

Walk 3a: Difoinarti, 4 March 2017

E – Enrico Ille; A - ‘Abd al-Ghannī; Y – Yāsir

Georeference: 19°56’46.8” N 30°30’01.8”E ([geo:19.9462,30.4973](https://www.openstreetmap.org/?lat=19.9462&lon=30.4973))



On 4 March 2017, Yāsir accompanied me after Kajbar immediately to Dafoi, a settlement that had shifted from the eponymous island to the mainland. We were hosted by ‘Abd al-Ghannī’s family, and he accompanied us in the morning to the island where a large fire had broken out as well. The co-movement had started thus in the house, continued across the river and between the island’s landing site and the site of the fire.

Starting fire (1)



A: Fire started by itself (*qām barāhu*). [...] The first level (*marhala*) started here, one palm was ignited (*itwalla'*) here. [...] This was the place around the livestock pen (*maḥall zarībah*), from here it extended. [...] Look, [...] the built *zarībah*, the whole floor was full of excrements.

A: Fire started by itself (*qām barāhu*). [...] The first level (*marhala*) started here, one palm was ignited (*itwalla'*) here. [...] This was the place around the livestock pen (*maḥall zarībah*), from here it extended. [...] Look, [...] the built *zarībah*, the whole floor was full of excrements.

E: So, it is still a *zarībah*?

A: Yes, they made it a *zarībah*. This is my father's brother's house.

Starting fire (2)



The second fire started about 7 a.m., during the eid al-adha prayer, probably due to a cigarette. It started on grass on the mainland and was carried by strong winds to the island.

A: Beginning is over there, not much was burned there. But there was there a big fire in dry grass (*‘awīsha*), and it immediately came over, burned about 100, 200 m and stopped.

E: Wasn't this last year, because here there is nothing that was burned?

A: Well, it went immediately at the tree tops, with the dates.

Y: You see the dry leaves (*al-jarīd*)?

A: Fire spreads there in a strange way (*bi-tarīqa ‘ajībah*), flying (*tā’ir*).

Y: Lack of pruning became the main reason for these fires.

Spreading fire



A: This is the wind, it changed. [...] It burned here, right? Before this burned, it reached the houses, turned over here, most of the wind went over there. We were standing here, and found it burning over there. The wind kept on changing. We were chopping, and found the fire had gone over there. We went according to the wind (*'ala mu'jib al-hawa*). Well, it came from above. By God, [dry] leaves like this, burning, were flying, going a distance, it was like this. We were afraid, we took the children and women from here.

E: Therefore, if you look at something like this, the fire reached the top, but didn't touch the ground.

A: Or even just reaches the middle [from below], the direction was not clear.

Stopping the fire: cutting trees



A: It reached up to here, we stopped it, chopped these [trees] and stopped it (haṣarnāhā).

Stopping the fire: bringing water



A: Our people (*awlādnā*, *ḥamlatnā*) were all standing here, in a queue, extinguishing the fire, with water hoses, the engine didn't work, they brought about 200, 300 containers (*ṣafāyah*), the people standing in a queue (*ṣaff*) here, all the way straight to the place I showed you before, at the fire. I take it, give it to Yāsir and so on, and they pour it out over there. Because the engine didn't work. In this way, the people did it.

Aftermath: landscape of destruction



A: See, these dates [on the ground]. It was a good yield (*balah kân naḍīf*). Probably not less than 1000 sacks that got burned. [...] 1000 sacks, and the palms, you see, also not less than 1000 palms. Look, this mother, it has one, two, three, four, five, six, seven seedlings. How many will it be? Thousands!

Aftermath: bodily harm



A: 6 or 7 months ago, after the second fire, there was a relative of mine, about 13 years old, she went here and fell in a hole where trunks of a palm group meet, and she got burnt, for four to five months she had to be treated. She had walked around with us. Only recently she became better, maybe 5-6 months we run behind her treatment.

Other losses: erosion



Y: Is this erosion (*haddām*)?

A: Yes, it's all from erosion, they gave it as compensation (*ta'wīd*). When we were young, we cultivated here, then there was erosion, the island formed (*raqqadat*) and they got it as compensation for this.

Y: Well, many date palms were lost, therefore. A: Many palms fell down, fell into the water.

Other losses: disinterest



E: But here the pollination and the harvest still takes place normally?

A: Yes, yes, the harvest, takes place normally.

E: I just mean, now the people saw with the fires what happens if there is no pruning/cleaning, and so on. Now I don't see that people immediately started cleaning and so on.

A: They don't care (*mā bihtimmū*). They don't, they can't, they don't know these youth of today, cleaning or anything, they don't care.

This was confirmed later that year during a visit of about 450 youths during the previous holiday who could not be excited for the idea to collectively clean the palms, (pre-walk conversation, 18 September 2017).

Past: productivity



A: It's [long pause], ah yes, island Saab, this is Saab, and this is island Saab. This is the place of production, this island. [...] There was a *sāqiyyah* here, when we were young, the saqiyya of our grandfather was here. [...] This was the *sāqiyyah* here, this was the channel, irrigating all the way up there. Look, how those people were strong, strange strength. The *sāqiyyah* they made here, I remember, when we were young we came here to ride the *sāqiyyah*. It went and irrigated like this. The island was very big, by the way, it became now small, look the island there, all cultivate there now, this seasonal agriculture. All of this extended [more] in the past.

Past: strength



A: I show you the strength of our people. This was exactly [19]62, 55 years ago, I am 61 years old, my age was then five or six years, I remember it, our grandfather, the boy we greeted earlier, of [public] transport, we greeted next to the cows, his grandfather *al-kabīr*, his name was Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, was a strong man, he was the owner of this saqiyya, the cattle and saqiyya fell with him, he was riding the *sāqiyyah*, was guiding them, the cattle and all of it was in the water below him, in the big hole, they were making big holes, and it was high. One saw him, he walked westwards, this man fell with his cattle and with the whole *sāqiyyah*, called out, all those people came, the people of Kajbar, the people of Fireig, it took maybe a whole or half day, took all these things out, he was half-dead. Our people came, dug a hole, they didn’t know doctors (*ṭabīb walla diktōr*), they dug a tight hole, like the one in a graveyard, three months this guy stayed in this hole. And they lit a fire, a small one (*khafīfa*), I don’t know, they brought some specific herbs, put them, and in this way the man was healed, he became maybe more than 61 years old, he died [19]74, and he was a man living normally, 3 months in a tight hole, fitting his size, and in this way they healed him. [names of herbs not clear, see next question] And in this way they healed this man normally.

E: Do you know which herbs they used?

A: By God, I think what they call *talunda* and *harjal*, the dry one, the uncooked, this they put there, and at some places they put fire with *garad* and these things. And oil, the whole body they made with oil, and put him in this hole. You see the strength of these people and how they healed? And they didn’t know a doctor. Now our bodies, if something like this hit us, we cannot bear it. [...] Well, those ate *turmus* and these things, and dates they didn’t sell. [...]

Y: When there was this winter, they said these dates makes one feel warm (*yadaffi’ zōl*), after the dinner it is [just] necessary to take one and go to sleep.

Resilience



A: Why will the trees be so clean afterwards? Look, how many leaves it already carries.

E: Because the 'heart' was not burned.

A: The 'heart' didn't burn, right.

Y: You see, it is strange, when I came after a few months, the date palms had brought out new leaves.

A: They are strangely resistant (*qawwi 'ajīb*).