



# Sur les Studios Baalbeck et autres lieux de mémoire au Liban



# About Baalbeck Studios and Other Lebanese Sites of Memory



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les Studios Baalbeck  
et autres lieux de  
mémoire au Liban

About  
Baalbeck Studios  
and Other Lebanese  
Sites of Memory

Monika Borgmann  
Lokman Slim





Oh maisons, vous avez construit des foyers dans nos cœurs  
Même quand vous êtes vides, celles qui sont dans nos cœurs sont remplies  
Al-Mutanabbi

Nul besoin de verser des larmes, ni de faire d'éloges. Il était une fois les Studios Baalbeck, membre actif de la communauté économique du Liban, qui avaient la capacité de réconcilier deux secteurs souvent opposés en apparence : le domaine artistique et celui de l'industrie. Bien des siècles auparavant, lorsque Schéhérazade raconta l'histoire des nombreuses aventures de Sindbad le Marin, elle la termina en disant que, alors que Sindbad vécut encore quelque temps après être rentré sain et sauf de son dernier périple, « celle qui met un terme à tous les plaisirs et qui sépare à jamais les compagnons », la mort, prit inexorablement le dessus sur sa faiblesse originelle. Autrement dit, c'est la mort de Sindbad plutôt que son retour à la maison qui marque la fin réelle de sa vie d'aventures. Cette citation de la mythique conteuse n'est pas purement rhétorique. Bien au contraire, Schéhérazade nous dit que toutes les histoires et sagas se terminent de manière définitive, malgré tout le plaisir et l'intérêt

qu'elles procurent. C'est de cette façon que les Studios Baalbeck ont été présentés aux Libanais quand les jours et les heures de cette maison devinrent inexorablement comptés. En ce sens, la vie et la mort de cette institution libanaise unique s'assimilent à une page des *Mille et Une Nuits* libanaises : une série de « voyages » accomplis par d'autres aventuriers qui se terminèrent par

la disparition physique de leur arche.

Il convient de noter que l'attribution au *Liban* plutôt qu'aux



Comme le montre cette bannière, les Studios Baalbeck partageaient les mêmes locaux que la Banque Almarshrek. Un rappel de la relation complexe entre cette institution et le secteur bancaire... La photo de la bannière a été prise fin 2012, tandis que la photo de l'entrée a été prise en février 2010, lorsque l'équipe d'UMAM D&R est arrivée sur place.



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Tel.: 01/553604 | P.O. Box: 11-5222 Beirut Lebanon  
www.umam-dr.org | info@umam-dr.org

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Texte français corrigé par Maryline Pinton.

English text edited by John McLean.

Layout and graphics by Hisham Salam.



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*Libanais* dans ce qui précède n'est pas fortuite. Après tout, parmi les fondateurs des Studios Baalbeck dans les années 60, figurent les Palestiniens Badie Bulos et, en coulisses, Yousef Beidas (également appelé Bedas). Mais ce n'étaient



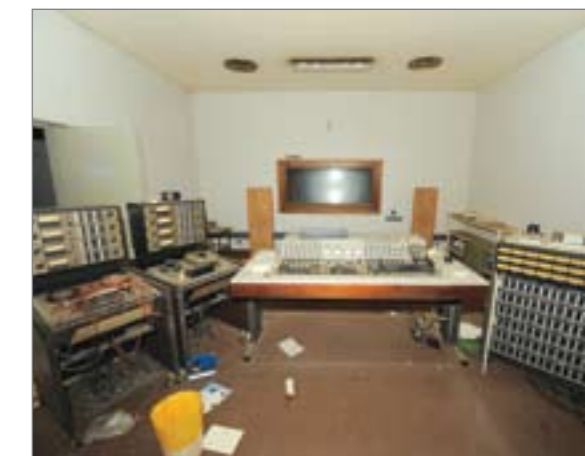
Tel que rapporté par une certaine presse qui a suivi l'affaire des Studios Baalbeck quand elle a éclaté en février 2010, quelques salles des Studios Baalbeck ont été transformées par l'entrepreneur en charge de la démolition en « salles d'exposition », où différents types de meubles, d'instruments et de machines trouvés dans les bureaux et ateliers des studios ont été mis « en vente ». Les deux images ci-dessus montrent la même « salle d'exposition » sous deux angles différents.

certainement pas les seuls pionniers « non-libanais » dans le domaine des arts et de la communication audiovisuelle de ce pays. En effet, même s'ils semblent avoir été oubliés par les historiens, l'Italien Giordano Bedutti, le Syrien Joseph Fahda, l'Irako-arménien Gary Garabedian et bien d'autres encore mériteraient d'être mentionnés chaque fois que l'on utilise ces deux mots clés : le cinéma et le Liban. Ce sont eux les visionnaires qui ont créé l'industrie du film et du cinéma au Liban, une réalisation dont les « Libanais » sont fiers, ce qui permet de comprendre pourquoi les Studios Baalbeck doivent être considérés comme un atout du Liban *en soi*. Il ne faut pas négliger le fait que ces mêmes aventuriers, qu'ils soient hommes d'affaires intrigants ou réalisateurs idéalistes, représentent également l'un des traits caractéristiques de ce pays : le Liban est tout sauf une communauté fermée.

**Mais** quel est le propos de cette monographie ? Se concentrera-t-elle uniquement sur les Studios Baalbeck ou s'intéresse-t-elle plus généralement à l'industrie audiovisuelle du pays ? Ce texte traite-t-il du Liban en tant que philosophie nationale et



« laboratoire » multiculturel généralisé ou s'agit-il d'une discussion sur son passé, son présent et son avenir ? En vérité, ce document s'efforce de traiter tous ces sujets : la façon dont ils finissent par converger ou diverger, se confondent parfois et explosent d'autres fois. Mais pour paraphraser l'inimitable Victor Hugo, il y a toujours plus. Et nous avons choisi le mot « plus » à dessein car ce développement, cette suite, cet *et cetera* est ce qui nous mène vraiment au cœur du problème ! Pourtant, même si cette notion de *plus* n'attire qu'une faible proportion de votre attention pendant la lecture de cet écrit, elle représente aussi la théorie qui nous attire tous. Ce n'est pas évident, il faut chercher à travers les ruines de ce pays, de-ci de-là, entre les restes de ce qui fut autrefois une installation industrielle, artistique et culturelle absolument unique : les Studios Baalbeck. Cette « situation » n'est pas sans rappeler la triste réalité qui concerne le reste, ou plus exactement ce qui a pu survivre à d'autres institutions publiques ou initiative privées, à savoir les documents sans lesquels le dossier de la mémoire du Liban ne peut être instruit. Comme indiqué précédemment, ces objets,



ces documents, ces souvenirs sont attribués au Liban plutôt qu'aux *Libanais*, pour garantir qu'aucun de ceux qui ont participé à ce recueil ne soit oublié.



**Fin** Février 2010, UMAM D&R apprend que les bâtiments des Studios Baalbeck devaient être démolis et que l'entrepreneur retenu pour le projet par les ayants droit du bâtiment avait reçu carte blanche pour disposer de leur contenu comme bon lui semblait. Compte



Plusieurs pièces des Studios Baalbeck telles qu'elles se présentaient lorsque l'équipe d'UMAM D&R eut accès à l'intérieur du bâtiment.



L'état des lieux une fois que l'équipe d'UMAM D&R eut accès à l'intérieur du bâtiment.

tenu de ces renseignements et des efforts constants d'UMAM D&R pour préserver les pièces retraçant l'histoire du pays, l'organisme devait prendre une décision. Pouvait-on se contenter d'espérer que les actifs des Studios Baalbeck soient peut-être sauvés et préservés par les institutions officielles libanaises appropriées (qui n'ont jamais fait

preuve de zèle pour sauver de tels « objets ») ou bien fallait-il prendre des initiatives unilatérales ? Au bout du compte, UMAM D&R décida de dédommager l'entrepreneur afin de pouvoir acquérir une partie au moins de ce contenu, notamment



des bobines de films et des documents papier.

Étant donné que la durée de vie des bobines traitées chimiquement est nettement plus courte que celle des documents papier, et compte tenu du risque matériel potentiel lié à un mauvais stockage de ces bobines, UMAM D&R a cherché l'aide d'un expert de renom dans le domaine de la conservation des films. En juillet 2011, l'organisme a invité le célèbre expert allemand, Harald Brandes, qui, aidé de deux volontaires locaux, a examiné et classé les bobines. En fait, M. Brandes et ses assistants ont décidé de détruire une partie des bobines car leur état avancé de détérioration menaçait d'endommager certaines bandes voisines sur les étagères. Une fois ce travail effectué, M. Brandes a soumis une évaluation technique recommandant, entre autres, de numériser le contenu de ces bandes *dès que possible* pour garantir leur conservation\*.

La gestion des milliers de documents papier était plus simple pour UMAM D&R, grâce à l'expertise acquise au fil des années dans la gestion de ses propres archives. Puisque un nombre conséquent de documents avait été correctement stocké et examiné, il était clair qu'ils constituaient une source non négligeable de précieux renseignements. En fait, les échantillons publiés dans ce catalogue apportent une preuve irréfutable de cet examen qualitatif.

\* Des extraits du rapport de H. Brandes sont reproduits, en anglais, page 25 et suivante.

Si ce sont là des faits, il ne faut pas oublier que rien n'a commencé ni terminé aux Studios Baalbek...

Dans un article publié le 6 Mars 2010, le journal *An-Nahar* indiquait :

Le Ministre de la Culture [de l'époque] a demandé au gouverneur du Mont Liban d'interrompre les travaux de démolition du Studio Baalbeck à Hursh Tabet, afin que le Ministère [puisse] envoyer une délégation pour vérifier la nature et le contenu du bâtiment et [déterminer] s'il peut être classé comme un bien archéologique et faire partie du patrimoine du [Liban]....

De toute évidence, la demande faite par le ministre au gouverneur est arrivée bien trop tard. Lorsqu'elle lui parvint, le mal était déjà fait: les actifs restants des Studios Baalbeck avaient déjà été dispersés. De même, il faut noter que les émotions exprimées à l'égard des Studios Baalbeck en mars 2010 et les éloges banals (malgré leurs bonnes intentions) qui ont été prononcés sur leurs ruines sont arrivés bien *après* les malheureuses circonstances qui ont conduit à leur disparition. Les Studios Baalbeck n'ont pas été « poignardés dans le dos » et ne sont pas morts en « martyrs ». En réalité, ils ont succombé à l'issue d'un long combat contre une douloureuse maladie. En fait, qu'il vienne du secteur public ou privé, aucun observateur des



La plupart de ces boîtes étaient vides au moment où l'équipe d'UMAM D&R eut accès à l'immeuble.

affaires libanaises (au sens large du mot « affaires culturelles », étant donné que le studio était considéré comme l'une des installations « industrielles » du pays) ne peut affirmer qu'il n'y avait pas lieu d'examiner « le patient ». Car après tout, une partie au moins des actions des Studios Baalbeck est la propriété publique des Libanais, notamment car l'Intra Bank appartient partiellement à l'État libanais et donc aux Libanais !



Aujourd'hui, après tant de lamentations et de jérémiades, les Studios Baalbeck ne sont plus qu'une grotesque caricature de ce qu'ils ont été, ne sont plus que leurs cendres. Même si UMAM D&R a eu la chance de s'improviser dépositaire de certains des actifs du studio, le sort du reste est un mystère. Et ce « reste » pourrait bien être conséquent, dans la mesure où il comprend non seulement ce qu'il y avait dans le studio au moment des préparatifs de la démolition du bâtiment, mais aussi les actifs datant d'avant la suspension de ses activités dans les années 70



puis 80, en raison de la guerre, ou après sa fermeture définitive au milieu des années 90 après une courte résurrection. À chacun de ces moments critiques, ceux qui détenaient les *clefs*, le pouvoir et la responsabilité des Studios Baalbeck doivent être tenus pour responsables de tous ces actifs où *qu'ils soient*, y compris ceux récupérés par UMAM D&R.

Donc, comme pour d'autres fonds d'archives sauvés de la déperdition par UMAM D&R, que faut-il faire de la collection des Studios Baalbeck ? Certains pensent, à tort, que la réponse est parfaitement évidente et ne mérite pas qu'on s'y attarde. Comme les objets survivants semblent faire partie de l'histoire et de la mémoire de ce pays, ils doivent être sauvegardés, dans tous les sens du terme. Ils doivent également être classés et indexés afin d'être mis à la disposition de tous ceux qui

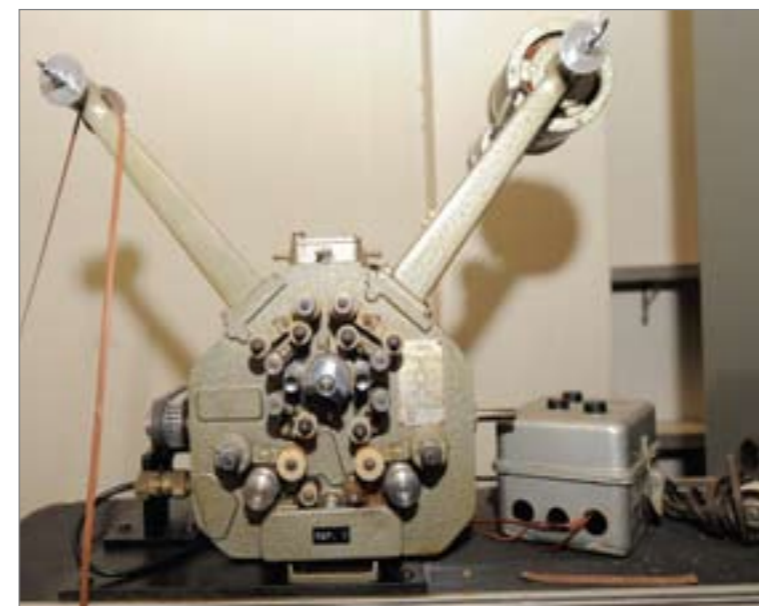


souhaitent les exploiter, que ce soit pour comprendre *ou se souvenir* de leur signification. Malheureusement, cette réponse « évidente » présente des défis liés à des circonstances imprévisibles et souvent dépourvues de toute logique. Comme ce fut le cas pour les Studios Baalbeck, des bâtiments sont souvent démolis malgré leur valeur « historique » et des documents (et cetera) qui ont un rapport direct avec la mémoire collective du Liban sont mis au rebut ou cédés à des entreprises de recyclage. Parfois, quelques articles isolés de cette mémoire collective libanaise sont sauvés par des individus ou des groupes qui apprennent leur existence par pur hasard. Si l'on ajoute à cela, les dysfonctionnements des organismes d'État auxquels incombe la responsabilité de protéger ces pièces de mémoire du Liban, ces exemples fournissent peut-être suffisamment de raisons pour penser



que la réponse à la question « *que faut-il faire de la mémoire du Liban ?* » n'est pas une évidence pour tout le monde. Afin de réunir, conserver et sauvegarder ces moments irremplaçables, ces témoignages tangibles de la mémoire collective du Liban, il est nécessaire d'entreprendre quelque chose de complètement différent de ce qui a été fait auparavant.

Au vu de ce qui précède, et jusqu'à ce que les Libanais se mettent



L'équipe d'UMAM D&R a essayé de photographier tous les objets des Studios Baalbeck auxquels elle a eu accès. Ces photos représentent divers instruments, appareils et machines vus là-bas.



Cette photo représente l'arrière-cour du bâtiment principal. La construction qu'on y voit donne l'impression d'une extension du bâtiment principal construite plus tard. En plus de l'entrée visible sur cette photo, cette construction communique avec le bâtiment principal par un couloir interne (image de gauche).



d'accord sur une « politique mémorielle » nationale (parmi tant d'autres types de politiques), nous n'avons d'autre choix que d'admettre que les bâtiments et les innombrables objets qui constituent la « mémoire du Liban » font constamment l'objet de braconnage. À ce stade, c'est seulement par pure chance, parfois *heureuse coïncidence*, que certains de ces objets sont finalement sauvés par des individus ou des organismes intéressés. En outre, quelles que soient les bonnes intentions de ces individus ou organismes et en dépit de l'intervention du destin, seule une petite partie de ce qui se trouve en péril de disparition a la chance

objective d'être sauvé. Incidemment, « l'affaire » des Studios Baalbeck démontre plus largement que la plupart des organismes officiels ayant un lien avec la préservation du patrimoine du Liban, du moins à court terme, ont au mieux fait la preuve qu'ils étaient des acteurs indécis et inefficaces. Ceci étant, on ne peut trouver aucune excuse à tous ceux et celles, citoyens libanais ou non, qui se considèrent comme des *parties prenantes* de la mémoire du Liban, mais reconnaissent dès le départ que ce fiasco mettrait en danger la mémoire collective du Liban. Comme les Studios Baalbeck le montrent bien, un certain mécanisme doit être mis en place pour traiter ces questions urgentes, étant donné qu'il apparaît qu'aucun des organismes, institutions ou structures nationaux existants

dont c'est la responsabilité n'en a ni la capacité ni l'envie. Autrement dit, tous ceux qui s'intéressent à la gestion de la mémoire partagée du Liban doivent travailler ensemble pour concevoir une stratégie adaptée aux situations les plus diverses, et ce, quelle qu'en soit la l'ampleur.

En termes pratiques, UMAM D&R propose la création à l'intérieur ou à l'extérieur du pays d'une structure à but non lucratif, « La Fondation pour la Mémoire du Liban » (FML). L'assemblée générale (ou un comité de pilotage identique) de la FML devrait se composer d'hommes et de femmes ayant pour souci de récupérer, protéger et conserver la mémoire collective du Liban. Chaque membre devrait faire preuve de sa plus grande motivation pour apporter sa contribution à cette initiative, sous forme matérielle ou immatérielle, afin de sauvegarder les idéaux et la dignité de l'histoire de ce pays. Afin de garantir l'efficacité et la neutralité de la FML, les procédures adoptées pour sa gouvernance doivent absolument prévoir un système de rotation des postes à responsabilité, pour empêcher toute « personnalisation » de l'organisme et/ou de sa mission. Lors de sa création, la FML doit se concentrer sur :

- 1) l'augmentation du nombre de bienfaiteurs « concernés » en plaidant en faveur de la « mémoire collective du Liban » par tous les moyens possibles et en toutes occasions, car il s'agit de l'une des caractéristiques culturelles les plus fondamentales de ce pays ;

- 2) le soutien moral et matériel à apporter à ceux qui sont le plus directement impliqués dans la protection de cette mémoire collective ;
- 3) la création d'un lieu, un local, où la FML pourra recevoir et stocker (au moins provisoirement) tous les dons recueillis. En échange, la FML devra remettre les dons qu'elle reçoit aux « archives nationales » (ou toute institution officielle similaire) une fois qu'il aura été constaté qu'un tel organisme respecte les bonnes pratiques en matière de gestion et de conduite.

Outre les points évoqués ci-dessus, il est impératif de s'occuper et de plaider en faveur du droit des citoyens à avoir accès à ces collections et à en bénéficier.

**Certains** pourront penser que se préoccuper de la mémoire du Liban à ce stade de l'histoire agitée du pays est un effort mal avisé, une mauvaise interprétation des priorités et un moyen facile d'ignorer les échéances actuelles, cela n'entamerait en rien nos objectifs. Il faut rappeler à ceux qui s'accrochent à l'argument consistant à dire « ce n'est pas le moment... il y a plus urgent à faire » que leur *succès* a déjà coûté au Liban la perte définitive d'une partie incommensurable de sa mémoire et de son histoire il y a plusieurs décennies. Il faut aussi leur rappeler qu'en termes « politiques », la dépréciation systématique de la question mémorielle équivaut à priver les Libanais d'une source

inestimable d'espoir. Dans cet environnement de « désespoir généralisé », le rêve collectif de restaurer le Liban, aussi nostalgique soit cette notion, a peut-être encore une chance d'inverser la tendance actuelle de misère et d'autodestruction.

Ceci dit, il va de soi que cette invitation à l'action, qui décrit de manière pathétique les Studios Baalbeck comme une opportunité qui n'attend qu'à être saisie, ne s'adresse pas à ceux qui continuent de croire et de soutenir qu'il y a plus urgent à faire...



*Oh houses, you have built homes in our hearts  
Even when you are empty, those in our hearts are full  
Al-Mutanabbi*

No tears to be shed, no eulogies to be given. Once upon a time, there was Baalbeck Studios, a thriving and contributing actor in Lebanon's progressive and booming business sector, which had the ability to unite the often disparate areas of industry and the arts. Eons before, when Scheherazade told the story of the many adventures of Sinbad the Sailor, she concluded the tale by describing that while Sinbad lived on for some time after he returned home safely from his last voyage, death, "the terminator of delights and the separator of companions," prevailed inexorably over his human frailties. Stated otherwise, Sinbad's death rather than his return home marked the real end of his lifetime of adventures. The point of this quote from the mythical storyteller is not made as a rhetorical courtesy. Instead, Scheherazade instructs us that a decisive end will indeed befall all stories and sagas regardless of how exciting and engrossing they

may be. Such was the case for the Lebanese as Baalbeck Studios' final days, then hours, ticked down into oblivion. The event was like a page taken from *One Thousand and One Lebanese Nights*: a set of "travels" undertaken by other adventurers, which ultimately ended in the demise of that uniquely Lebanese institution.

It is worth noting that this abstract attribution is given to *Lebanon* rather than to the *Lebanese*



As seen on this sign, the building in which Baalbeck Studios were located was also home to the Almashrek Bank. It is indeed a reminder of the close yet complex relationship between Baalbeck Studios and the banking sector....The sign was photographed near the end of 2012 while the picture of the entrance dates from February 2010 when the UMAM D&R team arrived on site.

# للنوشت و الأبحاث



**UMAM Documentation & Research** (UMAM D&R) est une O.N.G. libanaise créée en 2005 et dont les bureaux principaux sont situés à Haret Hreik, dans la banlieue sud de Beyrouth. Depuis 2005, UMAM D&R œuvre principalement à collecter et préserver tous les documents (écrits, sonores, audiovisuels, filmiques, photographiques...) relatifs à la Mémoire du Liban, dans le souci de constituer une collection de fonds d'archives à vocation citoyenne. Poussé par la conviction profonde que l'attitude opaque et amnésique vis-à-vis du passé, ainsi que le refus de le l'admettre, condamnent le Liban et les Libanais à un éternel sentiment de surplace, il n'est pas surprenant qu'UMAM D&R se concentre essentiellement sur le passé récent et tourmenté du Liban et ses mémoires conflictuelles.

Dans la mesure du possible, UMAM D&R fait de son mieux pour que son souci de recueillir, analyser, indexer et préserver ces documents aille de pair avec sa vocation citoyenne. Pour ce faire, UMAM D&R va à la rencontre du public libanais, ainsi que tout autre public intéressé, à travers des publications, physiques et électroniques, des colloques, des ateliers ainsi que des événements sur l'actualité, des expositions et des projections de films. UMAM D&R s'engage sans relâche dans ces différentes directions, dans l'espoir qu'un jour le Liban puisse enfin, avec toute la maturité requise, transcender son histoire tumultueuse, sans la désavouer...



people. After all, those who established Baalbeck Studios in the 1950s included Palestinians Badie Bulos and the intriguing Yousef Beidas (also spelled Bedas). But they were certainly not the only “non-Lebanese” harbingers of the country’s audiovisual



As reported by several of the press outlets that were covering the story of Baalbeck Studios when it broke during February 2010, the demolition contractor had converted some of the studios’ spaces into “showrooms.” These contained a variety of furnishings, devices and accessories that were arranged appropriately and placed “on sale.” The two pictures above capture the showroom from different angles.

communications and arts industry. Indeed, although they seem to have been lost to history, perhaps Italian Giordano Bedutti, Syrian Joseph Fahda, Iraqi-Armenian Gary Garabedian and many others deserve to be mentioned each time the relevant conversation turns to two key words: *cinema* and *Lebanon*. These were the visionaries who created Lebanon’s film and cinema industries—among other achievements in which the “Lebanese” take pride—which may help explain why Baalbeck Studios should be considered an asset of Lebanon *per se*. Importantly, those same adventurers, whether forward-looking businessmen or idealistic filmmakers, also represent one of the country’s most fundamental characteristics: Lebanon is anything but a closed community.

**But** in what direction is this missive traveling? Will it focus exclusively on Baalbeck Studios or does it address more generally the audiovisual industry in the country? In this text, are we examining Lebanon in the sense of its national philosophy and pervasive multicultural “laboratory,” or are we discussing its past, present



and future? In truth, the document seeks to encompass all these topics; how they eventually converge and diverge, conflate at times and implode at others. But to paraphrase the inimitable Victor Hugo, there is always more. And here, our use of the word “more” is carefully chosen because that extension, that continuum, that *etcetera* is what really gets to the point of this entire matter! Yet even though this notion of *more* actually incorporates the smallest proportion of the focus adopted in the epistle before you, it also represents the theory all of us are testing. It is certainly a demanding test, administered among the remains of the country and scattered haphazardly throughout its geography, but also in the midst of the ruins of a particularly unique cultural, artistic and industrial facility: Baalbeck Studios. It is a “situation” reminiscent of another sad reality that involves what remains—or what was *permitted* to remain—of other public and private concerns and pursuits, such as the documents that represent Lebanon’s shared memory. As mentioned previously, these memories are attributed most correctly to Lebanon rather than



*the Lebanese* to ensure that none of those who helped create them are ignored.



●  
Near the end of February 2010, UMAM D&R learned that the Baalbeck Studio facility was going to be demolished, and that the contractor hired for the project by the building’s caretaker had been given carte blanche to dispose of its contents. Thus apprised, and in view of UMAM D&R’s ongoing efforts to collect Lebanon’s



Several rooms of the Baalbeck Studios as they appeared once UMAM D&R’s team got inside the building.



The state of things once UMAM D&R's team gained access to the building.

memories, the organization faced a decision. Should it hope that the assets of Baalbeck Studios might be salvaged and preserved by the appropriate, *official* Lebanese institutions (which have never been in any particular hurry to salvage such “items”) or should it take unilateral action? Ultimately, UMAM D&R chose to compensate the contractor so that it could acquire at least some of those contents, especially reels of audio and video material and paper documents.

Since the “shelf life” of the chemically processed reels of film is significantly shorter



than that of paper documents, and considering the material danger that could result from those reels being stored improperly (a calamity that had already occurred in varying degrees because of neglect and pilferage), UMAM D&R sought assistance from a renowned technical expert in the field of film preservation. During July 2011, the organization invited noted German expert Harald Brandes, who with the help of two local volunteers, examined and categorized the reels. In fact, Mr. Brandes and his assistants opted to destroy some of them since their advanced states of deterioration threatened to damage some of the other tapes stored adjacent to them. Following those efforts, Mr. Brandes submitted a technical assessment that included a recommendation to digitize the contents of those tapes as *soon as possible* to ensure their preservation\*.

**Managing** the thousands of paper documents was somewhat simpler for UMAM D&R thanks to the expertise it has gained in that area over the years with its own physical archives. When a representative number of the documents had been stored properly and reviewed, it became clear that they offered a wealth of valuable information. Indeed, the samples published in this manual offer solid proof of that qualitative assessment.

\* Excerpts from Harald Brandes' report appear on page 25 sq.

**While** those are the facts, it must be borne in mind that things neither started with Baalbek Studios nor ended with it....

**In** an article published March 6, 2010, *An-Nahar* newspaper reported:

[The] minister of culture has asked the governor of Mount Lebanon to stop the demolition of Baalbek Studio in Hursh Tabet, so that the ministry [can] send a delegation to verify the nature and contents of the building and [determine] whether it can be classified as archeological and part of [Lebanon's] heritage....

**Obviously**, the minister's request arrived much too late. By that time, the awful deed had been done: the remaining assets of Baalbeck Studios had already been dispersed. Likewise, it is important to note that the emotions expressed about Baalbeck Studios in March 2010 and the banal eulogies (despite their good intentions) that were offered at its ruins came quite some time *after* the unfortunate circumstances that led originally to its demise. Baalbeck Studios was not “backstabbed” and did not die a “martyr.” In reality, it succumbed after a long battle with an agonizing illness. Indeed, regardless of private or public sector affiliation, no observer of Lebanese public affairs (which includes the broad area of



Most of the boxes pictured here were empty when the UMAM D&R team got inside the building.

cultural affairs, since the studio was one the country's “industrial” facilities) can assert that there was no reason to examine “the patient.” After all, at least some of the shares of Baalbeck Studios represented public property owned by the Lebanese people—especially since Intra Bank is partially owned by them as well!



Today, in the aftermath of all that hand-wringing, Baalbeck Studios is little more than a grotesque caricature of its former self, little more than rubble. While UMAM D&R was fortunate enough to have asserted itself as the new custodian of some of the studio's assets, the fate of the rest is a mystery. And that "rest" could be quite substantial, since it includes not only what was in the studio when preparations for the building's demolition were being made, but also the assets it contained when it went on hiatus in the mid-1970s,



again in the mid-1980s due to the war or after it closed permanently in the mid-1990s after a short-lived resurrection. At each of those critical junctures, those who held the keys, power and responsibility for Baalbeck Studios should have been held accountable for those assets *wherever they were*, including those recovered by UMAM D&R.

So, like other archival *fonds* UMAM D&R has saved from destruction, what should be done with the Baalbeck Studios collection? Some believe, mistakenly, that the answer is perfectly obvious and needs no elaboration. As the surviving items seem to be part of this country's history and memory, they should be safeguarded—in every sense of the word. They should also be categorized and indexed so they can be made available to anyone interested in learning *or recalling* their meaning. Unfortunately, that

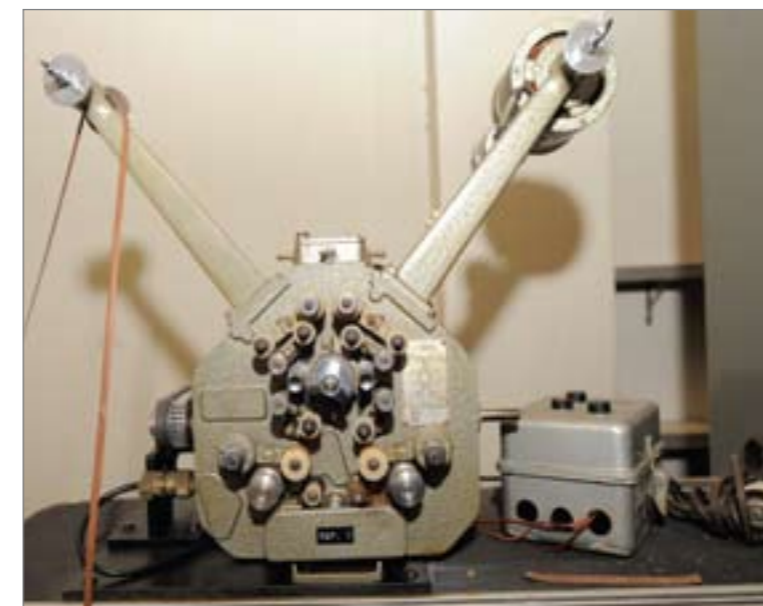


"obvious" response is fraught with challenges posed by unpredictable, often illogical circumstances. As was the case with Baalbeck Studios, buildings are frequently demolished despite any "historical" value they may have, and documents (etcetera) that relate directly to Lebanon's shared memory are typically discarded or sold to recycling plants. Sometimes, a few isolated examples of this shared Lebanese memory are rescued by people who learn of their existence purely by happenstance. Combined with the dysfunctional State institutions that were entrusted with the responsibility to protect these memories of Lebanon, perhaps these examples offer sufficient reason to believe that the answer to the question, *what should be done about Lebanon's memory*, is certainly not apparent to everyone. In order to collect, preserve and safeguard



this irreplaceable, tangible evidence of Lebanon's shared memory, something quite different must be done than what has been done before.

In view of the foregoing, until the Lebanese agree on national "memory politics" (among myriad other types of politics), we have no choice but to admit that the buildings, artifacts and countless items that comprise "Lebanon's



UMAM D&R made a concerted effort to photograph every area within the building to which its team had gained access. The pictures here captured the various instruments, devices and machines that were inside Baalbeck Studios when the team arrived.



A picture of the rear of the main building. The construction gives the impression of an “addition” built after the original building. In addition to having its own entrance, Baalbeck Studios could be accessed through a corridor in the main building (inset).



memory” are constantly being poached. At this point, it is only by sheer luck, *blind coincidence*, that any of those items are ultimately saved by interested individuals or organizations. Moreover, regardless of how well intended these individuals and organizations may be, and despite the presence of kismet, only a small part of the larger collection can be recovered. Tangentially, the Baalbeck Studios “affair” demonstrates generally that most of the official institutions associated with it—at least in the short run—have at best proven themselves indecisive and ineffectual. No excuse can be made

for any of those involved—whether they are Lebanese citizens or others who see themselves as *shareholders* in Lebanon’s memory—who acknowledge by default that this fiasco would endanger the country’s shared memory. As the Baalbeck Studios matter makes clear, some mechanism must be instituted to deal with such emergencies, particularly since it appears that none of the existing state institutions is reliable enough to do so, and none of the private structures, institutions or organizations has the wherewithal to assume that responsibility on their own. Simply put, all those associated with the management of Lebanon’s shared memory should work together to conceive a strategy for dealing with any

related situation, regardless of the magnitude involved.

In practical terms, UMAM D&R suggests that a not-for-profit structure, “The Endowment for the Memory of Lebanon” (EML), be fielded either within or outside Lebanon. The general assembly (or similar guiding committee) of the EML should be comprised of men and women who are concerned about reclaiming, protecting and preserving Lebanon’s shared memory. Each member should be inherently motivated to contribute to the initiative in any material or nonmaterial form and to safeguard the ideals and dignity of that national past. To ensure the EML remains effective and free from any undue influence, the procedures adopted for its governance must insist on the rotation of the managerial responsibilities to preclude any “personalization” of the organization and/or its mission. At its inception, the EML must focus on:

- 1) increasing the number of “concerned” benefactors by advocating “Lebanon’s shared memory” in every possible way and on every conceivable occasion, as it is one of Lebanon’s most fundamental cultural characteristics;
- 2) providing material and moral support to those involved most directly with protecting that collective memory;
- 3) establishing a location—a

home—where the EML can receive and store (at least temporarily) all related donations. In turn, the EML must give the donations it receives to the “national archives” (or similar official institution) once it becomes clear that such an organization observes best practices in management and conduct.

Beyond the foregoing areas of concentration, advocating and addressing the right of citizens to access and benefit from these collections is imperative.

While some people may argue that being concerned with these particularly Lebanese memories at this point in the country’s turbulent present is a misguided effort, a misinterpretation of extant priorities and a convenient way of overlooking current exigencies, such perspectives would do nothing to achieve the objectives stated herein. Instead, those who cling to such points must be reminded that Lebanon’s shared memory is in such poor condition today because the same points were argued *successfully* decades ago. Indeed, not only are such pretexts responsible for the loss of substantial portions of Lebanon’s memory, but the “political expressions” which support that argument should be recognized as impeding all opportunities to give the Lebanese an extraordinarily necessary source of hope. Under the prevailing

conditions of “widespread despair,” the collective dream of restoring Lebanon—however nostalgic that notion may be—still has the potential to interrupt the miserable, ongoing cycles of societal self-destruction. Understandably, this

invitation, which describes the pathetic condition of Baalbeck Studios as an opportunity waiting to be taken, is not addressed to those who continue to believe and advocate that now is not the right time for memories....

# للنوشتق والأبحاث



Documentation & Research

**UMAM Documentation and Research (D&R)** is a non-profit, Lebanese civil organization that was designated an NGO in 2005. Operating from its main offices in Haret Hreik situated in Beirut's southern suburbs (Dahiyeh), UMAM D&R capitalizes on its enduring citizen-oriented perspective to contribute to the archival and preservation of Lebanon's memories, which helps make them accessible to interested audiences. The organization's interests focus specifically on Lebanon's relatively recent yet turbulent past, about which UMAM D&R has consistently promoted both public information and debate. The organization's efforts are guided by the belief that one of Lebanon's most vexing predicaments is its lack of transparency about the past. Combined with the country's steadfast refusal to accept its past, the pervasive impression is that Lebanon has condemned itself to walk in place endlessly.

Since its inception, the activities UMAM D&R has undertaken relative to reconciling Lebanon's past with its present span a broad range of efforts including collecting, archiving, classifying and publishing information about its archives, organizing limited access seminars and workshops and hosting topical, open events such as exhibitions and film screenings. The organization pursues these and other related initiatives relentlessly in the hope of one day being able to see Lebanon's future transcend its own history.



## What Is to Be Done?

Excerpts from the Technical Report submitted by H. Brandes on the Audiovisual Archives of Baalbeck Studios

Following its "rescue" of numerous videos and reels of film from the now-defunct Baalbeck Studios (February 2010), UMAM D&R realized that it needed to contact an expert in film restoration, preservation and archiving for advice about managing and maintaining this acquisition. Mr. Harald Brandes came to the attention of Mrs. Trudy Peterson, a professional archivist and member of UMAM D&R's consultative council, who contacted Mr. Brandes in behalf of the organization. Having demonstrated his aptitude with a broad range of film types and

digital media in a number of countries and for several international organizations (including UNESCO and the Goethe Institute), Mrs. Peterson invited him on behalf of the organization to examine the film in situ in Beirut. Keying on his decades of experience as a film technician, restoration expert and instructor in film archive management, Mr. Brandes was assisted during his weeklong assessment by two Lebanese volunteers. Upon completion of his comprehensive review, Mr. Brandes submitted a detailed report. Below are the main points of his assessment.

### Condition of Baalbeck Studios' Audiovisual Archives

Among Baalbeck Studios' audiovisual archives, UMAM D&R stands to acquire some 400 reels of 16 mm and 35 mm film, to include negative and positive reels (color and black and white) as well as sound negatives. Since these reels of film did not include descriptions of their content, that information could only be obtained after they were thoroughly reviewed (e.g., condition, content, type, duration, etc.). Unfortunately, I had at my disposal only a simple viewing table with which to determine the content of those reels of 16 and 35 mm film.

After reviewing some samples and noting the presence of mold and oxidation, it became obvious that some reels have achieved an advanced stage of deterioration.



Harald Brandes at work.

### Two Rules to Follow for the Near Term:

1. Work with these reels of film in a well-ventilated area, preferably on an exterior terrace or balcony.
2. Use protective masks to prevent inhaling the oxidized material.

After taking these precautions, work can progress on the identification of these reels of film (e.g.,

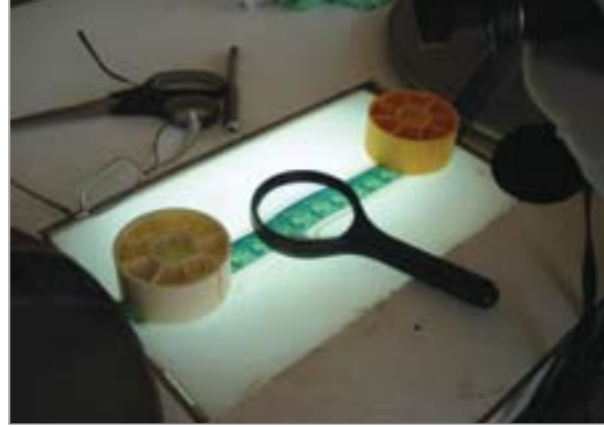


format, color or black and white, etc.). Given their overall condition, however, it seems apparent that these reels were subjected to poor care-in-storage procedures within Baalbeck Studios.

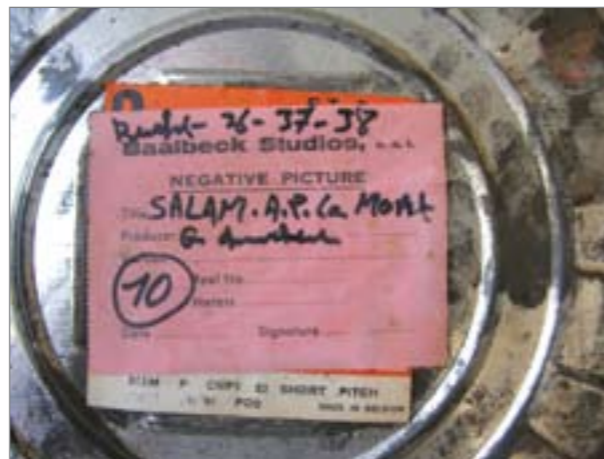
After reviewing approximately 100 reels of film, we should be able to produce accurate descriptions of the color and black and white rushes included in this trove of archival material. Where the sound negatives are concerned, however, producing a content list will be impossible without utilizing appropriate sound equipment. Similarly, while we could also identify the different reels of Magnetton film (e.g., 35, 16 and 6.25 mm), no assessment of their condition can be made without having access to the specialized equipment needed to read that film.

We discovered two reels of 2-inch format film but again were unable to evaluate their condition. Since it seems that a Beirut-based postproduction firm, still has equipment capable of reading this format, arrangements must be made with that company to transfer those films to a digital format.

I am convinced more capable equipment can be found in Beirut or elsewhere in Lebanon. Having access to such equipment



Harald Brandes at work.



would permit work to be done on these archives in a more professional manner, thus enabling UMAM D&R to achieve its mission. In addition, I am convinced that preservation of the movies within Baalbeck Studios' archives has not been given the same priority as have the reels salvaged by UMAM D&R. As a result, it is essential to identify the people and organizations that will be responsible for the management of the Studio Baalbek archive. Such a centralized effort would increase awareness of the archives and facilitate their safeguarding.

As UMAM D&R has already identified the primary sources of audiovisual expertise in Lebanon, they should be contacted immediately. Additionally, I believe it would be interesting and useful to contact the owners of Lebanon's old cinemas.



### Characteristics of this Collection

Based on my experiences while in Lebanon, I would categorize the condition of the materials as being typical of such chutes of movies. The reels are in various states of decomposition; however, there were some rare exceptions. Unfortunately, a significant number of those reels were completely unusable. Those reels must either be destroyed or stored as far away as possible from the others. Again, such actions must be conducted in well-ventilated areas.

The reels that can still be used should be copied onto newer film formats or digitized. Of note, copying the usable film to other film-based formats can only be done by using certain processes, which are no longer available in Lebanon. Further, the process is very expensive and would require a substantial outlay from UMAM D&R's already limited resources.

Ultimately, the best solution would be to digitize the collection entirely as even under optimal conditions of preservation and storage, the risk of degradation still exists. As an aside, if the objective is to save only the images contained in these reels of film, digitization, even in a standard format, would be sufficient. If exploiting this material is the real priority, however, a high definition digitization process—2K format or superior—should be utilized. Again, in view of UMAM D&R's budget constraints, digitization to HD or 2K format seems perfectly acceptable.

### Storing the Reels

It will be necessary to procure new cases in which these movies can be stored; however while these may be plastic cases, PVC should not be used. Further, the cases do



Siska, one of the two volunteers who assisted Harald Brandes, at work.

not need to be sealed hermetically as they must allow for permanent aeration of the film inside. The storage environment must be maintained at a relative humidity of less than 45 – 50% to preclude mustiness. While the temperature of the storage facility should be kept as low as possible, in my experience, the most important factor is maintaining temperature fluctuations in order to prevent condensation. Thus, the recommended temperature should be kept at between 18° C and 20° C. Color films are usually stored near 0° C, but given the cost of this project and the high risk of condensation, maintaining such a low temperature would not be justified. Although not ideal, storing the films at a temperature of about 20° C should be adequate.



## Un certain Royaume des Cieux

Youssef Chahine, les Studios Baalbeck, Andrée Chedid et al. **عن ملكوت سماء**

**A Kingdom of Heaven** يوسف شاهين، ستوديو بعليك، أندريه شديد...

Youssef Chahine, Baalbeck Studios, Andrée Chedid et al.

**En** 2005, une adaptation de la vie de Balian d'Ibelin sort en salle : *Le Royaume des cieux*, une production anglo-américaine signée Ridley Scott. Le cinéaste égyptien Youssef Chahine a dû se sentir propulsé quelque quarante années auparavant, lorsqu'en 1966, dans sa chambre d'hôtel sur les Champs Élysées, il travaillait à l'adaptation au cinéma du roman d'Andrée Chedid, *Le Survivant*. À cette même époque, Chedid, d'après les documents reproduits dans les pages suivantes, écrivait déjà pour Chahine un scénario intitulé *Le Royaume des cieux*, tandis que lui rêvait de le voir incarné à l'écran par de célèbres stars françaises...

**ذات** يوم من العام ٢٠٠٥ استقبلت دور السينما الأميركي - البريطاني «ملكوت السماء» لمخرجه ريدي سكوت. يومذاك كان يوسف شاهين ما يزال على قيد الحياة، والأرجح أن عنوان هذا الفيلم عاد به القهقري

عقوداً طويلة في الزمن - عاد به إلى العام ١٩٦٦ حيث كان من نزلاء «فندق فرونتناك» المطل على جادة الشانزليزيه، منكباً على تحويل إحدى روايات أندريه شديد إلى نص سينمائي، مواكباً عملها على وضع سيناريو لفيلم تحت عنوان «ملكوت السماء»، حاملماً باستقطاب بعض أشهر الممثلات الفرنسيات للمشاركة في هذه المشاريع السينمائية.

في الصفحات التالية جملة من المراسلات، معظمها بين يوسف شاهين وستوديو بعليك، مدارها على هذه المشاريع.

**In** 2005, Ridley Scott's British-American film "Kingdom of Heaven" was released. One would think that Egyptian film director Youssef Chahine, still alive at the time, had certainly heard of the film. It is quite likely that it sent him back immediately to 1966. At the time, according to the documents reproduced here, Chahine was a guest at Hotel Chateau Frontenac in Paris. He was involved with transforming Andrée Chedid's novel *Le Survivant* into film. Specifically, he was working closely with her to write a screenplay titled "The Kingdom of Heaven" and was trying his best to attract the talents of renowned French actresses....



Ce logo « prosaïque » est peut-être le premier à avoir été adopté par les Studios Baalbeck. L'élément visuel représenté par l'onde sonore, ainsi que la disposition des autres éléments, s'inspire largement du logo de la « Société Libanaise d'Enregistrements Artistiques ». Ce logo a été remplacé au fil du temps par un autre, moins visuel et plus abstrait.

This animated, multimedia logo is perhaps the first one used by Baalbeck Studios. The sound visualizer and unique layout of the other elements indicate that this early version borrowed heavily from the logo used originally by the "Lebanese Company of Artistic Recordings." The logo was eventually replaced by one that was far more abstract and less visually oriented.

*Handwritten:* King

**"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"**  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Basic Idea**

The little boy felt that it was through his fault that his friend became ill and is dying. They had argued about their common dog and he had kicked his friend.

Hearing a superstitious old Aunt say that the friend can only be saved by some holy water from the faraway land of Jerusalem the little boy armed only with a "Faith that can move mountains" a small bundle of clothes and food and his dog, sets out to get it to save his Pal.

His odyssey is incredible his goal especially on foot and for so small a child is unattainable. Yet everywhere he travels the people (Cross-sections of all humanity) help him and in turn are helped regain confidence through the strength of his own faith and will. Thus wherever he goes, he leaves a trail of sunshine in his wake.

The priest that had lost faith through the tragic death of his beloved.

The village girl that had allowed herself to be sold on the white slave market due to her inability to give birth to children.

Judas himself in the living image of a fisherman...

All, though their contact with the faithful child are helped regain confidence in life.

And it is not the holy water that saves the friend, as several people had brought some from all over the place to no avail.

It is more the desire to see his good friend return after the long journey that made his case, a national case, to hear him tell all about it, that makes his fight for his life. When the little boy returns strangely enough by a "Sabre Jet" whose pilot he had inspired, the friend smiles with the warmth of a great love and pardon for the little boy who had kicked him but also saved his life.

*Handwritten:* King

**"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"**  
\*\*\*\*\*

**High production budgeted staff**

For Director	25,000
Producers	15,000
Scriptwriters	10,000
Executive Producers, Sales, Distribution	10,000
Special marketing and publicity	10,000
Equipment	10,000
Contingency reserve against	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,000</b>

*Handwritten:* King

*Handwritten:* King

**12 MAY 1936**

Dear Mr. Dulac,

As promised, I'm here in Paris working on the script with Mrs. Chedid and our work up to now, though still in its first stages, seems quite promising.

By the time I come back to Beirut around the 23rd I should have with me the complete treatment written in about 70 pages.

I have as yet not made any concrete agreements with stars, as all would undoubtedly ask to read the script, the full script, however, Faten is very interested in the idea and my agents in Paris very interested in finding me co-producers as well as an actor for the first part.

Though I am doing a "forcing" to have the script ready very soon I still must be careful not to overdo it as this may hurt the normal progression of thought of Mrs. Chedid who has dropped and retarded a lot of other commitments to finish our work.

The moment I have more news I'll drop you a line. Hoping to find you always high spirited and in good health, I remain,

Yours,

Youssef Chahine

*Handwritten:* King

May 2nd 1936

Dear Mr. Dulac,

As promised, I'm here in Paris working on the script with Mrs. Chedid and our work up to now, though still in its first stages, seems quite promising.

By the time I come back to Beirut around the 23rd I should have with me the complete treatment written in about 70 pages.

I have as yet not made any concrete agreements with stars, as all would undoubtedly ask to read the script, the full script, however, Faten is very interested in the idea and my agents in Paris very interested in finding me co-producers as well as an actor for the first part.

Though I am doing a "forcing" to have the script ready very soon I still must be careful not to overdo it as this may hurt the normal progression of thought of Mrs. Chedid who has dropped and retarded a lot of other commitments to finish our work.

The moment I have more news I'll drop you a line. Hoping to find you always high spirited and in good health, I remain,

Yours,

Youssef Chahine

**March 23, 1936**  
A/1482

Mr. Youssef Chahine  
Beirut.

Dear Mr. Chahine,

With reference to our meeting of the 21st instant regarding co-production with Baalbeck Studios, I have the pleasure to inform you that we will be pleased if you will follow up this subject with your connections in this country and abroad with a view to securing advantageous co-production contracts with us in this country.

We wish you every success and we look forward to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Indie Dulac  
Chairman

30/36

**Baalbeck Studios, s.a.l.**

**March 23, 1936**  
A/1487

Mrs. André Chedid  
c/o Mr. Youssef Chahine - 114 Bd. Saint Germain Paris  
Beirut.  
O.S. n. 22.60.

Dear Mrs. Chedid,

This is to confirm our agreement with regards to the writing and completion of the screenplay known as the "Kingdom of Heaven" based on an idea by Mr. Youssef Chahine for a fee of 25,000.- which comprises all your charges for all the work involved until the final completion of the screenplay.

We enclose herewith a check for 2500.- an amount of your fee. Please sign the attached duplicate copy of this letter confirming your agreement to the above terms and the receipt by you of the above payment.

Yours faithfully,  
Indie Dulac  
Chairman

30/36

**Baalbeck Studios, s.a.l.**

**March 23, 1936**  
A/1488

Mr. Youssef Chahine  
Bellevue Building  
Yarouk Str.  
Beirut

Dear Mr. Chahine,

This is to confirm our agreement to commission Mr. Chedid to write and complete the screenplay of the "Kingdom of Heaven" based on an idea by yourself. The ownership of the screenplay when completed will be shared equally by Baalbeck Studios and yourself.

Please sign the attached duplicate copy of this letter as a confirmation of your acceptance of this agreement.

Yours faithfully,  
Indie Dulac  
Chairman

30/36

*Handwritten:* P.S. L.L. "Kingdom of Heaven"

**7/6/36**

II YOUSSEF CHAHINE FRONTENAC 66 PARIS

REYOUR CABLE FIFTH INSTANT WILL NOT ENTER ANY AGREEMENT UNTIL ALL DETAILS AND SCREENPLAY PRESENTED AND APPROVED BY US STOP SO FAR WE AGREE PURCHASE RIGHTS KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ONLY STOP WILL NOT COMMIT OURSELVES FURTHER BEFORE RECEIVING COMPLETED SCRIPT AND ALL DETAILS AND GUARANTEES REGARDING

BAALBECK STUDIOS

P.O. Box 4072 Tel. 221655

**ORIENT VIA RADIO-ORIENT VIA RAO**

RECEIVED BY AIRMAIL STOP WILL BE COMPELLED INTERMPT BY PRIORITY AGREEMENTS UNLESS RECEIVED EARLIER STOP DOLLAR CHECKS

**6 JUN 1936**

**ORIENT VIA RADIO-ORIENT VIA**

RECEIVED BY AIRMAIL STOP WILL BE COMPELLED INTERMPT BY PRIORITY AGREEMENTS UNLESS RECEIVED EARLIER STOP DOLLAR CHECKS

**6 JUN 1936**

**ORIENT VIA RADIO-ORIENT**

RECEIVED BY AIRMAIL STOP WILL BE COMPELLED INTERMPT BY PRIORITY AGREEMENTS UNLESS RECEIVED EARLIER STOP DOLLAR CHECKS

**6 JUN 1936**



File  
M.L.  
146

HOTEL FRONTENAC  
100 RUE DE LA HARPE  
PARIS  
FRANCE

Dear Mr. Baalbeck, June 9th 1966

The only game problem that caused, was that I didn't have the courage to tell us aggressively as I should, but to the lack of moral backing.

Then, you had received no previous explanation as to what I was planning, yet, as you must know, all cinema deals are always very problematic.

Seeing that our screenplay of "Kingdom of Heaven" needed more time to mature. I pushed on the occasion of buying - my own personal name, I'd liked the treatment which is a best seller published by the well respected editor Jonathan Cape. I think you may say good to make this good thing the first the book is very appreciable by most means.

Received: 14 JUL 1966

HOTEL FRONTENAC  
100 RUE DE LA HARPE  
PARIS  
FRANCE

As soon as possible, may have returned my approach as rough, as please accept my sincere regret, and as I mentioned in my telegram, I was trying to find series of special tips that and a deal would undoubtedly be made.

My intention was to prepare a sort of ready-made package for you to consider which would also include a full screenplay, which also would be a miracle, as to have one fully ready, usually with a feature.

In while waiting for reports, which I'm completing it and should have it ready - not more than a day. You can read against Mr. Baalbeck, you had often mentioned your trust in me.

address - France making their acceptance to not with us more probable and around the book is written in a way highlighting the development of a screenplay - not too long a time, it's a matter of fact that I'd like to be involved at the point of my treatment of it.

She, of course, is occupied by our common deal - the Kingdom of Heaven - allowing to finish it by December.

Also, I have numerous personal references of all kinds from America's biggest all of whom have now read the book, liked it and are saying one of my features this week to decide if they can trust me or not. My reputation is sound enough but they'd like to check!

Preparing a screenplay a co-production usually takes months but to the actors' commitment as well as the consultation of my large audience.

Following your instructions and desire to start up

at least as the artistic side is concerned and I had mentioned that in your own interest, I'd assume complete responsibility for the screenplay, taking into account the cost, if any, of the other elements and your duties of agreement.

Nothing will be imposed or could be. I intended as promised, to come you about every step I took, yet for the book itself I had to work to buy it myself, at my own expense and without me in being in fact, have not all laws dragging about it.

Personally then, my only in writing me money the book payment wasn't easy either and when I would I would guess the valueless of my money yet based to jump, some of the problems, while allowing myself to work out the deal in relative comfort rather than, like now, severe financial return. Besides I know you'll have me more and we'll work together in with, if you allow me to serve you to the best of my ability.

Yours and always, faithfully  
Yousef

## Jeux mortels et autres jeux...

### Sometimes it was just a game; other times it was deadly...

For the determined collector, the opportunity to review Baalbeck Studios' numerous documents is nothing short of nirvana. From routine, inter-studio correspondence to a suggestion that flowers be sent to an actress injured during filming to employee rosters that disclose religious affiliation and other information about the staff, there is much more to Baalbeck Studios than the contribution it made to the domestic and regional artistic scene.



Yousef Beidas  
(Jerusalem 1912 - São Paulo 1968)

Pour un collectionneur acharné, la masse de documents retrouvée dans les Studios Baalbeck est un pur enchantement. Tout en savourant la lecture de correspondances anodines avec d'autres Studios, de courriers des producteurs, d'une petite note suggérant d'envoyer des fleurs à une actrice qui s'est blessée pendant un tournage, de registres d'employés spécifiant leur religion et d'autres renseignements (à la libanaise), ce collectionneur se dit qu'il y a dans les Studios Baalbeck bien plus que leur renommée nationale et régionale.

Les Studios Baalbeck semblaient avoir un appétit vorace et des ambitions qui dépassaient largement le *hors-champ* du cadre cinématographique. Par exemple, cette lettre du célèbre producteur américain Sy Weintraub adressée à Yousef Beidas, grand manitou des Studios Baalbeck, à propos d'une éventuelle



Un organigramme présentant les différents actifs et investissements de la Banque Intra dans le monde : les États-Unis, la France, la Grande-Bretagne, l'Italie et la Suisse figurent sur la cartographie de Yousef Beidas ainsi que le Qatar, la Sierra Leone, le Brésil entre autres pays...

A chart that displays the various global assets and investments of Intra Bank. The USA, France, Britain, Italy and Switzerland are included as extensions of the Beidas empire, as are Qatar, Sierra Leone, Brazil and other countries...



LIFE, 27 Jan 1967

pursuits. One such example became immediately apparent in a letter to Baalbeck Studios' executive Yousef Beidas from noted producer Sy Weintraub about the possibility of partnering for the film "The Deadly Game." Weintraub, a pivotal force in US cinema and co-owner of film equipment giant Panavision, wrote, "As you [Bedas] informed me in your office, you are in the banking business and your primary concern is to make motion pictures in Lebanon which will attract tourists, and other businesses and industries to your country." Of note, the correspondence is little more than a nod considering the place held by Baalbeck Studios within Beidas' once burgeoning empire. In fact, the best description of Yousef Beidas' rise and fall is that it was a *deadly game*...

Since 1948 many Palestinians had been assimilated into Lebanese society, and more than a few of these had, like Yusuf Beidas, amply contributed to its economic prosperity. A few thousand, most of them Christians, had even been naturalized as citizens under Chamoun's presidency. Several of the leading cultural figures in Lebanon were of Palestinian origin, such as Sabri Sharif, who played a decisive role in the theatrical success of the Rahbani brother...

coproduction sur le film *The Deadly Game (Jeu Mortel)*. Weintraub, producteur Hollywoodien, l'un des grands patrons de Panavision, écrit à Beidas : « Lorsque j'étais avec vous dans votre bureau, vous m'avez dit que vous étiez surtout dans les finances et que votre intérêt principal en tournant des films au Liban était de développer le secteur touristique et d'attirer des capitaux étrangers à investir dans votre pays ». Cette

correspondance est un exemple de ce que représentaient les Studios Baalbeck pour l'empire Beidas. Toujours est-il que la grandeur et la chute de l'empire de Yousef Beidas a réellement été un jeu mortel...

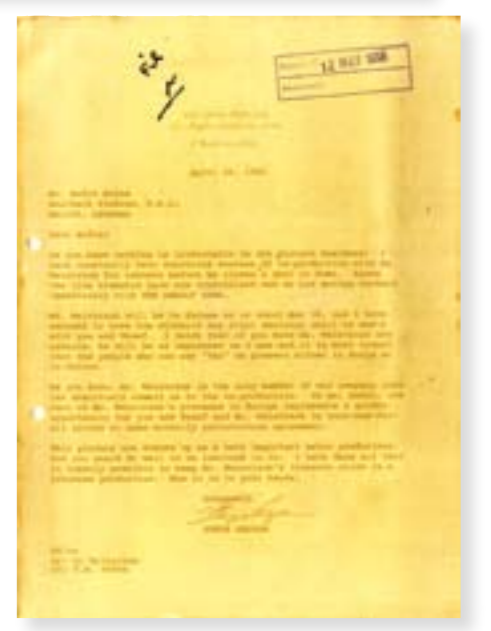
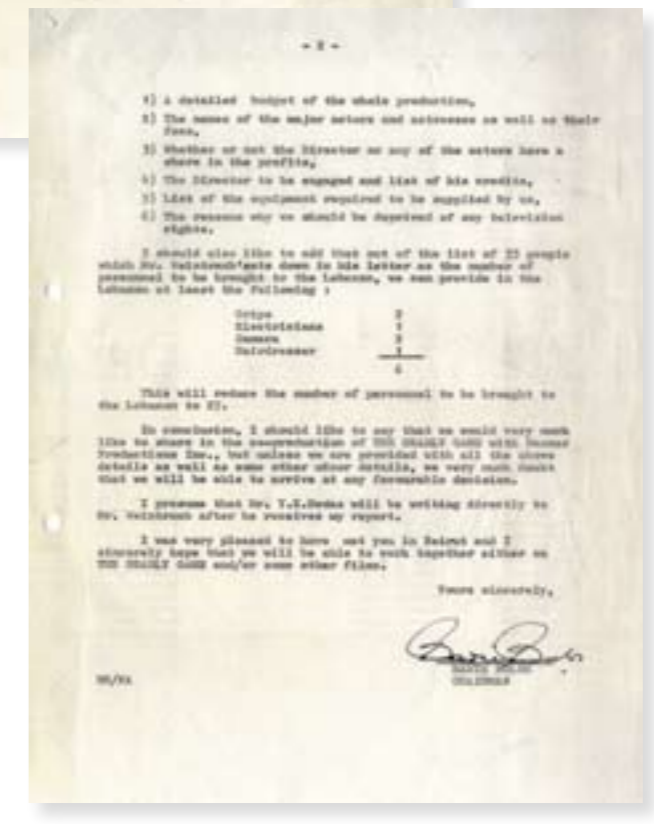
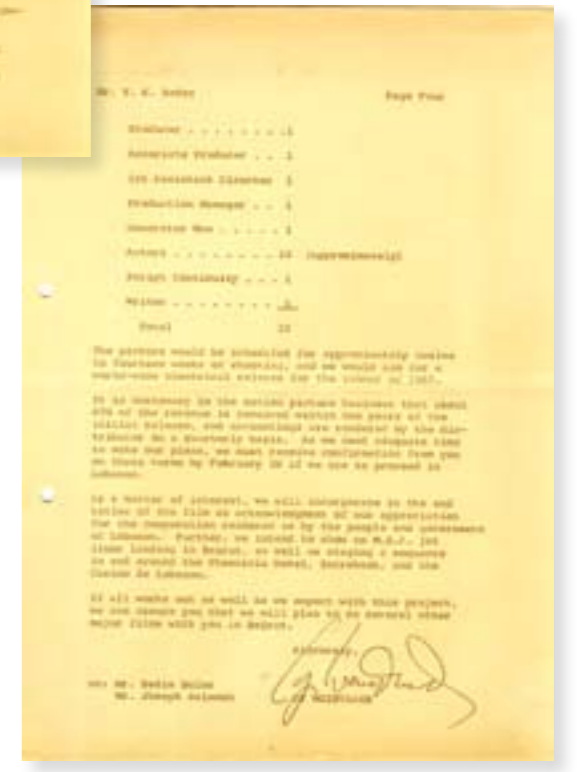
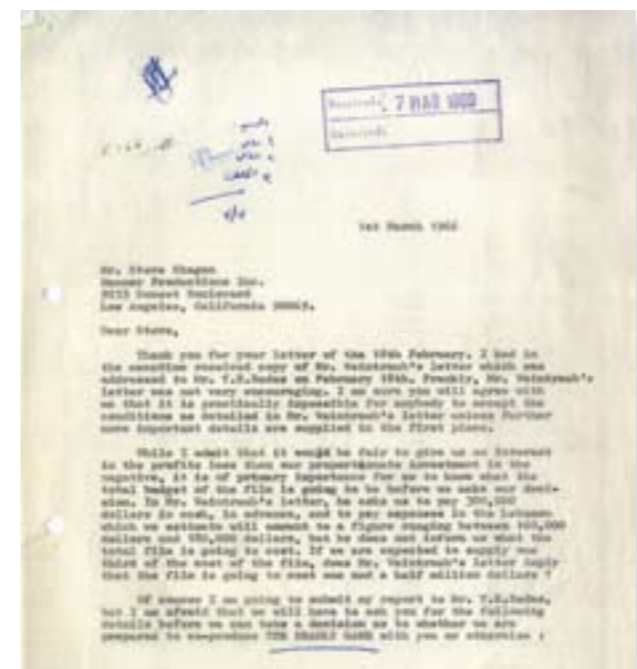
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**Youssef Beidas and Intrabank**

I am convinced that the Intrabank affair was the beginning of the disintegration of Lebanon. The old style of Lebanese government plunged the nation into a civil war that threatened its very survival as an independent state.  
Najib Alamuddin

Yousef Beidas, president and co-founder of Intrabank, was a Palestinian Christian from Jerusalem. His origins go back to the Russian immigrants who settled in Palestine in the nineteenth century. His father, Khalil was a man of letters who wrote in Arabic, but was also fluent in Russian. Yousef was born in Acre in mandate Palestine in December 1912. He acquired little education and when he became successful lawyer, life...

Kamal Dib, *Warlords and Merchants: The Lebanese Business and Political Establishment*, Ithaca Press, 2006.

Samir Kassir, *Beirut*, University of California press, 2010, p. 472.



Correspondances relatives à *The Deadly Game*.

مراسلات ذات صلة بـ «لعبة قاتلة».  
Correspondence related to "The Deadly Game."