

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN ALGERIA

Abdelouahed Oukebdane**, *Benkoula Sidi Mohamed El Habib

Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering

Université des Sciences et de la Technologie d'Oran Mohamed Boudiaf USTO-MB
El M'naouer, Oran, Algeria

Keywords: classification, heritage, listed buildings, monuments, process.

DOI: 10.48255/1973-9494.JCSCH.21.2021.06

1. Introduction

The heritage handed down to us by previous generations represents invaluable wealth, made up of the common heritage of a community, of a human group, etc. Ensuring its preservation and development is consequently of fundamental importance in helping future generations to understand, visualize and touch the history of our society.

To be able to safeguard this heritage, there are measures to be taken to ensure its sustainability and its enhancement. Among these measures it is worth mentioning the action of identifying and designating heritage assets to list them, which is perhaps one of the most important measures in the procedure in providing for their future protection and conservation. Our objective in this study is to describe the process of classification of urban and architectural heritage that has taken place in Algeria.

Like many countries, Algeria has a rich and varied architectural heritage which, by its number and diversity, bears witness to the presence of different civilizations which have succeeded each other in its vast territory since prehistory. With all this architectural wealth, Algeria counts only 511 historical sites and monuments listed up to 2019 [1].

A simple comparison between the number of monuments classified in Algeria and those classified in countries which are leaders in conservation, such as France and England, can enlighten us about the policy of taking charge and developing the classification of historical monuments in Algeria.

2. Comparison of the number of monuments listed in Algeria with other leading countries

The figures below represent the number of monuments listed in Algeria, France, and England.

1. Algeria - 511 listed monuments.
2. France - 45,684 listed monuments [2].
3. England - 377,000 listed monuments [3].

*Corresponding author: abdelouahed.oukebdane@univ-usto.dz

At first glance, the preliminary remark is overwhelmingly obvious. There is a surprising gap between the three figures, particularly between the first and the second two. The question that inevitably comes to mind is, "Why are there only 511 classified monuments in Algeria, and which 270 were classified during the colonial period?" [4]. To better understand the question, we will try to examine the nature of the process used in Algeria's classification of historical monuments in detail.

3. The process of classification in Algeria

The inventory of classifications of historical monuments in Algeria can be divided into three phases, which correspond to the three stages that the classification process in Algeria went through.

A - The first stage¹: before 1962, the colonial period from 1830 to 1962.

B - The second stage²: from 1962 to 1998.

C - The third stage³: from 1998 until today.

3.1. A: The first stage

Before independence, and during French colonization, only 270 monuments were classified (Table 1).

Table 1. Classified monuments before 1962 by period (source: author, according to the 1968 official journal)

Type of monuments	Number	Percentage
Prehistoric ^a	27	10%
Antique ^b	65	24%
PreOttoman ^c	58	22%
Ottoman ^d	43	16 %
French ^e / Spanish ^f	30	11 %
Natural sites	47	17%
Total	270	100%

^a Prehistoric: period of time before written records (Oxford living dictionaries).
^b Antiquity: period that goes from the origins of historical times to the fall of the Roman Empire; Ancient civilization, especially Greek and Roman.
^c Pre-Ottoman: period from the ninth century to the fifteenth century.
^d Ottoman: period from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century (1512-1830).
^e French: period from 1830 to 1962.
^f Spanish: period of the Spanish occupation of Oran, Algeria 1450-1797.

The questions that can legitimately be asked are:

- To which periods and historical timeframes do these monuments belong?
- Why did colonial France classify so few sites in Algeria?
- Are they representative, and do they reflect Algerian culture and civilisation?
- Did colonial France have the same consideration for monuments located in French Algeria as for those located on the mainland?

3.1.1. A: *Beginning of classification in France*

To try to answer all these questions, it is necessary to briefly examine the pioneering approach that was used regarding the matter of monument inventory in France.

It was only at the end of the 18th century that France adopted a policy of conservation. During this period, there was no foreign influence on the newly developed policy of monument conservation. It was quite the opposite, the official adoption of conservation policies in France attracted other countries and became a model to follow. In fact, it was the French Revolution, which was at the origin of the conservation policy, through the nationalization of a large number of public and private properties, which implicitly raised the question of the destination of works of art found in nationalized properties and those brought to Paris by the republican army. Guided by noble principles, the revolution decided to preserve for the Nation these monuments until then reserved for the privileged, and resolved to protect them from vandalism, and to pass them on to future generations [5].

In 1840, the “Commission des Monuments historiques” published a list of 1090 monuments [6], annexed to its report, to the Minister of the Interior. The Commission renewed the publication of the monuments whose number increased rapidly: it reached 2800 in 1848 and 3000 in 1849 [6].

3.1.2. A: *Colonial France’s attitude towards monuments in Algeria*

During that same period where an awareness of the preservation of monuments in mainland France was taking place, was it likewise in the southern part of the Mediterranean, otherwise in colonized Algeria?

Let us look at the Kasbah⁴ in Algiers, for example.

As soon as Algiers was conquered, the French military decided on the creation of a military base where their troops could gather in case of an alert. Thus, from 1831, they began demolishing the most interesting and vital neighborhood in the lower part of the city, which consisted of several typical souks (marketplaces) (Figure 1).

That was how 420 houses and shops were destroyed, as well as the graceful mosque (where the Deys would perform Friday prayers). This last building was richly decorated with marble and earthenware and had a dome that rested on twenty pretty marble columns, which still decorate the portico of the great mosque “Djama’a El Kebir” and have done so since 1837 (Figure 2).

It is worthy of note to remember that the main objective of town planners for the newly conquered Algiers was to make the city attractive to Europeans. Also, their proposal included the demolition of the Mosque of the Fishery, spared at the beginning of colonization, but again in 1910 there were new opinions in favor of its destruction [7] (Figure 3).



Figure 1. The lower part of the city tended to disappear under sustained demolition and expropriation.



Figure 2. The pretty columns, the only vestiges recovered from the mosque "Es Saïda" and which have decorated the portico of the great mosque "Djama'a El Kebir" since 1837.



Figure 3. The Mosque of the Fishery “Jamaa al-Jdid” is one of the historic mosques of Algiers. It is located in the district of the lower Kasbah. It was built in 1660 in the Moorish style. Its proximity to the sea gave it its name of Fishery Mosque.

It is also on this square, created by the French army at the beginning of the conquest – near Dar Aziza – that the residence of all the masters of Algiers was burned down and then demolished by the French colonial administration in 1856 [8].

So, from 1839, the lower part of the city gradually disappeared under sustained demolition and expropriation. All this contributed to giving a new look to the district, which was being populated by massive European immigration (mainly Italians and Spaniards) [9].

One may wonder why the French authorities chose to settle in the lower town, which they had populated, particularly with immigrants, at the cost of difficult demolitions, while the south-facing land was a relatively easy settlement area [10].

3.1.3. A: What was the attitude of Colonial France? What fate had been reserved for the most important buildings in Algiers?

In 1830, Algiers contained 13 big mosques, 109 small mosques, 32 “chapels”⁵ and 12 zaouïa (religious buildings); in all, 176 buildings devoted to worship.

In 1862, there were 9 big mosques, 19 small mosques, 15 chapels, and 5 zaouïa, still standing, totaling 47 buildings, of which 4 big mosques, 8 small mosques, and 9 chapels, totaling 21 buildings, were dedicated to Muslim worship [11].

At the end of colonization, the French left only a dozen of these historic religious buildings intact [12].

To conclude, we can assert that French colonial rule had a disdainful and even bellicose attitude towards autochthonous monuments.

3.1.4. A: Classification under influence according to historical and ideological affiliation

After having demolished a good part of the lower Kasbah and many places of worship, can the French attitude of classifying a certain number of monuments really be considered as a procedure for preserving Algeria's heritage?

Furthermore, even the listed monuments were so, on the basis of a certain number of cultural and ideological positions.

A more refined reading of these figures (Table 1) reveals the factual orientation of the French towards conservation. Moreover, the type of monuments (only one third of Islamic civilization) that the French classified between 1870 and 1958 indicate the direction of the effective policy implemented.

Considering the insignificant number of monuments classified in 130 years of colonization (270 monuments), it is clear that preservation was not a priority for the French. Besides, one can denote an obvious cultural influence in the choice of monuments.

Monuments of Islamic and local civilizations enumerated under the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman period represent only 38% of the total number of classified monuments.

Those of Antiquity, French and Spanish represent 35%.

The remaining 27% were prehistoric and natural sites.

We can advance a likely reason by assuming that the French consider themselves to be the legal successors of the Romans, a theory that can be consolidated by the works of French historians during colonization.

Beshaouch - a Tunisian archeologist - defends this thesis in a communication where he quotes French historians while qualifying them as historians with ideological presuppositions. Among these historians we can mention a great epigraphist and the first, who gathered inscriptions in Algeria, Léon Rosnier, professor at the College de France in the 19th century, and a member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres. Here is what he writes in a work on Latin inscriptions: "Roman monuments, especially inscriptions are, in the eyes of the natives, our more legitimate reason for the possession of Algeria." It is Leon Rosnier's deep belief that Latin epigraphy and Roman monuments are a justification for colonization [13].

To strengthen the idea that these historians had ideological presuppositions, I refer to another historian Dr Mohamed El Bachir Cheniti who mentions that the historians of the colonial period emptied Algerian history of its Arabism and its Islamism, He cites the following historians: Stéphane Gsell, Emile-Felix Gautier, Eugene Albertini [14].

The historian, Gaston Boissier, a member of the French Academy, is a historical reference from that period of time. He wrote a book: "Esquisse d'une histoire de la conquête et de l'administration" which was commented upon by Azzedine Beshaouch, who said: "The first time I saw this title, I thought it was about the French conquest and administration, while in fact it emphasized the Roman conquest and administration of northern Africa." This opinion was expressed in 1880, so it does not go back very far timewise. In the introduction, he justifies his sentiments by saying, like "Léon Rosnier", "I myself would like to show the importance of this past to justify our presence" (i.e. of France) [15].

Other works came to reinforce the idea of a historical belonging of Algeria to France, "Doctors and anthropologists accentuated the differences between the nomadic Arabs and the Berbers, supposedly easier to assimilate because they are sedentary" [16].

Finally, in 1930, during the centenary of the conquest of Algeria, it is largely on this basis that France presented itself as the legitimate successor of the Roman Empire, having liberated this territory from foreign usurpers and re-established the unity of European civilization by giving back the Mediterranean Sea to the Europeans [17].

3.1.5. A: The neglect of the Ksour

Another important heritage is the “Ksour”⁶, which represent a basic element of Algerian traditional culture and identity, and one of the most remarkable architectures of southern Algeria. The Ksour were completely neglected by the French administration, and no Ksar was ever to be classified during the 130 years of French presence in Algeria.

Lespes René mentions this gross negligence and contempt for the local heritage: “Local architecture was neglected and became irrelevant to the French; this local architecture symbolized the sign of regression and was presented as an indigenous architecture” [18].

In addition to the bias towards civilizations, there was also segregation in the dynamics of classification between the northern and southern regions of Algeria. This territorial division was to establish (with the presence of Roman archaeological remains), the partition of the country into two entities: Northern Algeria, marked by the omnipresence of Roman sites and monuments, and the Sahara, an area ten times larger, where Romanization left no traces; the Sahara would never be subject to the rules of the archaeological districts, given that the methodological grid of archaeological Algeria is controlled by the map of the distribution of Roman remains that were within the limits of the territory occupied by the Romans [19].

4. B: The second stage - monuments classified from 1962 to 1998

The total number of monuments classified in this period is 55 and are divided as follows (Table 2).

Table 2. Representing monuments classified from 1962 to 1998 (source: author's according to official journals 1968-1998)

Type of monuments	Number	Percentage
Prehistoric	11	19%
Antiquity	25	47%
Pre-Ottoman	9	16%
Ottoman	5	9%
French	5	9%
Natural sites	0	0%
Total	55	100%

These monuments were classified during the period following the departure of the French which started from 1962 – the year of independence for Algeria – and up to 1998, the year a new text dealing with heritage matters was promulgated by the President of the Republic, called Law 98-04 [20].

4.1. B: The attitude of the Algerian administration towards monuments after 1962

The 55 listed monuments are an insignificant number for a period of 36 years. In the table above, we clearly perceive that the Algerian officials in charge of heritage adopted the same attitude toward classification as their French predecessors.

During this period, only 37% of classified monuments dated back to the Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman era versus the 63 % of prehistoric, antiquity, and French period monuments and natural sites.

The authorities in charge can also be blamed for having practiced the same policy of negligence towards the Ksour; no Ksar was classified during this period.

Such results can simply be explained by the application of the texts of Ordinance 67 – the Archeology and Excavations section. This first law, promulgated in 1967, as Ordinance No. 67-281, on archaeological excavation and the protection of historical monuments and natural sites, was in fact only a rearrangement of the texts in force during the French occupation and then renewed just after independence with the legitimate precaution of suppressing the contents contrary to national sovereignty and those which are of colonialist or discriminatory inspiration or which undermine democratic freedoms, but it considers them null and void.

In other countries, the safeguard was extended to the core of cities, villages, etc. For example, in France, as early as 1962, there was the creation of the “secteurs sauvegardés”, while in England there was the creation of “conservation areas” in 1967.

On the other hand, in Algeria, during this period from 1962 to 1998, the legal framework went through a period of inertia caused by a disconcerting stagnation from the competent authorities. This resulted in a clear regression in comparison to what was being done in the rest of the world, for example, in France or England, where they established many conservation areas in this period.

Another plausible explanation is that the various chief executives that succeeded one another at the head of the heritage department seemed to attach more importance to archaeological monuments – vestiges and ruins – rather than buildings still in use.

Their position seemed to be influenced by their academic profiles, given that the majority of the managers at the agency⁷ were either archaeologists or historians with the exception of two, who were architects.

This agency was the only official body empowered to undertake inventory, research, conservation, restoration, enhancement and presentation of the national historic cultural heritage.

In support of these comments, I personally witnessed in 1989 a meeting⁸ focused on the feasibility study of setting up a historical monuments research center for the Maghreb region in El Eubad⁹, Tlemcen, upon the recommendation of the Symposium on Medinas [21]. At the end of the meeting, the first person in charge of the wilaya (administrative division) of Tlemcen, namely the wali¹⁰, asked the representative of the Ministry of Culture, in the following terms – quote: Who is the person who has authority over the director of the agency? (The agency is the only entity whose vocation, among other things, is the protection of listed monuments). In fact, the wali was looking for a way to force the director of the agency to reconsider his decision and authorize him to demolish the hospital which was located within the walls of El Mechouar¹¹. The director was one of the two architects who administered the agency.

Unfortunately, circumstances did not spare this building. Indeed, the sequence of events compromised its existence because the director in question was replaced by an archaeologist, who saw no archaeological interest in this building since he was more in-

terested in the remains and had no objection to the demolition of the hospital. Finally, the agreement to pull down this building was obtained, and the wish of the wali fulfilled.

The lesson to be learned through this kind of practice leads us to believe that a decision may depend on the vision of those who have succeeded each other at the head of the agency. At no time did the architect think that the presence of the hospital could constitute any inconvenience. Moreover, the structure of this building was still in good condition and therefore represented an additional asset to the site. On the other hand, the archaeologist seemed to be interested only in the vestige; the architecture of the building took second place, and this is only one significant example among many others.

The other equally eloquent example is the Ksour. After 1962, the Algerian administration had exactly the same approach as the French in this area. The Ksour, which are sites of great historical value, have been neglected and no Ksar was listed until 1999. Even worse, the considerable spatial extensions since independence are spontaneous and raise the particular problem of the contradictory relationship between the preservation of the architectural heritage that is part of cultural identity and modern development (e.g. Ksar Boussemgoune and Ksar Taghit) (Figure 4a-b).



Figure 4. a) Extensions around the Ksar of Boussemgoune (source: DUC Wilaya d'El Bayadh). b) Extensions around the Ksar of Taghit.

5. C: The third stage – from 1998 to the present day

The total number of classified monuments is 186 monuments and is distributed as in the table below (Table 3).

Table 3. Representing monuments classified from 1998 to the present day (source: author, according to official journals 1998-2019).

Type of monument	Number	Percentage
Prehistoric	18	9.5%
Antiquity	28	15%
Pre-Ottoman	35	19 %
Ottoman	22	12 %
French	55	30 %
National Park	5	2.5%
Conservation Area	20	10.5%
Natural sites	3	1.5%
Total	186	100%

These monuments were classified from 1998, the year a new text dealing with heritage matters was promulgated, until the present-day.

5.1. C: Awakening in defense of the colonial heritage

The period from 1998 to the present has seen the appearance of so-called colonial heritage defenders. Cries arose almost everywhere, pointing at the Algerian heritage officials for not having integrated the constructions of the French period into the national heritage.

Thus, an academic could not fail to observe that: “Unfortunately, contemporary heritage has not had the interest it deserves. Algeria’s patrimonial policy does not seem to care at all. The sector is a very particular one in this country because it belongs to its French past, a past that is not yet fully accepted, and whose rich heritage awaits re-appropriation by the Algerians” [22].

A second author notes: “The colonial legacy, (which) has not yet been explicitly recognized as part of the national architectural or urban heritage” [23].

Finally, the fateful question is asked: “In Algeria, it is still difficult to assimilate this notion of heritage, for example, the question that often comes up is: Is colonial architecture part of our heritage?” [24].

The problem that appears through these three examples applies to the colonial period as well as to the post-independence period, until the promulgation of the 1998 law.

The figures presented above, relating to the monuments listed from 1998 up till now, show that 30% of the listed monuments were from the colonial period, which is the equivalent of 132 years of architectural, cultural and urban production from 1830 to 1962. This result is almost equal to the number of listed monuments that date from the Ottoman and Pre-Ottoman period (31%). A period that is much longer, i.e. about 900 years of architectural, cultural and urban production from the year 900 to the year 1830.

From the above, it can be said that the listed monuments of the colonial period, which represent a third of the total listed monuments have indeed been re-appropriated by the Algerians, and not as some people claim, that this heritage has been completely neglected, and that Algerians do not want to recognize it as part of their national heritage.

The living example to reinforce the idea that what was bequeathed by the colonizer is beginning to be re-appropriated, and accepted by the Algerians as national heritage, is the classification of the Sidi El Houari district as a “conservation area” [25], knowing that a large part of this district was built during French colonization (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Place Kleber Sid El Houari; the monuments around the square are clearly from the French period.

Another important argument is made by Professor Derek Linstrum of the University of York in the UK, who stated that: “The greater part of any country’s buildings is likely to be capable of continuing to be useful. Any building is best preserved when it is in use” [26].

Every country inherits a quantity of building stock. Furthermore, it is useful and, if looked after properly, will continue to be so for many years to come. We can argue that the majority of buildings from the colonial era are in good condition and are still in use. The argument made previously by Professor Derick Linstrum can be applied to all these French constructions.

Thus, it can be said that during this period, which extends from 1998 to the present day, those responsible for heritage have behaved in the same way with regard to all

Algerian heritage, whether it was bequeathed by the French or left by previous civilizations – in particular Roman and Islamic. Watching these monuments fall apart, no effort, no initiative has been undertaken to save, study or classify this heritage. The same negligence is recorded for all the periods. The best illustration of this deficiency is the paltry number of 186 monuments listed during a quarter of a century.

6. Conclusion

Despite the extent and richness of the national historical heritage, and its universal scope, the number of listed monuments remains infinitely low. These facts cannot fail to challenge the researcher.

Is this situation caused by a lack of regulatory texts, a legal framework that is not in line with the reality on the ground, or is it the result of a bad application of the texts?

Given the post-independence situation, the policy of taking over the heritage was not properly undertaken and therefore did not receive all the attention it deserved by the public authorities.

Knowing that the 19th century represents the beginning of the world's awakening in the field of monument protection, it is unfortunate for Algeria that this period coincides with the period of occupation.

The Algerians at the time, under French rule, were not masters of their destiny, and even less so of their heritage. French concerns for the existing heritage were not the same as those of the Algerians and the majority, if not all, of the buildings erected during the period from the 9th to the 19th century were neglected or completely destroyed by the colonizer. However, responsibility lies not only with the occupier, even if they were responsible for the disappearance of thousands of monuments, Algerians too, through their passivity, never stemmed the cycle of deterioration of the heritage that had already begun, even before independence.

And no efforts have been made to catch up, instead they have shown a destructive negligence even after the country had regained its sovereignty.

The passage from the 1967 Ordinance to the 1998 Law brought many improvements, but these remain frozen on paper and their realization remains hypothetical. It is therefore clear that it is no longer a problem of legislation, but the situation is, rather, the result of a certain laxity in the enforcement and application of the laws by those who are supposed to promote them.

One of the main obstacles to the dynamics of heritage protection is, without doubt, the slowness of the implementation of decisions. Indeed, decades can pass between the opening of the classification and the actual classification, while the law advocates at most 02 years [27]. To illustrate this, we can cite as an example the prehistoric site of "Merdoufa" and "La maison du congrés de la Soummam"¹², both listed in 2007; 22 years passed between the opening of inventories [28] and their effective listing [29-31].

A look at the responsibility of the actors involved in the field is essential. Should this fact be attributed to the national classification commission, to the central authorities, to the local authorities or to civil society?

Another phenomenon that merits consideration is the lack of follow-up on the ground; the lack of defense of listed monuments has not failed to have a detrimental impact on this legacy of inestimable value.

The following three illustrated examples are very significant.

Example 1

The prestigious Great Mosque of Algiers Djamaa El Kebir (one of the main medieval mosques in Algiers and built by the Almoravid Youssef Ibn Tachfin 1097) was smothered by the installation, in 1988, of a gigantic seven-storey car park inside its perimeter of visibility (at 34 meters, but the law sets 200 meters). The insertion of this new building next to the Mosque deprived it of a space that constituted an extension and an opening, and have thus significantly affected the identity and space of this historic monument (Figure 6-7).



Figure 6. To the right stands a gigantic multi-storey car park in place of a square which gave an opening onto the Mosque.



Figure 7. The Djama'a El Kebir Mosque in Algiers –by its status as a listed monument, it is given special protection from any intervention, but here we note that its integrity has been endangered by an illicit construction.

Example 2

a) The Mohamed El Kebir Mosque is one of the oldest mosques in Oran, as it was built in 1791 by Bey Mohamed el Kebir; it has not been given the consideration and respect it ought to have had as a place of worship during the colonial period. As a low building, it has been surrounded on all sides, except for the road, by tall buildings which affect its identity and space as a historic monument (Figure 8).



Figure 8. The Mohamed El Kebir Mosque crushed by very large buildings dating from the colonial period.

b) According to the photos below (Figure 9a-b), which were taken at different times, the Mosque has been painted a different colour each time, according to the taste of the person who ordered the operation. In addition to periodic painting, adjacent constructions (figure 9c) regularly change light panels. These modifications are carried out without taking into account the regulations governing the interventions to be undertaken in the presence of monuments of architectural value.

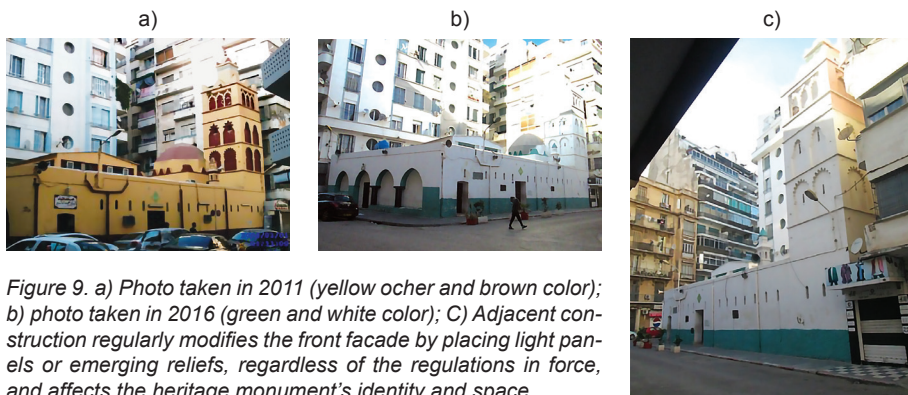


Figure 9. a) Photo taken in 2011 (yellow ochre and brown color); b) photo taken in 2016 (green and white color); C) Adjacent construction regularly modifies the front facade by placing light panels or emerging reliefs, regardless of the regulations in force, and affects the heritage monument's identity and space.

Example 3

The Great Mosque of Tlemcen is a major historic mosque in Tlemcen and was founded by the Almoravids in 1082. In the 1980s an extension was made to the adjoining building, which is about 2 to 3 meters from the Mosque; the height of the extension goes up several meters on 3 levels, crushes the mosque, and affects the identity and space of the historical monument (Figure 10).



Figure 10. The extension of the adjoining building, a few meters high, on 3 levels and which is in sight, crushes the listed Mosque.

Notes

¹ Corresponds to the colonial period from 1830 to 1962

² Corresponds to the application of Ordinance No. 67-281 of December 20, 1967, relating to excavations and the protection of historical and natural sites and monuments.

³ Corresponds to the application of Law No. 98-04 of 20 Safar 1419 corresponding to June 15, 1998, on the protection of historic monuments.

⁴ The area surrounding a North African citadel, typically in the old part of a city (Oxford living dictionary).

⁵ Chapel: a room, more or less large, which contains the burial of a marabout.

⁶ The Ksar, a group of earthen buildings surrounded by high walls, is a traditional pre-Saharan habitat. The houses are crowded together within the defensive walls, which are reinforced by corner towers.

⁷ The National Agency of Archeology and Protection of Historic Sites and Monuments, Ministry of Culture.

⁸ In addition to the Wali, the meeting was attended by the director of the national library, "Dr Mahmoud Agha Bouayad", representing the Ministry of culture, the General Director of CERIST, "Dr Moussa Benhammadi", representing the Ministry of higher education and scientific research and myself, Oukebdane Abdelouahed, representing the General Director of the Cultural Heritage Restoration Company.

⁹ El Eubad – this urban agglomeration, built during the Marinid era, is made up of four monuments: 1. The mausoleum of Sidi Boumediene; 2. The El Eubad mosque; 3. The Madrasah; 4. Dar El Sultan.

¹⁰ In contemporary Algeria, it is a civil servant placed at the head of a wilaya (administrative division).

¹¹ El Mechouar Palace is a royal Zayyanid palatial complex, located in Tlemcen in Algeria; it was built in the Middle Ages by the Zayyanid sultans in 1248.

¹² “La maison du congrès de la Soummam” where, on August 20, 1956, the Algerian nationalists organized a congress, during which the FLN adopted a program and set up a direction, etc, to ensure the conduct of the movement towards Algeria’s independence.

References

- [1] WEBSITE: <https://www.m-culture.gov.dz/index.php/fr/>
- [2] SECTION HEADING: <https://www.m-culture.gov.dz/index.php/fr/textes-juridiques-patrimoine-culturel/classement-des-biens-culturels>
- [3] <https://www.m-culture.gov.dz/index.php/fr/textes-juridiques-patrimoine-culturel/classement-des-biens-culturels/56-sites-et-monuments-historiques> [Accessed: 22/07/2021].
- [4] List of buildings protected as Historical Monuments total in France 2020. Available at: <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Monuments-Sites>[Accessed: 26/01/2022]
- [5] In England over 377,000 buildings of special architectural or historic interest have been protected. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664657/Heritage_Statement_2017_final_-_web_version_.pdf [Accessed: 22/07/2021]
- [6] Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n° 7 1968. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/Jo-Francais/1968/F1968007.pdf> p.11 [Accessed: 23/01/2021]
- [7] Rücker, F. (1913) Les origines de la conservation des monuments historiques en France 1790-1830). Paris. Jouve & Cie, p.6.
- [8] The first listed monuments of 1840 in France. Available at: <https://mediatheque-patrimoine.culture.gouv.fr/les-monuments-historiques-avant-1913> [Accessed: 18/07/2021]
- [9] Klein, H. (1937) les feuillets d’El Djazair Alger L. CHAIX. p.47
- [10] IBID. p.47
- [11] Kaddache, M. (http://alger-roi.fr/Alger/documents_algeriens/culturel/pages/56_casbah_actuelle.htm) [Accessed: 13/02/2021]
- [12] Deluz, J. (1988) L’urbanisme et l’architecture d’Alger. Aperçu critique. Alger / Liège, OPU/ P. Mardaga, p 11
- [13] Devoulx, A. (1870). Les édifices religieux de l’ancien Alger. Alger. Bastide p. 3
- [14] Benhamouche, M. (2007) Les mosquées de la ville d’Alger, ses zawiyas et mausolées à l’époque ottomane. Alger. Dar El Oumma p.08
- [15] Beshouch, A. (1998) Les archéologues dans la reconstruction de l’identité patrimoniale pré-islamique. In: Patrimoine et passions identitaires. Théâtre national de Chaillot, Paris 6-8 janvier 1997: Éd. du patrimoine – Fayard, p. 327-336.
- [16] Cheniti, M. (2003) « مبدؤل رائزجلا خيرات لعل ءاوضأ » « Lights on the ancient history of Algeria » Alger Dar El Hikma pp7-10.
- [17] Beshouch, A. (1998) Les archéologues dans la reconstruction de l’identité patrimoniale pré-islamique In: Patrimoine et passions identitaires. Théâtre national de Chaillot, Paris 6-8 janvier 1997: Éd. du patrimoine – Fayard, p. 327-336.

- [18] Borutta, M. (2020), De la Méridionalité à la Méditerranée: Le Midi de la France au temps de l'Algérie coloniale. Cahiers de la Méditerranée, 100. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/cdlm/13201> Accessed: 14 July 2021.
- [19] IBID.
- [20] Lespes, R. (2003) Oran: Etude de géographie et d'histoire urbaine. Oran, Edition Bel Horizon, p I-IX.
- [21] Betrouni, M. (2008) "The inventory of the cultural heritage and the construction of the national identity, In Acts/workshop on the inventories, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 10-12 June. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/102596> pp. 37-41 [Accessed: 13/02/2021]
- [22] Loi n° 98-04 du 20 Safar 1419 correspondant au 15 Juin 1998 Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n°44. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/Jo-Francais/1998/F1998044.pdf>[Accessed: 15/10/2017]
- [23] Recommendations of the first Maghreb seminar on the Medinas, Proceedings of the days of September 27, 28, 29, 1998 in Tlemcen.
- [24] Benkari N. (2003). La politique dans les pays du Maghreb: Le cas de l'Algérie. In: Regards croisés sur le patrimoine dans le monde à l'aube du XXIe siècle. Paris: Presses Paris Sorbonne, pp.179-190
- [25] Dekoumi D. (2007). Pour une nouvelle politique de conservation de l'environnement historique bâti algérien: cas de Constantine. Doctoral Thesis, November 22. Available at: <https://bu.umc.edu.dz/theses/architecture/DEK4951.pdf> [Accessed: 13/05/2017]
- [26] Kassab T. (2006) Table ronde " Patrimoine, témoin d'hier ou richesse durable pour demain. In : Revue vies de villes n° 05 May, p47 Available at : <http://viesdevilles.net/new/?c=n05> [Accessed: 13/02/2021]
- [27] Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n°5, 8 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/JO2000/2015/005/FP9.pdf> [Accessed: 15/10/2017]
- [28] Derek L. (1977). The building heritage: what to preserve: Lecture series for the benefit of the Commonwealth Association of Architects, London.
- [29] Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n° 44 1998 p.5. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/Jo-Francais/1998/F1998044.pdf> [Accessed: 15/10/2017]
- [30] Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n° 30, 1985 p.29. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/Jo-Francais/1985/F1985037.pdf> [Accessed: 15/10/2017]
- [31] Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne n° 60, 2007 p 18-20. Available at: <http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2007/F2007060.pdf> [Accessed: 23/01/2021]

Biographical notes

Oukebdane Abdelouahed is an architect and PhD candidate. His research focuses on conservation and enhancement of the architectural and urban heritage, as well as on preliminary studies and diagnosis according to the pathologies of the construction system. At the University of Science and Technology of Oran, Algeria, he specialized in the field of urban and architectural heritage conservation.

Benkoula Sidi Mohamed El habib is an Architect and urban planner and an Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Science and Technology of Oran. His teaching focuses on urban planning and land use planning. He has a special interest in the history of works of architecture and town planning from the colonial period, and in the urban history of the postcolonial period of Oran.

Summary

Algeria has a rich and varied architectural heritage; unfortunately, this heritage has not been sufficiently taken care of.

During the colonial period, France had a disdainful attitude towards Algerian heritage and considered it as “indigenous heritage not requiring to be taken into consideration,” and even worse, it preferred to classify ruins of ancient monuments from antiquity, “especially Roman monuments” to the detriment of monuments in good condition from the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman period.

Besides, one can denote an obvious cultural influence, since a large number of monuments classified during the colonial period belong to the pre-Islamic or French period.

However, the responsibility not only lies with the occupier, even if they are responsible for the disappearance of thousands of monuments. For their part, the Algerians themselves, through passivity, did not try to halt the deterioration of the heritage that had already started, even before independence. During the period of post-independence, an insignificant number of monuments were classified, few of which date from the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman period in comparison with those belonging to the prehistoric, ancient, French, as well as natural sites. This attitude is not the result of a problem of legislation, but rather of a certain laxity in the execution and application of the laws by those who are supposed to promote them. One of the main obstacles obstructing the dynamics of heritage protection lies, without question, in the slowness of executing decisions.

Riassunto

L'Algeria ha un patrimonio architettonico ricco e variegato; purtroppo esso non è stato sufficientemente curato. Durante il periodo coloniale, la Francia aveva un atteggiamento sprezzante nei confronti del patrimonio algerino e lo considerava come “patrimonio indigeno che non richiedeva di essere preso in considerazione” e, peggio ancora, preferiva classificare le rovine di monumenti antichi dell'antichità, “soprattutto monumenti romani” a scapito dei monumenti in buono stato di epoca pre-ottomana e ottomana. Inoltre, si può denotare un'evidente influenza culturale, poiché un gran numero di monumenti classificati durante il periodo coloniale appartengono al periodo preislamico o francese. Tuttavia la responsabilità non è solo dell'occupante, anche se è responsabile della scomparsa di migliaia di monumenti.

Da parte loro, gli stessi algerini, per passività, non hanno cercato di fermare il deterioramento del patrimonio che era già iniziato, anche prima dell'indipendenza. Durante il periodo post-indipendenza fu classificato un numero irrisorio di monumenti, pochi dei quali risalenti al periodo pre-ottomano e ottomano rispetto a quelli appartenenti ai siti preistorici, antichi, francesi, oltre che naturali. Questo atteggiamento non è il risultato di un problema legislativo ma piuttosto di un certo lassismo nell'esecuzione e nell'applicazione delle leggi da parte di coloro che dovrebbero promuoverle. Uno dei principali ostacoli che ritardano le dinamiche di tutela del patrimonio risiede, senza dubbio, nella lentezza nell'esecuzione delle decisioni.