh et al. 2010):

- a) The Catholic Church of St. John was erected on top of the Acropolis in 1883, and a Latin school was built nearby.
- b) Administrative structures, such as the police station in 1892 and the Saraya in 1896, were built.
- c) The Orthodox Church of St. Georges was erected near the intersection dividing the territory of the two orthodox tribes at the village's northern entrance shown in Figure 8.

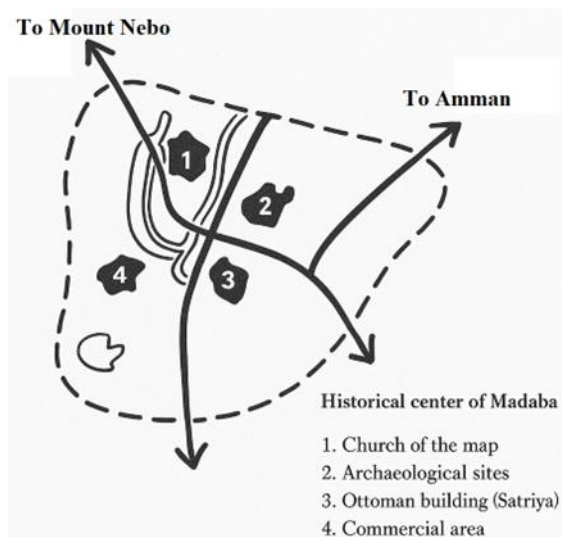


Figure 9: Map of the historical center of Madaba illustrated showing the two main roads concerning historical nodes.

Source: Map sketched by İlknur AKINER.

This edifice served as the major communication route between the Acropolis and the Orthodox Church and the main commercial street in the Ottoman village and the town of Madaba since it ran between the lands of the two Orthodox tribes (Gregory 1898). The Ottoman policy and the establishment of a commercial network between Madaba and other Syrian and Palestinian towns have been the driving force behind the development of agricultural and urban activities since the settling of Christian tribes and the formation of a stable human group capable of protecting its interests (see Figure 10). The protection and security provided a demonstration of how important it was for the Ottoman authorities to develop Madaba to encourage settlement and agricultural and commercial development in the town and its environs, to ensure the security of the exchange and communication routes between Syrian and Palestinian towns, and to establish a base from which to extend their authority over Salt and Karak. Due to Ottoman policies aimed at combating nomadism, supporting the settling process and agricultural growth, and engaging in commercial activities, Azayzat and Karadsheh became the owners of enormous domains (Lesnes 2019).



Figure 10: Madaba from the east, in 1952.

Source: <https://publication.doa.gov.jo> (Lesnes, 2019).

Unlike cities shaped by historically layered urban planning traditions, including those with Byzantine or Roman roots, Madaba's resettlement in the late 19th century followed tribal and familial patterns. This reflected a shift towards more decentralized, community-based urban development. Neighborhoods often expanded around kinship and tribal ties rather than formal planning axes. The city's growth radiated organically from major roads and religious buildings, aligning with broader Ottoman urban strategies that emphasized local governance and community agency in shaping the built environment (Maggiolini, 2011).

Excavations Reveal Madaba's Historical Heritage

Archaeological excavations at Madaba revealed a section of a paved Roman road, the city's previous major axis, which ran east to west and led to the city gates (Arad, 2023). The excavations also revealed the remnants of houses that had contained mosaic floors. The Church of the Holy Martyrs is one of them, as is the Church of the Virgin Mary was erected on the foundations of an ancient Roman house known as Hippolytus Hall. Through the splitting of land shares, the city of Madaba's tribal and religious structures and its cultural legacy had a significant impact on its urban expansion (Bikai and Harrison, 1996; Lesnes and Younker, 2013). The city was founded in the late nineteenth century due to the migration of three major tribes from Al Karak to Madaba (Griffith, 2016; Lesnes, 2019).

The original settlement of Madaba in the late 19th century began as a village, characterized by small-scale tribal landholdings and kinship-based spatial organization. Over time, particularly throughout the early 20th century, the settlement expanded in both population and built environment, gradually transitioning into what can be considered a town with emerging civic institutions, a central market, and increasing administrative functions. The early village morphology became the nucleus of the modern town's historical center. Madaba grew outward in concentric circles, primarily following tribal land divisions and extended family networks. This kinship-based organization remained a defining feature of urban morphology until the 1970s, when new demographic patterns emerged around the town center, though still loosely aligned with earlier community-based principles (Al Laimoun, 2004). The town evolved like a mosaic in a succession of juxtaposed regions, defined by familial ties, proximity, and background. Madaba's current urban fabric is evidence that remains to tell the history it went through. This historical layer played a major role in the city's urban planning, especially the layout of the city center, where most of these historical remains occur. The way the historical layer affected the urban fabric of Madaba can be traced through the development of buildings, the typology of land use, displayed in Figure 11, and the distribution of social areas among it (The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005c).

METHOD AND BENEFITS OF RESEARCH

The dialectical relationship between sacred sites and urban morphology takes on a unique dimension in Middle Eastern cities. The area where St. George's Church is located is the intersection point of both physical and sociocultural layers. This study, conducted specifically for St. George's Church in Madaba, aimed to investigate the impact of this interaction on both the built environment and socio-cultural dynamics. The research focuses on three key questions: How the church shapes the urban fabric, the relationship between the spatial movements of families and the religious structure, and the effects of historical layers on today's urban identity. Within the scope of spatial data analysis, church-centered region analysis was applied using Ottoman (1516-1918) and British Mandate (1921-1946) period maps of the 19th and 20th centuries (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan, 2005a-d). In the evaluation of historical data, the most basic publications on the church were examined in support of the methodological framework, such as Piccirillo's (1988, 1999 and 2004) inventory of Byzantine mosaics, Madden's (2012) epigraphic studies and Schick's (1995) archaeological find reports.

The influence of the church on both the built environment, including streets, religious buildings, and residential clusters, and intangible socio-cultural dynamics was examined by tracing the historical development of Madaba concerning the church's presence across different periods. This study involves a detailed mapping process, starting from the historic urban core and the primary thoroughfare, which later expanded into the area under investigation. The analysis also considers the spatial movement and settlement patterns of prominent families and their influence on the socio-spatial configuration of the city, particularly in terms of religious composition, income distribution, and political affiliations, all of which significantly shaped Madaba's urban morphology (The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005a; 2005b; 2005c). According to biblical references (i.e., Numbers 21:30, Isaiah 15:2), Madaba is considered a historical city within the territory of ancient Moab, often described as a Moabite frontier city that played a significant role in regional conflicts and cultural interactions. Archaeological excavations in Madaba, especially since the mid-20th century, have unearthed hundreds of Byzantine-era mosaics, church foundations, and architectural remains from Nabataean, Roman, and Islamic periods (Piccirillo, 1993; Schick, 1995). Despite these findings, much of the ancient city remains unexcavated, and many layers of its urban history are still being revealed (Meyers, 1997). Several researchers have highlighted the rapid and relatively unregulated urban growth of Madaba, especially from the mid-20th century onwards, as new waves of internal migration and modern housing developments altered its spatial and social structure (Piccirillo, 1993). The city's identity today reflects this layered complexity: traditional courtyard houses exist alongside modern apartment blocks, and neighborhoods are often organized by family or tribal affiliation rather than formal planning systems. This diversity in residential fabric, both in terms of architecture and community organization, has significantly influenced Madaba's current urban identity.

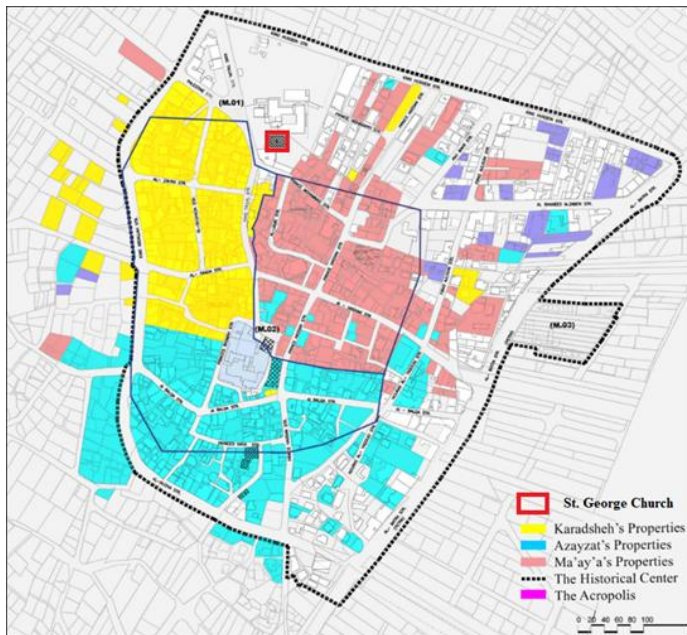


Figure 11: Land allocation according to social tribal classifications in the historical center of Madaba - St. George's Church is framed in red on the map.

Source: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005c.

EVALUATION OF THE URBAN GROWTH

The city witnessed a fast-paced growth in its inhabitants and used land from the second half of the twentieth century forward (see Figure 12). We can trace this development graphically through Figures 13,14 and 15, which demonstrate the construction of buildings through the '40s '50s, and 60's of the twentieth century (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005a). This development is considered to have created the various living styles within the city of Madaba. The new pattern started forming at the beginning of the 20th century by the recent dwelling tribes of Madaba and that was coherent with their ideologies, lifestyle, and needs (Al Laimoun, 2004). This pattern can be described by these characteristics:

- It was merely functional and fulfilled the people's needs, which is reflected in the land-use typology of the historical city center. The dominant type was the residential, followed by the commercial, then the educational and civil or religious uses. This distribution agrees with the need for settlement and finding a safe residue
- The new pattern was simple and humble. Naturally reflecting the inherent nomadic and rural traits of the new inhabitants.
- Consistent because of the nature of the new society's social, religious, and cultural relationships. In addition to the typology and general architectural language that existed originally in Al Karak
- Random, as the new tribes did not employ the previously existing urban pattern



Figure 12: Aerial view of Madaba in 1918 with the church on the map highlighted in red.

Source: Bikai and Harrison, 1996.

The urban expansion of Madaba initially radiated outward from tribal territories, forming a layered structure rooted in kinship-based settlement patterns. This kinship-oriented organization shaped the town's spatial character well into the 1970s, as new residential clusters emerged around the historic core, mirroring earlier patterns of community-based distribution (Bikai and Harrison, 1996; Al Laimoun, 2004).

The town evolved like a mosaic in a succession of juxtaposed regions, defined by familial ties, proximity, and background. The geographical arrangement formed based on ancestry and confessional identity proved extremely robust (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005c). It was neither challenged by the three Christian tribes' expanding numbers nor Madaba's transition into an urban hub drawing a growing number of migrants (Al Laimoun, 2004). Until the beginning of the 1970s, that is. Each of the three groups maintained the uniformity and homogeneity of its home region or "community neighborhood" over a century after the village was founded. Madaba evolved from a tribal to an urban structure marked by greater contact, imitations, and exchanges among the many tribes and communities and a rising variety of inhabitants, activities, and lifestyles (Al Laimoun, 2004; Lesnes, 2019).

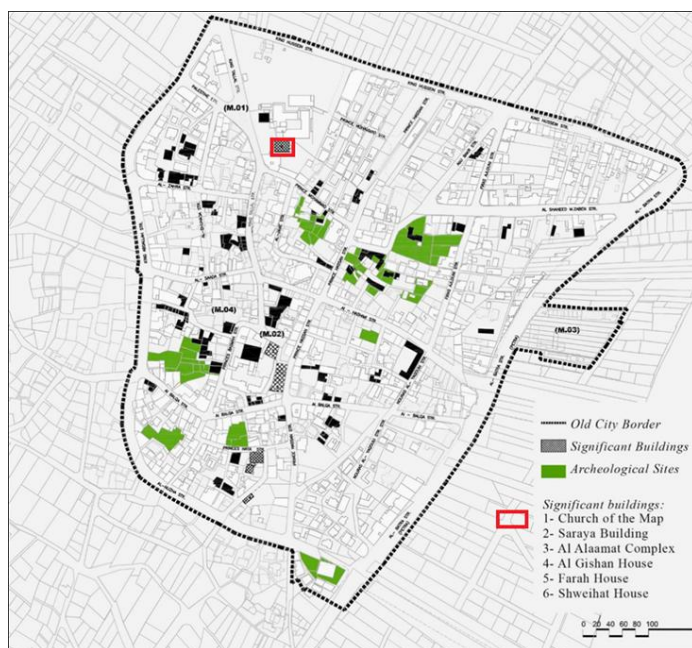


Figure 13: Buildings constructed up until the 1940s according to the historical center of Madaba - St. George's Church is framed in red on the map.

Source: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005a, Madaba City Revitalization Program, and Historic Core Regulations. Based on the Results of the survey from a joint venture of Lufthansa Consulting- ERM Lahmeyer International GmbH-Sigma Consulting Engineers. Extracted from the original map and edited by the authors.

THE CHURCH AS SEEN TODAY WITHIN THE URBAN FABRIC

The current situation in Madaba is a continuation of the prior one, as the tribes have continued practicing their lives maybe differently but in the same urban patterns with additional traits and activities that sustain the growth of the city and its inhabitants, which is observed in the employment of the old buildings that take up a noticeable space in the fabric of the historical center (Al Laimoun, 2004). Some of these old structures have been reused as museums, storage spaces, or residences for the lower-income class in Madaba. Numerous regeneration projects have been faced by the huge existing platform of historical heritage randomly distributed over consequent time stages that demand careful handling amongst the continuous formal calls of preserving these monuments. These religious objects, including the Church of the Map, have proved their role in forming the urban pattern of Madaba in all different aspects; lifestyle, expansion plans, street network layout, and land use within the city.

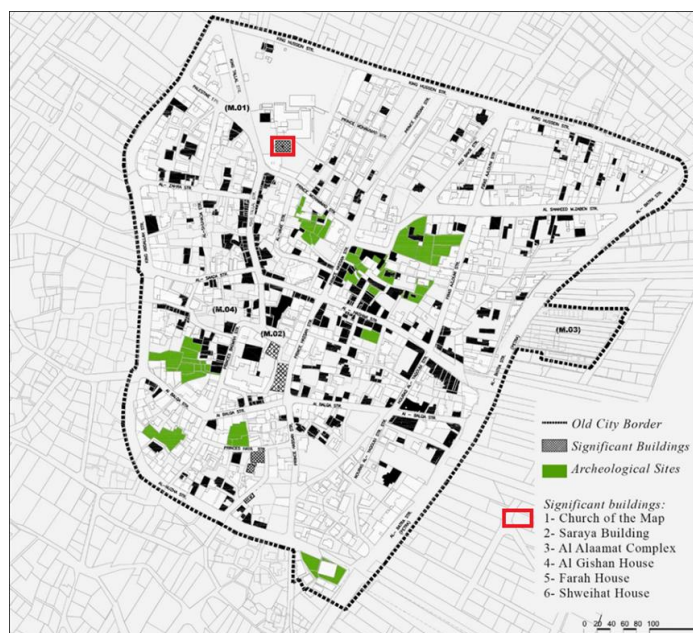


Figure 14: Buildings constructed up until the 1950s according to the historical center of Madaba - St. George's Church is framed in red on the map.

Source: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005a), Madaba City Revitalization Program, and Historic Core Regulations. Based on the Results of the survey from a joint venture of Lufthansa Consulting- ERM Lahmeyer International GmbH-Sigma Consulting Engineers. Extracted from the original map and edited by the authors.

The Church of the Map, in particular, and the holy sites in Madaba in general, have achieved worldwide significance among Christians in the twenty-first century; In addition to the church, Madaba is home to two Christian pilgrimage sites; Mount Nebo and Mukawer Heights. The Church of the Map has also gained touristic importance for hosting the oldest mosaic map of Jerusalem. Formal civil parties have proposed the replacement of the dwellers of the historic city center that mainly inhabit the churches' neighboring areas and suffer low-income lifestyles under buildings in high need of restoration and maintenance to better homes in the suburbs to make room for tourist attractions within the Madaba city center (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005d). The Cultural Heritage in Madaba is sometimes considered a significant constraint in the effective growth and regeneration of the city center for four main reasons (Al Laimoun, 2004):

- a) These buildings are considered historical heritage and are structurally unsafe in their old physical state.
- b) The cost of restoration projects and their considerably low returns.
- c) According to society, these historical buildings are not responsive to their expansion and evolution.
- d) Their link with lower-income classes.

Accordingly, the architectural spaces close to the city center can be characterized by their diverse and inconsistently originated inhabitants. Accordingly, the various architectural styles can also be observed in educational facilities, with the oldest school being the Latin school also serving the Latin Church on the acropolis that was followed by the construction of other religious schools also serving religious buildings one of which is the Orthodox Church (Church of the map) demonstrated in Figure 15. With its location in the northwest quadrant of the historical center, the Church of the Map serves as a pilgrimage site and a symbolic urban gateway for all visitors arriving from the direction of Amman. From the historic core's primary commercial axis, the Suq spine of King Talal Street and Al Hashmi Street, where most of the tourist facilities, small stores, crafts, and tourism are located.

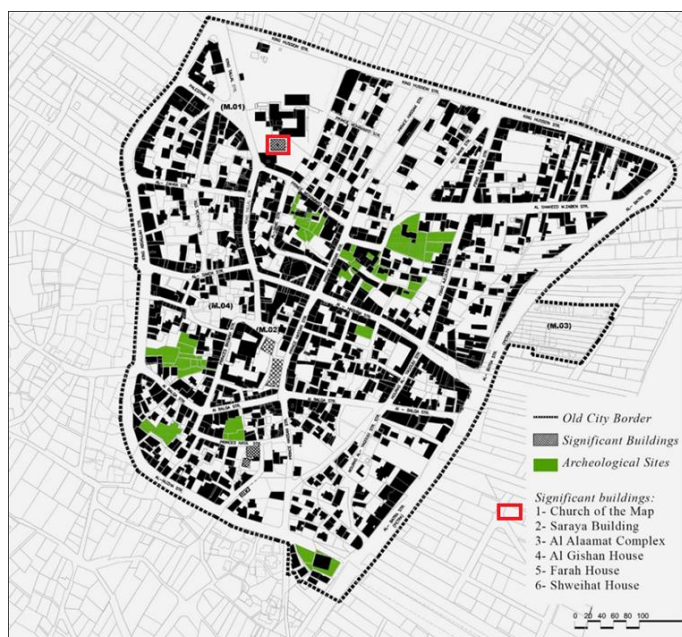


Figure 15: Buildings constructed up until the 1960s according to the historical center of Madaba - St. George's Church is framed in red on the map.

Source: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2005a, Madaba City Revitalization Program, and Historic Core Regulations. Based on the Results of the survey from a joint venture of Lufthansa Consulting- ERM Lahmeyer International GmbH-Sigma Consulting Engineers. Extracted from the original map and edited by the authors.

Therefore, Madaba's Ottoman-era resettlement and urban development are key to understanding its unique socio-cultural dynamics. The construction of the Church of St. George during this time reflects how religious and communal identities shaped not only Madaba's physical landscape but also its cultural and political environment. The interplay of tribal affiliations, religious diversity, and Ottoman administrative strategies created a rich tapestry of social interactions that continues to define Madaba today.

CONCLUSION

The architectural and urban growth of Madaba was a product of settlements by diverse tribes, and hence, complexions between cultural identity and spatial evolution. The tribes that colonized Madaba brought their architectural styles and lifestyle symbols, which are represented in the architectural techniques and details that constitute the historic heart of the city. This adaptation was not merely an imprint of the urban patterns established by previous civilizations, such as the Byzantines, who built upon the remnants of Roman urbanism. Instead, these tribes consciously opted to forge a new urban identity that resonated with their cultural beliefs and lifestyle preferences, leading to the establishment of a simplified urban pattern that diverged from the classical Roman street layouts that had previously dominated the area.

The enduring influence of religious and historical buildings in Madaba's city center is particularly significant, as these structures have profoundly shaped the development of their surroundings and the overall public space. This influence can be articulated through four primary observations:

1. **Directional Urban Design:** The layout of Madaba's streets and buildings exhibits a deliberate orientation towards religious sites, creating a spatial hierarchy that prioritizes these structures. The main thoroughfares expand towards the religious landmarks while contracting in the opposite direction, a phenomenon that is distinctly observable in the historic center but not replicated in the newer suburbs.
2. **Urban Corridors:** The establishment of urban corridors, such as King Talal Street, exemplifies the integration of public and commercial spaces with significant religious and historical sites. This corridor effectively connects the acropolis, including the Latin church and the Saraya Building, to the main route leading to Amman, with the Orthodox Church serving as a pivotal node along this axis.
3. **Public Space Utilization:** The presence of educational facilities, such as the Orthodox school adjacent to the Church of the Map, highlights the role of public spaces in fostering community engagement and social interaction. This facility not only serves as an educational institution but also acts as a vital social hub for a significant demographic within Madaba, while simultaneously attracting tourists.
4. **Heritage Preservation and Public Space Regeneration:** The ongoing efforts to regenerate public spaces and preserve historical heritage in Madaba reflect a broader commitment to maintaining the city's cultural identity.

These initiatives advocate for the protection of historical sites while enhancing the quality of public spaces, thereby ensuring that the rich tapestry of Madaba's architectural legacy continues to thrive.

In conclusion, the transformation of Madaba's urban landscape is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of its inhabitants. The city's unique architectural heritage, shaped by the convergence of diverse cultural influences, continues to play a crucial role in defining its identity and guiding its future development. As Madaba navigates the complexities of modern urbanization, the lessons drawn from its historical context will be essential in fostering a sustainable and culturally rich urban environment.

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