

## World Heritage Scanned Nomination

File Name: 1093.pdf

UNESCO Region: ARAB STATES

---

**SITE NAME:** Um er-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a)

**DATE OF INSCRIPTION:** 7th July 2004

**STATE PARTY:** JORDAN

**CRITERIA:** C (i) (iv) (vi)

**DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:**

*Excerpt from the Report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee*

**Criterion (i):** Um er-Rasas is a masterpiece of human creative genius given the artistic and technical qualities of the mosaic floor of St. Stephen's church.

**Criterion (iv):** Um er-Rasas presents a unique and complete (therefore outstanding) example of stylite towers.

**Criterion (vi):** Umm er-Rasas is strongly associated with monasticism and with the spread of monotheism in the whole region, including Islam

**BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS**

Most of the Um er-Rasas archaeological site has not been excavated. Containing remains from the Roman, Byzantine and Early Moslem periods (end of 3rd to 9th century AD), the site started as a Roman military camp and grew to become a town as of the 5th century. There has been little excavation of the ca 150-m by 150-m fortified military camp. The site also has several churches, some with well preserved mosaic floors. Particularly noteworthy is the mosaic floor of the Church of Saint Stephen with its representation of towns in the region. Two square towers are probably the only remains of the practice, well known in this part of the world, of the stylite monks (i.e. ascetic monks who spent time in isolation atop a column or tower). Um er-Rasas is surrounded by, and dotted with, remains of ancient agricultural cultivation

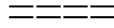
---

**1.b State, Province or Region:** Madaba Geographical Region

**1.d Exact location:** N31 28 34.8 E35 56 42.4



# THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN



## NOMINATION OF THE OLD CITY OF **UM ER-RASAS** (KASTRUM MEFA'A)



**FOR THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST**

**THE OLD CITY  
OF  
UM ER-RASAS  
[MEFA'A]**

**NOMINATION FILE SUBMITTED**

**TO  
THE WORLD HERITAGE BUREAU AND COMMITTEE**

**FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE  
LIST**

**BY  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES  
ON BHALF OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF  
JORDAN**

**FEBRUARY - 2002**

**THE FILE PREPARED BY: ABDEL SAMI ABU DAYYEH  
ARCHAEOLOGIST AND  
CULTURAL IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT REPORTER**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1- IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY</b>	
<b>Page</b>	
a. State Party	1
b .Name of Property	1
c .Province, Region/Geographical Location	1
d. Coordinates	1
e. Ownership	1
g. Area of Property	1
h. Maps and plans Showing bounсарy : In a Separate Volume.	1
<b><u>2-LOCATION</u></b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>3-ACCESSIBILITY</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><u>4-JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION:</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A. Statement of Significance</b>	<b>2</b>
The geographical aspect	2
The urban and Architectural aspect	2
Historical – Archaeological aspect	5
The multi cultural and religious aspect	6
<b>B. Criteria of inscription</b>	<b>6</b>
Criteria :I and III	6
Criteria : III	7
Criteria : V	8
Criteria : VI	9
<b><u>IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE</u></b>	<b>10</b>
Mayfa'ah, a forgotten site	11
<b><u>DESCRIPTION</u></b>	<b>12</b>
<b><u>Principle Monuments</u></b>	<b>13</b>

<b>A-</b>	<b>The Fortified Camp</b>	
	13	
A-	walls , interior, and gates of the castrum	13
2nd-	The Twin churches	
	14	
	1=The Church of the Rivers	14
	2=Church of the Palm Tree	16
	<b>II -The Northern Settlement Area</b>	<b>17</b>
	A-The ECCLESIASTICAL COMPLEX	17
	1:-The church of Bishop Sergius	17
	2:-The church of Saint Stephen	18
	3:-The church of the Courtyard	19
	4:-The church of Aedicula	20
	<b>Analysis</b>	21
	B - OTHER CHURCHES	22
	1:- The church of the Lions	22
	2:-The Church of Priest Wa'il	23
	3:-The Church of the Tabula	24
	4:-The Church of Saint Paul.	25
	5:- The Chapel of the Peacocks	28
<b>B-</b>	<b>The North Tower Complex</b>	
	28	
	1:- The Stylite Tower	29
	Stylite	30
	Simeon	30
	2:-The Church of the Tower	31
	3:-Area around the tower	32
	<b>One. A Square Building</b>	
	32	
	<b>IV- THE ANCIENT AGRICULTURAL FIELDS</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>E-</b>	<b>THE RESERVOIRS AND CISTERNS</b>	
	33	
	<b>MATERIAL OF DATING</b>	<b>34</b>
	History of Development	
	A-Before the Byzantine Era	34
	B-The Byzantine and Later Era	35

<b>COMPARATIVE STUDY</b>	35
1-The Abundance of Churches	35
2-Of the Mosaics	36
3-Of the Stylite Tower	37
4-Of the Castrum	37
5-Of The Ancient agricultural fields	38
<b>AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY</b>	38
<b>OWNERSHIP OF THE SITE AND ZONING</b>	39
Urban Development and Physical Planing and Site Zoning	40
Um Er-Rasas –Archaeological Park , Project of Protection/Management	41
Stakeholders	41
<b>MANAGEMENT PLAN AND OBJECTIVES</b>	42
Content of the management plan	43
Agencies involved with the management plan	43
Recent level of management and contacts	44
Protective Measures and Means of Implementing them	44
Approach and Ethics	44
<b>Boundary and Fencing issues</b>	45
Landscaping	46
<b>AGREED PLANS RELATED TO THE PROPERTY</b>	46
<b>SOURCES OF FINANCE</b>	47
<b>SOURCES OF EXPERTISE</b>	47
Visitor Facilities	48
Estimated Tourist Statistics	48
Staffing level	49
<b>FACTORS IMPACTING THE SITE</b>	49
a.Development Pressure	49
b.Environment Pressure	49
c.Natural Disastors and Preparedness	49
d.The visitor/Tourist Pressure	50
e. Number of Inhabitants	50

<b>MONITORING</b>	50
Administrative Arrangements for monitoring	51
Results of previous reporting exercises of monitoring	51
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	52

# UM ER-RASAS

(KASTRON MEFA'A)

=====

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY

**STATE PARTY** : Jordan (The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan)

**NAME OF PROPERTY (Nomination)** : Um er-Rasas(Kastron Mefa'a)

**PROVINCE** : Central of Jordan

**COORDINATES** : Palestine Grid=237: 101

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY** : The Sanctuary of the archaeological site is the property of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan

**AREA OF PROPOSED PROPERTY** : Two square kilometers With the buffer zone.

**MAPS PLANS AND PHOTOS** : Attached in a separate volume :

**Prepared by** :Abdel Sami AbuDayyeh  
From the Department of Antiquities (DOA).

## LOCATION





**Palestine grid** : 237 101

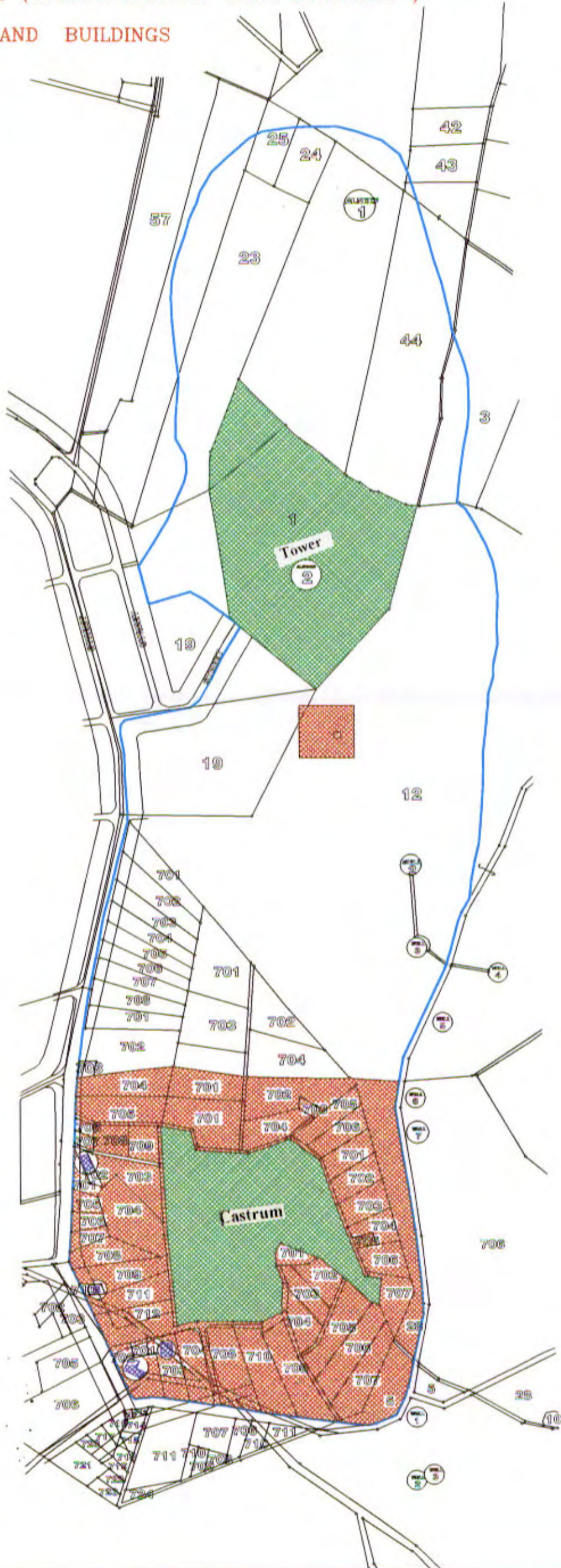
Um er-Rasas (Um Ar-Rassas) is located in central Jordan, 60 kilometers south of the capital Amman, 30 kilometers south-east of Madaba, north of Wadi el-Mujib, roughly half-way between the King's Highway, in the west, and the Desert Highway Road in the east.









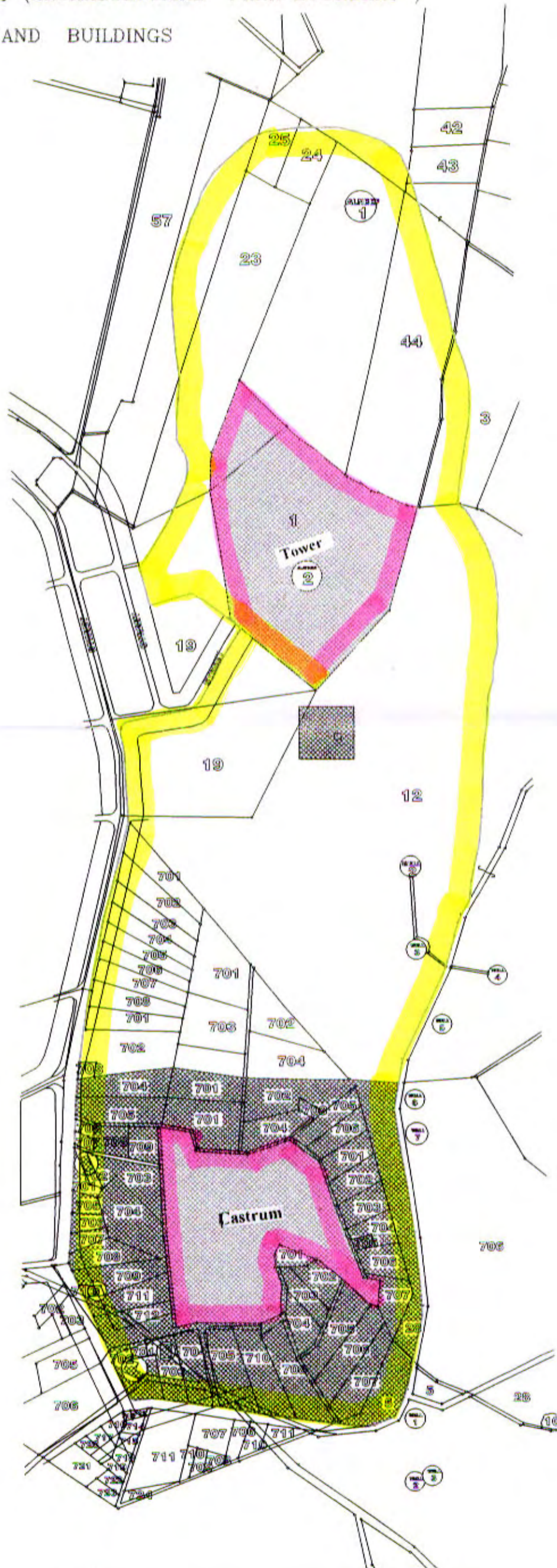
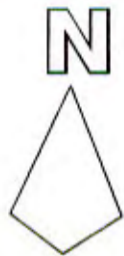
# UM ER-RASAS

-  DOA OWNED LAND
-  ZONE TO BE APPROPRIATED
-  BUFFER ZONE BOUNDARY (ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK BOUNDARY)
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND AND BUILDINGS



# UM ER-RASAS

-  DOA OWNED LAND (PROPOSED WORLD HERITAGE SITE'S BOUNDARY)
-  ZONE TO BE APPROPRIATED
-  BUFFER ZONE BOUNDARY (ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK BOUNDARY)
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND AND BUILDINGS



## **ACCESSIBILITY**

It is accessible from Madaba : 1- Either by the road that leads eastward to Nitl from where it passes near the Iron Age Fortress of Za'faran, crosses Wadi er-Rumeil and bypasses the hilltop Iron Age fortress of er-Rumeil to the left, and the ruins of ancient 'Aylat, today the village of er-Rumeil, to the right, to reach Umm er-Rasas from the north.2-Or by the southern road that crosses Wadi el-Wala up to Thiban(Biblical Dibon) and from there it goes east to reach Umm er-Rasas.

## **JUSTIFICATION BY STATE PARTY : FOR INSCRIPTION**

### **1st- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

=====

Umm er-Rasas is a fine example of an archaeological city of an outstanding universal value. It is a remnant of the peak of the Roman Eastern frontier camps of the *Limus Arabicus* as well as it became later an indicative example of highly ranked Christian cities that belonged to important Christian dioceses in the Byzantine era in the East that extended its life and importance with the same status in the Umayyad and even the Abassid (Islamic )Periods.

The city including the camp has been highly preserved in a unique way by being deserted and unoccupied after the Umayyad period for hundreds of years .On both the cultural and architectural levels ,the city can teach us a lot about the influence and interaction between the cultures of east and west during those periods.

The city remained unchanged for the last ( 1200 ) years and it still includes as components an outstanding example of a typical Roman and Byzantine military camp together with a Byzantine and Umayyad ecclesiastically dedicated settlement .

It is also remarkable due to its very high level of authenticity and integrity . Not having been affected by any type of urban zoning or modern action of building or use ,its spatial organization and structure

has remained largely negatively unimpacted and the function of the majority of its components correlates to their original old use. The different values of the city can be further demonstrated in the following aspects.

### **The Geographical Aspect :**

Um er- Rasas was once one of the important Camps of the Eastern Roman and Byzantine frontier fortifications of the Limes Arabicus fortified system. Being positioned near the fringes of the eastern desert of the Roman/Byzantine empire and on the international trade route (The Incense Route) that linked south and west Arabia with Syria and Palestine in the north, and being in the ecclesiastical diocese of Madaba Um er-Rasas(Mefaa) must have gained high international importance and interest either on the level of military support or in the religious sphere or as a commercial centre.

The town must have had, in antiquity , a status or rank of a pilgrimage focal point. A big complex of churches (four churches) was excavated together with other small churches and chapels and more ones are expected to be exposed in the future .If the high Stylite tower with its small church are added to the component, one can expect huge numbers of pilgrimages that used to visit the city in a way to consult the stylite monk and to achieve his blessing in a manner that was used in the case of Simeon the Stylite in Antioch between (AD.417-459).

The military camp was established and deliberately existed within a buttressed fortified enclosure wall with two entrances and functionally was confined within that wall until conditions permitted and required the addition , in a later time, of a civilian quarter(settlement) and scattered structures of varied functions that extended widely to the north and evolved horizontally without any restricting factors

### **The Urban and Architectural Aspect:**

The Urban uniqueness of Um er-Rasas seems from its being a city of two components ,the walled quarter (The military Camp) and the open quarter (The Civilian Quarter).

#### **The Walled Quarter(The Military Camp):**

The walled quarter has only been partly excavated ,but due to the huge quantity and amazing variety of the tumbled stone structures , as

visibly seen on the surface ,and due to the good state of preservation much could be learnt ,when completely excavated , about the architectural fabric and the building technology and the material used in the area at that time of the Roman/Byzantine era . Great amount of arches and vaults constructed of highly trimmed limestone boulders are still lined in rows , as if they have recently fallen in situ .The type of stone matches with the local easily available limestone. Two small excavated churches, within the walls, give an idea that even though this sector of the site (City) is described as a military quarter it included more than one fabric of urban and architectural development.

### **The Open Quarter (The Civilian):**

Once again, this sector ,which is located to the north of the walled quarter , has been only partly excavated. But as it seemed from the small excavated portion a big ecclesiastical complex was centered in this part of the Byzantine world during the period of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries. This complex, which is consisted of two main big churches annexed with two other small ones , could provide us with a variety of architectural artistic and historical knowledge and much information of the old urban city planing of the ancient world of the Byzantine era. The other excavated small churches in the neighborhood added to our information.

Basilica design of big churches is displayed together with small chapels and one aisled churches. The richness of the mosaics and the qualitative and quantitative variety in motifs provided us with a big corpus of information relating the city planing in Egypt ,Jordan and Palestine at that period which witnessed the mosaicising of the floors of those churches. A variety of city plans was depicted and reached us from these three areas of the ancient world of the Byzantine era.

On the other hand , one of the scattered structures in the remote northern side of that open quarter stands as the most outstanding and important example of its own type at that period of the early Christianity This monument is the Stylite tower. As it is still standing and well preserved in a unique condition of architecture with its full height(of 13 metres high) and domed room on the summit, it is considered as the most indicative example of that type of solid structures that served as a Stylite tower in the world.

## **Historical -Archaeological Aspect:**

Even though the archaeological material that referred to a dating of the settlement before the Roman conquest of the region were scanty due to the limitation of archaeological excavations carried out on the site, they fit well with Biblical resources (Joshua. 13:18; 21: 37:and Jeremiah 48:21). These archaeological evidences indicated that occupation in the outer quarter of Kastron Mefaa (recently confirmed as Um er-Rasas) was attested in the Iron II period. To that era belonged a basalt column base, a scarab and a group of pottery sherds found below the Chapel of the Column.

In the Late Roman period, 3<sup>rd</sup>.to 4<sup>th</sup>.centuries A.D., there may have been an official building at the site as indicated by a Latin inscription found in the eastern courtyard of the church of Saint Stephen; from that same period there are also Thamudic and Nabataean inscriptions reused in the eastern wall of the same church and of the church of Bishop Sergius, a sculptured ram, part of a lintel found reused in the apse of the Courtyard Church, and coins, as well as other reused architectural elements.

Historical resources, such as Eusebius of Cesarea mentioned that a unit of the Roman army was stationed on the edge of the desert at Mefaat in the 4<sup>th</sup>.century AD..(*Onomasticon* 128:21).The *Notitia Dignitatum*, an official document of the Roman Empire, stated that auxiliary cavalry troops of the Roman army were stationed in the camp of Mefaa on the edge of the desert under the command of the *Dux Arabiae*. The locality of Mefaa is recorded by the Arab historian el-Bakry as a village of the Belqa' of Syria.

To the Byzantine era excavations and visible remains and monuments are visible evidences on the high rank of importance that Mefaa could achieve. Exposed churches with their mosaics of rich and varied motifs and artistic components stand as a good example of documenting evidences. They include subjects of history that make them as confident historical records of that era.

The mosaic of Saint Stephen provide further evidence of the existence of an organized Christian community in the diocese of Madaba, at the end of the 8th Century. The late date of the mosaics of the Church of Saint Stephen opens what was closed chapter of Jordanian history relative to civil, religious and artistic interests. We now know that at the end of the eighth century A.D. an urban flourishing community still existed at the site. That community was religiously and administratively organized and exhibited an unexpected artistic vitality. That Christian community was governed by a deacon with a bishop and local clergy.

## **The Multi Cultural and Religious Aspect:**

From the big amount of excavated churches and from the existence of the elaborately constructed huge stylite tower we learn that Mefaa(Um er-Rasas) was in the Byzantine era an ecclesiastical focal point that is expected to have received visitors who came to pray or attend masses in such churches as the big church of Saint Stephen or the church of Bishop Sergius of the diocese of Madaba, during whose episode eight big projects of ecclesiastical type that archaeological excavations brought to light .Once again the introduction of the Stylite asceticism and religious austerity should have attracted to him a continuous streams of pilgrims who probably came to consult him or to ask for his prayers or receive his blessings as it was the case with the first Stylits Simeon of Antioch.

## **B-CRITERIA OF INSCRIPTION**

=====

### **Criteria: I and III**

The importance of the site was already noticed by the explorer E.H Palmer who visited it in 1871 and noticed that Umm er-Rasas must have been of considerable importance during the Byzantine period..

Um er-Rasas, in a way, represents a masterpiece of human creative genius. Um er-Rasas stands has the first site in Jordan and in the world that has a complete and intact ,solidly stone, constructed ,13 meters high ,tower that has served as a meditating platform for stylite monks, ascetics who lived on top of pillars seeking solitude. This tower was built in the middle of a square courtyard,and adjoined by a small church(the Church of the Tower) beside huge water cisterns hewn in the rock in the north of the ruins ,in the Byzantine period. It had no stairway but had a domed room at the top with a door opening on its southern side ,facing the church. A channel ran from top to bottom on the inside of the tower's wall ,probably to serve as a toilet. The discovery of a church ,used in Byzantine and early Islamic periods, in the south direction at the base of the tower in 1987 supported tthat functional view ,that this is a Stylite tower-a hypothesis proposed by C.Wilson in the nineteenth century. This Stylite tower is ,once again, shown, as a column, within a courtyard



relating a church with three hanging lamps depicted in the mosaics of Saint Stephen's church.

In the early Church, a solitary who lived on top of a pillar was called a stylite. Their pillars would vary in height, and the platforms, sometimes made more habitable by a small hut, were generally provided with a parapet against which the Stylite would lean for his scanty sleep. Food was usually supplied by disciples or admirers. Apart from prayer, Stylites gave much time to spiritual instruction, to reconciling enemies, and often to theological controversies. They considered St. Simeon Stylites their founder. Saint Simeon Stylite the first of the stylites or pillar ascetics was born on the Syrian border of Cilicia in AD. 389 or 390. In the vicinity of Antioch, and, after several years of ascetic life, he mounted a pillar, at first low, but gradually increased to a height of sixty feet high; he lived on the top of it until his death in AD. 459, occupied in adoration and intercession. This novel austerity attracted to him a continuous stream of pilgrims from all over the Christian world, and was widely imitated.

### **Criteria : III**

The mosaics of Um er-Rasas include exceptional testimony to a disappeared cultural tradition and civilization

The richness of the inscriptions and the quality of motifs of the mosaic pavement of the church of Saint Stephen make it one of the most important archaeological monuments and historical documents including:

A-The dedicatory inscription along the step of the presbytery provides us with the ancient name of Um er-Rasas :Mefaa ,or Kastron Mefaa.

B-The dedicatory inscriptions near the presbytery ,on both sides of the altar ,contains historical information .Although there is some difficulty in reading it because of its use of abbreviations, its date of 756 A.D. furnishes , with another inscription in the same church , the name of two unknown bishops, Job and Sergius II who can be added to the list of bishops of Madaba.

C-The same inscription also identifies the mosaicist ,Staurachios,of Hesban town ,who was the first mosaicist in the region whose place of origin became known . He and his colleague Euremios paved the presbytery in March 756 , at the time of bishop Job.

D-The inscriptions of the mosaics ,here, mention the monk and priest Kayoum and his church of Phisga(Mount Nebo),west of Madaba. Moreover ,another inscription mentioned the name of bishop Sergios I of Madaba(587 A.D).These inscriptions confirm that the territory of the diocese of Madaba ,as it reached Mount Nebo (10 Km far west),it reached the Wadi Mujib-Arnon, 30 km. far, the southern border of the Provincia of Arabia.

E- One more point is that the late date, October 785 A.D. of the mosaic floor of Saint Stephen's church stands as a clear evidence on the extending for almost a century, the history of mosaic art in the east .

## **Criteria V**

The Mosaics and the ecclesiastical monuments of Um er-Rasas stand as an outstanding example that represent the continuous traditional community or settlement especially when it is supposed to become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

1-The mosaics of Um er-Rasas provided new evidence for the history of Jordan in the Byzantine and even Early Islamic periods. The mosaic of Saint Stephen provide further evidence of the existence of an organized Christian community in the diocese o oof Madaba, at the end of the 8th Century. The late date of the mosaics of the Church of Saint Stephen opens what was closed chapter of Jordanian history relative to civil, religious and artistic interests. We now know that at the end of the eighth century A.D. an urban flourishing community still existed at the site. That community was religiously and administratively organized and exhibited an unexpected artistic vitality. That Christian community was governed by a deacon with a bishop and local clergy .

2-The mosaics at Um er-Rasas provide evidence for the Arab military nature of the settlement. The majority names of benefactors mentioned in the inscriptions of the church of St. Stephen were of Arabic origin. Sample of such names : include:Abdallos,Obedos,Naoum,Kaioum,Soelos,Elias,Abesobeos,Alafa, and

Gomela .

## **Criteria VI**

Um er-Rasas is directly associated with artistic works of outstanding universal significance. The mosaic floor of one of the churches of Um er-Rasas is considered as one of the most important archaeological pictorial documentary records in Jordan and even in the world, equaled only by the famous mosaic map of the sixth century A.D. discovered in 1897 in Madaba. The mosaic of the nave of Church of Saint Stephen displays a variety of city plans of three different geographical areas of the ancient world (The Byzantine Sphere), each plan accompanied by its toponym, or place name, in Greek script. Two areas in Asia (Palestine and Jordan), and the third in North Africa (Egypt).

A-The intercolumnar spaces of the north row a series of eight Palestinian cities are depicted: The Holy City (of Jerusalem) in which it is possible to identify the Anastasis church of the Holy Sepulchre according to the iconography attributed to it in the Byzantine period, Neapolis (Recent Nablus) with (perhaps) the façade of the church of the Theotokos on Mount Gerizim, Sebastis (Recent Sebastia), Caesarea on the sea; Diospolis (Recent Lidda); Eleutheropolis (Recent Beit Gibrin), Askalon, and Gaza;

B-The South row depicted seven Jordanian cities: beginning with the double plan of Kastron Mefaa (Recent Um er-Rasas); followed by Philadelphia (Recent Amman), Madaba, Esbounta (Recent Hesban), Belemounta (Recent Ma'in), Areopolis (Recent Rabbah), and Charach Moubal (Recent Kerak). Two additional Jordanian cities, were portrayed in the naves, one at the head of each aisle, associated with the portraits of the benefactors and inscriptions: Diblaton on the north, and Limbon (Recent Libb) on the south. Another toponym without illustration mentions Mount Nebo (Phisga) and the superior of the monastery of the Memorial of Moses who gave an offering to the church.

C- The inner geographical frame of the mosaic carpet is decorated as a river stream with fish, birds, and water flowers. Floating among them are boats and boys fishing or hunting. The continuous scene is interrupted by ten city plans of cities of the Nile Delta: Alexandria, Kasin, Thenesos, Tamiathis (Damietta), Panau, Pilousin, Antinau, Eraklion, Kynopolis and Pseudostomon.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE**

The modern name of the site, Um er-Rasas as it is pronounced means the mother of lead (Rasas means lead). Actually the term Rasas refers to the Arabic root Rass indicating the action of putting something on top of something else in perfect alignment. Therefore Um er-Rasas or Mourassas in the toponymic of the region is a term indicating a well-built. And, for this reason it is a good indication of the antiquity of the locality. The modern name was recorded in 1807 by the first modern explorer of Jordan, U. Seetzen. It was then visited by J.S. Buckingham in 1816, followed by many other explorers including E.H. Palmer and H.B. Tristram who realized the Christian character of some of the ruins.

The site of Um er-Rasas could be identified with the old name Mefaa or Kastron Mefaa, a toponym known from the Roman-Byzantine and Arabic sources and from the Bible. Mosaic Greek inscriptions discovered in the Church of Saint Stephen excavated on the northern edge of the ruins, and the inscriptions discovered in the church of the Lions have confirmed, four times, the ancient name of Um er-Rasas as Kastron Mefaa (camp of Mefaa), a settlement mentioned in the Bible (Joshua. 13:18; 21:37; and Jeremiah 48:21) and in the Roman-Byzantine sources.

The *Notitia Dignitatum*, an official document of the Roman Empire, and the 4th Century AD *Onomasticon* of Eusebius of Caesarea, both state that auxiliary cavalry troops of the Roman army were stationed in the camp of Mefaa on the edge of the desert under the command of the *Dux Arabiae*. The locality of Mefaa is recorded by the Arab historian el-Bakry as a village of the Belqa' of Syria. The name Kastron Mefaa suggested the military nature of the settlement in the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic, and possibly even Nabatean periods. But the so far increasing number and the artistic sophistication of the mosaic pavements of the uncovered churches stand against that military function, at least in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods.

## Mayfa'ah (Mefa'a), A forgotten Site in the Early Islamic Tradition

In The largely apologetic biography of the Prophet Mohammed which has come down to us, in its final form, from the hands of Abu Mohammed Abu al-Malik ibn Hisham(d.834),who edited materials originally assembled by Mohammed ibn Is-haq(d. ca.768),there is a section which tells the story of four men who,just prior to the coming of Islam ,broke with the polytheism of Quraysh in Mecca.They were representatives of the famous hanafia (singular hanif),thr pre-Islamic Arabian monotheists in the terminology of the Qur'an. These four,men who appear as a group in the biography of the Prophet Mohammed are Warqah ibn Nawfal ,`Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh ,`Uthman ibn al-Hawarayrith ,and Zayd ibn `Amr ibn Nufayl. The first three all became Christians just before the time of Islam ,but Zayd in the words of ibn Is-haq, "stayed as he was : he accepted neither Judaism nor Christianity." It is Zayd whose story includes the account of a visit to a site which can now be identified as that Um Er-Rasas –Kastron Mefaa.

Due to his religious restlessness, Zayd ibn `Amr ,according to ibn Is-haq , "had determined to leave Mecca to travel about in search of the *Hanifiyyah*, the religion of Abraham."His travels took him,as the story goes ,as fas as Mosul in northern Mesopotamia and throughout Syria ;all along the way he was "questioning monks and rabbis(*ar-ruhban wal-ahbar*) .The text goes on to say that Zayd"...came eventually to a monk at Mayfa'ah, of the land of al-Balqa( Central high Plateau of Jordan).This monk said to him : You are seeking a religion to which no one today can guide you, but the time of a prophet who will come forth from your own country which you have just left drawn near .He will be sent with *Hanifiyyah*, the religion of Abraham, so stick to it ,for he is about to be sent now ,this is his time."

Having received the monk's prophesy at Mayfa'ah ,Zayd is said then to have set out on his return journey to Mecca .

The location and identification of Mayrfa'ah was ,until recently , a mystery .Arab geographers, simply following the identification of the biography of the Prophet Mohammed, were content to say that it was " a village of the land of Balqa of Syria ( Balqa was known at that time as the high central Plateau East of the Jordan River).It is now clear that Um Er-Rasas is Kastron Mefa'a,known both from literary sources and inscriptions discovered at the site; and it is therefore plausible that Mayfa'ah is simply *Mefa'a* in Arabic transcription. It is philologically correct in that the diphthong 'ay' is often pronounced 'e'; and geographically the site is where it should be ,in the highlands of the Balqa.

For Muslim Arab Writers(historians) of the period like Ibn Is-haq,it would have been perfectly credible that Zayd ibn ‘Amr could have met a monk at Mayfa’ah –Kastron Mefaa at the turn of then 6<sup>th</sup>. to 7<sup>th</sup>. Centuries. The site should have been famous as a religious resort of consult at that time, and its fame reached as far north as north Syria, from where Zayd ibn ‘Amr was advised to ascend south to Mayfa’ah . Moreover it should have been flourishing and , according to archaeological record, it was in existence well beyond the lifetime of Ibn Is-haq.

## **DESCRIPTION**

=====

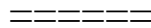
The ruins, situated at the highest elevation of a plateau, are visible from a distance of nearly twenty kilometers .

The site consists of five main components including:

- I- The Castrum,a walled area(Camp) of about ten hectares .
- II- The Northern Settlement.An open quarter of the same size to the north.
- III- The Stylite Tower Complex.The most visible monument of Um er-Rasas is a tower which is still standing at a distance of 1.5 km. north of the main ruins. The tower is in the middle of a square courtyard with a cistern to the north and a small church at its southeast corner.
- IV- The Ancient Agricultural Fields .
- V- The Reservoirs and Cisterns

Excavations started on the site in 1986 by the Department of Antiquities and the Franciscan Archaeological Institute, and were joined in the Spring of 1988 by a Swiss team supported by the Van Berchem Foundation.

## **PRINCIPLE MONUMENTS**



### **I-The Fortified Camp (The CASTRUM) An Almost Fortified Square Fortress**

The fortress of Kastron Mefaa, built at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. or the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. century A.D. appears as a large quadrilateral of 158m by 139m, surrounded by a solid wall 2m thick, reinforced by quadrangular towers, and two main gates ,one in the north, while the other one in the south. The walls, of cyclopean size , are made of large undressed blocks of stone, without any mortar and wedged with stones of smaller size. .On the inside there is a huge amount of stones out of which arise several arches, lintels and small columns decorated with crosses. At the south-east corner a deepening of the rubble probably indicates the presence of a reservoir .Because the city had no springs ,several cisterns are to be seen in the area outside and inside the ruins.

At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. century a wing of cavalry was stationed there. After the demilitarization of the campus during the 5<sup>th</sup>. century settlement remained within the enclosure .Then the internal fortress organization ,originally structured around two orthogonal ways ,was gradually modified by constructions built above courtyards and streets. Out of the four churches within the enclosure, (Twin churches) have been excavated. There are two other excavated spots: the North gate and the South gate areas.

#### **A- Walls ,Interior and Gates of the Castrum**

The top courses of the fortifications are lost. Nowhere has the original height of the wall been preserved. No restoration work was done on the whole enclosure excepted limited work by the Swiss team near the Twin Churches.

The excavations of the North gate were conducted by Swiss mission in the years 1991 and 1992. Excavations have exposed the passage and the guard rooms. Consolidation of walls has taken place in the form of re-pointing. The debris around the outside walls hide large parts of the external ramparts. Earth mixed with architectural fragments and blocks are visible among the debris. The gate provides access to a street which is now completely blocked with ancient collapse (2-5 meters of depth).

That street should be the normal access to the Twin Churches complex.

This structure is different from the North gate, as there is a small poster gate to the left of it, and a less clear use of the towers controlling access to the castrum. It is clear from the excavation that that gate didn't exist in the initial setting. There has been some consolidation of this structure, but the site needs considerable conservation efforts would the intention be to open it to the public.

## **B-The Twin Churches**

Inside the castrum explorers have identified four ecclesiastical buildings. The twin churches built against the eastern wall of the castrum have been excavated by the archaeologists of the Max van Berchem Foundation, starting in 1988.

### **1 = The Church of the Rivers (A.D.578/79 or 593/94):**

The Northern of the Twin churches

Excavated by the Swiss archaeological mission: Max van Berchem Foundation, directed by Jacques Bujard). Date of excavations: 1988, 1989, 1990. Superficies: 125 square meter. Earliest of the twin churches excavated by the Swiss mission members. The church has a mono apse with three naves separated by two rows of three arches, and a raised presbyterium, limited by chancel and flanked by two small rectangular chambers closed with doors. Three doors (one by nave) gave entrance through the western wall (from a kind of << narthex >>). Another door in the north wall, gives access into a small rectangular chamber (<< sacristy >> ?) covered by two arches. In later times two of the west doors were blocked and benches built along the wall, inside the church.

#### **Walls:**

They are of the common double sides of local uncut stones from different sizes and nature with medium filling of earth. Only the inner wall of the apse was built of well dressed and cut limestone blocks of pseudo



isodome aspect. The first row of voussoirs of the < cul de tour >> is still in situ, over a small cornice crowning the apse wall.

The apse was partially over cut through the inner side of the city wall. The walls are quite well preserved sometime over three meters high. All of them have been restored by the Swiss mission members.

**Floor:**

All the church was paved with colored mosaics, half of which are still in situ. under 10 to 20 cm. of dump and sand protection.

The semicircular area in the apse in the presbytery of the northern church of the complex was decorated with a field of flowers and two lambs facing the altar. The later construction of a fixed altar caused the destruction of the heads of the two animals. Three trees decorated the rectangular area in front of the altar with figures that have been disfigured by iconoclasts. A man seated on a stool with a flower in his hand can be identified in the first figure to the right. A second figure was harvesting fruit from the tree on the left side beside which a sheep was grazing. The empty area between the chancel screen and the panel was filled with geometrical motifs on the sides, with two pair of partridges facing a bunch of grapes, as well as a pair of peacocks on the west side.

Winged animals facing bunches of flowers decorated the nave along the step of the chancel screen, as in the church of Bishop Sergius. The central carpet was decorated with acanthus scrolls starting with a sea animal in the first row to the east, like the Abyss in the church of Bishop Sergius. The outer frame was decorated with scrolls of vine shoots coming out from the jars held by the four Rivers in the corners. An elongated jar on a pedestal was represented in the central scroll of the east side. Although iconoclasts disfigured the animals motifs of the composition, some intact figures remain, like the River in the southwest corner with a reed in his right hand, followed by a harnessed horse, and a bear-trainer with beard and moustache who held the bear by a rope. In the acanthus scrolls of the carpet one can see the portrait of the same benefactors depicted in the mosaic floor of the Bishop Sergius church. Among the geometrical motifs with which the aisles and the intercolumnar spaces were decorated, was a remarkable medallion with a winged(?) that decorated the area in front of the northern sacristy. The similarity of style and of the decorative program of its mosaic floor with that of the church Bishop Sergius leads to the assumption that the church was mosaiced by the same team of mosaicists of working at the time of Bishop Sergius at Um er-Rasas. Therefore it is proposed to choose AD 593/4 as the 12<sup>th</sup>.indiction year given by the inscription near the entrance of the church.

## Dating:

The mosaic is dated to 593-594 A.D.. The church was probably built half a century earlier.

## 2= Church of the Palm Tree:

The Southern of the Twin Churches

Excavated by a Swiss archaeological Mission, Max van Berchem Foundation (Jacques Bujard) .Date of excavations:1988, 1989, 1990 .Superficies 220 square meter. Located Inside the Castrum.It is the southern of the twin churches which have been excavated by the Swiss mission. This church was the latest **built. It has a mono apse with** three naves separated by two rows of three arches. It has a raised presbyterium and limited by chancel and flanked by two small rectangular chambers closed with doors (in the original state, these chambers were completely open to the naves). Three doors (one by nave) gave entrance through the western wall (from a kind of << narthex>). Two other doors are visible in the south wall, the one situated in the east opening into a small rectangular chamber covered by two arches. The apse partially cut off from the inside side of the city wall.

## The Walls

They are of the common double side of local uncut stones from different sizes and nature with medium filling of earth. The inside wall of the apse is of better quality, the use of stones being more regular, of quite regular shape and put on horizontal courses. Benches were found along the north and south wall. Two arched lintels found during the excavations prove that two small windows existed over triumphal arch. Traces of plaster still subsist on the different walls.

## **II- THE NORTHERN SETTLEMENT AREA ( 300x200m) :**

It consists of collapsed structures, where four areas have been excavated including:

### **A--The Ecclesiastical Complex : Four Churches**

=====

On the northeastern edge of the ruins of the Settlement a large and interconnected liturgical complex with four churches was identified. This included the two churches with mosaics: the church of Saint Stephen to the east and the church of Bishop Sergius to the north. The third church is called the courtyard church ,and the fourth is the Aedicula church ,both were paved .

#### **1-: The Church of Bishop Sergius**

The church was built in A.D.586. as a basilica with an apse and elevated gamma presbytery and two steps higher than the nave .It had an altar which shows two main phases of construction . It had the ambo in the nave on the southern corner of the presbyterium. In the presbytery we find the bench for the clergy (the synthronon) on the interior of the apse, with a service room to the north. Through the main entrance ,one could enter a room with mosaics which was between the baptistry to the north, and a funerary chapel ,to the south. The cruciform basin of the baptistry was covered with a waterproof reddish plaster ,but was badly damaged in a secondary reuse of the room .Two barrel-vaulted tombs in the funeral chapel continued eastward under the presbytery of the Courtyard Church.

The church is part of a bigger ecclesiastical complex comprising four churches. According to the dedicatory Greek inscription in a medallion which is between two lambs in front of the altar, this northern (lower) church was built and mosaicised in the year 587, at the time of Bishop Sergius of Madaba.A Greek inscription between two lambs and two trees is visible in the presbytery of the church.

.The two lambs are intact ,but iconoclasts had destroyed all the other rich figurative motifs of the main nave except for a personification of a Season which had been protected by the stone base of the pulpit(a later addition to the church)

Originally the rich program consisted of a frame featuring acanthus scrolls with scenes of hunting, fishing and wine making. Within the frame ,the central carpet included two classical personification :the Abyss(or Sea) and the Earth. Between these were portraits and scenes from the lives of the benefactors of the church with their name.Outside the main entrance to the west was the baptistry chapel of the complex and a funerary chapel, together with a paved church on a higher level, with a polygonal apse.

## **2-: The Church of Saint Stephen:**

The church was built as a basilica with an apse and elevated gamma presbytery and two steps higher than the nave .It had an altar which shows two main phases of construction. In the presbytery of the church of St.Stephen ,with the altar there are the bases of the ciborium and two side rooms. It had the ambo in the nave on the southern corner of the presbyterium.

The Church of Saint Stephen is one metre higher than the Church of Bishop Sergius. A stairway connected them. From the Greek inscription on both sides of the altar we are informed that the mosaicist Staurachios Ezbontinos (from Esbounta-Esbous:of Hesban) and his colleague Euremios paved the presbytery in March 756, at the time of Bishop Job.

The work was completed in October 785, at the time of Bishop Sergius II in honor of Saint Stephen by care of the deacon John, who was "chief of the Mefaaites and econom" and with the collaboration of all the people of Kastron Mefaa "who love Christ".

The other inscriptions which accompany the geometrical patterns of the mosaic provide the names of the benefactors, among them Kayoum, priest and monk of Pisgah-Mount Nebo. Since the portraits and the scenes of hunting, agriculture and pastoral life once depicted in the mosaics were disfigured by iconoclasts, the major interest of this mosaic is the double geographical frame and the place names which accompany the city plans. Between the intercolumnar spaces were inserted eight Palestinian cities

on the north: The Holy City (of Jerusalem), Neapolis-Nablus, Sebastis-Sebastia, Cesarea, Diospolis-Lidda, Eleutheropolis-Beit Gibrin, Askalon, and Gaza; and seven Jordanian localities on the south: the double panel of Kastron Mefaa-Umm er-Rasas, Philadelphia-Amman, Madaba, Esbounta-Hesban, Belemounta-Ma'in, AreopolisRabbah, and Charachmouba-Kerak. Two Jordanian cities were added in the naves along with the portraits of the benefactors: Diblaton, on the north, and Limbon-Libb, on the south. The inner geographical frame of the carpet is decorated as a river stream with fish, birds, and water flowers. Floating among them are boats and boys fishing or hunting. The continuous scene is interrupted by ten city plans of localities of the Nile Delta: Alexandria, Kasion, Thenesos, Tamiathis-Damietta, Panau, Pelousion, Antinaou, Eraklion, Kynopolis and Pseudostomon.

The mosaic of Saint Stephen provides further evidence of the existence of an organized Christian community in the diocese of Madaba at the end of the 8th Century, an urban community with obvious artistic vitality.

The richness of the inscriptions and the quality of the motifs of the mosaic pavement of the church of Saint Stephen make it one of the most important archaeological monuments of Jordan. In this mosaic of the Umayyad period, we find a combination of many of the themes which had become progressively more popular in the earlier mosaics of Jordan: portraits of benefactors, hunting and pastoral scenes, scenes of a daily life, architectural representations, birds and flowers which fill the elaborate geometric patterns, and inscriptions.

### **3 - :The church of the Courtyard**

: A Small Church

Between the Church of Bishop Sergius and the Church of Saint Stephen, an original paved courtyard was changed into a church with the addition of an apse on the western wall. Two barrel-vaulted tombs in the funeral chapel of the Church of Bishop Sergius continued eastward under the presbytery of the courtyard Church. This might explain the liturgical purpose of this new church which has its apse oriented to the west. The funerary character of the church is emphasized by the multiple tombs below the slabs inside the church itself. In the tombs, several women were buried, some of them wearing bracelets, rings and necklaces with bronze crosses.

Its plan can be regarded as with three naves (separated by two lines of

two arches each) if it is admitted that the southern side of the church of the Bishop Sergius could constitute his northern side. The apse presents a raised prebyterium originally provided with a chancel.

The access to this building was done by two doors bored in the medium of the southern wall and by the close churches. It is more probable than it served as " place of distribution " for the Churches of St.Stephen and of Bishop Sergius,of which it was separate only by two arches between which a chancel was established.

### **Walls:**

Very heterogeneous, the building being inserted inside various pre-existent structures. The walls are of the general type with two irregular facings of blocks of various sizes and natures separated with an earth filling. Only the quality of construction varies from one wall to another. They were originally covered with lime plaster more or less thick of which it remains important fragments in situ.

**Floor:** Was entirely covered with rectangular blue/grey "gypsum" flagstones,including for presbyterium..

## **4- : The Church of Aedicula:**

The church with a polygonal apse in the western sector is called the church of the Aedicula because of a small niche on the southern wall. It was built in the sixth century A.D. on a higher level than the other churches. It is a paved church in the southwestern sector. It was somewhat isolated from the other three churches, and had its own entrance on the southwest corner of the complex. The courtyard with the cistern north of the Aedicula Church was reached from the interior of the town through a tunnel which passed below the presbytery of the church. The church had a double door on the façade and another door in the southern wall.

A trench was opened in the slab-paved floor of the nave to check the absolute date of the building since it seemed more ancient than other edifices in the complex. Through a round shaft, a tomb one meter below covered with slabs was reached. Inside the tomb, with the skeletons of the deceased, there was a straw basket still filled with glass vessels and a cylindrical bone object covered by two strips of metal on the edges; inserted into it was a metal object similar to a small spoon which was used by women for the application of kohl(eye liner).One of the round

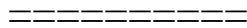
vessels still contained a black liquid ,possibly the remnants of an unguent .On the east side of the tomb ,among the bones, were two elongated glass bottles and a wooden box ,all probably part of womens' cosmetic ensembles. The round box which was most exciting find ,was covered by a thin layer of material which had been painted with geometric motifs and a series of winged animals.

## **ANALYSIS**

It is stylistically interesting to examine the four contemporaneous pavements of Um er-Rasas, where at least two teams of mosaicists at work could be detected .The team responsible for decorating the church of the Lions was particularly skillful in rendering of the animals and trees in their geometric setting .The other team was responsible for the decoration both of the church of Bishop Sergius and the church of the Rivers where the same patterns were used with the same rendering of design and colour. On the basis of this identity, the 12<sup>th</sup>.indiction year , still readable in the destroyed dedicatory inscription near the door of the church of the Rivers ,can be fixed to the year 578/79 or 593/94 , at the time of Bishop Sergius .To them we can add the mosaic of the church of the Priest Wa'il, more naïve and inaccurate ,but using the same technique in rendering colour.

Of historical and artistic importance is the city plan of *Kastron Mefaa* that decorates the northern intercolumnar space of the church of the Lions. Thanks to this discovery, this plan could be compared with that of the same city found in the church of Saint Stephen and dated to the Umayyad period. The plan of *Kastron Mefaa* in the church of Saint Stephen is more schematic compared to this new plan. Here could be seen clearly the intention of the mosaicists to depict *Kastron Mefaa* in its urban identity ,with the walled castrum and the northern quarter outside the walls. A church and a smaller building of an unidentified nature are depicted inside the castrum. The outer quarter also is walled ,like the town, and is united to it by a wall of a small size .Four churches are depicted inside the perimeter of the quarter, where ,as the plan of Saint Stephen, an open space with a column raised on a step platform was depicted .Here , a cross is added to the capital on the top of the column. Given the realistic rendering of the city, it should be imagined a real column standing in the middle of the ruins, the nature of which is still unknown.

## B- OTHER CHURCHES



### **1:- Church of the Lions:**

The Church of the Lions lies to the south of the St. Stephen's. A similar plan to that discovered in Saint Stephen Church of Kastron Meffa was later discovered in the inter-columnar space of the Church of the Lions . Thanks to that discovery, we are able to compare two plans of the same city .The plans were made two centuries apart. The plan of Kastron Mefaa in the church of Saint Stephen is more schematic when compared to the other plan .In the church of the Lions we can see clearly the identification of the mosaicists to depict Kastron Mefaa with an urban identity .It shows the walled castrum and the northern quarter outside the walls. A church and a smaller building of unidentified nature are depicted inside the castrum. The outer quarter ,too ,is walled, as is the town, and the two parts of the town are united by a wall of minor dimensions.

In 1989-90 the name of Bishop Sergius could be read again in the mosaic floor of the church of the Lions in the outer quarter of the depicted city plan. The eighth indiction year given together with the name of Bishop Sergius in the inscription in the main nave, enables to choose the year 588/89 for this outstanding work of the mosaicists of the city.

The complex of the church of the Lions consists of the church and a series of annex rooms and courtyards. The complex is well delimited to the north, west and south by streets, and to the east by a courtyard. Tombs were found outside of the entrance of the Church. They are built structures covered with slabs.

### **Plan:**

The church is the largest one actually discovered in Umm ar-Rassas. It is also the only one to possess three apses. The two lateral small apses, ornamented with small semi circular niches were vaulted with ( cul de four ); the first rows of voussoirs still in situ on each of them. Two rows of five arches each divided the internal space in three naves. The collapsed north group had been left in situ. The raised central presbyterium was well preserved with, exceptionally in situ, the steps leading to the ambo, the base of which was found at its original position. The main entrance was in the middle of the west wall. In the same wall a second door open on a closed small room covered by a stone flat roof supported by two arches. Two other doors, still unexcavated, are visible



in the northern wall. The Southwest corner of the building is getting place to a small staircase.

### **Walls**

As for all the others churches, the walls are made of two rows have simply undressed blocks of different sizes with internal filling of earth and chip stones. The pillars display regular brickwork even if the blocks are cut less accurately. Higher up the blocks become progressively smaller and less uniform. The main apse is made of large roughly hewn summarily blocks, quite in regular rows, with intervals filled with chip stones. The northern wall (quite unexcavated but shocked by the collapse of the arches) and, at a smaller scale, the southern one, do not **appear to** offer sufficient guarantees from a static point of view. The loss of cohesion is at the origin of general disjoints of the stone elements and to some edge break up.

### **Floor:**

The whole church was paved with polychrome mosaics which suffered iconoclasm and ancient destruction (1/3 of the pavement is missing )Even that, these mosaics are remarkable for the quality of the representation of the two lions which gave the name to the church, and, most of all, by the representation of *Kastron Mefaa*, much more realistic than the one of St Stephen.

## **2:- The Church of the Priest Wa'il**

The small church was part of a larger ecclesiastical complex ,not yet explored, outside the northwest corner of the walled castrum .It was ,then excavated and brought to light in 1990-91. A door in the eastern wall of the south aisle joined it with the main church to the east. The church was built and mosaiced in the year 586 A.D. as stated in the dedicatory Greek inscription in the central carpet : at the time of the most pious Bishop Sergius, was built and completed this holy temple by care of the priest Wa'il (Walesos,in Greek0,in the month of Dios of the fifth indication of the year 481(A.D.586).This is the priest and his servant

The western section of the mosaic floor was partially repaired with white tesserae independent of the iconoclastic damage of the figures .The presbytery was decorated with a composition of intersecting and adjacent octagons, forming squares and oblong hexagons in the curb of the apse .The area of the chancel protruding into the nave was decorated with a rectangular panel closed in a polychrome undulating ribbon. Three zebus were figured facing a thick clump of acanthus leaves in the center from which sprang vine shoots with grapes and tendrils.

The central carpet in the nave was enclosed in a narrow frame with a continuous series of white medallions on a black background, filled with jars on the corners, flowers, isolated fruits, a cage, and birds that have been disfigured. A free composition on different layers is represented in the carpet. As written in the inscription, in the first east scene was portrayed the priest Wa'il standing with his arms extended to receive a small branch from a figure (his servant?) seated on the back of a stag. Two other figures holding a stick were portrayed on the opposite side. It followed a travel scene with a red carriage drawn by a horse proceeding among highly stylized flowers. In the third scene several hounds pursued an unidentified beast. In the bottom scene there remains part of a big-game chase with a horseman spearing a wild beast which was pursued by a dog, while a second horseman followed behind.

In the east intercolumnar space of the southern row, was portrayed a standing figure east, dressed in a red mantle with a whip in his hand. On the opposite intercolumnar spaces there was a sea monster with a twisted body, followed by a Nilotic scene with two boats floating on the water with fish and aquatic flowers. The naked fisherman with a hat is the only figure in the whole composition spared by the iconoclasts. In the fourth intercolumnar space the mosaicists depicted four busts of half-naked women holding cornucopias in their left arms, from which water poured out, next to a high building with a red roof, an open door, and three towers with open windows, and smaller houses. Of the fourth woman, only part of the elbow is left.

The two side aisles of the church were decorated with a continuous series of acanthus scrolls filled with living motifs, like sheep, goats, a stag, and a horseman. The eastern end of both aisles was decorated with an isolated square panel with a pomegranate tree on the south, and a palm tree on the north.

### **3:-The Church of the Tabula**

Located in the western sector of the urban quarter, outside the north-west corner of the walled castrum. Work was continued on the main church of the ecclesiastical complex of which the small church of Priest Wa'il was part. The small church has been excavated in 1990-1991.

This large church with two service rooms on both sides of the apse, was paved with a stone floor. A tabula anasta with a Greek inscription has been added in the stone floor of the presbyterium inside the central entrance to the sanctuary. Of the inscription only some letters were still visible. The raised presbyterium has been closed by a stone

chancel screen partly preserved on the sides .The original stone slabs on the west side had been later removed and replaced by oil shale slabs of which only fragments remained scattered among the debris. One fragment was decorated with a cross ,in relief .Among the fallen stones of the roof the upper part of two small stone columns have been found decorated with crosses.

The Church is classical with three naves separated by two rows of four arches .The central nave is closed, to the east, by a raised apse presbyterium, the two side aisles by small chambers of rectangular shape and covered by an arch, both still in situ The Southern chamber is largely open to the nave .A door in the middle of the eastern wall gives access to outside or unexcavated annexes .The previous entrance was through a door opened in the middle of the south wall on the same wall, a second door gave access to the connected small rooms. A door in the western wall connected directly that church to the church of Priest Wa'il .Another one, in the northern wall, was opening to same unexcavated dependencies .On the northern wall again a second door opened in a small-unexcavated chamber of a square tower. That passage was covered with a small arch supporting a staircase leading to the first floor door entrance of the tower

The mouth of a cistern is visible in the central nave, near the western wall .Three water channels bring water from the roofs to it.The southern nave was reused in late antiquity as dwelling .The chancels of this church are left in situ .The south chancels are standing .They were cut from coquina limestone

The church was primitively paved with mosaics ,which were replaced by local alabaster slab floor except in the presbyterium .Large parts of it were removed during excavation .The church is earlier than the church of Priest Wa'il,dated to AD 586.

It is expected that all the church will be sheltered, the chancel and ambo anastyle (after implementation of a stone consolidation process ), the mosaics and stone floor presented after restoration.

#### **4:-The Church of Saint Paul**

The continuation of the research in the urban sector between St. Stephen complex on the northern edge of the ruins and the walls of the Kastrom to the South has brought to light two more ecclesiastical complexes. The southern one rotates around the Church of the Lions which had a splendid mosaic floor by the mosaicists of Madaba. The central ecclesiastical complex is made up of the Peacocks Church and a church which was brought to light and called as the Church of St. Paul, a name read in an

invocation to the Apostle incised on a roof tile: "*Saint Paul and Germanus save the Blues and Papiona Son of George the lector*". Alas the confirmation of the Church's name could not be found in the inscriptions in the mosaic floor. It is interesting to note that quite a number of tiles had various incisions amongst which the anonymous craftsman who enjoyed himself engraving a peacock, a snake and a terrified girl who holds her left hand raised up while keeping the right one on her hip.

The church was buried under a heap of rubble which some points reached higher than three metres. On this rested, in a northerly direction, the countless stones of the aligned fallen arches and those of the moulded ashlar of the calotte of the apse in the presbytery area

### **The Building**

Once the stones of the arches were removed it was found out that part of the church, when still standing and after being abandoned, was used as a dwelling place. To do this, the people who occupied these spaces, adapted two distinct areas in the northern nave and another one in the southern. It was later that the roof, covered with stone slabs on the lateral naves and tiles on the central nave, gave in falling on the completely abandoned area. The pottery sherds collected go back to after the eighth century as they are similar to those which were under the debris of Saint Stephen and the Church of the Lions. There came to light also some "Bedouin" pottery, characterised by its roughness and dark clay which we identified here at Umm al Rasas. This belonged to the families who reoccupied the edifices after their abandonment by the original population. From the asiles strewn in the north-west corner of the church we can say that another fireplace was used here for a long period of time. In the adaptation of the south-west area as a dwelling place, having its entrance in the southern wall, a long stone lintel was used upside down as part of the western wall. This lintel is decorated with a central cross flanked by two handled vases and two medallions with a whirling motif. Among the fallen rubble, directly on the mosaic floor, the marble lid of a small reliquary was found.

### **Roofing doorways and niches**

The roof of the single-apsed basilica was supported by two series of wide arches. The lateral naves were covered by long stone slabs (sometimes measuring over two metres) of fossiliferous limestone extracted from the local quarries. The building had three doors on the southern wall. The easternmost one led to a room which had a slit window. A portico

supported by a central arch stood in front of the other two external doors. The church had another door in the facade. This was out of the central axis, rather to the south and led to two rooms, one of which had a northern door. The central door on the southern wall had its lintel still in place. The other lintels, all decorated by crosses contained in circles or squares, were found near the doors. The church also had a slit window in the western corner of the northern wall.

On the eastern end of the two naves a step delimited a small space which is characterised by a niche with stone or plaster jutting moulding on the eastern walls. Most probably both spaces were covered by a barrel-vault or by a calotte. Some ashlar from the aforementioned elements remained in situ in the Southern nave while in the northern one they were found among the debris. Worth noting are some holes found on the splay of the apse which probably are to be put in relation to a jutting edifice of plaster of which were recovered some elements from among the debris of the fallen stones. Among the moulded elements are to be listed the capitals of the two side pillars of the semi-dome of the central apse.

### **The mosaic floor**

The general mosaic plan can be outlined together with its figurative details in the central nave notwithstanding the mutilation procured by the iconoclasts and the damage sustained.

The presbytery area is surrounded by a ribbon band and is decorated by a field of small flowers on a white background. An amphora between two facing birds and two bulls facing a fruit laden tree were inserted with the former towards the apse splay while the latter towards the balustrade. A one line inscription separated the field of flowers from the balustrade. Of this only the beginning introduced by a cross and the end survived. A small panel with a geometric motif was inserted between the ribbon and the northern side of the balustrade.

The mosaic plan of the central nave was divided in three autonomous panels with an autonomous alignment in respect to the alignment of the presbytery step which results deviated in some degrees towards the south.

### **Dating the mosaics:**

The inscriptions lack the name of the bishop and the year when the mosaic was completed. In view of this dating could be based on stylistic criteria. The mosaic fits well among the works carried out in the City and in the diocese of Madaba at the time of bishop Sergius. The "twelfth indiction" which can be read in the inscription along the step of the

presbytery takes us to the years 578 or 593. In the context of the other mosaics of Kastron Mefa'a, the former date is preferred.

### **5:-The Chapel of the Peacocks:**

Excavated in 1992. Together with the church of St.Paul this chapel compose a central ecclesiastical complex between the St.Stephen Complex in the north and the Castrum in the south.The one apsed chapel has been roofed with a series of five arches with long beams.The ecclesiastical structure has been collapsed by an earthquake during the early Abbassid period. The chapel had the apsed presbyterium raised of one step with the chancel screen dividing it from the main hall. The stone base of the altar with four sockets for the columnets was still in situ against the round wall of the apse. A cupboard was opened on the south wall of the apse. Its walls appear to be of the common type with double irregular lines and internal pocket. Large roughly cut blocks alternate with layers of small size stones laid in irregular manner. Most of the pieces from the roofing were found during the excavation: capitals, pieces of the arches, covering slabs... from which an anastylosis will be possible. The single apse is constructed as usual from more compact and regular brickwork, on site more or less similar blocks.

The floor of the chapel has been paved with mosaics .The central carpet of the mosaics has been removed in antiquity before the collapse of the chapel. Geographical motifs decorated the intercolumnar panels .The chapel had a main door on the west façade and two other doors on the north wall.

## **III - The North Tower Complex**

=====

The North Tower complex ,which is located at a distance of 1.5 km.from the Castrum, includes a high standing Stylite tower 13m.high , a small three naves church with simple plastered floors with annexed premises and different dwellings around: a wine Press cisterns, ancient quarries, two story building... Excavation have targeted the small church

near the standing tower, and areas around it. Conservation work has been conducted on the two-story building north to the tower, and is currently in progress on the church (directed by the Madaba office of the Department of Antiquities).

The most important structure in the remote northern side of the open quarter stands as the most outstanding and important example of its own type at that period of the early Christianity is the Stylite tower. As it is still standing and well preserved in a unique condition of architecture with its full height (of 15 metres high) and domed room on the summit, it is considered as the most indicative example of that type of solid structures.

### **1:- The Stylite Tower**

Um er-Rasas stands as the first site in Jordan, and it is said in the world that had an almost complete and intact solidly stone constructed, 13 meters high, tower that has served as a meditating platform for stylite monks, ascetics who lived on top of pillars seeking solitude. This tower was built in the middle of a square courtyard, beside huge water cisterns hewn in the rock in the north of the ruins, in the Byzantine period. It had no stairway but had a domed room at the top with a door opening on its southern side, facing a church located to the south of the tower. A channel ran from top to bottom on the inside of the tower's wall. It is expected that this channel had been used as a toilet. The discovery of a church, used in Byzantine and early Islamic periods, in the south direction at the base of the tower in 1987 supported that functional view, that this is a Stylite tower—a hypothesis proposed by C. Wilson in the nineteenth century. This Stylite tower is shown, as a column, within a courtyard relating a church with three hanging lamps depicted in the mosaics of Saint Stephen's church. A Stylite tower is epigraphically mentioned at the mosaic inscriptions of the church of Al-Mukhayat, 40 km. north west of Um er-Rasas. The Stylite tower is mentioned as located in the diocese of Madaba region, of which Mefaa was a part. And since no other tower has been discovered in Madaba region or even in all of Jordan, that epigraphic mention should have referred to tower of Mefaa (Um er-Rasas).

**Stylite** (Grk.: stylos, pillar)

In the early Church a solitary who lived on top of the a pillar .Their pillars would vary in height, and the platforms ,sometimes made more habitable by a small hut, were generally provided with a parapet against which the Stylite would lean for his scanty sleep. Food was usually supplied by disciples or admirers. Apart from prayer, Stylites gave much time to spiritual instruction ,to reconciling enemies ,and often to theological controversies. They considered St.Simeon Stylites their founder .There are mentioned instances of such ascetics from the 5<sup>th</sup>. cent. to the 10<sup>th</sup>. cents They flourished esp. in Syria, Mesopotamia ,Egypt ,and Greece .But as an architectural intact evidence of this type of pillars (Stylites) the one in Um er-Rasas is considered as the first known example.

Monasticism had become an important and well-developed movement within the church, and its power was increased and extended by the remarkable examples of men like Simeon.

There are still extensive remains of the church and monastery that were built around his pillar (modern Qal'at Sim'an). He is not to be confused with his 6<sup>th</sup>. Cent. Namesake ,also a stylite, who took up residence on Mons Admirabilis ,just to the west of Antioch .Feast day,1 Sept. in the E.,5<sup>th</sup>.Jan in the west.

### **Simeon (Symeon)Stylites (AD.408-459).**

It was during this time that Simeon ,the first and most famous of the pillar saints, was winning the veneration for his extreme self mortification ,which gave him such enormous influence not only in the vicinity of Antioch which claimed him as its own, but through the empire ,and made him a familiar figure in later times .Monasticism had become an important and well-developed movement within the church, and its power was increased and extended by the remarkable examples of men like Simeon.

Saint Simeon Stylite the first of the stylites or pillar ascetics was born on the Syrian border of Cilicia in 389 Or 390. After some time as a monk in the monastery of Eusebona(at Tell 'Ada, between Antioch and Aleppo),he went as a young man in AD 410 or 412,to Telanissos,about thirty miles east of Antioch,in the mountains, bordering the road to Berea which was not far.There he began his ascetic training and commenced his stylite existence about AD.417. . Here ,after several years of anchoretic life ,he mounted a pillar ,at first low ,but gradually



increased to a height of sixty feet high ;he lived on the top of it until his death in AD.459,occupied in adoration and intercession.

This novel austerity attracted to him a continuous stream of pilgrims from all over the Christian world , and was widely imitated .Many citizens of Antioch ,both officials and private persons of all ranks made the journey to saint's column to consult him,Or ask for his prayers or receive his blessings .Many stories of healing or aid in cases of evil were recorded. Both by personal intercourse and by correspondence, Simeon exercised considerable influence upon the world of his time ,converting pagans, awakening the careless, reconciling enemies ,and urging the cause of Chalcedonian orthodoxy .There are still extensive remains of the church and monastery that were built around his pillar (modern Qal'at Sim'an). He is not to be confused with his 6<sup>th</sup>. Cent. Namesake ,also a stylite,who took up residence on Mons Admirabilis ,just to the west of Antioch .Feast day,1 Sept. in the E.,5<sup>th</sup>.Jan in the west.

## **2:-The Church of the tower:**

A small three naves church with simple plastered floor with annexed premises and different dwellings around. Being excavated in 2001 by the Department of Antiquities no mosaics were found to form any part of its floor .What was found consisted of compacted white plaster. The plan of the church was created as a small basilica with one apse, oriented East-West .It has three small naves separated by two rows of two arches. Central nave with apse and elevated presbyterium flanked by small rectangular chambers completely open on the lateral naves. Two out of three doors in the north wall were opening to the inside large enclosure surrounding the tower. The third one gave access to an annex. Remains of a door(which was blocked during antiquity) in the axis of the western wall ,are still visible.

A vertical shaft ,two meters deep, empty burial was found in the middle of the church .About one meter of the height of its walls existed. The walls have been constructed with roughly trimmed local limestone blocks .The falling remains of long slabs show that the arches have been supporting its roof. Pottery collected date to Byzantine and Umayyad periods.

### **3:-AREA AROUND THE TOWER**

#### **a. A Square Building:**

To the North of the Stylite tower there exists a square of two storey building built with trimmed local limestone blocks .An exterior set of steps climb to its upper floor on the eastern side. Another set of steps merge from its interior façade of its western wall .These steps possibly climbed to a another missing floor or to the missing roof of the second floor. Even the function of this building is not quite understood but possibly it was used as a watching post constructed in that remote direction from the main Southern mainquarte of the town of Mefaa to control the Reservoirs and water tanks and the agricultural fields and even to give a kind of protection to the semi isolated Stylite and to the adjacent church .

There is a need for registration and study of the existing remains before implementing any restoration work.

### **IV- The Ancient Agricultural Fields**

Created in antiquity by terracing the wadis (valleys)flowing towards the North, North-east and North -west of the castrum. This unit comprises two groups of buildings The first is a watch tower and a small church with associated quarries and cisterns, and the second is a building whose function is still undetermined, with an associated cistern

Cultivated terraces were built by damming the bottom of local wadis with low terrace walls. The bulk of the terrace in fill consists of colluvium composed of angular gravel in a matrix of fine sandy silt. In most cases the colluvium is topped by a 30 cm thick cover of fine Sander silt. The colluvium is very similar to the dirt originating from the excavations.

This dirt could be used to restore the cultivated terraces providing a cover of fine material on top of the dirt layer is applied, after comprehensive study and documentation of the whole system and identical reconstruction of the ancient walls..

Restoration of such structures(terraces) will be easy while simultaneously being a good solution for recycling the debris found during the excavations: rubbish stones could be used to rebuilt the walls and the earth to fill back the fields. Under the condition to keep their ancient configuration and utilization this action will:

- 1- illustrate tourists' understanding of an antique village's agro -economy in arid lands,.
- 2) improve site cleaning and avoid summer dry fallow land fires,

In relation to the antique fields, groups of ruined buildings are visible. Two of them are presently being excavated by Madaba Office of the Department of Antiquities (May-June 2001). The first is a tower. or guard post, with an internal bottled shaped cistern and a nice 1,60m large circular stone as door lock, associated with a church (?) (it may be an antique: oil press, quarries, and at least one large open-air rectangular cistern. The function of the second building is still unknown .A cistern still in use is associated with the latter. Most of the fields are in the protected area (outside the two sanctuaries), hut several also lie down beyond its boundary, especially to the west and north-west of the castrum.

## **V-The Reservoirs and Cisterns**

They are of two groups ,the one group that surround the entire site and include bell shaped rock-cut cisterns, a large rock cut rectangular open-air basin, several large rectangular underground water tanks covered with arches and slabs and large debris mounds created by accumulation of the cisterns' silt removed from them, and of the towns refuses.

The other group is that is located at the Stylite complex area. These ones are huge reservoirs rectangularly hewn in the bed rock.

## **Material of Dating:**

=====

### **History of Development**

#### **A-Before Byzantine Era**

The material evidence collected in the complex during the archaeological campaigns fits with the historical data which comes to us in the written sources regarding Mefaa.

There was an occupation in the outer quarter of Kastron Mefaa beginning in the Iron II period ;to that era belongs the basalt column base ,a scarab and a group of pottery sherds found below the Chapel of the Column.

In the Late Roman period,3<sup>rd</sup>.to 4<sup>th</sup>.centuries A.D. there may have been an official building at the site indicated by a Latin inscription found in the eastern courtyard of the Church of Saint Stephen; from that same period there are also Thamudic and Nabataean inscriptions reused in the eastern wall of the same church and of the Church of Bishop Sergius, a sculptured ram, part of a lintel found reused in the apse of the Courtyard Church, and coins ,as well as other reused architectural elements.

Despite their extremely fragmentary state ,the many sculptured liturgical furnishings such as altars ,reliquaries ,chancel screens, small pillars, columns and capitals, contribute significantly to the history of the complex. The original liturgical furnishings were removed after the iconoclastic crisis. Several fragments bear evidence of the removal of sculpted figurative motifs. These were replaced by a second group of furnishings carved in oil shale with abstract motifs characteristic of the range of designs used by the local tradition.

The dating of A.D.756 for the upper mosaic pavement that decorates the presbyterium of the church of Saint Stephen gives an absolute chronological date which is fundamental for establishing our knowledge of the material culture of the early Arabic period .Since the pavement gives evidence of numerous vicissitudes before the building was abandoned, we propose a ninth century date for the pottery that is associated with the last phases of life in this sector of the city.

#### **B- The Byzantine and Later Era**

The first Byzantine building built in the area can be identified in the structures unearthed below the Church of Saint Stephen. In the second half of the sixth century(A.D.587), the Church of Bishop Sergius was built and paved with mosaics. To the same period can be dated the construction of the Church of Aedicula.

The complex underwent major changes in the Umayyad period ,and the area in front of it was restructured with the construction of a baptistery to the north and a funerary chapel to the south. Almost certainly the Church of the Courtyard was built in concomitant to the construction of the Church of Saint Stephen(8<sup>th</sup>.century A.D.),and served as between the outside and the Church of Bishop Sergius, from which it was separated by a simple balustrade in plutei of bituminous schist rather than a wall. The construction of the Chapel of the Column is dated to the final phase of the Umayyad period. In the year A.D.756,the mosaic floor of the presbytery inside the Church of Saint Stephen was laid anew.

One of the main questions raised by this astonishing discovery is : when was the Complex of Saint Stephen at Um er-Rasas abandoned by its inhabitants and why? To answer this central historical question it is important not only for Um er-Rasas but also for urban life in the region ,that we are still working at Um er-Rasas.

To date, there is still no absolute evidence to fix the time of the final abandonment of the ecclesiastical complex of Saint Stephen. However ,it would not be far from the truth if it is suggested that the ninth century A.D. for that event.

## COMPARATIVE STUDY

=====

### **1-The Abundance Of Churches:**

Population and Settlement intensity reached its peak in most of Jordan during the Byzantine period ,as abundantly attested by the archaeological record and field results of excavations and surveys in many parts of the country. Um er-Rasa provided a strong market and religious centre in this period .Circumstances provided the security for population to expand and flourish throughout the countryside .A healthy economy, utilizing the available resources and capitalizing on established trade routes covered the region, supported this population and prospered within the zone of imperial security. A religion that had a local genesis became a prominent social and cultural force within the Byzantine empire ,endowing the region with status and attention .An expandind religious

community enjoyed the highest political support and attracted pilgrims as part of the Hoky Land itinerary, albeit on the periphery. The healthy economy and that force of the religion is epigraphically and archaeologically attested by the abundance of churches constructed by donations of individuals or groups of individuals, sometimes from one family. Sometimes a village was a donor. Wealth donors possibly sought divine favour through such bequests, encouraging this proliferation. In this aspect the abundance of churches, the important liturgical and ecclesiastical rank and status of Um er-Rasas could be understood by the high abundance of its churches, than other sites in Jordan well known as of having multiple churches, more than adequate for their population base. Umm al-Jimal had fifteen, eight have been discovered at Khirbet as-Samra, and eleven in Madaba. In the case of Um er-Rasas sixteen churches and chapels have been detected, many of them were excavated. (MacDonald 2001:466,495).

## **2- Of the Mosaics:**

From the comparison between these Mephaaite (of Um er-Rasas) mosaics and the mosaic floors of the churches in Madaba and the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo (40 kms. far west), we can deduce that several mosaic workshops were working in the diocese of Madaba at the same time. But even though they seemed as if they used the same sketch book circulating among them, they differentiated from each other in the final result. The best example of this sketch book is the gazette that seen in the church of the Lions church at Um er-Rasas and in the chapel of the Virgin Mary in the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo. But the churches of the diocese of Madaba or elsewhere did show that geographical documentary record as that depicted at St. Stephen church of Um er-Rasas. One more point is that the mosaic floor of St. Stephen, with its numerous inscriptions which accompany the decorative composition opened a new vision for the historical knowledge of the Christian community during the first two centuries of Islamic domination in the region. The mosaic in fact was finished in 756 AD, according to one of the two dedicatory inscriptions, and depicts the cities of Jordan, Palestine and Egypt.

## **3-Of the Stylite Tower:**

Monasticism had become an important and well-developed movement within the church, and its power was increased and extended by the remarkable examples of men like Simeon the Syrian .A partial list of the Monophysite monasteries in the Province of Arabia, dating to c.575, survives in the 'Letters of the Archimandrites'. There were 137 signatories, all heads of monasteries in the province. (MacAdam.1994:59). The Stylite Pillar or tower was an Eastern (Syrian) phenomenon. Although its founder was the North Syrian Saint Simeon the Stylite in Antioch region about 417 A.D and even though this phenomenon (Asctics) extended to other countries such as Egypt ,Greece and Mesopotamia during the Byzantine era till the 10<sup>th</sup>. century but as an architectural intact evidence of this type of pillars (Stylites) the one in Um er-Rasas is considered as the first known complete example. It is mentioned that in Antioch there are still existing the remains of the stylite pillar of St.Simeon and the remains of its church .But those remains do not make it as complete as the one in Um er-Rasas. On the other hand the tower of Um er-Rasas is expected to be that one referred to in the mosaic inscriptions at Mukhayyat Church( 5 km. west of Madaba). This inscription is mentioned as the first epigraphic evidence for a stylite in the Madaba region and since there has been no other tower of this type detected in all of Jordan this hypothesis is strongly proved as real. This hypothesis is enhanced by the depicting of this tower ,as a column mediating a small church at the mosaics of Saint Stephen of Um er-Rasas properly.

#### **4-Of the Castrum (Camp):**

As it is known the camp of Um er-Rasas was one of the series of the military camps of the Eastern Roman Frontiers. Of those camps one can mention the Lejjun camp(40 km. far to the south, the camp of Alhumeima(about 200 km. far to the south),and the camp of Udhruh( about 170 km. far to the south).

In comparison they all served the same purpose of accommodating the Roman troops and cavalry. The camp of Um er-Rasas extended its life in the Islamic(Umayyad and Abassid) Periods since it was related with the civilian ecclesiastical and Monastic quarter and its use was turned to become civilian rather than military in those later periods .The life of the other camps stopped or deteriorated after the Byzantine Period. The importance of that Monastic fame of Um er-Rasas in the end of the Byzantine period in the area is well attested in the literature texts. The story of the meeting of Prophet Mohammed ,while he was trading between Mecca and Syria with monk Buheira of Mefaa is well known.

Monks of Mefaa were known as dedicated to Christianity and its affairs in a way that gave them the fame of believed knowledge and predicting .

## **5- Of the Ancient Agricultural Fields**

Impressive network of terraces, which covers much of the land to the north of the town of Um er-Rasas, were terraced or perhaps lying behind dams crossing the small wadis that flow from this plateau where the castrum is located. The assumption of small dams is validated by the presence of small rectangular structures in the middle of each wall possibly water weirs , rather than for collecting water. However such dams were built to trap silt and enough water to allow a slow soil impregnation, an effective substitute to irrigation. Eventhough none of these features have been so far excavated or properly investigated in Jordan, the group of Um er-Rasas ancient fields (such dam-like structures can also be observed along each wadi around the site. within and around the archaeological park perimeter) are the best preserved of this type in Jordan and constitute a comprehensive ancient agricultural system.

### **AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY**

=====

The including the camp and all of its components has been highly preserved in a unique way by being deserted and unoccupied after the Umayyad and Abassid (Islamic) periods for about 1200 years. Thanks to its being far from any urban planning or adjacent to centres of urban communities its integrity and authenticity has been well preserved . Fortunately ,the neighboring modern village is developing outside the ruins along the asphalt road which joins Um er-Rasas with Madaba.

The ancient components have not been impacted by any actions of modification or modern building, and the function of the majority of these components correlates to their original old use and authenticity.

The two main periods of the history and integrity of the city of Um er-Rasas(Mefaa) are still well preserved. The Roman era being the first



period is well represented by the fortified camp, and the Byzantine era being the second main period is well represented by the different components of the open northern quarter besides to some elements added to the fortified camp as a requirement of the new official religion (Christianity) .

Even though the Roman/Byzantine fortified camp is still thoroughly unexcavated its original architectural and designing fabric could be clearly seen on the surface since it has never been covered by accumulations of any later community after it was deserted in around the ninth century A.D.

The authenticity of the open Byzantine quarter was confirmed by the excavations and field studies implemented during the last two decades .A lot of Byzantine/Umayyad churches have been uncovered. Their original architectural and artistic fabric of mosaic pavements proved authentic testimony. The other scattered well preserved Byzantine architectural elements and structures confirmed that authenticity and integrity including the Stylite tower ,the reservoirs and the church of the tower.

### **Ownership of the Site And Zoning**

The archaeological sanctuary is owned by the Department of Antiquities.This Department is in the process of acquiring the land around the archaeological area and the area extending from the tower to the fort, thereby solving zoning issues related to site protection.

This buffer zone is being defined on the basis of the cultural , ecological and socio-economic diagnosis.The various topographical surveys outputs of UAR site are now available.A map of the Archaeological Park and its buffer zone is being designed as part of the preliminary management plan. Thematic design maps will be produced as well (landscape, plantations.....)

## **Urban Development and Physical Planning- and Urban Zoning**

---

---

## Site Zoning

Zoning is considered as an essential mechanism for the management of a protected area whatever it is ,natural or cultural . Site zoning forms the basis for any further conservation and tourism development. It is a prerequisite to an efficient implementation of the project and the future site management plan. Zoning being adjusted to the cultural, ecological and socioeconomic situation of each type of land.

Periodic findings will necessitate zoning adjustment over time. For example, if new key archaeological discoveries occur in the agricultural and grazing zone. a new sanctuary might be established with specific regulations and possible tourism development (with subsequent increase of site carrying capacity).

The proposed zoning of the UAR site is based on the distribution and importance of the archaeological remains, on the current land use and on the landscaping values of the site. The land tenure constraint is in the process of being defeated through the DOA land purchase.

The Department of Antiquities has declared to the local population that it will buy the entire land within the archaeological Park boundaries including current buildings. Given the archaeological restrictions put on this land by the DOA owners are interested to sell. For example, they can no more build any houses or any type of constructions or planting trees. All land reclaim being under the control of the Department of Antiquities local owners' alternatives are restricted.

An urban planning has been designed in 1996 for UAR by the Ministry of Planning, including zoning of already built areas and urban extension, which has initially been planned on each side of the road, but which still finally be limited on the opposite side to the archaeological site.

In 1999, the Ministry of Planning and Public Works prepared a general Master Plan of the extension and reorganization of the neighboring modern town of Um er-Rasas . That document stated authorized constructions to be built on both sides of the Madaba road and in the south-western part of the area of the site. Currently, only construction to the west of the road are being developed (eg. new Baladyeh building). All constructions planned on the east side (archaeological park) are apparently cancelled and the land put under the archaeological Law.

## **Um Er-Rasas (Mefaa) Archaeological Park(AP) Project of Protection /Management**

=====

An EU-funded '**Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage Project**' is being in the process of implementation. A proposal of the project and management plan has recently been finished.

The main objective of the project is to promote the cultural heritage of Jordan and encourage the tourism to the region and to the country in general thus opening the area to new ideas and ways of living and consequently promoting the cultural, social and economic development of the local population

The "Umm-Ar-Rasas component" is part of the sub-project << protection and promotion of Jordan's cultural heritage through direct site preservation and presentation at Umm Ar-Rasas and the nearly adjacent site of Lehun . Um er-Rasas is intended to be turned into a national Archaeological Park. The Management plan is being in process and the implementation will start very soon in the works of preservation and presentation.

### **Stakeholders Involvement**

As mentioned in the TORs, the development of UAR site *is expected to bring a source of income that will contribute to the economic well being and development of the local population*"

For such reason and in order to ensure sustainability, the UAR conservation & tourism development project should involve local stakeholders including local population in the project design and management. Taking into account local population may avoid possible conflicts in the next future regarding land use (not only archaeological area) and socioeconomic development of this area.

A workshop would be organised by the relevant Jordanian authority (MTA) in collaboration with the consultant to inform local population and local stakeholders, of the objectives of the new AP and the need of a consensus in the acceptance of this project.

Although this area is quite of the desert, the consultant shall consider the existing human activities in and around the UAR site. As a matter of fact a few families presently live close to the UAR site

Therefore, the consultant will assess human activities in such area, links between local population, their production system (agriculture; livestock breeding/grazing handicraft ) and the archaeological site preservation .He will analyse the socio-economic conditions required to this AP protection and the flay in which population could benefit from tourism development . As a result, a zoning shall be proposed in order to define specific areas for monuments conservation , tourism development and socioeconomic activities control .

### **MANAGEMENT PLAN AND OBJECTIVES:**

The Purpose of establishment of a Management Plan for the Old City Of Um Er-Rasas are:

**1-** Preservation of the unique character of the Site in terms of its unique identity and integrity as including different components of fortified military type, open civilian habitation ,liturgical and ecclesiastical complexes and old agricultural technology of fields terracing and water collection and damming.

**2-** Preservation the unique character of the site in terms of cultural ,architectural ,religious and aesthetic values.

**3-** Preservation of the character of the Site in terms of its unique artistic and historical values. Good evidences are available in the components of the site indicated that the art of mosaicism was lengthened one century more to the ,already, known history end of that art in the east. (Extension from the end of the seventh to the end of the eighth century) .

The mosaic of Saint Stephen provide further evidence of the existence of an organized Christian community in the diocese o oof Madaba, at the end of the 8th Century. The late date of the mosaics of the Church of Saint Stephen opens what was closed chapter of Jordanian history relative to civil, religious and artistic interests. We now know that at the end of the eighth century A.D. an urban flourishing community still existed at the site. That community was religiously and administratively organized and exhibited an unexpected artistic vitality. That Christian community was governed by a deacon with a bishop and local clergy .

- 4- preservation of the physical fabric whilst adapting to modern life
- 5- The development of tourism and turning it into an active economic contribute in the area and to the local community.

### **Content Of the Management Plan**

The draft management plan will comprise :

- 1-Investigations / diagnostic outputs.
- 2- Synthesis of site values, problems (threats and constraints), selected strategies for site conservation and development
- 3-Delimitation (boundary development) and zoning of the AP (+ buffer zone) .
- 4-Specific actions in archaeological areas I ( Castrum and open Quarter Complex) and II (Stylite tower complex) (six basic zones)
- 5- Overall site presentations physical measures, landscaping design, tourism infrastructure (roads and trails network, Visitors Centre, entrance gate, parkings,.. )
- 6- Proposals for the management structure of the AP and its buffer zone(manager, guards, ticket collectors, activity organized guides, extensionists, ...)
- 7- Proposals for tourism development (incl. positive Socioeconomic impact and mitigation measures of negative impacts)
- 8-Tentative time schedule and cost estimate of proposed actions.

### **AGENCY/AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

=====

- 1. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is the main umbrella.
- 2-The Recent Main Agency that forms the umbrella of implementing protection and Management is the Department of Antiquities in carrying out its authority of

doing the requirements of the Law of Antiquities .

- 3-The Forthcoming Local Unit of the Management of the Um Er-Rasas Archaeological Park will be entrusted with a mandate from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to implement the protection ,management ,controlling ,monitoring and conservation issues.
- 4- The Municipality of Um Er-Rasas is involved in controlling the urban planning of the adjacent modern town and community .

### **Recent Level of Management and Contact :**

- 1-The Main Headquarters of the Department of Antiquities in Amman  
Amman : Third Circle , Queen Misbah Street ,  
Director General , Tel. (00 9626-4644336), Fax :( 00 9626- 4615848).
- 2-The Department of Antiquities of Madaba :

### **Protective Measures and Means of Implementing them:**

1. The Law of Antiquities of Jordan No.21/1988.
2. The Group of Instructions of Archaeological Excavations and Field Surveys Issued from the Department of Antiquities.
3. The Forthcoming (Law) Regulations of the Um Er-Rasas Archaeological Park (Reserve).
- 4- The Inspection of the Department of Antiquities for Enforcing the Antiquities Law and its Regulations of Building
5. The Municipal Inspection for Enforcing the Law of Building and Urban Planning.
- 6- The Tourist Police .
- 7- The Local Police Station.

### **Approach and Ethics**

The works design proposals for UAR should be consistent with recognized international principles and recommendations (UNESCO, Venice Convention).

The project will be conceived according to a global vision of conservation, restoration, enhancement and development based on site specific characteristics and identity;

The proposed works will take into account the preservation of the physical integrity of the area and their archaeological and landscaping values, with respect of the local socioeconomic balance

The present study should design preliminary measures which aim at inhibiting any construction projects both private and public in and around the site without consideration for the presence of archaeological vestiges (this matter being of extreme concern from a cultural resource perspective);

The project will constitute a major component for the local, and even regional, sustainable development apart from tourism handicraft and agricultural (grazing) activities might be recommended or encouraged in the site vicinity, complementary to the overall objective of the project. With this view a labeling for local-made products could be created,

5- The project will prepare the basis for the establishment of a management structure for conservation visitors management, maintenance and for coordinating site and buffer zone activities (channeling income-generating activities to the local community)

## **Boundary and Fencing Issues**

Once the AP still officially settled and gazetted boundaries are needed to provide it with a permanent visible demarcation and to facilitate regular control. In addition and as required in the terms of reference, archaeological areas I(Castrum and open Quarter) & II (Tower Complex area) deserve a specific physical protection (monuments buried, remains and objects, vegetation). However, one can hardly vanish for fencing the whole site, consultant has to assess the real possibilities of separated fencing. Fencing has to be light and well adapted to the site's features. Topographic elements, existing stone-made terraces, shrubs and plantations have to be used, as well as the agricultural and range land areas (between Archaeological area I and II) in order to reduce landscaping impact. Whatever the fencing design, it is suggested to hide most visible stretches with vegetal hedges wherever the soil is deep enough to allow the growing of desert-adapted shrub species (for reducing the cost of maintenance)

## **Landscaping**

A rapid landscape analysis of the Archaeological Park and its surroundings will be carried out , based on concrete criteria (cultural and natural components, human activities, visual analysis) .The purpose is to assess and roughly map the site landscape values and sensitiveness. From this analysis, the visual impacts of the proposed physical works will be evaluated: positive (enhancement of the landscape) and negative impacts (obtrusive constructions, networks, ...); in that case re-designing or moving such works will be needed.

Positive impacts of the site landscaping design will be mainly achieved through the enhancement of some landscape components such as rock forms, topographical slopes and terraces, certain ruins, natural and/or artificial ecosystems). An important aspect of the landscaping design work still be the use of autochthonous vegetation and plants.

Reduction of dust and soil erosion and dissimulation of some obtrusive engineering works are secondary . Important objectives to be achieved in particular through landscaping. Soil potentialities will be rapidly assessed within the Archaeological Park in order to identify areas where and which indigenous specks of plants (herbs & grass, shrubs, trees) as well as vegetation types (hanging creeping,..) could be grown with these different objectives in mind .These assessment outputs will be taken into account while zoning the site. The study still therefore indicate the species to be planted and the rehabilitation areas, depending on the micro-ecological conditions and the goal to be reached .Drought resistance and rusticity will be determinant criteria in order to reduce water consumption as much as possible (restricted to the first years of the plantations).

## **AGREED PLANS RELATED TO THE PROPERTY :**

### **The Proposed Plans for the Archaeological Park.**

1-The Main Zoning Plan for the Archaeological Reserve of Um Er-Rasas that was already approved and ratified by the Ministry of Tourism,the Ministry of Municipalities ,the Ministry of Planing and the Ministry of Public Works in 1996 and 1999.



2-The New Management Plan ,which is still in the process of approval and ratification.

### **Sources of Finance:**

- 1- **The recent Funding** for the Old City of Um Er-Rasas comes from the government budget ,and is directed through the Department of Antiquities (Government) .
- 2-**The Funding for the Forthcoming** Um Er-Rasas Archaeological Park in the Beginning and in the short term will be allocated from the EU, and will be intended for studies and the works of the real establishment of the infrastructure of the Park and for the urgent field works of cleaning ,excavating, consolidation, conservation ,protection , training on management .
- 3-Funding for the long term management will be Self Generated by visitors ticketing and other related pending activities.
- 4- Any Funding Donation or contribution from any agency will be welcomed and accepted and will be referred to on the Donors' Board of the Park.

### **SOURCES OF EXPERTISE :**

- 1- Recently ,the management of the site is in the hands of the Department of Antiquities of Madaba.
- 2- For the long term , the management will be in the hand of the local Management Unit which will be establishment according to the requirements of the proposal of the forthcoming Management Plan.
- 3- The Conservation will be implemented by the Conservation Unit of the Department of Antiquities .The Unit includes conservation architects ,engineers , archaeologists and specialized conservators. Any Assistant from any other local or international agencies will be welcomed and accepted .
- 4- Training will be allocated locally ,if adequately available , at the local institutions and at or by international institutions.

## **VISITOR FACILITIES:**

### **A .Recent Situation :-**

- 1- Recently very limited ,available in the form of
  - a- A locally posted small police station for the protection of the site and security of visitors.
  - b - A modest small visitor facility building, including toilets.
  - c- Tap water is available .
  - d- Part of the archaeological structures is sheltered.
  - e- Access roads of good quality are available.
  - f- A post office is posted there ,provided with telecommunication and mail facilities .
  - g- A health governmental center is posted there to serve both the local community of modern town of Um Er-Rasas and visitors .

### **B. Planned to be :-**

- 1- The Management Plan of the Park includes the conditions of establishment of a Standard modern Visitors' Center Provided with all required facilities including a presentation unit and Tour Guides.
- 2- Sign Posts will be constructed in different locations throughout and around the site .
- 3- Vehicle's Parking areas will be constructed.
- 4- Rest house will be provided.
- 5- Souvenir Shops will be available.

## **ESTIMATED TOURIST STATISTICS:**

- 1- The recent situation and the available facilities of the site make the number of visitors very modest. The recent average is about 9000 visitors a year.
- 2- According to studies included in the Draft Proposal of the Management Plan the number of visitors will be doubled many times. The site is very pending with its varied and interesting components, especially when it is included with other neighbouring sites on the map of visitors' route after being developed and well qualified as a touristic attraction and destination.

## **STAFFING LEVEL:**

### **Recent Staffing :**

1- The recent situation of staffing is modest, consisting of one official in charge of showing the site components and four site guards .Added to them a small police station, posted to help guarding the site and ti insure security of visitors.

### **Planned Staffing:**

The Proposed Management Plan enforces the need for the training and employment of a highly qualified staff that may guarantee and meet the requirements of standard protection and management.

## **FACTORS IMPACTING THE SITE :**

### **a. Development Pressure:**

- 1 - In the recent situation, two houses with modern gardens exist on the western side of the land parcel that separates the two governmental owned archaeological sanctuaries. This small problem does not affect the archaeological sanctuaries properly. But since the terms and conditions of the Park require the entity of the site, the Department of Antiquities is in the process of acquiring those two private properties.
2. The modern town of Um Er-Rasas is fairly far from the two Sanctuaries and from the limits of the proposed buffer zone of the Park. The factor of urban development of the modern community does not constitute any problem.

### **b. Environmental Pressure :**

- 1- The Site is not close to any factors of pollution.
- 2- The rainfall at the site location is limited (average about 200-300 mm. a year ).Little snow is very rarely attested in some sparsely separated years in the site region .

### **c. Natural Disasters And Preparedness:**

- 1- No disasters of any type is witnessed.
- 2- The two archaeological sanctuaries are off way of any floods .No threatening streams exist in the area. Besides that the sanctuaries exist on a raised plateau.
- 3- The proposed Management plan will deal with the issue of preparedness.

**d. The Visitor/Tourism Pressurs :**

- 1- Average of visitors/tourists to the site is still very modest.
- 2- The proposed management plan will deal with this issue in detail if it becomes a problem in the future.

**e. Number of Inhabitants:**

- 1- No inhabitants do stay or live within the archaeological sanctuaries or within the proposed buffer zone ,except the two gardened houses which are to be acquired by the DOA very recently .

## **MONITORING**

**Key indicators for the measuring the state of Conservation:**

1-The Principal indicators :for the state of conservation in the site are a number of buildings requiring medium to extensive interventions such as the the Stylite Tower, the adjacent Square building, the southern wall of the enclosure of the fortified castrum and some pavement floors.

**2-Other indicators are:**

- The Annual Budget
- The Number of Persons involved in implementing of the conservation of related projects.
- Number of periodical Documentation and recording of the state of buildings and projects.
- The Continuation of excavating other portions of the site.
- The number of visitors.
- The need for the construction of more infrastructure.

**Administrative Arrangements for Monitoring:**

**a-In the recent situation**

- 1- the Department of Antiquities in Madaba make spaced inspection tours on different sites including the old city of Um Er-Rasas .
- 2- The local guards make little unscientific monitoring while inspecting the case of security of the site from time to time .

**b- The proposed management plan:**

enforces the need of scientific regular monitoring by the trained local unit of management .

**Results of Previous reporting exercises of Monitoring**

The results of the follow up for the last few years showed that:

1-There was a need for the documentation of the Stylite tower since cracks and deterioration were noticed on the facades of the tower ,especially the northern one.

2-The ecclesiastical complex of Saint Stephen was sheltered to protect it from weathering and deterioration and to achieve the show of its components as a touristic attraction.

3-In the absence of adequate conservation the mosaic floors of other excavated churches were deliberately covered with loose sand to keep them in situ and protect them from deterioration and flaking .

4-A project of zoning the area of the old city and turning into a protected area in a system of Archaeological Reserve or as a Zone of Special Regulations of Urban Development was created in the last six years ,and lately the project was promoted to the status of An Archaeological Park

## Bibliography

- Brunnow, R.E.: A. Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia*, II, StraßBURG  
1905 1905, 63-72
- Bujard, Jacques and Piccirillo M.: Les Eglises Geminees D'umm Er-  
1992 Rasas (Foundation Max van Berchem), *Annual of the  
Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, XXXVI, 1992, pp. 291-306.
- Ch. Clermon-Ganneau, "L'inscription de Oumm er-Rasas" *RAO*, II, 185-  
1898 188, 1898
- Downey, Glanville, *A History of Antioch in Syria, from Seleucus to the  
1961 Arab Conquest*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1961, p. 453-  
455, 459-461, 465-466.
- MacAdam, H.I.: Settlements and Settlement Pattern in  
Northern and Central Transjordan, ca. 550-750, in  
G. King and  
A. Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic  
Near East*  
. II, *Land Use and Settlement Patterns*, NJ: Darwin.
- MacDonald, Burton, Russell Adams and Piotr Biekowski : *The  
Archaeology of  
2001 Jordan*, England, 2001.
- Michele Piccirillo and Taysir Attiyat: "The Complex of Saint Stephen At  
1986 Umm Er-Rasas-kastron Mefaa, First Campaign, August  
1986" *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of  
Jordan*, vol. xxx, 1986, pp. 341-351
- Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Simeon Stylites, and  
Stylite", ed. F.L. Cross, second  
1974 edition, 1974, p. 1276-77, 1317
- Palmer, E.H.: *The Desert of the Exodus*, II, Cambridge 1871, 498-500.  
1871
- Piccirillo, Michele: "The Mosaics at Um er-Rasas in Jordan" *The Biblical  
1986 Archaeologist*, vol. 51, Nov. 4, 1988, pp. 208-213, 227.  
1986 *L.A.* XXXVI, 1986.

- 1987 L.A. XXXVII, 1987
- 1988 L.A. XXXVIII, 1988
- 1990 'Umm er-Rasas-Kastron Mefaa. Quinta campana  
1990.' p.465 in 'Ricerca storico-archeologia in  
Giordania: X-1990.' *Liber Annus* 40(1990). pp.453-484.
- 1991 L.A. XLI, 1991
- 1992 L.A. XLII 1992, p.367-368.
- 1993 *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman, 1993
- 1995 :The Activity of the Mosaicists of the Diocese of  
Madaba at the Time of Bishop Sergius in the Second  
Half of the Sixth Century A.D., *Studies in the History  
and Archaeology of Jordan*, vol. V, 1995, pp.391-398.
- 1996 Ricerca storico-archeologia  
in Giordania, L.A. XVI, 1996, p.409- 413
- 1997 La chiesa di San Paolo a Umm al –Rasas-Kastron  
Mefaa. L.A. XLVII, 1997, p.374-375.
- Piccirillo, Michele and Eugenio Alliata : *Umm Al-Rasas, Mayfa'ah*,  
1994 Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem, 1994.
- SECA ,Par Scientifique Agropolis: *Protection and Promotion of Cultural  
2001 Heritage Project, Hashemite Kingdom of  
Jordan*, Preliminary  
Design ,and Final Technical Report for Umm Ar-  
Rasas  
With illustrations, two  
vols., Sept. 2001, SECA, France, email:  
seca@seca-fr.com
- Saller, S.-B. Baggatti: *The Town of Nebo*, Jerusalem 1949, pp.244-245.  
1949
- Schick, Robert: "Christian Life in Palestine During the Early Islamic  
1988 Period" *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 51, Nov. 4, 1988,  
pp.218- 221, 239.
- Schick, Robert and E. Suleimn : Preliminary Report of the Church At El-  
1991 Quweisma, 1989, *ADAJ* XXXV, 1991, pp.325-  
335.

- 1997 : "Umm Er-Rasas" *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric M. Meyers, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, vol. 5, pp. 279-281.
- Tristan, H.B.: *The Land of Moab*, London, 1874, 140-143.  
1874
- Wilken, Robert L, : "Byzantine Palestine, A Christian Holy Land", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 51, Nov. 4, 1988, pp. 214-218.  
1987