

Analysis of the Socio-Cultural Heritage of Madaba - an Approach to Conservation of Heritage Buildings: The Case Study of Dar Al Saraya in Madaba

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ABSTRACT Worldwide, much of the built cultural heritage is threatened by neglect, encroachment, shortcomings in conservation and a lack of maintenance. The heritage is further threatened by inadequate social awareness of its value and by the lack of an effective legal protection framework. Conservation and rehabilitation of old historic buildings have thus become a priority at the different levels and sectors of society involved. This paper discusses the strategies that must be implemented when a traditional building requires rehabilitation in order to enhance its sociocultural value to the national heritage. The Dar al Saraya building in Madaba, Jordan, is used as an example.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Madaba is located 30 km south-west of the Jordanian capital, Amman. It has a deep historical character made up of varied and rich civilizations. The historical layers of the city represent a unique and genuine urban and religious heritage that can still be observed in the remaining monuments, in addition to the inherited memories of the people of Madaba across several generations.

The urban character of the city, including its historical locations, has been much examined, and many efforts have been made to document and conserve or redevelop the cultural and physical values associated with its built environment. This area of research, however, still requires more concentrated, structured studies to emphasize comprehensive development as part of the effort to preserve and maintain its rich cultural heritage.

Madaba exhibits a number of structures that can play a major role in the development of comprehensive policies designed to maintain the urban character of the area. An example of this is the Dar al Saraya, located at the semi-hilly area known as the small acropolis of the city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design reported here employs an analytical and descriptive approach, where observation and analysis were combined to analyze different aspects and problems of interest. The historic building of Dar Al Saraya in Madaba

is used as an example of a typical rehabilitation project. Analysis of previous reports, site visits, and photographic documentation of the building were carried out. The result is a set of recommendations for the implementation of a suggested conservation plan.

Aims of the Study: Philosophy of Conservation and Intervention

Our objectives are 1- To identify the policies and strategies normally used in the conservation of heritage buildings, and to use them to underscore the sociocultural and historic significance of the al Saraya building; 2- To identify areas of conservation through direct application on the case study - the al Saraya building, and 3- to determine the positive character of the building in relation to its built environment in the surrounding area.

The built heritage needs to be managed and maintained. A conservation plan is essential to assist those responsible for individual sectors of the built heritage to help them take into account the needs of their site or building and how it can effectively be preserved and developed.

MADABA CITY

Modern Madaba has an area of 27650 dunams, and is located at an elevation between 775-800 m above mean sea level. ¹At different times in the past, Madaba came under the control or influence of different civilizations such as the Moabites,

Assyrians, Babylonians and Nabateans. During the Roman Empire, Madaba was a regional commercial and economic centre for the Moab-Kerak Plateau. It witnessed the Christian era and, later, during the first half of the 7th century CE, the rise of Islam. This is represented in a clear way in the ancient settlement, now mostly buried beneath the modern town.

"The main features of the historic fabric are represented by the early Ottoman village (1880-1918) and by subsequent phases of urban growth; which occurred until the 1940's, which confirmed and extended the Ottoman village road network".² The name of Madaba is derived from the old name 'Miad Eiban' which means the "fruits (of) water".³

"Madaba Governorate is located in the mid southern region of Jordan. The Qasabat Madaba District forms around 42% of the whole Governorate and its population is currently around 130 thousand persons."² Madaba witnessed rapid expansion from 1953 until 1984, mostly on its northeast side. Two major highways run through it, connecting it directly to the capital, Amman.⁴ Population growth, rising standards of living and changing social needs all render conservation problematic.⁵ Because an effective conservation plan must be a viable document that has a clearly defined purpose and can be updated, and must be responsive to the effect of development on cultural heritage significance, two major principles should be taken into consideration:

1. To ensure that any proposed changes do not have an adverse impact on community values; and
2. To ensure that those changes contribute to the cultural heritage significance of the historic building or site.⁶

"The conservation plan should set out the arrangements and timescale for a periodic review of the contents of the plan and the implementation of the action it recommends".⁷

The Proposed Project

The objective of the conservation plan is to create a new heritage centre, the 'Dar al-Saraya Building', a public-private partnership in which the public partner will assume responsibility for the rehabilitation of the structure. The building itself has an area of approximately 500 m² and the surrounding public space an area of 860 m². The

site is located on King Talal Street and is presently occupied by a police station, connected to Prince Hassan Street by a stairway.

The stages of the proposed conservation project are:

1. Setting out the objectives of the conservation project.
2. Making explicit the case for the cultural and historic significance of the site and building.
3. Consultation: specialist reports might be required at this stage, consultation for the plan itself and recommended actions to be taken may also be required.
4. Supplementary information (e.g., documentation of plan, photographs and other historical data to support implementation of the action plan).
5. Action plan: actions required to restore the site and its context, and to create a public history exhibit for the Dar al Saraya Building.

The Objectives of the Project

The joint-venture revitalization program is subject to modification with respect to the following project objectives:

-To ensure preservation of a landmark heritage building, and to emphasize its symbolic value in the context of Madaba's history;

-To provide the city with a flexible, state-of-the-art museum that can be used for exhibition spaces for both locals and tourists; and

-To foster public education and cultural awareness by providing historical documentation and public information facilities.⁸

ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL REVIEW OF DAR-AL-SARAYA

Assessment and analysis of the historic and cultural significance of the site can be made through a statement of its recorded history, its contents, methods of construction, materials used in construction, design elements, hard and soft landscaping, and earlier and current uses of the buildings (in short, all prior knowledge of the site and its immediate environs).

The map reflects the importance of al Saraya to the city fabric and its relative height in relation to circulation routes and pedestrian movement in the old city (Fig. 5) the location of Saraya Complex.⁹

The building is on the acropolis of Madaba

overlooking the commercial district of the town and is now used as a police station. According to the inscription above the main entrance, the building was constructed in 1896 as an Ottoman municipal administrative office. It consists of two storeys; the second storey was added in 1922, and was constructed using the same stylistic vocabulary as the 1896 structure.

In the late Ottoman Empire, the word *saraya* meant "military headquarters building for the Ottoman government".¹⁰ The building is in a good state of preservation. The southern part of the structure rests on top of an archeological site with architectural remains and potsherds dating back to Classical antiquity.¹¹

Description of the Construction Phases

The ground floor was constructed around 1896 (during the Ottoman period) as a series of cross-vaulted rooms around a central corridor on the north-south axis forming a tripartite plan. At the end of the corridor an open courtyard can be found. Externally the walls were constructed using roughly squared ashlars (Fig. 3) Existing Ground floor plan). Openings in the main façade are

regularly spaced, reflecting the internal structural layout; windows are circular headed (Fig. 1) Original façade (Fig. 2) Proposed side elevation).

The second floor was added in 1922. This was constructed on the original bearing walls, with the main roof extended and corridor walls built over the main walls on the ground floor. Access to this floor is by reinforced concrete stairs from the open courtyard to an unroofed open landing with individual rooms. A small balcony is accessed by a door leading to it located at the center of the façade.

Two additions at the back, one single-storied on the southeast, and the other two-storied on the southwest, are made of concrete blocks, with walls and roof made of reinforced concrete. Cement rendering is used both internally and externally, and is used as a kitchen and toilet accommodation, in addition to a storage room on the south west which can be accessed from outside the building (Fig. 4) Proposed Ground floor plan).¹²

A-Building Materials

-Roughly squared masonry slabs were used in the extended walls, and cement-rich mortar was

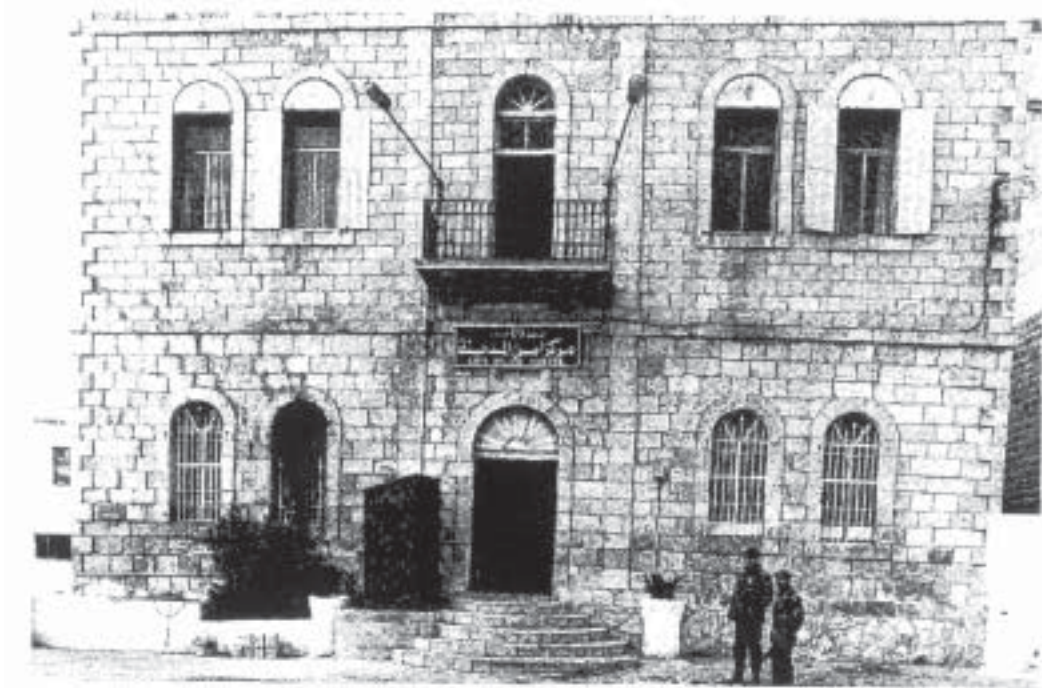


Fig. 1. Original façade

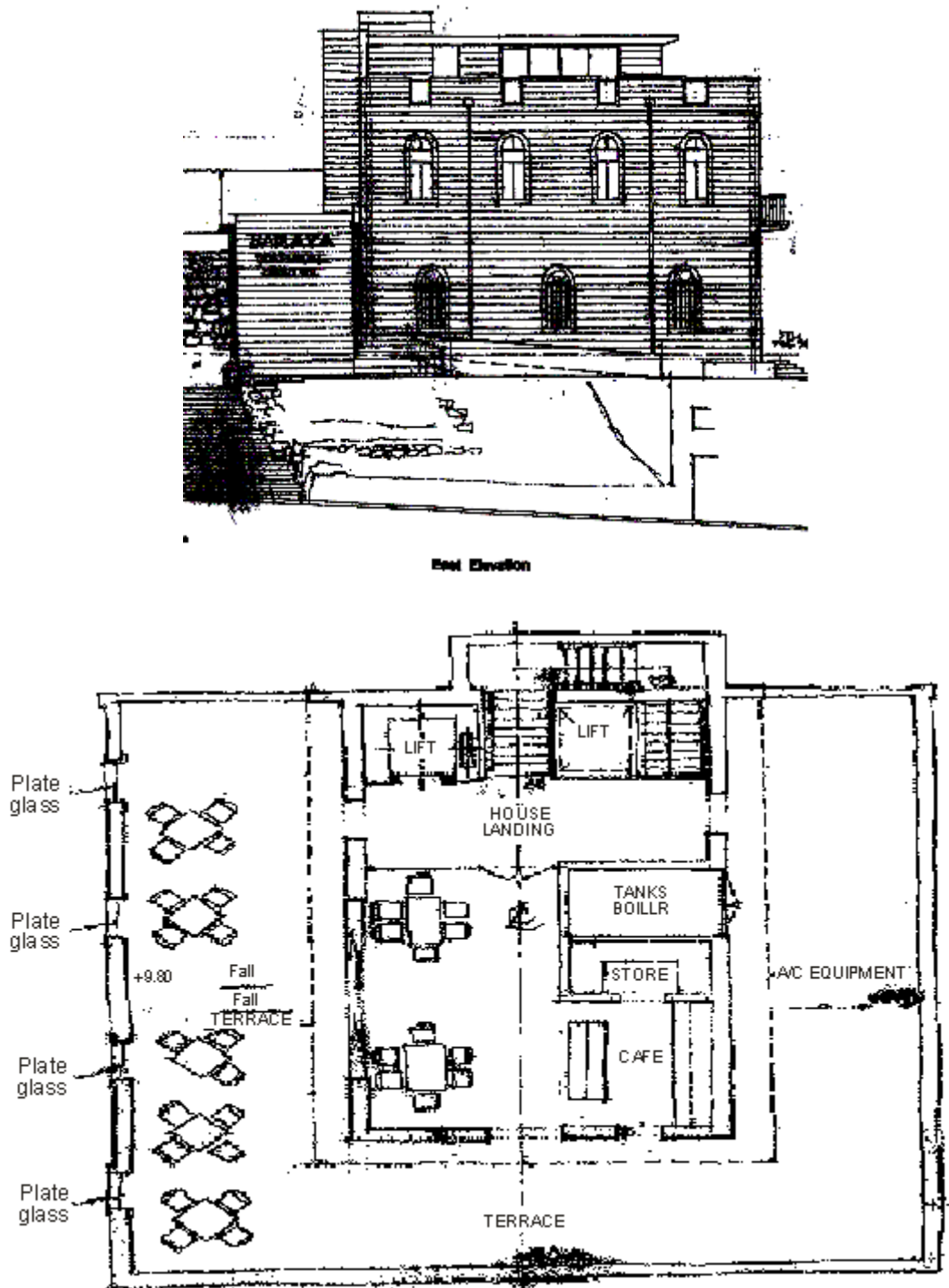


Fig. 3. Existing Ground Floor Plan

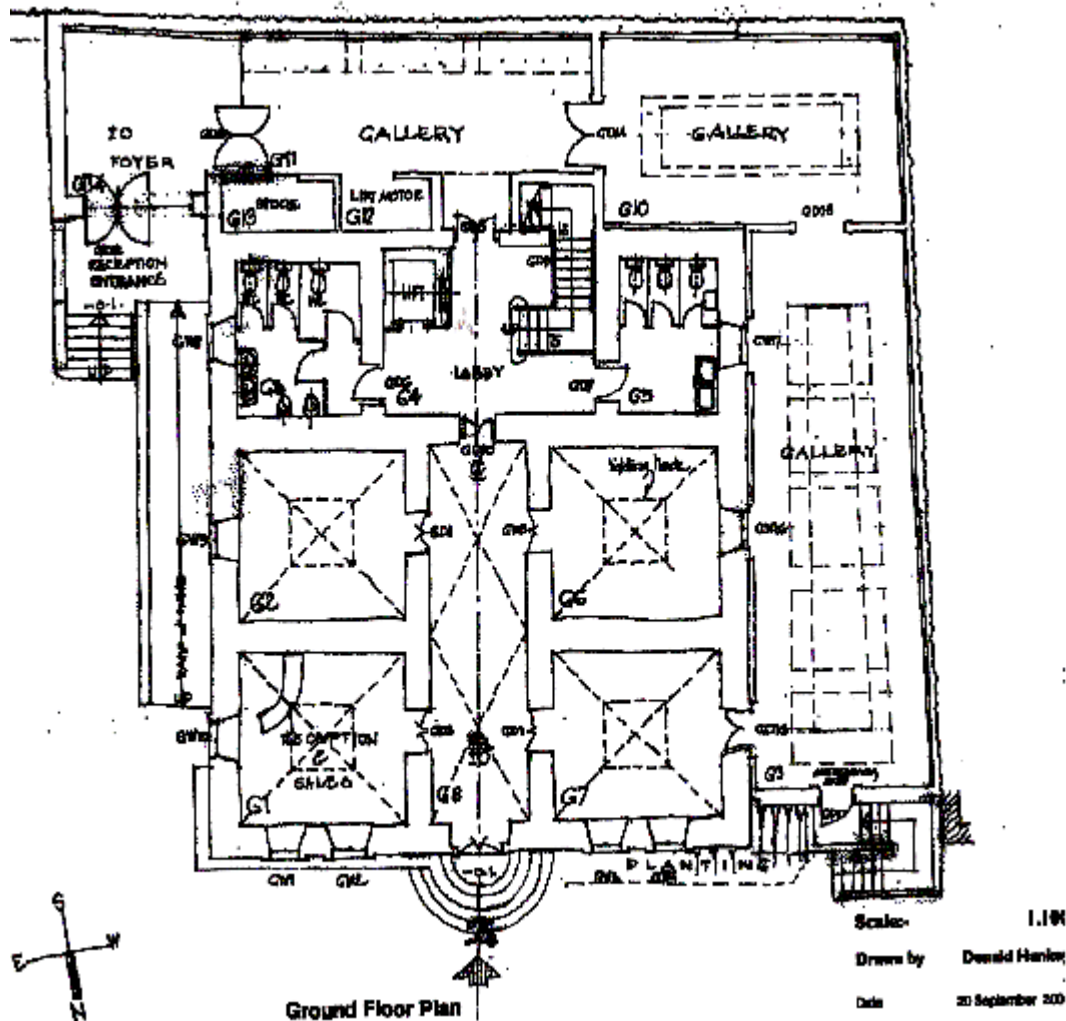


Fig. 4. Proposed Ground Floor Plan

added recently for re-pointing. This should be removed and replaced with historically-correct lime-based mortar.

- The masonry is stained in several places due to rusted window frames and by rain water run-off from the roof.

- The ground floor is tiled but is in poor condition; it should be repaired.

- There is evidence of damp penetration (mould) in all rooms, but especially those on the ground floor.

- Tile skirting, originally present, must be added.

B-Building Openings

- Doors are painted the same color as the walls; they need repair, especially the frames and locking rails.

- The windows presently have steel shutters, although some have fallen off or have been removed. They contribute little to the style of the architecture of the building and should be either repaired or replaced.

- The windows are in reasonable condition but require re-glazing and resealing.



Fig. 5. the location of Saraya Complex

C-Services and Infrastructure

-External light standards, aerials and other electrical fittings are fixed to the external walls. They should be removed or concealed because they affect the appearance of the building.

-On the east and west elevations of the building, there is zinc piping which needs to be relocated.

-The entrance area (the outside yard 'saha') should be paved with basalt pavers or blocks.

-There is no heating in the building, which is a clear deficiency for current and projected usage.

-The proposed heritage center should be provided with adequate heating, lighting, and electrical service.

D-The Hard Landscape

The value of the hard landscape in this kind of intervention cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the need to have a strong relationship between the building and the area surrounding it, and to throw into sharp relief its architectural character. In the case of the Saraya Building, the following procedures are recommended:

1. Considering the intrinsic architectural value of the Saraya building, all hard landscape elements must be made from materials that are harmonious in texture and color with the existing building materials.
2. The main entrance plaza should be connected with the stairs leading to Prince Hassan Street.
3. The area adjacent to the building near the church should be at the same level as the main entrance plaza and redesigned to be used as an outside open exhibition area.
4. Special attention must be given to designing the area in front the commercial shops, which must be accessible to motor vehicles, the area must be connected to the entrance plaza without affecting the shops, and gradients and levels must be carefully studied prior to any remodeling effort.
5. Neutral colors should be used for paving to minimize glare; stone paving that matches the stone façade of the building would be most appropriate.
6. All seating units should be of stone cladding; wooden benches should not be used.
7. The entrance to the private residence adjacent to the Saraya Building entrance must be

concealed with a tree or hedges while continuing to provide accessibility for users of the residence.

8. The view of the private residence near the stairway leading to Prince Hassan Street must be studied.

E-The Soft Landscape

1. All existing trees must be removed except for one healthy *Melia azedarach* tree in front of the building entrance.
2. The species to be planted must match the character of the Saraya building, and must be chosen from the species native to the area.
3. It is preferable to use evergreen trees of a well-defined shape and medium size at full growth.
4. All existing trees are documented in the existing landscape plan drawing.

FINDINGS

-All construction repairs should be redone to suit the future use of the building.

-Floor and wall finishes must be renewed.

-All electrical and mechanical services must be renewed so that they will be distributed in such a way as to match with the new function of the heritage center.

-The small building extension to the west of the main structure should be removed.

-Special care should be taken to the landing of the Yard (SAHA) entrance so that it can be a multiple use area, suitable for festivals and other cultural events.

-The building in general is suitable for the new function proposed.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions focus on the macro level of downtown:

The analysis of the building in relation to downtown Madaba underscored the necessity to undertake a referential conservation intervention, not only on the level of the building itself, but in regard to the surrounding area and its urban design parameters. The building is considered crucial as a referential location. Studies concerning historical, urban and social issues regarding conservation should be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the building rehabilitation level, the following recommendations are deemed necessary:

-The conservation plan should include a section detailing a schedule for its implementation and identifying who is responsible for each activity.

-The conservation plan should be systematic, comprehensive and cover every issue such as the archeological and historical studies. Cost estimate reports should cover the different stages of implementation of the work. Monitoring and assessment should also be considered.

-Spatial distribution of functions within the conserved building and site should be appropriate to the surrounding built space. Harmony of design should be considered when suggesting new usage of the traditional heritage building. Accordingly, the type of lighting, heating, finishes, etc. will be affected by the new usage of the building.

-The possibility of adding modern services should also be considered. If these services cannot be added, or if the existing services cannot be renovated and maintained, these problems might compromise the proposed new functions of the building.

-In all maintenance and research work, the heritage requirements should be not over looked, and no major changes that might affect the historic spirit of the space should be allowed.

-Project and studies dealing with conservation issues must be documented and published so that the benefit can be achieved.

NOTES

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