Introduction

Metoda Peršin

The archaeological exploration of Lebanon has been historically focused on the easily accessible coastal plain and the Beqaa Valley. The Lebanon mountain range in between, although known from numerous written sources as an important region and resource-rich area, has been in comparison under-explored. Difficult to access, this mountainous area has much to offer, not only to the ancient inhabitant or traveller, but also to the modern hiker. Through the exploration of the hiking trails in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, one can dive into exploring floral and faunal species, marvel on stunning vistas and learn about the past through the exploration of archaeological remains that are preserved and studied thanks to the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM). The history of humanity is closely intertwined with its surrounding nature and the archaeological projects in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve are a perfect example of how humans continuously interacted with their environment throughout various periods.

Since 2017, the APJM took steps towards exploring the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve archaeologically; initially, to offer new knowledge to the scientific community, and secondly, to preserve the cultural heritage. Four main archaeological projects have taken place in the reserve between 2017 and 2024, namely the Qornet ed-Deir excavation, the Broqta excavation, the JMAS archaeological survey and the Tahoun project. This book incorporates results of the many field campaigns of these projects in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the region. This volume is a result of many dedicated individuals passionate about archaeological research and nature, who explored the rugged terrain to gather information on the interaction between humans and nature. In parallel to field work, multiple scientific analyses of archaeological material deriving from these projects have taken place and add an important dimension to understanding the excavated and surveyed remains. Whereas the two excavations focus on specific geographic locations explored through a wide temporal window, the two surveys cover much larger geographic areas, provide an important wider context of the archaeology in the reserve and complement the research of the two sites. The present volume adds fresh knowledge on the use of mountains through a millennia-long time span and important information to place the region within its wider context.

We are grateful to the APJM for initiating and funding archaeological research in the reserve in order to communicate results to the academic community and to educate the wider public in Lebanon and abroad. We are especially thankful to Pierre Doumet and Joelle Barakat for consistent help throughout all the phases of research. This volume represents an integration of knowledge of various experts working on the four projects, closely connected and together forming a bigger picture of the human activities in this space. We are grateful to all the contributors of this volume for adding their expertise on the various topics. We would like to express thanks to all the coworkers of the APJM who enabled us to conduct field work, especially Chadi Zwain and his team from Yahchouch, and for all of those who helped in preparing the material for studies – especially Elie Khalil and Marc Atallah. We are also grateful to Isabelle Skaf for conservation of small finds, as well as Karin Kopezky from the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Florian Haas from Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt for providing us with the LiDAR data.

Part I

Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve

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Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve (2009–2024): Meeting the Twin challenges of Conservation and Development

Pierre Doumet

Launched in 1971 by UNESCO, the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. The MAB Programme seems even more relevant today than when it was launched, as it confronts some of humanity's most serious challenges: biodiversity loss, climate change, and sustainable development. Although less known than UNESCO's World Heritage Site Program, MAB is proving at least as meaningful as it seeks to integrate harmoniously what could be viewed as two incompatible goals: nature conservation and socio-economic well-being, all the while protecting and showcasing human cultural heritage across the planet for future generations.

The number of UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves has today reached 784. These precious receptacles of knowledge and diversity, of biology and culture, constitute a unique promise for the future of humanity. Jabal Moussa in Mount Lebanon was declared a Biosphere Reserve (BR) in 2009, it was the 446th BR at that time. Geological and botanical surveys quickly confirmed exceptional wealth: this easternmost Mediterranean forest, with pockets remaining from the Ice Age, holds more than 726 flora species, at least six of which are endemic to the Jabal, as well as what seems to be the oldest geological outcrop in Lebanon, from the Triassic Period. It was also declared a Global Important Bird Area (IBA), a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and an Important Plant Area (IPA).

But a less-known aspect of the rich heritage of this 'pristine' landscape, partially harbouring the legendary Adonis Valley with its share of myths and mythology, has been the unexpected, age-old interaction between man and mountain. Famously characterised as *le coin le plus sauvage du Liban* by French historian Ernest Renan in 1861, Jabal Moussa has not stopped delivering its share of surprises in the areas of archaeology and history since our first preliminary archaeological survey undertaken in 2009 by Dr Claude Doumet-Serhal. Countless Late Roman pottery sherds found in the freshly ploughed fields of the village of Broqta, neighbouring Adonis Valley, provided the first indices of what was to come. A subsequent visit around Qornet ed-Deir revealed a significant quantity of medieval glazed sherds on a plot owned by the Maronite Patriarchate and rented by the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM), the manager of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve.

A decade and several archaeological missions later, a sophisticated LIDAR helicopter survey highlighted hundreds of unsuspected points of interest, beneath a thick vegetation cover that remain to be explored.

In the meantime, APJM has barrelled ahead with its two-pronged conservation/development mission, launching a far-reaching ecotourism programme involving kilometres of nature trails, featuring sustainable job opportunities for guides, guards, and boosting many related activities such as bed-and-breakfast services and the traditional making of local *produits du terroir* catering to a growing number of enthusiasts. Reserve visitors (at BR entrances) and city dwellers (through several city outlets) are increasingly purchasing Jabal Moussa natural products such as *zaatar*, forest honey, jams and many

more local delicacies and handicrafts. Jabal Moussa BR is, since 2017, an enthusiastic member of the newly founded Mediterranean Network of Biosphere Reserves (MedMAB) where it seeks to build on the common Mediterranean natural and cultural heritage through strong links with other BRs and prominent universities from the region.

The more biodiversity and archaeological wealth are discovered and displayed, presented and published, the better the chance of people realising the need for preservation of the rich landscapes of Jabal Moussa. A cultural centre at one of the ecotourism entrances was recently inaugurated and showcases the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe that Jabal Moussa BR has now joined as a member (The Phoenicians' Route and Iter Vitis, the Way of the Vine). The centre will also house detailed information of the finds unearthed at both Qornet ed-Deir and Broqta archaeological sites, whereas architectural remains, including previously documented and newly cleaned and enhanced monuments such as Hadrian's inscriptions and the Roman Stairs, can be viewed by simply following the BR mountain trails.

We are blessed and deeply grateful to the multinational team of archaeologists that has spent countless hours unearthing, mapping, and studying these surprisingly rich remnants of our mountain habitat and today, we can affirm with some certainty that this work has only just begun: If afforded appropriate protection, and with the continuing support of our donors, the Jabal will surely continue to unveil its hidden treasures for decades to come.

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