

BYBLOS "WEN-AMON'S HARBOUR"

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From 6 August to 4 Septembre 1998, a first research campaign was organised at Byblos by the Directorate General of Antiquities with the support of the British Council in Beirut.

- On site research having been brought to halt due to the civil war, it was important to go back to what in the Bronze Age was the chief harbour for the export to Egypt of cedar and other valuable wood. The aim of this first campaign was to search for the remains of the ancient harbour at Byblos; the existing fishing harbour (north of the ancient walls, but within the Crusader fortifications) is too small for either handling bulky cargo, or accommodating the ships that carried it. How timbers some 30m. long were shipped out of Byblos remains an outstanding question. The bay south of the peninsula is more promising, for it is bigger and has a valley leading down into it. The area now shows signs of silting, so geological work is needed in order to find out what it was like in antiquity.

During the 1998 mission a preliminary study was made by Dr. Christophe Morhange (on site from August 6 to 13) who drew up recommendations for further examination by core-sampling. He also examined the rocks surrounding the base of the peninsula which bear complex indications of sea-level vacillations. Some of these mark man-made cuttings, notably a trench 33 m. long and some 6 m. high with a flight of rock-cut steps in one of its sides. This flight now ends in mid-air; the wave-notch marking the current sea-level having obliterated the bottom steps thus combining geological with archaeological problems.

- Maurice Dunand knew that an *haut-fond* which would have served as an offshore anchorage for cedar-carrying ships existed somewhere off the southern-bay. Finding its exact position did not seem urgent during the 1960s, so the search for it was deferred until "some later date". That date came in 1998, when the dive recorded below confirmed the presence of a submerged reef which now needs examining by a geologist specialising in such formations in order to find out how it may have changed since antiquity, and also by archaeologist divers in order to record any such man-made objects as are usually found on anchorages. Surveying would establish the exact dimensions of this submerged reef. Its dimensions are, of course, particularly significant since they would set the seaward limits for the "World Heritage" area around Byblos.

- The discovery of six anchors still *in situ*, incorporated in the peculiar architecture of the hitherto unpublished "Temple à Escalier" (see J. Lauffray, forthcoming) which dominated the southern bay now makes them more relevant to the function of this curious building than to anchor typology per se.

The preliminary findings of the 1998 campaign, set the scene for future investigation.



1 Byblos 1964: southern bay and "Temple à Escalier"