

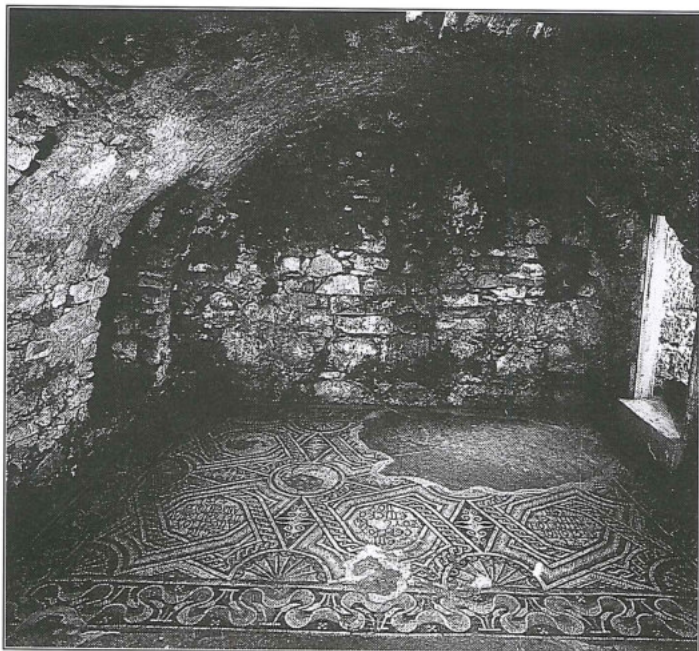
The Activity of the Mosaicists of the Diocese of Mādabā at the Time of Bishop Sergius in the Second Half of the Sixth Century AD

According to dated archaeological discoveries, the most intense ecclesiastical building activity in the diocese of Mādabā occurred at the time of Bishop Sergius, between AD 575 and 598.

The first mosaic inscriptions mentioning the name of Bishop Sergius were copied at Mādabā in June 1897 by Fr. Giuseppe Manfredi, the parish priest of the local Latin community, in the mosaic floors decorating the upper church and the lower crypt of the prophet Elias along the paved Roman road (FIG. 1).¹ In the inscription of the upper church, Sergius is called “the friend of God, the curator, who had gathered the gifts”.² In the inscription the Bishop is called φροντιστής, curator, as noted by P.-L. Gatier, and not the *contemplative*, as ordinarily translated by earlier scholars.³ The Greek term is related

to the care with which Bishop Sergius collected the funds to build the new sanctuary along the Roman paved road of Mādabā, which in my view included the church of the Prophet Elias and the church of the Virgin Mary.

In April 1902, Father Manfredi had the chance to excavate the church of the Apostles on the southern slope of the *tall*, built during the episcopate of Sergius and mosaiced by the mosaicist Salaman in AD 578/79 (FIG. 2).⁴



1. Mādabā. The crypt of the Church of Saint Elias (AD 595/96).



2. Mādabā. The Church of the Apostles by the mosaicist Salaman (AD 578/79).

¹ G. Manfredi, ‘Piano generale delle antichità di Madaba,’ *Nuovo Bollettino delle Antichità Cristiane* 5 (1899), p. 157.

² P.-M. Séjourné, ‘L’elianée de Madaba,’ *RB* 6 (1897), pp. 648-656.

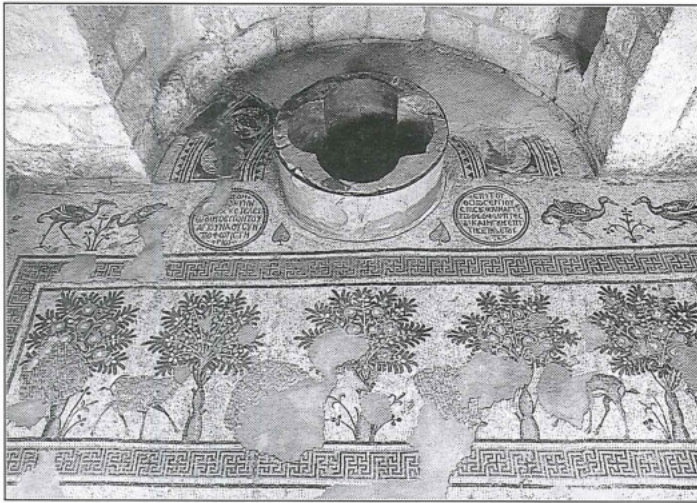
³ P.-L. Gatier, *Inscriptions de la Jordanie, Tome 2. Région centrale (Amman, Hesban, Madaba, Ma’in, Dhiban)*. IGLS 21. Paris (1986), pp. 141 f.

⁴ H. Vincent, ‘L’église de SS. Apôtres à Madaba,’ *RB* 11 (1902), p. 599.

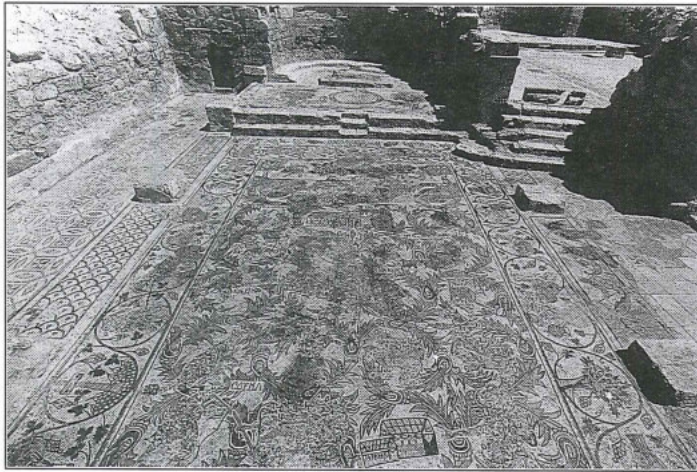
The mosaicist signed the medallion of the Sea in the central nave of the church.

In 1933, Fr. Sylvester Saller, Director of the Franciscan archaeological mission at Mount Nebo, read the name of Bishop Sergius two times in the baptistry chapel of the Memorial of Moses (FIG. 3).⁵ The church represented the most important building program in the diocese. The primitive church built in the fourth century became a three-aisled basilica with the baptistry chapel on the south wall, and the long diakonikon chapel on the north wall. Unfortunately, the decoration of the main nave of the basilica was totally destroyed.

In 1979 we could read the name of the bishop in a long inscription in the courtyard of the so-called cathedral church of Mādabā, in the southern quarter of the



3. Mount Nebo - Šiyāgha. The mosaic floor in the apse of the baptistry chapel (AD 597/98).



4. Umm ar-Rašāš - Kastron Mefaa. The Church of Bishop Sergius (AD 587/88).

city.⁶ Bishop Sergius completed in 575/76 the renovation works already started by Bishop John, his predecessor. The works of Sergius deserved the admiration of the people of Mādabā, as written in the Greek dedicatory inscription on the east side of the mouth of the cistern in the courtyard, and in the Semitic inscription transcribed in Greek on the west side of the mouth of the cistern.⁷

Thanks to the excavations at the site of Umm ar-Rašāš - Kastron Mefaa in the southern territory of the diocese in progress since 1986 by the Department of Antiquities in collaboration with the Franciscan Archaeological Institute, and by the Max Van Berchem Foundation since 1988, new evidence of this building activity has been brought to light. There, at least four churches were built and mosaiced at the time of Bishop Sergius. In 1986, we excavated the church of Bishop Sergius, as we have named the north church of the large complex of Saint Stephen on the northern edge of the ruins (FIG. 4).⁸ The church was built and paved with mosaics "in the good times of our lord, the most holy and most blessed Bishop Sergius...on the sixth indiction of the year 492 of the Province of Arabia (AD 587)", as it is written in the medallion between two lambs in front of the altar (FIG. 5).⁹

In 1989 the Max Van Berchem Foundation uncovered the church of the Rivers inside the castrum. In our opinion, the church was mosaiced by the same team of mosaicists working at the time of Bishop Sergius at Umm ar-Rašāš. We base that statement on the similarity of style and of the decorative program of its mosaic floor with that of the church of Bishop Sergius. Therefore, we



5. Umm ar-Rašāš - Kastron Mefaa. The Church of Bishop Sergius. The sanctuary.

⁵ S. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, I*. Jerusalem, 1947, p. 247.

⁶ M. Piccirillo, 'La "cattedrale" di Madaba,' *LA* 31 (1981), pp. 308 f.

⁷ "All were saying in admiration: A cistern within a cistern. Oh! How marvellous!" [in the inscription of the courtyard on the east side of the mouth of the cistern, *LA* 31 (1981), pp. 308f.]. The expression of wonderment is repeated in Semitic transcribed in Greek on the west side of the mouth of the cistern: "Goubba bagoubba (a cistern within a cistern)...gushing for the Mad-

abites..." [*LA* 31 (1981), pp. 310 f.].

⁸ M. Piccirillo and T. 'Attayat, 'The Complex of Saint Stephen at Umm er-Rasas - Kastron Mefaa. First Campaign, August 1986,' *ADAJ* 30 (1986), pp. 341-351.

⁹ M. Piccirillo, 'Le iscrizioni di Um er-Rasas - Kastron Mefaa in Giordania, I (1986-1987),' *LA* 37 (1987), pp. 204-206.

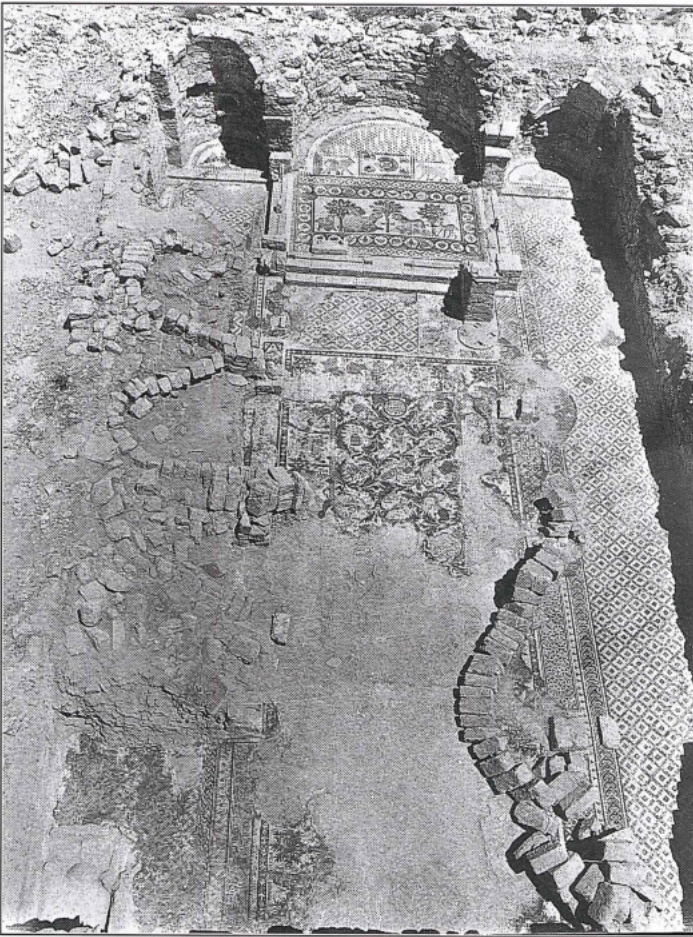
propose to choose AD 593/4 as the 12th indiction year given by the inscription near the entrance of the church.

In 1989-90 we could read again the name of Bishop Sergius in the mosaic floor of the church of the Lions in the outer quarter of the city (FIG. 6).¹⁰ The eighth indiction year given together with the name of Bishop Sergius in the inscription in the main nave, enables us to choose the year 588/89 for this outstanding work of the mosaicists of the city.

In 1990-91, together with Mr. Taysir 'Attiyat, we brought to light the church of the Priest Wā'il built and mosaiced in the year 586 (FIG. 7).¹¹

Thus since 1897 to the present, archaeological excavations have brought to light the following projects built during the episcopate of Bishop Sergius of Mādabā:

- the northern sector of the western courtyard in the Cathedral complex (AD 575/76);
- the church of the Apostles with its northeast chapel



6. Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastron Mefaa. The Church of the Lions (possibly AD 588/89).

(AD 578/79);

- the church of the Priest Wā'il at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (AD 586);
- the church of Bishop Sergius at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (AD 587/88);
- the church of the Lions at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (AD 588/89);
- the church of the Rivers at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (possibly AD 593/94);
- the crypt of the Prophet Elias and possibly the Church of the Virgin Mary, along the Roman road (AD 595/96);
- the three aisled basilica with the southern baptistry chapel at the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo - Ṣiyāgha (597/98).

We are, therefore, able to study a group of mosaics laid down during the long episcopate of Bishop Sergius, from 575 to 598, in the territory of Mādabā, which for that period remains the most representative centre in Jordan of the mosaic art.¹² From an inscription in the Cathedral complex we know that Bishop Sergius was succeeded by Bishop Leontius by 603 at the latest.¹³

The New Churches at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastron Mefaa

At Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, so far six churches with mosaics have been excavated. At least four of them were built and mo-



7. Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastron Mefaa. The Church of the Priest Wā'il (AD 586).

¹⁰ In M. Piccirillo, 'Umm er-Rasas - Kastron Mefaa. Quinta campagna 1990.' P. 465 in 'Ricerca storico-archeologica in Giordania: X-1990,' LA 40 (1990), pp. 453-484.

¹¹ In M. Piccirillo, 'Sesta campagna a Umm er-Rasas - Kaston Mefaa.' Pp. 522-526 in 'Ricerca storico-archeologica in Giordania: XI-1991,' LA 41

(1991), pp. 497-546.

¹² M. Piccirillo, *Chiese e Mosaici di Madaba*. Jerusalem, 1989.

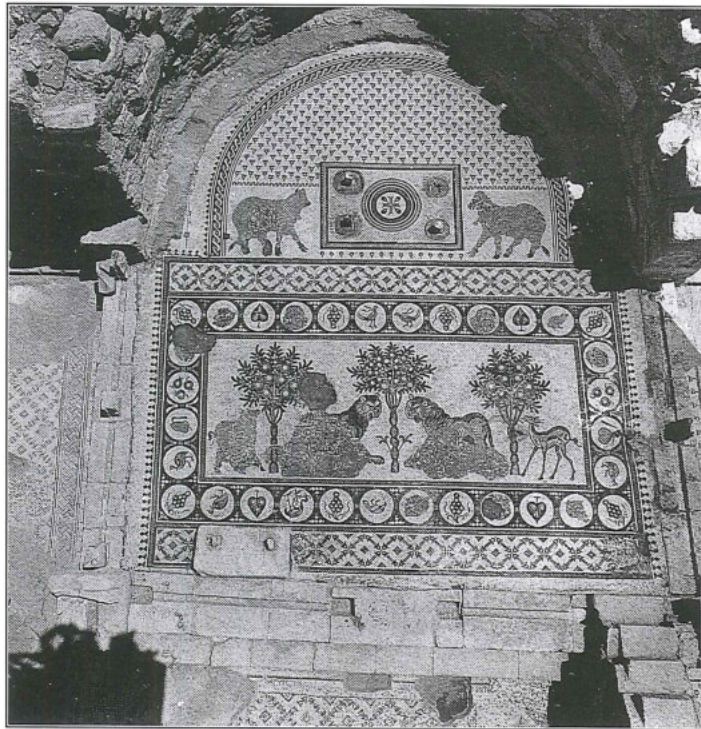
¹³ M.-R. Savignac, 'Nouvelle inscription grecque de Madaba,' RB 8 (1911), pp. 437-440.

saiced at the time of Bishop Sergius of Mādabā in the territory of which *Kastron Mefaa* was located. Three have been excavated in the last few years.

The Church of the Lions (AD 573/74 or AD 588/89) (FIGS. 6, 8)

The church is located in the southern limit of the area outside the northeast corner of the walled castrum, on the north side of an alley that crosses the ruins in an east-west direction. Its excavation has revealed another outstanding artistic work of the mosaicists active in Jordan during the Byzantine period. Unique so far in the diocese of Mādabā, this church is triapsidal, with niches built in the centres of the side apses. The church was built at the time of Bishop Sergius, as stated in a medallion of the central nave: "At the time of the most pious Bishop Sergius was completed this holy temple in the month of Dios of the seventh indiction" (AD 573/74 or 588/89).

The floor was paved with mosaics showing good craftsmanship and fine taste in its general composition and figurative details. The area of the presbytery was divided into two main panels (FIG. 8). A semicircular panel with flowers enclosed in a guilloche decorated the area of the apse behind the altar. The rectangular frame of the altar was decorated with a cross of flowers in a medallion. Two bulls, each with a bell attached to its neck, were depicted on the sides. In the inner frame of the rec-



8. Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - *Kastron Mefaa*. The Church of the Lions. The sanctuary.

tangular panel decorating the area in front of the altar, birds alternated with fruits in white medallions on a black background. Two gazelles and two lions facing trees loaded with fruits were represented in the panel.¹⁴ A series of benefactors with their names written near the head were portrayed in the area along the step of the chancel screen. A hunter, accompanied by his dog, shooting arrows with a bow at an unidentified prey, was figured near the base of the pulpit built on the south side. A continuous series of fruit bearers alternating with trees loaded with fruits was depicted in the border frame of the carpet in the main nave. The medallion with the inscription followed by chase and fowling scenes filled the acanthus scrolls of the carpet. Birds were depicted on the sides of an amphora in the semicircular panels of the side apses. Geometric motifs decorated the side aisles and the long intercolumnar panels still visible. The city plan of *Kastron Mefaa* was added in the east intercolumnar panel of the north row.

The main peculiarity of this mosaic floor is the way in which the iconoclasts have intervened in the figures of the presbytery, after destroying all the human and animal figures of the main nave. There, they defaced the two bulls on the sides of the altar, one of the two gazelles, the bodies of the two lions, and some birds of the border frame. However they spared the heads of the two lions, the gazelle on the right side and some birds. This is a strange peculiarity to be added to the dossier of the iconoclastic movement in Jordan.

The Church of the Priest Wā'il (AD 586) (FIG. 7)

The small church was part of a larger ecclesiastical complex, not yet explored, outside the northwest corner of the walled castrum. A door in the eastern wall of the south aisle joined it with the main church to the east. The church was built in the year 586 as stated in the dedicatory 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 Wā'il (Walesos, in Greek), in the month of Dios of the fifth indiction of the year 481 (AD 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 centre from which sprang vine shoots with grapes and tendrils.

¹⁴ The whole decorative programme is paralleled in the mosaic floor of the chapel of the Virgin Mary in the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo (M. Piccirillo, *Mount Nebo*. Amman, 1988, pp. 52 f.).

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, baskets, 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 Wā'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 each 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 facing east, dressed in a red mantle with a whip in his left 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.

The Church of the Rivers (AD 578/79 or 593/94)

Inside the walled 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.

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 fig-

ure 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 animated 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.¹⁵ Among the geometrical motifs with which the aisles and the intercolumnar spaces were decorated, was a remarkable medallion with a winged griffin (?) that decorated the area in front of the northern sacristy.

Analysis

In the church building program in the city of Mādabā and throughout the region, we have historical evidence of the developing economic welfare of the Christian population of the diocese in the second half of the sixth century. At the time of Bishop Sergius we witness a luxurious building project of new churches and the beautification of old ones with mosaic floors and painted or mosaiced walls, with clergy, rich families, and government officials involved. In Mādabā the large basilicas were built using the architectonic elements of the previous monuments of the Nabataean and Roman periods, thus changing the urban view of the city. It was the end of the Roman pagan city and, at the same time, the final new monumental look of the Christian city of Mādabā. The singular building activity of the time, in which Bishop Sergius was involved, is mentioned in the inscription of the upper church of the Prophet Elias, as we have seen, and in the inscription of the west courtyard of the Cathedral church.

All those sacred buildings were paved with mosaics. The most frequently attested mosaicist of the period is Salaman, who signed the superb medallion of the Sea in the Church of the Apostles (FIG. 2). The pavement of the Church of the Apostles preserves one of the most beauti-

¹⁵ M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*. Amman, 1993, pp. 240-242.

ful and interesting works of the mosaicists of Mādabā. Even if it is difficult to determine up to what point the hand of the mosaicist Salaman, who signed the central medallion, is to be seen in the whole of the decoration, it is undeniable that in the entire composition, and in its many figurative details, the guidance of a master craftsman is evident in the choice of themes and composition.

The composition of the carpet rotated around the central medallion with its personification of the Sea, which was superimposed on the grid, covering the nave, was obtained by the systematic repetition of pairs of long-tailed parrots or pheasants facing each other (FIG. 2).¹⁶ The motif, somewhat artificial and methodical, was enlivened on the whole by the insertion of flowers, fruits, and leaves — also repeated with patterned regularity. Among the fruits, one can see pomegranates, melons, bunches of grapes, and pears. Among the flowers, there were anemones and bunches of flowers between a pair of leaves, and what appear to have been the buds of acanthus flowers.

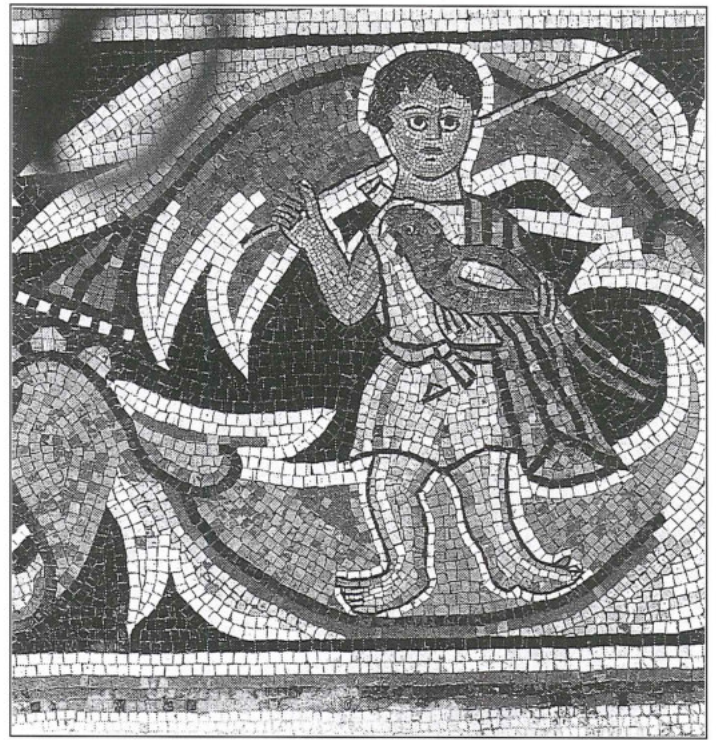
In colour and composition, the richest part of the work was the animated acanthus border that enclosed it, notable for the variety of its iconographic motifs as well as for the technique of its execution. Although the south side has been lost, the other three sides are well-preserved. The corner scrolls of acanthus were decorated with four foliate masks with wide-open eyes, pronounced eye-brows in black continuing down to the line of the nose. The shadings of the face was obtained by using layers of tesserae of different sizes, all in red of different tones, varied according to shape and size to produce the desired effect.¹⁷

The acanthus scrolls, fifteen of them on the long sides and seven on the short sides, were formed of two leaves that had their origin in a central tuft with buds alternating above and below and repeated after each medallion. The background of the border was of a dark colour, ornamented from time to time with florets in white tesserae. In the central medallion on each side of the border, there was a boy intent on some game (FIG. 9). In all three of the medallions that are still extant, the boy, while bare-foot, wore a short white tunic bound at the waist with a red mantle thrown over his shoulders. On the west side, the scene was developed in two medallions: the boy stood on a rudimentary wagon with four wheels drawn by a pair of pheasants or parrots; he had the reins in his left hand and a whip in his right, in a gesture of inciting

the birds to race.¹⁸

In the other scrolls, we have a series of very singular motifs, taken from compositions of much more wide-ranging narrative. On the west side there was figured a crouching cat next to a bird and, on the other side of the boy with the wagon, a bull with a long tail. On the north side, there follow two scenes narrated in two continuous pairs of medallions: one scene was of a wolf advancing toward a bunch of grapes and the other was composed of a brooding hen with her chicks, one of which has jumped up on her back. A pomegranate branch and a bird perched on the bloom of a flower were on each side of the central medallion, followed by a cat in motion and by two gazelles, one standing and the other lying down. Alternating with plants there were a basket filled with fruits and a melon with a knife. In the central scroll, the boy had a stick in his right hand, while holding a parrot with the left hand (FIG. 9). On the eastern side, there were two fruits shaped like elongated squash, and two pairs of parrots, now vanished, accompanying the medallion with the boy and a windmill.¹⁹

Stylistically, if compared with the earlier mosaics done at the time of Bishop John, such as the pavements



9. Mādabā. The Church of the Apostles. Boy with bird and stick.

¹⁶ A motif that parallels contemporary mosaic floors of the region (cf. R. Farjoli Campanati, 'Considerazioni sui pavimenti musivi cristiani della Giordania.' Pp. 157-162 in M. Piccirillo, *I Mosaici di Giordania*, Rome).

¹⁷ For the historical evolution of this classical motif in the Byzantine period see A. Mazza, 'La maschera fogliata: una figura dei repertori ellenistico-orientali riproposta in ambito bizantino,' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik. XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress. Akten. Wien 4-9 Oktober 1981*. Vienna, 1982, pp. 5, 23-32.

¹⁸ The scenes of the small circus at Piazza Armerina (A. Carandini, *Filosofiana*, Palermo, 1982, p. 283). Cf. K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage*. Oxford 1978, pp. 88-108.

¹⁹ See P. Testini, 'Gli animali tra apparato decorativo e simbologia.' Pp. 135-142 in M. Piccirillo, *I mosaici di Giordania*, Rome, 1986.

of the church of Saints Lot and Procopius, the upper chapel of the Priest John at al-Mukhayyaṭ, and the chapel of Saint Theodore at Mādabā, the work has lost the organic quality of the whole, namely, the compositional equilibrium that was the greatest merit of the preceding works, a quality that we can still enjoy in the baptistry chapel of the Cathedral, the first work of this period. If we linger to observe the superb medallion of the Sea at the centre of the nave, the bulls and rams solidly constructed at the entrance of the church, and the compositional deicacy of the border, we might forget some of the monotonous and somewhat artificial composition of the grid of the nave. Salaman with his personality, in my view, brought a new floral style to Mādabā that gave more emphasis to gigantic botanical motifs. This is not the case of the leaves, the pumpkins, the watermelons, and the melons of the composition found also in the baptistry of the Cathedral church, and in the diakonikon of the Memorial of Moses at Nebo.²⁰

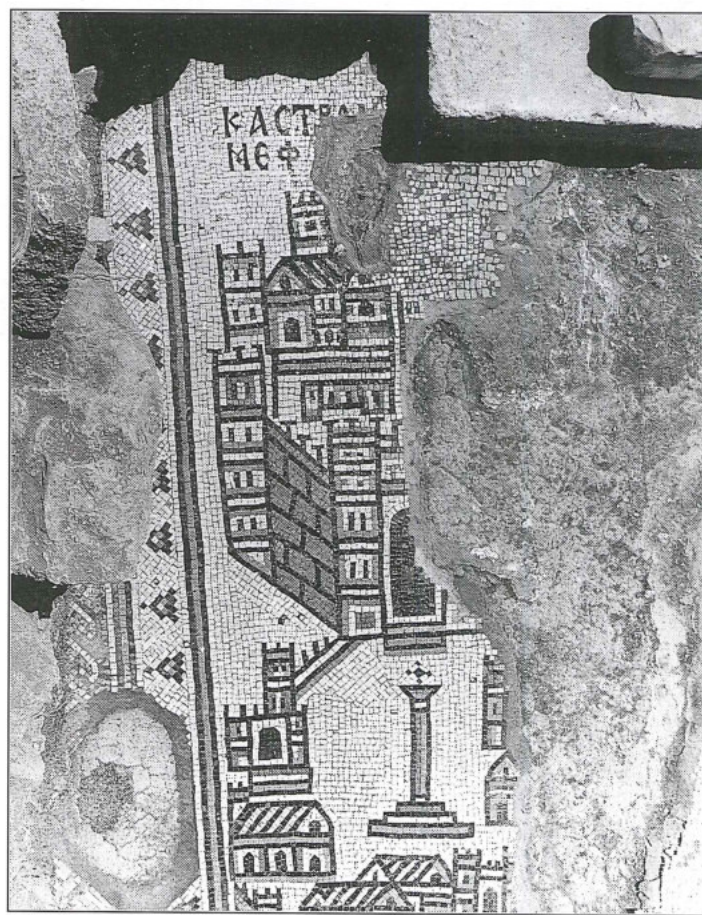
It is stylistically interesting to examine the four contemporaneous pavements of Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, where we can detect at least two teams of mosaicists at work. The team responsible for decorating the church of the Lions was particularly skillful in the rendering of the animals and trees in their geometric setting. The other team was responsible for the decoration both of the church of Bishop Sergius and of 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 12th 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 Wā'il, more naive and inaccurate, but using the same technique in rendering colour.

From the comparison between those programs and the mosaic floors of the churches in Mādabā and in the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, we can deduce that several mosaic workshops were working in the diocese of Mādabā at the same time. They used the same sketch book circulating among them, although they differentiate from each other in the final result. The best example of this sketch book is the gazelle that we can see in the church of the Lions at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ and in the chapel of the Virgin Mary in the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo.²¹

The iconographic motifs used in the mosaic programs are a continuation of the inspired classical artistic and cultural renaissance of the Justinianic era. Most frequent

are the scenes of flocks grazing, of agriculture, of vintage, of the chase, together with isolated motifs of flora and fauna, and architectonic representations of church buildings and cities, a common motif in the mosaics of Jordan. Unusual is the travel scene with a carriage drawn by a horse among stylized plants in the church of the Priest Wā'il at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ.²² To the scenes of the terrestrial world, are added the classical personifications, typical of the epoch, like the Sea in the church of Apostles, the Abyss, the Earth, and the Seasons in the church of Bishop Sergius and in the church of Priest Wā'il, and the Rivers in the church inside the castrum.²³

Of historical and artistic importance is the city plan of Kastron Mefaa that decorates the northern intercolumnar space of the church of the Lions (FIG. 10). Thanks to this discovery, we can compare this plan with that of the same city found in the church of Saint Stephen and dated to the Umayyad period (FIG. 11).²⁴ The plan of Kastron Mefaa in the church of Saint Stephen is more schematic



10. Kastron Mefaa in the Church of the Lions at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastron Mefaa (possibly AD 588/89).

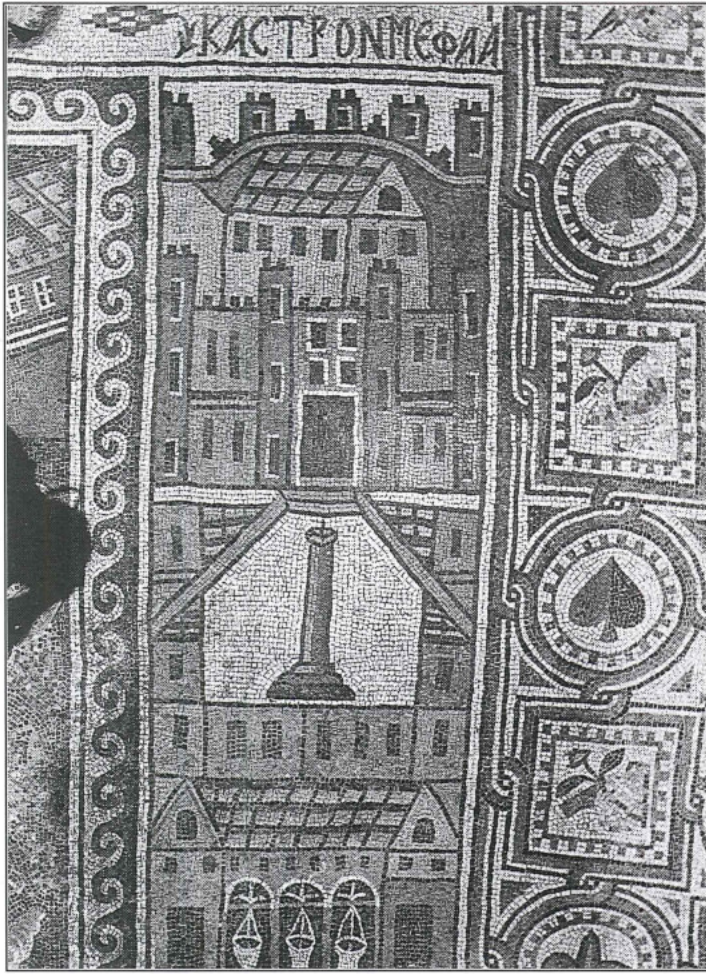
²⁰ S. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses, II*. Jerusalem 1941, PLS. 99-101.

²¹ Piccirillo, *Mount Nebo*, p. 54.

²² A quite similar scene exists in the north aisle of the Michaelion at Huarte in Syria, see P. Canivet and M. T. Canivet, *Huarte. Sanctuaire chrétien d'Apamène (IVe - VIe s.)*. Paris, 1987, I, 216-220; II, PLS. 120.

²³ The personifications of the rivers of Paradise decorate the four corners inside the carpet in the chapel of S. Theodore in the Cathedral church of Mādabā, see M. Piccirillo, 'La "cattedrale" di Madaba,' *LA* 31, (1981), p. 304, PL. 78-79.

²⁴ M. Piccirillo, *Chiese e mosaici di Madaba*, p. 294.



11. Kastrom Mefaa in the Church of St. Stephen at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastrom Mefaa (eighth century AD).

compared to this new plan. Here we can see clearly the intention of the mosaacists to depict Kastrom 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 in 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, we have to imagine a real votive column standing in the middle of the ruins, the nature of which is still unknown.