



Bhamdoun

From the family *Bayt Hamdun*, *Hamdun*,
a diminutive from Aramaic.

From *Hamd*, in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic,
meaning craving, enjoyment.*

* Anis Freiha, *Mu'jam asma' al-mudun wal qura
al-lubnaniyya wa tafsir ma'aniha, dirasa lughawiyya*,
(A Dictionary of the Names of Towns and Villages in Lebanon),
Librairie du Liban Publishers, Beirut, 1972, p. 14.

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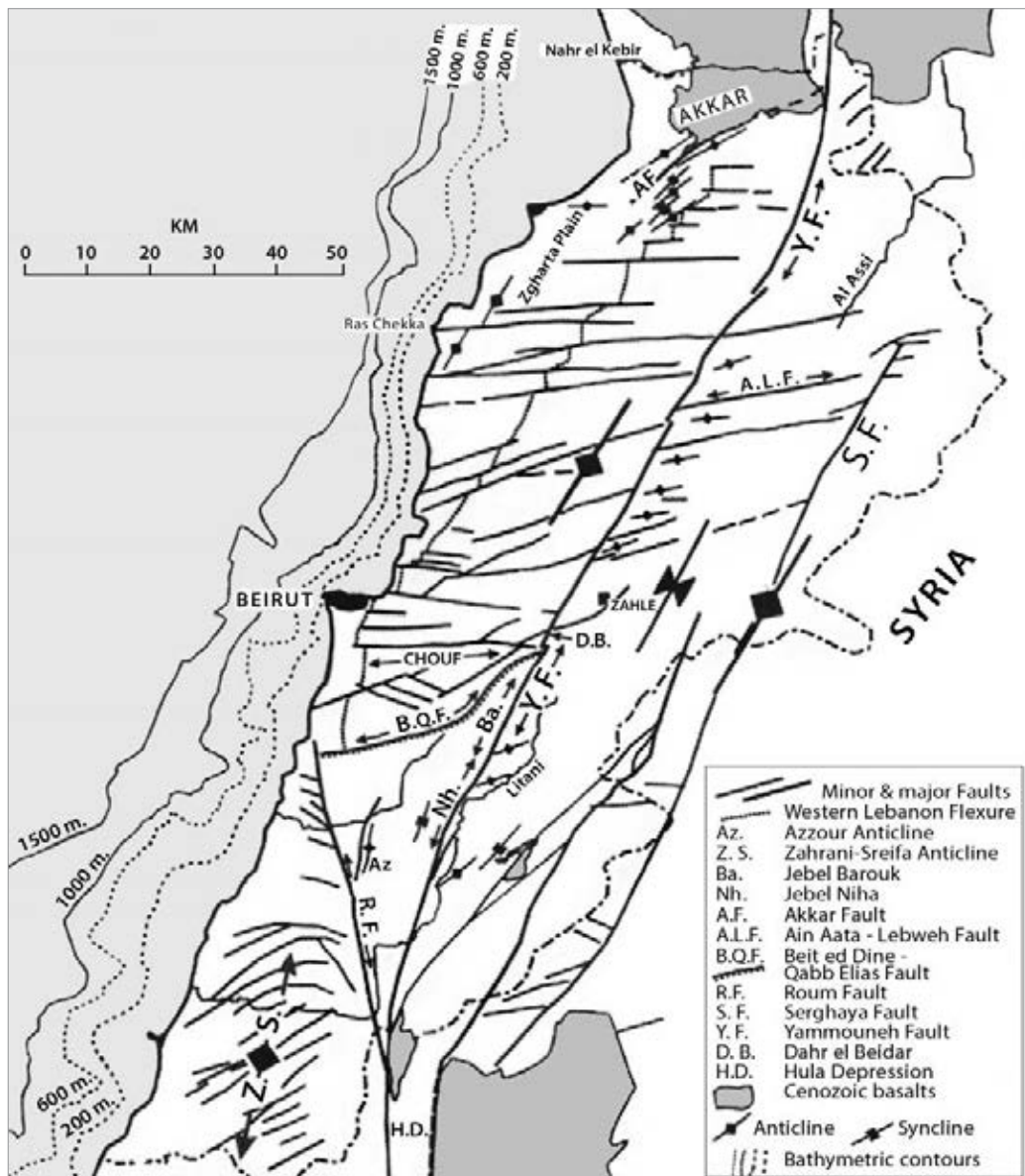
Unfortunately, there are no family documents. Most of these were destroyed during the so-called civil war, and the older generation who could have helped have all gone.

I have tried to piece together as much information as I could, to make this work as factual as possible. The past is often looked upon through a rosy haze. I have a nostalgic feeling for the days spent in my village. Everything changes, must change unfortunately not always for the better, thanks to globalization. People seem to pick the worst features of other societies, and many of our young have forgotten their origins.

This book hopes to remind us of what was, so that we might keep the best of the past, combined with the best of what is to be.

Geology AND Geography





Simplified Structural Map of Lebanon in C. D. Walley, The Geology of Lebanon, a Summary, Created by the Digital Documentation Centre at the American University of Beirut, mirrored in al-Mashriq.

THE village of Bhamdoun, at a distance of 25 kilometres from Beirut, is located 2.5 kilometres from what is the Beirut–Damascus highway. To reach it, one leaves Beirut for Hazmieh, Jamhour, Kahhaleh, Aley. It lies at an altitude of 1,185 metres and above the Hammana valley (the Valley of Lamartine) in Qada' Aley, (formerly Qada' al-Shuf), in Mount Lebanon. It is a separate village from Mhattat Bhamdoun, or Bhamdoun Station, but people often make the mistake of joining the two together. The Station grew around the railway that linked the village to the DHP (*Damas, Hama et Prolongements*) in 1898.¹

Geology²

The Lebanon is composed of the coast, two mountain ranges (Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon), and in

¹ See chapter “Interlude: Bhamdoun Station”.

² Based on Sami M. Audeh, *The Geology of the Bhamdoun and Mdeirej Area, Chouf District, Mount Lebanon*. Unpub. M.A. thesis, American University of Beirut, Department of Geology, June 1976; C.D. Walley, *The Geology of Lebanon, a Summary*, created by the Digital Documentation Centre at the American University of Beirut, mirrored in *al-Mashriq*.

between the Bīqā' depression. The country is crisscrossed by many faults, the longest being the Yammouneh fault, running along the Western Bīqā' and linking with the major fault of the Jordan valley to the Ghab fault of Northern Syria. This is the Lebanese segment of the Dead Sea Transform fault.

The Rum fault, running from Marja'yun in the south to Beirut, is probably where the plate tectonic motion is going on, and which caused the terrible earthquake of 1956, with its epicentre at Chhim. There are many other smaller faults, and some major faults in the Anti-Lebanon.

The present day structure of the Bhamdoun area is determined by its geographical location in the Lebanon mountain range. It is situated along the cone and the Western flank of the main Lebanon uplift, straddling the boundary between the Northern Mount Lebanon block and the Southern Barouk–Niha block, its local structure constituting features within these two blocks and from the interplay of the two.

The area as a whole is mountainous and may be divided in two: the higher central and southern area, and the lower northern and north-eastern area which form the slopes of Wadi 'Ayn al-Dilbi.

Average elevation is 1,100 metres above sea level, but with relief differences at the lowest level of Wadi 'Ayn al-Dilbi, and the highest level at Ras al-Brayj.

On the whole, the topography is rugged. The valleys running through are fed by streams only during the wet season.

Four major earth and rock slides are apparent:

1. 1.5 kilometres north of al-Mishirfi village;
2. North of Mdeirij over an area of 3.5 kilometres;

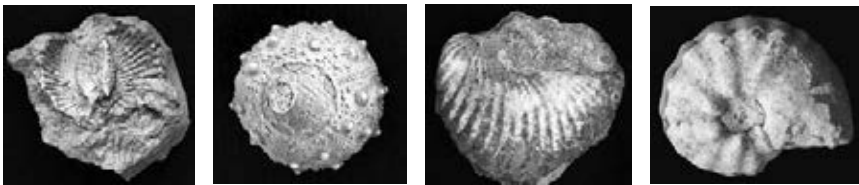
3. 0.5 square kilometres north-east of Mhattat Bhamdoun;
4. Qubay'a village of more than 1 square kilometre.

These slides are due to the soft rocks such as shale and sandstone, because of heavy rains and frosts.

Structurally, the area may be divided into two unequal parts, and in between the Bteter-Bedghan fault, Nahr al-Ghazir, and the road from Chanay to Ruwaysat Sofar to Mhattat Bhamdoun. The region east and south is simple in structure, composed of rocks slipping to the southwest. There are steeper dips around Mhattat Bhamdoun and the Ras al-Harf fault, probably owing to dragging.¹

The faults in the area under question are normal tension faults.

Rock Types in Lebanon²



Fossils found in Bhamdoun; courtesy of Mr. Camille Khairallah

The following are the types of rocks according to the age:

1. Upper Cenozoic: basaltic volcanoes;
2. Quaternary: dunes and lake deposits;
3. Niocene: limestone on coasts, conglomerates and lake deposits in the Biqa' ;

¹ Audeh, *The Geology, op. cit.*, p. 9.

² Walley, *The Geology, op. cit.*, n. p. See "Simplified Geological Map of Lebanon" in the pictures section.

4. Upper Cretaceous (Simonian): chalks and limestones;
5. Lower Cretaceous: fluvio-deltaic limestones overlain by thick marine limestones;
6. Lower Upper Jurassic: thick shelf limestones.

Hydrology

Many springs may be found in the area, but most are negligible. Only one spring may be considered important, that of 'Ayn al-Dilbi.

The 'Ayn Dara spring is the most perennial spring, which supplied –and does not now– the village with potable water. Seasonal springs dry out in summer. Thus numerous springs are scattered throughout the area, but there is always a shortage of water during the dry season. There are a number of wells drilled by individuals for private use.¹

In ancient times, there was probably a small river which ran where the *qadumiyyeh* was, today Dr. Ayyub Tabet Avenue, as some remember a river there. I remember smooth rocks which could only have been moulded by water.

Geography

The geographical position of Bhamdoun is in the Druze region of the Gharb, composed of four parallel ridges, the lowest being the Gharb itself, followed by the lower ridge of the Jurd, rising to about 1,100 metres,

¹ In Ottoman times, every house in the villages had to have a reservoir. This provided water during the dry season.

followed by the two ridges of the higher Jurd. It overlooks Beirut.¹

The southern part of Mount Lebanon was formed by five traditional areas: KISRWAN, ruled by Maronite feudal shaykhs, and the MATN, GHARB, SHUF, JURD, controlled by the Druzes. In Mamluk times, KISRWAN, MATN, GHARB, JURD belonged to the *wilaya* (vilayet, province, territory) of Beirut, while the SHUF was the administrative district of Sidon. Both these *wilayas* were part of the province of Damascus. With the Ottoman conquest of 1516, the Jurd was separated from the Gharb to form its own administrative district, being one of the five *nahias* (circumscriptions) of the *sanjaq* (sub-province) of Sidon–Beirut, the others being the Gharb, Matn, Shuf, and KISRWAN. In 1660, the *sanjaq*, along with that of Safad, was made into a separate *wilaya*, that of Sidon, until 1775, administered from Sidon, then from Acre until 1832, and finally from Beirut.

The Ottomans recognized the “hereditary” claims of the feudal lords. By the end of the sixteenth century the Maʿnids became overlords, annexed the Gharb, and conquered much of the surrounding areas. Ottoman control was through the fiscal system.

According to Tannus al-Shidiaq, writing in the nineteenth century, the Jurd, part of the sub-provinces of Mount Lebanon, was the last part of the upper Gharb, or from the Ghabun River to Nahr al-Safa, to Mdeirij, populated by Christians and Druzes, (the Christians arrived in the

¹ See Tannous al-Chidiac, *Kitab akhbar al-aʿyān fi tarikh Jabal Lubnan*, 1859, reprinted Beirut, Lebanese University, 1970, 2 vols.; Kamal Salibi, *Taʿir ʿala sindiyanah, mudhakkarat*, Beirut, Dar al-Shuruq lil nashr wal tawziʿ, 2002.

sixteenth century to that area). The ruling shaykhs were the 'Abd al-Malak, with their seat at Bteter. Then came the villages of Bhamdoun, Shbayniyyeh, al-Ruwaysat, Shartun, Kfar 'Amiyya, Duwayr, Shurat, Rumayleh, al-Mushrafa, Bedghan. Next came Majd al-Ba'na (the village of sheep), Sharun, Rashmayya, 'Ayn Traz, ruled by the Banu Salih. Among the Rashmayya shaykhs was Bishara al-Khuri, whose namesake was to become the first president of an independent Lebanon.

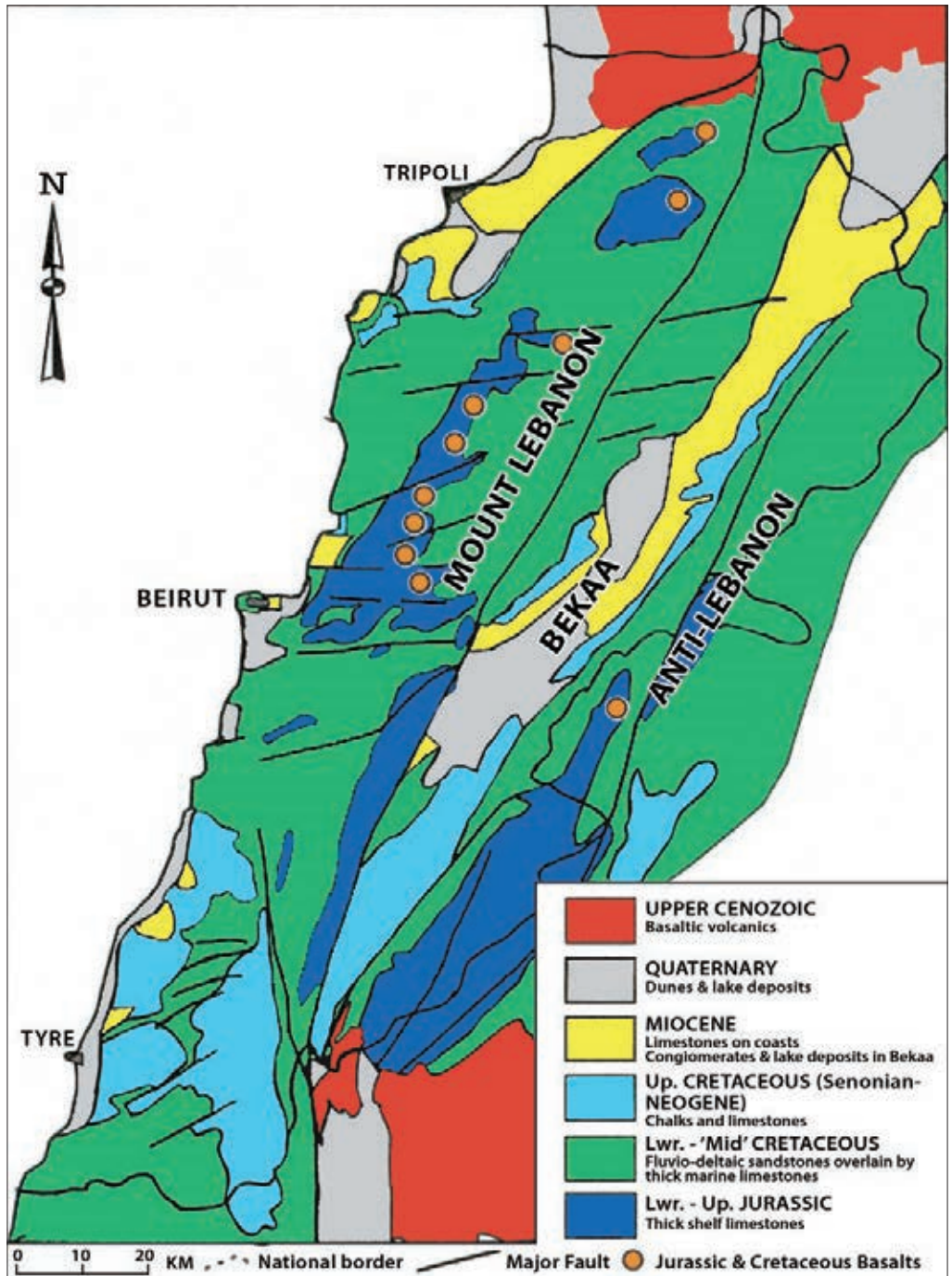
Bhamdoun became part of the Jurd, belonging to the Shuf district. In the twentieth century, the districts were reorganized, the Shuf divided, so that Bhamdoun became part of the district of Aley.

Climate

Bhamdoun weather is dry and healthy, with fog usually in September. Before the climate change, it had heavy snow and rain during the winter season. Three months spent in summer there were/are enough to give health for the whole year.

The weather became famous, and the village a health spa. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, families whose children had asthma and tuberculosis brought them to Bhamdoun to recover. And they did. This was before the establishment of Hamlin Hospital in Shbayniyyeh for the treatment of tuberculosis, which today has become a general hospital and has a geriatric wing.

Villagers rented their homes to these families, and often slept –in summer– under trellises of vines on the roofs of their houses. And the coming of the health seekers stimulated the building of hotels, the first being al-Karmah.



“Simplified Geological Map of Lebanon” in C. D. Walley, The Geology of Lebanon, a Summary, Created by the Digital Documentation Centre at the American University of Beirut, mirrored in al-Mashriq.

Bhamdown, old village. "At the time there were very few houses, small in size, and vineyards."
Courtesy of Mr. Wadi' Maalouf








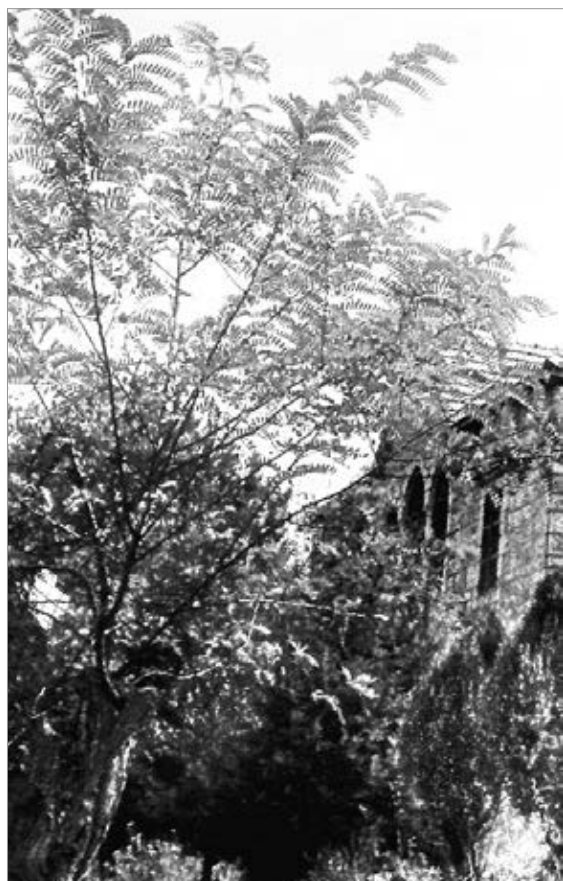
Vineyards of Bhamdoun
Courtesy of Mr. Naji Boutros





A black and white photograph of a stone house in Bhamdoun. The house is built with rough-hewn stone and has a tiled roof. In the foreground, there is a stone wall and a wooden trellis structure, possibly for a vineyard. The scene is set in a rural, hilly area with some trees and a clear sky.

Beautiful stone house.
“Such was Bhamdoun.”





“The Bhamdoun stonecutters were renowned, carving each stone separately to build the old houses with thick walls. It was a work of art.”





Tabet house, covered with snow
Courtesy of H. E. Dr. Joy Tabet

