

An aerial photograph of a rugged, mountainous landscape. A winding road snakes through the terrain, which is covered in dense green vegetation. A small cluster of buildings, possibly a village or a farmstead, is visible in the lower-left quadrant. The overall scene is one of a remote, natural environment.

شجرة الأرض الغازية

Gaseous Cedar Tree

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Problem Statement

I come from a country where everyone comes from a village. I come from a village that's cradled by a mountain range, a mountain range so protective that clouds can't find their way out - not even to douse the desert. You'd think that water would be abundant - and surely it would be - but I'm afraid our greed has slowly depleted the aquifers - who would have thought that having two flanks would be a mountain's burden.

I come from the western flank of the mountain, from "The Cedars of Lebanon" - or "the Cedars of God" to prevent any confusion. The "Cedars" sits on the Casa [qaḍā'] of Becharreh, one of the 7 Casas of the North Governorate [Muḥāfazat Aš Šamāl], but it's also adjacent to the Baalbek-Hermel Governorate [Muḥāfazat Bā'labakk Al Hermel]. A somewhat privileged position¹ in the interlocking territorial delimitations, meticulously inscribed in religious, patriotic and mythical beliefs. From such strict and complex borderings, territorial aggressions and conflicts repeatedly arise, a repetition that carries intensive differences and that produces, in turn, said differences. For the purpose of this research, I intend to dwell on three conflictual episodes I found interest in, episodes indicative of a long exposure to the atmosphere, three weathering acts rooted in deep time but non-linear nonetheless:

The first recorded pillaging episode of the cedar tree forest 4700 years ago, the persecution of the Maronite monks in Wadi Qadisha by Mamluk sultans 755 years ago, and the ongoing conflicts around water ownership between villagers from Becharreh and Dennyeh.

These repetitions in territorial production are symptomatic of interrelations between social, mental and environmental ecologies²; their respective constituents will unfold as the theoretical framework allows it to. In understanding the climate of the Cedars, it became evident that existing forms of territorial appropriation - namely traditional property beliefs or land divisions - were discordant with existing patterns of inhabiting and could eventually be challenged. Land division seems incongruous to a land where intermittent streams surge on private properties, carrying sediments, rocks and microorganisms, only to disappear in the early summer days, where the guerilla planting of trees is the most effective reforestation tool; a land where goats and shepherds roam freely, razing our backyard bushes and fertilizing the soils along the way, such a land cannot be strictly yours,

¹ as mentioned by Antoine Harb in *Lebanon – A Name through 4000 Years Entity and Identity*, the distinct geography of the country attracted minorities that were persecuted in neighboring countries - namely Druze, Shi'a Muslims, Orthodox Christians among others - lending them refuge between the mountain range and the sea, a nook that remains hard to storm, shielding Becharreh but exposing Dennyeh

² Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, p.41



nor strictly mine. Ironically, the very tools that draft the borders of properties struggle to represent the accuracy of the limits. Cadastral maps issued by the municipality³ are the perfect representation of such a process, a transition from a land bounded by a tree and a stream, to a land drawn on a modest piece of paper, and from that piece of paper to a computer-aided drawing of a polyline, moving the coordinates slightly along the process. This shift exemplifies the territorial aggressions⁴ aforementioned and the incongruent nature of the land division, a transition that both strengthens and is strengthened by an ideology centered on private property, a mode of desiring that takes precedence over community and solidarity. In the production of the territory, borderings are weathered and borderings are weathering; could new borderings then provoke desiring otherwise?

³ Refer to pp. 20 - 21

⁴ The use of the word aggression is borrowed from Bogue's *Deleuze: On Music, Painting and the Arts* where he highlights the aggression/territory duality but contests whether aggression has primacy in the construction of a territory

Fig. 1 Overlay of Cadastral Maps of Becharreh, Hand Drawing Dating from 1964, CAD Drawing Dates from 2015

Theoretical Framework

For Deleuze and Guattari, terminologies of space are inherently political¹, hence their attempts “to unhinge calcified language regimes is aimed at remapping the terrain of thought so as to welcome in a host of new becomings.”² I would like to inscribe my research in this unhinging effort, an attempt to conceptualize bordering otherwise, far from the constraining enclosures and the signs, lines and languages of oppressive borders. The success of this endeavor rests on the understanding of the “interconnectedness of material and metaphoric”³, the precision of which will be drawn based on formations taken from Kleinherebrink’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari. Said formations should not be read as typological, but rather intensity-specific, capable of morphing while suggesting relational arrangements.

The External Milieu/Internal Milieu/Intermediary Milieu/Annexed Milieu framework lays the foundation for intensive thinking. The membrane (the intermediary milieu) borders while still capable of morphing, the membrane is also the milieu of intensive exchange, allowing sources of energy to reach the internal milieu, altering its structure in the process⁴. The internal milieu could be the cedar tree, the Wadi, or the Mamluk sultan, in looking at the interrelations of the milieus one can start mapping the bordering membrane, and the different forms it takes. The actors involved in the production of this specific territory influence each other’s milieu formations, and their weatherings are indicative of a “Refrain”, a Territory and Ritornello continuum. Only by means of repetition and difference can a territory be produced⁵, the rhythmical difference would spur the milieu into another milieu as it traverses an intensive threshold⁶, in other words it becomes expressive. The three weathering acts - the pillaging, the persecuting, and the water clashing - are ritornellos in the molar fabrication of the “Cedars of Lebanon”, but they are also territories in and of themselves, and the expressions of the repetitions will be crucial for my comprehension of the construction of my mountains. Finding a more rigorous framing for the “becoming-expressive” was crucial, a reading adopted from musical cosmology but derived from the Territory and Ritornello formation, where territo-

rial actors masterfully intertwine and create counterpoints. A counterpoint denotes the nonhierarchical nature of territories while preserving the complexity of weathering acts and their binding relations, an opportunity for me to capture elusiveness with subtlety.

Together these formations construct a framework for territorial understanding beyond Euclidean systems of reference, but rather as a proximity based set of coordinates⁷, a rhizomatic landscape that hosts but that cannot be formally appropriated. Guattari talks about ecosophy, a philosophy encompassing the social, mental and environmental ecologies, as both a unifying and a granular approach⁸. He reframes the aforementioned theories, on bordering, on intensive thinking, and on territorial production as follows: “While the logic of discursive sets endeavors to completely delimit its objects, the logic of intensities, or eco-logic, is concerned only with the movement and intensity of evolutive processes.”⁹ In the context of the Cedars of Becharreh, this movement cannot be dissociated from the weather. My use of the word is neither analogy, nor metaphor, weathering represents a specific approach to comprehending the interconnectedness of bodies, locations, and weather within our changing climate.

*Every time we breathe, we pull the world into our bodies: water vapor and oxygen and carbon and particulate matter and aerosols. ... To be a human means to be the land and water and air of our surroundings. We are the outside.*¹⁰

To weather means to annex energy sources to the internal milieu, to repeatedly consume and to morph while the world outside is repeatedly morphing. It delineates the intricate relationships between socially, culturally, politically, and materially diverse bodies concerning the material essence of a place across extensive layers of historical, geological, and climatological timescales. In Neimanis and Hamilton’s words “to weather means to pay attention to how bodies and places respond to weather-worlds which they are also making”¹¹.

1 Woodward, Jones, *On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari*, p.237

2 Ibid, p.239

3 Smith, Katz, *Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics*, p.68

4 Kleinherebrink, *Territory and Ritornello*, p.213 (from his reading of *A Thousand Plateaus*)

5 Ibid, p.214

6 Kodalak, *Affective Aesthetics beneath Art and Architecture*. p.408

7 Delanda, *Nonorganic Life*, p.129

8 Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, p.42

9 Ibid, p.44

10 Davis, *The Land And Water And Air That We Are*.

11 Neimanis and Hamilton, *Weathering*. p.81

When can Architecture as Weathering Induce Desiring Ownership Otherwise?

عندما تكون الهندسة بفهومها التجويّة أن
تتجرب رغبة على الاستخدام مختلف

How can we understand a territorial formation in its rhythmic cosmology to create potential affects?
Can borders be fluid? Could appropriation be porous? Could private use subvert private property?

Method I

Meteorological Mappings

Water Thicker Than Blood



الدم عايبير في

The Meat that Refused to Burn



كبة نيئة حيارت
بشينة

A Tree Growing Sideways



شجرة بالأسم

Weathering Act I

Water Thicker Than Blood

الدم عايبير في

It all started with Haytham and Malek's death, or maybe that's where it ended. A day of mourning was proclaimed in Becharreh and countless news articles followed "Two shot dead in disputed area in Lebanon" some with suggestive undertones "Army Intervenes to Prevent 'Sectarian Strife' in Northern Lebanon Following Qornet Es Saouda Shooting". It wasn't the first time headlines emerge from this remote place, in November of last year, ahead of the skiing season, the chairlift cables were first sawed then shot, an undertaking targeting the economy of Becharreh, a vindictive gesture in the wake of severe droughts in Sir Ed Denniye. The reciprocal acts of aggression are rooted in rhythmic repetitions that could be plotted on Guattari's three ecologies "scheme". The aforementioned tensions, the tribe-like transgenerational vendettas, are inherent to the social ecology, beliefs pertaining to neighboring weather-worlds differ drastically, villagers on respective flanks of the mountain are represented by rivaling religious figures, opposing political leaders and diverging economic activities. A social climate that cannot be dissociated from mental and environmental ecologies, as their affects operate under the aegis of an ecosophy. Confused cartographies are indicative of the synergy between the three ecologies, they operate on a mental ecology as they weather the collective grudge, they strive to represent and annotate the abstraction of the land in its environmental complexity, namely its geological formations and its material flows, but its manufacturing cannot be dissociated from its holder, an author who is possibly a recipient of said generational grudge. Such mappings constitute the probative evidence for the case of the depleting aquifers, a map of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate (مُتَصَرِّفِيَّة جَبَل لُبْنَان) dating from 1889, where the "Cedars of God" are illustrated but traces of Sir ed Denniye are nowhere to be found. But does the absence from the map necessarily mean the presence of a void?

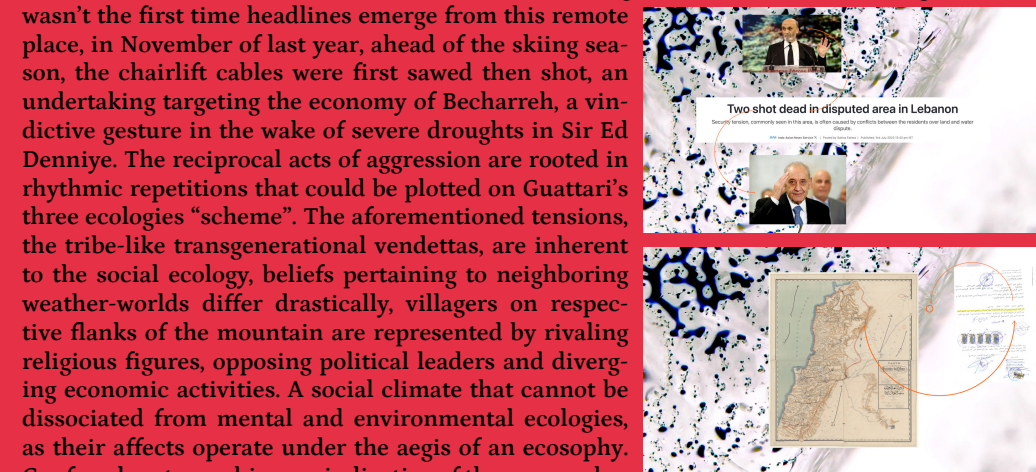


Fig 2. Screenshots from a first attempt at meteorological mapping. Pictured here are the political figures representing respective villages (Top), along with cartographic and narrative evidence used in court (Bottom).

Method I

Meteorological Mappings

Weathering Act II

The Meat That Refused To Burn

كبة نيئة حارت بشية

The map of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate earlier mentioned was drawn in an attempt to salvage the Ottoman empire from implosion. The “Tanzimat” or Reorganization, lasted for five decades, fifty years of contesting territorial boundaries and their respective sovereignty (but then again what’s fifty years compared to over five centuries of occupation). Maintaining a stronghold on Mount Lebanon was more challenging than the Mamluk sultans estimated: geology clearly took a stance, and no conqueror could ever defeat geology. The wadi’s weathering provided shelter for persecuted Maronite monks, the crevices were thus inhabited but the milieu was not hospitable as energy sources were precarious,

their wheat crops allowed for bulgur reserves, slowly depleting. Surrounded by goats endemic to the wadi, their only resort was to hunt and consume the flesh of the agile grazer, avoiding the lighting of a fire at all cost to stay out of sight. The bulgur thus aided the grinding of the meat to facilitate its consumption, making it softer both on the palate and on the guts, as the wheat absorbed most of the plasmatic fluid, reducing the risk of bacterial growth. The environmental ecology is subject to human intervention and its reapings dictate the weathering of the wadi, in its becoming-expressive, and that of the Maronite identity, inherent to a mental ecology, legitimized by the generational grudge of persecution.



Fig 3. Inhabited Crevices of the Wadi
Fig 4. Herd of Native Goats Roaming

Weathering Act III

A Tree Growing Sideways

شجرة بالأسم

The inherited grudge is arguably the foundation stone on which the Cedars of Lebanon was built - possibly national identity alongside it. The curriculum for Lebanese history wasn’t very extensive, in fact it has not been updated since the early 1970s, leaving much of recent history up for interpretation, but one thing the history books would never omit is Gilgamesh’s pillaging of the Cedar forest. Thousands of years ago, the mountains were shaded with cedar trees, an evergreen so fragrant and robust it quickly gained recognition, the trees bore witness to the epic battle between Gilgamesh and the mighty Humbaba, guardian of the forest. Our fallen hero was the last standing obstacle holding Gilgamesh’s troops back, their saws were unleashed and the tallest trees were floating down the Euphrates to build the gates of Nippur. This all too heroic tale painted the ideal backdrop for Maronite politicians from the casa of Becharreh to thrive, their sworn mission to reforest the mountains facilitated their rise in popularity in recent years, a mission that was set in motion many decades ago when one villager, Dr. Youssef Tawk took it upon himself to fight deforestation with guerilla gardening. Tawk crafted a weather-world where junipers and cedars “miraculously” surfaced on the flanks of the mountains and on private property, strategically harnessing time as an ally as the trees’ lifetime will surpass his, leaving environmental ecology to its own devices. Tawk was also the first to introduce me to Humbaba, and the catalyst for the Qornet Es Saouda conflict as he destroyed the pipes that drained the aquifers. Tawk lived most of his life in the village, he could never stand the city.



Fig 5. 6. Young cedar trees reforesting the barren mountains, pictured here are the trees planted by Tawk (Top), and the trees sponsored by political figures (Bottom).

Method II

Meddlings

The weathering acts and their mappings allude to actualized spatial practices intrinsic to the territory, and to potential praxes that I would like to instigate. As I intend to visit the site in the coming months, I look forward to permeating the territory with meddlings. I draw inspiration from the chants of Maronite monks, evolving progressively with the changing seasons, adopting rhythmic pulses in the autumn as the hammers were pounding and subtle brushings in the spring as the sickles were reaping. But beyond dictating a rhythmic division of labor, chants would bind the monks as voices reverberated across the fields, attesting to the presence and well-being of the monks, as disruptions in the rhythm were indicative of an injury or an attack. I also find inspiration in Belgian artist Francis Alÿs' "When Faith Moves Mountains". Alÿs gathered intrigued volunteers excited at the idea of moving a mountain promising "maximum effort, minimum result", negotiating with Peruvian strangers, with shovel manufacturers and with the mountain itself, a participative performance becoming geomorphic. I recall the disastrous youtube experiment by John Harmon, boiling water with a magnifying lens. I find the gesture almost rebellious, using the sun rays to return the atmosphere's water.

I would like to advocate, through the aforementioned examples, for a desire to intervene without leaving a trace, without expected results. A set of punctual events, of possible trespassings, meddlings, prototyping desiring machines and the territory alongside it. A chant as binder, a promise as geomorphism, or a cloud as rebellion, the actualisation seems to depend on mutual participation, non-human or human alike. As I write this my intention is to catalyze territorial production and flows, facilitating the trespassing of territorial actors with the construction of architectural vessels for stalling, managers could reroute goats, pits could gather lonely farmers, or ice cube mounts could offset climate change, such interventions come to mind as research tools for a better understanding of the weather. I am also aware that my understanding and mapping of the weathering acts will allow for more attuned interventions to surface, my intentions will hopefully be more responsive to issues of private use, to constraint architecture, and to a rural jurisprudence.

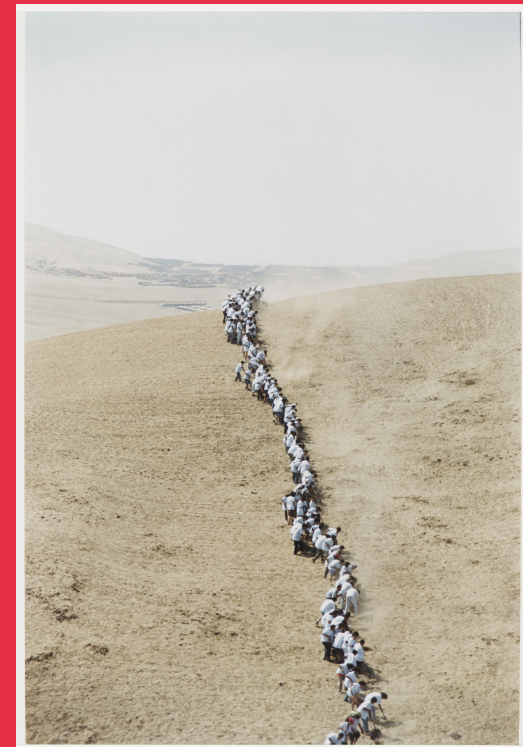
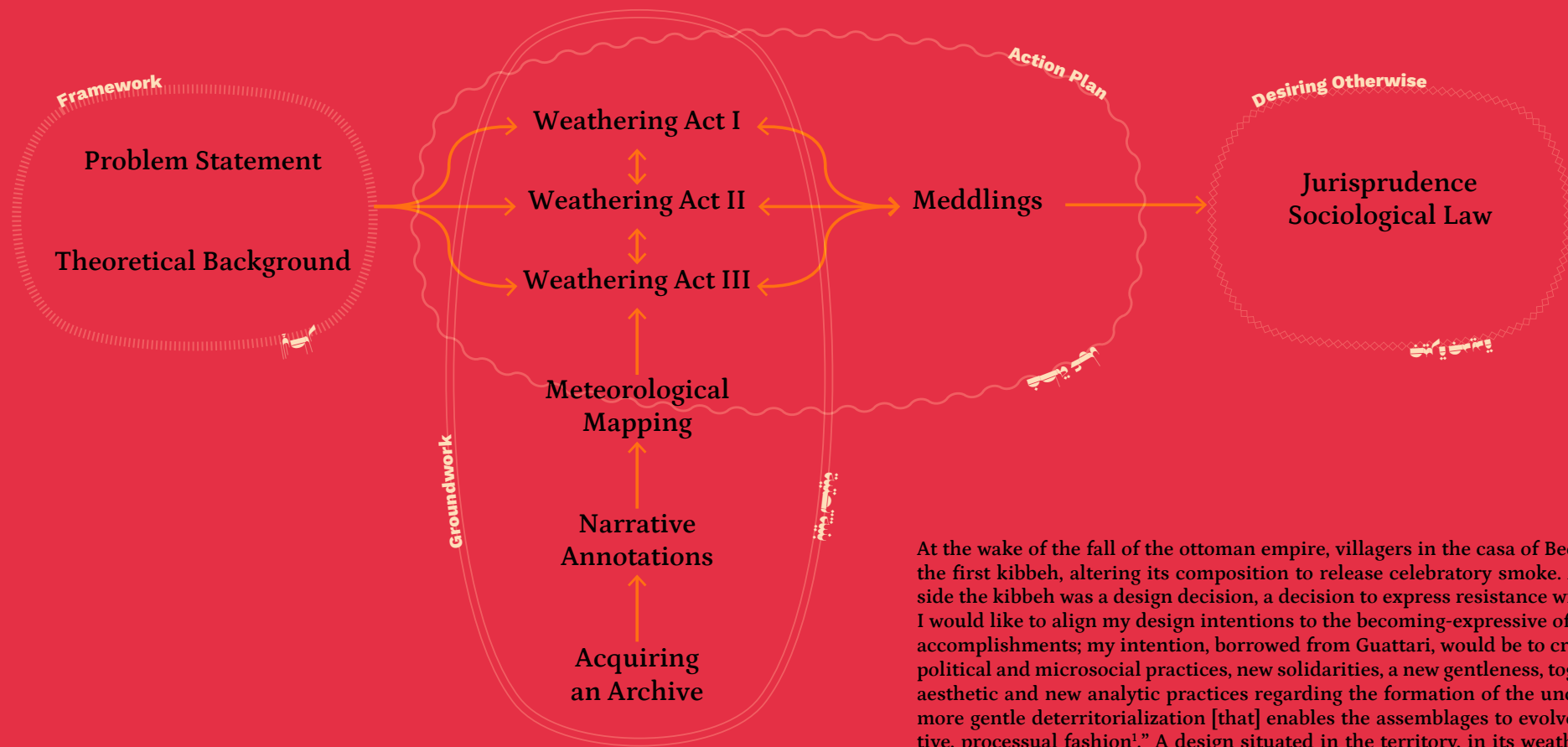


Fig 7. When Faith Moves Mountains by Francis Alÿs, photo courtesy of the artist.

Design Intentions



At the wake of the fall of the ottoman empire, villagers in the casa of Becharreh burned the first kibbeh, altering its composition to release celebratory smoke. Adding lard inside the kibbeh was a design decision, a decision to express resistance with thick fumes. I would like to align my design intentions to the becoming-expressive of a community's accomplishments; my intention, borrowed from Guattari, would be to craft "new micro-political and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices regarding the formation of the unconscious. [...] A more gentle deterritorialization [that] enables the assemblages to evolve in a constructive, processual fashion¹." A design situated in the territory, in its weathering and with its actors, an ecological practice navigating through the numerous interconnected and diverse aspects, in an effort to "processually activate isolated and repressed singularities that are just turning in circles"².

1 Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, p.51

2 Ibid

Acquiring an Archive



Document:

Satellite Images 569-570 Dating from 1956

Procurement:

Army imagery, property of the Department of Geographic Matters, can only be acquired by submitting proof of land ownership within the confines of the image, the processing of the request took three weeks.

image0445.jpg



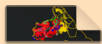
Document:

Cadastral Map of the Casa of Becharreh Dating from 1964

Procurement:

These maps were kindly shared by the previous secretary of the mayor of Becharreh, Mr. A. K. has collaborated with my father on infrastructural works in the Casa of Becharreh.

MAPS 61-90.pdf



Document:

Cadastral Cad Drawing of the Casa of Becharreh Dating from 2015

Procurement:

These maps were kindly shared by the previous secretary of the mayor of Becharreh, Mr. A. K. has collaborated with my father on infrastructural works in the Casa of Becharreh.

Finalised
Cadastral.dwg



Document:

Low Relief Orthostate Depicting a Naval Expedition Dating from -720

Procurement:

The orthostate is part of the Louvres's permanent collection, in room 229 of the Department of Oriental Antiquities. Although the low relief was found in former Mesopotamia, I will need to pay sixteen euros to see it.

Expedition Navale
Lamassu.jpeg



Denniyeh
Evidence

Document:

Probative Evidence for the Becharreh/Denniyeh Trial

Procurement:

The complete folder was kindly shared by the previous secretary of the mayor of Becharreh, Mr. A. K. The documents were available on-line in July but there's no longer traces of them on national media websites.

Document:

Maps from 2015 with the Demarcations from Various Sources

Procurement:

Army maps, property of the Department of Geographic Matters, can only be acquired by submitting proof of citizenship, the request was submitted four months ago and it's still being processed, a small area is visible here as it was shared in the evidence folder.



خرائط الجيش عليها
حدود الجيبان-6.p

Document:

Eyewitness Testimonies from the "Elders" in Becharreh

Procurement:

These testimonies were gathered in 1999 as previous conflictual episodes surged, the "elders" claim to have come to an agreement with dwellers from the neighboring village.



أفادات الكاتب
العدل.pdf

Document:

Map of Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate Dating from 1889

Procurement:

I first saw this map when I visited the Department of Geographic Matters, my contact in the army told me he could share the scans of the maps with me as long as they don't get published, so I'm hoping this research doesn't get too interesting.



Map of
Moutssarifiah.jpg

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Tentative Schedule

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