

FROM MOORISH TO NEO-MOORISH IN ORANIE (ALGERIA): A STYLE BETWEEN RUPTURE AND CONTINUITY

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Keywords: authentic, copy, heritage, Moorish, Oranie.

DOI: 10.48255/1973-9494.JCSCH.21.2021.08

1. Introduction

Moorish architecture has undergone many deformations and transformations due to the conflict of cultures and ideological signs¹ between the conquering colonial society and the dominated society. After independence, a new avatar of this entity² emerged under the impetus of the new political power. Each colonial power in Algeria marked its way by celebrating its cultural values to the detriment of local or indigenous culture. Each of them³ interpreted the traditions of the colonized society in its own way, pretending to do better than their predecessors.

Moorish became "Turco-Moorish" under the Ottoman protectorate in Algeria and then took on a new look with the colonial conquest of the French empire, the former rivals of the Turks.

With Algeria's independence, Moorish architecture experienced another boom, driven by the will of some technocrats and Algerian architects who wished to reconnect with the ancient architectural traditions of our country. For example, we can mention the architect, Abderrahmane Bouchama, the author of several projects, scattered throughout the country, which express the desire to break with colonial traditions and claim a prestigious past dislocated by colonial enterprise. Each of these phases in the history of Moorish architecture in Algeria is linked to the other two⁴ by a relationship of rupture or continuity. Multiple transformations and deformations punctuate an evolution in which each dominant force in Algeria has left its imprint. A way to build an identity attached to Algerian history but, also, a way to assert its sovereignty over this country. Here too, we see that architecture is instrumentalized in favor of political power and ideologies.

Other factors and contributors explain this triple incarnation⁵ of the Moorish, the ethnic and/or cultural belonging of the designers and the classic relations of tension established between the nation of the conqueror and that of the colonized society. These different postures are successively represented in this contribution.

In contemporary Algeria, the master builders, architects, and designers commonly introduce into their architectural and constructive practice in the public and private sectors, architectural elements drawn from the traditional or local *Maghribi* and specifically from an Algerian architectural repertoire, such as Abderrahmane Bouchama and Halim Faïdi.

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This postcolonial practice seems to be similar to that of the French colonial period, when some French architects such as Benjamin Bucknall, Toudoire, Georges Guichain, Albert Ballu practiced architectural “arabization” known as neo-Moorish in 1905, and later called “arabisations” by François Beguin in 1983. Could the Algerian architectural practice of the Moorish be considered as a form of identity claim? If not, can it be considered as an extension of “neo-Moorish” colonial work? Of these two productions, which one is the closest to the “authentic Moorish” work produced by the original authors, the Moors? The aim here is to understand whether these two architectural productions are part of a process of architectural innovation or, on the contrary, a process of architectural progression and “modernization” that finds its references in the local heritage.

While Algerian colonial architecture has been widely studied and discussed on the one hand by European and Algerian researchers, such as Nabila Oulabsir and N. Bouzar, that of the independence period, on the other hand, is rarely treated, with the exception of a few works by architectural authors such as Delluz and Ravéreau. In addition, this return of Algerian architects to traditional referents and architectural orders drawn from Algerian heritage may seem to announce the birth of an architectural movement that tends to detach itself from the universality of architecture and globalization that crushes all local specificity and identity. The last part of this contribution will attempt to provide some answers to this question. Through an iconographic comparative approach, based on documentary support (plans, photos, land surveys, etc.) we will try to highlight the nature of the relationships, such as continuity or rupture between the following three chronologically observed architectures⁶: the Moorish pre-colonial, the French neo-Moorish⁷ [1] and the “neo-Arabic” independence.

2. The authentic Moorish

2.1. Origin of the Moorish

Moorish architecture owes its name to the *Almoravids* in the 10th century who were the masters of Marrakech and the Maghreb. Coming from the Berber tribe of the *Nefoussa* originating from Central Africa (Niger), the *Almoravids* are the ancestors of the famous nomads, the *Tuareg*, founders of an immense Empire, which was able to extend its authority over the territories of the Iberian Peninsula, under the reign of *Youssouf Ben Tachfin*. According to Girault de Prangey [2], *Muslim* Spain became Moorish or African during the conquest of the *Almoravids*.

Hispano-Moorish architecture replaces Syro-Byzantine architecture. Algeria owes the *Almoravids* three of its oldest prayer houses in Algiers, *Nedroma* and *Tlemcen*. Georges Marçais “states that it was at this time that Western Muslim art asserted its personality. Even the *Tlemcen* dyestuff tent, which dates back to the 11th century, still presents an imitation of the Roman composite, but announces the appearance of the Hispano-Moorish capital” [3].

2.2. The evolution of authentic Moorish across Oranie

In his chronicles of Algiers, J. J. Deluz explains that an authentic architecture is an architecture expressing a national truth, far from all mannerisms in search of original forms [4]. Yet, few vestiges illustrate this architecture. Some buildings located in

Tlemcen escaped the French destruction which occurred at the beginning of colonization, such as the *Almoravid Mosque of Nedromah* (classified as the oldest mosque in Algeria according to Marçais)⁸ [5] and that of Algiers. These mosques present the same Andalusian Maghreb style and are characterized by a certain harmonious simplicity of the spans and an elegance in the pointed horseshoe arches resting on robust pillars.



Figure 1. Model of the mosque of Sidi Bel-Hassen on display in the municipal museum of Tlemcen (Source: Author, 2016).

Similarly, the Zeiyanide mosque of Sidi Bel Hassen built in 1296 [5], whose decoration of the dome and ornamentation of the *mihrab* are equal only to those of the *Alhambra* or to the two Marinid achievements, (*Sidi Bou-Medine* (1339) and *Sidi El Haloui* (1359) (Figure 1 and 2). The mosque of El Mansourah is part of a royal complex built by Abu Yacoub Yussif during the eight-year siege of Tlemcen by the Marinids⁹ [6] (Figure 3).

In Oran and Algiers, the situation is different because “Moorish” art was hybridized by *Turkish* influences. As a result, Moorish architecture has lost its authenticity by producing a composite style: the “Turco-Moorish” [7]. The great mosque of Algiers, *Djamaa El Kabir*, survives as a typical monument of this authentic architecture. Fine colonnades with twisted barrels have replaced the massive pillars supporting horseshoe arches specific to Moorish art. The fine cylindrical or octagonal Turkish minaret has replaced the *Andalusian-Maghrebian* square minaret.

This evolution sees the golden age of sumptuous decoration and abundant ornamentation, gradually decline and decay. This does not mean that architectural creation in Algeria ended. In the same way, the two-thousand-year-old cities of Algiers and Oran, in the eighteenth century, experienced terrible earthquakes that ravaged almost all their buildings. The reconstruction enterprise, carried out under the authority of the new Turkish masters, shows a Balkan and Ottoman influence.



Figure 2. Mihrab of the Sidi Bel Hassen Mosque, now a museum (source: Author, 2016).



Figure 3. Minaret of El Mansourah (source: Author, 2014).
against the Spanish [8].

The Mosque of *Hassan Pasha*¹¹ is a typical Oran Mosque of “Turkish-Moorish” [7] architecture; the graceful architectural aspect of its octagonal minaret distinguishes this building [8-9]. Thin and slender, on three levels, it presents harmonious, elegant proportions, and is richly enameled and framed with white and green ceramics; all these characteristics make this element one of the most beautiful Turkish minarets in Algeria (Figure 5).

It is obvious that each new invasion or conquest of Algeria brought with it major transformations in the indigenous or local culture of the occupied territories. From Roman to French colonization, each conqueror introduced their own methods of construction and architectural forms. The Moorish style adapted to these “intrusions” in Algeria by taking on new figures, forms or looks, such as the Turco-Moorish style produced in Algeria with the arrival of the Ottomans. As an illustration, we can mention, in Oran, two remarkable mosques that are typically “Turkish-Moorish”: the *Hassan Pasha* Mosque and that of the Pearl. The Pearl Mosque (*Bey Mohamed Ben Athman El-Kèbîr*¹⁰ Mosque) is located next to Pearl Square (Figure 4) and was built in 1793 by El Bey Ben Athman El-Kèbîr to celebrate his military victory



Figure 4. The Mosque of the Pearl; a) view from the church of Saint Louis; b) the main gate with the minaret (source: Author, 2016).



Figure 5. Pasha Mosque (source: Author, 2016).

There are other buildings in Oran attributed to Bey Mohamed El-Kèbir, which date back to the end of the 18th century, a period marked by the appearance of this visible “Turkish-Moorish” style [7]. For example, the Guerkentah Mosque and Bey Palace. The Palace, built in 1792, underwent many modifications by the new French occupants, causing it to lose its Moorish authenticity.

However, Algiers is the city that has benefited the most from this “Turkish-Moorish” architectural legacy, as it has the most famous monuments and the most well-known architecture in Algeria. However, the main objective of our study is to highlight the least known and little studied monuments in Oran, without downplaying those that have great coverage.

2.3. Character and specificities of Moorish architecture

“Architecture is at the same time the mirror of societies, one of their most perennial images, and the container of their well-being, the concretization of their culture as well” [10]. Moorish architecture is essentially based on the gesture of man, the logic of materials and its relationship with the environment. It presents itself as a logical response to climatic stress and the morphology of the place. Mores and religious beliefs have most influenced this architecture, its shape and the spatial layout of its buildings. In the “manual of Muslim art”, Georges Marçais [11] raises the importance of religion in the formation of Muslim art and architecture when he says that “art is at the service of worship.” It owes its values to religion.

Muslim architecture, in general, is appreciated on foot. The notion of the architectural journey is enhanced by architectural events such as courtyards, steps and water points. A desire of discovery is provoked in the walker. New events and spaces on the march (the walk). The notion of the right or direct perspective peculiar to the West is lost in this architecture. “... Arab architecture gives us a precious lesson. It is best appreciated in walking, on foot: it is by walking, by moving, that we see the order of architecture develop” [12]. From there, Le Corbusier inspired one of the famous fundamental principles of his architecture: that of the architectural walk. In addition, his famous Modulor is a result of the discovery of the *Kasbah* and the Algerian cities of *Mozabit*, such as *Ghardaïa*.

Everything revolves around man, space and functionality, shape and scale, height and size. This is the ordering element of this architecture. The dwellings in traditional Algerian architecture were often rudimentary, on a human scale, with no great heights. On the other hand, mosques and public buildings had a kind of monumentality. But the latter was not as strongly expressed compared to the buildings of Cairo or those of Syria and the Middle East. French settlers, who described the architecture found in Algeria as banal and rudimentary, often mentioned this phenomenon [13].

According to Le Corbusier (1987), “Everything is still standing in the congested Kasbah of Algiers; all the elements of an architecture infinitely sensitive to the needs and tastes of man. The European city can draw a decisive lesson, not whether it is to bombard a glossary of Arab ornaments, but to discern the very essence of architecture and urbanism. Other problems are then posed, referring to different customs and having to satisfy other needs. A fundamental base is common: the sun of Algiers” [12].

Introversion, due to the *Quranic* and religious guidelines of Islam, reflects the ideal of equality between Muslims, even in architecture and constructions. The rich cannot manifest their economic status, ostentatiously, and stand out from their co-religionists and the masses. This value of Islam, this principle, gave these buildings a certain uniformity and architectural harmony. All dwellings were very similar, making it difficult to distinguish between the home of a rich man and that of a poor man. The difference became noticeable only after having penetrated inside. This confinement in Moorish architecture was severely criticized by newcomers in Algeria: “... In the middle of this uniformity of architecture, this regular layout of the building, the richness of the interior sculptures, should we not recognize that in this the Orientals better understand the interior life than we (Westerners), who, most often, exhaust all our fortunes for the luxury of our buildings outside, while hardly we think of the interior comfort” [14].

This observation was made by François Duvilliers-Chasseloup¹² who, during his visit to the Dey Hospital in Algiers in 1856, was to make surveys as a landscape architect. The description of the Dey Hospital informs us about the quality of the introversion

of Moorish architecture compared to exhibitionist Western architecture. Moorish architecture gives priority to privacy and the privacy of its occupants. This confinement and discretion are materialized by the existence of the patio or the courtyard. This element becomes inseparable from all Moorish houses and buildings. It is a reservoir of air and light through which breathe all spaces, rooms and premises far away from prying eyes.

Ultimately, Moorish buildings and dwellings were often modest and simple in scale compared to mosques and madrasas. In this period between the 13th and 18th centuries, buildings for worship were more important than dwellings and houses. They were more monumental and more spectacular. Even the palaces were arranged in pavilions to identify with the human scale. Man is always the main design module in this architecture. Everything revolves around this element. It must also be said that the site and the environment are well integrated by Moorish architecture. The latter is designed and developed according to these two important elements. However, like any Muslim architecture, the Moorish style owes its values to the cult, such as the simplicity of the architecture, the simplicity of the forms, the regulation of the relationships between neighbours, such as Muslim equality, (the facades of the houses of the rich are similar to those of the poor). Prohibition of opposite buildings (no window in one building faces the interior of another). Thus, the overall logic of the spatial framework is defined by religious beliefs as fundamental principles of design. In its true sense, it is an architecture at the service of worship.

The neo-Moorish represents a surprising architecture by the multiplicity of its dimensions: cultural, historical and geographical. The uniformity of its architectural forms and the diversity of its authors (architects from different European nations practiced neo-Moorish under French colonial rule). In order to symbolize its belonging and its doubtful rooting in this land of Algeria, which is properly Moorish, the French colonist produced this architecture. A contradictory act, with regard to the colonial tradition, which destroyed and erased all the pre-existing indigenous culture, at the beginning of colonization. This borrowing from Moorish architecture by the colonial enterprise seems rather strange, because it presents a demand for a culture of others (that of the Algerians) and a reinvention of a new story which raises many questions. Several researchers and art historians, among whom we can cite the work of Nabila Oulebsir [15-16], have treated this subject. Our magister dissertation entitled "The Neo-Moorish colonial legacy in Oranie from 1830 to 1930" also addresses this question [1].

3. The copy of the Moorish: the neo-Moorish

3.1. Colonial France and indigenous culture

During the conquest of Algeria, the concept of heritage was not ripe enough for the new occupants to save the vestiges of the local culture from destruction. Similarly, in France, a considerable number of monuments were sacrificed during the French Revolution of 1789. Algerian cities such as Annaba, Algiers, Constantine, Oran and Tlemcen consequently underwent significant destruction, which led to the partial or total disappearance of the traditional fabric in order to create new fabrics that were alien to the original site (Kasbahs and medinas have been designed according to a morphology that adapts to the nature of Algerian urban sites).

To describe the immensity of the destruction of Algerian cities by the French, Marçais reports that: "in Tlemcen, a 13th century mosque was transformed into a fodder loft.

Has the madrasa Tachfinia with its mosaic portal been demolished to make way for the most grotesque town hall in sight? These are the historical inscriptions used in the paving of the sidewalks, a royal epitaph known by the learned world of Europe, which disappears (stolen by the French scientists) one knows not how. Lastly, for the Turkish time, it is Algiers of the corsairs butchered (destroyed by the French); it is the capital of the Deys recut on the model of a Marseilles suburb." [17].

Nevertheless, a new page was being written in the history of colonial urban and architectural policy in Algeria. Academicians and scientists such as Georges Marçais, Stéphane Gsell and others, supported this evolution. This group of French-Algerian elites acted on two different terrains. The first was to disseminate information about indigenous art and historical monuments produced by the local society as an attractive source for promoting tourism and economic enrichment of the colony (Algeria). The second field of action was intervention against any destruction of pre-existing monuments and the call for their restoration. It was an S.O.S launched to save what was left of the *Kasbah* of Algiers and its historic buildings. The committee of old Algiers was part of this group [18]. In 1930, it had 330 members belonging to the Algerian historical society, including architects, archaeologists, historians, jurists, etc.

3.2. France's protector of indigenous culture and the emergence of neo-Moorish

The Moorish style experienced another turning point in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, marked by a certain late awareness shown by the colonial French, vis-à-vis the local heritage of the natives. It gave birth to the neo-Moorish or Arabisance movement studied by Beguin [19] in a well-documented book. The latter remains an essential reference for any research in this particular field of the history of Algerian and colonial architecture. The new figure of Moorish drawn by the French is linked to the directives of the general governor of Algeria Charles-Celestin Jonnart (1875-1927). His policy was rejected by many French colonists, in particular the assimilationists and the "Algerianists". He tried to rebuild an Algerian identity from multiple components [15]. He built madrasas, schools, train stations, and many public buildings in neo-Moorish style. Concerned with the economic development of the colony, he adopted a composite and emblematic style, a sign of Algeria's economic autonomy from the French metropolis. A ministerial circular, issued in 1905, succeeding¹³ that of 4 December 1904, relating to school buildings, made this new "Oriental Style" official and was to be adopted by the various administrative buildings [15].

Moreover, this interpretation of Moorish is also closely linked to the evolution of architectural creation. Djermoune and Oubouzar classify this architecture in the historicist repertoire [20]. Since the Renaissance, when architecture was accepted as an independent and autonomous discipline, architectural creation has not ceased to oscillate between rupture or recourse to history [21]. The first trend is defined as modernist, while the other presents the historicist current to which the Neo-Moorish belongs.

Many other neo-styles were created in the second half of the nineteenth century: neoclassical, neo-Gothic, neo-Romanesque, neo-baroque, and the revisited past is due to the emergence of the rationalist movement following the reforms of the School of Fine Arts. The break with classical Greco-Roman traditions and openness to other references and sources of inspiration has nourished this architectural effervescence. In 1905, Jonnart passed a circular encouraging architects and authors of public projects and schools to use the Moorish forms specific to Algeria, although there are buildings built in the oriental style before this date. Such as the boys' school group, "Ecole Gambetta"

built in Tiaret in 1875¹⁴, as part of the instructions given by the colonial administration for the adoption of a new state style designated for school buildings [22]. Architects are recommended to give an artistic touch to Algerian schools inspired by indigenous architectural sources (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Ziane Chérif Abdelhamid School (ex-Gambetta School); (source: C. Aguilla, 2003)

In the treatment of the façade of the Ziane Cherif Abdelhamid School in Figure 7, one can see the borrowing from the Moorish ornamental and decorative repertoire: the same spandrel, the similar star (a) and the same type of bow (b). Part (c) is a detail of the door of the *madrasa Sidi Boumediene*, El Eubab, made by Duthoit, E. during his Architectural Mission of 1872 in *Tlemcen* [15]. We can see its influence on the design of the openings of this school. The arcades of the courtyard recall the pillars and arches of ancient *Mowahidite* mosques such as that of *Nedromah* (Figure 8).

Similarly, he recalls the neo-Moorish college *El-Saddiki* in Tunis designed by Maillait in 1875, cited in the book “L’architecture moderne de style arabe” by Guy, R. [23]. This architectural production is much more decorative and ornamental; the spatial or functional aspect remains Western, referring to the classical European model. Neo-Moorish architecture is ornamental, geometrical and mathematical, reproducing Hispano-Moorish architecture, applied to Western logic. To this adaptation of the Moorish, we can relate other monuments built in Oranie that are part of our body of study. Thus, the railway station of Oran¹⁵ is one of the neo-Moorish icons in Algeria: the architect A. Ballu completed it in 1912, after the death of its designer, M. Toudoire [1] (Figure 9).

The madrasa in Tlemcen, whose monumental doorway (Figure 10) is reminiscent of that of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, is another example. Despite the western conception of the superficially decorated Andalusian-Maghrebian plan, this madrasa remains a good example of orientalist neo-Moorish architecture with its artistic and technical foundations.

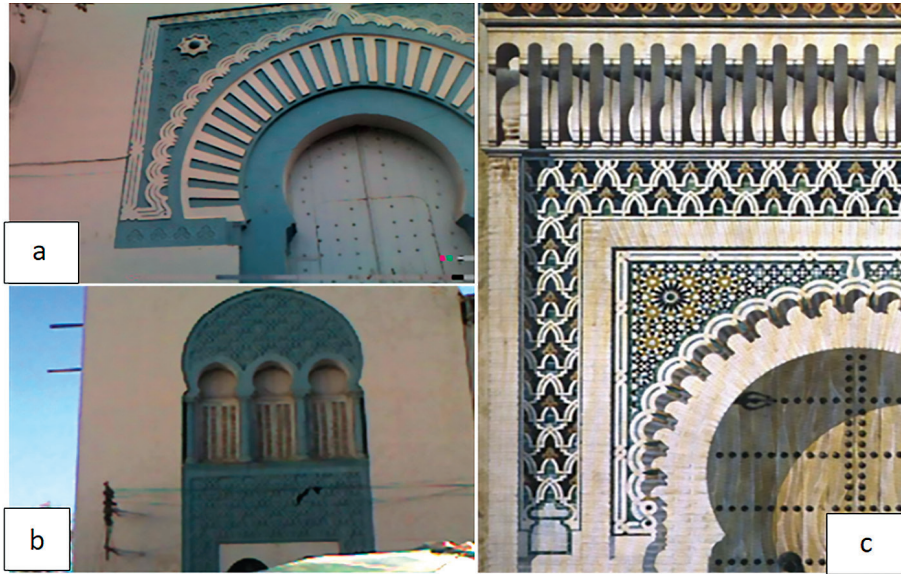


Figure 7. Architectural details (Ziane Cherif Abdelhamid School and Sidi Boumedine Mosque); a) Detail of studded door of the Ziane Chérif School; b) Pointed arch window of the Ziane Chérif School; c) Spandrel of the porch of the Sidi Boumedine Mosque (source: Author, 2007).



Figure 8. The courtyard of the school; (source: Author, 2007).



Figure 9. Oran Railway Station (Karguentah Station); (source: Author, 2013).



Figure 10. Madrasa de Tlemcen, former Franco-Muslim school; a) view from the public garden; b) detail of the monumental gate; (source: Author, 2010).

In the neo-Moorish style, the borrowing from Moorish architecture was reduced to mere architectural formalism without any soul. It presented a Western architecture dressed in a guise drawn from an ornamental and decorative Moorish repertoire. This production was not the result of chance or arbitrariness; it had conceptual foundations.

Talented architects and outstanding artists, erudite scientists and academics have conducted studies, research and scientific missions to understand this indigenous architectural art and culture and to make it known to the Western world.

Among the most famous scientific explorations of Algeria is Edmond Duthoit's 1872 exploration of Tlemcen. Based on a scientific approach that tended to decipher the meanings and principles classifying Arab art, he also sought filiations with the Muslim civilization in Andalusia. Through his work on the monuments of Tlemcen, he has demonstrated that this architecture is based on geometric and mathematical concepts. In other

words, it had scientific principles and could be interpreted in the same way as Western architecture [15].

With the work of Marçais and his scientific conferences from 1905 onwards, the European world was made aware that Muslim art is of a scholarly nature and that Muslim culture is indeed urban, recalling that Arabs and Muslims founded the oldest cities in the ancient world. Thus, in studying ornamental motifs from Tlemcen, he demonstrated that Moorish ornamentation and decoration were based on purely geometric norms and bases.¹⁶

Mention should also be made of the work of Donjoy, who carried out extensive studies on the *Tachfinya Madrasah* and the *Sidi Brahim* Mosque in Tlemcen, whose remarkable drawings earned him a second-class medal at the Salon of 1873 and the Universal Exhibition of 1878 [15]. These developments confirmed and consolidated the conclusions of the architect Edmond Duthoit. Indeed, Moorish architecture was considered a “reasoned architecture” with geometric and mathematical bases, which could be associated, through a scientific approach, with those architectures considered as learned.

Therefore, the neo-Moorish cannot be reduced only to a political operation because it is also the result of a cultural and scientific effervescence peculiar to this period. In fact, the political will was associated with the cultural passion of artists and researchers, academics and historians, architects and painters. Neo-Moorish work remains an architectural expression based on principles and laws, even if the copy is far from being authentic. During the period under review, the neo-Moorish was essentially formalistic, but this characteristic was an expression of modernism in vogue. For some architects, this Arabic architectural expression was seen as a modernization of Arab architecture and an innovation in the world of Western architecture, marking a break with the monotony of classical historicist orders imposed by the Academy of Fine Arts as a unique source of reference and inspiration. Thus, Raphael Guy expresses neo-Moorish modern architecture in an Arabic style. Hence the title of his book: “Modern architecture of Arab style” [23]. The latter must be able to reconcile the modern with the traditional, the past with the present, the West with the East. However, one condition was necessary: the architecture had to conform to Western hygiene and comfort standards. In the end, the copy did not usually conform to the authentic, but rather, broke away from it completely.

The neo-Moorish was always in search of roots and references in the Moorish. The perception of French authors, despite their efforts, was Eurocentric and based on a superficial and shallow knowledge of Algerian culture. Moorish art and architecture, in particular, can only be understood and reproduced in Algeria by Algerians, as they are the expression of their local culture and traditions par excellence.

3.3. The neo-Moorish after independence, a heritage in jeopardy

After Algeria’s independence and the return of European settlers to their countries of origin, most of the vacated buildings and constructions were re-occupied by a new population who were of rural or nomadic origin. Considered as an easily accessible vacant property, this real estate housed new ways of living and new appropriations of built space, marked in particular by the over-occupation of houses by the Algerian population. In order to adapt it to their way of life, these new occupants made many changes, damaging this forgotten heritage, destroying some of the original elements and sometimes even ransacking it.

Numerous neo-Moorish civil buildings, private or public, of remarkable architectural quality and striking beauty, which marked both the urban landscape and the architectural decor of Algerian cities, were threatened by extinction. After independence, no political or public will has been shown to save this heritage from the danger of degradation (Figure 11), linked to the effects of time and the practices of the inhabitants. This deterioration was accentuated during the 1980s and 1990s, marked by the housing crisis and a growing population which caused the over-occupation of these places by many families.

One example that stands out is Villa Sainte Anne¹⁷, which was occupied by eighteen families at the same time. Figure 12 shows the state of deterioration of this construction which was of great architectural beauty. Orientalist in style¹⁸, decorated with arabesques and Moorish ornamentation, the moucharabies (or mashrabiyyas) of this building were made of finely carved wood. The columns were made of marble, with capitals representing acanthus leaves in Moorish style. Typical Andalusian-Maghrebian pointed arches, crowned by projecting cornices covered with green tiles, framed the doors and windows. It remains a very remarkable construction that attests to the know-how of its architect.



Figure 11. Villa A. Pommert, built in 1924 in Mostaganem; (source: Author, 2015).



Figure 12. Villa Sainte Anne in Sanchidrian (Oran); a) global view of the villa; b) main façade; c) detail of the moucharabieh; (source: Author, 2011).

Many neo-Moorish buildings have disappeared or are being disregarded in the absence of any patrimonial policy of safeguarding or maintenance, which could curb the irreversible loss of this architectural heritage, which carries a historical memory. The Algerian authorities were hostile to this colonial architectural legacy. Some Algerian technocrats and architects questioned this neo-Moorish product, considering that this colonial interpretation of local traditions was only a disfiguration of the Algerian identity and image. Conversely, Moroccans and Tunisians adopted a policy of safeguarding and maintaining this colonial heritage as a collective memory favorable to the promotion of a profitable tourism economy. To leave this inheritance to its fate, presents a monumental error similar to that made by the French vis-à-vis the native culture at the beginning of the colonization of Algeria. Rooted within the territory, this group of buildings reflects a striking phase in the contemporary history of our cities and that of our architectural culture.

4. The copy of the copy, the neo-Arabian

After independence, Algerians reclaimed their cities and the spaces that had been taken over by the French settlers. However, identity markers are blurred, ancestral traditions can no longer be found. Algerian authenticity has been lost and erased forever from almost all cities. The remaining few, such as the Kasbah of Algiers or the monuments of Tlemcen, have been altered completely, when compared with those of neighboring countries (Morocco and Tunisia). In 1907, Henri Saladin, made a descriptive statement relating to Algerian heritage after the French conquest: "Unfortunately, it must be noted that Algeria has the fewest monuments of Arab art, except in Tlemcen, and that we have not been able, particularly in Algiers, to preserve from destruction all those charming Moorish houses, most of which have already disappeared" [24].

4.1. Architectural trends in independent Algeria

Since independence, Algerian cities have acquired architectural forms that are foreign to the local culture. Varied and disparate architectural styles give urban landscapes a heterogeneous character. Among these architectures, it is possible to distinguish the following.

The first trend favoring the continuity of colonial orders as a reference. Many buildings were designed according to this model by borrowing the linearity of the facades along the street and the orientation of the courtyard inward. The notions of the islet, the street and the square dominate in this approach. The majority of the buildings constructed are those of wealthy individuals who reproduce this colonial-style aesthetic as an expression of luxury, wealth and distinction, compared to other less privileged classes of society. This interest in colonial architecture appeared in the 90s under the influence of academics and architects who rediscovered the charm of colonial architecture.

The second trend is the one that has had the greatest impact on Algerian cities. The neo-modernist or contemporary architecture, 'spectacle' or 'prestige' architecture as Deluz describes it in his work "*Le tout et le fragment*" [25]; an architecture without roots and without cultural, geographical or social identity. Its history began

in the 1970s, when the Algerian authorities turned to star architects, for the realization of large-scale projects; as examples, we quote: “the University of Science and Technology of Oran” (designed by Kenzo Tange), “the University of Constantine” awarded to the Brazilian architect-sculptor Oscar Neimeyer, as well as “the sports hall of Harcha (Algiers)”, etc. Many architects, of Algerian training, fascinated by Western culture, followed this trend based on formal theories that break with Algerian traditions. This “technological” architecture [25] whose aesthetic reference is based on qualities intrinsically attached to the constructive system while using, more often than not, glass curtain walls as cladding materials. This architectural production seeks to portray a modern image of the country and an expression of its economic opulence.

The third trend is about historical character, vacillating between the Moorish and the “neo-Arabian” which make use of the ancestral and local repertoire [26]. The latter is described below.

4.2. The Moorish, the history of an Algerian identity

Since the sixties, some never tired of wanting to “re-Algerianize” Algeria in general, their aim being to reconnect with Algerian local traditions. Claiming a national identity, Algerian technocrats and architects, who were resolutely “anticolonial”, called for a complete break with colonial architectural traditions and its signs that memorized a bloody past. In the main, they wanted to demonstrate the cultural and political independence of Algeria vis-à-vis the former occupant. Abderrahmane Bouchama was at the forefront of this movement in search of an Algerian architectural and cultural identity. In his essay and manifesto, “l’arceau qui chante” [27], he tells how the corporation of architects engaged in a lively debate in order to promote the emergence of a national architecture. It encouraged architects to return to local culture and ancestral traditions as a source of reference that was essential to the advent of a national architectural identity. From there, he proposed the rehabilitation of vernacular and local architecture through a modern and innovative approach.

Although recommended by administrative decision-makers and some Algerians, this architectural tendency has not yet been paid much attention by the great mass of the community of architects due to the simple fact that “Algerian culture” was, and remains, unknown to its people, who are oriented towards a “spectacular modernism” [28] without their own identity. These architects are attracted by the visual and formalism. Abderrahmane Bouchama denounced the loss of artistic and architectural know-how as evils of colonization. During a dialogue initiated as an architect with a wealthy Tlemcenian sponsor and a talented chiseller, well-versed in this Moorish art, the architect admitted that he could not meet the requirements of the client who asked for a ‘pure style where the arches must sing’. The sponsor advised him to go to Morocco to find master “*maalams*” who could reveal to him the treasures and secrets of his ancestors. This conversation awakened in the architect the notion of heritage and referents to which he must resort [15].

It was from there on that the course of an architect in search of an Algerian national identity would begin. However, his first achievement referring to the Moorish style was prior to independence: indeed, he drew the plans for *Dar-El-Hadith Tlemcen* between 1936 and 1937, after his return from France and towards the end of his studies.



Figure 13. Youth Hostel in Oran designed by architect N. Bouguenaya; (source: N. Bouguenaya, 2010).

This neo-Moorish style building was not unlike the French colonial buildings in Algeria. This was his only project at that time, but after independence, he received many institutional and religious orders throughout the country: the headquarters of the Birkhadem National Archives, Benaknoun Cultural Center, the Supreme Court, Caroubier University of Islamic Sciences, the Islamic Institutes of Constantine (1969), Tlemcen (1970) and Le Caroubier (1970), etc. As a reference for these works, he cites Algerian, Arab-Muslim architecture and the famous Alhambra of Granada.

In the years that followed, other young architects realized constructions of neo-Arab character, answering the requests of the local authorities. As an outstanding example, Bougueneya, an architect in Oran¹⁹, recounts her experience with the Moorish, recommended at that time by the former mayor of Oran (*Zoukh*). The latter required architects and other builders to introduce arches as identifying signs of belonging to the old Moorish Algeria (Figure 13). She denounces how her work was denatured and distorted during construction, as the arches were made in Romanesque and non-Moorish style. Architects are no longer masters of their work or designs. Their architectural expression is deprived of freedom by the administrative laws of the specifications, which do not respect the architectural work. The administration sets the rules. The architect becomes an instrument at the service of the administration and for the benefit of politics. Nowadays, this opinion is shared by the great mass of the community of architects who practice their craft in construction yards throughout the national territory. This observation is one of the points relating to the deterioration of the architectural quality and built environment in independent Algeria [4].

In an article entitled, *The Invisible Architect*, Taher Djaout describes the architecture of a house built in the neo-Arab style, in a fun and relevant expression, when he says: “a neo-Moorish architecture open through the satellite dish to the universal” [28]. Here he expresses that traditional architecture cannot be satisfied merely by adding a simple decoration and a few clichés; it must be the subject of research in order to achieve real reinterpretation.

Houses built by private individuals are often designed in Moorish fashion using a disparate ensemble composed of various traditional decorative elements such as Moorish arches, tiled awnings, green tile cornices, and even Cupolas and stucco plates or Moorish ornamental plaster, etc. These productions make this architecture a patchwork style that appeals to all forms of Muslim art and even, sometimes, Western.

The Tlemcenian house in (Figure 14) is built in a patchwork style and has a heterogeneous element of Muslim art. The cupolas are Mughal style while the doors, columns and cornices in tiles recall the Maghreb style. This reveals a certain disorientation of the Algerian who has lost his ancestral Andalusian-Maghreb landmarks. In addition, another example, in Oran, is that of the regional Museum of Craft, inaugurated recently, and conceived in a "neo-Arab" architecture, in discordance with its architectural and urban neighborhood (Figure 15). The latter is composed of several towers (contemporary) of medium height for residential use, whose referential landmarks are universal, anonymous and relocated from the historical-cultural point of view, the territory and the site. There are numerous examples that dominate the architectural and urban landscape of our Algerian cities, a phenomenon that needs to be well analyzed, studied and undertaken by the scientific and research community.



Figure 14. Tlemcenian House (source: Author, 2013).



Figure 15. The Regional Museum of Crafts (Oran). Source: author, 2014.

5. Conclusion

Through these three successive periods, Moorish architecture suffered multiple deformations where each occurrence referred to a particular political and cultural affiliation. Each of the three figures analyzed, correspond to the perception of the master builder who conceived it. The authors, whether French or Algerian, each represented and redesigned this past, according to their own orientation. The architecture presented a tool to identify affirmation and ideological propaganda, even if the motives of each were very different. For the French, it was a cultural re-conquest after finishing with their military conquest. It was a matter of justifying their presence on a territory that did not belong to them; but for Algerians, it was a *raison d'être*, and a reconstruction of an identity that had been destroyed and erased by colonization. In other words, it was necessary to stage an image of affirmation of an independent Algeria to break with its previous cultural dependence and with any tradition reminiscent of the colonial past. Moorish architecture becomes a semantic charged with a sign that reflects the relationship between a conquering nation and a conquered society. A malleable substance, easy to reshape for the manifestation of this cultural antagonism, nourishing politico-ideological and identity issues.

Beyond the ideological or political conflict, the relationship of continuity or architectural break between these three figures of Moorish architecture is what prevails in this research. The “copy of the copy” or “neo-Arab” produced during the period of independence was like the colonial “copy of the neo-Moorish”, an unconvincing version of Algerian architectural identity. Most of the architects who worked for the Algerianisation of architecture had very poor knowledge of local know-how and ancestral architectural traditions. Even their architectural practices were not based on any scientific or experimental research qualified to support their production. Their representation of the Moorish was purely profane and arbitrary. No efforts have been made to re-read and understand this culture. Some self-taught architects, but very few, are an exception. Similarly, in architecture schools in Algeria, not many have a reliable knowledge of this Moorish culture, or even Arab-Muslim in general, to be able to train practicing architects in this field. Indeed, French colonialism, which lasted more than a century, has left its traces and misdeeds, in an Algerian society acculturated and torn between an almost erased ancestral culture and a different and unknown Western culture.

On the other hand, colonial neo-Moorish gives us a good example when Jonnart decided to promote this architecture as an expression of identity of French Algeria. Colonial society has resolutely embarked on academic research on Moorish arts and culture. Most of the ancient or Muslim historical monuments were inventoried and classified during this period. Handicrafts schools were created, and Moorish architectural elements were codified.

The “neo-Arab”, to be recognized as a quality architecture whose principles are well founded and rooted, requires, on the part of those who promote it, the overcoming of interest focused only on the formal, aesthetic or visual aspect. This trend should no longer be limited to a historiographical setting, confined to the folklore of forms and scenery. The study of Moorish architecture must be integrated into a scientific approach that identifies all-related aspects such as the socio-cultural and cultural dimensions. The experience of André Ravéreau, who worked for a long time in Algeria, is enriching; he pushed his research of an architecture strongly related to his objective conditions (places, climate, materials, construction, and modes of living and culture of space) as far as it was possible [29]. He was one of the masters of the rediscovery of

traditional and vernacular architectures in Algeria, understood not as a model to “copy” but as a source of inspiration and methodological teaching essential in the architectural conceptual approach. Hence, Deluz deemed that: “Any teaching of architecture should begin there” [12].

Notes

¹The choices made by the colonial power in terms of architectural communication (minaret, dome, calligraphic, geometric and floral ornamentation, etc.); see Figure 6 and 7 (signs of practical, cultural and political ideological dimension).

²After the independence of Algeria in 1962, the authorities began to produce a new Algerian style which was inspired by the local traditions of the country.

³The Spanish, who were driven out by the Ottomans, conquered Algeria. Then, the French conquered it in 1830, and remained until 1962. Each of these nations produced Moorish architecture according to its understanding and perception of Algerian architectural traditions.

⁴The Algerian architects of independence decide to draw inspiration from the Andalusian-Magreb style to the detriment of the Turkish Moorish style produced by the Turks in Algeria and the neo-Moorish style created by the French. The two are the Turkish-Moorish style and the neo-Moorish style.

⁵Triple incarnation, these are the 3 figures of the Moorish:

- The authentic (Andalusian-Maghreb style, the Turkish-Moorish style).
- The copy: the French neo-Moorish style.
- The copy of the copy, the neo-Arab style produced in Algeria after independence in 1962.

⁶In order to better support our study of the many mutations or deformations undergone by the Moorish, we attributed to these three architectures the following distinctive qualities: the authentic (source of reference and source of Orientalist architects and authors of neo-Moorish) refers to the Moorish, the work of the Moors, peoples from North Africa; the copy corresponds to Neo-Moorish, colonial work; the copy of the copy, or neo-Arabian, qualifies the Algerian work of independence. Through this qualification, we demonstrate that this production does not produce a significant break with the previous copy.

⁷The prefix “neo” marks a renewal within the framework of an old order. Hence the expressions: neoclassical, neo-Moorish, neo-baroque, neo-traditional, etc. Ultimately, this indicates the composite nature of the considered entity that incorporates new data. As for the designation “Moorish”, it finds its origin in the qualifier of Moorish, which, according to the Romans, was what belonged to ancient Mauritania (currently the Maghreb). Subsequently, in the Middle Ages, this name was given to the people of the Maghreb who conquered Spain. Currently, the name is attributed to the inhabitants of Western Sahara (Mauritania).

The definition of the National Center for Lexical Textual Resources (CNRTL) seems the most appropriate for our research because it refers to the artistic and architectural aspect of the Moorish. This term is borrowed from the Spanish “morisco”, “Moorish” used in the fourteenth century to designate the Moors of North Africa and those of Spain. Moorish Architecture or Moorish Style is said of the style that flourished in Spain after the Arab invasion (also called Hispano-Arab or Hispano-Moresque). The Moorish name in the plural is attributed to the Moorish style decoration motif, formed by foliage (it can also be written Moresque). (URL: <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/academie9/mauresque>).

⁸The great mosque of Tlemcen (built in 1135 by the Almoravid, Ali Ben Youssef Ben Tachfin) is one of the oldest mosques in the Maghreb. For the construction of the Town Hall and the layout of its municipal square, the French razed much of this historic monument to the ground. In its first state, it had the same simplicity of architectural decoration as the mosque of Nedromah and that of Algiers. However, it benefited from enrichments that attest to an evolution of art and architecture among the Almoravids. Its dome, its Mihrab and the central nave affirm the implantation of Andalusian art in the Maghreb [3,5].

⁹Only the minaret and some walls remain of this medieval city. After the end of the siège, the Tlemcenians ravaged it. It was then restored, or rebuilt, by the Marinid Abi El Hassen (the builder of the mausoleum of Sidi Boumedine El Ghaouth). The minaret is one of the jewels of Andalusian-Maghrebian architecture in Tlemcen. It was ranked third for its height of 38m, after that of the Giralda of Seville and that of the Kutubiyya of Marrakech; in 1875, the French restored it.

¹⁰Its square-based minaret, reminiscent of the mosques of Tlemcen and Andalusia, and its blind arches and lattice brickwork characterize it. In its neighborhood, on the same site, are the ancient Turkish baths built in 1708 by Bey Bouchlaghem. On the terrace, you can see the domes of its damp, warm rooms. Under the French occupation, these baths served as laundries for the French soldiers.

¹¹The Mosque of *Pasha* was built in 1796 by Bey Mohamed El-Kèbir and dedicated to Pasha Baba Hassan of Algiers, who contributed to its construction, following the victory over the Spaniards. It was realized under the direction of the Amin (Syndic) of the masons Si Mohamed Ben Tadbirt.

¹²François Du villiers-Chasseloup (1801-1887) was a French architect and landscape engineer, a founding member of the Horticultural Society of Paris and author of the book "Parks and Gardens", published in 1871.

¹³In his book, Oulebsir, N. (2002) states that: "Several circulars written by Governor General Jonnart formalize at the beginning of the century the intention manifested by the colonial administration to adopt the neo-Moorish style as a state style. The first, transmitted on December 2 in 1904 to the municipalities, concerns the style to be given to school buildings and draws attention to the interest of recommending to the architects to give an artistic stamp to the schools of Algeria by taking inspiration from the neo-Moorish style. The second (March 4, 1905), relates to the style to be attributed to the administrative constructions and completes the previous one by inviting the prefects to recommend to the municipalities to address to the architects, for the elaboration projects of administrative constructions (school buildings, town halls, houses of administrators, etc., using models of oriental architecture"[15].

¹⁴At this date, the neo-Moorish style is not yet official. The exteriorization of the forms and the (native) signs that characterize this style can be noted.

¹⁵Designed by the architect Marius Toudoire (1852-1912) for the French railway company from Paris to Lyon and Marseille (PLM), it is identical to the Lyon train station with its spatial and functional provisions (plans), while its architecture is of the European type.

¹⁶Built in 1905 by the architect Henri Petit, in the neo-Moorish style with a magnificent facade inspired by the mihrab of the Great Mosque, its devices present arabesques in mosaic of earthenware in several tones and has a beautiful courtyard paved with marble and many classrooms. The madrassah is located opposite the place of the former Mujahideen, next to the Mausoleum of Sidi Maamar Ben Ali, which draws its particularity from the fact that it is partially below ground level. This monument has become a museum of archeology in Tlemcen.

¹⁷ A rich French farmer attracted by Orientalism, which was popular at that time, built Villa Sainte Anne in Sanchidrillon in Oran around the end of the 19th century. It is currently in ruins. Its land is intended to become the base for an administrative project.

¹⁸ The oriental or Orientalist concept is a precursor of the neo-Moorish concept; it was used in colonial literature before the appearance of the decree of 1904, which announced it as the official style of Algeria.

¹⁹ Bougueneya, an architect trained at the Oran School of Architecture, built a youth hostel in 2010 and other projects in Oran in neo-Arabian style.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the D.G.R.S.T. of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria for the support given to my research, as well as my research supervisor Prof. Mohamed Madani for his help and guidance.

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Biographical notes

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Summary

Algeria, the center and heart of the Maghreb, has often been coveted by conquerors, attracted by its wealth and geostrategic location in the Mediterranean. This particular situation has made it a cultural crossroads. Thereby, "Moorish", as one of the most remarkable expressions of Muslim architecture and a local architectural tradition specific to this region, has undergone the alterations and repercussions resulting from successive acculturations. This art, born in the Maghreb in the 10th century, has asserted itself as a specific style since the 13th century. If we consider the authenticity of this original production, several transformations and deformations, such as the "copy and the copy of the copy", will appear because of the socio-political changes resulting from the colonial periods.

From there, a crucial question arises: are these different figures that have appeared from the "Moorish", the authentic, the "Turkish-Moorish", the "neo-Moorish", the "neo-Arab", linked by a relationship of continuity or rupture? Through an iconographic comparative approach based on documentary support (plans, photos, etc.), we will try to expose existing links between these architectures. This contribution describes and

analyzes the peculiarities and metamorphoses of this style throughout its history: from the “Ottoman reign”, which was followed by the French colonial “neo-Moorish” and finally to the “neo-Arab” form of the independence period. As a conclusion, it can be said that the appropriation of this architectural style was a way of legitimizing the presence of the successive masters of Algeria. Moorish served them as an instrument of ideological, cultural and political transmission.

Riassunto

L’Algeria, centro e cuore del Maghreb, è stata spesso ambita dai conquistatori, attratti dalla sua ricchezza e dalla sua posizione geostrategica nel Mediterraneo. Questa particolare situazione ne ha fatto un crocevia culturale. Così, il “moresco”, come una delle espressioni più notevoli dell’architettura musulmana e una tradizione architettonica locale specifica di questa regione, ha subito le alterazioni e le ripercussioni derivanti dalle successive acculturazioni. Quest’arte, nata nel Maghreb nel X secolo, si è affermata come stile specifico dal XIII secolo. Se consideriamo l’autenticità di questa produzione originale, appariranno diverse trasformazioni e deformazioni come la “copia e la copia della copia” a causa dei cambiamenti socio-politici derivanti dai periodi coloniali.

Da qui, sorge una domanda cruciale: queste diverse figure apparse dal “moresco” (l’autentico, il “turco-moresco”, il “neo-moresco”, il “neo-arabo”) sono legate da un rapporto di continuità o di rottura? Attraverso un approccio iconografico comparativo basato su un supporto documentario (piante, foto, ecc.), cercheremo di esporre i legami esistenti tra queste architetture. Questo contributo descrive e analizza le peculiarità e le metamorfosi di questo stile nel corso della sua storia: dal “regno ottomano”, che fu seguito dal “neo-”moresco” coloniale francese e infine alla forma “neo-arabista” del periodo dell’indipendenza. Come conclusione, si può dire che l’appropriazione di questo stile architettonico era un modo per legittimare la presenza dei successivi padroni dell’Algeria. Il moresco servì loro come strumento di trasmissione ideologica, culturale e politica.