Report on Mission to
Byblos
(Lebanon)

12-17 November 2001

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Reactive Monitoring Mission to Byblos

(Report prepared by Demetrios Michaelides, January/February 2002)

Preamble

On 11 July 2001, Mrs Regina Durighello (Assistant coordinator, ICOMOS) forwarded to me (electronically) a letter from Mr Jean-Louis Luxen (Secretary General of ICOMOS), with which, he invited me to carry out, on behalf of ICOMOS, a five-day mission "to examine the state of preservation of the archaeological mound and the presentation of the Byblos (Lebanon) World Heritage Site". The letter also defined the terms of the mission and fixed it at some time "before the end of September 2001". The letter arrived by post on 30 July and on the same day I wrote to both Mr Luxen and Mr Henry Cleere, accepting the invitation. After a request from Mr Frédéric Husseini (Director General of Antiquities of Lebanon), the time of the visit was postponed and then eventually fixed for November.

The Mission took place between 12-17 November, and, during my stay in the Lebanon, I was greatly assisted by Mr Jo Kreidi (Director of Projects UNESCO Regional Office), who arranged all appointments and practicalities, and Miss Samar Karam (Archaeologist of the Direction Générale des Antiquités - hitherto DGA). I visited Byblos and Jbeit every day and Miss Karam accompanied me everywhere (Mrs Tania Zaven, the archaeologist working in Byblos being away on maternity leave). She was untiring and willing to pass on to me her first-hand knowledge of the monuments of Byblos and the way of life in Jbeil, the modern town that has succeeded it.

A meeting with the Atelier des Architectes Associés (hitherto AAA), acting as consultants to the World Bank, was particularly well timed. The AAA has prepared an extensive series of proposals for the mis-en-valeur of Byblos and the rehabilitation of its buildings and monuments. These do not involve the World Heritage Site (hitherto WHS) directly but they are all related to it. The proposals for each different section are discussed under the "Recommendations".

During my stay in the Lebanon I also met a fair number of government officials and professionals, all of whom helped me in forming my thoughts on the site and its problems, and all of whom I would like to thank for their assistance. They are listed in the Appendix.
Apart from the invitation "to examine the state of preservation of the archaeological mound and the presentation of the Byblos (Lebanon) World Heritage Site", I had no other guidelines as to what this Report should entail or what it should aim at. So, I have prepared it as I thought fit, discussing the WHS but also the medieval town in which it is found, as well as their surroundings. Unsure whether I was required to just give a clinical picture of the situation or also make proposals, I have included my "recommendations" at the end of each different section of the Report, hoping that these will be of some use.
Byblos as a World Heritage Site

"Few places in the world convey such a sense of remote history as Byblos offers" (M. Dunand, *Byblos. Its history, ruins and legends*, Beirut 1973, p. 9).

Byblos is an unusual site in another way too. Over the years, its excavators have not hesitated to either move buildings from one place to another, or altogether destroy the remains, however important, dating to periods they were not interested in. Perhaps the most spectacular of the buildings one sees today, the Obelisk Temple, and the most picturesque, the Theatre, are not in their original position but were dismantled and rebuilt on their present locations by Maurice Dunand. Even worse, Dunand, great archaeologist that he was, did not hesitate to destroy, amongst many other remains, two large temples, a bath complex and a basilica, in order to reach the Middle Bronze Age levels.

Another surprising feature of the site is the modern jetty, a big eyesore and the most controversial feature in the area, completely overpowering the ancient harbour and the remains of the city.

None of these factors, however, stopped Byblos from being declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. As a matter of fact, the WHS of Byblos and the surrounding medieval town come as an oasis after the concrete jungle that accompanies one all the way from Beyrouth to Jbeil. The beauty of the medieval town and the area as a whole (the unruly concrete sprawl aside) lies in its atmospheric mixture of remains from different periods and different cultures. Every effort should be made to preserve this character, and all interference should be kept to a minimum. After all, there is no need to beautify what is already beautiful. Such an attempt, however successful, will turn it into something clinical and artificial - and, I am afraid, some of the well-intentioned proposals of the AAA, veer towards this.
Byblos/Jbeil Today

I: The Archaeological Park
II: The Harbour and Coastline
III: The Medieval Town
IV: The Modern Town

I: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

Facts and impressions

The WHS of Byblos is the second most visited site in the Lebanon after Baalbek. According to the DGA’s Rapport Periodique 2000, it had 62,208 visitors during 1999 alone.

The site is free from modern constructions and its situation by the sea offers a very romantic and old-fashioned (in the good sense) enjoyment in ruins. It has the advantage of having the tall Crusader castle from where the visitor can have a superb panorama (figs 1-2) of the whole area, marred only by the disproportionately large modern jetty on one side and the mostly untidy and ugly modern urban development on the other.

I:a: General appearance
I:b: Monuments and their Condition
I:c: Readability of monuments and need? for reconstruction
I:d: Visitor Aids
I:e: Site Museum
I:f: Perimeter wall/ fencing of the ancient site
I:g: Staff
Fig. 1. View from Crusader castle towards east

Fig. 2. View from Crusader castle towards south
I:a: General appearance

My visit was very privileged since it was preceded by 5/6 months of intensive work on the site. This involved cleaning, partial restoration, creation of pathways etc (by Mrs Makaroon and her team), and aimed at getting the site ready for the large numbers of visitors that the International Summit of French-speaking Countries was expected to bring. The summit, incidentally, was eventually postponed. I understand that the general sprucing up involved the removal of about 30 lorries of rubbish from the site, an indication that before these works were carried out, it must have been pretty dirty and untidy. I also understand that, on several occasions the dry weeds caught fire that spread over the ancient remains - the effects of one such recent fire are still very evident despite the new vegetation growing over the burned patches.

In any case, the site was free from unseemly weeds and appeared very neat and tidy, the only exception being some rubbish in the large open pit of the tomb with the sarcophagus of Abi-shemu. It will be interesting to see if it maintains the same aspect after the end of Spring when the wild vegetation dies back.

The site is fairly well provided with rubbish bins (fig. 3). Their design in no way blends with their environment, but at least they are there.

The site was, at some point, fitted with floodlights for illuminating it at night. I had no occasion to experience this myself, and I understand that it does not really happen. As it is, there are unsightly electricity wires in many different parts of the site (fig. 3). Some had originally been covered with concrete and this has now crumbled or altogether perished in places, making the situation worse.

Recommendations:

Continue to keep the weeds down and the site free of rubbish. Make sure the rubbish bins are emptied regularly. The removal of dry undergrowth etc will also diminish the risk of fire.

If the site is to be lit up at night, it is necessary to plan again and mask the wiring.
I:b: Monuments and their Condition

Many of the buildings are in bad need of repair and unless conservation work or protective measures are taken immediately, many risk collapsing. The rebuilt Obelisk Temple (fig. 4/5) and the Theatre (fig. 4/19) are in fairly good condition, and it is a wise decision not to allow visitors to enter the temple. Elsewhere, however, the situation is nearly tragic. Often, this has been brought about by the excavators of the site who, looking for always earlier remains, have over-excavated, leaving stone walls sitting on crumbly and fragile sections of earth. This
Fig. 4. Plan of the WHS of Byblos

is particularly so in the area of the Great Residence and the Prehistoric dwellings in the SW corner of the site (fig. 5). Heavy rains could easily bring down some of these ancient walls. In fact, at the other end of the site, near the "Primitive Ramparts" to the NE of the site, a large section of the monumental and much sturdier walls has already collapsed into a heap of stones and soil (fig. 6).

The traditional houses that once existed over the site were demolished long ago so that excavation could proceed. The only exception is a house that Maurice Dunand kept in order to use during the excavations, and which is certainly an important and beautiful feature of the site (fig. 4, west of 13). It has, however, been excavated all around and it now sits on a mound of earth which is gradually being washed away by the forces of nature (fig. 7). This looks ugly and archaeologically unprofessional but will also gradually undermine the house.

The situation is even worse on the east of the Primitive Ramparts. Here, the ancient walls, which also sit on the edge of a high earthen section, were consolidated, in a way
Fig. 5. Over-excavated remains in the SW end of the site

Fig. 6. Wall collapse near the "Primitive Ramparts"
commonly employed in the 1960s and 1970s, with an overabundant use of concrete. This is now beginning to crumble and the whole thing is precarious. The way it is, presently, being propped up with wooden poles is both unprofessional and inefficient (fig. 8).

The Neolithic Houses are one of the most important features of the site. The area in which they are found has been fenced off. This provides protection from visitors but it is not enough. The once beautifully preserved floors of these buildings have crumbled away and, in any case, no visitor can understand what they represent (fig. 9, foreground).

Another sad sight is offered by the 3rd millennium BC Temple, that preceded the Obelisk Temple, and that was unearthed after the dismantling (and relocation) of the latter. I was unable to see the condition of the floors and some of the lower structures because these were covered with plastic sheets and gravel for protection. What was exposed, however, is in
Fig. 8. Propped walls east of the "Primitive Ramparts"

Fig. 9. Neolithic Houses
very poor condition indeed. The large earthenware purification basins, once preserved almost to their entirety, have cracked and crumbled, and several pieces are now missing (fig. 10).

The lifted mosaic floors found just beyond the ticket office, on either side of the ramp leading to the Crusader castle, and one of the first things the visitor sees, are in a deplorable condition (figs 11-12). Most of them give the impression of having been lying there forgotten for many decades. These mosaics are not in situ and are now fixed onto slabs of concrete. In most cases, the iron reinforcements in the concrete have become oxidized and have swollen causing the concrete to crack and the mosaic to fall to pieces. In some cases the iron rust has stained the tesserae, in others the tesserae have lost adhesion and have fallen out. The condition of other mosaics left in situ near the Nymphaeum, at the back of the building now housing the Municipality and the old Serail, is even worse. Here the tesserae are almost completely detached from their original bedding and now lie loose on the surface of the soil. Elsewhere, lack of maintenance has resulted in the stone tesserae exfoliating or cracking. Their total destruction is a matter of time.
Figs 11-12. Crumbling mosaics on either side of entrance to WHS
Recommendations:

Wherever possible, refill the old excavations in order to avert the collapse of the walls and the stratigraphic sections. There are several scientific methods of doing this without disturbing the evidence, and these are both fairly inexpensive and reversible.

Where this is not possible, the soil on which the later walls sit should be protected from wind and rain erosion. In 2000, such protection was provided by Mrs Makaroon and her team, to (3rd millennium BC) structures east of the Obelisk Temple, consisting of a stone covering of the earthen surface (fig. 13). The use of stone is efficient and tasteful, and there is a demarcation of where the modern section begins. If one wanted to be critical, one could say that it misleads the ordinary visitor to thinking that it is an ancient wall, or, even worse, that it is part of the wall that it is actually supporting. I can think of no other solution (where back-filling is not possible) so this method should be used before the walls collapse - especially since it only needs locally found stone and generally inexpensive materials.

Fig. 13. Stone-covering protecting earthen section below stone wall
The remains of the Neolithic houses should be scientifically reburied (see above) before they disappear altogether. This is rather urgent as they are already in an advanced state of decomposition. A replica of a well-preserved example can be easily and inexpensively constructed on top of the soil covering the original remains.

The 3rd millennium BC Temple needs looking after too. The plastic sheets and gravel covering its floors can only be accepted as a temporary and short-term protective measure. I understand that the present plastic sheets were put there around 1994/5, and I cannot believe that they can last for much longer. In any case, in a climate, such as that of Byblos, the plastic will eventually create a hot-house effect that will encourage the germination of seeds that will destroy the remains. In order to preserve them, the floors must be scientifically reburied (see above) - something that, no doubt, will detract from the tourist value of the building. If this is not desirable, another way of protecting this building would be to roof it with a simple structure and provide walk-ways (detached from the original floors), which should be strictly followed by the visitors. Such a roof would also provide some protection for the clay basins. It would be better, however, for these basins to be removed to the museum and replaced by replicas.

The mosaics found on the site of Byblos, either in situ or transferred onto concrete slabs, must be protected since they are already perishing at an alarming rate. Given their number, treating each one of them in the right way would be very expensive. They are certainly not all of the same importance, so a priority plan should be made before treatment begins. All of them need to be moved under cover and away from the rain in order to reduce the rate of corrosion. The better examples need to be transferred from the concrete blocks onto new modern supports that will not damage the decorated surface. This is a costly but feasible process given that there are specialized mosaic conservators working in the Lebanon, who could at least start by giving these floors a first aid treatment. These mosaics could be stored or exhibited, according to their quality, in the old khan or other such listed buildings on the east side of the Medieval town, which could be turned into a museum (See III:d, below). This
would also house the other mosaics, some of them very important, that are now found in many different places of the inhabited nucleus (see III:g, below).
I: Readability of monuments and need for reconstruction

The monuments of Byblos, as they survive today, are not, strictly speaking, spectacular, in the sense of, let us say, those of Baalbek. The whole site, however, is beautifully atmospheric and evocative. Little needs to be done, in terms of reconstruction, to "improve" the monuments, which are better left as they are. The Roman Nymphaem is the only case where partial reconstruction, which seems fairly easy, would enhance greatly the site. It would also bring to the fore a very important monument from an illustrious period in Byblos' history, which, except for the "displaced" theatre and the small colonnade, is not otherwise represented on the site.

The excavators' interest in the earlier phases of Byblos' history has deprived us of most Hellenistic and Roman remains. The situation is made even worse by the fact that practically all publications deal with the prehistoric remains of Byblos, something that hinders the understanding of a town that certainly flourished during those periods.

Reccomendations:

After careful study, and if enough funds can be raised, the Roman Nymphaeum could be partially reconstructed. Such a reconstruction programme could start with a re-evaluation of J. Lauffray's fairly detailed publication ("Une fouille au pied de l'acropole de Byblos", Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth IV, 1940, 7ff.), and should be provided with replicas of some of the several beautiful statues that were found there during excavations. This would provide Byblos with a spectacular monument, and remind the visitor of a splendid phase in the city's history, most monuments of which seem to have been sacrificed in the search for earlier and "more important" remains.

Students should be encouraged to study the Hellenistic and Roman remains of Byblos so that visitors and scholars have a better understanding of the city's history and development, as well as of the few remains from these periods that have been allowed to remain on the site.
I:d: Visitor Aids

The monuments on the site are very important but not always spectacular and, even less frequently, easy to understand. At the moment, apart from one good and informative panel in the Crusader tower, the visitor has no other aid to find his/her way around and, even less, understand the topography and the monuments. I understand that another sixteen such panels in three languages (Arabic, French, English) are being prepared.

Recently constructed (June 2001) pathways help the visitor find his/her way around the site (figs 14-15, see also figs 2,3 & 13). These are well thought out and offer a choice between a short and a long itinerary. Ingeniously, where possible, they follow the tracks of the old railway lines (used in the past for disposing of the soil from the excavations) which have now become a feature of the site. I was told that, ever since these were constructed, visitors have been adhering to them and have almost stopped walking all over the ruins. Mrs Makaroon explained that the pathways had been designed so as to interfere as little as possible with the "original" surfaces. Roughly, they consist of a textile covered with gravel. The gravel is treated so that it partly adheres to the textile. The pathways seem effective and are aesthetically pleasing, although in other than flat terrain they give the impression of being unable to withstand the treading of many visitors.

Fig.14. Recently constructed pathway following rail tracks
Early November was a very pleasant time to visit the site but I can imagine that a visit during the hotter months of the year must be quite tiring, especially since, apart from a patch of trees planted by Maurice Dunand near the 3rd millennium BC Temple (see fig. 2), there is no other shade on the site. There are no benches or anything else for the tired visitor to sit on. The toilets at the very entrance of the site (before one reaches the Crusader castle) and very far from the ancient remains are quite inadequate.

Reccomendations:

Make sure that the plan for equipping the site with more explanatory panels with text and drawings is carried out efficiently.

The tomb of Abi-shemu, the only one to still house its important sarcophagus, needs to be made more easily accessible. Descent into it, is at the moment dangerous.

In view of the authorities’ wish to make Byblos one of the main tourist destinations of the Lebanon: Include the pathways in a maintenance-plan to guarantee their continual functionality and appearance. At the moment, there are no provisions for making the site accessible to handicapped people. Something should be done towards solving this problem, at least for part of the site. Also provide benches and
some kind of shade, as well as better toilet facilities

On the other hand, part of the beauty of the site is the fact that it is free from such modern constructions and fittings. So any kind of visitor-oriented upgrading will have to be minimal.
I: Site Museum

One shortcoming of the site at the moment is that it is deprived of practically all artifacts that have been found there over the years. Many of these are very important archaeologically (several, like the sarcophagus of Ahiram, and the mosaic of the Rape of Europa, are of world renown) and aesthetically pleasing, and they now hold pride of place in the National Museum of Beyrouth. Several rooms in the Crusader castle are presently being modified and equipped to house a small local museum, part of which will be provided with audio-visual information relating to the site and its history. The rooms were clearly in a terrible condition before work for this museum began. The work carried out so far is well conceived, and thoughtfully and tastefully executed. The rooms appeared dry (but this should be checked again during the rainy season) and traditional plaster (without cement, I was assured) was used for the walls and the joints. Care was taken to save a surviving section of the old plaster preserving some interesting graffiti. All other fittings were modern. My reservations regarding this museum are, on the one hand, its very small size compared to the wealth of finds from Byblos, and, on the other, the fact that the really important finds are unlikely to be relinquished from the National Museum to return here. One way of remedying the latter would be to make replicas (but the local museum is small) and even better, to have them put well into the fore in the audio-visual programme.

Another concern is that although, as I mentioned, some rooms of the castle are being tastefully and efficiently restored in order to house the museum, there is no overall plan for the conservation and mis-en-valeur of the castle as a whole. This is a great pity, as it will no doubt lead to problems in the future.

Recommendations:

Prepare a general plan for the paced restoration and mis-en-valeur of the Crusader castle.

Complete the museum in the Crusader castle, and bring some objects (e.g. a few of the many bronze figurines from the temple of the Obelisks), make replicas of some of the very important finds (e.g. the sarcophagus of Ahiram) and certainly give good coverage to all in the audio-visual programmes.
Ideally, a much larger museum is needed for such an important site. This could contain: a/ Replicas or better (some of) the originals now in Beyrouth, b/ Finds presently kept in store in the Crusader castle, c/ Objects now found in private gardens around medieval Byblos (see III:e and fig. 30, below), and d/ The mosaic fragments found in public spaces (see III:f, and fig. 36, below).
I:f: Perimeter wall/ fencing of the ancient site

The site is delimited sometimes by the adjoining buildings, sometimes by ordinary fencing and sometimes by old, purposely built stone walls with fencing.

Recommendations:

All the above can do with some repair, especially the fencing. There is no need to demolish the old, purposely built walls in order to replace them with something new - which is something proposed by AAA. These walls are perfectly O.K. and serve their purpose. Even if new walls/fencing were to provide something conceptually more modern and, perhaps, aesthetically more pleasing, there are many more things on which time and money can be more beneficially spent.

I:g: Staff

One serious problem the WHS and Byblos as a whole face is lack of permanent staff for scientifically checking and maintaining such an important and rather problematic area. There is one archaeologist (overburdened with a lot of other duties, anyway), but no architect nor conservator working permanently on the site. There are three guards but they work on different shifts which means that they are never there all together. The effect is that the site is largely unguarded, something that will certainly become a serious problem when, as is intended, the site attracts more tourists.

For the negative effects of the shortage of staff in other parts of the town, see, for example, IV:e below.

Recommendations:

Increase staff. Allocate an architect and a conservator who will "look after" the site on a more permanent basis. Increase guards and have them patrol the site.
II: THE HARBOUR AND COASTLINE

II:a: Ancient/Old Harbour
II:b: Modern jetty
II:c: Ancient Installations/ Harbour below Byblos mount
II:d: Coastline South of Byblos Site
II:e: Coastline North of Byblos Site

II:a: Ancient/Old Harbour

The Old Harbour, although shorn of the romantic aspect one sees in old photographs, still preserves a lot of its magic (fig. 18). It also acts as a link between the modern, the medieval and the ancient town. It is still used by the fishermen of Jbeil and also hosts an assortment of small boats. Some of the modern buildings facing on its side are not amongst the best. Most of the medieval/old ones are in bad need of repair.

Recommendations:

Preserve the character of this harbour. Its present aspect may not be exactly that of its famous ancient predecessor but it is of the right scale and gives a good idea of what it must have been like in earlier times. Any enlargement will destroy this, as will the proposed construction of tourist attractions (Phoenician ships etc) on the land side.

The medieval buildings in and around the harbour must be carefully repaired so as to preserve their present character. They and the harbour as a whole must certainly not be "prettified".

Strict control should be exercised so that there are no more incongruous modern buildings facing the harbour.

The harbour and its life are directly related to the modern jetty. For this reason, see the discussion and recommendations in II:b, below.
II:b: Modern jetty

The modern jetty is ugly and spoils the view from almost everywhere in the ancient and medieval town (fig. 16). It was, unfortunately, constructed before Byblos was declared a WHS, so one will just have to live with it. One of the reasons for building it was to provide protection for the old harbour, something that it has apparently not succeeded in doing. I understand from the Mayor of Jbeil, that since its construction, the jetty has become very popular with the inhabitants, for whom it is a favourite promenade and snapshot spot. He also told me that a large part of the Byblos Festival, an annual event the town is really proud of, takes place on the jetty, and could not, in fact, take place anywhere else.

Fig. 16. Air photograph of ancient and medieval Byblos showing modern jetty dwarfing old harbour
**Recommendations:**

What must certainly not happen here is to extend the jetty in order to turn it into a marina. Nor should it be extended for it to be used for mooring tourist ships that will come on day visits to the site. I have heard mention of both these possibilities. There is a danger that any extension of the jetty will turn it into a pleasure port without the necessary facilities. With or without facilities, this will have a disastrous effect on the whole environment of the old harbour and ancient site. As far as the marina is concerned, there seems to be no need for it since there are several marinas in a stretch of about 40kms along the coast, and many more if one goes towards Beyrouth. Some work needs to be done at the sea-end of the jetty, which has collapsed, but this should be kept to a minimum.

During my discussions with the authorities, I was told that the Old Harbour is in imminent danger and that the sea will destroy it together with the livelihood of the fishermen that use it. This, unless the jetty is extended at a given angle that will discourage the waves from driving straight into the harbour during the winter months (fig. 17). I am not convinced that this is the best or only way that this problem can be resolved. The small original harbour, one of the *raisons d'être* of Byblos, will be (and to some extend it already is) completely overpowered by the gigantic jetty. Moreover, the projected extension will block the view of the open sea from the harbour (fig. 18) and from the Medieval town to at least the level of Pepe's Restaurant. Cutting off the view of the open sea from a town that to a large extent owes its illustrious past to it, is unacceptable. After all, I understand that the period during which the sea is really rough and poses such threats totals, on average, about three months per year.

There is another factor to consider. There is absolutely no guarantee that the extension of the jetty will solve the problem. In fact, there have been no impact studies and it cannot be predicted how the sea currents will behave in an altered environment. Before any further discussions/work in relation to the jetty, the authorities will have to call in an expert (through UNESCO?) who will carry out an impact study. Apart from all that has been mentioned already, there is also the danger that such a jetty might cause the eating away of the coast to its south, i.e. the foothills of the Byblos mound.
Fig. 17. Projected extension of jetty
Something else should also be done at the same time. H. Frost, time and time again, has underlined the absolute necessity of studying systematically the sea bottom in and around the ancient harbour, before any work is carried out in the area. She has even discussed the possibility of creating an underwater museum after the study is completed. As far as I can gather no such study has taken place nor is one being planned. I believe that this is one area that pressure has to be exerted in order to get this vital study done before it is too late.
II:c: Ancient Installations/ Harbour below Byblos mount

The coast below the site is dominated by the huge spoil heaps, that have piled there after decades and decades of excavations (fig. 19). At present there is a small path along the coast leading from the jetty to an area of extensive rock and reef formations (fig. 20), and then

Fig. 19. Coast below site and spoil heaps

Fig. 20. Spoil heaps and reef formations at south end of WHS
beyond the eastern end of the site and to El Chiny bay (fig. 21). In the rocks and reefs there are considerable ancient remains (fig. 22). For some years now, Honor Frost has been underlining the importance of these reefs. She has argued (see already mentioned 2001 Report, and H. Frost [with an Appendix by C. Morhange], "Mission de prospection marine à Byblos", September 1998, for BAAL) that the old harbour is too small for either handling bulky cargo or accommodating large ships, and could not possibly have been used for the ancient export of cedar wood, with timber up to 30 metres long. M. Dunand had already suggested the possibility of an haute-fond, lying out to sea off the south bay that could have served as an anchorage for cedar-carrying ships. Frost has now shown that, almost certainly, all these rock formations, the ancient cuttings and the El Chiney bay beyond, are all related to these activities. In fact here, the timber could have been easily lowered down the valley to sea level and onto ships - something that is impossible in the old harbour.

Fig. 21. Reefs and possible open harbour with El Cheney bay on the south
Recommendations

All the plans being discussed in relation to this part of the site find me in total disagreement.

The AAA has proposed to build a walkway that will take the visitor all along the coast. This will be made of wood and will branch out, at regular intervals, in order to reach platforms constructed on the reefs out in the sea. Why are such a walkway and platforms necessary? Wooden structures in direct contact with the sea will require constant monitoring and continuous maintenance. Given the lack of staff, who is going to do this? Even if the staff is found, such maintenance will be costly.

Given that the pressure for extending the jetty is based on claims that the sea is very rough and will destroy the harbour, I think it is unreasonable to even consider placing wooden platforms in an even more exposed part of the coast. Wooden pathways along the shore will face the same problems. The inhabitants of Jbeil have been using the present narrow path for centuries. Admittedly, this has suffered some damage when machinery passed from here to transport stone for the construction of the
jetty. Also, it is sometimes difficult to negotiate. All that needs to be done here, however, is clean the existing path, make it a bit wider and have a handrail added where necessary. This will have minimum impact on both site and coast, and it will be easy and relatively cheap to maintain. Needless to say, together with this, the ancient remains in this area need to be cleaned and rehabilitated into the ancient nucleus.

The same AAA plans propose to cover the pebbly beach below the site with sand and construct there "adequate services and facilities for a tourist beach". This should not be allowed in what is effectively a WHS area. In any case, why temper with a natural landscape in order to create an artificial and, definitely, costly-to-maintain one? There are plenty of other places where people who like sandy beaches can swim.

A road is also being discussed in relation to this stretch of coast. The road will be temporary and will serve the heavy machinery needed for the construction of the new bit of the jetty, the creation of the sandy beach etc, after which it will be removed. Such a road will be disastrous. The stretch of level land along the beach is narrow and building a road will necessitate either cutting into the side of the mound or filling in the rocky formations in the sea. This will have very negative effects on landscape and site, neither of which will ever look the same again. Moreover, such a road poses a serious danger to the WHS. This has transpired from discussions I have had with archaeologists who know the area and its morphology, and, above all, with coastal geomorphologists, including Christophe Morhange. This part of the site and the massive spoil heaps sit on poor quality consolidated sandstone that in its turn sits on clay. This makes it very precarious, and the geomorphologists assure me that the vibrations from heavy vehicles will almost certainly create landslides and cause this end of the site to collapse. It is a miracle that nothing happened during the construction of the jetty but, one must not forget that, in 1922, this area suffered a major natural landslide.

What is certainly needed here is a survey at sea level around the base of the peninsula. H. Frost's preliminary investigations have shown that structures recorded on an early plan published by M. Dunand (Fouilles de Byblos I, 1921-1923, Paris 1937-1939) have since disappeared; while others that were not recorded still survive.
II:d: Coastline South of Byblos Site

This is the area beyond the Byblos headland and further south to El Chiny Bay, including a long stretch of sand that makes Byblos such a beautiful site (figs 2, 21). The combination of the sandy beach going up to sand-dunes and then banana and other plantations, further up-hill, are the only reminder of what this coast must have looked like in earlier times.

Apart from this, there are also all the other considerations to be taken into account, in relation to the ancient open harbour mentioned above.

Recommendations:

All that has been recommended above holds true for the south coast too. The situation here, however, is even worse. Unfortunately there are plans to develop the sandy coast and the hills as a holiday and tourist resort. Everybody I spoke to told me that the decision is irrevocable but that the development will be controlled. This is a great shame and I believe that it is worth pressing for saving this beautiful landscape as intact as possible. However controlled the development, its sight will confront, not to say persecute, the visitor wherever he/she is in the WHS of Byblos.
II:e: Coastline North of Byblos Site

The coastline immediately North of the Old Harbour, the Saquiet Zaïdane bay, is quite heavily disturbed. There are rather unsightly bathing establishments (the "Ursin"). Built right into the sea and in what I am told is land belonging to the DGA. Further away there is another, more modern complex ("Byblos Marine" if I am not mistaken) that comes right down to the sea and really spoils the beach (fig. 23). An extensive gas/petrol-works? built on the promontory further north is certainly ugly but far enough not to matter too much. According to the AAA plan, the area immediately outside the medieval city and before this stretch of coast will be turned into a parking area. It would, perhaps, have been better not to have a parking area here but this is clearly a sacrifice that has to be made so that life can continue in modern Jbeil. It will aid the visitor to approach the site, as it is going to be used as one end of the shuttle service that will bring visitors from the coastal highway to the old town and the site (see IV:a below)
**Recommendations:**

The design of the parking area should be as unobtrusive as possible. One positive result of its location is the fact is that it will also be used by the shuttle, which means that coaches and other vehicles will stay outside the medieval town and well away from the WHS.

Short of pulling down the awful things that have been built here, the authorities should make sure that no other such structures are built on DGA land or on the beach. Even if some development takes place, the coastline must be respected.
III: THE MEDIEVAL TOWN

The Medieval town of Byblos provides an absolutely enchanting setting, and every effort should be made to preserve its character. The "Plan Général: Byblos 2" that the DGA provided me with, shows that a large part of the buildings and land within the walled town have been either listed or expropriated. Where possible, the DGA's control/ownership should extend even further.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done here both with regard to the ancient remains and the "living" buildings therein. I have to state *ab initio*, however, that many of the "improvements" proposed by the AAA will, in my opinion, deprive the town of its magic - a magic that is the result of the natural growth/development/abandonment of its different parts over the centuries. What certainly needs to be done is for the buffer zone around the medieval town to be increased, and for the buildings and gardens inside it to be preserved.

III:a: Square in front of entrance to the WHS
III:b: Small church immediately south of site entrance
III:c: Souk
III:d: The building of the Municipality, the old serail and the old khan.
III:e: Medieval walls
III:f: Area north of site entrance
III:g: The rest of the medieval town
III:a: Square in front of entrance to the WHS

Everybody who visits the site has to walk through this square. This is a rather messy affair made to look even more untidy by some very brightly coloured advertisements acting as shop awnings. The square openings preserving ancient remains, most notably large columns, can certainly do with some improvement (figs 24-25). I have not managed to ascertain how much of the ancient remains here are really _in situ_. I presume that since these squares were made in order to leave them exposed, the remains must be _in situ_.

Figs 24-25. Square with ancient remains in front of the entrance to the WHS
Recommendations:

I am not sure how this area can be improved. One way would be to excavate further in order to join the different "pools" of antiquities into a single large space. The lower level of excavated remains thus created can be provided with pathways that will guide the visitor towards the entrance to the ancient site.

I am not in agreement with the proposal of the AAA, which is to fill in the square openings and turn the whole into a large open space with a fountain. The design is very pleasing but it takes no account of the antiquities. Will the columns, which now stand well below street level, be raised to the level of the new square or will they be removed altogether?
III:b: Small church immediately north of site entrance

The remains of this small church are a disgrace. The church as such is invisible while its mosaic floors, transferred onto iron-reinforced concrete slabs, are highly discoloured and falling to pieces (fig. 26). Moreover, the mosaics are covered with all sorts of rubbish. Worse of all, they are in a constantly wet environment since an outlet, on an adjacent roof, lets out water (dirty?) directly onto them. This offers a very ugly sight indeed.

Recommendations:

Although I am all for preserving mosaics in situ, this is not a case I would support. As things are, there is not even a hint (visible at least) of the building they once decorated. So, unless proper provisions are made for protecting these floors (perhaps a simple roof?), they should be removed to a museum/or store. In any case, the site needs to be cleaned and allowed to dry.

Fig. 26. Mosaics of early Christian church near entrance to WHS
III:c: Souk

The present arrangement of the Ottoman souk, on the East of the entrance to the site, although not particularly old is picturesque (Figs 1, 27). It presents a narrow street flanked by shops, provided at the front with low roofs offering shade to shop-owners and passers-by. The buildings on the south of the street, ending on the East with a beautiful group consisting of the Municipality and the old Serail, back onto the ancient site.

Recommendations:

The character of the souk should be preserved. The proposal of the World Bank Consultants is to remove the low roofs from the front of the shops; make a restaurant and construct promenades on top of the southern row of shops, and then cover the whole with wickerwork to provide shade to souk and tourists on the roofs. Although this will provide the visitor with a very privileged view of the site, immediately to the
South, it will spoil completely the present character of the souk and it will add another out-of-character element to what one sees from within the site. I do not consider that such an intervention in what is a character-full part of the town is necessary.

The proposal for providing an external wooden balcony on the Persian archaeological area (part of the WHS) "with accessibility from the shops of the old souk for entertainment" is not worth even discussing.

III:d: The building of the Municipality, the old serail and the old khan

Two of the most interesting buildings in Jbeil are the one housing the Municipality and that of the old Serail (fig. 1). These, as well as a couple of buildings to their north, the old khan and another structure (once a church?) on plot no. 551, are under preservation order and at the authorities' disposal. These traditional buildings are interesting and help to add to the "authentic" character of this neighbourhood.

Recommendations:

The AAA proposes that the Municipality and the old Serail should be rehabilitated and transformed into a "chateau de relais" type hotel and restaurant overlooking the WHS. It seems a shame to dedicate such nice buildings, in direct contact, both visual and physical, with the WHS, to a hotel. One function that has not been considered and that will, I think, solve some of Byblos' problems would be to turn them into a museum. Amongst many other things, these buildings could house those mosaics that can not be safely preserved in situ on the site. They could also offer protection to the other mosaics that are presently dispersed and abandoned to their fate throughout the medieval part of Byblos.

The same can be said of the old khan and another structure (once a church?) on plot no. 551, which in the AAA's project they are designated as "tourism dedicated commercial area for traditional activities, exhibitions and cultural events".
III:e: Medieval walls

The medieval walls of Byblos are quite well preserved and easy to follow for practically their whole circuit. On their interior, they back onto gardens mostly at the rear of private houses, which provide one of the most beautifully picturesque aspects of Byblos (fig. 28). The average visitor cannot, of course, have access to these private gardens. He/she, however, can enjoy most gratifying glimpses of gardens and walls while walking through the town.

![Fig. 28. Back gardens and medieval defences](image)

On the outside, the walls are bordered by a strip of green, a pavement and the main road. This creates a buffer zone that protects the walls and keeps modern building, on the other side of the street, away from the medieval site. At least one of these buildings, however, is too large for such an environment and completely dwarfs the walls (fig. 29).
Fig. 29. Medieval walls dwarfed by modern buildings on their periphery

Recommendations:

The AAA project has plans for improving the medieval walls of Byblos. I am in full agreement with their proposition for widening the footpath/buffer strip on the outside. I would also recommend that the height of the buildings, on the other side of the street (but near the medieval town) be kept low and in proportion to the medieval walls.

The AAA’s idea of reopening the now blocked Tripoli gate on the northern Medieval wall is also excellent. This will provide pedestrian access in front of the municipal parking and ensure continuity of movement through public domain.

I cannot, however, recommend their proposal for building wooden passerelle either on top or along the outside of the Medieval walls. This will take the visitor all around the medieval town, and as an idea it is clever. It will certainly provide the
visitor with excellent views of town and harbour. It is not to be recommended, however, for the following reasons: If the passerelle are to be built on top, an incredible amount of work has to be done beforehand. Long stretches of the walls are in a decrepit condition and they would require considerable rebuilding to accommodate such wooden walkways. Such structures will, moreover, entirely spoil the aspect of the walled town. Another negative element is that although such walkways will provide the tourist with wonderful views, they will also expose the backs of the inhabited houses and their gardens to the eyes of every passer-by, and thus interfere in an undesirable way with the living nucleus of the town.

A priority here is to have the walls properly studied, drawn and consolidated before any rebuilding takes place and before anything, even a wooden structure is built on top or even next to them.

The AAA’s plans for another stretch of the walls, that near the Eastern gate are equally drastic and just as damaging to the medieval structures. Here, they plan the reconstruction of the gate, and the conservation and restoration of the walls making them accessible to tourists.

This human-scale and beautiful aspect of Jbeil, with the gardens going up to the walls, must be disturbed as little as possible. I would, however, recommend the removal to the local museum of some important antiquities, such as marble sculpture, which now lie abandoned in back gardens (fig. 30).

Fig. 30. Marble reliefs in back garden near medieval walls
III:f: Area north of WHS entrance

The area north of the entrance to the site is also very beautiful. There are several interesting buildings and the tree-covered streets leading towards the site are absolutely enchanting (fig. 31). Of great interest in this part of the town is a mosaic with figured compositions accompanied by Greek inscriptions (figs 32-33). This is by far the most important mosaic one sees today in Byblos. The way it is exhibited, on a vertical wall, allows one to see it properly and creates a very pleasant setting. It will, however, eventually destroy it. There are already clear signs of rapid deterioration of both the tesserae and the concrete into which they have been relayed. There is no label or panel explaining where the mosaic comes from or what it represents.

**Recommendations:**

The character of this part of the town must be preserved at all costs. Also, interesting buildings, that reflect the town's history, and collections of antiquities, such as that of the Fondation Pepe Abed (fig. 34) after "tidying up" and scientific selection of artifacts, should be promoted and incorporated in visitor itineraries.
The mosaic, being very important, must be transferred onto a new foundation so that it is not further damaged by the concrete. It should also be protected from rain and the wind as it is very exposed to the elements now. If these conditions cannot be met, it should be removed to the museum.

Figs 32-33. Mosaic with figural scenes
Fig. 34. Pepe's Restaurant and Fondation Pepe Abed
III:g: The rest of the medieval town

There is little to say about the rest of the medieval town except that it is full of charm, and that its character should be preserved at all costs. The area around the Crusader church of St John is particularly beautiful. Here, however, both in front of the Crusader church and in the public gardens behind there are mosaic floors that need to be protected. Those in front belong to an early Christian church (fig. 35). They are better preserved than those of the small church discussed earlier but the site is overgrown and difficult to interpret. Moreover, the mosaics have been relayed on concrete slabs and are beginning to suffer from all the problems this brings about. The mosaics at the back of the Crusader church are an assortment of fragments (always on concrete) vertically and "artistically" exposed, and not always in the best way (fig. 36), in different parts of the gardens There are also some more fragments in the building behind the Crusader church. There is no indication either to their provenance or the context in which they were found. They are there not to illustrate any particular phase of the town's history but simply to act as decorative features in the gardens.

Fig. 35. Early Christian church with mosaics in front of Crusader church
Fig. 36. Mosaic and rubbish bin in gardens behind Crusader church

Recommendations

The same things that have been recommended before apply here too: 1/ Alter as little as possible the character of the medieval town. Certainly avoid such incongruous and ugly constructions as some that are going up at this moment (fig. 37). 2/ Weed and clean the remains and the mosaics of the early Christian church, and either roof them over, bury them or remove them to a protected place. This last is also suggested for the bits of mosaic decorating different parts of the gardens.
Fig. 37. Unwanted "restoration"/extension of old buildings
IV: THE MODERN TOWN

With regard to the World Heritage Site of Byblos, the modern town of Jbeil poses a number of problems, the most important of which are a/ the traffic in the area; b/ the *decumanus maximus*; and c/ the encroaching modern development.

IV:a: Traffic and visitor access to the site

IV:b: The *decumanus maximus*

IV:c: Modern development

**IV:a: Traffic and visitor access to the site**

The plans of the AAA provide for the reduction of traffic to and from the medieval town and the WHS. This will be achieved by providing a shuttle service, starting at the parking area that will be built just inside the coastal highway intersection (at the top of the *decumanus maximus*), and ending at the already discussed parking area on the west of the old harbour. There will also be an intermediate stop near the bottom end of the *decumanus maximus* that will service the adjacent part of the medieval town.

*Recommendations:*

This will relieve town traffic and will also keep coaches and other cars away from the site. Highly recommended.

**IV:b: The *decumanus maximus***

The main roads linking the modern coastal highway with the medieval town and the archaeological park are found on either side of the ancient *decumanus maximus*, the main N-S thoroughfare of the Roman town (figs 1, 38). The *decumanus maximus* was summarily excavated, or rather exposed, as an "avenue", completely dissociated from the ancient city it served. It now appears as an untidy channel with concrete retaining walls, cutting through the modern sprawl, and one would be forgiven for thinking that it was always just a straight
Fig. 38. The *decumanus maximus* with the Crusader castle at the far end

avenue in the middle of nowhere. This, of course, was not the case. On the contrary, it was the heart of the ancient city flanked by colonnades and important buildings, and with a multitude of densely built streets coming off it, all along its length. One, then, cannot help but wonder what has happened and is still happening to the rest of the ancient town. I was told that when ancient remains turn up on a building site, these are excavated before the building resumes. That may well be so in theory but who excavates them and who is ever going to find out what has been found and what has been destroyed? Walking around the modern town, there is no hint anywhere of the splendid ancient city that lies underneath. Considering that most of the buildings there are large modern constructions with basements, it is highly unlikely that anything has been preserved. A sad reminder of what is being lost, are the large numbers of broken columns and architectural fragments, many of best-quality marble, heaped at the northern end of the *decumanus maximus*, just below the coastal highway (figs 38-39). These, I was assured by more than one person, do not come from the excavation of the *decumanus*
Fig. 39. Columns and marble fragments below highway

maximus, which is what I had assumed originally, nor from the WHS. So, where do they come from?

This sad situation is, I am afraid, the result of two factors:

One is that, often, archaeologists forget all but the remains of the period they are interested in. In the case of Byblos, the Prehistoric and Phoenician remains were what interested the excavators and these have been preserved to the detriment or complete destruction of everything else.

The other factor is, I feel, a result of Byblos having been declared a World Heritage Site. This is something that I have observed elsewhere too. What was declared a WHS is only a fraction of the ancient city, and, of course, one cannot preserve everything. But, the fact that a section is preserved under the aegis of UNESCO, acts like a carte blanche for the destruction of everything else, and this is what seems to have happened here. It is inconceivable that even the extent and the limits of the gigantic Hellenistic and Roman city have not yet been properly established.
**Recommendations:**

The AAA proposal includes plans for sprucing up the "channel" of the *decumanus maximus* and providing a pedestrian walkway towards the old city. This should certainly be implemented. Above all, however, the whole length of the street must first be properly excavated. I was told that the law foresees the full excavation of the *decumanus maximus* before the implementation of the modern road plan. But, the two roads on either side of it, joining Jbeil with the coastal highway, were constructed beforehand.

At the same time, more attention must be paid to what is going on in the rest of modern Jbeil. Every effort should be made to establish the extent of the ancient city. Not everything that turns up during construction can, or should be, preserved but as much as possible, ideally everything, should be recorded. Unless the number of staff is increased, this is entirely out of the question. Another certainty, however, is that we will never know or understand Hellenistic and Roman Byblos.
IV:c: Modern development

This is something natural and welcome if the city is not to die away. Unfortunately, because of the political situation of the recent past, urban planning and building control have been very lax. The results of this (aside from the question of the *decumanus maximus* and the ancient city already discussed) are, on the one hand, the undiscriminating demolition of many very beautiful traditional buildings, and, on the other, the growth of really ugly buildings very near the medieval town and the site. One area where the old character still survives to a satisfactory degree is on the south of the Armenian Orphanage. There are new urban plans that I had the chance to examine, and these are on the whole good. They should, however, be modified to further increase the buffer zone, which, as it appears now, is inadequate. This, after all, is the valley of El Chiny leading down to El Chiny bay, that has already been discussed in relation to the open harbour. A wider buffer zone, apart from the obvious advantages it will offer, will also help to preserve some remaining characteristic and beautiful traditional buildings in their environment. One case in point is the area east of the ancient site, just beyond the Armenian Orphanage. Despite some particularly ugly new buildings (fig.40), this is an area with a lot of character preserving a magical mixture of traditional buildings (fig. 41) and banana and other plantations.

*Recommendations:*

Every effort should be made to preserve this part of the town. The new urban plan describes this area as a "B Zone" which means that structures of up to 4 storeys high can be constructed there. This will have a very sad effect on the environment around the WHS and it will condemn the traditional buildings to certain demolition. This area should certainly be changed to B4/E Zone to include it in the buffer zone and thus preserve its unique character. (I hope I did not get the names of the different zones wrong. The essence of what I am saying should, in case, be quite clear).
Fig. 40. Old houses and banana groves replaced by modern buildings

Fig. 41. Old house to the south of the WHS near the El Chiney valley
APPENDIX

Persons consulted during my stay in the Lebanon (in alphabetic order).

Abd El Ahad, Joseph Direction Général de l'Urbanisme
Boccardi, Giovanni UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris
Doumet Serhal, Claude Archaeologist, Special Assistant, The British Museum; and Honorary Research Fellow, University College, London
Hatem, M. Ministére de Transport
Husseini, Frédéric Director General of Antiquities
Kallab, Oussama Architect - Restorer working on Byblos site
Karam, Samar Archaeologist, Direction Général des Antiquités
Kreidi, Jo Projects Manager, UNESCO Regional Office
Liger-Belair, Jacques Architect, Atelier des Architectes Associés, World Bank Consultant
Makaroun, Jasmine Architect responsible for recent conservation/management work on Byblos site
Morhange, Christophe Coastal Geomorphologist, Centre Européen de Recherche et d'Enseignement des Géosciences de L'Environnement, Université Aix-Marseille
Phares, Joseph General Secretary, Fondation du Patrimoine Libanais
Saghieh-Beydoun, Muntaha Archaeologist, Consultant CNRSL
Salameh, Ghassan Minister of Culture
Sfair, Rafael Major of Byblos
Skaff, Isabelle Conservator, Direction Général des Antiquités