



# BAALBEK

## THE PHOENICIANS' ROUTE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Founded by the Phoenicians, Baalbek was later conquered by the Macedonians who called it "Heliopolis" meaning "Always the City of the Sun" for assimilation between the Sun god and the Phoenician divinity Baal. It later became a Roman colony under Augustus, preserving the new name. Today, three main buildings still remain:

• The Temple of Jupiter

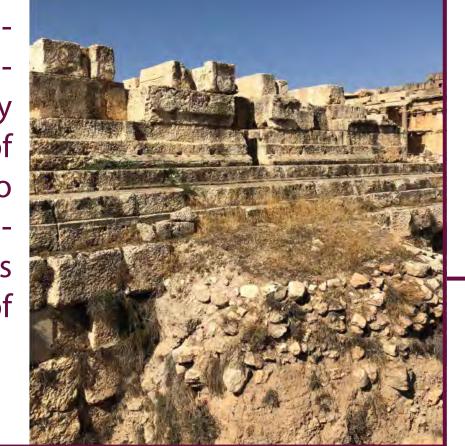
The Temple of Bacchus
The circular Temple of Venus

• The circular Temple of Venus.
A fourth monument, the Temple of Mercury, is located on the hill of Sheikh Abdallah. In July and August, the International Baalbek Festival hosts leading international, regional, local performers and mu-

sicians.
Baalbek is a heritage site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1984).

#### HISTORICAL MAPPING

Under the Roman Temples in Al-Qalaa', excavations have recently shown the existence of ruins that date back to the Phoenicians. It is believed that these ruins used to be the Temple of Baal.

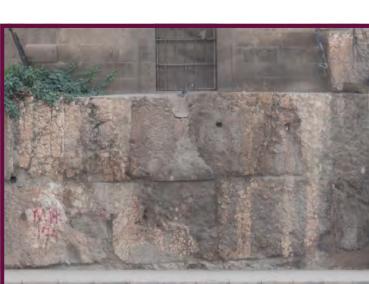


#### Phoenician Ruins



This temple is known from the coins of the Roman emperor Philip the Arab (r.244-249). It has been identified at Sheikh Abdallah Hill, not far from the barracks of the Lebanese army, but only a flight of stairs survives. The temple itself must have been a bit more to the south-west, on the summit of the hill.

### The Temple of Mercury





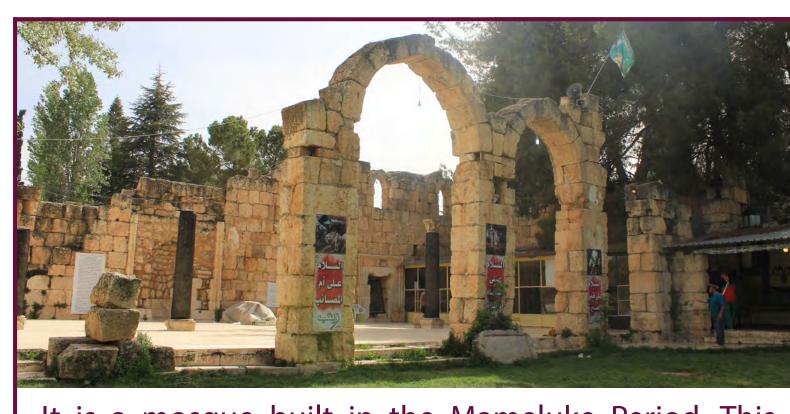
To the right is a scale model of a theater, believed to have stood in Baalbek since the Roman Period. This model is found in the National Museum of Beirut. The remains of this theater have been identified under the Palmyra Hotel. Excavations made by the German mission in 1898 ended up by closing the door and the vaulted entrance that were found since houses were built above them.

#### An Old Theater, Now Palmyra Hotel



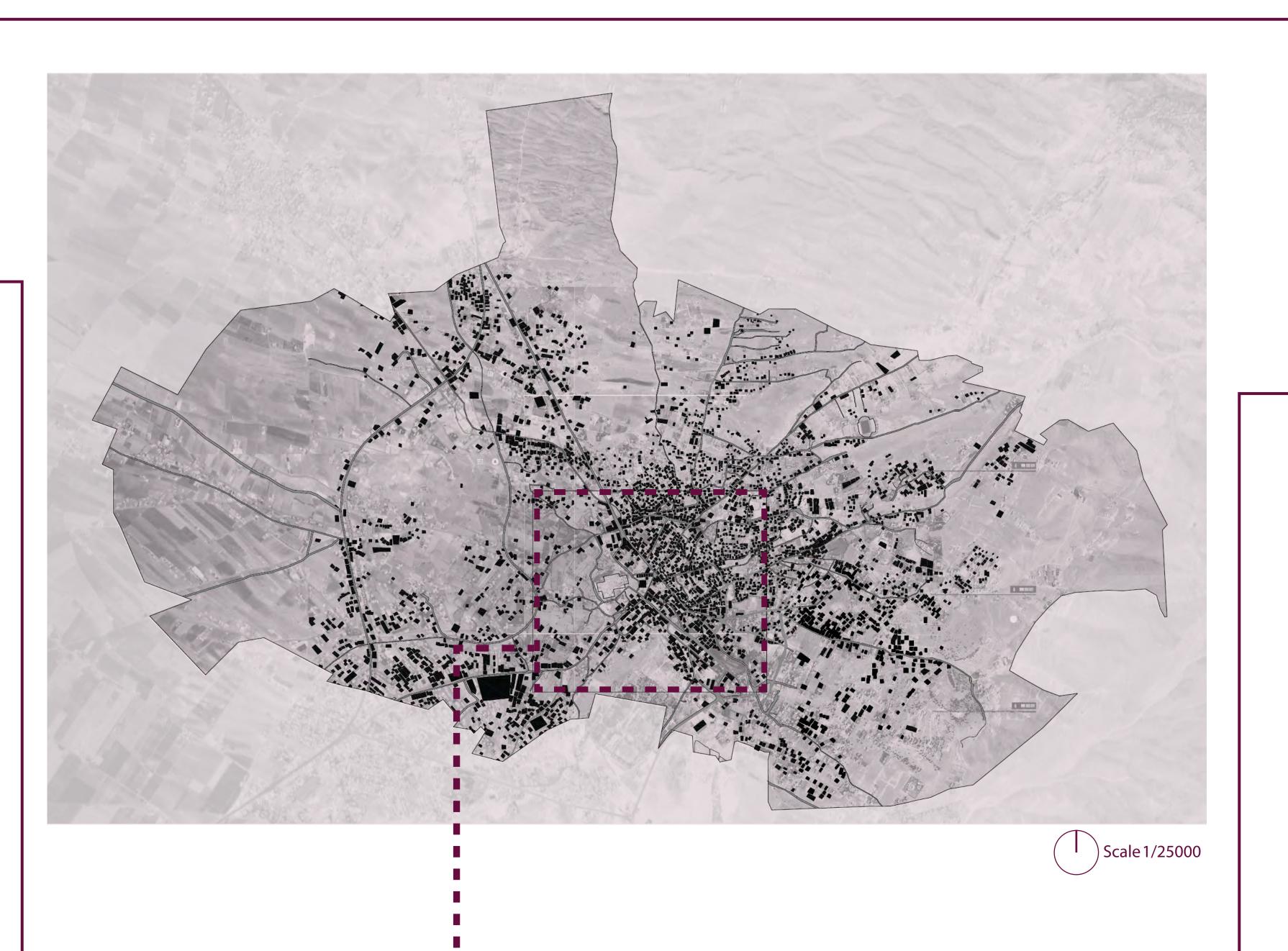
In a quarry to the west of the ancient city of Baalbek lies a monolith with a height of 20 meters and width of 4.5 meters, to be one of the largest stones ever cut by man. This monolith is named "Hajar Al-Hibla" or "Stone of the Pregnant Women". Another monolith has been found next to it but not fully excavated yet and is probably larger.

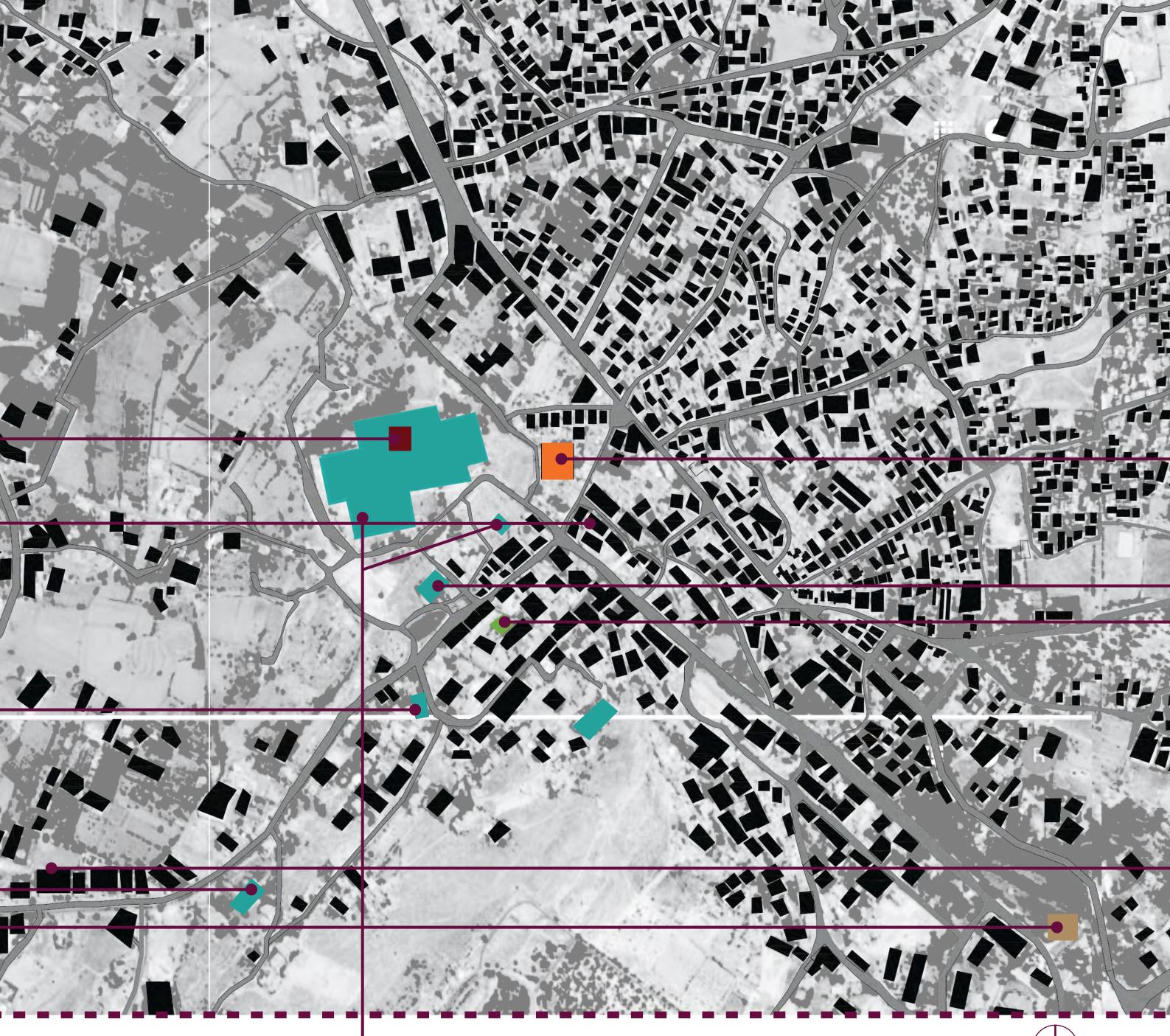
## Stone of the Pregnant Women



It is a mosque built in the Mameluke Period. This mosque was built in honour of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Mohammad.

Ras Al-Imam Al-Hussein Mosque





Legend

Phoenician Civilization (Iron Age) 1200 – 333 B.C.

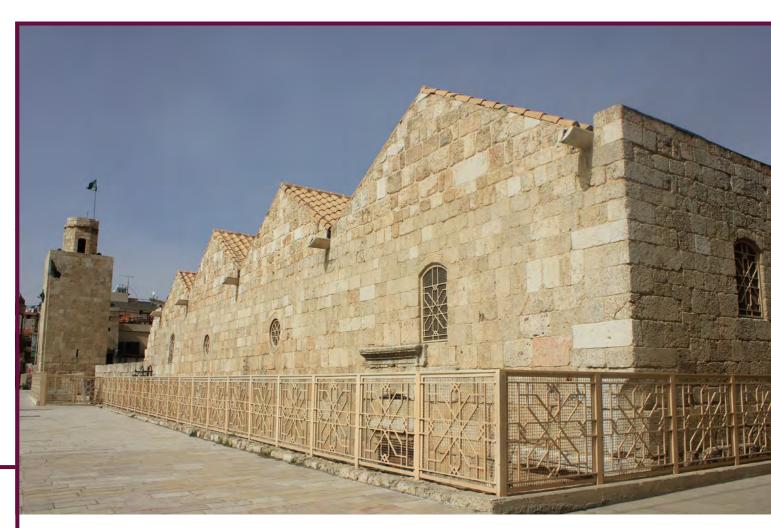
Byzantine Period 300 – 635 A.D.

Mameluke Period 1290 – 1515 A.D.

Greek - Roman Period 333 B.C. – 300 A.D.

Islamic Period 635 – 969 A.D.

Crusader Period 1090 - 1099 A.D.



Located in front of the entrance to the Roman archaeological site, the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century Umayyad mosque was built on the site of the Roman forum, turned into the St. John Byzantine Church in the fourth - fifth century, and incorporates granite and limestone columns taken from the site. It was restored in the 1990's.

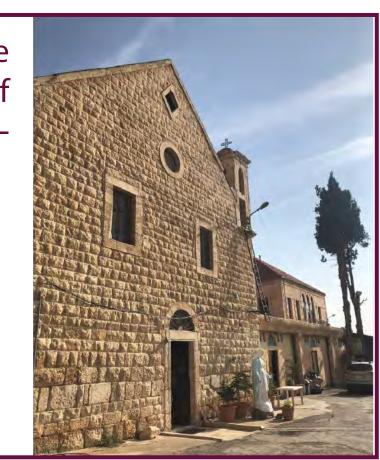
#### The Great Umayyad Mosque



Bustan Al-Khan is a Roman bath in an area in the south-western part of the ancient city, presumably built in late second century A.D. Because of the exposed position at the main entrance of the city and the location nearby the sanctuary of Jupiter, the building composition of the public bath and the huge banquet hall holds a special position in the urban structure of the antique city. It covers a space of nearly 10.000 m<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Bustan Al-Khan**

It is the Greek Melkite Catholic Archbishop of Baalbek, built in the Byzantine Period.

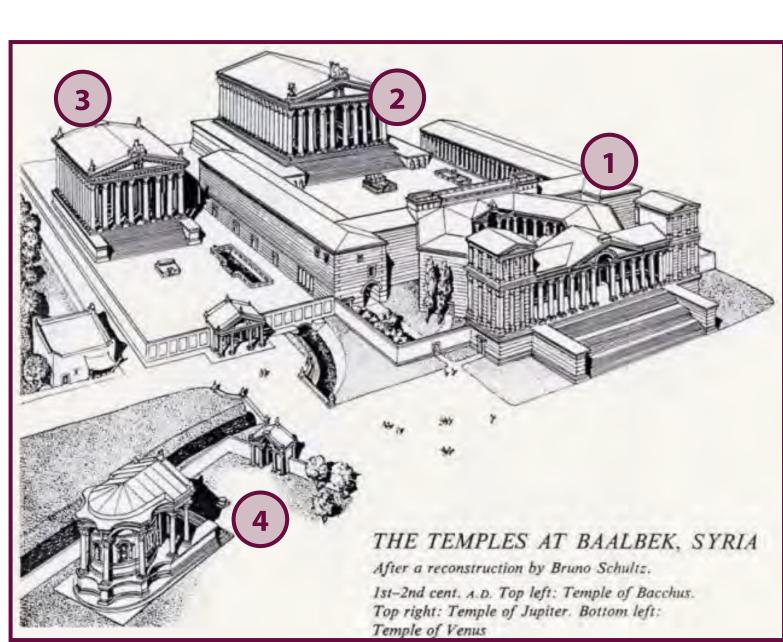


St. Barbara Cathedral



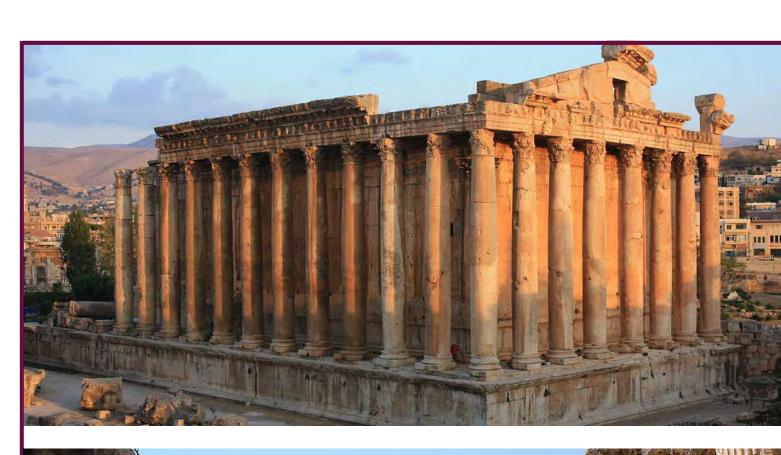
This shrine most likely dates to the Ayyubid Period. It had a dome above the eight columns of red granite. It is located on the left of the city's southern entrance, in an area full of buildings today, after having been in the past a great cemetery.

Qubbat Douris

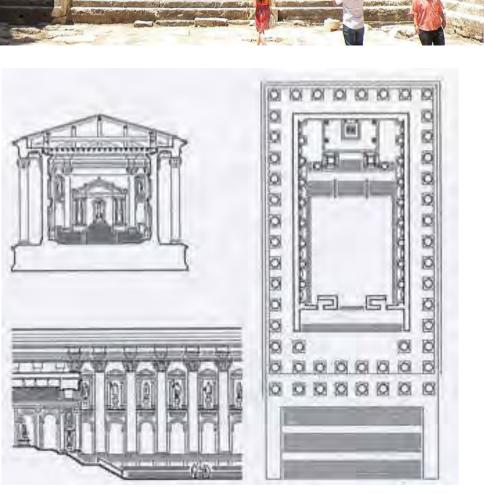


Top right: Temple of Jupiter. Bottom left: Temple of Venus

Baalbek Roman Temples (perspective view)







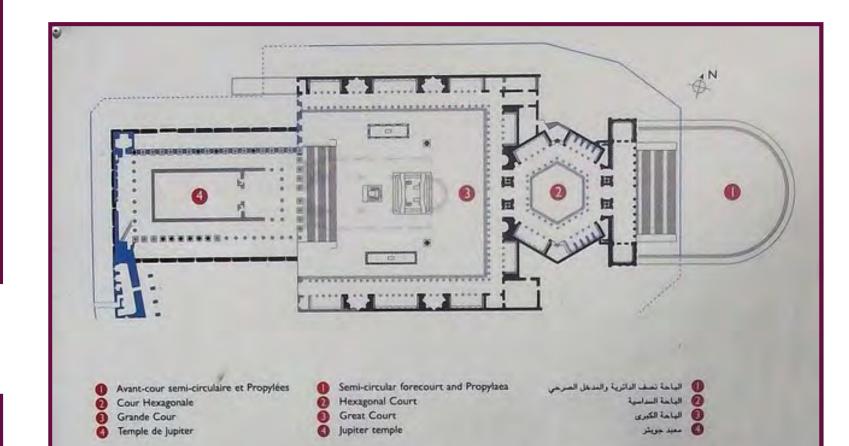
The Temple of Bacchus (60 - 150 A.D.) is the best conserved structure. Its interior span is 62 feet and a monumental gateway 21 feet wide and nearly 42 feet high. Some figurative reliefs depicting Greek gods have survived, though in a very damaged state. Yet, despite its clear importance, very little is known about the purpose of the impressive building. It is larger than the Parthenon in Athens.

3 The Temple of Bacchus

Baalbek Roman Temples

The Hexagonal Forecourt is a six-sided area built between the Propylaea and the Great Court in the early third century A.D. It incorporated 30 granite columns. By the early fifth century, it had been covered with a dome and transformed into a church.

## 1) The Hexagonal Forecourt



The Temple of Jupiter (15 - 55 A.D.) is the greatest temple of Baalbek. It was dedicated to a god who was, at various periods in history, called Ba'al, Hadad, Helios, Zeus, or Jupiter. Rising above a wide flight of stairs, the shrine of the temple of Jupiter in Baalbek was the largest sanctuary in the Roman world, but little survives, except for six Corinthian columns on the south side, which are still carrying their entabla-

## The Temple of Jupiter

The Temple of Venus built in the early third century A.D. is small and round. It has six columns that probably once supported a dome. It is carved everywhere with niches, sculptures (now lost) and other elegant decorations.



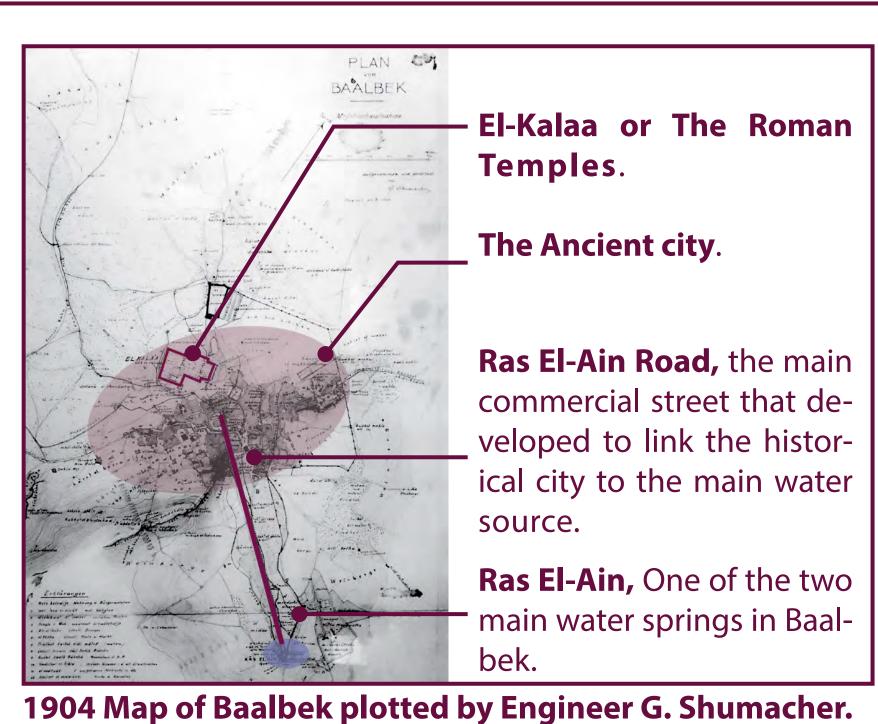
## 4 The Temple of Venus

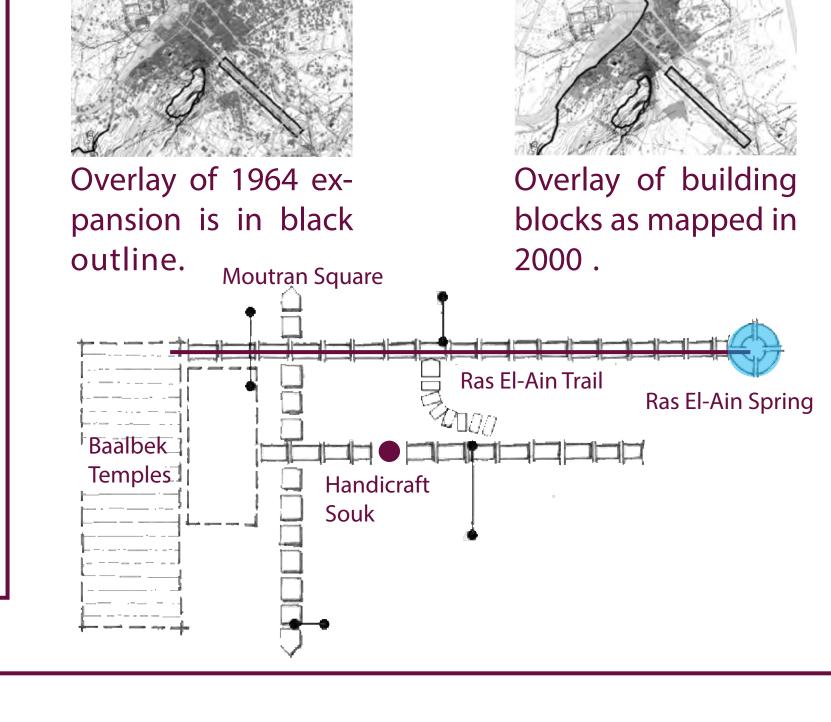
A homage to Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus, the archaeological site in Baalbek is the largest and most impressive Roman temple complex in the world. Amazing in its size, decoration and height, it received UNESCO heritage site status in 1984.

In the fourth century, Christians turned areas of this pagan site into churches, after which the Arabs turned them back into temples in 634.

As protection against the Crusaders, the temple complex was fortified in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. From then on, it suffered from earthquakes, conquests, looting and general destruction and the site was left almost unnoticed until its re-discovery in 1751. Restoration of the complex began in 1898 by the German Archaeological Mission.

## CLOSE UP OF THE HISTORICAL MAPS





## CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

## 1200 - 333 B.C. - Phoenician and Canaanite Peri-

od
Baalbek known to be a Canaanite city.
Phoenician build the temple of Baal, the Sun god. Baalbek becomes a religious center.

550 - 333 B.C. - Persian Period
Pottery with images and cuneiform texts.

331 B.C. - Baalbek remained an Off-Visited Pilgrimage Site

It remained as such until the legitimization of Christianity in the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great at 313 B.C.

198 - 82 B.C. - Heliopolis Became a Subject to the Rule of Baltimus Manius

636 - 696 A.D. - Islamic Period

1158 - 1203 - 1664 - 1759 A.D. - Earthquakes
Damaged or destroyed many of the temples and structures
of Baalbek.

**1516 - 1917 A.D. - Ottoman Period**Baalbek was under the Ottoman rule.

3000 - 6000 B.C. - First Settlement
Towards the end stone age.

# 2300 - 3000 B.C. - Presence of Old Temples Colored pottery, stone and metal weapons, volcanic glass pieces and 3 skeletons: Bronze accessories, Axe, purple pearls during the Hexose era (1580 - 1730 B.C.).

## 333 - 323 B.C. - Baalbek conquered by Alexander the Great He renames the city "Heliopolis".

**202 - 195 B.C. - After the Fifth Syrian War** Begaa Valley became part of the Seleucid Empire.

64 B.C. - 635 A.D. - Roman and Byzantine
Period
14 B.C. till 200 A.D., building of the Roman temples in Baalbek.

Late 11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. - Baalbek as a Seljuk Base

1291-1516 A.D. - Mameluke Period
The Mamelukes rebuilt the temples after being destroyed by earthquakes and the Mongols.

1920 - 1943 A.D. - French Mandate

## **EVALUATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND HISTORICAL BUILDINGS**

Baalbek is a very rich city with archaeological sites. The scale and grandiose of its temples which gives the impression from the first visit should be enough to make Baalbek one of the most important archaeological tourism destinations in the region. However, these sites are not given the attention they deserve.

On a larger city scale, there is an absence of a general touristic plan that would encourage tourists to visit the city.

Although the CHUD (Cultural Heritage and Urban Development) Project initiated by the Council for Development and Reconstruction since 2004 targeted the development of the ancient city of Baalbek, it still faces problems and counter decisions from the municipality and the citizens mainly when aiming at creating a car-free ancient city. As told by the stakeholders, there is a complete disregard to any new archaeological discoveries, the old theater mentioned above is an example. Whenever new findings are discovered by chance, excavation stops, and the findings are covered and neglected.

Insufficient advertisement is another major issue that minimizes the importance of Baalbek temples.

