

Anfeh Unveiled: Historical Background, Ongoing Research, and Future Prospects

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ANFEH UNVEILED

Historical Background, Ongoing Research, and Future Prospects

Nadine Panayot Haroun

ABSTRACT

This article describes how the site of Anfeh, Lebanon, which played an important role in the economy of the northern Levant from the Late Bronze Age to the Ottoman period and is currently on the World Monuments Watch List, was researched, surveyed, and excavated. The international rescue excavation and survey of Anfeh is directed toward reconstructing its entire history using recent archaeological data obtained from surveys and excavations, oral histories, and written sources. The ultimate objective of the project is to advance and implement a sustainable development program for both Anfeh and its hinterlands.

KEYWORDS: North Lebanon, coastal zone management, terrestrial survey, maritime survey, Early Bronze Age, archaeological excavations, sustainable development

Anfeh is located on the coast of northern Lebanon and is 15 km south of Tripoli and 71 km north of Beirut (Fig. 1). The town is extended to the west by a

400-meter promontory, oriented on an east–west axis (Fig. 2). Standing about 14 m above sea level (Sanlaville 1977: 356), the site has visible Greco-Roman and medieval remains everywhere. Basins, vaults, presses (Fig. 3; see also Fisher-Genz and Nordiguian 2010: 79–87), tanks and quarry pipes, and the remains of mosaic pavements on top of the promontory. Several other mosaics reported by local residents have been uncovered in various locations underneath the modern town, which extends further south of the promontory. Unfortunately, none of these mosaics have been preserved *in situ*.

The still-visible remains attest to continuous human activity at Anfeh and are protected by salt marshes—now abandoned—which used to be highly productive between the 1940s and 1990s (Fig. 4). Threatened by a port expansion project, Anfeh was included in the World Monument Fund's World Monuments Watch List for 1998–1999 (World Monuments Fund 1997: 36). Although this project has been suspended, the site is still in a precarious state (Fig. 5). Except for clandestine excavations and robbers' trenches observed all around the promontory and in the village, the site was not scientifically investigated until June 2011. Sporadic land surveys were conducted between 1945 and 1965 (Copeland and Wescombe 1965) followed by isolated maritime surveys during the 1970s and 1990s (Chollot 1973; Amadouny 1999), none of which were comprehensive.

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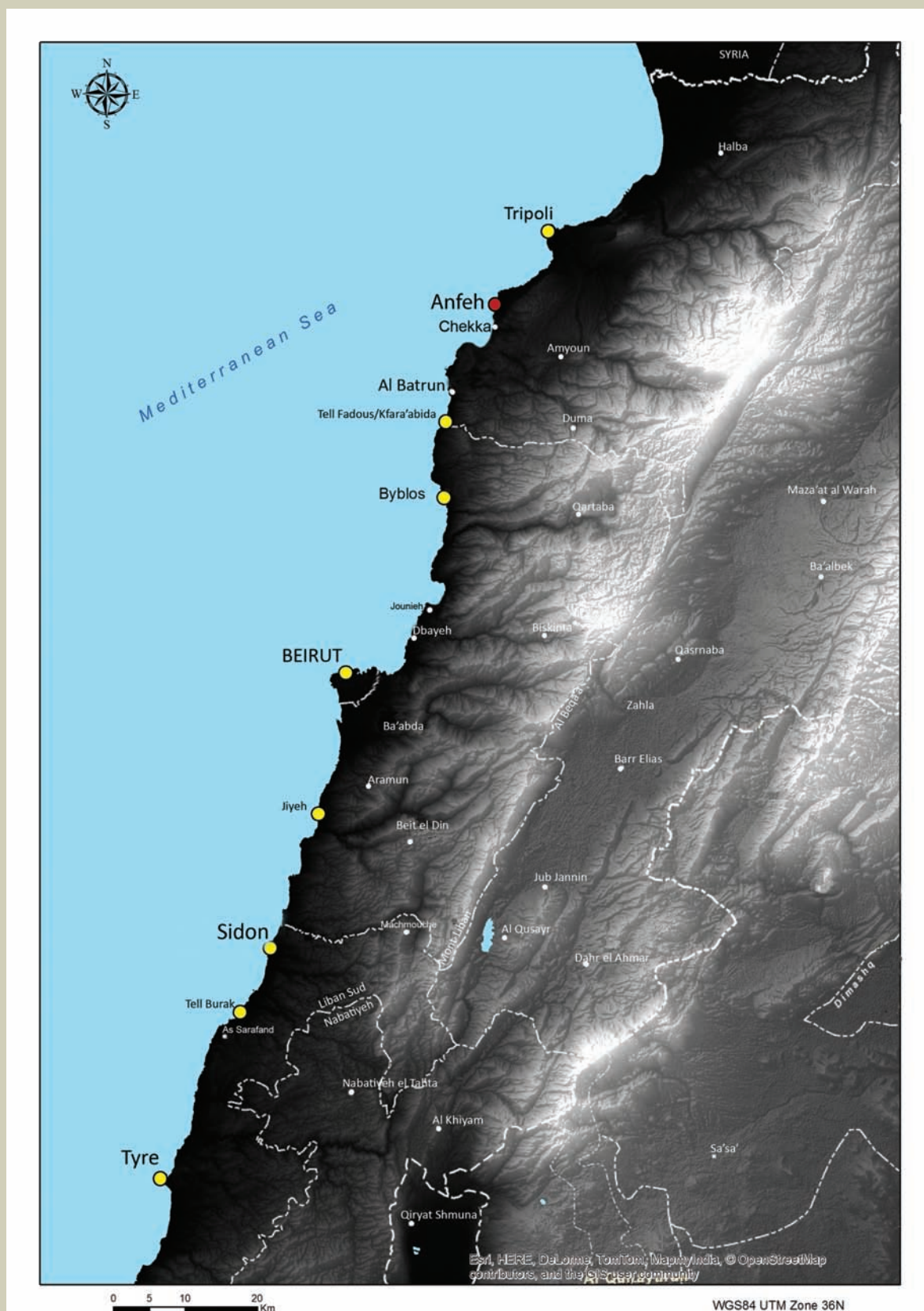


FIG. 1
A map of Lebanon showing sites mentioned in the article. (Map by C. Safadi.)



FIG. 2
An aerial photo of the promontory Ras el-Qalaat at Anfeh taken in 1962. (Courtesy of the Directorate of Geographical Services, Ministry of Defense, Lebanon.)

Although a geomorphologic study of the site was made by Paul Sanlaville in 1977, more recent research is being conducted within the framework of the present project in collaboration with the Geology Department of the American University of Beirut. This will allow for an analysis of the changes in sea level, which is particularly important in understanding the successive developments of human settlement.

Tradition and oral history place the appearance of the first salt marshes in Anfeh during the Ottoman period, but some claim that salt-making was a Phoenician tradition. Even if they constitute a disruption to the natural landscape, these salt pans have preserved the archaeological layers underneath. Apparently, Anfeh existed and played an economic role during the Late Bronze Age, the Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, and medieval periods up until the Ottoman period.

The Historical Background of Anfeh

The first traces of human occupation date back to prehistory. According to Lorraine Copeland and Peter Wescombe (1965: 85), some flint tools collected northeast

of the modern village during a previous survey are from the Middle Palaeolithic period. The occupation of Anfeh during the Canaanite period is more than certain. The city is, indeed, traditionally identified with Ampî (Freyha 1972: 6; Salamé-Sarkis 1999: 78) and is mentioned six times in the Amarna letters. In his correspondence with the pharaoh, Rib-Addi, king of Byblos, who was a faithful subject of the Amarna court, mentions the port and the fleet of Ampî, telling the Egyptian monarch that the enemy ships of Arwad had reached the city (EA 71, 72, 76, 95, 102; Collon and Cazelles 1987: 296; Salamé-Sarkis 1999: 78). One of the letters reveals that the city finally fell to the king of Amurru, Abdi-Ashirta, and eventually turned against Byblos. The location of Ampî during this period is still unknown.

We do not know whether the city continued to exist during the Phoenician period, or if it was refounded as Batrun (Salamé-Sarkis 1987: 101–19), a nearby city south of Anfeh. During the Assyrian period, a document tells the story of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon's campaign against Sidon and its territory in 677 BC and enumerates all the coastal cities, including *Ampa*, which were part of the Sidonian kingdom and fell under attack (Scheil 1914: 6–12; Campbell-Thompson 1931: 9–15; Lipinski 1994: 158).

In the Greco-Roman period Anfeh is identified by some travelers and researchers with the Greek city of Trieris, known as *Terus* in Latin sources.¹ Authors such as Polybius and Strabo mentioned the city several times.² Indeed, Polybius, when recounting the campaign of Antiochus III, mentions that the king had destroyed Trieris and burned *Kalamos* in the plain of Tripolis (Hist. 5.68.8). Identifying *Kalamos* with Kalamun is almost certain, since the region has kept the same place name.

For Anfeh's identification with Trieris, however, there is less of a consensus. Hassan Salamé-Sarkis (1999: 80) argues that El Heri, a town located south of Anfeh, is actually Trieris, because it is closer to the massive and strategic promontory of Rass esh-Shekka, which is known in ancient sources as *Theouprosopon* (Davie and Salamé-Sarkis 1991). It allowed for a direct line of sight along the coast and all the ports from Byblos to Tripoli. The more strategic location of El Heri, according to Salame-Sarkis, would explain the need for Antiochus to control all the access points and, therefore, would make it more likely to have been the place mentioned by Polybius.



FIG. 3
An oil press on the promontory of Anfeh. (Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)

During the Crusader period, Anfeh was called Nephin and was known as a well-fortified town famous for its wines (La Roque 1722: 43; Deschamps 1973: 300). It is also traditionally referred to as the “Citadel,” due to the visible remains of a medieval fortress that covered the entire promontory. Indeed, the German Dominican traveler Burchard of Mount Sion described the citadel after his visit to the region in AD 1283 as “equipped with twelve towers” (Stewart 1897: 15–16).

The peninsular fortress was cut off at sea level from the rest of the village of Anfeh by two moats (Renan 1864: 140–46; Lawrence 1988: 28). These were carved through the rock across the peninsula for 120 m, leaving a small spur to support the castle’s drawbridge (Fig. 6).³ When they were used for protection, the moats were filled with seawater up to 3 m. Like Boutron/Batrun, Nephin was a dependency of the County of Tripoli in AD 1099, belonging to

the Raynouard family who followed Raymond of Saint-Gilles during the First Crusade (1096–1099) (Rey 1869: 413; Grousset 1934–1936: sv. *Enfé/Néphin*).

The lords of Nephin, cut off from the town and having retreated behind the walls of the fortress, later became infamous bandits and were a terror to travelers in the region. A well-known event took place there in AD 1282, when the count of Tripoli, Bohemond VII, ordered the imprisonment of the eighth lord of Byblos, Guy II, with his brothers and cousin in Anfeh for their many crimes. Eventually, they were condemned to be buried alive and starved to death in the fort that once protected them (Condé 1960: 513). This violent history, however, did not diminish the town’s reputation as a source of fine wines, and this continued to be a mainstay of the economy throughout the tumultuous twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD (Condé 1960: 513).



FIG. 4
The salt marshes of Anfeh. (Photo by R. Kalindjian.)



FIG. 5
A beach cabin or chalet built during the war on top of an oil press and a rock-cut chamber. (Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)



FIG. 6

The moat and its spur in the background, which supported the castle's drawbridge. The architect Georges Sassine is behind his camera in the foreground. (Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)

In AD 1289 taking advantage of the quarrels and disputes among the Crusaders and their allies, the Mamluk sultan Qalawun destroyed Tripoli and burned it. The knights who survived retreated to the coastal castles of Boutron and Nephin. Sultan Qalawun went on to completely destroy the castle of Batrun, but—thanks to its moats—the castle at Nephin partially survived albeit transformed into a quarry site (Salamé-Sarkis 1999: 83). Even though most of the architectural elements and blocks were reused in other projects since the medieval period, some blocks with carved embossment are still found on the promontory and also at water level (Figs. 7–8). Throughout the succeeding Mamluk period, the city was referred to as Anafa.

The Saydet el-Rih (“Our Lady of the Winds”) Rescue Excavations

At the request of the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities, the Department of Archaeology and Museology of the University of Balamand undertook a salvage excavation campaign in the chapel of Saydet el-Rih in Anfeh prior to the programmed restoration work of the church (Figs. 9–10). Excavations were conducted between 2011 and August 2012. The final excavation results will not be discussed here as they will appear in the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities’ journal, *Bulletin d’Archéologie et d’Architecture Libanaises* (BAAL). However, a brief overview of the project and its preliminary results will be presented below.



FIG. 7
In situ embossed blocks from the fortress.
 (Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)

The site has revealed several occupational phases, beginning with the Early Bronze Age. Several deposits of ceramic sherds from this period were found south of the chapel and have moved back the initial date of the occupation of Anfeh—which was previously known only from the Amarna letters. The sherds are rather homogeneous and were sealed by a very hard cement that kept them safe and undisturbed.

Finds from the Iron Age include a network of cisterns and tanks linked together by channels that are carved into the bedrock and cover the entire surface area underneath

the chapel and around it (Figs. 11–12). These features were cut prior to the installation of the chapel and consist of six cisterns and two basins, extending further north and west of the chapel and ending at the seashore level. It is highly probable that these tanks were used to collect rainwater, which was channeled to the seashore to rinse off fishing boats and other sea-going vessels, and to supply them with fresh water. Dating these rock-cut cavities was quite challenging as they have been reused throughout many periods up to the construction of the church. Nevertheless, the earliest ceramics associated

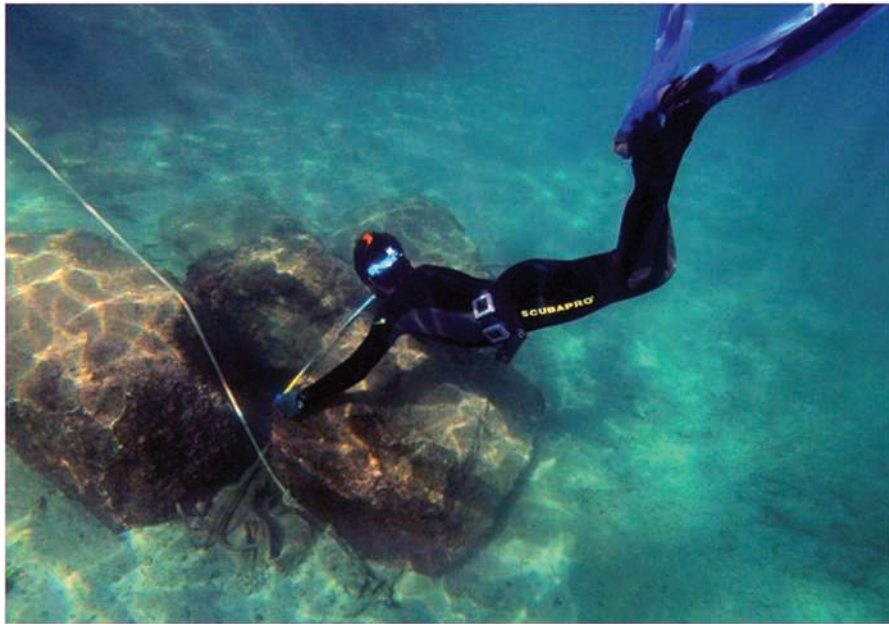


FIG. 8
A submerged block from the fortress
being measured by underwater
archaeologist Ziad Morsy. (Photo
by J. Jansen van Rensburg.)

with the carving of the cisterns date back to the Iron Age. A similar network has been excavated at Sarafand (ancient Sarepta) by James Pritchard and dated to the Roman period (1978: 49).

The chapel itself was first built during the sixth/seventh centuries AD and was then a small rectangular single-nave building oriented toward the east. Part of the apse is still intact along with the eastern part of the southern wall. A mosaic floor covering one of the very large open tanks extends outside the chapel toward the south (Figs. 13–14). It is contemporary with the chapel and dates back to the late Byzantine period. The chapel was enlarged during the thirteenth century AD with the addition of two extensions. The western extension is a square-shaped room with a typical medieval cross vault, used today as the entrance. The northern extension was a rectangular room built along the northern wall; now it is no longer visible partly due to the construction of a vaulted burial chamber (see below). The evidence of this room's existence was revealed by several floor levels uncovered outside the chapel and associated with its northern wall (Fig. 15).

The chapel is traditionally known to be a place of worship for fishermen, who come to ask for the protection and blessings of the Virgin Mary prior to going out to sea. The walls are covered with paintings, which are very

badly preserved today. They depict Saints George and Demetrios riding horses, the baptism of Christ, and the Virgin Mary calming the winds, to name a few. According to oral tradition, it is believed that this chapel is the first church dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the entire Near Eastern coast.

After the Middle Ages, the chapel was surrounded by an Ottoman cemetery that belongs to the Greek Orthodox community, which makes up the majority of the local population of Anfeh. Excavations to the north of the chapel revealed an eighteenth-century burial, which was cut through the thirteenth-century floor level associated with the chapel. This burial consists of a rectangular vaulted chamber, oriented toward the east, and built of medium-sized well-cut sandstone cobbles. During the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) as well as other periods of instability, the site of the chapel and its adjacent area were the target of illegal excavations by treasure hunters. Unfortunately, many looters' pits have been identified. Also, the late Byzantine mosaic pavement to the south of the chapel had been partially uncovered and was then refilled with rubble.

The quantity and variety of pottery material revealed in such a small chapel was quite unexpected, given the recent activities of vandals who left their mark on this narrow space. The material recovered constitutes new evidence for the occupation of the promontory of Anfeh



FIG. 9
Saydet el-Rih (“Our Lady of the Wind”) chapel
before its excavation and restoration. (Photo by
N. Panayot Haroun.)



FIG. 10
Saydet el-Rih (“Our Lady of the Wind”) chapel
after its excavation and restoration. (Photo by
N. Panayot Haroun.)



FIG. 11
A cistern carved
into the bedrock
underneath the
chapel of Saydet
el-Rih. (Photo by
T. Louka.)

going back more than 3,000 years. The origin of the unearthed ceramics cannot be ascertained as yet. They could have been brought from afar, that is, from one of the tells around the town of Anfeh or from another Early Bronze Age settlement. Identifying the location of the Early Bronze Age settlement of Anfeh would be highly significant, since Early Bronze Age settlements on the

coast of the northern Levant are quite scarce (Genz 2012: 611). Additionally, the identification of Anfeh with the city of Trieris has yet to be established. It could very well be underneath the modern town. Indeed, houses in the village and on the promontory were built on the remains of mosaic pavements, according to the testimonies of Anfeh's current inhabitants.

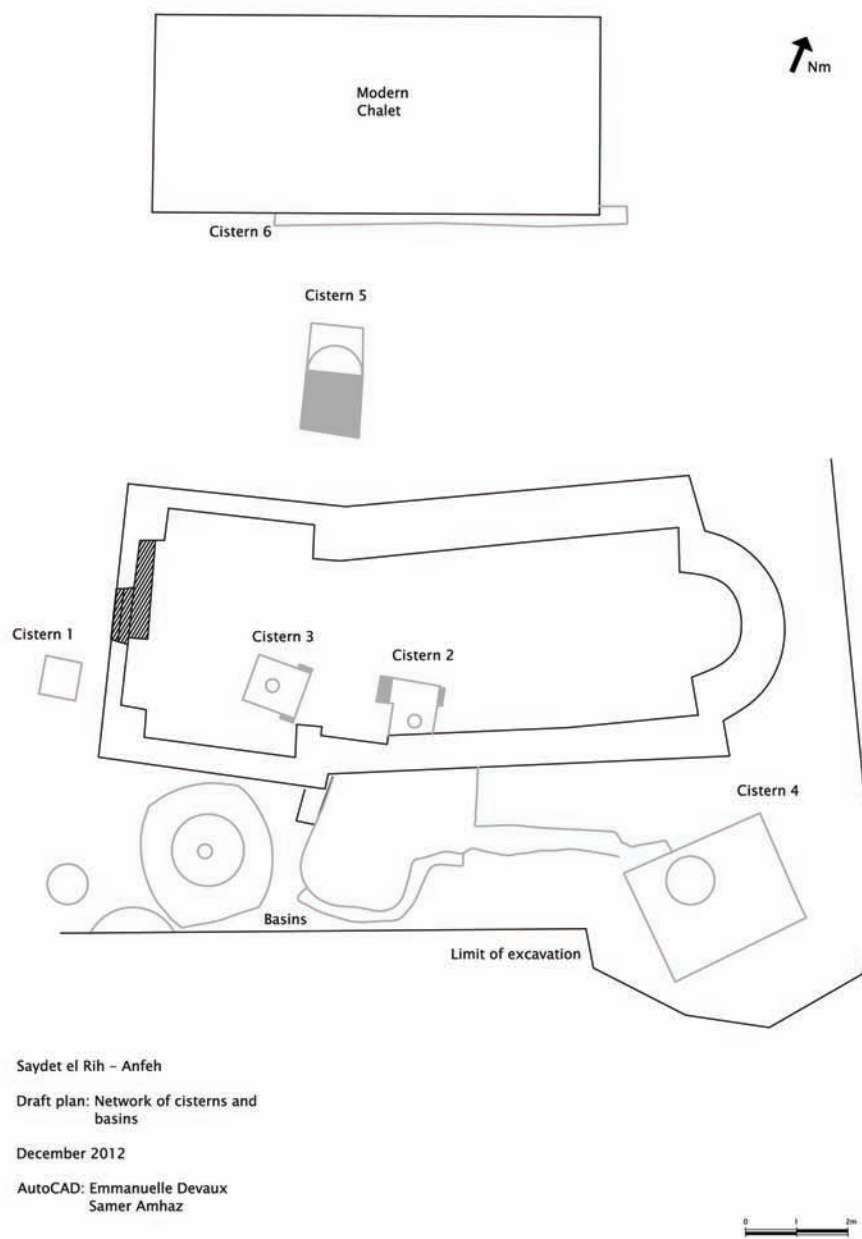


FIG. 12
A plan of the network of cisterns and basins underneath the chapel and around it.
(Drawing by S. Amhaz and E. Devaux.)

All of these questions deserve to be answered and investigated further. Therefore, an awareness campaign has been recently implemented, involving community leaders, town residents, and the scientific team. As a result, the Municipality of Anfeh and the University of Balamand in October 2012 agreed to a sustainable development program for the town. This program includes four main phases as detailed in Table 1.

Implementation and Preliminary Results of the Sustainable Development Plan

The proposed plan of action for the preservation of Anfeh covers a period of eight years starting in 2013. These stages mainly pertain to land and underwater surveys and excavations, restoration and conservation, as well as ethnographic campaigns looking at fishing



FIG. 13
The mosaic pavement with the destruction level on top and the open tank carved into the rock. (Photo by S. Amhaz.)



FIG. 14
The mosaic pavement dated to the sixth/seventh centuries AD. (Photo by S. Amhaz.)



FIG. 15
The vaulted burial from the eighteenth century AD that cuts through the thirteenth-century medieval floor that is associated with the northern wall of the chapel and covers one of the cisterns. (Photo by S. Amhaz.)

TABLE 1. THE FOUR MAIN PHASES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ANFEH

Phase	Objective	Focus
I	Survey	Land and Underwater
II	Archaeological and Ethnographic Work	Several Intrusive Soundings on the Promontory and Surrounding Areas
		Extensive Archaeological Excavations
		Ethnographic Campaigns Concerning Salt Production (Fig. 16) and Fishing Practices (Fig. 17)
III	Restoration	Selected Archaeological and Historical Monuments
IV	Tourism and Sustainable Development	Construction of a Salt Museum and Boutique

practices and salt production. Phases I and II are now being implemented. The methodologies and preliminary results of Phase I are described below.

The land survey covers an area that stretches 5.3 km north–south and less than 2 km east–west, covering an

area of approximately 13 km² (Fig. 18). The survey area is mainly occupied by olive groves, but major disruptions in data acquisition are expected in highly urbanized areas on the outskirts of the modern town and along the highway. The objectives of the land survey pertain mainly to



FIG. 16
Flower of salt. (Photo by R. Kalindjian.)

FIG. 17
A fisherman out at sea in the evening. (Photo by R. Kalindjian.)



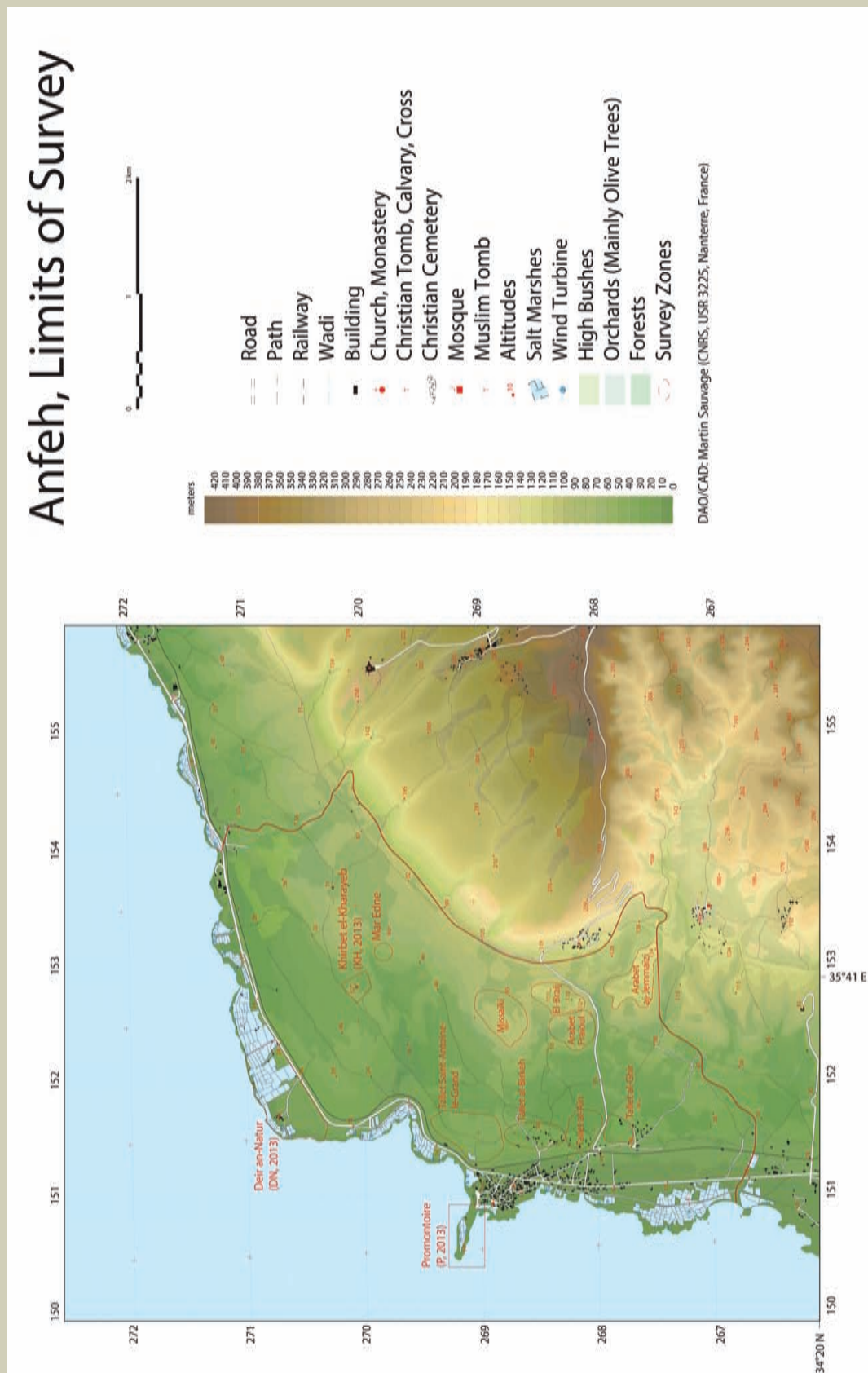


FIG. 18
A map showing the hills and tells that still need to be surveyed. (Map by M. Sauvage.)

determining the historical development of ancient Anfeh as well as identifying sites mentioned in primary sources and are as follows:

1. To locate the site of Anfeh in its spatial and chronological parameters between the Bronze Age and the Middle Ages.
2. To identify through land survey two sites mentioned in Essarhaddon's list of coastal cities of the Levant, going north and starting from Sidon (Lipiński 1994: 158): Qasmiyeh by R. Campbell Thompson (1931: 14) or with Bishmizzine by Emil Forrer (1920: 65) and Edouard Lipiński (1994: 160). However, Bishmizzine is located 9 km east of the coast in the Kurah district, which is one of the reasons why Sassine (1996: 40) suggests identifying Bît-Gisimeia with Arabet el-Jemmaizi, a hill not too far from Anfeh. The second site, which remains unknown, is Birji located between Anfeh and Qalamun according to Lipiński (1994: 160).
3. To validate the hypothesis—based on the prism of Esarhaddon—that the main road linking Anfeh to the hinterland in early antiquity was a crossing between two hills. These could be tentatively identified with El Braiji and Arabet el-Jemmaizi (Scheil 1914: 6–12; Thompson 1931: 10; Lipiński 1994: 158–63).
4. To survey the hills around the promontory for the remains of strategic watchtowers or army settlements that would have had a clear view of Anfeh.
5. To assess the state of preservation of all the monuments on the promontory and its surroundings, including several churches and monasteries which are abandoned and in ruins. These are all within the geographical boundaries already set above. However, one site has been added deliberately: the chapel of Saint Barbara in the village of Barghoun, which lies in ruins but still holds wall paintings in its apse (Fig. 19). This chapel can be compared stylistically and architecturally to the chapel of Saydet el-Rih, thus complementing our understanding of the region's rich religious heritage.

The systematic land survey entails a multi-disciplinary methodology requiring three key approaches. The first

considers the cartography of the site by producing a suitable digital map, based on ancient and modern textual sources along with recent mapping and satellite imagery. This will serve as the basis for integrating archaeological data on the topographical and archaeological maps, with the final purpose of creating tourist-friendly maps. Secondly, a walking survey will be conducted to systematically explore the area in order to identify and inventory all types of evidence of human occupation, such as dwellings, isolated villages, burial sites, military settlements, chapels, monasteries, etc. The recording and description of the remains will yield graphic and photographic documentation that will be integrated into a database. The third approach is a site-wide chronological assessment, which will be done through the collection of surface material to date periods of occupation at each site. An assessment of the gathered material will be conducted at the end of the season by ceramicists. Meanwhile, a ceramic sample from the promontory of Anfeh will be assembled for comparison with the material collected from the surrounding areas.

The underwater visual survey at the site of Anfeh covers an approximate area of 4 km² around the promontory of Ras el-Qalaat and the adjacent coasts (Fig. 20). It aims to conduct a non-intrusive assessment of the submerged archaeological remains in the waters off the Anfeh promontory. It also intends to record, map, and document the seabed around the northern and southern sides of the promontory as well as the coastal stretches to the north and south of the modern village. The architectural elements of the citadel that remain underwater need to be mapped and drawn, and their relation to the citadel or to potential quays established. Finally, this survey may reveal the presence of anchorage points, harbor installations (Fig. 21), and deposit areas such as dump sites and/or shipwrecks.

The methodology for the underwater survey essentially considers the collection of data to produce a bathymetric map using an echo-sounder mounted over the side of a boat. This was done ahead of the first survey campaign in October 2013. The visual survey will be conducted through scuba and free diving techniques with the aim of putting together underwater photo mosaics of the surveyed areas, along with taking detailed photographs of other relevant features, details, and artifacts.



FIG. 19

A wall painting on the conch of the apse at Saint Barbara's chapel in the nearby village of Barghoun.

(Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)

The underwater survey complements the programmed land survey of the Anfeh promontory and its surrounding areas. Such a coastal site cannot be separated from its maritime environment and the potential connections between sea and hinterland engendered by such a location. This investigation will produce an archaeological map that will be useful for site development and the protection of the archaeological remains found. Indeed, the survey findings as well as the proposed layout of the promontory and the village will help the local economy flourish.

Synthesis

The planned land and maritime surveys, followed by systematic archaeological excavation and restoration campaigns of the Anfeh promontory, the village, and the

surrounding areas will greatly enhance our understanding of the spatial and chronological occupation of this region and will highlight the integration of Anfeh's network of exchange and its regional control during different historical periods. Based on an agreement between the Municipality of Anfeh and the University of Balamand, a sustainable development plan will be implemented according to the norms dictated by the Directorate General of Antiquities.

Preserving the archaeological heritage of the area through several initiatives will create economic benefits for the communities by: (1) training people to become part-time guides with the approval of the Ministry of Tourism; (2) engaging the local population with awareness campaigns with the help of local non-governmental organizations and the municipality to encourage the production and sale of local products; (3) enhancing fishing



FIG. 20
A view from the promontory of Anfeh, looking south toward the coast. Red poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) are abundant during the month of May on the site. (Photo by N. Panayot Haroun.)



FIG. 21
The modern fishing harbor of Anfeh. (Photo by R. Kalindjian.)

practices, the main activity of the local population, and encouraging the establishment of small beach restaurants; and (4) encouraging the building of guesthouses and coordinating with outdoors associations, who organize hikes and other environmental activities to include Anfeh and its environs. In addition, the establishment of a salt museum will have an impact on the cultural and social image of the region, enhancing the possibility of creating arts and music festivals. In short this program will place Anfeh on the cultural map of Lebanon by building the local economy while preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region.

Notes

1. For these accounts, see Maundrell (1810) 1963: 53; Buckingham 1825: 459; Thomson 1848: 9; and Renan 1864: 144. For the Latin sources, see Renan 1864: 141–142; and Dussaud 1927: 117.
2. For Strabo, see *Geogr.* 16.2.15.
3. Only one moat can still be clearly identified today. The second one has been buried under the remains of later periods and the salt pans.

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