

Recording the Tangible and Intangible Maritime Heritage of the Anfeh Seafaring Community, Lebanon.

Report by: J. Jansen van Rensburg

Project Introduction:

Throughout the centuries Anfeh's fishing community have been using their knowledge and skills to make their living from the capricious seas surrounding Ras Anfeh, a promontory located 15 km south of Tripoli and 70 km north of Beirut. The fishermen's traditions are representative of the culmination of several hundred centuries of engagement with a range of different cultural groups, each of which has left their own cultural imprint. Unfortunately, with the modernisation of the fishing fleet over the past decades many of these traditions in Anfeh, as elsewhere in Lebanon, are being consigned to an unrecorded part of 'Levantine history' (Starr 1977: 57-70; Pinello, & Dimech 2013). This project was undertaken in response to this direct threat to the maritime traditions of the fishermen in Lebanon, by focusing initially on the small fishing community in Anfeh.

The aims of this project were twofold, namely:

- To conduct a two day maritime ethnography workshop to train Lebanese participants in the principals, techniques and ethical considerations of maritime ethnographic recording.
- To record the tangible and intangible maritime heritage of the Anfeh seafaring community, by studying maritime traditions using ethnographic data collection and archaeological recording techniques.

Project background:

The Anfeh Maritime Ethnography Project was realised during discussions with Nadine Panayot Haroun from Balamand University on the need for the inclusion of the fishing community within the wider Ras Anfeh project.

The importance of the fishing traditions in Anfeh had also attracted the interest of a small group of dedicated volunteers, The Anfeh and Neighbourhood Heritage Committee. This committee is dedicated to the preservation of many aspects of Anfeh's heritage. Several volunteers within this committee are related to fisherman, and were especially keen to see that the maritime traditions of the Anfeh fishermen were recorded.

Location:

Anfeh, is a village in the Koura district of the North Governorate of Lebanon. It is located 15 km south of Tripoli and 70 km north of Beirut. The coastal village is extended by a nose-shaped promontory, 400m long with a maximum width of 120m and oriented on an east-west axis (Figure 1). The fishermen operate out the main fishing harbour, Nhayreh, which lies to the north of this promontory (Figure 2).

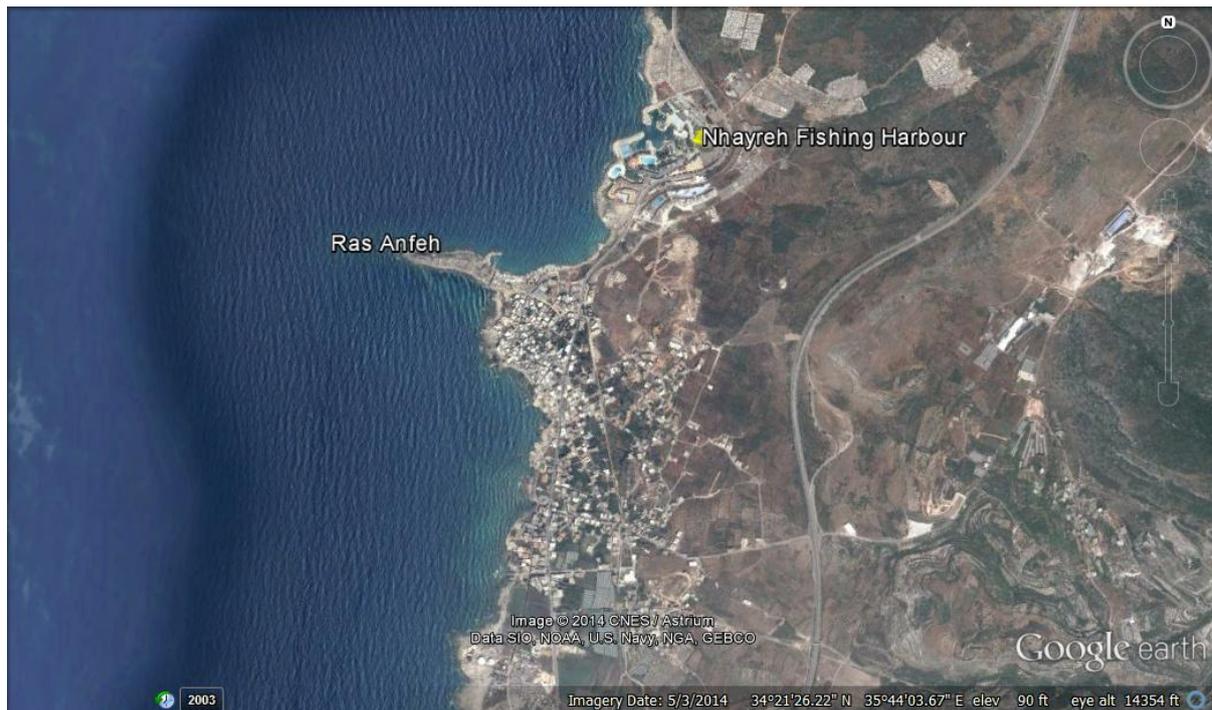


Figure 1. Map of Anfeh, showing the promontory Ras Anfeh and the fishing harbour Nhayreh (Image – Google Earth).



Figure 2. The fishing harbour Nhayreh (Photo author).

Methodology:

This project had two main aims, to conduct a workshop and to record the maritime traditions of the fishermen of Anfeh. The aim of the first part of this project was to provide a legacy within Lebanon by conducting a workshop that would train participants in the principals, techniques and ethical considerations of maritime ethnographic recording. This would be followed up by practical fieldwork, where the participants would be given the opportunity to practice their new skills. To realise this aim a free two day workshop at Balamand University was run from the 6-7 August 2014, followed by a three week fieldwork school, which ran from the 8-23 August 2014. The workshop was publicised widely using social media and the mailing lists of various universities in Lebanon. The volunteers from the Anfeh and Neighbourhood Heritage Committee were also approached, as many had expressed a desire to learn how to undertake ethnographic recording. The syllabus for the workshop was divided into the two days as follows:

Day 1

- Understanding ethnography, ethnographers' and the questions they ask
- Maritime ethnography
- Tangible and Intangible traditions
- Maritime cultural heritage

Day 2

- Ethnographic interview techniques
- Participant Observation
- Maritime ethnographic project management
- Ethical considerations
- Ethnographic writing
- Maritime archaeological illustration

The first day was predominately classroom based and provided the participants with a theoretical background to what is meant by ethnography, outlined the variety of tangible and intangible maritime traditions and explored the concept of maritime cultural heritage (Figure 3). The second day familiarised the participants with the variety of means whereby maritime traditions can be recorded, and how they can devise the best strategy for recording them. The participants were also shown how to use digital voice recorders, cameras and video recorders when undertaking ethnographical research (Figure 4). They were also made familiar with the requirements and considerations that are necessary in the planning, running and successful completion of maritime ethnographical projects. The final part of the course taught the participants how to undertake maritime archaeological illustration, after which they undertook a supervised practical session during which they undertook to draw both stone anchors and a traditional vessel in Nhayreh (Figure 5).



Figure 3. Classroom session on the first day (Photo author)



Figure 4. Dorothy Chakra demonstrating the use of a digital voice recorder (Photo author)



Figure 5. Julian Jansen van Rensburg explaining to the participants how to record the various features of a felucca (Photo author).

The second aim of this project was to record the tangible and intangible maritime heritage of the Anfeh seafaring community, by studying their maritime traditions using the ethnographic data collection and archaeological recording techniques taught to the participants of the two day workshop. Involving the participants in the second stage of the project, not only provided them with practical experience but also allowed those with close ties to the fishermen to act as gatekeepers. During this stage of the project several fishermen were approached for interviews. Initially a series of semi-structured interviews were undertaken. This interview technique allowed for the interviewee to ask open-ended questions based on several themes, which we had preselected (Appendix 1). The importance of this is that it allowed the interviewees to direct the conversation towards specific themes and explore a range of subjects within one interview. The interviews were then followed up where necessary with a more structured interview based on specific questions (Appendix 2 & 3). Due to the nature of ethnographic interviews many structured interviews often reverted to a more semi-structured approach. A series of diagrams and fish identification charts were also given to the participants, as many of them had little or no knowledge of fishing. This allowed both the fishermen and participants to have a frame of reference when talking about specific fishing practices or fish. These interviews were, depending on the fisherman, either recorded using paper notes, a digital voice recorder and, in several cases, by using a digital video recorder (Figure 6). During our interviews we were invited on several fishing trips by the fishermen in order that we may directly observe and participate in their daily lives. These trips were recorded mainly using paper notes and videography.



Figure 6. The participants interviewing retired fishermen outside St Catherine's Church, Anfeh (Photo author).

Outcomes:

The free two day workshop was extremely well attended with 25 participants coming from four different institutions in Lebanon, including three volunteers from the Anfeh and Neighbourhood Heritage Committee. Furthermore, a number of emails were received by people who were unable to attend, but expressed a wish to attend this workshop if it was to be run in the future. The number of participants, and that many even came from Beirut to attend, demonstrates the high degree of interest that a maritime ethnography class has in Lebanon. Furthermore, many of the participants were not studying anthropology or archaeology, and were attending the class out of interest for the subject. The volunteers of the Anfeh and Neighbourhood Heritage Committee were particularly grateful for the class, and played an active role throughout the fieldwork practical, facilitating access to members of the fishing community, including members of their own family. The aim to allow for the project to run beyond the specific time scale of this project and ensure a legacy for maritime ethnographical projects in the future is beginning to be realized, and I am in contact with two participants who are continuing to collect data about the Anfeh fishermen and their practices. It is hoped that this will be the beginning of a community based project that will further Anfeh's seafaring communities' engagement with their heritage and provide the impetus for greater involvement in the conservation and management of maritime cultural heritage in Lebanon.

The three week practical that was used to gather information about the maritime traditions of the fishermen of Anfeh was a resounding success, with over 20 fishermen having been interviewed. During this period over 120 videos were recorded and 23 hours of voice recordings were made and transcribed. The data that was gathered covered six broad themes, namely:

- Weather
- Navigation
- Fishing equipment and practices
- Vessels
- Economy
- Superstitions, beliefs, and music

The corpus of data gathered is beginning to be processed. Consequently, rather than present a full outline here I will present several vignettes as they relate to the six broad themes.

1. Weather. The influence of the weather plays a significant role in the fishermen's lives and there are a number of methods the fishermen use to forecast the weather. These range from a feeling that they have in their hands, to the appearance of "سميكات", a fish looking cloud on top of the mountain, which is taken to mean that the next day there will be strong winds. This wind normally occurs 24 hours before the winds begin to

blow. The importance of the winds is further emphasised by the fishermen's knowledge of when, where and how the various winds will affect the sea and hence their fishing.

2. Navigation. The practice of navigation by the fishermen is based solely on taking landmarks to find their position, as few fishermen sail out of sight of land. During several interviews we were told that some fishermen had used celestial navigation, yet none of the fishermen were familiar with it. Nevertheless, the fishermen were all aware of and could readily identify the extent of a large number of fishing areas, each of which were named.
3. Fishing equipment and practices. The most common fishing methods being used are traps, long lines, troll lines, and bottom and top anchored seine nets. The nets were and in some rare cases are still being made by the fishermen, although the majority purchase their nets from Tripoli. The use of explosives as recorded in earlier reports is increasingly rare, although in the past it had been relatively a relatively common occurrence (Starr 1977: 60). The deployment of the various types of fishing gear is, according to the fishermen interviewed, governed by the seasons of the year as well as the prevailing winds.
4. Vessels. The fishermen all use a wooden fishing vessel known as a felucca, a generic term that is used throughout the Mediterranean, and which has come to represent a range of vessel types. The fishermen in Anfeh do not construct their own vessels. Instead all vessels are commissioned in Tripoli. However, we were fortunate enough to be able to interview one fisherman who is skilled at repairs, in particularly caulking (Figure 7).
5. Economy. The fishermen in Anfeh are divided between those for whom fishing is their sole source of income, and those with a second job, whether gardener or fish market owner. The fish that is caught is either sold to a local fish market, private individuals or taken to the fish market auction in Tripoli.
6. Superstitions, beliefs, and music. A number of beliefs surrounding the appearance of specific meteorological phenomena and their influence on the forthcoming weather were recorded. The fishermen also recalled a song that was sung when dragging the felucca onto the shore, which was sung to us by a member of the fishing cooperative (Video 1).

Video 1. Toni Younes, singing the song that used when dragging the felucca up on the shore.



Figure 7. Dorothy Chakra recording Michel L Dayaa caulking a vessel in Nhayreh (Photo author).

During the recording of the various different terms being used by the fishermen we also began to compile a basic lexicon on fishing terms. The importance of this is that many of the terms that were being used were specific to the local dialect spoken in Anfeh, and in several cases foreign loan words were used. A similar situation was found to exist in an earlier study that looked at fishing terms in Lebanon, although our study has identified terms specific to the Anfeh fishing community (Mutlak 1973).

Future plans

This project has highlighted the juxtaposition between the rich traditional knowledge of fishermen, even in a small fishing village like Anfeh, and the neglect they are suffering at the hands of archaeologists, historians and anthropologists. However, what is perhaps more worrying is that much of this knowledge lies within the fading memories of the older fishermen. While this project has taken a large first step in gathering this data, there is a real need for further work to take place, both within Anfeh and along the shores of Lebanon. Preferably before these memories fade into an unrecorded part of ‘Levantine history’.

While this project has attempted to begin addressing this issue by hosting the first free maritime ethnographical workshop, there is a real need for this to be followed up with additional workshops and support. Furthermore, by highlighting the importance of these

traditions and incorporating them within wider ecotourism projects, not only do we preserve the knowledge of these traditions for future generations but also raise awareness of their importance within cultural heritage management plans. The village of Anfeh is ideally suited to realising the potential of incorporating maritime traditions within wider cultural heritage management plans, as it has the support structure from Balamand University and a strong local interest. Indeed Anfeh would make an ideal case study, from which to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in Lebanon and, it is hoped, to provide other communities with the impetus to carry out similar plans.

References

Mutlak, A. H. 1973. *Dictionary of fishing terms on the Lebanese coast: a philological and historical study*. Beirut, Librairie du Liban.

Pinello, D., & Dimech, M. 2013. Socio-Economic Analysis of the Lebanese Fishing Fleet. GCP/INT/041/EC – GRE – ITA/TD-16.

Starr, P. D. 1977. Lebanese fishermen and the dilemma of modernization, in *Those Who Live from the Sea*. ed. M. Estelle Smith. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co.). 57-70.

Appendix 1.

Themes

1. Weather
 - Winds
 - Currents
 - Sea state (waves)
 - Seasons of the year
 - Fishing seasons
 - Clouds
 - Forecasting: storms, other dangers.

2. Navigation
 - Type: stellar, pilotage
 - Method: stars, landmarks, sea marks
 - Direction
 - Distance
 - Depth
 - Location fixing
 - Clouds
 - Lost?

3. Fishing methods and equipment
 - Types of equipment: nets, lines, traps, spears, dynamite?
 - Equipment classification: Material, construction, method of operation.
 - Types of fish in specific areas
 - Types of fish associated with specific currents, winds, seasons.
 - Specific types of fishing gear used to catch specific types of fish

4. Vessels
 - Types of vessels
 - Ownership
 - Crew
 - Shares
 - Relationship between the vessel and the fishing gear

5. Economy
 - Fish species targeted
 - Market

- Sustainable fishing

6. Miscellaneous

- Music
- Poetry
- Superstitions / Beliefs
- Charts, diagrams
- Log, diary
- Sea knowledge, skills and experience

Appendix 2.

Questionnaire English

Vessels

1. Do you own a fishing boat?
2. How long have you had the boat for?
3. Do you just fish, or do you have another job?
4. Does your family help you with fishing?
5. Was your dad also a fisherman?

Weather

1. What are the best times of the year for fishing here?
2. How do you know when the best time is for fishing?
3. Can you fish during other times? Why not? Where?
4. What is the name that you would give for the best time for fishing?
5. What winds would be dangerous for fishing? Which direction do they come?
6. Do you have a name for the different winds? How do you name these winds?

Fishing Practices

1. How long have you been fishing for?
2. What type of equipment do you use?
3. What fish do you prefer to catch, why?
4. What times do you fish?
5. Do you have a particular area where you would chose to catch certain fish?
6. Do you have a name for these areas?
7. What are the characteristics of these areas?
8. What are the methods you use to fish?
9. Where do you get your nets from?
10. What nets would you use for small fish and bigger fish?
11. How do you measure the mesh size?
12. When is the best time for fishing?
13. How long would you stay out at sea fishing?
14. What are the names of the fish, are they different elsewhere?

Navigation

1. When you go fishing how do you know where the best places to go are?
2. How far out to sea do you go, can you still see the land?
3. Which stars would you use, how?
4. What landmarks would you use to identify fishing areas?
5. Do you use a compass?
6. Do you keep a diary of the weather or fishing?
7. What is the size of your crew?
8. Do you have a story about an event or danger you faced at sea?
9. Do you have any Music, sayings, or poetry?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire Arabic

إناء

هل تمتلك قاربا للصيد؟
 منذ متى تمتلك هذا القارب؟
 هل تصطاد فقط؟ أو تمارس مهنة أخرى؟
 هل تلقي المساعدة من عائلتك؟
 هل كان والدك صيادا أيضاً؟

الطقس

ما هي أفضل أوقات في السنة لصيد السمك هنا؟
 كيف يمكنك أن تعرف أفضل وقت للصيد؟
 هل تقوم بصيد الأسماك في أوقات أخرى؟ لما لا؟ أين؟
 ما هو الاسم الذي تطلقه على أفضل وقت للصيد؟
 أي الرياح تشكل خطراً على الصيد؟ ومن أي اتجاه تأتي؟
 هل تطلق أسماء مختلفة على الرياح المختلفة؟ كيف تقوم بتسمية هذه الرياح؟

ممارسات الصيد

منذ متى وانت تقوم بصيد الأسماك؟
 ما السمك الذي تفضل صيده ولماذا؟
 في أي وقت تصطاد؟
 هل هناك مناطق معينة تختارها لصيد السمك أو لصيد
 أسماك محددة؟
 هل لديك اسم تطلقه على هذه المناطق؟
 ما هي الوسائل التي تعتمد عليها في الصيد؟
 ما هي مميزات هذه المناطق؟
 ما هو أفضل وقت للصيد؟
 كم من الوقت تقضيه بالصيد بالبحر؟

هل تشتري الشبكة أو هل تصنعها؟
 ما هي الشبكة التي تستعملها لصيد السمك الصغير؟ السمك الكبير؟
 كيف تقيس عين الشبكة؟
 ما هي أسماء السمك؟ وهل تختلف في مناطق أخرى

الملاحه

عند ذهابك للصيد، كيف يمكنك أن تعرف ما هي أفضل الأماكن للصيد؟
 كم تبعد عن الشاطئ، هل لا تزال بإمكانك رؤية الأرض؟
 أى النجوم تستخدم، وكيف؟
 أى معالم تستخدم لتحديد مناطق الصيد؟
 هل تستعمل البوصلة؟
 هل تحتفظ بكتاب مذكرات عن الطقس أو السمك؟
 كم شخص تأخذ معك في المركب؟
 هل لديك رواية عن حدث حصل معك في البحر؟

هل لديك موسيقى أو اقوال أو شعر؟