

BCHARRI & WADI QADISHA

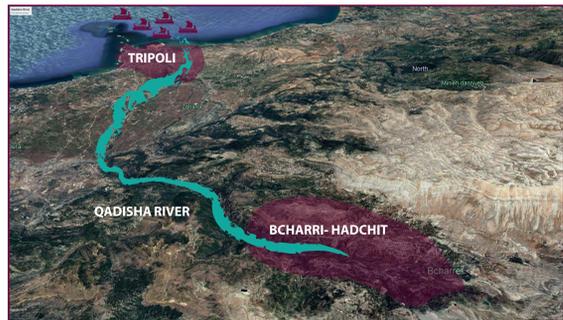
THE PHOENICIANS' ROUTE

بشري وادي قاديشا مسار الفينيقيين

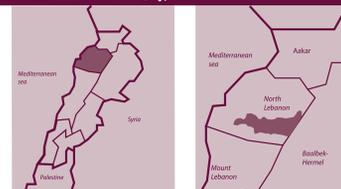
INTRODUCTION

According to some sources, the Phoenicians used to transport the wood by throwing it into the Qadisha River, where it would float to the port city of Tripoli. They would walk regularly next to the river in order to make sure none of the logs get stuck. This path became the main road between Bcharri and Tripoli. However, other sources indicate that the logs could have been dragged by animals instead on said path just mentioned.

The Romans used the same pathway and called it "Documanus Maximus". It was of great importance to their military pursuits. Up till two generations ago, the same path was used by the locals to get to Tripoli and some remnants of Roman bridges could still be observed at the time.



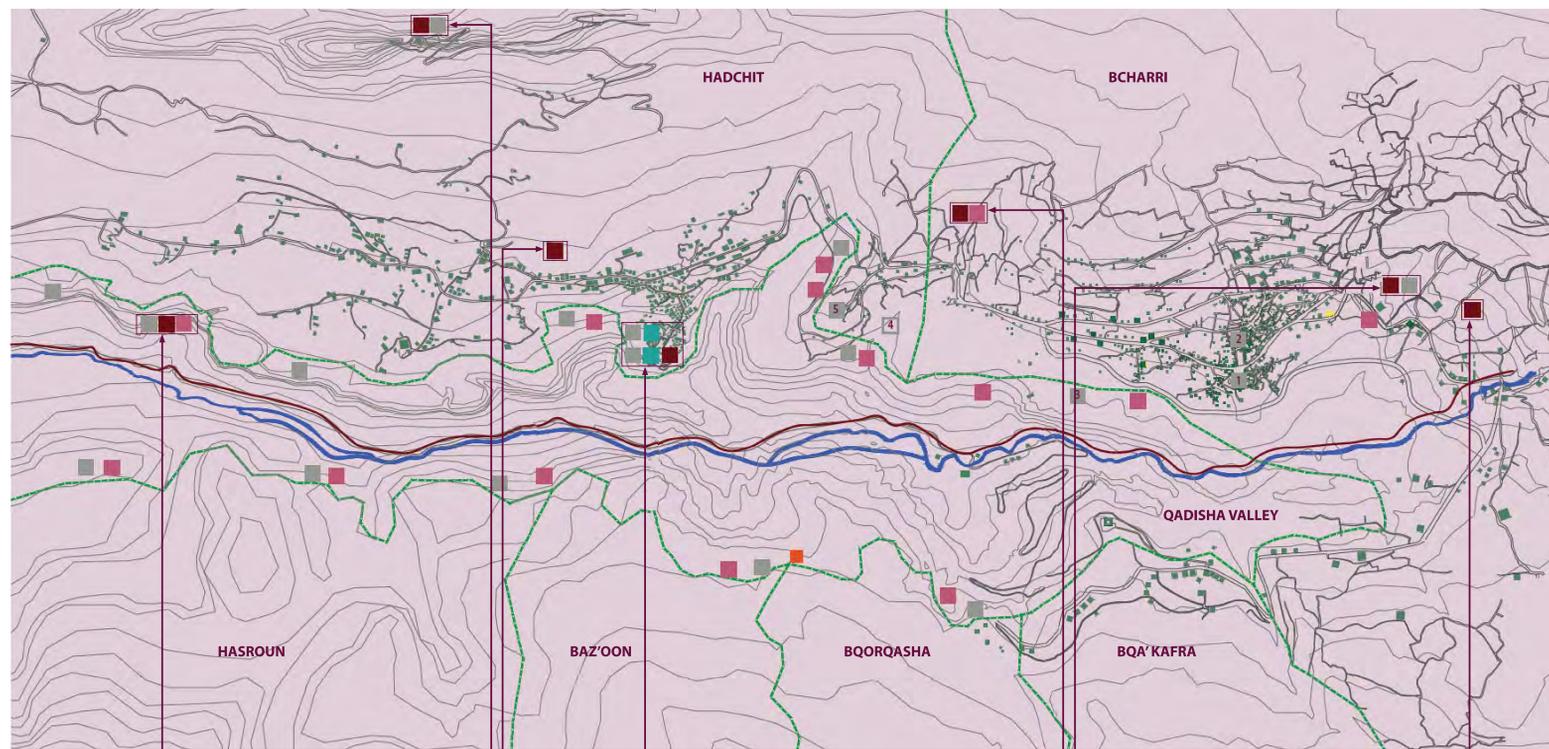
Transportation of Wood from Bcharri to Tripoli



HISTORICAL MAPPING

Legend

- Phoenician Civilization (Iron Age) 1200 - 333 B.C.
- Palaeolithic Age 1,400,000 - 24,000 B.C.
- Greek - Roman Period 333 B.C. - 300 A.D.
- Crusader Period 1090 - 1099 A.D.
- Ottoman Period 1516 - 1919 A.D.
- Village Limits
- Qadisha River



Scale 1/8000

A church and monastery built in one of the caves of Wadi Qadisha, Mar Youhanna Adna used to be a Phoenician temple, before it was adopted as a hermitage then turned to a Jacobian church.



Church

It became a tradition for the Christian prophets to be known for their professions and accordingly adopt names from previous pagan figures. Mar Youhanna Adna was one of those prophets whose profession dealt with medicine for the ears, so he was given the name "Adna" referring to a Phoenician figure who used to heal ear illnesses. Within the church is a piece of stalactite that drips water into an urn. It is believed that rubbing this blessed water cures any ear related illness.



Upper Level Monastery



First Level Plan



Second Level Plan

Mar Youhanna Adna

The Roman Temples

There was a huge temple established in Hadshit for the one of the Roman gods. It is unclear whether it belonged to the god Apollo, Jupiter or Bakhus, but archaeologists agree that it was bigger than any building in the area. Unfortunately, this temple was completely destroyed and the stones and columns that remained were used for building new churches. Some people even took the liberty to turn some of the remnants of the temple into ornaments in their houses.



Saydet El-Shkeif
It is believed to have been a Phoenician temple that was destroyed by the Romans. Then, they built a temple in the same location which was demolished as well. The remaining stones were used to build the current church by the Maronite Christians.

The Roman Statue

Perhaps, the only remaining relic that is still intact is the statue of a Roman emperor that is displayed next to Mar Romanos Church in Hadchit. The statue was found during modern excavations and placed next to the Church of Saint Romanos.

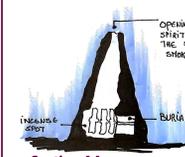


The Roman Temples - The Roman Statue - Saydet El-Shkeif

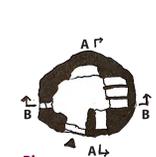
The tomb is a pyramid structure, built with stone and mud. It includes 4 burial chambers. The pyramid is hollowed out on the inside allowing for the smoke of the incense to guide the spirit on its journey to the gods.



The location was chosen due to the calcareous rocky nature of the mountains which allowed the bodies to be preserved longer. Within the four burial chambers, there are groves on which the sarcophagi are placed and pushed to the inside like drawers.



Section AA



Plan



Section BB



Phoenician Tomb

It is a small church on the top of the mountain which was named after the Biblical Saint Mar Elias who was originally from Sarepta (Sarafand). It was thought at that time that he mysteriously disappeared from Sarepta for two years that he was completing his hermitage on the top of this mountain inside a cave. It is speculated that this cave used to be a Canaan/Phoenician temple due to the fact that it follows the characteristics of where temples should be, and it completes the link of mountain top temples. The area surrounding the cave got transformed into a small church and the cave was expanded within.



South Façade



Section



The importance of this location is that it provided the Phoenicians with visual surveillance in all directions which helped them keep an eye on their colonies in Bcharri and Hadchit, while communicating with temples in other areas.

Mar Elias Church and Monastery

It was originally a Canaanite tomb that was turned into a hermitage then a church with Frescos of Saint Shmona. The plan shows 3 burial chambers: the main one being for a royal individual and his wife, while the other two sub-chambers were used for his kids.

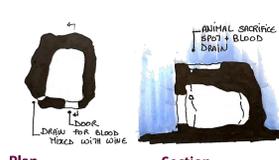
"Saydet El-Dirr" (the Lactating Lady) was a name given to Virgin Mary. It was adopted from the Phoenician Mother goddess depicted with nude breasts.

Saydet El-Dirr

The tomb is a simple rectangular void, carved into a natural stone that is approximately 2 by 3 meters on the exterior and 2 meters high. The chamber is entered through a small opening.

On the top of the tomb, is a rectangular recess carved into the stone where animals are sacrificed to the gods so that they can allow the spirit of the deceased to rest in peace. The recess is accompanied by a drain so that the blood of the animal can drain into an urn outside of the tomb.

Once the blood is collected, it is mixed with wine and poured through a tiny hole that drains into an urn on the inside of the tomb. Another source states that the deceased is buried in a position where his head is placed under the drain to symbolically drink the bloody wine.



Plan

Section



Canaanite Tomb

It is a hermitage site inside a cave which used to be a Phoenician tomb. It was also transformed to a church and monastery as a refuge for the Jacobians when they were being prosecuted in the 1400's. The sleeping quarters of the monks is in ruins but is still identifiable outside of the cave as it was a later addition. The church consists of two levels; the lower of which was the tomb, but then got transformed into storage space. That level is currently inaccessible, but the arches and vaults which hold the top floor church in place are visible.



Mar Mema

EVALUATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

Characteristics of Canaanite/Phoenician Architecture

Temples

They were built on high ground (top of hills and mountains) to be able to communicate to each other using mirror reflections in the day and fire at night as well as signal the people of certain celebrations and holidays.

It is believed that the chain of temples existed on high places all the way till Tripoli's port.

Tombs

They were built in rocky calcareous lands that were unusable in agricultural pursuits. This allowed the bodies of the deceased to be preserved for longer periods of time due to high acidity pH.

The Canaanites and Phoenicians preferred those areas to be high in altitude like top of hills and mountains to be closer to the sky where the gods reside, so that the journey of the spirit to the heaven would be easier.



BCHARRI & WADI QADISHA

THE PHOENICIANS' ROUTE

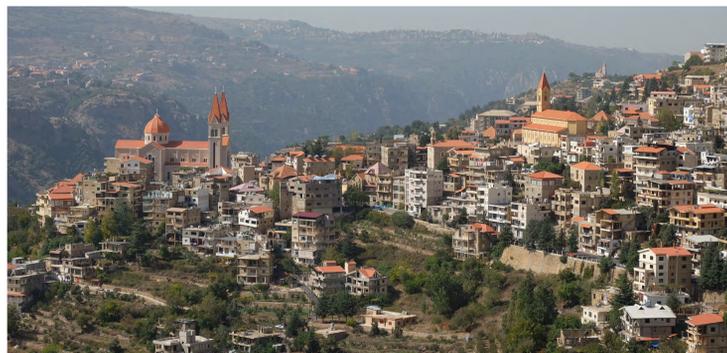
بشري وادي قاديشا مسار الفينيقيين

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Bcharri and Wadi Qadisha are generally a main touristic attraction in Lebanon. Aside from the rich historical identity of the area, and the perfect place to ski in winter, it is also an important destination for tourists for many other reasons, such as the ones listed below.

MAR SABA CATHEDRAL

Known for being the largest church in Lebanon.



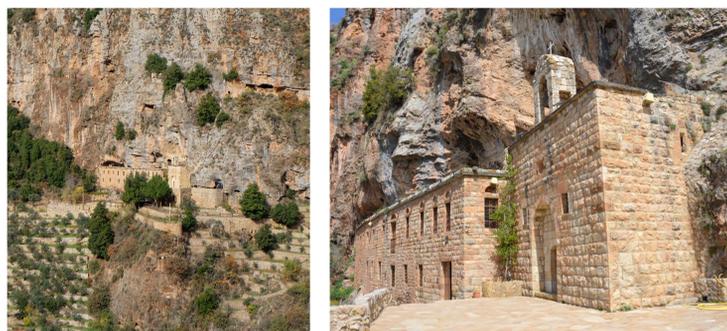
EL-SAYDE CHURCH

Second largest church in Bcharri, located 2 streets north of Mar Saba.



MAR LICHAA MONASTERY

A monastery built within a Syriac hermits cave.



NATURAL SINKHOLE

Too much water pressure caused the side of the mountain to cave in. The spring now joins the Qadisha River.

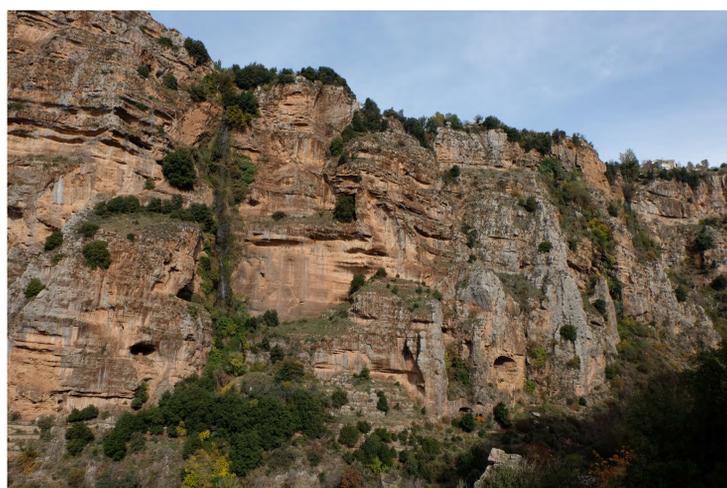


QALB YASSOUH CHURCH

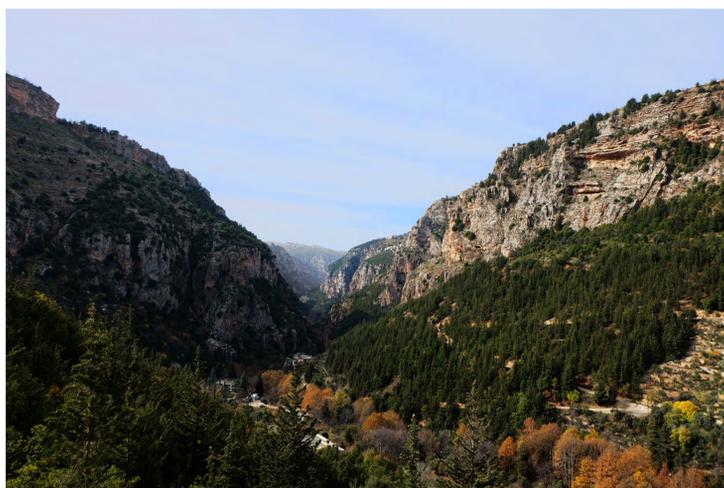
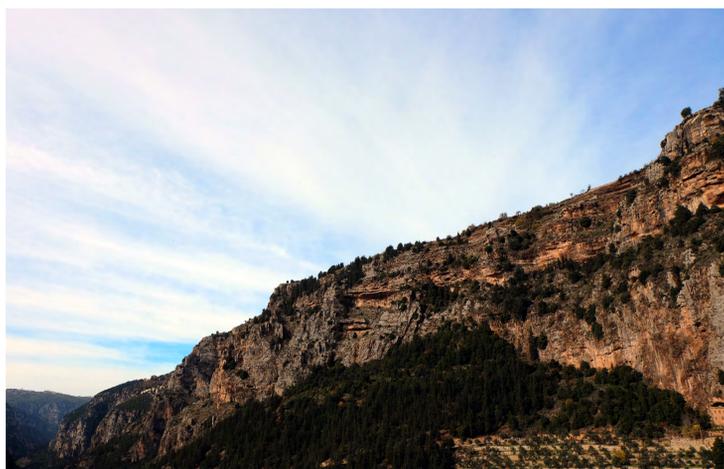


HERMIT CAVE

Spread along the Qadisha Valley, there are more than 27 known caves, and many more still to find.



NATURAL SCENERIES



CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

1,400,000 - 24,000 B.C. - Palaeolithic Age

Some of the caves found in Wadi Qadisha that were later used by hermits originally belonged to the Palaeolithic Age. In those caves, researchers found remnants of granite stones used for weapons and skeletons belonging to that stage but with no specific dates.

1200 - 333 B.C. - Phoenician and Canaanite Period

Lebanese people lived on coasts in port cities in order to make it easier for trading with other countries around the Mediterranean. However, they needed a more efficient way to obtain their main commodity which was cedar wood that only grows in mountains between 900 and 2200 meters above sea level. Consequently, they started moving from coastal to mountainous regions in order to further their wood trade by creating colonies in mountains close to cedars.

885 B.C. - Mar Elias Seeks Solitude in Hadchit Mountain

Mar Elias was a Hebrew hermit who mysteriously disappeared from Sarepta for two years and was thought to reside in a cave at the top of Hadchit mountain which is now named after him. The cave he chose is assumed to be either a Canaanite or Phoenician temple due to the fact that it follows the characteristics of where temples should be and it completes the link of mountain top temples. The area surrounding the cave got transformed into a small church and the cave was expanded within.

64 B.C. - 635 A.D. - Roman and Byzantine Period

Hadchit and Bcharri were important military quarters for the Romans due to their location which allowed the military to keep surveillance over all the surrounding areas, especially the pathway to Tripoli "Documanus Maximus" along Qadisha River which the Phoenicians used. They even built bridges along the river that survived up till 100 years ago and were also used by the locals until they were demolished.

350 A.D. - Hebrew Syrian Hermits Seek Solitude in the Caves of Wadi Qadisha

The first Christians during that time were hermits, so they sought hermitage in caves. Some of these caves were abandoned Phoenician and Canaanite temples (like Mar Yohanna Adna and Mar Elias) or tombs (like Mar Mema). Although some of these caves can be observed in Hadchit and Bcharri, most of them were on both sides of Qadisha Valley. The pathway to these caves was often hidden and dangerous making them harder to reach for non hermits.

450 A.D. - Maronitism Emerges in Bcharri

Students of the one of Maronite saints come to Bcharri in order to enlighten the people.

680 A.D. - Bcharri Becomes Home of the Maronites

The priests of Mar Maroun Monastery relocated to Bcharri and elected a patriarch. The people of Bcharri started building churches and most of the Qadisha caves turn into hermitage. Also, the news of a Christian territory where Christianity can be practiced freely spreads to the Middle East, so Christians start moving to Bcharri for safety and freedom.

1487 A.D. - Hadchit and Bcharri Welcome Jacobian Refugees from Nearby Villages

A civil war erupts in nearby villages leading to the prosecution of Jacobians, so Bcharri invites them to seek refuge in their churches and caves, such as Mar Mema.